

# Violence Against Children

The Voices of Ugandan Children and Adults

Dipak Naker



**Save the Children**  
in Uganda

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ISBN: 9970-893-07-1

Violence against Children: The Voices of Ugandan Children and Adults  
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# Violence Against Children

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Dipak Naker  
Raising Voices



**Save the Children**  
in Uganda



# Dedication

This work is dedicated to the children of Uganda whose experience of childhood depends on what you and I do today, tomorrow and the day after. They are waiting to hold our hand, to show us what it could be like, if only we will listen and learn.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, our gratitude goes to the children and adults who were the subjects for this study. Courageously, they chose to speak-out, to articulate controversial points of view, to put themselves on the line. Their generosity and their willingness to share painful experiences made this work possible. To them and countless unheard voices, we owe action.

Reaching-out to these individuals and building the trusting relationships within which personal experiences could be shared, was admirably completed by the researchers Lucy Apio, Rehema Kajungu, Josephine Kamisya, and Jean Kemitare. They moved with ease between dialogues with children and adults. They listened carefully and compassionately without being overwhelmed by what they heard. Their skills and professionalism contributed immensely to the quality of the research.

Thank you to the many individuals who helped design this study, in particular, Tom Barton, Rachel Rinaldo, Christine Stevens, and Robert Wyrod. Their comments and experience saved us much time, resources, and heartache. I am also immensely grateful to Stephanie Sauve for meticulous and sensitive editing of this work. She gave to this project much more than she was contracted for.

Kathrin Ayer developed the design concept for this report. Her creativity and design work has made the publication much more accessible to a wider audience. Many thanks also to Samson Mwaka who undertook the final layout and formatting of the report. Samson's long hours of patient, detailed work went beyond the call of duty.

I am grateful to Heidi Jo Brady for donating

the use of her photographs for this report. Her exceptional photography adds a dimension to this report that text alone could never accomplish.

At Save the Children in Uganda (SCiU), Laetitia Basemera saw the importance of this work and made it possible by opening all the necessary doors. Jenifer Bukokhe managed the complex interests of various parties with grace and efficiency and made many insightful suggestions on the final draft of the report. Lisa Sekaggya and Joyce Otimodoch negotiated, on our behalf, the maze of logistics and bureaucracy needed to conduct research of this kind, and made it look easy. Germine Sebwoffu provided valuable input during the development and implementation phases. SCiU field staff and government counterparts in all five districts pulled many strings to solve problems, even before these problems appeared on the radar. All of these individuals demonstrated in action their commitment to promote children's rights.

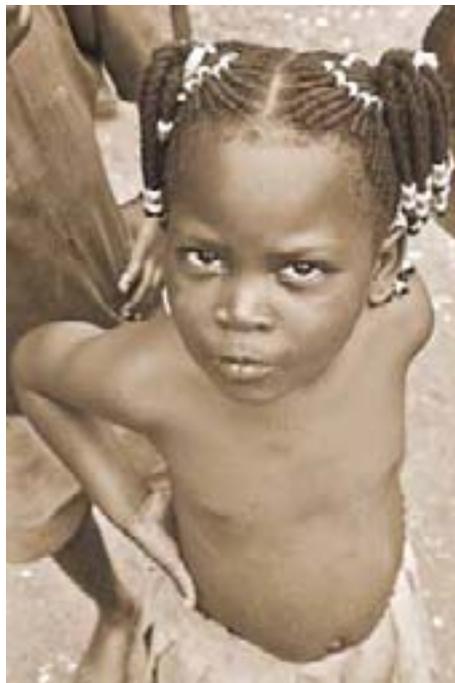
Lori Michau has made countless valuable suggestions, commented on several drafts of the report, managed the final design phase of the report and provided encouragement and support through all stages of the work. Without her help, this work would be less, by much.

All these friends and colleagues have enriched the work. However, the ultimate responsibility for any of its shortcomings rests entirely with the author.

**Dipak Naker**  
Co-Director  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study examines the stories and opinions of 1406 children and 1093 adults from five diverse districts in Uganda. Five complementary research methods including questionnaires, focus group discussions, narrative role plays, key informant interviews, and journal writing served to engage a broad range of individuals in sharing their experiences and perspectives on violence against children. Children were asked about their experiences of the violence used against them: how the violence manifests, how often it occurs, who commits it, how it makes them feel, how they react, and what they believe should be done to prevent it. Adults were asked about their perspective of violence against children: how they understand the term “violence against children,” how adults in their communities punish children, how they themselves punish children, how they rationalize the types of punishment they use, and what they believe should be done to prevent violence against children.



In overwhelming numbers, children described the rampant use of violence against them. More than 98 percent of children reported experiencing physical or emotional violence, 75.8 percent reported experiencing sexual violence, and 74.4 percent reported experiencing economic violence. For each form of violence, a significant percentage of children reported experiencing the violence at least once a week or more.

Children described violence occurring at home, as well as at school. At home, the father and stepmother perpetrated the violence most often, whereas at school older students and teachers were named most frequently. While almost all children experienced common forms of violence (e.g., caning and slapping), the predominant manifestation of the violence depended on the sex, age, and social status of the child. For example, of all the children consulted in this study, older boys were more likely to experience severe physical violence, and older girls were more likely to experience sexual violence.

Children expressed feeling intense anger (66.7 percent), fear (65.9 percent), and shame (56.6 percent) when violence was committed against them. A considerable number of children shared transitional thoughts of suicide and revenge, or admitted to displacing their anger on younger children. Many children reported that their experiences of violence shaped their beliefs about themselves

and some children discussed how experiencing violence undermined their trust in adults and confidence in themselves. However, these feelings did not render children passive, as many became active protagonists seeking a resolution to their situation. For example, 62.3 percent of the children explained that when they experienced violence they sought help from other adults, and 54.7

percent described crying loudly to attract attention or hiding to avoid the immediate violence. Only one in five, mostly younger children, said they did nothing when violence was committed against them.

