

CHILDREN AND VIOLENCE

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The Innocenti Digest is compiled by UNICEF International Child Development Centre to provide reliable and easily accessed information on a critical children's rights concern. It is designed as a working tool for executive decision-makers, programme managers and other practitioners in child-related fields.

INTRODUCTION

Violence involving children – violence directed at children and violence by children – is causing increasing concern in many if not all countries of the world. The intense media spotlight, often on particularly horrific individual cases of violence involving children, suggests – not necessarily accurately – greater prevalence. In the varied arenas of armed conflict around the world, children are particularly vulnerable to the increased targeting of civilian populations, often with lethal modern weapons.

As in all other areas of child policy, the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child offers hope of accelerating reform to protect children from all forms of violence. Almost all of the world's children live in countries that have ratified the Convention. It asserts children's rights to physical and personal integrity, and States' obligations to protect them from "all forms of physical or mental violence", from sexual and other forms of exploitation and abduction, from the effects of armed conflict, and from inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The Convention also provides a framework of principles and standards for violence reduction and prevention, and for constructive, rehabilitative responses to children's violent behaviour.

In the case of many categories of violence to children, greater sensitivity is leading to greater visibility – a prelude, it is hoped, to effective prevention. Available research from different countries suggests that, at least outside active war zones, children are most at risk of violence, including sexual violence, within their own homes and from the adults closest to them. But generally attempts to document the overall extent of violence to children are in their infancy, a reflection of the low status of children, and the low political priority accorded to them – and perhaps more immediately a reflection of the individual and collective guilt of adult perpetrators of violence to children.

It is only in the last few decades that the prevalence of deliberate physical and mental violence to children by parents and other carers has begun to be widely acknowledged. Even more recently there has been the 'discovery' of widespread sexual abuse of children in the family and in institutions, and also organized sexual abuse, including child prostitution, 'sex tourism', child pornography and other forms of sexual exploitation.

With increased visibility of violence directed at children comes the realization that children are far more prone to violent victimization than adults:

The history of childhood is a nightmare from which we have only recently begun to awaken.

The further back in history one goes, the lower the level of child care, and the more likely children are to be killed, abandoned, beaten, terrorized and sexually abused. . . . That this pattern has not been previously noted by historians is because serious history has long been considered a record of public not private events.⁴⁹

The dependent status of children, and traditional assumptions of parents' and other adults' authority over them, has made them particularly frequent subjects of violence – just as traditional assumptions of male authority have bred violence to women. Institutionalization of children in schools and child care institutions, ostensibly to provide 'care', has often involved repressive, authoritarian regimes in which violence is endemic, and in which adult violence to children may cause and be compounded by children's violence to other children. In addition, traditional assumptions about the unreliability of children as witnesses have frequently led to their complaints or requests for help being disbelieved or ignored; these assumptions continue to inhibit formal interventions, including prosecutions.

Greater recognition of the scale of violence to children, and increasingly active and consistent challenging of it, follows on from societies' recognition of and responses to violence to women. It is a sad reflection on human civilizations that the smallest and most vulnerable of people should have had to wait until last for consistent social and legal recognition of their equal right to physical and personal integrity, to protection from all forms of interpersonal violence. Only a handful of countries have as yet adopted laws to give children the same protection that adults enjoy from physical assault. In most states violent punishments, including beatings with tools, remain common and sanctioned by the law. Nevertheless, there is now growing recognition that asserting children's right to protection from 'routine' physical violence in the home and in institutions is as vital to improving their status as it has been to women's status to assert their equal right to protection from routine violence in the home and the community. Leading this trend is the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the international monitoring body for the Convention, which has consistently challenged laws that permit any

► Violence and children defined

For the purpose of this *Digest*, violence is defined as *deliberate behaviour by people against people liable to cause physical or psychological harm*, borrowing and adapting a definition used by various national commissions set up to consider violence and its prevention. The definition could, of course, range wider to include societal forms of violence – the effects of poverty, exploitative child labour, and lack of adequate health care and education, and non-deliberate neglect by the state, parents and others. **But the focus here is on interpersonal violence to and by children.** Sexual abuse and exploitation are included because, although (as defined in most countries) they do not necessarily involve violence or coercion, the vast majority of evidence indicates their generally harmful effects. Children's involvement in armed conflict and its effects on them also have strong links to the forms of violence considered here.

The focus is not simply on the widely used term 'child abuse', because its definition in policy and practice differs so greatly from country to country, culture to culture. Many forms of violence that are harmful to children lie outside common definitions of child abuse. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the other hand, now almost universally ratified, emphasizes all children's right to physical integrity – to protection from "all forms of physical or mental violence".

A 'child' is defined, as in the Convention, as everyone from birth to his or her 18th birthday.

physical punishment of children, recommending clear legal reform and educational programmes.

Alongside recognition of the prevalence of violence to children has come growing awareness, through research, of the dangers of it, and of the links between early experience of violence, and violent and other antisocial behaviour

in childhood and later life. Violence to children is inextricably linked to violence by children, and to manifestations of adult violence. No country can be complacent about any level of violence involving children. Insensitive and violent treatment of children, like insensitive and violent treatment of the environment, threatens not just the quality of human lives today, but the

very survival of human societies in the future. Reducing violence to children has immense potential for transforming societies for the better. As stated by the Australian National Committee on Violence:

*The greatest chance we have to prevent violence in society is to raise children who reject violence as a method of problem-solving, who believe in the right of the individual to grow in a safe environment.*²⁴

THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD AND VIOLENCE

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989 and ratified as of August 1997 by all but two of the world's countries, provides clear principles and standards for the protection of children from violence, and for the treatment of child perpetrators of violence.

Protecting children from violence

The preamble of the Convention asserts that the child, by reason of his or her physical and mental immaturity, "needs special safeguards and care". Article 19 obliges ratifying States to: *take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.* (para. 1)

Other articles, which have been elevated by the Committee on the Rights of the Child to the status of "General Principles", are also relevant to the issue of violence:

- Article 2 of the Convention insists that all rights within it must be available to all children without discrimination on any ground. Thus violence to children cannot be justified, as it often is at present, on grounds of tradition, or culture, or religion;
- Article 3 requires that the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children;
- Article 6 upholds every child's right to life,

and States' duty to ensure survival and development to the maximum extent possible;

- Article 12 underlines children's right to express their views and have them taken seriously.

In addition, articles oblige States:

- to take measures to abolish traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children (Article 24.3);
- to ensure that school discipline is administered "in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the Convention" (Article 28.2);
- to protect children from sexual exploitation (Article 34);
- to protect children from abduction and to prevent sale and trafficking of children (Article 35);
- to protect children from all other harmful forms of exploitation (Article 36);
- to protect children from "torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment" (Article 37);
- to use all feasible methods to protect children affected by armed conflict (Article 38);
- to provide rehabilitative care for victims of violence (Article 39).

Responding to violence by children

The Convention also provides clear principles and standards for responses to violence by children. Its "General Principles" are relevant to all aspects of society's responses to violent behaviour of children and young people. None conflicts with other people's rights to physical and personal integrity. The best interests of the child should be a primary consideration

(Article 3); the child's right to life and maximum development must be respected (Article 6); the child's views should be ascertained and taken seriously (Article 12). Restriction of liberty – whether in the penal system or in 'welfare' or other systems – should be used only as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate time (Article 37).

Article 37 also sets out an absolute ban on capital punishment and life imprisonment for offences committed by under-18-year-olds, whereas Article 40 gives detailed standards for developing a distinct system of juvenile justice (the subject of *Innocenti Digest* 3). Such a system must emphasize promotion of the child's sense of dignity and worth, reinforce the child's respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of others, and take into account the child's age and the desirability of promoting the child's reintegration and the child's assuming a constructive role in society.

Three other United Nations instruments provide even more detailed standards:

- United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice ("The Beijing Rules") 1985;
- United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency ("The Riyadh Guidelines") 1990;
- United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty 1990.

The focus on the best interests of the child, and on rehabilitation and public safety rather than retribution, is in society's short- and long-term interests as well as children's. There is no evidence that responses based on retribution are effective in reducing or preventing violence. On the contrary, there is evidence from

many countries that harsh and humiliating punishment is a significant factor in the development of violent attitudes and actions, and that imprisoning children increases the likelihood of re-offending, and in particular of

non-violent offenders becoming violent.

Disregarding such international standards, some countries are adopting increasingly punitive policies involving use of custody for even very young offenders and rigorous 'boot camp'

regimes, despite research evidence favouring community-based rehabilitative responses to criminal behaviour.

PREVALENCE OF VIOLENCE TO CHILDREN

In many countries, violence to children remains largely a hidden problem. Much of it occurs within the privacy of the family, or the relative privacy of institutions. Moreover, research into levels of violence in the family and institutions has had a very uneven development.

In an international bibliography and literature review on violence in the family, prepared by the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute in Rome, of the over 1,500 entries covering the period 1985 to 1992, about 79 per cent were published in the United States; adding those published in the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada accounted for over 90 per cent of the bibliography. The executive summary emphasizes that "very little is known about family violence outside the Western world".⁵¹

In addition to its unrepresentative nature, current research and information on children and violence is also flawed in that it generally relies on interviews with parents and other caretakers. Consequently, even if undertaken in conditions of strict confidentiality, it is likely to underestimate the true level of violence. Other studies interview adults about their childhood experiences. It is still uncommon for researchers to interview children themselves, in confidence, about their experiences.

A rare large-scale attempt to ask children directly about their violent experiences took place in Finland in 1990: about 9,000 15-year-olds in schools were invited to fill out a detailed questionnaire anonymously on, among other things, their experiences of violence and their sexual experiences.^{59 60}

A national in-depth telephone survey of a large representative sample of children aged 10-16 years in the United States, reported in 1994, found rates of violent victimization far

exceeding those found in official government statistics. The rate for rape was five times as high as official figures; a quarter of the children reported a completed victimization (excluding corporal punishment) in the previous year, and more than a third a completed or attempted victimization. Just less than a third of those victimized in the last year reported having suffered physical injuries as a result of their assault.⁶¹

It is also rare as yet to look comprehensively at all forms of violence to children. The two prominent US commentators responsible for this study suggest that

*Although in recent years there has been a great deal of public and media attention to victimized children, the concern has been largely fragmented. Professionals have focused on specific forms of victimization, such as child abuse, sexual abuse, handgun violence, and kidnaping, mostly as separate problems. But the fragmentation has inhibited a comprehensive perspective on the overall victimization of children. Such a comprehensive perspective would emphasize better the true toll of violent victimization. For example, one reality, not widely appreciated, because of the fragmentation, is that children are far more prone to victimization than adults.*⁶²

In their attempt to provide a comprehensive analysis of violent victimization of US children, the authors defined three broad categories of victimization:

- "extraordinary", such as homicide, which affects a very small group of children;
- "acute", such as physical abuse, which affects a larger but still minority group of children;
- "pandemic", such as physical punishment and assault by siblings, which affects most children.

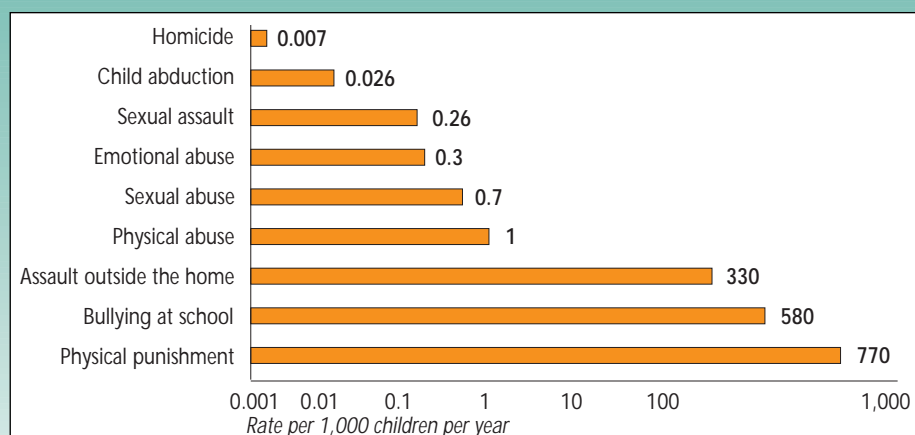
They were able to provide national statistics for the United States for the various types of victimization, arranged in increasing order of incidence, from 0.03 per 1,000 children (child victims of homicide) to 800 per 1,000 (victims of sibling assaults). The information came from

agency records, and from self-reports or caretaker reports to large-scale national surveys. In the United Kingdom, similar efforts have been made to sketch as complete a picture as possible of the **incidence of violence to children**.

