“... the Study [on Violence against Children] recognises that virtually all forms of violence are linked to entrenched gender roles and inequalities, and that the violation of the rights of children is closely linked to the status of women.”

Prof. Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, 2007
Independent Expert for the UN Secretary-General’s Study on Violence against Children

FROM INVISIBLE TO INDIVISIBLE
PROMOTING AND PROTECTING THE RIGHT OF THE GIRL CHILD TO BE FREE FROM VIOLENCE
SUDAN: A crowd of girls assembles in queues outside their school in the Kassab camp for internally displaced persons near the town of Kutum, 116 km from El Fasher, capital of North Darfur.
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FOREWORD


The UN Study on Violence against Children represents a turning point in the approach of the international community towards the rights of children and their legitimate call to fulfill their rights. The study is a call to action for all governments, with other stakeholders, to take immediate steps to end all forms of violence against children – boys and girls equally.

All children have fundamental human rights. Violence against children, whether it is physical, psychological or sexual, is a gross violation of these fundamental human rights. The study reiterates the pervasiveness of violence against children as a global phenomenon – perpetrated too often by those close to them, and occurring in a range of settings which should be protecting them – in their homes, schools, communities, places of care and other settings. The key messages of the study declare that all violence against children is preventable, and no violence against children is justifiable – implicit is the fact that this violence must stop.

The study explores a range of factors that make children more vulnerable to violence and suggests strategies for ending violence against children. As part of this analysis the study recognises that virtually all forms of violence are linked to entrenched gender roles and inequalities, and that the violation of the rights of children is closely linked to the status of women. Violence against children has incalculable costs to present and future generations, and it undermines human development.

The situation for girls in all regions has similar underpinnings – perhaps varying in intensity but always similar in nature – including discriminatory and patriarchal practices, inequality, exclusion, inadequate legal protection, lack of educational opportunities, the disproportionate impact of HIV and AIDS, as well as the persistence of poverty. Failure to address these situations constitutes not only a grave violation of human rights, but threatens the very fabric of society.

i www.violencestudy.org
Inspired by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols and other international conventions, the study urges governments to adequately integrate the rights enshrined in these conventions and agreements into domestic laws, policies and practices. Governments have the primary responsibility and obligation to take concrete and immediate action to end all forms of violence against children and to address the gender issues affecting girls and boys to ensure that every child lives in a world free from violence.

To emphasise the importance of the gender dimension, the study directed one of its 12 key, overarching recommendations at this issue specifically and called on governments, working with partners, to effect change:

**RECOMMENDATION 10. ADDRESS THE GENDER DIMENSION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN**

*I recommend that States should ensure that anti-violence policies and programmes are designed and implemented from a gender perspective, taking into account the different risks facing girls and boys in respect of violence; States should promote and protect the human rights of women and girls and address all forms of gender discrimination as part of a comprehensive violence-prevention strategy.*


So many of our colleagues and friends, not least children themselves, have expressed through the process of the study a vision of a world that is humane and free from violence, which promotes a culture of rights and nurtures its girls as well as its boys to achieve their full potential. This vision includes girls enjoying equal rights and freedoms, respect and dignity without fear of gender-based violence.ii The vision is clear; it is now up to us and our collective actions to realise it.

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AFGHANISTAN: Children attend class at a community-based tent school in the village of Borghason in the central Bamiyan Province.
INTRODUCTION
I. INTRODUCTION

“People feel that a girl is meant to be used – either as a doormat, a maid, a birth-giving machine or as a source of physical pleasure. Something concrete seriously needs to be done to change the current scenario because now a girl does not feel safe even in her own house, let alone the streets.”

– 16-year-old girl, India

The Global Pandemic

Violence against women has been described as “one of the most universal and unpunished crimes of all.” This statement is perhaps nowhere more relevant than in reference to violence against the girl child: Across the world, the double burden of being both female and young relegates millions of girls to the margins of society where, unseen and unheard, their rights are disregarded and their safety is denied.

The implications of this invisibility are enormous. Some researchers have estimated the number of “missing” females – those who should be alive but are not because of discriminatory practices – to be between 50 million to 100 million worldwide. Of those who survive, millions more girls will be the victims of customary practices – such as female genital mutilation (FGM), early marriage and forced marriage, to name a few – that deprive them of full physical, psychological and social development.

Even if not the direct outcome of cultural traditions, girls’ particular vulnerability to many other types of violence – especially when compared with boys – nevertheless reflects social norms and behaviours that significantly undermine girls’ safety and wellbeing. Girl children across the world, for example, are up to three times more likely than boys to experience sexual abuse. Into adolescence, girls are the majority of child-sexual-exploitation victims worldwide, whether through informal prostitution and/or pornography networks, or through trafficking into the commercial sex industry. They are also more likely than their male peers to be forced or coerced into sex by their dating partners. In situations of armed conflict, girls may be the targets of sexual slavery, forced prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation.

The consequences of victimisation are as sweeping as the violence itself, not only in terms of the myriad acute and chronic health problems that accompany many types of violence to which girls are exposed, but also because victimisation in childhood increases girls’ risk of future ill-health. These risks are further exacerbated by the fact that reproductive-
health services, where they are available, do not typically address the special needs of adolescents.

Perhaps not surprisingly, violence and discriminatory practices that deprive girls of their reproductive rights, as well as the lack of health and protective services targeting girls, have put them at the centre of the HIV/AIDS pandemic: Globally, more than 60 percent of all adolescents and young adults with HIV/AIDS are female, and in some settings in sub-Saharan Africa the ratio of infected females to males between 15-24 years of age is as high as 8:1.7

**A Call to Action**

While emerging data provides some indication of the scope and gravity of violence against girls, experts agree that policies and programming are nowhere near adequate to confront the problem. Still, there are encouraging indications of a growing international commitment to addressing violence against the girl child.

Perhaps most pointedly, in late 2006 the UN Secretary-General released two groundbreaking studies: one on Violence against Children, and the other on Violence against Women. That the General Assembly called for these studies – each for the first time in the history of the UN – sends “a clear signal” from member states of their investment in promoting and protecting the right of women and children to be free from violence.8

Both studies repeatedly underscore the manifold vulnerabilities of girls and highlight those vulnerabilities as the expression of a virtually universal failure to ensure girls’ most basic rights. Their recommendations make it clear that states, collectively and individually, have a responsibility to undertake efforts to end the pandemic of violence against women and children – including girls. Taken together, the two mutually reinforcing documents represent a global call to action to secure the health and wellbeing of girls across the world by bringing an end to the violence that circumscribes their lives.

This report is an effort to respond to that call. It shines its spotlight on the girl child by briefly summarising some of the key issues highlighted in the respective studies with regard to the nature, prevalence and impact of violence against girls in the contexts of home, community, school and institutions. It also includes supplemental information from UN and other publications, as well as from key activists and rights networks.
In addition to providing background information on the scope of violence against girls, this report attempts to take the Secretary-General’s studies one step further in their promotion of the right of the girl child by presenting specific policy and programmatic recommendations related to ending violence against girls. At the heart of these recommendations is the recognition that any efforts to address girls’ needs must include strategies for girls’ participation, such that they are empowered to claim their full rights, thus becoming agents of change in their own lives and in the lives of others.

Notably, many of the recommendations presented in this report are derived from the September 2006 UN Division for the Advancement of Women’s expert group meeting on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination and Violence against the Girl Child, held in collaboration with the UNICEF Innocenti Research Center as a precursor to the 51st session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The focus of the 2007 CSW was precisely the issue of ending discrimination and violence against girls. Remarkably, in the weeks leading up to the landmark session, organisers were logging the highest number of registrants in the history of the CSW, making the message unmistakable: The time has come to ensure that the right of girls everywhere in the world are shifted from the realm of the invisible and placed, squarely and inviolably, in the realm of the indivisible.
© UNICEF, Roger LeMoyne. DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO: Girls and women carry bundles of branches and other materials to build temporary dwellings in a camp of more than 20,000 displaced people in the eastern region of Ituri. Villagers fleeing attacks by roving militias chose this site because it is near a peacekeeping base.
From Invisible to Indivisible: Promoting and Protecting the Right of the Girl Child to Be Free from Violence

Key Conceptual Aspects of the UN Secretary-General’s Studies on Violence against Children and Violence against Women
II. KEY CONCEPTUAL ASPECTS OF THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL’S STUDIES ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The Study on Violence against Children: Focus on the Rights of the Child

In 2001, the General Assembly of the UN requested the Secretary-General to undertake the first-ever comprehensive, global study on all forms of violence against children. In February 2003 an independent expert, Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, was appointed to direct the study in collaboration with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR), the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO). The findings and recommendations contained in the study are the outcome of international and regional consultations held with policy-makers, programmers and children alike, as well as from data amassed from around the world.

Informed by the standards promulgated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Violence against Children Study applies the same definition of ‘child’ as is outlined in the CRC: “every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.” The Violence against Children Study also applies the same rights-based perspective as the CRC, reinforcing the view that children should not be passive recipients of care subjectively awarded according to the discretionary beliefs and values of parents and society. Instead, children are rights holders, entitled to unqualified protection of all their human rights. States – and the adults that comprise them – are the duty bearers: They are responsible for ensuring that the human dignity and personal integrity of every child is protected and promoted in all facets and throughout all phases of a child’s development.

Drawing from the obligations outlined in the CRC, as well as from other international and regional instruments delineating states’ responsibilities towards children, the underlying principle of the Violence against Children Study is that “no violence against children is justifiable, and all violence against children is preventable.” And yet, the findings of the study make it glaringly apparent that in settings throughout the world many forms of violence against children prohibited by the CRC remain “legal, state-authorized, and socially approved.”
The Violence against Children Study also makes it clear that in the home, in the community, at school and in institutional and work settings girls are often exposed to violence simply by virtue of being girls. As such, the author’s recommendations repeatedly underscore the importance of addressing the gender dimensions of girls’ special vulnerability to violence. In fact, one of the 12 primary recommendations in the study asserts, “States should promote and respect the human rights of women and girls, and address all forms of gender discrimination as part of a comprehensive violence prevention strategy.”13

In order to detail the nature or origins of gender-based violence against girls, it is important to turn to the UN Secretary-General’s Study on Violence against Women.

**The Study on Violence against Women: Highlighting the Structural Nature of Gender-based Violence**

The Secretary-General’s Study on Violence against Women, spearheaded by the UN Division for the Advancement of Women, was commissioned by the General Assembly in 2003 and coincidentally made public the same week as the Violence against Children Study. It draws upon contributions from experts around the world, as well as from existing quantitative and qualitative research, to present an overview of the forms and prevalence of violence against women across the globe, the contexts in which violence occurs and its underlying causes. The study also highlights a number of best practices for addressing violence against women in legislation, policies and programmes, and presents key recommendations to governments for the way forward.

For the general purposes of the Study on Violence against Women, the term ‘women’ is broadly “used to cover females of all ages, including girls under the age of 18.”14 In addition to including girls in the broad references to violence against women, the study repeatedly pinpoints some of the special types of violence experienced by girls, such as FGM, early marriage, sexual exploitation, etc., and specifically identifies girls as one of the subgroups of women most prone to being targeted for violence.

At the very outset of the Study on Violence against Women, the authors acknowledge that violence against women has received increased international attention as a form of discrimination against women and as a violation of their human rights. The study contends, however, that improved awareness has not translated into success in terms of reducing the prevalence of the violence. This failure is attributed to the fact that “violence against women has yet to receive the priority attention and resources needed at all levels to tackle it with the seriousness and visibility necessary.”15
As with the Violence against Children Study, the Study on Violence against Women insists that any efforts to address violence against women – and thereby girls – must incorporate, at the most basic level, an understanding of the gendered components of the violence. The Study on Violence against Women additionally elaborates the structural and other causes that make violence against girls a gendered phenomenon – and therefore so difficult to eliminate.