When asked what should be done to prevent violence against children, most children preferred caution and sensitivity. They urged for a non-punitive response, such as engaging parents (79.4 percent) and teachers (73.9 percent) in a dialogue about how to relate more equitably with children. They suggested engaging a broad cross section of adults in a similar dialogue through community-wide actions. They recommended the creation of local response mechanisms that would meet the needs of children when violence was perpetrated against them. Relatively fewer children suggested the involvement of police (56.9 percent).

Most adults (90 percent) agreed that in their communities, children were deliberately beaten, shouted at, and denied food or basic needs, yet they hesitated to label these acts as “violence.” They preferred the word “punishment,” explaining how adults use these acts to guide children. The adults conceptualised punishment as moderate and acceptable acts and described violence as excessive and inappropriate punishments, which they preferred calling “mistreatment.” Although many adults insisted that they knew the difference between punishing a child and mistreating a child, almost half (46.8 percent) said they would withdraw basic needs from a child as a form of punishment. Thirty seven percent of adults said that children in their communities were “frequently mistreated,” and a further 55.1 percent said that children were “sometimes mistreated.”

Most adults (91.3 percent) described using a combination of physical and emotional punishment to control children, most commonly caning, shouting, and assigning physical work (above and beyond normal chores). When compared to reports from children, adults consistently under-reported the extent of punishment they inflicted on children (with the exception of caning and glaring). Many adults discounted ad hoc incidents of shouting, pinching, or slapping, not even considering them punishment.

When asked why they punished children, many adults claimed that they did it to make children compliant, obedient, and respectful of traditions. However, many adults doubted whether their current methods of punishment would ensure this outcome. Although 87.9 percent of adults said they punished children to guide them on how to behave, only 32.6 percent firmly believed that the punishment would change the child’s behaviour.

Many adults disapproved of holding adults accountable for their actions against children, believing that this accountability cultivated uncontrollable behaviour in children. They resented the dialogue on children’s rights especially about “prohibition of corporal punishment” and complained that it was preventing them from discharging their duty as adults. However despite these sentiments, 81.7 percent of these adults said they punished their own children, and 57.9 percent said they felt comfortable punishing other children in the community. Clearly, adults have reached a critical juncture regarding their relationship with children. The rhetoric of children’s rights as perceived by adults, particularly discussions about the usage of corporal punishment, has introduced

a new dimension to the adult-child relationship. It has provoked anxiety and misunderstanding among adults at the expense of children who bear the brunt of the backlash.

Cumulatively, the findings from this study point to an urgent need for a multi-layered response in Uganda. Firstly there is a need to develop a comprehensive policy framework that addresses within all policy initiatives, the detriment of the current power-based model of the adult-child relationship and its manifestations within homes, schools, and communities. While several child-centric policy initiatives are already in place, none of them address the fundamental issue of children's lack of power in their relationships with adults. Secondly there is a need to develop non-punitive, practical, and creative outreach programs that skilfully dispel the antagonism gathering momentum within the adult-child relationship. These programs would promote an alternative model for the adult-child relationship; one that fosters mutual respect and encourages child engagement rather than mere compliance within the relationship. Finally there is a need to establish community-based mechanisms that proactively respond to children experiencing violence. Subsequent layers of response would build on these foundational layers to consolidate a long-term strategy of promoting equity in the adult-child relationship.

This report's central aim is to present the voices of children and adults as they were captured in the study. The presentation and layout is aimed at bringing as many of those voices to a wider audience as possible in their clarity and unanimity. It also aims to draw attention to the disconnection

between actions and intentions, experiences and perceptions. The first part will describe the methodology or how those voices were engaged. The second part will report on the dialogue with the children and the third part on the dialogue with adults. The final part will draw together the findings of the study to suggest recommendations for actions aimed at various duty-bearers.





# PART ONE

## Research Design

**PURPOSE OF STUDY**

**PARTICIPANTS**

**FRAME OF REFERENCE**

**METHODOLOGY**

Part one of this report summarizes the various elements of the research design, including purpose of the study, methodology used, description of participants and ethical considerations. There is also a discussion on the terminology used in the study from the perspectives of both children and adults.

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

Although the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) clearly articulates, in Article 19, the state's responsibility to protect children from all forms of violence, it is widely acknowledged that globally little of that obligation has been translated into practice. Furthermore, until recently, there was no coordinated global effort to consolidate the information on children's experiences of violence against them. However as a result of the discussions during the United Nations General Assembly's Special Session (UNGASS) in 2000 and 2001, the Secretary General of the United Nations (UN) appointed a special rapporteur to investigate this situation in early 2003. A multi-country study to define and measure the extent of the problem is currently underway.

In Uganda, the situation is not much different. Little is known about children's perspectives on the nature and extent of the violence used against them. Even less is known about who perpetrates the violence, where children most commonly experience it, and what children believe ought to be done about it. Consequently, many of the responses to violence against children tend to be ad hoc and sometimes even counterproductive. It was in response to this situation, Raising Voices and Save the Children in Uganda undertook this study. It will, we hope contribute to generating momentum for discussion of how to respond to the dearth of information and infrastructure and inspire action.

### Purpose

The purpose of this study is to generate credible information that will enable the creation of effective interventions for the prevention of violence against children. The study aims to understand how and why violence against children continues to occur, so that the information generated can be used to design programs, develop policies, and inspire further similar research towards creating a meaningful response to the problem.