Attempts to look at violent victimization of children comprehensively, and to see all violence to children as being part of a single continuum, fit well with the framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is hoped that this kind of approach will develop universally within the context of implementation of the Convention. For the moment, it is impossible to tell from available data in most countries whether violent victimization of children is increasing, or whether greater sensitivity is leading to greater visibility. To take just one example, in South Africa 22,911 cases of child abuse were reported to the South African Police Service Child Protection Unit in 1994, a 36 per cent increase on the figures for 1993. From 1993 to 1994, child rape cases increased from 4,736 to 7,559 (by 62.7 per cent). But a White Paper drafted by the Department of Welfare emphasized that the true extent of child abuse in South Africa is unknown because there is no centralized database or coordinated reporting system in place.⁶⁷

In most countries there are some centrally collected statistics from law enforcement bodies of investigations, prosecutions and convictions of adults for violent offences against children, including assault, cruelty (where it exists as a separate offence), rape and other sexual offences. We know from those countries where there has been in-depth interview research that these figures represent only a tiny proportion of actual offences. Increasingly, as sensitivity to violence involving children grows, many countries have developed child protection systems including obligations to report instances of, or suspicions of, violence to children, and formal duties for investigation. These too will provide

Incidence of violence to children in the UK (per 1,000 children per year)



Source: *Children and Violence*, Report of the Commission on Children and Violence convened by the Gulbenkian Foundation, Gulbenkian Foundation, London, 1995.

statistics, but again with no clear relationship to the true level of violence.

In a report calling for more consistent reporting and recording of physical violence to children, the World Health Organization commented that “conflicting definitions of child abuse and neglect, difficulties in identifying cases of child abuse and neglect, and variations in reporting requirements make cross-national comparisons virtually impossible”.⁴¹ WHO has tentatively sought some agreement on common definitions of physical violence to children, developing a protocol, which it hopes will be used in particular by health care workers to collect comparable statistics.⁴²

INTRAFAMILIAL VIOLENCE TO CHILDREN

Children are most at risk where they should be safest: within their families. Children are in fact far more likely to be murdered, physically assaulted, sexually abused, abducted and subjected to harmful traditional practices and mental violence by family members than by strangers. Extrafamilial forms of violence such as armed conflict and high levels of community violence place dramatic stress on families – and thus affect intrafamilial violence too.

Infanticide and homicide of children

An analysis of 285 homicides committed in the United Kingdom from 1989 to 1991 involving victims under the age of 18 years found just 13 per cent had been killed by strangers; 60 per cent were killed by parents.⁵⁶ Similar results have been reported in the United States and in Australia. In countries where homicide statistics are analysed according to age of victim, infants and very young children are often found to be the age group most at risk. In the United Kingdom, under-one-year-olds are four times as likely to be victims of homicide as any other age group – almost all killed by their parents.

Infanticide remains defined in many legal

systems as a lesser crime than murder, although it involves the intentional killing of a baby. The rationale is to provide a special defence for mothers suffering psychological trauma as a result of birth. However, in many of the same legal systems, there are general recognized defences of ‘diminished responsibility’ to charges of murder which could be applied in special cases. It therefore seems clear that the roots of the special status of this crime lie in regarding an infant’s life as of less worth than that of an older person.

Contrary to the usual assumption that infanticide is an Eastern rather than a Western problem, Lloyd deMause in his classic *History of Childhood* documents that infanticide of legitimate as well as ‘illegitimate’ children

was a regular practice of antiquity, that the killing of legitimate children was only slowly reduced during the Middle Ages (hence the grossly unequal ratios of men to women in many societies) and that illegitimate children continued to be regularly killed right up into the nineteenth century. . . . Even though Thomas Coram opened his foundling hospital in 1741 because he couldn’t bear to see the dying babies lying in the gutters and rotting in the dung-heaps of London, by the 1890s dead babies were still a common sight in London streets. . . .⁵⁰

Infanticide has been practised as a brutal method of family planning, and in societies where boy children are still valued, economically and

Violence in the family

“Although it may appear in different forms, and the level of people’s awareness of, and reaction to the phenomenon may vary, the gravity and extent of the problem [of family violence] is worldwide. The family is the primary and most important social institution for the upbringing, education and protection of its members, but it can often become an arena for suffering and violence. All over the world women and children are murdered, mutilated, assaulted, battered or sold. Millions of human beings are suffering within their family ‘walls’, and the weakest members of society are the most vulnerable: ethnic minorities, refugees, migrant families, children and women in armed conflicts. They are most at risk and have the least legal, economic and social protection.

“Data, information and knowledge of the problem merely represent the tip of an iceberg, a tip that is still considered by many as a ‘private’ domain.”⁵¹

socially, above girls, unequal gender population figures indicate that it remains widespread. Government attempts to restrict population growth, often without providing adequate and effective family planning education and resources, provide another impetus for infanticide.

Traditional attitudes in societies in which disabled children, or children born on certain days, bring shame to the family can encourage

infanticide. Similar pressures arise in societies that strongly disapprove of the children born to very young mothers or to unmarried or inappropriately matched couples.

The lack of efficient and comprehensive methods for registering each and every birth leaves babies at risk of murder, abduction, sale or disappearance in many countries: the process of registration, according the newborn baby an official status, is an essential method of protection.

Where research studies have looked in depth at a random sample of child deaths, they invariably find a number, beyond those already formally recorded as homicide, in which violence has played a significant part. A reflection of the growing sensitivity of societies to violence to children is the development of special legislation and procedures for **investigating child deaths** in detail and making formal reports, with the primary aim of prevention.

In one of the very few international attempts to compare rates of violence to children across countries and continents, WHO has collected statistics from more than 60 countries on homicide deaths and deaths from injury of undetermined origin in infants less than one year old. But, as mentioned earlier, WHO and other commentators have emphasized the unreliability of such comparisons, owing to the varying definitions and methods of reporting and the very variable reliability in the collection and central collation of statistics.⁴¹

Overall homicide rates vary remarkably from country to country and provide one measure of the level of serious violence in different societies. For example, the US homicide rate for certain age groups of young people as victims far exceeded that in all countries studied by WHO, with the exception of the Bahamas and Ecuador. Aggregating data for the period 1987–1990, WHO statistics show that annual deaths by homicide of people aged 15 to 24 were 15.3 per 100,000 in the United States, compared with 0.9 per 100,000 in both the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, 0.7 in France, and 0.4 in Japan. Indeed, the United States has significantly higher rates for most violent crimes than almost all other industrialized nations. The more serious the crime, the greater the difference between the US rate and those of other developed nations.⁴²

Physical assault

Hitting children as a form of discipline, even beating them with sticks and belts causing sig-

nificant injuries, remains common and supported by the law in family homes in almost all countries of the world. In most countries, in fact, physical punishment of children is the only form of interpersonal violence sanctioned by the law, whereas even trivial assaults on adults are criminalized. Where children have been interviewed about violent assaults by adults and by other children in their community, they report far higher victimization rates than adults. This situation is in stark contrast to the principles set out by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which asserts in its preamble that the child, by reason of his or her physical and mental immaturity, "needs special safeguards and care".

Research from countries in all continents, as reported by Radda Barnen and EPOCH-Worldwide, has found consistently high levels of violent punishment in the home.⁴³ In Barbados, a 1987 survey found 70 per cent of respondents "generally approving" of parental physical punishment; of these, 76 per cent endorsed beating children with belts or straps. In India, a 1991 survey of university students found 91 per cent of males and 86 per cent of females had been physically punished in their childhoods. In Romania, a 1992 survey found that 84 per cent of a sample of parents regarded spanking as a normal method of child-rearing, and 96 per cent did not regard it as humiliating. In the United Kingdom, government-sponsored research published in 1995 found that almost one in six children had experienced "severe" physical punishment; the large majority (91 per cent) had been hit, 77 per cent in the last year. In the United States, a 1985 survey of 3,232 families found that 89 per cent of the parents had hit their three-year-old child during the

previous year, and that about a third of 15- to 17-year-olds had been hit.

In a concluding statement to the General Discussion on Children's Rights in the Family, organized by the Committee on the Rights of the Child as a contribution to the International Year of the Family in October 1994, a Committee member stated:

As for corporal punishment, few countries have clear laws on this question. Certain States have tried to distinguish between the correction of children and excessive violence. In reality the dividing line between the two is artificial. It is very easy to pass from one stage to the other. It is also a question of principle. If it is not permissible to beat an adult, why should it be permissible to do so to a child? One of the contributions of the Convention is to call attention to the contradictions in our attitudes and cultures.⁴⁴

The Committee has indicated that the Convention requires a review of legislation to ensure that no level of violence to children is condoned. In the official report of its seventh session in November 1994, the Committee stated:

In the framework of its mandate, the Committee has paid particular attention to the child's right to physical integrity. In the same spirit, it has stressed that corporal punishment of children is incompatible with the Convention and has often proposed the revision of existing legislation, as well as the development of awareness and educational campaigns, to prevent child abuse and the physical punishment of children.

The Official Report goes on to note that the Committee's concerns have been shared recently by various other United Nations entities. The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, for example, adopted a resolution in April 1994 specifically stressing the importance of Article 19 of the

Investigating child deaths: a preventive response

In several states of the USA, legislation sets out obligations to hold a formal inquiry into all 'unnatural' deaths of children. For example, the South Carolina Child Fatality Review and Prevention Act creates a Department of Child Fatalities within the State Law Enforcement Division, and a multidisciplinary State Child Fatality Advisory Committee. The Act states:

It is the policy of this State that

- *Every child is entitled to live in safety and in health and to survive into adulthood;*
- *Responding to child death is a state and community responsibility;*
- *When a child dies, the response of the State and the community to the death must include an accurate and complete determination of the cause of death, the provision of services to surviving family members, and the development and implementation of measures to prevent future deaths from similar causes.*

The Act places a duty on coroners and medical examiners to notify the Department within 24 hours when a child dies as a result of violence, when unattended by a physician or in any suspicious or unusual manner, or when the death is unexpected or unexplained. The results of investigation are reported to the Advisory Committee, whose purpose is to make recommendations aimed at decreasing the number of preventable deaths.

Convention, and calling on States to take all possible steps to eliminate violence against children in accordance with the Convention.⁶²

In 1996, the European Human Rights Commission declared admissible an application by a 12-year-old boy and his natural father. The boy had been repeatedly caned by his stepfather, but a prosecution had failed. The application, which is likely to be considered by the European Court of Human Rights, alleged that domestic legislation failed to protect the boy from inhuman or degrading punishment or treatment, in breach of Article 3 of the European Convention, as well as of other articles.