A fundamental aspect of gender-based violence against women is that the violence is used in cultures around the world as a way to both preserve and maintain women’s subordinate status vis à vis men. In other words, acts of violence against women are both an expression of and a way to reinforce male domination – not just over individual women, but women as a whole class of people. The violence is “rooted in power imbalances and structural inequality between men and women.”16 In this way, the gendered dimensions of violence against women are distinct from those of violence against men: While men may certainly be exposed to violence as a result of their socially determined gender roles and norms, the violence they experience – or even perpetrate against other men – rarely if ever contributes to or confirms the overall subjugation of men as an entire subgroup of people. There are, of course, many other critically important vectors of oppression experienced by subgroups of men, such as race, class, creed and sexuality; but within the prevailing global context of patriarchy, men are the power brokers in terms of gender, and women are the subsidiaries.

The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women makes the link between gender-based oppression and violence against women clear by emphasising that violence against women is “a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to the domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women.”17 The declaration further defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.”18

Under this definition, the traditional reluctance of governments to enter into the ‘private’ spheres of home and family is challenged. Clarifying gender discrimination as a central component in the perpetration of all forms of violence against women reinforces states’ obligations to work towards the elimination of violence against women as part of their responsibilities of protecting and promoting universal human rights.
The resistance, however, is significant. Working towards the end of violence requires challenging patriarchal norms and other deeply embedded structural forms of male dominance over women. Tellingly, the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, to which 184 member states of the UN are party) contains among the highest number of reservations of any UN treaty.  

Moreover, while gender is one of the chief factors around the world in the perpetration of violence against women, it is not the only factor. Examples of additional precipitants to violence against women include class, race, poverty, ethnicity and age. Where gender discrimination intersects with these “other sites of oppression”, levels of violence are likely to be compounded.

Such is the plight of girls around the world. Doubly marginalised by virtue of being both females and children, they risk exposure to some of the world’s most pervasive and pernicious forms of discrimination and violence, whether in the home, in the community, at school, at work or even in protective-care institutions.

Although programming specifically targeting girls is vastly insufficient to address their rights and needs, there are initiatives around the world that offer good models for the future. What follows is a review of the some of the key forms of violence to which girls are exposed, some of the key issues that must be addressed in order to prevent this violence and promote the recovery of the millions of girls around the world who have already been victimised and, where available, some of the policy and programming efforts undertaken with and for girls in countries across the globe. Taken together, these examples illustrate that knowledge and political will can be harnessed to make a difference.

An international consensus exists on the critical importance of addressing the protection and promotion of the right of the girl child. This international consensus, forged with the participation of governments and international organisations, including the UN, civil society and other stakeholders, provides the frameworks and accountability mechanisms for eliminating discrimination and violence against girls and addressing their exclusion from entitlements, rights and equal opportunities.
The consensus is reflected in a body of international legal instruments, including:

- the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** (CRC) and its two optional protocols on *The Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict* and *The Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography*;

- the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women** (CEDAW) and its optional protocol;

- the **Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children** of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime;

- the **International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families**;

- and the **International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions 138 on Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and 182 on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor**.

The Consensus on the Right of the Girl Child is also reflected in policy outcomes of intergovernmental processes and their follow-up, such as:

- the **Beijing Platform for Action** (1995) and the outcome of the 23rd Special Session of the UN General Assembly (2000);

- the **International Conference on Population and Development** (1994);

- the **World Summit for Children** (1990);

- the **Millennium Declaration** (2000) leading to the **Millennium Development Goals** and the 2005 **World Summit**;

- as well as in **Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security** and **Resolutions 1261, 1314, 1379, 1539 and 1612 on Children and Armed Conflict**.

PHILIPPINES: Melay (name changed, right), 12, plays a game of checkers with a fellow resident at a girls’ shelter in Quezon City near Manila, the capital. Melay was raped at age seven by her older brother and his friend at their home on Mindoro Island. Last year, after repeated beatings by her father, she ran away to Manila, the capital. Eventually she was approached by a social worker from a local NGO, which found a place for her at the shelter.
VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS IN THE HOME
III. VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS IN THE HOME

According to the Violence against Children Study, families “hold the greatest potential for protecting children from all forms of violence.” For countless girls, this potential has been far from realised: In many instances and in relation to many forms of violence, the family is the site of violence, and its members the perpetrators.

SON PREFERENCE

“I am the one who does all the housework … I do the cooking and take care of the household items. [My brother] just eats and goes out to play.”

10-year-old Ethiopian girl who cares for her HIV-positive mother

Nature and Scope

In various cultures around the world, a son represents a boon to his family, whereas a girl is perceived as an affliction. This preference for sons takes many forms, but at its most extreme can result in practices such as sex-selective abortion of female foetuses and female infanticide which, in some parts of South Asia, West Asia and China, have significantly altered natural female-to-male birth ratios.

In other cases, son preference is demonstrated in terms of gross neglect of girls, with sometimes fatal results: According to UNICEF, gender-discriminatory practices lead to more than a million deaths of female babies each year. Sometimes girl-child mortality is the outcome of discrimination against mothers. In settings where mothers do not receive adequate care and nutrition, their children, and especially their girl children, are at increased risk: In South Asia, a girl is 400 times more likely to die if her mother dies.

The most common manifestation of son preference, however, involves favouring the social, intellectual and physical development of a boy child over that of a girl child. Examples include requiring a daughter to quit school in order to take care of household chores, or preventing her from engaging in games and other activities with her peers so she can stay home and supervise younger siblings.

Whatever her responsibilities, the results are similar: A boy is nurtured so that as an adult he can be a productive member of society as well as an asset to his parents, but a girl is seen as a domestic labourer, first in her childhood home, and later in her marital home. And because home is the place where gender roles are initially modelled and very often
solidified, a girl who is reduced to the level of servant is more likely as a mother to impose the same fate on her daughter, contributing to a trans-generational cycle of gender-based discrimination.

**Taking Action against Son Preference**

Several key recommendations for addressing son preference include ensuring that all expectant mothers have adequate nutrition, as well as adequate ante- and neo-natal care, and that births (and deaths) of all children are immediately registered. Other recommendations include targeting families where young girls are at greatest risk and placing material resources for the care of girl children directly into the hands of mothers and grandmothers. Revising legislation and national policies to improve protection for girls is another essential strategy for promoting a shift in gender-discriminatory practices.

However, these strategies are not sufficient in themselves. In China, for example, legislation to prevent sex-selective abortion of female foetuses may have contributed to an increase in underground abortion services. Material resources targeted at girls, even when placed into the hands of women in the family, may be diverted if biases against girls are not addressed at the broadest and deepest levels of society. Any lasting efforts to eliminate discrimination against girl children will require widespread efforts aimed at confronting traditional beliefs and norms that value boys over girls.

**CHILD FATALITY REVIEW TEAMS**

In the United States, the Los Angeles County Interagency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (ICAN) started a Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT) in Los Angeles in 1978. Members included coroners, police, courts, social services, health and public-health workers. ICAN became the National Center for Fatality Review, and other teams followed, some adding teachers, mental-health workers and, occasionally, community members. The teams meet to discuss cases of child deaths where medical evidence is inconclusive, with the goal of pooling together different types of evidence in order to solve a case. By 2001, an estimated 1,000 teams existed in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States. International networking has also begun connecting ICAN with programmes in China, Iceland, Estonia, Iran, Japan, Jordan, Lebanon, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. This model can be effective in addressing son
preference to the extent that it allows for more aggressive monitoring of child deaths and for the identification of trends that may indicate particular risks for girl children.\textsuperscript{28}

\section*{INDIA’S INTEGRATED CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES}

Comprehensive support for the poorest families has had a positive, and in some cases unintended, effect on nourishment and health of young girls. India’s Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), the world’s largest integrated early-childhood programme, focuses on millions of expectant and nursing mothers and children under the age of six. The programme provides a package of services including supplementary nutrition, preschool education, immunisation, health checkups, referral services and nutrition and health education. There is emerging evidence of its positive impact on the nutritional status of children who benefit from the programme.\textsuperscript{29}

\section*{FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION}

“[My relatives] asked us to go around for sweets and eggs. When we arrived, three women caught me, bundled me into the toilet, pinned me down and undressed me … I saw the knife and knew what was going to happen. I cried out, but I couldn’t find the words to speak.”

Young girl from Burkina Faso who underwent FGM\textsuperscript{30}

\textbf{Nature and Scope}

As a primary institution for promoting and maintaining cultural practices, families may allow and even promote acts of violence against the girl child in the name of custom. Female genital mutilation, which involves the medically unwarranted excision of all or part of the external female genitalia, is primarily practiced in Africa, most prevalently in Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mali, Sierra Leone, Somalia and northern Sudan.\textsuperscript{31} Females typically undergo the practice between the ages of four and 14.\textsuperscript{32}

Examples of the immediate and long-term physical effects of FGM range from severe pain, shock and haemorrhaging to urinary tract infections, obstructed menses, infertility and obstructed labour. Although data is limited, FGM may also contribute to the risk of
HIV/AIDS among those who have been cut, in part because of the unsanitary instruments often used on initiates, and also because the scarred or dry vulva of an excised woman is more likely to be torn during intercourse, facilitating transmission from an infected partner.33

These risks, however, have historically not been sufficient to halt the practice in many settings where social norms are used to dictate women’s sexuality. Social control may not be the only argument used in the perpetuation of FGM, but it is among the most significant. One female circumciser in Kenya, for example, explained, “When you leave a girl uncut, she sleeps with any man in the community.”34 In many settings, FGM increases a girl’s prospects for marriage and may, in fact, be a prerequisite. In some traditional Islamic cultures, and despite the increasing number of imams who are speaking out against the practice, FGM may be considered by men and women alike to be ‘sunnah’, or required practice.35

Across the wide range of cultural, ethnic and religious groups that perform FGM, a shared trait in the perpetuation of the practice is the conditioning of families to accept and defend it. Various myths, such as the one insisting that FGM promotes cleanliness and good health, are used to stigmatise girls who have not been cut. Against this backdrop of social pressure, FGM continues to thrive, even in many settings where governments have outlawed it.

**Taking Action against FGM**

Progress has been made in criminalising FGM in national legislation in at least 14 of the 28 countries in which it is practiced.36 While laws preventing FGM are fundamental to its eradication, one leading expert in the global fight against FGM insists, “Social change will not be attained through legal or punitive action alone.”37 Women living in cultures where FGM is normative most often endorse educational campaigns as one of the best ways to abolish the practice. However, research has suggested that messages focusing on the negative health outcomes of FGM tend to result in adoption of lesser forms of cutting rather than eradication of FGM altogether.38 The most effective strategies are the result of indigenous movements that advocate for the overall wellbeing of women and girls and target all members of the community, from young girls to circumcisers to male community and religious leaders.39
SOMALIA

A community-empowerment model for abandoning female genital mutilation/cutting was carried out by the nongovernmental organisation TOSTAN in Somalia. As a result of an exposure and sensitisation visit to three areas of Somalia, local partners and civil society members expressed strong support for and interest in this approach to the abandonment of FGM. Through this process, participants declare their intention to abandon the practice in their families and communities. TOSTAN’s community-empowerment model for abandoning FGM guides intermarrying communities through a three-year process of human rights awareness, encouraging dialogue on harmful gender-based social conventions. The process is designed to respect and contextualise such cultural practices, focusing away from individual practice and toward societal norms. As a result of this process, intermarrying communities are able to publicly declare their intent to abandon FGM as an empowered society.