It does not attempt to delve into a detailed analysis of mechanisms of and motives for perpetrating violence and recognises that the analysis, out of necessity, will remain at a broad level. The work of the study resolves into two broad questions:

#### What are children's experiences of violence against them?

The exploration of this question begins with an investigation of how children conceptualise the violence against them, the nature of that violence, how often it happens, who perpetrates it, where it occurs, and what they think should be done about it.

#### Why do adults perpetrate violence against children?

The exploration to this question begins with an investigation of how adults conceptualise violence against children, the nature of the violence they perpetrate against children, how often they perpetrate it, who they perpetrate it against, and what they think should be done about it.

## PARTICIPANTS

A total of 1406 children (719 girls and 687 boys) and 1093 adults (520 women and 573 men) participated in this study. These participants represent a broad range of backgrounds, including children 8 to 18 years old, children in school and out of school, parents, teachers, and various community leaders. It was assumed that all adults had interactions with children and that most of them were also parents (see Tables 1.1 and 1.2).

At the time of the study, participants lived in one of five districts in Uganda: Apac, Iganga, Kasese, Nakapiripirit, and Wakiso. These districts represent a variety of perspectives and priorities. They were selected primarily based on their geographic diversity, and for the existing infrastructure that could support implementation of the project, accessibility to participants, and safety of the researchers. These districts represent cultural diversity, and a combination of urban, semi-urban, and rural perspectives.

### Apac

A district in the northern part of Uganda that often serves as the first relatively safe haven from the area of conflict further north. It has several internally displaced persons (IDP) camps and is spread out over 6488 square km. It has a population of 454,504 most of whom speak Luo. Almost 90 percent of the population is spread out in rural areas and the remaining 10 percent clustered around Apac town.<sup>1</sup>

### Iganga

A semi urban district with large section of the population living near the main highway to the east of Uganda and further on to Kenya. It is relatively accessible from Kampala and as a result has regular commercial thoroughfare. It has a population of 692,000 spread out over an area of 6435 square km. Two languages are spoken widely in this area, Luganda and Lusoga.

### Kasese

A western district, near the border with Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It has diverse geographic features including Lake Edward and Rwenzori Mountains. Most of the population is spread out

in rural areas and involved in agricultural as well as industrial activities. The main languages spoken include Lhukonzo and Lutoro although in border areas with DRC, Kiswahili is also spoken. It has a population of 343,600.

### Nakapiripirit

Situated in the far Eastern corner of Uganda bordering Kenya, Nakapiripirit is sparsely populated and predominantly rural. This is one of the least developed districts in Uganda with low literacy rates among adults. The population is mainly Karimojong and the Pokot who are predominantly pastoralists. The last available estimates of population puts the figure at approximately 41,000 spread out over an area of 2712 square km.

### Wakiso

Bordering Kampala, this is a district with a complex boundary and relatively densely packed population of 562,609 people in 2723 square km. It has good road connections to Kampala and includes an urban centre of Entebbe as well as outlying rural areas. Most people speak Luganda and are involved in a diverse range of economic activity including fishing and agriculture.

<sup>1</sup>This and all other information about size and population of districts extracted from Uganda Districts Information Handbook (2002), compiled by Mugisha Odrek Rwabwoogo

## FRAME OF REFERENCE

### Forms of Violence

For the purposes of this study, the acts of violence against children are organized under four broad forms; physical, emotional, sexual and economic. While this may oversimplify the reality of children's experience (most acts of violence are multifaceted), it does facilitate a meaningful discussion and allows responses to become more specific. However, the study will not propose a false hierarchy of importance within the four forms.

### Causes of Violence

This study assumes that most violence against children, within the domestic realm, is the consequence of children's low status in the social hierarchy of power. In other words, violence is inflicted on children mainly because they are children, and less so because of their actions. For example, an adult male who commits the same mistake as a child would not be beaten, but the child would. Thus, this study analyses violence within the context of this power-based adult-child relationship. It avoids simple cause-and-effect linkages, such as alcohol, jealousy, misbehaviour, and poverty as the causes of violence, although it recognises that they can act as triggers for violence.

### Violence as Context

This study conceptualises the violence that children experience as a context of the adult-child relationship rather than an event within that relationship. The experience of violence goes well beyond the slap or the insult. The adult uses the slap or the insult to instigate and reinforce a belief system in children regarding their abilities, their worth as individuals, and their possibilities for the future. Thus, within this study, the attention centers on the nature of the adult-child relationship, and the analysis focuses on children's experiences of navigating that relationship.

### Children First

In this study, children's best interests take precedence. Children's participation is perceived as a crucial source of information, interviewers use child-centric consultation methods, and children's input carries as much weight as that of adults. This study makes every effort to ensure that children's voices are heard.

### Identifying Common Themes

The study will be vigilant against homogenizing the interests of children as one large category. However, the analysis will synthesize common themes and identify priorities of children as a group.



## Data Collection

The research design combines five complementary methods of data collection: questionnaires, focus group discussions (FGD), narrative role plays (NRP), key informant interviews, and journal writing. Together they offer varied approaches for engaging participants in sharing their personal experiences regarding violence against children. A standardized research protocol was developed and used in each district.

## Questionnaires

Researchers administered 1000 questionnaires to children in groups of 10, including 750 in-school children selected from 50 schools and 250 out-of-school children (selected using quota sampling). Researchers also administered 900 questionnaires to adults in groups of 10 to 15, including 400 parents, 400 teachers, and 100 community leaders (all selected using quota sampling). Two researchers facilitated each group. One researcher read the questions to the participants, and the other researcher assisted participants as necessary. This process rendered 777 valid questionnaires from children and 755 from adults. All numerical data quoted in this publication is derived from analysis of questionnaires.

## Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions were segregated by sex and age (for children) and included 42 discussions with children and 28 with adults with ten participants per group (selected using quota sampling).