Laws that define arbitrary levels of 'legal' violence to children

In many countries, either criminal or civil (family) law, or both, includes specific confirmation of parents' and some other carers' rights to use violent forms of punishment, often with the stipulation that such punishment must be "reasonable" or "moderate", leaving individual adults, child protection workers and ultimately courts to determine what constitutes "reasonable" violence to children. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has singled out such legislation for particular criticism. For example, when the Committee examined Spain's initial report, it expressed "concern at the wording of Article 154 of the Spanish Civil Code which provides that parents 'may administer punishment to their children reasonably and in moderation', which may be interpreted to allow for actions in contradiction with Article 19 of the Convention".⁶³

Similarly the official report of the Committee's consideration of the United Kingdom's initial report records a comment by the Deputy Chair of the Committee:

It was the Committee's experience that difficulties arose whenever a 'reasonable' level of corporal punishment was permitted under a State's internal law. To draw an analogy, no one would argue that a 'reasonable' level of wife-beating should be permitted. His conclusion was that the United Kingdom position represented a vestige of the outdated view that children were in a sense their parents' chattels. In the Scandinavian countries and Austria, stricter legislation had resulted in fewer cases going to court than in the United Kingdom, rather than the reverse. . . . The notion of a permissible level of corporal punishment was thus best avoided.⁶⁴

The Committee has on many occasions formally recommended that States prohibit, without ambiguity of any kind, all violent punishment in the family and in institutions, and it has proposed the use of educational campaigns to

promote positive forms of discipline. Summing up this position, one Committee member is recorded to have found that "few aspects of the law concerning children were so important for the children themselves. In countries where legislation clearly banned corporal punishment, it gave a message to the children. Prohibition had not resulted in a flood of complaints to the court but it had served to educate parents."⁶⁴

Laws that prohibit all violence to children

Although reforms are increasingly being considered in countries in all continents in the light of the Convention and the Committee on the Rights of the Child's recommendations, as yet only a handful of countries have prohibited all violent and humiliating punishment of children (Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Norway, Austria and Cyprus). And in 1996, Italy's Supreme Court in Rome declared unlawful any use of violence for educational purposes within the family or in schools, affirming that "the very expression *correction of children*, which expresses a view of child-rearing that is both culturally anachronistic and historically outdated, should in fact be redefined, abolishing any connotation

of hierarchy or authoritarianism and introducing the ideas of social and responsible commitment which should characterize the position of the educator vis-à-vis the learner".⁶⁵

..... **Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse of children, like other manifestations of violence to children, is certainly not new; its increased visibility in all societies must be welcomed as a move towards effective child protection. It seems clear that, although it can occur outside the family setting, most sexual abuse of children takes place in their own homes, by parents and other close relatives.

As with physical violence, recognition of sexual violence to children follows recognition of sexual violence to women. And in most cases the perpetrators are men. In most societies, sexual interference or assault without consent or involving any form of coercion is now consistently prohibited, whatever the age or status of the participants. The last step in these reforms, whose purpose has been largely to outlaw sexual violence to women, tends to be the criminalizing of rape within marriage, and this step has still not been taken in all countries.

→ Implementing equal protection for children in Sweden

Children are entitled to care, security and a good upbringing. Children are to be treated with respect for their person and individuality and may not be subjected to corporal punishment or any other humiliating treatment. (Swedish Parenthood and Guardianship Code)

In 1979, Sweden became the first country to ban all physical punishment of children. The emphatic aim of the new law was educational – not to prosecute more parents, or increase state intervention in family life, but to change attitudes and practice and to make hitting children as unacceptable as hitting adults. As one Swedish Ministry of Justice official said when explaining the new law, "By the prohibition of physical punishment, the legislator wanted to show that a child is an independent individual who can command full respect for his or her person, and who should thus have the same protection against physical punishment or violence as we adults see as being totally natural for ourselves."

In a significant case in 1982, the European Human Rights Commission rejected an application by a group of Swedish parents who alleged that the 1979 ban on parental physical punishment breached their right to respect for family life. The Commission concluded, "The actual effects of the law are to encourage a positive review of the punishment of children by their parents, to discourage abuse and to prevent excesses which could properly be described as violence against children."⁶⁶

In 16 years there has only been one prosecution in Sweden for what might be regarded in other countries as 'ordinary' physical punishment: a father was given a small fine for spanking his 11-year-old son. Implementation of the law was accompanied by a large-scale educational campaign, building information about the new law and its purpose into the education system, and into all forms of parenting education and support.

In 1994, research commissioned by the Swedish Department of Health and Social Affairs found just 11 per cent still approved of physical punishment, compared with 65 per cent a few decades ago. And only 1 per cent of a large sample of Swedish 15-year-olds reported ever having been hit with an implement (compared with up to 25 per cent of children in some age groups in the United Kingdom and other countries which so far have resisted legal reform against physical punishment).⁶⁶

The definition of sexual abuse of *children* in many societies covers any sexual activity with someone who is not legally competent to give consent, or has refused consent. Thus, a charge of sexual abuse would apply even in cases when a person below the age of consent appears a willing or even an initiating partner. The definition of criminal sexual activities also includes sexual activities at any age with close adult family members – incest. The justification for these protective measures comes from the growing body of evidence that such activity can cause both physical injury to still-developing bodies and serious psychological damage.

..... Illicit transfer

Parental and other abduction of children, when it occurs without the child's informed consent, is certainly a form of violence. It is one that has become more visible and, given modern means of transportation, probably more prevalent. In the United States, detailed National Incidence Studies of all abducted children were carried out in 1988. These studies found 345,000 family abductions (where a family member took a child, or failed to return a child, in violation of a custody agreement); between 3,200 and 4,600 non-family abductions (force was used against 87 per cent of the victims, involving a weapon in 75 per cent of cases); and 114,600 attempted non-family abductions.⁷³ Recognition of its prevalence, both within countries and across borders, has led to specific developments in international law, most notably the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction.

The Hague Convention is a global instrument. As of June 1997, 43 countries had ratified or acceded to the Convention, though there is a significant absence of Middle Eastern and Far Eastern countries. Its provisions, in brief, enable children under the age of 16 who had been wrongfully removed or retained (that is, in breach of someone's rights of custody) between two Hague Convention countries to be returned promptly to the place where they have habitual residence, where a final decision as to their future can be made. A court may refuse to order this if the child objects, or might be at grave risk of harm, or has been over a year in the new environment and is settled – but the court's business is not to investigate the merits of the dispute itself. In addition to the Hague Convention, there are various regional treaties with similar aims, such as the Inter-American Convention on

the International Return of Minors, and the 1980 Council of Europe Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Decisions Concerning Custody of Children.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child includes two relevant articles challenging abduction: Article 11 requires measures "to combat the illicit transfer and non-return of children abroad"; Article 35 requires measures "to prevent the abduction of, the sale of or traffic in children for any purpose or in any form". Both stress the importance of international cooperation in combating these practices.

..... Traditional practices involving violence

In many societies there are common traditional practices that involve degrees of physical and/or mental violence to children and that may be prejudicial to children's health. The Convention clearly requires a review of such practices. However, reviewing practices that have cultural or religious roots, or both, and that may in themselves contribute to the cultural identity of children and adults, sometimes on a nationwide basis, requires great sensitivity.

The specific reference to traditional practices comes in Article 24.3, which obliges States to "take all effective and appropriate measures with a view to abolishing traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children". During the drafting of the Convention, a deliberate decision was taken not to single out any specific practice, given the wide range that can have harmful effects – son preference, female genital mutilation, early marriages and diet, among others.⁷⁴ Article 24.3 is significant because it is the very first mention of the abolition of traditional practices in a binding international instrument, and, contrary to what might have been expected given the 'delicate' nature of the problem, no reservations have been made to this provision. Given the international consensus at government and international agency level, it is clear that, henceforth, the debate should not centre on whether or not harmful traditional practices are to be abolished, but only on what constitute 'appropriate' means of bringing this about.

Adults often seek to justify traditional practices on the grounds of cultural identity and/or religious practice (but within all religions there are now authoritative challenges to the necessity, and morality, of such practices). The health risks of practices that involve some invasion of the child's bodily integrity – including for

example the very widespread practice of male circumcision – may be increased by their performance by people with no medical training, and in unhygienic conditions. The lack of appropriate anaesthesia intensifies the suffering of children.

Justifications that assume that children should follow the culture or religion of their families and/or communities challenge the Convention's upholding of children's own freedom of religion (Article 14). These practices often take place when the child is very young and unable to consent. Mature children, of course, should have the same rights, if any, as adults have under the law in each society to consent to practices that involve a degree of violence but are not significantly prejudicial to health. But parents' responsibility to provide appropriate direction and guidance to children in the exercise of their rights (referred to generally in Article 5, and specifically in relation to freedom of religion in Article 14) must not involve breaches of Article 19 and/or Article 24.3. These provisions, read in conjunction with the non-discrimination principle in Article 2, and the best interests principle in Article 3, are unequivocal. The Convention does for protection of children what other United Nations instruments have done for the protection of women from harmful traditional practices.

Practices that should be reviewed in the light of the Convention's principles include:

- all forms of circumcision and genital mutilation;
- binding, scarring, burning, branding, coin-rubbing, tattooing;
- initiation ceremonies involving, for example, forced holding under water;
- deliberate discriminatory treatment of children involving violence and/or prejudicial to health – for instance, preferential feeding and care of male children and lack of care of disabled children or children born on certain days.

Measures to combat harmful traditional practices promoted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child include legislation and education. Many States now have explicit bans on female genital mutilation, but it is clear that legal reform will achieve little unless it is combined with widespread education and awareness-raising, and unequivocal statements condemning the practice by community and religious leaders.

..... Mental violence

Children, especially dependent children, are particularly vulnerable to forms of mental vio-

lence by parents and others – ranging from verbal abuse, sarcasm and belittling, through forms of humiliation, harassment and isolation not involving physical violence. The Convention uses the term “mental violence” in Article 19;

the effects on the child might better be termed psychological. Article 19 also implies, in the wording “all forms of physical or mental violence”, the need to consider not only the direct but also the indirect effects of family violence

on children. Research into violence within the family has highlighted the potentially adverse psychological effects on children of witnessing or hearing violence – both physical and mental – between their parents.

EXTRAFAMILIAL VIOLENCE

Extrafamilial violence is experienced most dramatically by children caught up in armed conflicts and by children living on the streets in poor urban areas. Other forms of extrafamilial violence to children involve the ‘legalized’ use (or continued use despite prohibition) of violent and/or humiliating discipline or treatment in institutions, sexual exploitation, child pornography and physical violence in sport.

Children and armed conflict

The introduction to the United Nations study of the impact of armed conflict on children, led by Graça Machel, emphasizes that millions of children are caught up in conflicts in which they are “not merely bystanders, but deliberate targets”. They are “slaughtered, raped, and maimed . . . exploited as soldiers . . . starved and exposed to extreme brutality”. Because of the length of recent conflicts, many children have lived in the midst of “unregulated terror and violence” their entire lives, experiencing “multiple and accumulative assaults.”²²

The study, presented to the United Nations General Assembly in 1996, estimates that in the past decade two million children have been killed in armed conflict. Three times as many have been seriously injured or permanently disabled, many by landmines – children in at least 68 countries live amid the contamination of more than 110 million landmines. Countless others have been forced to witness horrifying acts of violence – for example, a UNICEF survey of more than 3,000 children in Rwanda in 1995 found that over 80 per cent had lost immediate family members, and more than one third of these had actually witnessed their murder. The study estimates that over recent decades the proportion of war victims who are civilians has leapt

from 5 per cent to more than 90 per cent, with women and children particularly targeted. Involving children as soldiers has been made easier by the proliferation of inexpensive light weapons – guns so light that children can use them and so simple that even a child as young as ten can strip and reassemble them.