EARLY MARRIAGE

“Every girl child in some corner cries in silence because of marriage in early ages. You may not be among those who cry for freedom, those who wish to study further but are forced to marry an old ugly man for money. But I have seen and faced early marriage, and I understand how horrible it is.”

Young Sri Lankan girl

Nature and Scope

Early marriage is defined by the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices as “any marriage carried out below the age of 18 years, before the girl is physically, physiologically, and psychologically ready to shoulder the responsibilities of marriage and childbearing.” This practice is most prevalent in developing countries. In South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, for example, it has been estimated that on average one in every three girls between the ages of 15 and 19 is already married, and in specific countries the percentages are much higher. Only 5 percent of boys from the same regions are likely to be married before the age of 19.

As with the practice of FGM, the desire to control women’s sexuality may be one of the most significant reasons families choose to marry their daughters off at a young age. The
practice may be promoted, for example, as a way of reducing a girl’s risk of engaging in premarital sex, or as way of maximising her reproductive lifespan. It may also be an outcome of poverty: Impoverished parents may feel compelled to marry off their daughters early if they believe that a husband can better provide for her. In still other instances, economic gain is a driving force for families to marry off their young daughters. Amongst some African communities, a girl’s parents can obtain a higher bride price for a daughter who is a virgin, and therefore perceived to be free from HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. In Asian settings where dowry practices predominate, parents of a girl who is married off young may be able to pay less to the groom’s family because younger girls are considered more desirable than their older counterparts.

Whatever the material or other benefits to the family, the consequences of child marriage can be deadly for a girl. Complications from early pregnancy, for example, are a leading cause of death for 15- to 19-year-old girls worldwide. If not fatal, early childbearing significantly increases girls’ risk for injuries, infections and disabilities, including obstetric fistula. Early childbearing can also pose risks to the girl’s child: A baby’s chance of dying in its first year of life is 60 percent higher if its mother is under, rather than over, the age of 18.

Because of biological factors, young wives are also more physically vulnerable than mature women to contracting sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, from an infected partner – a danger compounded by the fact that girls are even less likely than are older women to be able to negotiate safe sex with their partners. Child marriage is thus an HIV-risk factor for girls: In a study undertaken among 13- to 19-year-old girls in Uganda, for example, married girls were twice as likely to be HIV-positive than girls who were unmarried.

**Taking Action against Early Marriage**

The International Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls has emphasised that efforts to address early marriage must be significantly scaled up in regions where the practice is most prevalent. They recommend that early marriage be banned in all countries, such that the minimum age of legal marriage is 18 for both girls and boys. The ban should be implemented by ensuring, among other strategies, that customary and statutory laws are aligned in their criminalisation of early-marriage practices. They also advocate for widespread community education about the negative impact of early marriage for girls, as well as behaviour change targeted at community and religious leaders. The forum’s
recommendations further highlight the importance of empowerment programmes that ensure young girls have the opportunity to complete their secondary education and that support them in understanding and realising the full spectrum of their rights to mental, physical and social wellbeing.\footnote{47}

**BANGLADESH**

A three-year Pathfinder model project entitled Raising the Age of Marriage for Young Girls in Bangladesh was successful in addressing early marriage and the issues surrounding it. As poverty is often a major factor in parents deciding to arrange an early marriage, the programme provided stipends to girls transitioning from primary to secondary school, which raised overall school enrolment. Advocacy meetings were held to inform girls about the benefits of education and delaying marriage and the dangers of early pregnancy. Three classes of 20 girls were also trained as paramedics, which provided them with a good salary, marketable skills and, as many of them returned to their remote villages, also provided much-needed healthcare in these areas.\footnote{48}

**ETHIOPIA**

Primary schools are the one location in Ethiopia where girls and boys who may be vulnerable to forced early marriage are brought together. The creation of Girl’s Advisory Committees (GACs) is an innovation in Ethiopian primary schools aimed at preventing child marriage and other forms of gender discrimination. GACs are school committees linked to the parent-teacher association and include male and female teachers, a community member and a female teacher as an advisor. The student members act as links between the community and the school, reporting on upcoming child marriages, abduction, teasing, harassment and extended absence of girls from school. When an impending marriage is announced, the GAC visits the parents to attempt to dissuade them. If the parents refuse to listen, they are invited to school, where the teachers encourage them to cancel the marriage, explaining that it is illegal. Mothers are reported to have said they were glad their daughters were not forced into
marriage as they were, but that they would have been unable to protest without the support of the school.49

INTIMATE-PARTNER VIOLENCE

“I ran to my friend and then they came and pulled her to the ground. They gagged my friend so she couldn’t scream. Two of them held her and the other three dragged me away. They took me to a house at sunset and after three hours they took me a long distance. When I tried to sit, they beat me … after a week I lost my virginity.”

13-year-old Ethiopian victim of ‘abduction marriage’50

Nature and Scope

Intimate-partner violence is defined within the Study on Violence against Women as “a range of sexually, psychologically and physically coercive acts used against adult and adolescent women by a current or former intimate partner, without her consent.”51 Sometimes referred to as domestic violence, it is one of the most pervasive types of violence against women and girls worldwide, and one of the greatest contributors to female morbidity and mortality.

One important risk factor for intimate-partner violence may be the young age of the wife: Research suggests that girls who are married early are at greater risk of violence than those who marry late, especially when the age discrepancy between the girl and her husband is significant.52 Girls who are forced into marriage – exemplified to the extreme in ‘abduction marriages’ customary in certain parts of Africa, Eastern Europe and Asia – also typically suffer the added trauma of forced sexual initiation.

Girls are also more likely to be socially isolated by virtue of their age and lack of independent resources, and therefore less likely to be able to seek assistance for domestic violence. Girls may additionally be more likely to accept the abuse by their partner as part of the power differential in their marriage: In studies from Benin, India and Turkey, for example, 62 percent to 67 percent of young wives believed that their husbands were justified in using physical violence, as compared with 36 percent to 47 percent of older wives.53

All too often, children living in violent households must endure the consequences as well. Partner abuse has been shown to increase the risk of infant and early-child mortality, and it can further contribute to a host of emotional and behavioural problems, such as bed-
wetting, nightmares and excessively aggressive behaviour or timidity, for children who witness violence between their parents.54

Where violence against partners exists in a household, the risk for violence directly targeted at the children may be higher. Research conducted in the United States, for example, has identified intimate-partner violence as the most significant antecedent to child-maltreatment fatalities.55

**Taking Action against Intimate-Partner Violence**

Services for victims of intimate-partner violence have expanded considerably in the last 20 years, particularly in Western industrialised settings. The lessons of these efforts illustrate the importance of engaging the health, legal-justice and social-welfare systems to monitor and respond to incidents in a coordinated and collaborative way. In some countries, services include hotlines, safe houses and community centres. National legislation is also increasing, although resistance to criminalising domestic violence is still strong in many countries in Africa and Asia, where intimate-partner violence is considered to be a private rather than a public concern. Moreover, while model ‘male involvement’ programmes have been initiated in many countries, their impact is still minimal.

Most notably, there are few programmes that target adolescent girls. There is also limited programming focusing on behaviour change among teenage boys. Specific efforts must include educating boys about norms that support non-violence and equal participation in relationships, as well as providing girls who are in early marriages with opportunities to continue to develop their skills, autonomy and identities.

**INDIA**

In an example of building girls’ social assets, the Deepak Charitable Trust in Gujarat and the Child In Need Institute in West Bengal have organised groups of married girls as a key component of the First Time Parents Project. Groups address social vulnerabilities and isolation of married adolescent girls/first-time mothers. The vast majority of these girls had never met their husbands before they were married, and few had friends in their new homes. Less than 2 percent were members of a group or club. Participation in the groups increased married girls’ contact with peers and mentors, exposed them to new
ideas and helped them engage in participatory learning approaches covering subjects such as legal literacy, vocational skills, pregnancy and postpartum care, government schemes available to women, public amenities, gender dynamics within and outside of the family, relationship issues and nutrition. The project has been able to mobilise more than 750 girls to work together on development projects, celebrate common festivals and organise welcome ceremonies for newly married members.\textsuperscript{56}

**EGYPT**

In Egypt, nongovernmental organisations that have been supported by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Youth and the Ministry of Social Affairs have implemented the New Visions educational programme, which has reached 17,000 young men and boys to educate them about healthy relationships and non-violence. Among boys who have graduated from the programme, 26 percent now feel it is acceptable for a husband to hit his wife, a decline of about half.\textsuperscript{57}

**INCEST**

"After my mother died, I went to my mother’s mother. In 2001, she died, so I stopped going to school… Then we went to my auntie … Most girls find that they start keeping up [having sex] with stepfathers or uncles. Most are raped – they have no say."

16-year-old Zambian girl orphaned by AIDS\textsuperscript{58}

**Nature and Scope**

Incest refers to any sexual activity between a child and a closely related family member. Although most cultures around the world have legal and social sanctions prohibiting incest, the problem is nevertheless widespread. It is also gender-biased: WHO estimates that of 150 million girls and 73 million boys worldwide who have experienced forced sexual intercourse, up to 56 percent of girl victims were abused by family members, compared with up to 25 percent of boy victims.\textsuperscript{59}
Young girls may be at greatest risk. The peak age of vulnerability to child sexual abuse – whether within the family or committed by someone outside the family – is estimated to be between seven and 13 years of age. Cross-culturally, evidence suggests that from 40 percent to 60 percent of sexual abuse in families involves girls under the age of 15.

Of the various forms of child sexual abuse, studies indicate that parental incest is among the most devastating for children. The abuse can have a host of negative repercussions, including reproductive-health problems, depression, suicidal tendencies, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, sexual dysfunction and substance abuse. The negative impacts may continue long after the abuse stops: Girls who are sexually violated have a higher risk than non-abused girls for engaging in sexual risk-taking later in life and are also significantly more likely to become pregnant before the age of 18.

HIV is linked with child sexual abuse in a variety of ways. Fathers, stepfathers and other male relatives may target the girls in their family for sexual violence because they feel confident of their virginity and therefore believe they are free of HIV/AIDS. In sub-Saharan Africa, where a disproportionate number of the world’s children have been orphaned by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, girls who have lost the protection of their primary caregivers may be at higher risk of being exploited and abused when relocated to relatives’ homes. At the same time, situations of abuse are likely to make it virtually impossible for girls to negotiate condom use, putting them at high risk of becoming infected by an HIV-positive abuser.

**Taking Action against Incest**

The fact that girls are at significantly greater risk than boys of incest and other forms of child sexual abuse illustrates the likelihood that many abusers are acting out socially accepted gender norms related to male dominance and violence against women. These norms not only make girls more prone to sexual abuse, but they may also contribute to girls’ reluctance to speak out about the violence. While conviction rates for sexual assault are low the world over – at about 6 percent in the United States when factoring in estimates of unreported rapes – they are likely to be even lower for children because of decreased levels of reporting as well as the challenges of evidentiary substantiation, especially in cases where a victimisation may not become known until it is too late to collect forensic evidence.

Any efforts to address incest and other forms of child sexual abuse must include building the capacity of law enforcement and the judiciary, as well as social services, to promptly and
efficiently deal with suspected or confirmed cases. Just as importantly in relation to long-term prevention, governments must make a serious effort to understand the motivation behind the behaviour of abusers and put in place appropriate prevention programmes. Many children’s activists, concerned about how long these efforts might take, have scaled up public education in an effort to raise awareness among children, families and communities about the underlying causes of child sexual abuse and have also instituted parental-monitoring programmes, life-skills workshops for adolescents and support groups for high-risk children.