## Narrative Role Plays

This study reached 100 children -- half boys, half girls, half in school, and half out of school through narrative role plays. The total sample was divided into 10 sex-segregated groups, 2 per district with 10 children each, and each group process lasting approximately four hours. The process began with a brainstorm and a discussion about how participants understood the term "violence against children," followed by the sharing of experiences. Subsequently, the group divided into two, and each group prepared a short play based on their experiences of violence against children. Each group had the opportunity to act out their short play for the other participants. After the plays, the participants discussed what they observed, whether the plays reflected the reality in their communities, and their proposed strategies for preventing violence against children.

**Table 1.1 Children consulted through each method of data collection**

| Group           | FGD        |            | Questionnaire |            | Interview |           | NRP       |           | Journal   | Total       |
|-----------------|------------|------------|---------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
|                 | In         | Out        | In            | Out        | In        | Out       | In        | Out       | Total     |             |
| 8-14 yrs Girls  | 50         | 70         | 196           | 27         | 12        | 4         | 20        | 20        | 8         | 407         |
| 15-18 yrs Girls | 50         | 60         | 115           | 47         | 13        | 12        | 10        | 0         | 5         | 312         |
| 8-14 yrs Boys   | 50         | 30         | 174           | 32         | 15        | 6         | 20        | 10        | 7         | 344         |
| 15-18 yrs Boys  | 40         | 70         | 125           | 61         | 12        | 10        | 10        | 10        | 5         | 343         |
| <b>Subtotal</b> | <b>190</b> | <b>230</b> | <b>610</b>    | <b>167</b> | <b>52</b> | <b>32</b> | <b>60</b> | <b>40</b> | <b>25</b> | <b>1406</b> |

## Key Informant Interviews

Key informants included 84 children and 58 adults who participated in one-on-one interviews regarding their experiences of and perspectives on violence against children. These individuals were identified based on their unique backgrounds or positions in the community and their willingness to share their experiences (e.g., child with a disability, imprisoned child, religious leader, headmaster, police officer, social welfare officer, etc.).



## Journal Writing

The research team asked 25 children to record, over a 10-day period, their thoughts, experiences, and strategies for combating violence against children. These 25 children were identified based on their ability to write and the willingness to attend a briefing and debriefing meeting.

**Table 1.2** Adults consulted through each method of data collection

| Women             |                |            |           |             |
|-------------------|----------------|------------|-----------|-------------|
| Group             | Questionnaires | FGD        | Interview | Total       |
| Teachers          | 191            | 40         | 11        | 242         |
| Parents           | 129            | 50         | 10        | 189         |
| Community Leaders | 31             | 50         | 8         | 89          |
| <b>Subtotal</b>   | <b>351</b>     | <b>140</b> | <b>29</b> | <b>520</b>  |
| Men               |                |            |           |             |
| Teachers          | 196            | 30         | 9         | 235         |
| Parents           | 154            | 60         | 12        | 226         |
| Community Leaders | 54             | 50         | 8         | 112         |
| <b>Subtotal</b>   | <b>404</b>     | <b>140</b> | <b>29</b> | <b>573</b>  |
| <b>Total</b>      |                |            |           | <b>1093</b> |

were identified and carried through to the subsequent meetings. In the second meeting, group members discussed specific concepts (e.g., how adults understand the word “violence”) and the questions that would be used to elicit information from the subjects. In the third and final meeting, participants examined the research tools that would support data collection and provided their final comments. Fifty questionnaires were administered to adults and fifty to children as a pre-test of the tools developed through this process and final adjustments were made.

## Formative Research and Tool Development

Additional adults and children formed four advisory groups. Two groups consisted exclusively of children (20 girls in one group and 20 boys in the other), and two groups consisted exclusively of adults (10 women in one group and 10 men in the other). These groups commented on the concept of the study, influenced the design of the study, and guided the wording in the research tools.

Each advisory group met three times. In the first meeting, group members engaged in a broad ranging discussion exploring their conception of violence against children, why it occurs, and what should be done to prevent it. Key themes

Through this process, two interesting discussions deeply influenced the research design. Among the child advisors, a lively discussion arose as to whether a questionnaire would effectively elicit the experiences of children. Ultimately, most of these advisors felt that, in a Ugandan context, many children would prefer to be asked structured questions, for which they could then choose from a selection of pre-written answers. They cautioned the researchers to explicitly differentiate for children between the questionnaire process and a school examination, the latter aiming to elicit expected answers and evaluate performance. They also recommended keeping the questionnaire simple and providing assistance, to younger and out-of-school children in particular, with how to complete the questionnaires.

Among the adult advisors, a heated discussion arose regarding the appropriate terminology for the study. The adult advisors ultimately suggested that the expression “punishing children” replace that of “violence against children” (for further discussion on this recommendation see pages 12, 13 and 58).

In the end, the advisory groups aided in the development of three sets of tools to support data collection:

1. Questionnaires (one for children and one for adults)
2. FGD topic guides (one for children and one for adults)
3. Key informant interview topic guides (one for children and one for adults)

Each research tool underwent translation into the four local languages (Luganda, Lhukonzo, Pokot, and Luo) and then back-translation by a different translator. This dual process allowed for the reconciliation of discrepancies in meaning between the four translated versions and, for questionnaires, discrepancies in the order of questions and possible answers.

## Data Analysis

The data from the questionnaires was captured in Epi Info and analysed using Statistical Package for



Social Sciences (SPSS). The notes from focus group discussions, narrative role plays, and key informant interviews were segregated by key groups (see Tables 1.1 and 1.2) and ordered by question number. They were then manually coded based on a key developed by the research team, and major themes were identified. The Journals were also coded in a similar way for key themes. Quotations were highlighted and typed under key themes using sex, district, the age of children, and the social role of adults as identifiers.

## Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations<sup>2</sup> guided every stage of the research process, from research design and participant selection through to all interactions with both children and adults, all data analysis and reporting. For example, prior to each activity, the participants received information on what the activity addressed, what purpose it served, and how the information gathered during the activity would be used. The participants were reassured that they were selected not because they had done something wrong but because the study aimed to learn from them about their experiences and beliefs.

Each activity began with an explicit explanation that participation was entirely voluntary and no sanction would result if any participant declined to participate or withdrew at any stage of the process. Particular care was taken with children through tone and body language to develop trust. Researchers were trained to adopt a friendly

demeanour (without patronizing) and to at all times, be aware of the power they wielded in the presence of children, simply because they were adults. Finally, the researchers read out an explicit statement of informed consent that required each participant to affirm they were participating voluntarily.

All participants were also assured that their identity would not be disclosed<sup>3</sup> without their informed consent (e.g., consent would be sought if their contributions were used in a case study) and that their real names would not be used in any quotation or documentation. Children, in particular, were assured that no one in their communities, especially their parents or teachers, would be told about what they had shared.

Researchers were trained not to pressure any participant into revealing personal or traumatic information the participant was not ready to share. Participants who did share painful personal experiences were offered, at the end of the process, further opportunity to talk about their concerns. Those who wanted further support were referred to the appropriate local agencies. Those who requested a specific action were (with their informed consent) introduced to the local probation officer or the appropriate field staff member of Save the Children in Uganda, who agreed to work with the participant to ensure action was taken.

<sup>2</sup> Save the Children Uganda has a clear ethical policy (derived from guidelines issued by Save the Children Alliance) guiding all interactions with and participation of children in any activity. This formed the basis of the research team's interactions with children.

<sup>3</sup> The photographs included in this report do not imply identity of any child or adult whose comments are discussed in the report. Most pictures were taken in Uganda by the photographer, often travelling independently from the research team. Explicit consent was sought when photographing research process or activity.



### What do you understand by the term “violence against children”?

**Violence is when they treat you badly so you feel bad all the time.**

13-year-old girl, Apac

**Tying children with a rope and the child sleeps there for three or more days without eating.**

12-year-old boy, Kasese

**Burning them even when a child does a small thing like fighting with his friend or stealing 100/=.**

16-year-old girl, Iganga

**Violence is when they look at you with bad eyes to scare you.**

9-year-old boy, Apac

**Giving children hard labour. Although we must do labour, it should be according to age. For example, a child of 6 years should not fetch firewood or a 20 or 10-liter jerry can of water. Children should not be treated like this.**

17-year-old boy, Wakiso

**I think it is the discrimination of children especially by stepmothers. Some children are not given food, school fees, and not allowed to express themselves freely. They are always put down and always sad and not allowed to mix with their stepbrothers and sisters.**

15-year-old girl, Wakiso

**Treating children badly. Giving a child heavy work and also beating and tying the child, the hands and legs with a rope then beating him.**

15-year-old boy, Apac

**Locking children up in the house.**

8-year-old girl, Kasese

**Denying medical care or food to children.**

18-year-old girl, Nakapiripirit

**Excessive beating, for example, caning a child 10 to 20 strokes, and the child runs mad because of fear of the stick or even runs away from home.**

10-year-old boy, Nakapiripirit

**Child neglect by mothers who go to drink without caring to prepare meals for the children.**

12-year-old girl, Iganga

**Some young girls are forced to marry a 50-year-old man who has so many wives already.**

12-year-old girl, Nakapiripirit

**Over-beating of children.**

15-year-old boy, Wakiso

## DEFINING “VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN”

### Definition of “Violence”

This study applies, to the context of violence against children, the definition of violence put forward by the World Health Organization (WHO):

***The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.***

*World Report on Violence and Health 2002, WHO*

This definition embodies four critical ideas that resonate with the approach of this study. First, it incorporates the concept of “power” and, thus, implies analysis of the transaction in terms of a relationship. Second, it includes the use of actual force as well as threatened force, the latter characterizing the bulk of the violence perpetrated against children. Third, it includes the acts that lead to psychological harm, maldevelopment, and deprivation, all of which are critical concerns when understanding the impact of violence on children. Finally, this conception of violence closely approximates what children understand as violence, even though they may not use similar words.

However, in order to apply this WHO definition to the study, the research team first had to contend with a difference between children and adults’ conceptions of violence against children, a discrepancy that emerged during the formative



research.

## Children's Conception of Violence

In almost every discussion it was apparent that children conceptualised violence as a way in which many adults related to them and something that made them feel bad about themselves. They tended to use examples to illustrate the meaning of violence rather than a conceptual definition. When the concept of violence was explored through different methods, the following ideas consistently emerged.

1. **Violence is about how adults make you feel bad.** In a variety of contributions, when probed to clarify what made an act violent, children talked about residual feelings of anger, fear, shame, and humiliation.

**Violence against children is when big people make you feel bad by doing bad things to you.**

13-year-old girl, Wakiso

2. **Violence is about bad things adults do to you.** Most often children talked specifically about what adults did to them. When asked, "What is violence against children?" they gave examples of personal experiences.

**It is when my father shouts at me all the time even for small mistakes.**

9-year-old boy, Apac

3. **Violence is about what adults don't do.** Children also gave examples of omissions and neglect as acts of violence, such as being ignored or excluded from the family.