The study provides a detailed analysis of the **direct and indirect effects of armed conflict** on children, and makes detailed recommendations for the world community: “Children are both our reason to struggle to eliminate the worst aspects of warfare, and our best hope for succeeding at it.”²³

Direct and indirect effects of armed conflict on children: Highlights of the Graça Machel Study

Armed conflict affects all aspects of child development – physical, mental and emotional: Health and psychosocial well-being: “Thousands of children are killed every year as a direct result of fighting, from knife wounds, bullets, bombs and landmines, but many more die from malnutrition and disease caused or increased by armed conflicts. The interruption of food supplies, the destruction of food crops and agricultural infrastructures, the disintegration of families and communities, the displacement of populations, the destruction of health services and programmes and of water and sanitation systems all take a heavy toll on children. Many die as a direct result of diminished food intake that causes acute and severe malnutrition, while others, compromised by malnutrition, become unable to resist common childhood diseases and infections.” (para. 137)

Refugees and internally displaced children: Of the estimated 27.4 million refugees worldwide and the 30 million displaced people, at least half are children. “At a crucial and vulnerable time in their lives, they have been brutally uprooted and exposed to danger and insecurity. In the course of displacement, millions of children have been separated from their families, physically abused, exploited and abducted into military groups, or they have perished from hunger and disease.” (para. 66)

Sexual exploitation and gender-based violence: “Rape poses a continual threat to women and girls during armed conflict, as do other forms of gender-based violence including prostitution, sexual humiliation and mutilation, trafficking and domestic violence. While abuses such as murder and torture have long been denounced as war crimes, rape has been downplayed as an unfortunate but inevitable side effect of war.” (para. 91)

Landmines and unexploded ordnance: “Anti-personnel mines are designed not to kill, but to maim, yet even the smallest mine explosion can be lethal for a child. . . . For the children who survive, the medical problems related to amputation are often severe, as the limb of a growing child grows faster than the surrounding tissue and requires repeated amputation.” (para. 116)

Child soldiers: “The progressive involvement of youth in acts of extreme violence desensitizes them to suffering. In a number of cases, young people have been deliberately exposed to horrific scenes. Such experience makes children more likely to commit violent acts themselves and may contribute to a break with society. In many countries, including Afghanistan, Mozambique, Colombia and Nicaragua, children have even been forced to commit atrocities against their own families or communities.” (para. 48) “Child soldiers may find it difficult to disengage from the idea that violence is a legitimate means of achieving one’s aims. Even where the experience of participating in ‘the cause’ has been positive, the transition to a non-violent lifestyle will be difficult.” (para. 57)

Homicide of street children

Generally, as discussed earlier, murder of children by parents is much more common than murder of children by strangers. But in certain countries, children – in particular children living and/or working on the streets of large cities – have been murdered or victimized by both criminal gangs and by official law enforcement agencies. The UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, drawing on various official inquiries, has provided the following information on the homicide of street children:

A UNICEF-financed study of homicides of children and adolescents in four Colombian cities found 1,678 victims during the first six months of 1994. This suggests a total annual figure for the whole of Colombia of not less than 4,000. Information on those responsible for homicides is negligible, but the study indicates cases in which responsibility has been pinned on popular militias, juvenile gangs, organized criminal groups, the National Police, and groups dedicated to 'social cleansing'.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child, when examining Colombia's initial report under the Convention, expressed grave concern about "the life-threatening situation faced by an alarming number of children in Colombia, particularly those who, in order to survive, are working and/or living on the streets. Many of those children are subject to arbitrary arrest and torture and other inhuman or degrading treatment by authorities. They are also subject to coercion, disappearance, trafficking and murder by criminal groups."⁶⁶

The homicide of children and adolescents in Brazil has received international attention. The Brazilian Federal Police registered a total of 4,611 homicides of children and adolescents over a period of three years (1988–1990), most of them boys between 15 and 17, of whom 82 per cent were black. According to UNICEF, contrary to popular belief many of the victims of homicide were not children living and/or working on the streets, nor criminals or gang members, but simply poor youth. A study issued by three independent Brazilian organizations found that 38 per cent of the victims had a permanent address, and many of them lived with their families; of 457 victims studied, only 13 were identified as drug dealers.

A study by the Public Ministry and UNICEF on homicides of children and adolescents in São Paulo indicated that individuals and/or 'extermination groups' are responsible for most

of the homicides. A special commission of the Brazilian Federal Parliament assigned to investigate the killings of children and adolescents concluded that the involvement of state agents, especially the civil and military police, in death squads was far from exceptional.⁶⁵

In 1991, 622 children and adolescents were victims of homicide in São Paulo. An analysis, carried out in the course of a UNICEF/Public Ministry inquiry, of 307 of these homicides found that in 37 per cent of the cases the perpetrator was unknown, and the remaining 63 per cent of cases were closed before a criminal process could be initiated. In 42 cases the victims were shot from behind; in 29 cases victims were shot at point blank range.

A first sign that the general trend of impunity can be reversed comes from Guatemala, where four policemen have been convicted for murdering a street child, Nahamán Camona López, in 1990. This is one of the few cases worldwide where official involvement in such homicides has been proved. Another positive sign is an NGO-initiated programme to assist the Guatemalan National Police in training new recruits on the proper treatment of street children.⁶⁷

Violence in institutions

Violence in institutions can take the form of physical punishment, physical restraint, solitary confinement and other types of isolation, obligations to wear distinctive clothing, reduction of diet, restriction or denial of contact with family members and/or friends, verbal abuse or sarcasm. In some legal systems, teachers' and other carers' legal rights to use physical and other types of punishment are derived from their position *in loco parentis*. In others, the independent authority of teachers and others outside the family to use such punishment is explicitly confirmed in the law. Legal reform to prohibit physical punishment and other humiliating treatment of children must, of course, protect all children in all settings – in the home, in other informal settings, in non-institutionalized forms of care (foster care, day care, and so forth), and in all schools and other institutions.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has found that violent punishment – canings, beatings and floggings – is still in use in some countries as a sentence of the courts for offenders as young as 10, and is also used in penal institutions. In some communities 'traditional' or 'informal' systems of justice also involve corporal punishment. The Committee has empha-

sized that Article 28.2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, concerning school discipline, includes conformity with Article 19, and the protection of children from "all forms of physical or mental violence". Physical punishment, and other humiliating punishments amounting to mental violence, are thus outlawed. Wherever the reporting process under the Convention has revealed the continued existence of school corporal punishment, the Committee has proposed its abolition. It has already been outlawed throughout Europe, with the sole exception of private schools in the United Kingdom. It is prohibited in some other countries in all continents, including for example China, Burkina Faso and Botswana, New Zealand, and half of the US states.

The European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg and the Human Rights Committee have also condemned the use of corporal punishment. The European Court ruled in 1978 that judicial birching of a juvenile (in the Isle of Man) breached Article 3 of the European Convention, which bars "inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment". Commission decisions on applications made by UK schoolchildren and their parents on school corporal punishment led to abolition in all state-supported education in 1987. During the 1990s, constitutional courts or supreme courts in many countries also censured corporal punishment, including recently those in Namibia, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Sri Lanka. In South Africa until 1993, up to 30,000 young offenders were whipped each year. But in June 1995, the new Constitutional Court declared whipping unconstitutional, and the Government has prohibited physical punishment in the penal system and all schools.

Sexual exploitation

Under the Convention, Article 19 requires action to protect children from "all forms of . . . maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse". This is expanded in Article 34, which requires States Parties to "undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse". Article 34 emphasizes the international nature of certain kinds of sexual exploitation of children, requiring States to take all appropriate

national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent:

- (a) *the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity;*
- (b) *the exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices;*

(c) the exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.

In recent years, extensive sexual abuse of children in residential institutions has been uncovered in many countries. In addition, 'organized' sexual abuse of children – frequently using children in private or state-run residential institutions – has been exposed, revealing networks of paedophiles.

Some forms of abuse are rooted in centuries-old traditional practices. Others are quite new – for example, the use of modern technology to disseminate child pornography, and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation including organized sex tourism involving child prostitutes.

The age at which children are permitted to consent to sexual activity varies from country to country between 12 and 18 years. In some countries a minimum age is specified, and in addition a higher age when the sexual relationship is with a person in a position of trust or authority over the child (for instance, a relation, teacher or care worker). One example is provided by Canada's Criminal Code, which specifies that "it is a criminal offence to have sex with someone under the age of 14 years, with an exception where the younger partner is at least 12 years of age, where the age difference between the two partners is less than two years, and where the older youth is not in a position of trust or authority over the younger one, nor is the latter his or her dependant."⁶⁷

During the drafting of the Convention, representatives from France and the Netherlands who proposed the inclusion of an article on protection of children from exploitation, including in particular sexual exploitation, stated during discussion that the purpose was not to regulate the sexual life of children but rather to combat the sexual exploitation of children on the basis of concrete examples.⁷²⁵¹

In some countries there are differential ages of consent for girls and for boys, and for different forms of sexuality – heterosexuality and homosexuality. In the United Kingdom, for example, the law recognizes a young person's consent at 16 to heterosexual activities, but at 18 to homosexual activities. These differences, like the very common gender differences in the minimum legal age for marriage, are apparently in breach of the non-discrimination principle in Article 2 of the Convention.

Aside from the bar on discrimination, the Convention is not prescriptive about the age at which the child is to be given the right to consent to sexual activity. Such limits need to be

judged against the overall principles of respect for the child's evolving capacities, and for his or her best interests and survival and maximum development. The international trend is towards a higher age of consent (for example, Sri Lanka recently raised it from 12 to 16; Thailand's new anti-prostitution law has raised the age from 15 to 18).

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has expressed particular concern at traditional beliefs that lead to exploitation – for example, the belief that by having sex with a young girl, one is able to rejuvenate oneself. During discussion of Jamaica's initial report under the Convention, a Jamaican representative stated that "in rural areas, residents were often reluctant to report cases of sexual abuse. In some parishes, it was held that sex with a virgin cured venereal disease; that belief was sometimes responsible for the sexual abuse of very small children. Since the mother shared that belief, she would not report the abuse. Such notions, grounded in tradition, were difficult to eradicate."⁶⁸ There is also chilling evidence that younger and younger children are being used as prostitutes in an attempt to lessen the adults' risk of HIV/AIDS.⁷⁰

In 1996, the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children held in Stockholm adopted a Declaration and Agenda for Action, using the Convention as its framework:

*The commercial sexual exploitation of children is a fundamental violation of children's rights. It comprises sexual abuse by the adult and remuneration in cash or kind to the child or a third person or persons. The child is treated as a sexual object and as a commercial object. The commercial sexual exploitation of children constitutes a form of coercion and violence against children, and amounts to forced labour and a contemporary form of slavery.*⁴¹

Action at local, national and international levels was called for, including the development by the year 2000 of national agendas for action and indicators of progress, with set goals and time-frames for implementation.

Various international NGOs have promoted a proposal for an additional protocol to the Convention to cover particular manifestations of sexual exploitation, including **sex tourism**. In addition, a United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children has been studying and reporting on aspects of the problem.

Child pornography

A by-product of sexual abuse of children, and particularly of organized sexual abuse, is the produc-

tion and dissemination of child pornography. The growth of a worldwide market in child pornography (disseminated not only through books and magazines but through computer disks and the Internet) has led to cross-national police and customs cooperation. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has welcomed developments in individual countries' legislation to make the possession, as well as the production and dissemination, of child pornography a criminal offence.

..... **Sport and violence**

Physical violence in sport – both by participants and by spectators – has become an issue of concern in many countries. In relation to participant violence, some countries have introduced legislation to prohibit sports such as boxing in which injuring an opponent is the deliberate aim (as distinct from the occasional accidental injuries that occur in other 'contact' sports).

Sports bodies, internationally and nationally, are now taking very seriously the problem of spectator violence – largely but not exclusively involving violence both to and by young people, almost invariably male. For example, the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers has adopted a 'Code of Sports Ethics', which emphasizes the

→ **Sex tourism**

There has been a great deal of publicity and debate about the issue of child prostitution. It is acknowledged as a problem in both industrialized and developing countries. Particular outrage has been focused on revelations of 'sex tourism': the availability of child prostitutes has been advertised in the promotion of holidays for mostly Western tourists in various countries including the Philippines, India and Sri Lanka. Campaigns by international NGOs have led to a review of legislation in many countries to enable their nationals to be prosecuted in their own country for criminal sexual abuse of children committed in other countries. By 1995 more than 10 countries had enacted such laws, and there had been some prosecutions under them (for example a Swede was prosecuted in 1995 for sexual exploitation of a child in Thailand). The Committee has welcomed these reforms. In addition, the World Tourism Organization has adopted a "Statement on the Prevention of Organized Sex Tourism", to mobilize the industry to be more sensitive to children's interests, encouraging education, joint action and legal reform.