ARMENIA

Reports from a UNICEF Child Protection Project in Armenia revealed that more cases of child abuse and neglect are now reported and referred to the Gyumri-based centre where UNICEF supported training seminars of more than 300 local authorities, teachers, health professionals, psychologists and students of pedagogical university. The seminars focused on prevention of child abuse and neglect, early identification of abuse cases and support to child victims of violence.

CRIMES OF SO-CALLED ‘HONOUR’

“My brother’s eyes forever follow me. My father’s gaze guards me all the time, stern, angry …We stand accused and condemned to be declared kari and murdered.”

Poetic rendering of the experience of a young Pakistani girl

Nature and Scope

‘Honour’ crimes are those committed against girls and women who are perceived to have contravened accepted social norms of behaviour and have therefore brought shame to their families. In many instances, proof of whether a female family member behaved ‘inappropriately’ is considered unnecessary in exacting punishment; even unsubstantiated rumours can justify extreme punitive measures. While families may argue that they are acting according to religious and other principles, many experts maintain that honour crimes serve as a way to reinforce patriarchal social structures and norms. In the words of one expert, “What masquerades as honour is really men’s need to control women’s sexuality and freedom.” In one telling example, a Turkish girl was killed by her father for reporting
to authorities that she had been raped and then refusing her father’s demands that she marry the rapist.68

Although the majority of honour crimes are concentrated in Muslim and some Mediterranean cultures, incidents have been documented in countries as far ranging as Bangladesh, Turkey, Jordan, Israel, India, Italy, Pakistan, Brazil, Ecuador, Uganda, Morocco, Egypt, Lebanon, Afghanistan and Iraq.69 The Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women has noted that honour killing “is on the rise as the perception of what constitutes honour and what damages it widens.”70

The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) places the number of girls and women killed by family members in the name of honour at 5,000 per year.71 Most often the perpetrators of honour crimes are male family members, but they frequently act with the explicit or tacit approval of female family members, the community and, in some instances, the government. In addition to constraining female behaviour, honour killings may be exacted in order to disguise the culpability of a male family member in crimes of rape, incest or adultery, or for economic gain, such as inheritance. In most instances, honour killings are never investigated by the police, and only a handful of the perpetrators who are arrested receive punishment commensurate to the crime.

**Taking Action against Honour Crimes**

There are differing opinions about the best ways to address the problem of honour crimes. Some argue that any local efforts must be supported by the international community, while others express concern that international involvement, such as media coverage by the international press – particularly ‘Western’ press – may generate a backlash that undermines the efforts of local activists, especially those working in traditional Islamic cultures.72 Most agree, however, that eradication strategies must support the implementation of protective laws. There is also consensus that efforts must be made to provide targeted services to girls and women who may be at risk, especially in terms of access to safe havens.

In some settings, potential victims are forced to enter prisons or other custodial facilities, where they may be held indefinitely while those threatening them remain free.73 Even where shelters exist, there is often little they can provide in terms of concrete assistance because of the limited rights and opportunities afforded to women by their families and/or the prevailing culture. Efforts therefore must be vastly but incrementally increased to promote shifts in community perceptions about gender roles, rights and responsibilities.
According to one expert, “Honour killings will only be eradicated when power over women is not seen as central to a man’s self-respect, and domination of women and girls is not seen as reassuring social glue.”

**JORDAN**

A grassroots campaign against honour killing in Jordan gathered some 15,000 signatures on a petition to repeal an article in the penal code that pardons honour crimes that are the result of a wife committing adultery. In 2001, a temporary amendment was passed precluding exoneration based on adultery, although it retained adultery as a mitigating circumstance. Efforts are ongoing to abolish aspects of the penal code that give exemptions and reduced sentences to those who kill in the name of honour.
KENYA: A girl writes in a notebook, while another child reads at Children’s Centre, an orphanage and school in a slum area of Nairobi. The centre relies on community support and private contributions to provide basic necessities for the children, many of whom have lost parents to AIDS.
VIOLANCE AGAINST GIRLS IN SCHOOLS
IV. VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS IN SCHOOLS

Although significant progress has been made in recent years to improve the number of girls enrolled in schools worldwide, boys remain much more likely to receive an education than girls, especially beyond the primary level. According to the Violence against Children Study, “of the 86 developing countries for which data are available, 50 percent have achieved gender parity (where a girl’s chances of going to school are equal to a boy’s) in primary education, but only 20 percent have achieved gender parity in secondary education, and 5 percent in tertiary education.”

The Violence against Children Study goes on to clarify the issue of girls’ poor school attendance: “almost all violence in schools reflects a ‘hidden curriculum’ that promotes gender inequality and stereotyping … These stereotypes often make schools unsafe and uncomfortable for girls and are prominent among the reasons why, in some countries girls, particularly during adolescence, are less likely to attend school than adolescent boys.”

Girls’ unequal participation in school is therefore not only an outcome of discriminatory practices such as early marriage and preferential treatment of boys (as in cases of prioritising payment of school fees for boys or failing to provide adequate school sanitation facilities for girls); it may also be directly linked to violence against them. Although the very purpose of schools is to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children, the reality for many girls is that schools represent a security threat that is considered better to be avoided by some parents, especially when girls are transitioning from childhood into adolescence.

BULLYING, SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND SEXUAL ASSAULT IN SCHOOLS

“All the principle told him was: ‘Stop – if you’re beating a girl already you’ll grow up to beat your wife.’ He didn’t get detention. Nothing. I don’t report anything anymore. I feel it’s unnecessary. I’m just wasting my time.”

14-year-old South African girl

Nature and Scope

In regional consultations held for the Violence against Children Study, violence against girls in schools was repeatedly highlighted as a significant concern. One of the common forms of school-based violence is bullying, which when committed by boys against girls often serves as an opportunity for boys to exhibit their ‘masculinity’, or to target a victims’ sex or sexuality. As such, bullying may include sexual harassment and can escalate to physical or sexual assault. An investigation conducted in the United Kingdom with children
from ages 10 to 11 and 14 to 15 found that harassment of girls by boys in secondary schools commonly includes sexualised name-calling, looking up their skirts and grabbing or fondling them.\textsuperscript{80}

While data on girls’ exposure to sexual violence in schools is still limited, existing evidence paints a grim picture: In research undertaken in public schools in the United States, for example, 83 percent of girls surveyed in grades 8 through 11 reported exposure to some form of harassment.\textsuperscript{81} In many instances, the perpetrators are exactly those who are entrusted with girls’ care and protection. Among girls surveyed in Botswana, 20 percent reported being propositioned for sex by a male teacher.\textsuperscript{82} Studies from Ghana, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Pakistan similarly indicate that teachers as well as male students expose girls to sexually explicit language and/or sexual propositions.\textsuperscript{83} And the threat to girls is not only limited to the school grounds: Research from Peru found that a girl’s risk of sexual violence increases in relation to the distance she must travel to get to school.\textsuperscript{84}

School curricula and other teaching materials may serve to reinforce some of the traditional notions regarding sex roles and sexuality that underpin violence against girls. This situation is exacerbated in school settings where there are few female teachers, especially in positions of authority. In many developing countries around the world, male teachers far outnumber female teachers. In 16 countries surveyed in sub-Saharan Africa, for example, 30 percent or less of all teaching posts were held by women, and the percentage became even lower in rural and/or remote areas.\textsuperscript{85} Such male-dominated contexts “make it very difficult for girls to assert themselves and to challenge male power.”\textsuperscript{86}

As such, girl students are likely to be exposed to violence both because of and as a method for reinforcing their lower status in relation to boys and to their male teachers. With regard to the former, boys can often bully, harass and even assault girls with relative impunity because girls have little recourse to protection in male-dominated school settings. With regard to the latter, boys may target girls who breach traditional norms of female subservience, such as those who are student leaders and/or are performing well in school, in order to ‘put them in their place’.

**Taking Action against Bullying, Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault in Schools**

In the last 20 years, increasing attention and resources have been directed at encouraging girls to enrol and (to a lesser extent) remain in school, but school enrolment is not
synonymous with empowerment. In the Caribbean, for example, where girls are nearly universally enrolled in school at the primary level – exceeding enrolment rates for boys – nearly half the 10- to 18-year-old girls participating in a population-based survey reported that their first sexual experience was “forced” or “somewhat forced.” If girls are to be free of gender-based bullying and violence, significantly more attention must be directed to improving the quality and content of education in terms of promoting human rights and eradicating gender stereotypes that underlie much violence against girls.

In addition, gender parity should not only be sought for students, but should also exist in terms of the ratio of female-to-male teachers and school administrators. However, while employing female teachers is generally regarded as an important strategy in facilitating a protective school environment for girls, in itself it may not be enough: Where gender-discriminatory practices promote violence against girl students, female teachers are also at risk, and as a result may themselves feel disempowered to prevent violence against girls or provide girls necessary support in addressing the violence. Teachers and others in positions of authority should therefore be required to participate in gender-sensitivity training and should also be educated about the special challenges facing girl students.

Empowerment of girls may be additionally supported through youth clubs and peer-education programmes that provide them information and education on rights, health and self-esteem, as well as opportunities for sport, art and other recreation. Special efforts must be made to target the most vulnerable girls for inclusion in these youth programmes, as evidence suggests that the proportion of girls participating in typical student programmes is low, especially for those girls who are most disadvantaged.

It is also critical that schools take an assertive and pragmatic approach to enhancing school security. Girls should not be required to be alone with male teachers; lighting in and around the school should be sufficient; girls should not be forced to walk long distances to school; and, most importantly, girls should have designated school staff they can approach if they feel at risk. For those girls who do experience abuse, the school must be equipped to provide immediate support and also have linkages with referral networks in the wider community.
NEPAL

In Surkhet, Nepal, Save the Children has supported girls by educating men and boys about making schools and communities safer. Boys and male adults (including education officials and village leaders) were unaware that girls perceived ‘innocent teasing’ as sexual harassment and discrimination until the girls mapped the places they felt unsafe. By examining and discussing the maps, males were able to recognise the places where girls were regularly subject to such teasing. In addition, girls have developed networks throughout the villages and the district with links to girls in other villages, to local police, to teachers’ and women’s groups and to the district child-welfare committee.89

SOUTH AFRICA

Two projects from South Africa focus on how teachers can make a difference. Part of a training programme at the School of Public Health at the Western Cape asks primary school teachers to evaluate their own attitudes towards gender-based violence and reflect on the implicit messages conveyed through their words and actions. Understanding the dynamics of gender-based violence in schools enables these teachers to incorporate activities to combat the problem into their daily routines. A manual “Opening Our Eyes: Addressing Gender-based Violence in South African Schools” was created for teachers and school administrators as a tool for professional development and a starting point from which to develop whole-school approaches and policies. The manual makes the very important link between gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS and also provides some very concrete strategies for creating safer schools.90
Liberia: Marie (name changed), 14, looks out the window of an interim care centre near Monrovia. Marie was separated from her mother almost a year ago during an attack on her village in north-eastern Liberia. In the resulting confusion, she and four other girls joined one of the fighting groups, where they underwent military training and were issued weapons. After leaving this centre, she hopes to finish school and become a doctor.
VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS IN THE COMMUNITY
V. VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS IN THE COMMUNITY

Communities not only constitute physical space, but also a social environment – one that intersects with, informs and reinforces gender attitudes within families. As children emerge from their families to engage more actively in their communities, their risk of certain forms of violence may increase. For girls, the risks of community-based violence are often related to exposure to sexual violence, particularly throughout puberty. Unfortunately, in many traditional societies the threat of community-based sexual violence against girls can result in efforts by family members to limit girls’ engagement in social life, in turn increasing girls’ risk for withdrawal from school, domestic labour, early marriage and other forms of violence. Such is the double bind of many early-adolescent girls around the world who are at the critical juncture of entering community life.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE COMMUNITY

“In the street they harass girls; the drunk guys say things … abuse them sexually … violate them.”