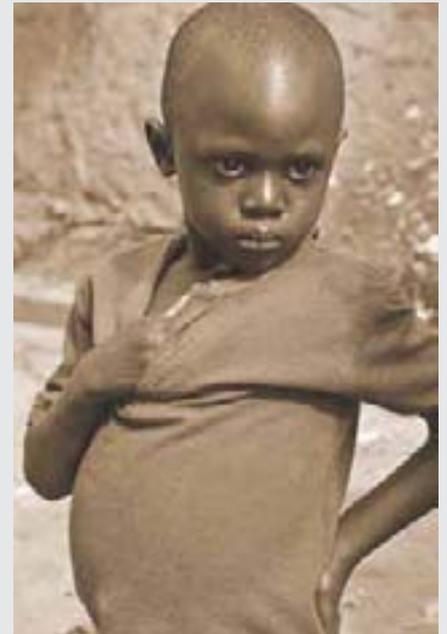
**My stepmother never talks to me or teaches me anything. She ignores me as if she doesn't notice me at all and gives me sharp looks if I do something that she doesn't like.**

8-year-old girl, Iganga

4. **Violence is wrong.** Children expressed a clear judgment of violence as wrong. Each story of sustained violence carried indignation and the belief that the adult ought to have known better.

**It is not right to make a child walk four kilometres with a heavy load to sell things at the market, especially on a school day.**

15-year-old boy, Kasese



## ADULTS' CONCEPTION OF VIOLENCE

The topic of violence against children aroused controversy among many adults. They understood violence as an occasional act and described it as an incident (rather than within the nature of the adult-child relationship). They did not emphasise the impact of violence on their relationships with children or to the resultant feelings for the child or adult. When the concept of violence was explored through different methods, the following ideas consistently emerged:

1. **Violence is an excess of otherwise acceptable acts.** Many adults described violence as excessive punishment rather than the punishment itself.

**Two strokes [of the cane] for a child who is misbehaving is not bad. Twenty strokes however for a simple mistake is mistreatment of the child.**

*female, parent, Apac*

2. **Adults feel reluctant to use the word "violence."** Many adults felt reluctant to describe any adult interaction with a child as violence. For obviously egregious acts, many chose the description "mistreatment" to imply a temporary aberration and discount the seriousness of the act. For other contentious transactions, many adults preferred the term "punishment" to imply an intention to guide children rather than abuse power.

**Sometimes I see a mother hit her child badly. She doesn't mean harm. Yes she is mistreating, but with a good heart.**

*female, community leader, Apac*

3. **Punishment must involve physical or emotional pain.** Many adults felt that for punishment to be effective it was necessary to inflict physical or emotional pain. Adults considered a moderate amount of pain, or severe pain over a short period of time, a useful tool for training children to avoid the perceived misbehaviour. They did not categorize the infliction of this pain as violence.

**If the child feels no pain, he will just laugh and learn nothing.**

*male, community leader, Kasese*

4. **Adults know the difference between punishment and mistreatment.** Adults asserted that, by virtue of being immersed in the Ugandan culture and cognizant of local sensibility, most adults developed a reliable sense of the boundary between the legitimate punishment of children and the mistreatment of children.

**We all grew up here. We know what is right and wrong when it comes to punishing children.**

*female, community leader, Iganga*

5. **Punishing children is a duty.** Many adults felt it their duty to punish children in order to guide them on how to behave.

**If you as a parent don't punish your children, you are not their real parent.**

*male, parent, Nakapiripirit*

## IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STUDY

It was recognized during the formative research that if the definition advanced by WHO was to be adopted for the study, much of what adults considered 'punishment' must be understood as violence against children. For example during the formative part of the research, some adults argued against including acts such as shouting, threatening and glaring as examples of violence. Furthermore, a significant number of adults, in informal conversations asserted that even acts such as caning and slapping were not violent, unless administered in excess.

However it was also recognized during formative research that asking adults if they were violent towards children would elicit an inauthentic response. Clearly very few adults are likely to respond honestly to such a contentious question. Thus a practical compromise was necessary to elicit a response that was representative of the reality. For the dialogue with adults, the concept of 'punishing children' was used instead of 'violence against children.' The questions were phrased with the intention of ascertaining the nature, frequency, and the motivation for the 'acts' as opposed to what it meant to the perpetrator of the act. Towards the end of each engagement, the boundary as perceived by the respondent, between punishment (the acceptable behaviour) and mistreatment (the excess 'acts') was explored.

Clearly this strategy has an associated cost. It could appear to tacitly condone the 'punishment' and may even misdirect the respondent to talk only about a limited range of interactions with the children instead of the deeper feelings, if the act was named as violence. However, this was weighed against findings from the pre-tests of research tools where it was clear that adults were not engaging honestly in conversations that labelled their actions as violence, and that began by threatening the very basis of their relationships with children. The language of the questions posed in the adult part of the report has to be understood within the context of this compromise.





# PART TWO

## Children's Experiences of Violence

**WHAT IT MEANS TO THEM**

**WHO COMMITS IT AGAINST THEM**

**WHAT THEY THINK SHOULD BE DONE ABOUT IT**

Through various methods of data collection, children responded to these questions:

**Have you experienced violence against you?**

**Who commits violence against you?**

**How do you feel when you experience violence?**

**What do you do when violence is committed against you?**

**What, if anything, should be done about violence against children?**

Part two of this report provides an overview of the consultations with children by juxtaposing children's voices taken directly from research notes and the analysis of the data collected. It ends with a summary of key findings.