COMBATING VIOLENCE INVOLVING CHILDREN

by Peter Newell

Peter Newell launches here a discussion on strategies for combating violence involving children based on the work of the UK Commission on Children and Violence. Reactions to this section as well as to other parts of the Digest will be reported in due course in an update to this publication.

As indicated throughout this *Digest*, the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides a framework of principles and standards for policy development to reduce all forms of violence involving children. Systematic programmes to reduce and prevent violence should be part of every State's agenda for children. The overall aim must be to build a safe, non-violent society for all. But the focus is on children because there is solid evidence to show that early intervention is vital to prevent the development of violent attitudes and actions, in childhood and later life.

It is crucial that strategies against violence should be carefully planned and be positive. Strategies and interventions can have unintended negative effects. For example, unrealistic fears of violence can lead to a fortress mentality, community distrust, and a reduction in children's freedom and mobility that is certainly not in their best interests.

Basic strategies

Adoption of a commitment to building a non-violent society by government, communities, institutions, organizations. This demands:

- understanding and acknowledgement of the factors that interact to increase the potential for violence involving children, and those that prevent violence;
- action to prevent violence in all services for and work with children and their families;
- consistent disavowal, in particular by opinion leaders in every society, of all forms of interpersonal violence.

Development of coordinating intersectoral and interdisciplinary structures at national, regional and local levels to implement the commitment in practice. In relation to **armed conflict**, the recent major report prepared for the United Nations on *The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children* includes very detailed proposals for

action internationally and nationally. In relation to combating sexual exploitation of children, the 1996 World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children agreed a detailed agenda for action.

Reviewing all forms of support and all services for children and families from a specifically anti-violence perspective. Inequality, discrimination and lack of appropriate support and services for children and families all increase the potential for violence. Thus, statewide programmes aimed at challenging inequality and poverty, improving health and education services and opportunities for children's play and leisure, as well as family support including parenting education and information and pre-school care and education will all be relevant to violence prevention. But their full potential will only be realized when they are reviewed in detail, focusing on what is being done, or could be done, within each programme or service to prevent and combat violence by applying non-violent attitudes, aspirations and behaviour.

Legal reform to remove tolerance in the law for any level of violence to children, including physical punishment and deliberate humiliation in the home and in institutions.

Reviewing law, policy and practice on possession of guns and other lethal weapons, to reduce the risk and severity of injury.

Reform of juvenile justice systems in conformity with the Convention and United Nations rules and guidelines, to ensure that responses to violent behaviour contribute to violence prevention, rather than to a further proliferation of violence.

Challenging violence to children in institutions. Article 3.3 of the Convention requires that "institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care and protection of children shall conform with the standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, in the number and suitability of their staff as well as competent supervision". In relation to protection from violence, there should be clear standards established in legislation for all institutional settings which include children:

- prohibiting physical punishment and any other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (in addition to this general prohibition, rules should specify the prohibition

of any such forms of discipline or treatment known to have been commonly used);

- requiring clear policies for the prevention of any forms of violence by children against children in institutions.

Reviewing the role of the media, seeking to ensure that the positive potential for aiding violence prevention is fully realized, and that the portrayal of violent images does not contribute to the problem of violence. All involved in the media accessible to children should commit themselves to working towards a non-violent society, and should be aware of current knowledge of the effects of violent images on children. Classification schemes and voluntary controls to limit gratuitous violent images and children's access to them should be introduced or improved. Information on and packaging of programmes and material should enable children, parents and other carers to exercise informed

Preventive policies in institutional settings

Policies for the prevention of any forms of violence by children against children in institutions should include:

- provision of immediate protection and support to those who suffer violence;
- appropriate non-violent responses to perpetrators of violence;
- arrangements for ensuring that the policy is known to all in the institution, including children, in a form they can understand;
- arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the operation of the policy, which should include children;
- ensuring there are clear and well-publicized procedures to enable children to seek confidential advice, and to make representations and complaints about their treatment to an independent body, with appropriate powers of investigation and recommendation/action. Such procedures should ensure that, where necessary, children have access to independent advocates or representatives who can advise them and/or act on their behalf; special arrangements may be required to safeguard disabled children and very young children.

control over viewing and listening. Appropriate media education should be encouraged, in schools and for the public.

Developing systems for information-gathering and research on violence involving children. Implementation of Article 19 and other linked articles on violence to children demands more consistent information-gathering, as a basis for the development of law, policy and practice to assert children's rights to physical and personal integrity and thus to help reduce and prevent all forms of interpersonal violence. The following section summarizes the information, statistics and research required.

Information-gathering on violence to children

For adequate information to be provided on levels of violence to children in all countries, common definitions, research protocols and indicators of effective child protection need to be developed and agreed by appropriate authorities in each country. The framework of the Convention should be used as the basis for developing indicators.

Information

For policy development, information is required on:

(a) *Legal frameworks (criminal and family law):*

- law on assault: details of any exceptions or defences related to violence to children, including any rights of parents or others to use violent or humiliating punishment, and differences in law between the protection available to adults and to children; any other specific offences of violence to children – for instance, cruelty;
- legislation or other arrangements to prevent violence to children in the penal system and in all institutions, both state-run and private, including violence by adults, and by other children;
- legislation or other arrangements to prevent or control traditional practices involving violence or prejudicial to health;
- minimum age at which children are judged capable of consent to sexual activity;
- offences of sexual assault;
- legislation or other arrangements to prevent or control child prostitution, abuse of children in other jurisdictions by nationals ('sex tourism'), and child pornography (production, dissemination and possession);
- any legislation or guidance relating to children's rights to confidential advice, counselling, treatment and compensation regarding violent victimization.

(b) *Child protection systems.* Definitions of child abuse used in legislation and/or administration of child protection systems, including:

- physical abuse;
- emotional abuse;
- sexual abuse;
- neglect.

Details of child protection policy and procedures, including:

- measures for prevention of all forms of violence in the family, in substitute care and in institutions; and for prevention of accidents, self-harm and suicide, and of sexual and other forms of exploitation.
- children's access to confidential advice and counselling, for instance, through telephone helplines;
- obligations, if any, to report violence to children;
- obligations on state authorities to investigate;
- powers of investigation;
- emergency powers to remove a child at risk;
- criteria for compulsory separation of a child;
- judicial/court involvement, including any special arrangements for courts hearing cases concerning violence to children (for example, arrangements for child witnesses); sentencing policies and any arrangements for diversion from judicial process.

Arrangements to ensure respect for the Convention's principles in all the above and any other child protection and court procedures:

- the best interests principle (Article 3);
- right of child to express views and have them taken seriously, and to be heard in any judicial or administrative proceedings (Article 12);
- respect for evolving capacities of children (Article 5); consideration of children's right to make decisions for themselves, to consent or withhold consent to examinations, etc.

Arrangements for rehabilitation of victims and compensation (Article 39).

Arrangements for treatment and rehabilitation of perpetrators of violence to children (Article 19).

Prevention programmes aimed at encouraging children to protect themselves from violence.

Statistics

If common definitions and – as far as possible – procedures can be established for the collection of statistics, building on those of WHO and other agencies, and on existing research and statistics in individual countries, it will be possible to make comparisons over time within and between countries. This will help with the evaluation and development of prevention programmes.

(a) *Criminal:* Criminal statistics for violent crimes against children, including homicide, various categories of physical and sexual assault, cruelty and abduction. Such statistics should be centrally collected and analysed by age and sex of victim, and where appropriate by status of perpetrator. They should be presented also as a proportion of the age group.

(b) *Child protection:* Statistics on causes of all child deaths (this demands careful investigation to identify causes and inform prevention). Systematic injury surveillance of children within health services – doctors, other health professionals, hospital outpatients and admissions. Police and social welfare authorities' statistics on reported cases of violence and the results of investigations following reports. Where local registers of children 'at risk' of violence and/or abuse are maintained, analysis of numbers and proportion of relevant age group on registers by cause (actual or suspected abuse; type of abuse), gender and age.

Returns from all institutions involving children (or a representative sample of different categories of institutions – schools, child care, penal, health) of incidents of violence, including bullying and self-harm, based on confidential interviewing of children.

Research

Retrospective studies of representative groups of adults' childhood experiences of violence (using commonly agreed questions and definitions).

Studies of levels of physical and sexual violence to children in representative samples of families, using in-depth confidential interviews with children and parents, also covering violence experienced in institutions and communities.

Analysis of calls relating to violence made to any confidential helplines for children.

In addition, there is a need for specific and longitudinal research studies, building on the substantial work already carried out in some countries, to:

- seek information on factors involved in the development of various forms of violence to children;
- evaluate preventive strategies – including in particular children's own views of professional and other interventions. There will also need to be research to evaluate the collection of statistics – for instance, the process of recording deaths as homicide, and injuries as abuse/assault.

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responsibility of all concerned to work closely with and set a good example to children and young people.

Another kind of violence is endured by young athletes on the champion track. Driven by dreams of prestige and profit, trainers and parents

pressure children into following extremely rigorous training regimes. Young sports protégés become commodities, traded on national and international markets. In the two years following the fall of the Berlin Wall, for instance, some 40 young soccer players aged 13–17 were 'bought' by Western German clubs. Other children have

been doped by trainers to enhance performance, or forced to diet in order to qualify for matches. For every child who becomes a champion, there are hundreds of children who have sacrificed their childhoods and sometimes their health, while receiving very little in return, frequently not even a proper education.⁴⁹

PREVALENCE OF VIOLENCE BY CHILDREN

There is current concern in many societies worldwide at levels of violence by children and young people. In some societies it would appear that such waves of concern are cyclical, rather than based on hard evidence of real increases. There is also the tendency of the media to focus on particularly horrific but isolated events, such as the Bulger case, rather than on overall trends.

Violent crimes

Estimates of trends of serious violence by children and young people generally come from age-analysed statistics of convictions for violent (including sexual) offences. But as with statistics of violence to children, changes may reflect a greater sensitivity to violent offences, more resources put into investigation, or varying policies in relation to young offenders (for instance, the current move in some industrialized countries away from informal, non-judicial responses towards more prosecution and more custodial sentences).

In a very few countries there have also been large-scale crime surveys involving interviews with children and young people about their criminal, including violent, behaviour, which are likely to provide more accurate reflections of reality, and if repeated over time, an indication of real trends in behaviour.

Some countries report increased concern over violence by children in schools and other institutions, including suggestions that more children are carrying weapons – guns and knives. In various parts of the United States, schools have installed metal detectors, and security guards patrol buildings. One aspect of the problem is bullying, which can range from teasing and harassment (commonly including

racial and sexual harassment) to serious physical assault. More positively, non-violent conflict resolution has become a standard part of the curriculum of many school systems, together with anti-bullying strategies developed cooperatively by students, teachers and parents. The Norwegian professor Dan Olweus, for instance, carried out pioneering work in assessing the prevalence of school bullying in Norway. Use of a questionnaire nationally revealed that about 15 per cent of pupils were involved in bully/victim problems "now and then" or more frequently; about 9 per

cent were victims and 7 per cent bullies. An anti-bullying policy introduced in Norway as a result is said to have reduced the incidence by up to 50 per cent.⁵⁰

Children's self-inflicted violence

Protecting children from self-inflicted violence, including suicide and attempted suicide, comes within the ambit not only of Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but also

→ The James Bulger tragedy

One particular violent crime by young children in 1993 received worldwide media attention: the tragic violent abduction and murder of two-year-old James Bulger in Liverpool, United Kingdom, by two 10-year-old boys. At first the media spotlight focused on the details of the murder. But increasingly the spotlight, in the UK and elsewhere, has shifted to a more considered look at the antecedents of the event in the two boy-murderers' childhood, and at their treatment following arrest. The boys were held in separate locked units for six months before their trial, with no access to any form of treatment, in case it prejudiced their prosecution. They were tried in an adult court, as adults would have been tried, and at the end of the trial the judge, describing the boys' action as "an act of unparalleled evil and barbarity", sentenced them to be detained "at Her Majesty's pleasure" (parlance for an indeterminate sentence of imprisonment under the English system) and revealed their identities. His recommendation that they should be locked up for a minimum of eight years was increased to 10 years by the Lord Chief Justice, and to 15 years by the Home Secretary.