Latino child commenting on the relationship of ‘machismo’ to violence against girls

Nature and Scope

Accurate statistics on the prevalence of sexual violence are among the most difficult of all violence data to collect, not only because of underreporting due to the shame and stigma associated with sexual victimisation, but also because conventional notions about male and female sexuality reflect and reinforce the status quo of male dominance, making it acceptable in many settings for sexual interaction between males and females to involve some degree of force. Conventional notions about rape, by contrast, are that it is a rare event – most often committed by strangers and typically involving physical brutality. In reality, according to one expert, “rape appears in many guises.”

Given vulnerabilities associated with their age, physicality and lack of negotiating power, it is likely that adolescent girls are among the highest of all risk groups for sexual violence perpetrated against them by members of their community. However, for many girls around the world, sexual aggression by boys and men is normative, and therefore not perceived by girls (or boys) as criminal unless it crosses the bounds into more conformist definitions of rape. Notably, 11 percent of adolescents responding to a survey conducted in South Africa reported being raped, but a further 72 percent reported being subjected to forced sex,
confirming the reflection of one South African teenager: “Forced sex is the norm. It is the way people interact sexually.”

Research corroborates such norms. Average estimates of coerced first sex among adolescent girls around the world range from 10 percent to 30 percent, but in some settings, such as Korea, Cameroon and Peru, the number is closer to 40 percent. Research from the Caribbean suggests that forced first intercourse there is as high as 48 percent. The majority of high school males participating in a study undertaken in the United States agreed that it would be acceptable for a man to force a woman to have sex if she ‘led him on’, changed her mind or sexually aroused him. In Kenya, adolescent boys admitted to drugging and gagging girls to obtain sex, explaining, “We seduce them at first, but if they remain adamant, we force them.”

Importantly, younger adolescent girls appear to be most at risk, as the likelihood of sexual initiation being coerced or forced decreases as girls get older. Multi-country research conducted by WHO found that women who reported (retrospectively) that their first sexual experience was before the age of 15 were more likely to have been forced or coerced than those who reported initiation before the age of 17 years. Those who reported sexual initiation after 17 years of age were the least likely of all women surveyed to report that it was forced.

Considering the normative element of violence in sexual relations reported by many girls across the world, it is not surprising that adolescent girls and young women are at the epicentre of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and in some regions of the world constitute the fastest growing population of newly infected. However, establishing the links between sexual violence and risks and/or rates of HIV transmission is a relatively new field, with many attendant research and programming challenges. In addition to HIV, sexual violence can result in many other negative health outcomes that are difficult to directly trace to the incident(s), such as gastrointestinal problems, headaches, chronic fatigue, sleep disturbances, eating disorders, substance abuse, suicidal tendencies and self-harm, depression, anxiety and difficulties in sexual and interpersonal relationships. As long as sexual violence carries for the victim stigma, shame and self-blame, it is likely that many girls and women will never seek out or receive the care they need to manage and overcome their victimisation.

**Taking Action against Sexual Violence in the Community**

While it is important to address the issue of stranger rape, research suggests that it is even more of a priority in terms of protecting girls to address exposure to sexual violence
in circumstances of known perpetrators. In addition to the provision of a range of compassionate services for those who have been victimised, such as immediate healthcare, social support and legal aid, efforts need to be aimed at prevention. This would minimally entail improving girls’ access to reproductive-health information and services – which are often not targeted to adolescents, particularly young adolescents – as well as educating both girls and boys about human rights.

In many cultures around the world, boys and girls have been socialised to believe that males should have primary control over sexual decision-making, including condom use as well as the nature and timing of sex. The result for girls is that they are at risk in sexual interactions of ignoring their own rights and needs and acquiescing to male expressions of power and control. However, as one women’s rights activist has noted, “just because a woman doesn’t call it rape, doesn’t mean she doesn’t feel violated.” At the heart of addressing forced and coerced sex is establishing new boundaries for sexual relations between girls and boys that are based on mutual respect and mutual agreement.

**SOUTH AFRICA**

In South Africa, UNICEF supports the Thuthuzela model centres for victims of sexual violence and works with the National Prosecuting Authority and other partners to make the centres child-friendly. The aim of these centres is to provide children and women with better, integrated, humane treatment by reducing the risk of subsequent victimisation, improving the conviction rates for sex crimes and lessening trauma for the survivor. HIV counselling, testing and treatment are provided within six to 72 hours of exposure and compliance to anti-retroviral treatment is monitored and support provided. Sixty traditional leaders were also trained to develop and implement strategies to prevent and respond to sexual abuse of women and children, and 1,800 multidisciplinary service providers have been trained in prevention, response and support. The service providers include health workers, medical doctors, prosecutors, magistrates, police officials, teachers and community volunteers. Seventy-five social workers have also been trained on trauma counselling, psychosocial support, medical examination and referral, and 26 volunteers have received training in telephone-counselling services.
UNITED STATES

The Safe Dates Project in the United States was a successful school-based initiative that aimed to change attitudes on dating violence within both the school and the community. This intervention took a holistic approach, engaging adolescent boys and girls in sessions on the role of gender norms in the positive formation of intimate relationships. It included training of teachers, community members and parent groups in a 10-week curriculum covering healthy and unhealthy relationships, gender roles, sexual assault and communications development to prevent dating violence. After four years, significantly less dating and sexual violence perpetration and victimisation was evident for the adolescents in the intervention group.101

CHILD PROSTITUTION, PORNOGRAPHY AND TRAFFICKING

“Some relatives come from the cities to the village and take these girls to town promising to help them learn a trade but end up introducing them into prostitution, forced labour and other illegal activities. This usually happens to girls who come from a poor family background … Female relatives who are accomplices promise their parents that they will sponsor them in school or a trade, only to end up introducing the child into prostitution. Since the girls might not have the transport or means to return to the village, they have no choice than to give in.”

Violet, 15, and Martha, 16, Cameroon102

Nature and Scope

The combined effects of globalisation, internationalisation and free trade have resulted in “what appears to be a dramatic increase worldwide” in the buying and selling of children for sexual purposes.103 Sex tourism, as well as the increasing demand for ‘virgins’ who are marketed (by pimps) and perceived (by customers) to be free from sexually transmitted diseases, has further contributed to the swelling ranks of children involved in commercial prostitution worldwide.

According to UNICEF, the majority of the estimated one million children who are forced or coerced into the sex trade each year are girls.104 Many of these girls are victims of global trafficking networks. While the highest numbers of prostituted children – some as young as
10 years of age – are thought to be concentrated in Brazil, India, Thailand, China and the United States, experts agree that child prostitution is a worldwide phenomenon that is not only on the rise, but ensnares increasingly younger girls. 105

Around the world, there are strong links between child trafficking, child prostitution and the production of child pornography. In the last 30 years, child pornography has become a thriving enterprise: In the United States alone, revenues of the child-pornography market have been estimated to be between US $2 to $3 billion per year. 106 The internet, in tandem with the widespread use of personal computers and home video equipment, has made child pornography progressively easier to produce and trade and has also increased the risk of children being victimised: One study in the United States found that one in five children who go online regularly is approached by internet strangers for sex. 107

Although much more difficult to measure, a significant amount of sexual exploitation of children occurs outside the context of commercial markets. Children may engage in ‘survival’ sex for subsistence money or goods, or be taken in by ‘sugar daddies’, or older men who offer them presents, school fees, etc. in exchange for sexual favours. Emerging data suggests that the growing number of AIDS orphans in sub-Saharan Africa are at special risk: 47 percent of surveyed children in Zambia who were selling sex for money had lost both their father and mother to AIDS, and 24 percent had lost one parent. 108 Whether in commercial or non-commercial markets, children who are poor, uneducated, homeless, or for other reasons exist in society’s blind spot are those at greatest risk of being sexually exploited – and those least likely to receive assistance.

In too many instances, according to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography, exploited children are either ignored or treated like criminal delinquents. 109 In a classic example, 10 Vietnamese girls who were trafficked for prostitution into Cambodia were arrested by Cambodian authorities in August 2002 and sentenced to three months in prison, after which they were summarily deported. 110 Such summary deportations can often result in subsequent re-trafficking, because of the failure of governments to address the fundamental issues – discrimination, oppression, and violence – that make girls and young women particularly vulnerable to trafficking. Treating sexually exploited children as criminals also leaves them that much more powerless to manage the myriad negative effects associated with their exploitation – such as physical injury; HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases; unwanted pregnancy and other reproductive-health problems; social stigmatisation; antisocial behaviour; substance abuse; depression; and suicidal tendencies.
Taking Action against Child Trafficking, Prostitution and Pornography

In the past 15 years, the international community has taken significant steps to stem the global tide of sexual exploitation of children. Perhaps most notably, in 1996, 122 governments participating in the first World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children adopted a Declaration and Agenda for Action, committing themselves to introducing and/or improving protective legislation criminalising child prostitution, child trafficking and child pornography, and developing non-punitive approaches to assisting child victims. In 2000, the UN adopted an optional protocol to the CRC specifically prohibiting the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Since then, at least 32 countries have introduced extraterritorial laws that support prosecution of their citizens who commit sex crimes abroad. The World Tourism Organization has created a global code of conduct to increase protection of children from sex tourism. An increasing number of countries around the world have enacted laws specifically related to trafficking, and many are also scaling-up national policing methods as well as intergovernmental collaboration and cooperation in order to monitor and address illegal cross-border movements.

At the local level, hotlines, safe houses and other initiatives have been introduced to address the needs of vulnerable and victimised children. In order to facilitate the sharing of best practices, the organisation to End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography, and the Trafficking of Children for Sexual Exploitation International (ECPAT) has developed a database of country-specific information that summarises regional, national and community-based prevention and response programming and policies.

Despite these important gains, in 2003 the UN Special Rapporteur noted, “the process of re-victimization of children and adolescents who seek remedial action … nourishes the vicious cycle of impunity.” Significantly more needs to be done to combat sexual exploitation of children, especially in terms of training judiciary, facilitating prosecution of exploiters and ensuring that child victims receive compassionate and comprehensive assistance. More also needs to be done at the level of prevention, to ensure that children and their families – especially those who are most vulnerable by virtue of poverty, low levels of education, social isolation, etc., – do not fall prey to individuals and networks liable to abuse them. For girls, of course, reducing vulnerability means also addressing the gender dynamics that place them at special risk.
INDIA

A nongovernmental organisation in India, the Society to Help Rural Empowerment and Education (STHREE) addresses trafficking of women and children in rural areas, particularly Andhra Pradesh. It has supported the formation of community-based self-help groups (SHGs), anti-trafficking committees (ATCs) and a highway mobile committee (HMC). When a woman or girl is offered work outside the community, the ATCs ask for verification of the employer’s name, address and telephone number. For women or girls going abroad, the ATCs try to verify visa status, help educate communities on the verification of expected payment details and share cases of villagers being duped. ATCs and HMCs work directly on preventing trafficking, whereas the SHGs try to work on the underlying causes through educational and awareness activities as well as through providing viable livelihood options. A UNICEF assessment found that the number of women and girls trafficked from the project area decreased between 2000 and 2004. Helping families or ATCs to file complaints and follow up with police and nongovernmental networks in other states also rescued girls from places as far away as Delhi, Mumbai and Pune.114

THAILAND

The Youth Career Development Program, originally launched by UNICEF in partnership with the Pan Pacific Hotel, is currently in partnership with some 20 additional leading hotels, welfare schools under the Ministry of Education, and nongovernmental organisations in Thailand. It is one of the most successful prevention programmes in Thailand related to trafficking. Girls at high risk of being trafficked or sexually exploited are able to receive state-of-the-art training and assistance in job searches in the hotel industry in Bangkok; nurse-aide training and work in the international hospital; or training in the finance industry through Standard Chartered Bank. At the end of these various courses, most of the girls get jobs. Many are enrolled in the open universities for higher education while working.115
YEMEN

In partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), a national technical committee drafted an action plan for child trafficking. In addition, several broad-based community-awareness campaigns have been undertaken targeting children, families, local councils, religious leaders and teachers. A documentary video, a cartoon series and an album of traditional songs related to child trafficking were also produced and widely disseminated. Anti-trafficking messages are regularly broadcast from radio Hajja and the television programme of the Ministry of Interior in an effort to further facilitate community awareness.

VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS IN ARMED CONFLICT

“When I carried things the bandits pushed me and everyone else to go faster. I was always hungry and tired and my feet kept swelling. I didn’t have anything to wear except a sack … I was afraid of the bandits, and I kept going. It was the bandits beating and killing people who couldn’t keep up … I saw the bandits carve unborn babies out of pregnant women’s bodies … I was raped by many different bandits as I went from base to base … I was too afraid to escape.”

A 16-year-old girl forced to porter for the Mozambican National Resistance (Renamo) in Mozambique

Nature and Scope

According to former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, “women and children are disproportionately targets” and “constitute the majority of all victims” of contemporary armed conflicts. Although securing definitive data on the nature and scope of violence against civilians is exceedingly difficult in conflict-affected settings, UNICEF estimates that in the last decade, some 2 million children have died as a result of war and another 6 million have been seriously injured and/or disabled. Anecdotal reports from conflict zones around the world suggest that during war, flight, displacement and reintegration, girls are subject to multiple forms of physical, sexual and psychological violence, including murder, torture, abductions, maiming and mutilation, rape, sexual slavery, sexual exploitation, involuntary disappearance, arbitrary detention, forced marriage, forced prostitution, forced abortion, forced pregnancy and forced sterilisation.
In the Democratic Republic of Congo, sexual violence against women and girls was so extensive and horrific that the conflict has sometimes been referred to as “the war against women.” Atrocities have similarly been reported against girls in Sierra Leone, Northern Uganda, Afghanistan, Colombia, Liberia, Burundi, Rwanda, Chechnya, Sudan, the former Yugoslavia, Myanmar, East Timor – virtually all of the world’s most recent war zones.

In some settings, victimisation of girls is the result of their induction into fighting forces. Global approximations of the number of child soldiers who are girls are as high as 40 percent, and the majority of them are forcibly or coercively conscripted. In addition to combat, porter and/or domestic duties, girls are often expected to supply sexual services – and in some cases are forcibly ‘married’ – to superiors or fellow combatants. During Liberia’s disarmament and demobilisation programme, 73 percent of participating girls and women reported exposure to some form of sexual violence during their association with fighting forces. Conflict and its aftermath increase girls’ risk for violence in countless additional ways. Girls are more likely than boys to assume primary care for their siblings when parents are killed or missing, leaving them particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Other girls who are unaccompanied by or separated from family are also at risk of sexual exploitation: Of more than 2,000 prostitutes surveyed in Sierra Leone in 1999, 37 percent were under the age of 15, and the majority of them had been displaced by conflict and were unaccompanied by family. In the context of Myanmar’s ongoing conflict, an estimated 40,000 girls and women are trafficked annually to work in Thailand’s brothels, factories and as domestic labourers.

Girls living in refugee camps may face sexual violence inside camps, particularly where camps are poorly designed and administered, or when venturing outside camps in search of firewood and other staples. They may be forced into early marriages by their destitute parents or guardians in exchange for bride price, or in parents’ efforts to facilitate their daughters’ removal to ‘safer’ environments. Even the often-positive prospect of third-country resettlement may pose particular risks for girls: Incidents of FGM hastily performed on girls as young as one year of age have been documented in settings where children and their families are being resettled to countries where FGM is illegal.

**Taking Action against Violence in Armed Conflict**

The extent of sexual and other forms of violence against women and children during conflict has received increased attention in the last 15 years, resulting in several key UN
Security Council Resolutions aimed variously at safeguarding women and children from sexual violence, preventing child recruitment into fighting forces, as well as monitoring incidents when children’s rights have been breached. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court has also declared various forms of sexual violence in conflict as war crimes and crimes against humanity. Despite these gains, programming to address sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in conflict-affected settings still tends to be limited in scope and effectiveness. An independent experts’ investigation published in 2002 found that “the standards of protection for women affected by conflict are glaring in their inadequacy, as is the international response.” This is perhaps especially true for violence-related programming specifically targeting girls. Girls associated with fighting forces, for example, are often excluded from reintegration programmes. Sexual assault services rarely specifically target girl children for assistance – most are oriented towards adult women and older adolescent girls. Conversely, programming for unaccompanied minors often focuses on assistance to younger children, failing to address the needs of older adolescents.

While programming addressing the special needs of girls at all stages of their development is neither widespread nor consistent in conflict-affected settings around the world, there are nevertheless valuable initiatives that illustrate promise in recognising and responding to girl children and female adolescents. They include, for example, improving access to education for child mothers and girl heads of households; vocational and skills training for girls at risk of or engaged in prostitution; psychosocial care for sexually victimised girls; family and community sensitisation and reunification efforts for girls associated with fighting forces; special youth programmes addressing gender and gender-based violence; and girls’ social clubs that promote information-sharing on reproductive health and rights as well as other developmentally relevant issues.

In the past several years the international community has begun speaking out with greater forcefulness about one of the central aspects in combating war-related violence against girls and women: ending impunity for perpetrators. Such impunity “both reflects and reinforces the widespread cultural norms that acquiesce to the inevitability of violence against women and girls whether in time of peace or of war.” Any long-term efforts to eliminate violence against girls during conflict must challenge the social, cultural and political determinants of the violence, from the highest levels of international and national accountability all the way down to the level of community-based engagement with individual men and boys.
BURUNDI

In Burundi, UNHCR provided firewood and installed mills within camps where girls or women were being raped when they left the parameters of the camp to collect firewood. Women were introduced into camp security and monitoring teams. In addition, more than 70 older refugee women were appointed to serve as ‘volunteer mothers’ to identify, assist and care for young rape victims. They in turn recruited older men to act as ‘volunteer fathers’, recognising that men can play a key role when it comes to preventing sexual violence.126

SIERRA LEONE

In Sierra Leone’s reintegration programming for girls, UNICEF worked with implementing partners to provide educational opportunities to girls formerly associated with fighting forces. These programmes combined classroom and vocational training with childcare and feeding programmes so that girls with infants could attend while their children were nearby in a positive, safe environment. Importantly, schools that received former captive children were ‘rewarded’ with additional supplies and books that benefited all students in the community, thereby avoiding the appearance that only former captive children received educational assistance. Additionally, accelerated schooling helped older girls gain basic literacy and math skills they missed due to the length of time spent in fighting forces.127
In Colombia, displaced girls are three times more likely than their peers to become pregnant before age 15. UNFPA and its partners have adopted an innovative approach to reaching these young people through projects that draw on artistic expression by adolescents as a release and remedy for the violence in their lives. The programme uses drama, role-playing, music and dance to assist adolescents in managing the violence they have experienced. Health providers visit twice a week to talk about reproductive health and offer services. Participants in the programme have acquired the tools to challenge harmful aspects of gender relations, resist peer pressure and address sexual violence. They have received information and services to prevent disease and ensure maternal safety. The project has raised the self-esteem of displaced adolescents and given them a sense of control over their lives.¹²⁸
AZERBAIJAN: Children who live at a boarding school in the town of Sheki, 330 km north-west of Baku, the capital. The facility provides care and services for 150 children from neighbouring villages and regions, including children with disabilities. It also provides child-development training for parents. More than half of the approximately 27,000 children living in such institutions are from families who are unable to adequately care for them.
VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS IN CARE AND JUSTICE SYSTEMS
VI. VIOLECE AGAINST GIRLS IN CARE AND JUSTICE SYSTEMS

“It was like being crucified on an iron bed. I tried to resist, but seven or eight guards pushed me down on my back onto a hard iron frame. They stretched out my arms and legs and chained them to the four corners of the bed. I had to lie there like that from the evening until the next morning.”

16-year-old institutionalised girl, Middle East

Nature and Scope

Some estimates place the total number of girls and boys living in institutional care around the world at approximately eight million. They may be in orphanages, prisons, detention facilities, hospitals, reform schools or asylum centres. Wherever they are housed, it is too often the case that institutionalised children are not receiving the care and protection to which they are entitled: Violence against children in some residential care facilities has been found to be six times higher than for children in foster care settings. For those in police custody, prisons or other ‘justice’ institutions, the risk of violence is even greater.

The vast majority of children living in care and justice institutions are boys, especially those in correctional facilities or prisons. Ironically, the very fact that girls are in the minority of total children in institutional care may put them at increased risk for certain forms of violence because systems are not designed to meet their specific needs. Girls in detention are less likely than boys, for example, to have access to educational opportunities; they are less likely to receive adequate hygiene and other supplies; and they are more likely to be housed in facilities far from family and other sources of support. Because they are also more likely to be placed in mixed-sex facilities – many of which do not have adequate female staff – they are at particular risk of sexual harassment and assault.

Discrimination and violence against girls is not only an outcome of institutional placement, it is also a precipitating factor. In some settings in the world, girls outnumber boys in orphanages, a fact related to the lesser value accorded to females by some families and societies. In China, where son preference is acute, orphaned girls are dispatched to state institutions so appallingly inadequate that one documentary referred to them as “dying rooms.” Girls who suffer sexual exploitation, such as those who are trafficked for sex or are otherwise victims of the commercial sex industry, may be incarcerated as criminals and thus subjected to further abuse.
In cultures where honour killing is prevalent, girls may be placed indefinitely in detention centres in order to receive ‘protection’ from parents and other family members who would avenge their honour by killing the girl. In a bitter twist, these girls’ freedom may in many cases only be granted by the very family members who aim to kill them.\textsuperscript{136} In still other instances, imprisoning a girl or placing her in detention may be used by parents and authorities as a way to prohibit her from marrying without parental consent, or for punishing her for having committed adultery or engaging in sex before marriage. And in the most extreme cases, girls can be arrested and detained by police for having been raped and ‘unlawfully’ impregnated prior to marriage.

**Taking Action against Violence in Care and Justice Systems**

The Violence against Children Study asserts unequivocally that institutionalising children is a measure of “last resort.”\textsuperscript{137} To ensure that girls and boys are not indiscriminately placed in state care when other options – such as foster placement, which is not only more cost-effective to governments but also vastly more helpful to children – are feasible, national legislation and policies are key, enforced through training of police, social welfare workers, lawyers, etc. While this is important in reference to all children, special attention must be given in laws, policies and programming to the discriminatory factors that place girls at particular risk for being institutionalised.

For those children who have no option but to enter institutional care, policies must be oriented towards safe, supportive treatment. For girls, this means being placed in facilities that are organised and staffed to meet their particular developmental needs, so that they are not forced into male-dominated and male-oriented institutions. Provisions must be made, especially in traditional settings where few services or other resources are typically allocated by the government to ensuring the rights and welfare of girls, for expanding alternative care for girls that not only allows them safe haven, but also provides them with tools that facilitate their empowerment.