## QUESTION 1

### Have you experienced violence against you?

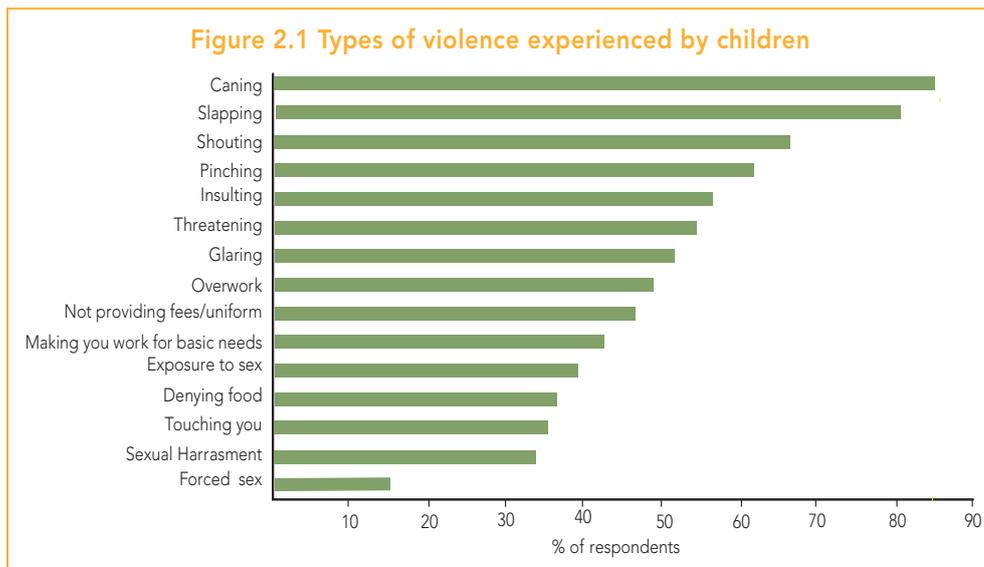
When researchers asked children, "Have you experienced violence against you?" children responded with a virtually unanimous and unambiguous "Yes."

Almost every child indicated without hesitation that they had experienced violence. Children of all ages, girls and boys, readily gave examples of the violence they had experienced, from the adults in their homes, schools, and communities.

**Physical violence** was reported as the most common form of violence experienced by children. Caning was reported most frequently, followed by slapping and pinching. Children reported denigration of their physical integrity, from being shoved and kicked, to the constant threat of a raised arm, even for minor offences.

**Emotional violence** against children was also common. Two thirds of the children reported being shouted at, and more than half reported

Figure 2.1 Types of violence experienced by children



### A Boy at Boarding School

*We are at a boarding school where they torture us. They beat us all the time. The nurse shouts at you and doesn't give you any treatment if you are sick. The teachers beat you for no reason. The food is terrible. It is what we call 'transparent posho.' It is so light there is no calories in it.*

*One day me and my friends, we were so hungry. One of our friends had some money*

*so we decided to go to the hotel near our school for some meat. We got there and ordered our food and were so excited. But before the food arrived, the headmaster walked in. When he saw us, he exploded! He shouted at us and gave us two slaps each in front of everyone. Then he made us hold our earlobes and hop back to school frog-style. Everyone was laughing at us. When we got to the school he said, 'You wait, I am going to teach you a lesson tomorrow.'*

being intimidated with glaring. More than half of the children said they were threatened and insulted by adults frequently.

A significant proportion of children reported experiencing **sexual violence**. Of the children consulted through the questionnaire, one in six reported being forced to have sex. More than one third of the children reported being touched sexually against their will, and a similar number reported being harassed sexually. A large number of children reported being exposed to their parents or other adults having sex or to explicit sexual materials.

In focus group discussions, children readily cited **economic violence** as a form of violence against children. Almost half of the children reported denial of school fees and money for uniforms or denial of money for medical care as a form of punishment. Children also reported the exploitation of their labour, many describing the assignment of excessive work as an explicit condition of partaking in the family. Of the children consulted through the questionnaire, one in five reported being denied food as a form of punishment for minor infractions.

Although no child was immune from any of the four forms of violence, the kind of violence children experienced depended partially on their age, sex, and whether they attended school. For example, younger children were more likely to be bullied in schools, older girls were more likely to be sexually harassed, out-of-school children were more likely to experience emotional violence, and older boys were more likely to experience extreme forms of physical violence. However, children emphasized that although the form of violence may vary, they had experienced violence against them in every stage of their childhood.

**You can't escape it. From when you are born to when you are grown-up, they beat you, shout at you, insult you, and do what they like to you to control you. I don't know why it has to be like that.**

16-year-old boy, Apac

**Next morning, he called all five of us in front of the assembly. Again he gave us two slaps each, really painful slaps, and then announced to the assembly what we had done. He then asked two boys to go and cut some thick hard sticks. He said every teacher will have to beat each one of us with three strokes. There were more than 20 teachers there. I could see that some were not happy but what could they**

**do. They all beat us and I lost count how many strokes rained on me. All I remember is that I could hardly walk for two days afterwards.**

**The headmaster, at the end of it, turned to all the students and said, 'This is what happens to students who break our rules.'**

17-year-old boy  
(district withheld to protect identity of the child)

## QUESTION 2

### Have you experienced physical violence?

#### Physical Violence:

Any act or interaction in which the adult aims to inflict physical pain on the child.<sup>4</sup>

Children talked most readily about physical violence and could offer immediate examples of how it happened and how often it happened. Usually, no elaboration or probing questions were required to elicit a detailed response or a story about when they had last experienced physical violence.

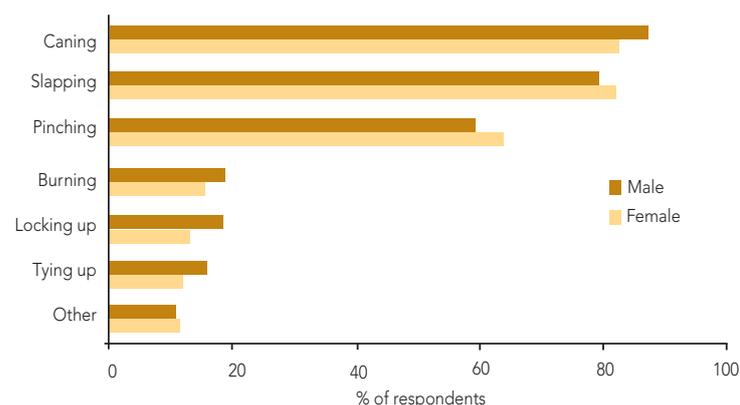
**Everyone gets a slap or cane here. Sometimes you even get it twice a day, even from different people.**

*8-year-old boy, Kasese*

Of the children consulted in this study, 98.3 percent reported having experienced physical violence, such as caning, slapping, pinching, locking up, or burning. In regard to frequency, 31.1 percent of children said they experienced physical violence at least once a week, and 15 percent said it happened "everyday."<sup>5</sup> As to where the violence occurred, 38.8 percent of the children said they experienced physical violence mainly at home; 28.6 percent said mainly at school; and 31.8 percent said at school as well as at home.