The murder was not in fact unparalleled; most countries report very rare but occasional murders by children of children. Far more common in all societies, but receiving far less attention, are horrific murders of children by their parents.

The method of setting the sentence and the manner of the boys' trial are currently being challenged in the UK courts and before the European Commission of Human Rights. In June 1997, England's highest court, the House of Lords, judged the method of sentencing by the Home Secretary to have been unlawful. Such treatment of children clearly breaches the principles and standards of the Convention. Research evidence also suggests strongly that it conflicts with the interests of the society into which the boys will eventually be reintegrated. It is interesting to note that in France, also in 1993, judges determining the sentences of young murderers gave priority to care within the family, allowing three young children found guilty of the brutal murder of a tramp to remain with their families instead of being institutionalized.⁵¹

of Article 6, the right to life. Increases in the suicide rate, in particular among young men, have been reported in recent years from most industrialized countries. Another cause of concern in certain countries has been a high rate of self-harm and suicide in institutions, including, in particular, custodial penal institutions for juvenile offenders. There have been suggestions that suicide by young people is underrecorded in some countries, presumably to avoid causing pain and embarrassment to parents and others.

Protection from self-harm overlaps with

protection of children from drug abuse (Article 33). Research has found particular links between suicide and the use by young people of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, including alcohol.

Eating disorders and disturbances (anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa) represent another form of self-harm. Eating disorders only became a subject of major systematic study in the 1970s. A recent review of international research concluded that there was no clear evidence of increased prevalence. These disorders

occur mostly among young women during adolescent development. They are disorders of affluence, plenty and economic development, much more common in advanced industrialized nations. The "thin body ideal of feminine beauty, established continuously since around 1960, seems an important predisposing condition for eating disorders"; media dissemination of the 'ideal', and greater exposure to the media could have caused an increase in eating disorders, but no research has yet demonstrated a causal relationship.¹⁴

WHY DO CHILDREN BECOME VIOLENT?

The idea that some children are born 'bad' and destined to be violent survivors, and it underlies punitive – and frequently violent – responses to children's behaviour in many societies. Available research on child development, however, provides no support for such negative theories. Children's violent behaviour often has its origin in adult violence to children, usually in the home.

The cycle of violence

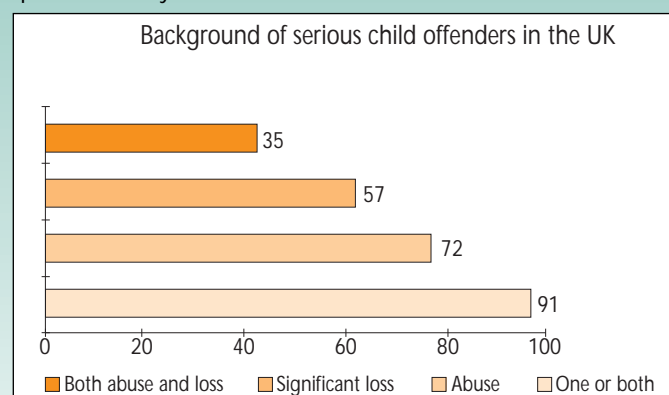
The 'cycle of violence' is certainly not a simple concept, nor is it clearly understood. There is no doubt that the direct experience of violence (or neglect) in childhood substantially increases the risk of subsequent violent behaviour. But the majority of such victimized children do not become violent.

Given the multiplicity of factors involved, studies of the **antecedents of violence** cannot identify causes beyond doubt. Even in the case of alcohol and other substance abuse, where the connection with aggressive or violent behaviour may appear obvious, simple causal links are difficult to establish. Research can, however, identify risk factors and make judgments about the relative significance of particular factors. All commentators appear agreed that it is in the early years, and in particular within the family, that attitudes to violence are generally formed. The best predictor of violence in adulthood is violent behaviour in childhood. Most of the risk factors identified

The antecedents of violence

A detailed US study found that being abused or neglected as a child increased the likelihood of arrest as a juvenile by 53 per cent, as an adult by 38 per cent, and for a violent crime by 38 per cent.³⁷

A recent review of the backgrounds of a large sample of children who have killed or committed other grave (usually violent) crimes in the United Kingdom found that 72 per cent had experienced abuse, and 57 per cent significant loss (death or loss of contact with someone important); 35 per cent had experienced both phenomena, and a total of 91 per cent had experienced one or both (see the chart). The report emphasizes that "Not all children who experience these phenomena become violent offenders, and not all violent offenders have suffered these traumata. However the frequency is sufficiently high to make the pattern worthy of some attention and to ask how it can be avoided."⁵



for violence are the same as for delinquency. But substantial research evidence has highlighted violent and humiliating forms of discipline as significant in the development of violent attitudes and actions from an early age.

Violence is overwhelmingly a male problem; the roots for this appear to be primarily social rather than biological, highlighting the inadequacies of current socialization of male children, and the promotion of insensitive and overbearing male behavioural models and attitudes in many societies.

There is no clear evidence of genetic causation of violence, but one factor in a predisposition to violence may be an individual's temperament. Genetic and social influences are inextricably intertwined. From the earliest age, how a child behaves will determine his or her relationships with others and how he or she is treated, by parents and siblings, by other children, by other carers and teachers. While acknowledging that "biological and personality factors may predispose individuals to violence", the Australian National Committee on

Violence cited “strong evidence” that “in almost every case a loving and secure environment can overcome such predispositions”.⁴⁵

Inadequate monitoring and supervision of children by parents and other adults can be crucial in realizing a potential for violence. The American Psychological Association Commission on Violence and Youth found that “youth at risk of becoming extremely aggressive and violent tend to share common experiences that appear to place them on a ‘trajectory towards violence’. These youth tend to have experienced weak bonding to caretakers in infancy and ineffective parenting techniques, including lack of supervision, inconsistent discipline, highly punitive or abusive treatment and failure to reinforce positive, pro-social behaviour. These developmental deficits, in turn, appear to lead to poor peer relations and high levels of aggressiveness. . .”⁴⁶

Economic and environmental deprivations are powerful stress factors, in particular making it more difficult to be an effective parent. Crude international comparisons suggest that violence is greatest in societies with the sharpest social and economic inequalities. A recent WHO report commented:

*We are only beginning to understand how marked social and economic disparities contribute to the aetiology of violence. Poverty, joblessness and the lack of real employment opportunities may promote violence by generating a sense of frustration, low self-esteem, hopelessness about the future, and family instability. Racism and sexism produce social and economic disparities and may contribute to violence by depriving certain segments of the society of the opportunities to be successful in school and work. The poor in many societies do not have equal access to criminal justice, health care and educational systems, making it more difficult to escape from the impoverished conditions that contribute to violence.*⁴⁷

Broader social factors are influential too: the extent to which a society appears to condone violence influences the values and the actions of individuals. In many societies, for example, there is support for violent punishment of children, ambivalence about violence in sport, and a considerable appetite for violent images in the media.

Violent images and toys

Concern at levels of interpersonal violence in Western societies has led to a current focus on the effects that violent images in the

media – in particular on television, in videos and most recently computer-generated images – may have on children. The concerns are both that frequent exposure to such images may desensitize children to violence and that children may be encouraged to imitate particular violent behaviour.

A recent American review of available research, covering 188 studies over the period 1957–1990, concluded: “Overall, the vast majority of studies, whatever their methodology, showed that exposure to television violence resulted in increased aggressive behaviour, both contemporaneously and over time.”⁴⁸ But it should be emphasized that these findings are challenged by other academics who point to flaws in the research, inadequate analysis of the context of violence in television and films, and the lack of acknowledgement that very often pro-social, anti-violence messages prevail; there are also studies that, through direct interviews with children, challenge the idea that children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of the media.

In addition to Article 19, the Convention requires States in Article 17 to “encourage the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being, bearing in mind the provisions of Articles 13 and 18”. Guidelines must be developed in forms that respect the child’s right to freedom of expression (Article 13), and the primary responsibility of the parents for the upbringing and development of the child (Article 18). The overall emphasis of Article 17 is on encouraging the mass media to develop their pro-social potential for child development.

The United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency also emphasize the “extensive social role and responsibility” of the mass media:

The mass media generally, and the television and film media in particular, should be encouraged to minimize the level of pornography, drugs and violence portrayed and to display violence and exploitation disfavouredly, as well as to avoid demeaning and degrading presentations, especially of children, women and interpersonal relations, and to promote egalitarian principles and roles. (para. 43)

Modern technological developments, including satellite and cable television, computer-generated images and the Internet, make it increasingly difficult for States to control the content of

media readily available to the population, including children. This emphasizes the protective role of parents and other carers. There is common agreement that children and their parents and other carers need to be educated in critical understanding of modern media. Those involved in the media need to ensure that they act responsibly, and that the content of their products and programmes is clearly labelled to enable parents to exercise appropriate guidance and direction to their children.

In countries where there is a high sensitivity to violence, these considerations have led to a combination of state regulation (codes for broadcasters and others requiring precise labelling and warnings of the violent content of products/programmes, age-related classification of videos, defined times for the transmission of ‘adult’ programmes, complaints systems and enforcement procedures), voluntary controls by the private sector, and media education in schools and for the public, including in particular parents.

‘Aggressive toys’ (defined as toys whose purpose is to stimulate behaviour or fantasy involving the attempted injury of another person) raise similar concerns to violent images in the media: they may reflect and contribute to an overall desensitization of children to violence, and they may inhibit more pro-social and non-violent play. In Sweden the production of war toys has been banned; Spain and Germany do not allow them to be advertised. A 1982 resolution of the European Parliament called on Member States to ban visual and verbal advertising of war toys, and also the manufacture and where possible sale of replica guns and rifles; the production or sale of war toys should be progressively reduced; and these toys replaced with toys that are constructive and that develop creativity.⁴⁹

The debate on the significance of media violence and aggressive toys as factors in the development of violent attitudes and actions is an important one, but it should not be allowed to divert attention from the actual experience of violence by children at the hands of adults – and its potent effects on their development. ■

Various intergovernmental organizations are concerned with aspects of violence involving children.

UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), for example, all contributed to the United Nations study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children, led by Graça Machel. UNICEF has an established policy for action on behalf of children in need of special protection measures, which is grounded in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and which will be implemented in part through the establishment of specific country, regional and global technical support networks. The Programme Division of UNICEF New York has a Child Protection Section, which includes a focus on street children. WHO has recently established a Task Force on Violence and Health and is considering proposals for making violence prevention a public health priority. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has conducted studies on street children and sexual exploitation in connection with its International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) held a conference on 'Young People and the Media' in April 1997, in which the problem of violence figured prominently. The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) in Rome has directed attention to violence in the family (see Bibliography).

Similarly, there are international and national professional organizations – particularly in the fields of law, social work, health, education and psychology – as well as academic and other institutes, whose work is relevant to the topic. In addition, several countries have one or more national bodies focused exclusively on the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

Considering the significant role that NGOs have played in raising some of the issues highlighted in this *Digest*, the Centre decided that it would be appropriate to bring their activities into focus. It therefore contacted a number of organizations, mainly at the regional and international levels, requesting them to provide information about their work. The following section contains their replies. It is not meant to be a comprehensive listing; nor does it represent a prioritization or ranking of organizations, but merely a first attempt

to provide signposts in a highly complex field. Some Internet information has also been included, which reflects websites available in June 1997; this information, of course, is subject to change.