Reducing girls’ risk of institutionalisation also requires developing strategies that empower mothers to care for their children. Research has repeatedly shown that mothers who are safe, healthy and self-sustaining are more likely to raise safe, healthy and self-sustaining children.\textsuperscript{138} Family support programmes might address, for example, risks linked to violence in the home, poverty, female-headed households and other sources of discrimination against mothers.
LEBANON

The SOS Children’s Village, a residential care facility for children, works worldwide to provide assistance to families in order to keep children at home. In one case in Lebanon, an overburdened and unemployed mother of four, whose husband was disabled, requested that SOS Children’s Village accept her children. Rather than taking the children into care, SOS made an agreement with the mother that it would cover the children’s educational fees for one year and approached the school to reduce the school fees. The mother was also asked to prepare a business plan for an income-generating activity that she could carry out. SOS agreed to help with start-up costs and provide a loan for her business. Within 15 days, the mother drew up a plan for a mini-bakery in a shop next to her house. As soon as she went into business, she began to generate income and to repay the loan to SOS. The family soon became entirely self-reliant, with the children remaining at home with their parents.  

SUDAN

In northern Sudan, UNICEF agreed with the police headquarters to develop a gender-appropriate investigation process within the Children and Women Police Protection Units for children victims, witnesses and offenders. In order to ensure that investigations and police support to girls are carried out sensitively, UNICEF is advocating for an increase in the female police cadre.
SUDAN: Girls leave the Abu Shouk camp for displaced people near the city of El Fasher, capital of North Darfur State, to gather firewood. The trip can take more than seven hours, leading them past government checkpoints and leaving them exposed to attacks. Girls as young as eight years of age have been attacked, raped or killed trying to fetch wood, which is essential for cooking in the camp.
FROM INVISIBLE TO INDIVISIBLE:
PROMOTING AND PROTECTING THE RIGHT OF THE GIRL CHILD TO BE FREE FROM VIOLENCE

VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS IN WORK SETTINGS
VI. VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS IN WORK SETTINGS

“His wife was out for a traditional funeral … He got me and threw me on the bed. When my stomach got bigger and bigger, they kicked me out, and I ended up on the street.”

18-year-old Ethiopian girl formerly working as a nanny

Nature and Scope

Over 200 million children and adolescents work outside their homes. Whereas rates of child labour are reportedly similar in boys and girls between the ages of five and 11, girls tend to fall off statistically during teen years. Global data on working children indicate that adolescent boys suffer a disproportionate burden related to all forms of child labour when compared with adolescent girls. Importantly, however, this numerical remission of girls may be less a reflection of reality and more a reflection of a failure to account for the ‘invisible’ types of work in which young females around the world typically engage, particularly domestic service.

In fact, targeted investigations into domestic service conducted by the International Labor Organization (ILO) and UNICEF suggest that “staggering numbers” of children around the world – an estimated 90 percent of whom are girls – are working as household servants. Most of these girls enter domestic service in their early teens, but some begin as early as age five. In India, for example, 20 percent of all children under age 14 who work outside the family are in domestic service.

The very same invisibility and isolation associated with working in the informal sector that has historically excluded girls from the international statistical rolls on child labour may contribute to their heightened vulnerability to sexual and other hidden forms of abuse. In a survey undertaken in El Salvador, 66 percent of girls working in domestic service reported abuse and sexual harassment. The implications of the additional (sexual) ‘responsibilities’ expected of girl domestics is captured in Haiti by the term ‘la pour ça’, meaning ‘there for that’.

Girls who are subjected to sexual harassment and abuse in domestic settings are not likely to be able to exercise control over sexual interactions, and are therefore more likely to suffer unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS and other negative health outcomes. They may also be fired from their jobs once the sexual indiscretions are discovered, and those girls who cannot return to their families may end up
on the streets. Significant numbers of girls seeking shelter in centres for sexually exploited children in Tanzania, for example, reported having been sexually abused and subsequently thrown out of homes where they were working as domestic servants.148

Emerging data suggests that the HIV/AIDS pandemic is one of the factors driving girls into domestic service and other forms of child labour, particularly prostitution. According to data culled from Ethiopia, Tanzania and Zambia, children orphaned by the AIDS epidemic figure prominently in forms of child labour associated with high risks of violence, including domestic work, quarrying and prostitution.149 The implications of this are particularly alarming considering UNICEF’s prediction that approximately 12 percent of all children in sub-Saharan Africa will have lost at least one parent by 2010, one-quarter of whom will have lost one or both parents to AIDS.150

**Taking Action against Violence in Work Settings**

To reiterate the Violence against Children Study, “the most obvious response to violence against children in the workplace is to remove them from it.”151 As early as 1919 a convention on minimum age for child labour was adopted by the ILO and reinforced in subsequent conventions, including the CRC. Most recently, concern about the conditions of working children has led to the adoption of ILO Convention No. 182 regarding the worst forms of child labour. International efforts have accelerated to identify and address work settings that violate minimum-age standards and otherwise put children at risk of violence and abuse.

However, knowledge about children working in the informal sector – the sector that most profoundly affects girls – is still significantly lacking, as are strategies for protecting working girls from the distinct forms of violence to which they are exposed. Finding and removing girls from domestic labour may not be a realistic option if strategies are not concurrently developed to address the social and economic precipitants that lead them into it.

Experts maintain that one of the motivations girls have for entering domestic service is to earn money for their education, but school programmes typically overlook the needs of girls who are engaged in work outside of academia.152 Girls’ involvement in domestic work therefore lowers their levels of enrolment and achievement in school, with resulting long-term repercussions in terms of their ability to overcome poverty – making them ever more vulnerable to ongoing exploitation and abuse.
Any lasting efforts to reduce the number of girls working in domestic service worldwide must incorporate plans to monitor and address the particular risk factors that push girls into household and other forms of labour, including parental poverty, absence of parents and forms of discrimination that disproportionately affect girl children, such as parental preference for sons to attend school. For those girls who are bound to work, strategies must be directed at decreasing their isolation, increasing their understanding about their rights, encouraging them to identify and report potential endangerment, and providing them alternative sources of income so they are not compelled to withstand violence and abuse in order to survive.

**KENYA**

In an effort to address the likelihood of parents making their children work to supplement family income, Kenya – a country with two million working children – has tried compensating parents for the loss of their children’s economic contribution. Parents and guardians of children working on plantations, subsistence farms and in fisheries, as well as orphans and other vulnerable children, are paid $7 to $14 per month per child; the money is conditional on the children attending school.153

**THE PHILIPPINES**

The Visayan Forum Foundation (VF) in the Philippines began reaching out to girl and boy domestic workers in public parks, shopping malls and other places where these children gather. VF has found that organising and empowering child and adult domestic workers increases the impact and sustainability of other aspects of their programmes to assist them, in particular crisis intervention, education and networking. Through informal meetings, young domestic workers organised themselves into a worker’s group called SUMAPI (meaning ‘to join’). Originally started in Manila in 1995, SUMAPI now has more than 5,000 members with core groups and chapters in a number of provinces and districts. As members of SUMAPI, girl domestic workers attend workshops to discuss and learn from their experiences, to gain knowledge about their
rights and to participate in social activities and networking with other child domestic workers. Among SUMAPI members, potential core-group leaders and advocates are identified and given training on leadership, team building, organising, counselling and self-development. SUMAPI members are actively involved in policy advocacy for child domestic workers in the Philippines and abroad.154
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Towards a Standard for Prevention of and Response to Violence Against Girls
VIII. TOWARDS A STANDARD FOR PREVENTION OF AND RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS

THE STATE OF THE WORLD’S GIRLS

“I’ll never ever understand why boys and girls are not equal to each other. In rural areas elders think that girls are born to give birth and to marry and for cleaning house. Girls who live in rural areas … are not sent to schools. Their parents are not aware of the changing world yet.”

15-year-old Turkish girl

As the examples in this report make clear, violence against girls is fundamentally related to the same gender-discriminatory norms and practices that cause violence against women, in so far as those norms confer males more power, control and resources than females in virtually every setting and in every culture across the globe. The particular vulnerabilities of girls, however, are not only related to gender-based discrimination. They are also related to the fact that in many settings around the world, children are not accorded their full rights and entitlements: When it comes to violence and discrimination, girls suffer the added vulnerability of simply being children.

Moreover, gender-based and age-based inequity intersect in such a way as to make girls essentially invisible in efforts aimed at either addressing violence against women or in addressing violence against children. Thus, girls are the ‘marginalised of the marginalised’, a fact further compounded for girls who, for example, are disabled, ethnic minorities, in war zones, orphaned, etc.

Despite their vulnerabilities, girls, when given the opportunity to be agents of change, can very clearly articulate the issues that most profoundly and negatively affect them. From their fears of FGM, to their frustrations at being discriminated against by their families, to their awareness of the extent and nature of sexual exploitation and abuse, thousands upon thousands of girls across the world have reaffirmed the sentiments of the 16-year-old from India quoted at the beginning of this report: “Something concrete seriously needs to be done.”

Something is being done, but it is not sufficient. The international community has increasingly recognised the importance of improving efforts to tackle violence against girls, not only because girls have a right to live free from violence, but also because violence against girls, as with violence against women, incurs considerable social and economic costs: It not only impoverishes individuals, it contributes to the impoverishment of communities and nations. The Millennium Declaration (2000) recognises this link: The declaration
acknowledges that in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), it is necessary to “combat all forms of violence against women.”\textsuperscript{156} In fact, violence against women (including girls) negatively impacts the achievement of all of the MDGs, not only to the extent that gender equality is a cross-cutting priority in each of the MDGs, but also in terms of the direct impact that violence against women and girls has in realising six of those goals. Thus, addressing violence against girls is not only a human rights responsibility of governments, it is in their best interests for social and economic development.

**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS AND THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.

Violence against women and girls generates poverty. Violence against women and girls produces direct costs to individuals, to families and to society. In particular it is important to recognise the high cost of providing medical and legal care to victims, as well as the negative impact of violence on labour productivity. Studies in individual countries show a high correlation between preventing violence against women and girls and achieving sustainable poverty reduction.

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education.

Violence against women and girls hampers education. Girls’ unequal participation in school is not only an outcome of discriminatory practices such as early marriage and preferential treatment of boys, it may also be linked to violence against them, in so far as parents prohibit their girls from attending school for fear that they will be victimised.

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women.

Violence against women and girls imperils gender equality. Violence against women and girls is one of the most visible outcomes of gender inequality and females’ lack of empowerment. In settings where traditional gender roles promote male dominance, women and girls may accept these norms as inevitable, in part because of their internalisation of social norms, and in part because of their lack of access to resources to affect change. If women and girls are to live their lives free from violence, they not only need to have equal access to resources and opportunities, they also need to be able to exercise control in all areas of their daily lives.
Goal 4: Reduce child mortality.

Violence against women and girls has direct links to child mortality. In addition to the estimated millions of girls who are ‘missing’ due directly to gender-discriminatory practices such as sex-selective abortion, female infanticide and differential feeding, evidence has indicated that children of women who suffer violence in intimate relationships are significantly more likely to die before the age of five. The practice of early marriage increases the risk of child mortality: If a girl is under the age of 18 when she gives birth, her baby’s chance of dying in its first year of life is 60 percent higher than that of a baby born to an older mother.

Goal 5: Improve maternal health.

Early marriage and early childbearing also pose direct risks to maternal health: A leading cause of death for 15- to 19-year-old girls worldwide is complications from pregnancy and childbearing. Data indicates that for every girl who dies during pregnancy or childbirth, 30 more will suffer injuries, infections and disabilities.

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

The ‘feminisation’ of HIV/AIDS, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and particularly among adolescent girls and young adult women, may be directly linked to multiple forms of violence against women, ranging from sexual assault and exploitation to intimate-partner violence. Girls in abusive relationships, for example, are less likely to be able to negotiate condom use and are also less likely to access treatment for sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV. For girls who marry young, the risk is even greater: Studies indicate that HIV rates are higher among married young women than among their unmarried female counterparts.

TAKEING ACTION AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS

“We are the experts in our own lives. In many ways, we are the victims of violence. As a major right in the UN CRC, participation is our right. We are capable of expressing what is right and what is not and we can even help in implementation and monitoring of the government’s work … There are no excuses for violence against children, not even traditional practices and customs.”

Children’s statement in the UN Report on Violence against Children, October 2006

A Comprehensive Framework

The factors that contribute to the high prevalence of multiple forms of violence against girls around the world require strategies that are aimed at multiple levels and engage multiple stakeholders. The December 2006 preparatory report produced by the UN Secretary-General in advance of the March 2007 CSW on “The Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination and Violence against the Girl Child”, as well as the subsequently drafted ‘agreed conclusions’ of CSW, delineate many specific recommendations for comprehensively addressing violence against girls. Without reiterating those recommendations in their entirety here, the following presents an overarching framework for designing and implementing broad-based interventions aimed at reducing violence against girls.

At the level of legal reform, laws must be developed harmonising CEDAW and the CRC to specifically recognise the rights, needs and vulnerabilities of girls, so that protection for girls is no longer subsumed and/or assumed under legislation that broadly encompasses violence against women and/or violence against children. Governments must further be held accountable for monitoring the implementation of these laws and for periodic review and revision of laws that that do not offer sufficient protection for girls, especially in settings where customary laws and practices run counter to statutory laws. Even if laws are developed that reflect the obligations outlined in both CRC and CEDAW with regard to violence against girls, they will have little impact if the public (especially the girls they are meant to protect) does not know they exist.

At the level of systemic reform, the actors in the health, legal/justice, security, education and social-welfare systems need to be specially trained in preventing, detecting, monitoring and addressing violence against girls. In order for programming to be broad-based and integrated within and across all these sectors, policies mandating sectoral responsibilities related to
violence against girls should be created by relevant ministries and other national-level policymakers. The mistake, too often, in addressing violence against girls (as well as violence against women and violence against children) is that programming is small-scale, limited to one or two sectors, and does not receive sustained funding from the government. In order for this ‘multi-sectoral’ approach to violence against girls to have the greatest impact, strategies must also be put in place for coordination and collaboration across and within sectors.

At the level of service-delivery reform, girl-child survivors must be able to access immediate and comprehensive care that will reduce the likelihood of long-term negative effects related to violence against them, as well as their vulnerability to future incidents of violence. This means ensuring that girls receive targeted reproductive healthcare, access to sexual assault treatment centres with knowledge about girls’ special needs, access to hotlines and helplines, shelter, counselling services, legal aid, civil remedies, etc.

In order for these various levels of intervention to be effective in addressing violence against girls, community mobilisation and sensitisation are critical. All members and strata of the community should be engaged in developing and enforcing preventive measures and in recognising the rights and needs of victims. Effort might include raising overall community awareness, mobilising community-based efforts, providing support for evidence-based advocacy and conducting mass-media campaigns that improve knowledge, attitudes and practices of community members related to the rights and protection of girls.

Finally, and at the heart of these efforts, is soliciting the participation of girls in defining and developing programming that specifically targets their needs. This process of engaging girls is important for girls of all ages, but perhaps especially so for girls in the early stages of puberty, who may be at greater risk of violence overall than girls in other age groups, but who are less likely to be able to receive assistance because the onset of puberty is often accompanied by greater restriction on girls’ social interaction and access. It is also critically important – especially in terms of identifying the needs and vulnerabilities of sub-groups of girls – to solicit the participation of girls who may be marginalised in multiple ways, such those who are in early marriages, disabled, infected/affected by HIV, etc.

**Strategic Priorities**

In addition to the overarching objectives related to legal, systemic and service-delivery reform, as well as to community mobilisation and participation of girls in designing and implementing protective programming, there are several key ‘cross-cutting’ priorities that
are essential to any lasting efforts to promote and protect the right of the girl child to be free from violence.

The first priority involves empowering girls. According to experts convened at the UNICEF Innocenti Research Center in advance of the 2007 CSW, empowerment “is an active and inclusive process centred on the girl that engages all stakeholders – parents, guardians, teachers, elders, the community and the state at large … and results in girls who are transformed through the acquisition of knowledge on their rights and their bodies, and the skills and tools needed for developing a strong and proud sense of their own identity.”

Empowering girls means addressing the low levels of expectation that they may hold for themselves as a result of societal and familial attitudes and behaviours, building their social assets by ensuring their access to education and skills building, and creating channels for girls’ participation, such as through girl-friendly spaces and environments that provide girls a wide range of resources and activities.

Another key priority is empowering women. The 27th Special Session of the General Assembly on Children in 2002 recognised that the achievement of development goals for girls was contingent upon women’s empowerment. Importantly, this means not only empowering women as mothers, but also empowering them as rights-bearing individuals. Evidence suggests that women whose rights are fulfilled are more likely to ensure that girls have access to adequate nutrition, healthcare, education and protection from harm.

According to UNICEF’s 2006 report on the State of the World’s Children, “The status of women is a crucial element for accurately gauging the state of the world’s children and assessing what the future holds for them.” The UN Millennium Declaration understands this link between gender equality and development, identifying “the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women” as one of the eight key MDGs and calling upon countries to “combat all forms of violence against women and to implement the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.” (See Box 2)

Working with men and boys is an important factor in preventing violence against girls. Behaviour-change strategies in the health sector have shown that gender-inequitable attitudes can be unlearned and thereby contribute to healthier relationships. Throughout society and the community in general, men are seen as leaders and are a major force for change. Evidence suggests that coalition building and advocacy are also successful strategies for working with men.
Any efforts to combat violence against girls must also be informed by **national and local data collection and research** on the nature, scope and impact of violence against girls. According to the UN Secretary-General, “the lack of data disaggregated by sex and age remains a serious constraint to formulating and implementing effective targeted policies and programs and monitoring progress in eliminating discrimination and violence.”

There is also an urgent need to undertake operations research to assess the effect of different programmatic approaches on preventing and reducing violence against girls and on changing social norms that are tolerant of such violence. The emerging evidence on the relationship between violence and girls’ risk of HIV also indicates that this is a critical area for more focused research.

Similarly, without better **evaluation of the impact of prevention efforts and support services**, it will be difficult to achieve donor and government commitment to addressing violence against girls. The priorities for monitoring and evaluation are (1) to gain consensus on definitions of different types of violence against girls; (2) to create standard indicators; (3) to formulate qualitative methods to capture local variation and nuanced differences in contributing factors, experience and response to violence; and (4) to finance impact evaluations of past and ongoing projects/programmes on violence against girls to identify successful interventions.

**Investing in anti-violence programmes and policies must be for the long term.** Policy reform, systems change, behaviour change and community mobilisation are complex and lengthy processes that are influenced by many other factors that are difficult to control in the short term. Helping individuals think through alternatives to violence and create informal and formal systems of accountability and support are essential in sustaining changes in attitude and behaviour.
APPENDIX
APPENDIX: INDICATORS OF PROGRESS ON ENDING DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS

(Excerpted from the UNDAW/UNICEF Report of the Expert Group Meeting on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination and Violence against the Girl Child)\(^\text{163}\)

120 The following data are important indicators for monitoring progress on ending discrimination and violence against girls. These data should be drawn at both the national and sub-national levels.

Collecting data and reporting findings at the sub-national level is essential in presenting an accurate picture of the situation of girls and progress in identifying and addressing gaps.

It is paramount that data be disaggregated not only by sex, but also by age:

- Infant to 5 years of age
- Children 6 to 9 years of age
- Children 10 to 14 years of age
- Children and youths 15 to 19 years of age
- Youths 20 to 24 years of age.

121 The Expert Group recommends that governments and nongovernmental organisations work together to collect, analyse and monitor data in the following areas:

**Health status**

- Prevalence of underweight girls/boys (under 5 years of age).
- Mortality rates of girls/boys (under 5 years of age).
- Proportion of girls giving birth under 18.
- Proportion of births attended by skilled health professionals by mother’s age and parity.
- Prevalence of HIV by age and sex.
- Percentage of girls/boys reporting first sexual relation was non-consensual (i.e., forced or tricked).
- Ratio of new incident HIV infections female-to-male detected in 20-24 years of age.
- Percentage of girls (5-9, 10-14, 15-19, 20-24) who have undergone FGM.
- Percentage of girls/boys (5-9, 10-14, 15-19, 20-24) who have been subject to violence and battery inside or outside the family.
• Percentage of girls/boys with comprehensive and correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS.
• Percentage of voluntarily sexually active girls seeking to avoid pregnancy by contraceptive prevalence rate and by condom use at last high-risk sex.

Educational Status
• Percentage of girls/boys starting in grade 1 (by age 8) who reach grade 5.
• Percentage of girls/boys (10-14) out of school who have never been to school.
• Percentage of girls/boys (10-14) out of school who have 1-4 years of schooling.
• Percentage of girls/boys (10-14) who are in school at appropriate grade for age.
• Percentage of girls/boys (15-19) who completed primary school.
• Percentage of young women/men (20-24) who completed secondary school.

Protection, Rights and Empowerment
• Percentage of girls/boys who have been away from home for more than six months.
• Percentage of girls/boys living apart from one parent.
• Percentage of girls/boys (age 10-14) living apart from both parents.
• Percentage of girls/boys (age 10-14) living apart from both parents and out of school.
• Ratio of school attendance of male/female orphans.
• Ratio of school attendance of non-orphans (age 10-14).

Child Marriage
• Percentage of girls/women currently aged 10-24 who were married under age 15, and under age 18.
• Average spousal age differences for girls married (under age 15, under age 18) compared with those married over age 20.

Participation and Access to Civil Society
• Percentage of girls/boys of age of consent who are issued vital documents, including personal identification documentation, health certificates and other vital forms of personal identification.
• Percentage and age distribution of girls/boys who participate in youth programmes.
• Percentage and funding allocation for girl-focused programmes within youth programmes, including programmes where girls can safely meet each other, find mentoring, develop leadership skills and receive programme benefits.

• Percentage of activities designed specifically to meet girls’ needs that are age, gender, lifecycle and context appropriate (such as specially designed financial literacy, citizenship programmes and sports).

• Percentage and funding allocation for programmes focused on reaching disadvantaged and marginalised girls/boys.

• In youth-serving initiatives, percentage of peer educators, peer leaders and mentors that are female/male.

• Percentage of girls/boys that participate regularly in group sports.

• Collect by age, gender and marital status for those (10-14, 15-19) who have:
  – Regularly attended a youth programme or youth centre in the last week.
  – Had contact with a peer educator.
  – Been a peer educator or leader.
  – Attended an HIV lecture.

**Community Support, Safety and Protection**

Percentage of girls/boys (of the specific age categories noted above) who:

– Have trusted adults to whom to turn.
– Report having many friends in their neighborhoods.
– Have a place in which to reliably and safely meet same-sex peers.
– Feel comfortable in their neighborhood.
– Have an emergency place to spend the night if necessary.
– Have someone from whom they can borrow money in case of an emergency.
– Are able to live and move about in their neighbourhood without fear of being beaten or assaulted.
– Have experienced harassment and crime.
ENDNOTES


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14 UN Secretary-General’s Study on Violence against Women, 2006, 12.

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100 N. Toubia, quoted in Heise et al, 1995.

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148 UN Secretary-General’s Study on Violence against Children, 2006, 245.
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“... the Study [on Violence against Children] recognises that virtually all forms of violence are linked to entrenched gender roles and inequalities, and that the violation of the rights of children is closely linked to the status of women.”

Prof. Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, 2007
Independent Expert for the UN Secretary-General’s Study on Violence against Children