GENERAL

Child Rights Information Network (CRIN)
An important entry point to NGOs at the national level is the Child Rights Information Network (CRIN), which has an organizations database and membership directory, covering all aspects of children's rights. Entries can be sorted by expertise and by geographical area.

Becky Purbrick
Coordinator
c/o Save the Children
17 Grove Lane
London SE5 8RD
United Kingdom
Tel.: +44 171 703 5400
Fax: +44 171 793 7630
E-mail: crin@pro-net.co.uk
Web page:
<http://www.childhub.ch/webpub/crhome>

Forum on Children and Violence
The Forum on Children and Violence provides a new and innovative model of a national organization aiming to deal holistically with the subject of violence and children. Established in 1997 by the UK Commission on Children and Violence, the Forum brings together a wide range of people committed to working towards a non-violent society through prevention of violence involving children. The Forum has a newsletter and is compiling checklists on violence prevention. It is included here as a model for national-level organizations interested in providing a forum on the different aspects of children and violence.

Janet Convery
c/o National Children's Bureau
8 Wakley Street
London EC1V 7QE
United Kingdom
Tel.: +44 171 843 6309
Fax: +44 171 278 9512

International Centre for Childhood and the Family (ICCAF)
A third organization with a general focus, including activities relating to violence, is the International Centre for Childhood and the Family (ICCAF), recently formed through the merger of the International Children's Centre and the Institute of the Child and the Family. ICCAF is dedicated to children's health, protection and rights worldwide through information, training and consulting programmes.
Dr. Olivier Brasseur
Director-General
Carrefour de Longchamp
Bois de Boulogne
75016 Paris
France

ON THE WEB: General organizations

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: Contains database of documents (State Party Reports, Concluding Observations, Summary Reports, etc.) relating to the Committee on the Rights of the Child as well as to other treaty bodies.
<http://www.unhchr.ch>

Child Rights Information Network: Includes general information on its members and their projects and publications. Database of more than 500 CRIN members can be searched by topic and regional or country focus.
<http://www.childhub.ch/webpub/crhome>

Tel.: +33 1 44 30 20 00
Fax: +33 1 45 25 73 67
E-mail: 1006.31.1101@CompuServe.com

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN)

Regional Office
P.O. Box 71420
Nairobi
Kenya

Tel.: +254 2 72 24 96/72 67 94
Fax: +254 2 72 19 99
E-mail: anppcan@arcc.or.ke
Web page:
<http://www.africaonline.co.ke/anppcan>

Person(s) to contact

Ouko Ooko Moses
Documentalist

Scope

Benin, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe

Activities

Undertakes activities related to child abuse and neglect in general, and youth and violence.

Information services

Provides information on how and where abused children can be assisted; on children's rights and child protection; on children's rights organizations in Africa; and on African States Parties to both the CRC and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

Child VIP Project (Violence Identification and Prevention)
1325 Fourth Avenue, Suite 1500
Seattle, WA 98111-3846
USA
Tel.: + 1 206 292 1144
E-mail: driter@igc.apc.org or
jkydd@helsell.com
Web page: <http://www.speakeasy.org/childvip>

Person(s) to contact

Dianne Riter
Coordinator

Date founded
1995

Links

Scope

International

Activities

Develops protocols for the identification, assessment, diagnosis and prevention of violence to children on topics including: physical trauma, sexual trauma, psychological trauma, armed conflict and inappropriate child labour; develops effective methods for reporting identified traumas.

Information services

Maintains a web site with copies of protocols; publishes a *Taxonomy of Trauma*.

Fundación para la Protección de la Infancia Dañada por los Estados de Emergencia (PIDEE-CEDIAL)
Av. Holanda 3587
Casilla 599-11
Santiago
Chile

Tel.: + 562 225 8752

Fax: idem

E-mail: pidde@reuna.cl

Web page: <http://www2.chilenet.cl/pidee>

Person(s) to contact

Maria Eugenia Rojas
Executive Secretary

Date founded

1980

Scope

Latin America

Activities

Provides psychosocial assistance to children at risk; runs a Documentation Centre on Infancy in Latin America (CEDIAL).

Information services

Issues a bulletin on childhood and children's rights in Latin America; broadcasts a programme entitled "Children's Rights: Dreams and Realities".

The International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN)

401 N. Michigan St., Suite 2200

Chicago, IL 60611

USA

Tel.: +1 312 644 6610 ext. 4713

Fax: +1 312 321 6869

ON THE WEB: Child abuse and neglect

African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN):

<http://www.africaonline.co.ke/anppcan>

Child VIP: Information on physical and other kinds of trauma.

<http://www.speakeasy.org/childvip>

Fundación de Protección a la Infancia Dañada (PIDEE-CEDIAL) por los Estados de Emergencia:

<http://www2.chilenet.cl/pidee>

International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN): International Journal and Newsletter.

<http://child.cornell.edu/ispcan/ispcan.html>

E-mail: Kim_svevo@sba.com

Web page:

<http://child.cornell.edu/ispcan/ispcan.html>

Person(s) to contact

Kimberly Svevo
Staff Director

Howard B. Levy, M.D.

President

E-mail: howpep@aol.com

Date founded

1977

Scope

Worldwide network

Activities

Carries out work to prevent abuse, neglect, exploitation and all other forms of cruelty to children, and to promote children's healthy physical and social development. Emphasis is on increasing international collaboration.

Information services

Publishes research journals, an international newsletter (in English and Spanish), special reports and books of abstracts; organizes congresses, conferences, training seminars and workshops.

CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICTS

ANPPCAN

(Full contact details under Child abuse and neglect)

Activities

Undertakes activities related to children in situations of armed conflict, and refugees and displaced children.

Child VIP Project

(Full contact details under Child abuse and neglect)

Activities

Develops protocols related to trauma as a result of armed conflict.

International Catholic Child Bureau

(Full contact details under Sexual abuse and exploitation)

Activities

Carries out research on psychosocial needs of child soldiers; runs a pilot project with Liberian refugees in the Ivory Coast to rebuild community strengths; and is planning a project to enhance local capacities in post-conflict situations (Sierra Leone, Liberia).

Information services

Publications on child soldiers, recovery programmes for children and families, reintegration of young ex-combatants into civilian life, psychological needs of refugee children.

International Federation Terre des Hommes (IFTDH)

31, chemin Frank-Tomas

CH-1208 Geneva

Switzerland

Tel.: +41 22 736 33 72

Fax: +41 22 736 15 10

E-mail: Fitdh@infomaniak.ch

Person(s) to contact

Eylah Kadjar-Hamouda

Representative to the United Nations

Date founded

1966

Scope

Affiliated offices in Germany, France, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, working with partners in 55 countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America

Activities

Carries out projects with children affected by armed conflict and undertakes advocacy at national and international levels. Participates in the international campaign to ban landmines.

Information services

Provides publications, contacts with different members of IFTDH network, and information on projects and best practice.

Quaker United Nations Office - Geneva

Quaker House

Avenue du Mervelet 13

1209 Geneva

Switzerland

Tel.: + 41 22 748 4800

Fax: + 41 22 748 4819

E-mail: Quno@pop.unicc.org

Web site: <http://geneva-international.org/GvaIntl/gi/egi/egi099.htm>

Person(s) to contact

Rachel Brett

Associate Representative

ON THE WEB: Children and armed conflicts

Children of War: A newsletter on child soldiers from Rädda Barnen.

<http://www.rb.se/chilwar>

Impact of Armed Conflict on Children: Full text of the official report of Graça Machel, Expert of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

<http://www.unicef.org/graca>

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC): Reports on operations by countries, issues and topics, including children and war and protection of children in humanitarian law. Also list of ICRC publications.

<http://www.icrc.ch>

Quaker United Nations Office:

<http://geneva-international.org/GvaIntl/gi/egi/egi099.htm>

Relief Web: a project of the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs. Updated information on disaster situations. More than 800 links to country and regional information.

<http://www.reliefweb.int>

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): Includes background papers on refugees and asylum seekers from different countries; Human Rights Watch analyses; and bibliographic information.

<http://www.unhcr.ch>

Date founded

1948

Scope

International

Activities

Carries out work at international/United Nations level on child soldiers – raising age for recruitment/participation in hostilities and raising international awareness about child soldiers.

Information services

Provides information on United Nations activities on child soldiers, in particular on the draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the United Nations study on *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*.

Rädda Barnen

(Swedish Save the Children)

Torsgatan 4

SE-107 88

Stockholm

Sweden

Tel.: +468 698 90 00

Fax: +46 8 698 90 13

Web page: <http://www.rb.se>

Person(s) to contact

Carl von Essen

Expert in children in armed conflict

E-mail: carl.vonessen@rb.se

Date founded

1919

Scope

Bangladesh, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Guatemala, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Peru, South Africa, Sudan, Vietnam and Yemen

Activities

In this area, carries out activities related to protecting the rights of children affected by armed conflict: refugees; children displaced within their own countries; child soldiers; and children who have lost contact with their families. Work focuses on protection, rights to rehabilitation, psychosocial health, education and reintegration.

Information services

Provides searches in a number of bibliographic databases. Particular focus on collecting information in the area of child soldiers. Its home page at <http://www.rb.se> is an important source of information.

HARMFUL TRADITIONAL PRACTICES

Inter-African Committee (IAC)

Headquarters

c/o Economic Commission for Africa/ACW

P.O. Box 3001

Addis Ababa

Ethiopia

Tel.: +25 11 51 72 00/51 57 93

Fax: +25 11 51 46 82

E-mail: IAC@padis.gn.apc.org

Liaison Office

147 rue de Lausanne

CH-1202 Geneva

Switzerland

Tel.: +41 22 31 24 20/732 0821

Fax: +41 22 738 18 23

E-mail: cominter@iprolink.ch

Person(s) to contact

Headquarters

Elizabeth Alabi

Senior Programme Officer

Liaison Office

Berhane Ras-Work (Ms.)

President (Headquarters)

Date founded

1984

Scope

25 African countries, as well as France, Sweden and the United Kingdom

Activities

Combats harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, early marriage and nutritional taboos, and promotes positive practices such as breastfeeding and child spacing.

Information services

Provides information materials, leaflets, videos, newsletters, educational materials, reports of conferences and research studies.

WOMANKIND Worldwide

3 Albion Place, Galena Rd.

London W6 0LT

United Kingdom

Tel.: +44 181 563 8607/8

Fax: +44 181 563 8611

E-mail: womankind@gn.apc.org

Web page:

<http://www.oneworld.org/womankind>

Person(s) to contact

Simona Malambri

Information Officer

Trudi Harris

Fundraising and Communications

Coordinator

Date founded

1989

Scope

Brazil, Ghana, India, Nicaragua and Peru

Activities

Carries out projects to combat female genital mutilation.

Information services

Provides project profiles, statistics on countries where IAC has projects, statistics and general information on women's issues.

ON THE WEB: Harmful traditional practices

Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children (IAC):

<http://www.who.ch/programmes/ina/ngo/ngo-14.htm>

Womankind Worldwide: Information page.

http://www.oneworld.org/womankind/wk_info.html

ILLICIT TRANSFER

International Social Service (ISS)

32 quai du Seujet

1201 Geneva

Switzerland

Tel.: +22 731 7454/55

Fax: +22 738 0949

E-mail: iss.gs@span.ch

Person(s) to contact

Chantal Saclier

International Programmes Director

Date founded

1924

Scope

Branches and affiliated offices: Argentina, Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Philippines, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, UK, USA, Venezuela. Correspondents in 80 countries.

Activities

Provides social services (to the general public) relating to illicit transfer; intrafamilial abduction; and intercountry adoption and illicit transfer and abuses/trafficking/sale/abduction.

Information services

For organizations and professionals involved in the protection of children's rights (but not open to the general public); provides information and networking on violence in intercountry adoption.

PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT

EPOCH-Worldwide

(End Physical Punishment of Children)

77 Holloway Road

London N7 8JZ

United Kingdom

Tel.: +44 171 700 0627

Fax: +44 171 700 1105

E-mail: epoch-worldwide@mcr1.poptel.org.uk

Person(s) to contact

Peter Newell

Coordinator

Date founded

1990

Scope

International network of over 70 organizations; members in 40 countries in all continents

Activities

Lobbies governments and organizations nationally and internationally to encourage education and legal reform to end physical punishment of children; maintains database of relevant information; acts as an information network.

Information services

Publishes handbooks and materials on positive non-violent discipline.

SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION

ECPAT

(End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and the Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes)

ECPAT Information Centre

328, Phayathai Road

Bangkok 10400

Thailand

Links

Tel.: +66 2 2153388/6110972/6110973

Fax: +66 2 2158272

E-mail: ecpatbkk@ksc15.th.com

Person(s) to contact

Hervé Berger
Executive Director

Date founded

1991

Scope

Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Cambodia, Canada, Denmark, France, Finland, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, United Kingdom, Viet Nam

Activities

Motivates local communities to find strategies that will protect children; works closely with NGOs, UNICEF, ILO and other individuals and groups; monitors the activities of sex abusers, child traffickers and sex tourists; involves young people themselves in seeking solutions to commercial sexual abuse; seeks ways to control the flow of child pornography in shops and on the Internet; provides expert advice to governments on changes in law needed to protect children; works closely with Interpol and local law enforcers to ensure laws are implemented; assists the tourism industry in its campaign to end sex tourism. Initiated the 1996 World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children held in Stockholm, Sweden.

Information services

Issues a quarterly newsletter, a monthly bulletin of news clippings and articles, a monthly 'Global Updates' summary of key activities undertaken by governments and NGOs against the sexual abuse of children.

Human Rights Watch - Children's Rights Project

(Full contact details under Street children)

Activities

Undertakes studies on trafficking and sexual exploitation of girls and women (Burma/Thailand, Nepal/India).

International Catholic Child Bureau
Bureau International Catholique de l'Enfance (BICE)

63 rue de Lausanne
1202 Geneva
Switzerland

Tel.: +41 22 731 3248

Fax: +41 22 731 7793

E-mail: bice_ch@compuserve.com

Person(s) to contact

Florence Crampe

Date founded

1948

Scope

Affiliated offices in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Ivory Coast, Philippines, Uruguay, USA

Activities

A regional Latin American programme in eight countries aims to strengthen local resources to address the issue of sexual abuse and exploitation; a preventive programme in Northern Thailand seeks to strengthen community resilience to the sale of children for prostitution. Also maintains a programme with young girls in Togo and plans to develop a follow-up project to the Stockholm Congress to review preventive and rehabilitation strategies for child victims of sexual exploitation.

Information services

Provides publications upon request concerning approaches to prevention and psychosocial recovery of child victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

WAO-Afrique

(Action to Stop Child Exploitation)

45, rue du Séminaire

B.P. 80242

Lomé

Togo

Tel.: + 228 21 41 13

Fax: + 228 21 73 45

Person(s) to contact

Cléophas K. Mally

Director

Date founded

1990

Scope

Bénin, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Niger, Senegal, Togo

Activities

Conducts studies on child domestics, children in bondage and trafficking of children; provides literacy and vocational training for child victims; carries out advocacy and lobbies governments to make legislative changes and to adopt protective policies towards vulnerable groups of children.

Information services

Maintains a children's rights documentation centre, which is open to the public and offers information on children's rights in general and on specific cases of violence towards children (child domestics, trafficking of children, contemporary forms of slavery). Also can make available photos, and interviews of children on cassette.

ON THE WEB: Sexual abuse and exploitation

ECPAT International: news, country reports and publications on aspects of child prostitution, child pornography and the trafficking of children for sexual purposes.

<http://www.rb.se/ecpat>

World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: Factsheets, theme papers, Declaration, links, press materials and Congress reports resulting from Congress held in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1996.

<http://www.childhub.ch/webpub/csechome>

STREET CHILDREN

ANPPCAN

(Full contact details under Child abuse and neglect)

Casa Alianza/Covenant House Latin America

Mailing address only (the regional office is located in Costa Rica):

SJO 1039

PO Box 025216

Miami FL 33102-5216

USA

Tel. (in Costa Rica): +506 253 5439

Fax (in Costa Rica): +506 224 5689

E-mail: bruce@casa-alianza.org

Web page: <http://www.casa-alianza.org>

Person(s) to contact

Bruce Harris

Executive Director, Latin American Programs

Date founded

1981

Scope

Costa Rica, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras

Activities

Runs legal aid offices in Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras whose functions include personal documentation for street children (birth certificates, credentials); legal defence of child victims of human rights abuses; prosecution of perpetrators of violence against street children; and awareness-raising through the mass media. The agency has a 'Rapid Response' e-mail network, open to the public, whose several thousand members receive updates on incidents of violence towards street children, and respond via e-mail to government officials and the media, thus creating strong international pressure for change.

Information services

Maintains home page, which is continually updated and receives an average of 2,000 visitors per month; responds to questions from the public; provides support to organizations involved in the legal defence of street children.

ChildHope UK

40 Rosebery Avenue

London EC1R 4RN

United Kingdom

Tel.: +44 171 833 0868

Fax: +44 171 833 2500

E-mail: chuk@gn.apc.org

Contact

Nicolas Fenton

Director

Scope

Affiliated offices in Brazil, Guatemala, Philippines and USA. Partner projects in Albania, Brazil, Bulgaria, Philippines, Romania, South Africa, Turkey

Activities

Undertakes projects on behalf of street children and Roma children (Central and Eastern Europe).

Information services

Provides general background information, country fact sheets, project profiles; facilitates contacts at NGO and local community levels.

Consortium for Street Children UK
4 Bath Place
Rivington St.
London EC2A 3DR

Tel.: +44 171 739 7917
Fax: idem
E-mail: cscuk@gn.apc.org

Person(s) to contact

Anita Schrader
Director

Date founded

1992

Scope

Developing world, Eastern Europe

Activities

An association of NGOs; provides advocacy, research and support to campaigning for children living and working on the street.

Information services

Through its extensive network has access to a wide range of experience and information on street and working children. Provides briefing and support in identifying information and contacts. From late 1997/early 1998, will make available a comprehensive legal handbook on the defence of street and working children.

Human Rights Watch – Children’s Rights Project
485 Fifth Avenue

New York, NY 10017-6104
USA

Tel.: + 1 212 972 8405 ext. 252
Fax: + 1 212 972 0905
E-mail: whitman@hrw.org

Person(s) to contact

Lois Whitman
Director

Date founded

1994

Scope

Brazil, Bulgaria, Burma, China, Colombia, Guatemala, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Liberia, Mexico, Nepal, Pakistan, Romania, Sudan, Turkey, UK, USA

Activities

Engages in monitoring and advocacy activities relating to street children.

Information services

Publications related to the violation of children’s rights in general; specific studies on violence to street children, including their arbitrary and illegal detention, torture, extortion and murder.

Plan International
Headquarters
Chobham House
Christchurch Way
Woking
Surrey GU21 1JG
United Kingdom

Tel.: +44 1483 755155
Fax: +44 1483 756505
E-mail: hodges@plan.geis.com

Person(s) to contact

Carys Hodges (Ms.)
Information Resources Specialist

Date founded

1987

Scope

Donor Country Organizations in Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Republic of Korea, Netherlands, Norway, United Kingdom, USA; Regional Program Offices in Eastern and Southern Africa, the Caribbean and Central America, South Asia, South America, Southeast Asia, West Africa; 40 Country Program Offices in these regions.

Activities

Carries out work on the rights of street children.

Information services

Provides information on Plan’s work and copies of publications.

WOMANKIND Worldwide

(Full contact details under Harmful traditional practices)

Activities

Undertakes projects related to street girls

ON THE WEB: Street children
Casa Alianza – Covenant House Latin America:
<http://www.casa-alianza.org>
European Network on Street Children
Worldwide (ENSCW):
<http://www.knooppunt.be/~enscw/intro.html>
International Labour Organisation (ILO):
<http://www.ilo.org>
Methods of Research with Street and Working
Children: An Annotated Bibliography:
<http://www.rb.se/childwork>

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CHILDREN AND VIOLENCE ON THE SCREEN

The Nordic Information Center for Media and Communication Research (Nordicom) has set up The UNESCO International Clearinghouse on Children and Violence on the Screen. A fundamental starting point for its work is the Convention on the Rights of the Child, providing the perspective within which violence will be considered. The Clearinghouse receives financial support from UNESCO and the Government of Sweden. Its prime task is to make new knowledge and data known to prospective users – including researchers, policy makers, media professionals, teachers, voluntary organizations and interested individuals. The Clearinghouse publishes a yearbook and a newsletter – *News on Children and Violence on the Screen* – three times a year.

The UNESCO International Clearinghouse
on Children and Violence on the Screen
Nordicom
Goteborg University
Sprangkullsgatan 21
S-411 23 Goteborg
Sweden

Tel.: +46 31 773 1000
Fax: +46 31 773 4655
E-mail: nordicom@jmg.gu.se

Information sources

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Past and future issues

Number 1. *Ombudwork for Children* 1997. 20 p.

This first *Innocenti Digest* provides information on the recent and expanding phenomenon of ombudsmen/commissioners for children. It discusses the history of ombudwork; patterns in the origin, development, mandate and status of the different types of ombudsman offices; the functions of ombudwork in theory and practice; and characteristics essential to this kind of work. The *Digest* also gives an assessment of the impact of one long-established office, the Norwegian Ombudsman, showing that, despite very limited funding, it has successfully raised the profile of children on the political agenda, enhanced acceptance of children as holders of human rights and contributed to improving the position of children in law. The *Digest* ends with details of 16 existing ombudsmen/commissioners for children and a selected bibliography on the topic.

Innocenti Digest 3 deals with the main issues connected with children and young people coming into conflict with the law and contact with the justice system. It looks at standards and problems from arrest through to the court hearing and sentencing, use of custodial measures and ways of avoiding the child's unnecessary and counter-productive involvement with the formal justice system. It also covers prevention questions.

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We invite comments on the content and layout of the *Digest* and suggestions on how it could be improved as an information tool.



The UNICEF International Child Development Centre, often referred to as the *Innocenti Centre*, was established in Florence, Italy, in 1988. The Centre undertakes and promotes policy analysis and applied research, provides a forum for international professional exchanges of experiences, and disseminates ideas and research results emanating from its activities. On a highly selective basis, in areas of programme relevance, the Centre also provides training and capacity-building opportunities for UNICEF staff and professionals in other institutions with which UNICEF cooperates. The Centre is housed within the *Spedale degli Innocenti*, a founding hospital that has been serving abandoned or needy children since 1445. Designed by Filippo Brunelleschi, the *Spedale* is one of the outstanding architectural works of the early European Renaissance.

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The opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of UNICEF.

This issue of the *Innocenti Digest* has been compiled principally by Peter Newell, author of various studies on different aspects of children's rights, and since 1989 Coordinator of the UK campaign EPOCH – End Physical Punishment of Children – and of its international network, EPOCH-Worldwide. He is Chair of the Council of the UK Children's Rights Development Unit, and was a member of and Research Coordinator for the UK Commission on Children and Violence, convened in 1994–1995 by the Gulbenkian Foundation. In 1994, he was invited to be a member of the Advisory Panel to the Goldstone Commission of Inquiry into Children and Violence in South Africa. With Rachel Hodgkin, he has recently been commissioned by UNICEF in Geneva to prepare an *Implementation Handbook* on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. He has made various presentations to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The Centre would like to thank all of the organizations that provided information for the 'Links' section of the *Digest*, and in particular Radda Barnen and CRIN, who very generously shared their resource databases with us.

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