Both girls and boys experienced with comparable frequency the common forms of physical violence, such as caning and slapping. However, girls tended to experience more of the subtle forms of physical

Figure 2.2 Types of physical violence experienced by children, as per sex of respondents



violence, such as pinching or twisting of the ears, while boys (especially older boys) experienced more of the extreme forms of physical violence, such as burning, tying up, or severe beatings. While this difference may be an expected consequence of gender-based stereotypes, when explored in focus group discussions and interviews many parents linked it to the issue of bride-price.

**I do not want to cause scars. Who will pay cattle if there are scars all over her body?**  
*female, parent, Nakapiripirit*

Disturbingly, more than one in six children consulted through the questionnaire reported being burned deliberately by an adult as a form of punishment. The aim it appeared was to inflict severe pain and leave a scar that would serve as a warning against repeating the offence. More boys reported being burned as a form of punishment compared to girls, possibly due to similar concerns about scars reducing the bride-price as discussed

<sup>4</sup>This is a working definition and is not meant to be comprehensive.

<sup>5</sup>The term "everyday" should be understood in context. When probed, many children said that "everyday" meant it happened so frequently that it was a regular part of their life.

above. This also suggests that burning as a type of punishment may not necessarily be an act of rage perpetrated in a moment of extreme anger, but a calculated form of punishment with a specific aim.

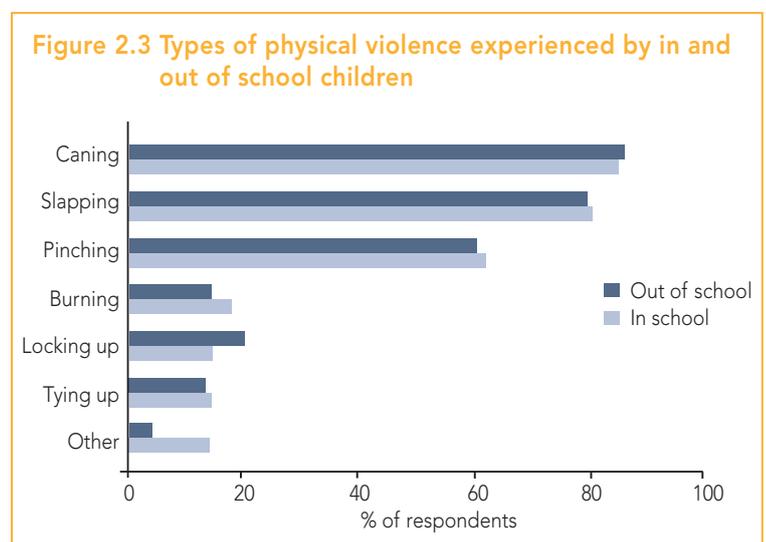
Out-of-school children were more likely to be locked up<sup>6</sup> or tied up compared to in-school children, although the latter were more likely to experience other forms of violence than those specifically explored in this study (such as kneeling, slashing grass, and cleaning latrines).

Despite the many teachers who repeated the “official policy” that they do not beat children, 60.4 percent of in-school children reported routinely being beaten and humiliated. Most damaging to children’s sense-of-self were the random and unjust beatings. For example, the entire class would be beaten when some children were “making noise” or children would be beaten for coming late to school because of excessive work assigned at home.

Most children, especially those consulted through focus group discussions and interviews, tended to expect physical violence as a normal part of their relationship with adults. In journals, many children wrote about experiencing or witnessing physical violence several times a day. Narrative role plays based on children’s own experiences and depicting children being caned mercilessly regularly elicited a nervous laughter of recognition.

The data indicates that physical violence manifests in a variety of context-specific forms, is rampant and has become normalized. Despite provoking intense feelings in children, as will be discussed later, it continues to occur with regularity.

***It [violence] is too much and happens everyday and no-one cares about it.***  
*14 year-old boy, Iganga*



<sup>6</sup> Although locking up is aimed at instilling fear and isolation, and therefore is a form of emotional violence, it was commonly accompanied by tying up and beating and thus has been analysed in this section.



### Have you experienced physical violence?

**You see this scar? She burnt my right hand with a red-hot knife, because she sent me for tomatoes and I delayed to come back. She also burnt my brother's back with a flat iron and burnt his legs with hot water. She gave my young brother of 4 years his urine to drink, because he used to wet the bed.**

16-year-old boy, Wakiso

**I went back home late from school, because the teacher kept us late. They beat me for it and told me to go and fetch water as a punishment. I went and still delayed, because there were many people at the well. When I reached home I was beaten again.**

15-year-old girl, Iganga

**If you live with relatives you are beaten all the time.**

14-year-old girl, Apac

**I live in a drunkard's home [father] who canes me regularly without any reason.**

15-year-old boy, Iganga

**The teacher slapped and kicked me, because I was watching my friends solve mathematics problems on the blackboard during lunchtime without his permission. The teacher was drunk.**

16-year-old boy, Nakapiripirit

**I was over-beaten by my father with a cane until I got scars.**

13-year-old boy, Wakiso

**My father tied me up and locked me up for two days without food, because I ate a piece of fish that was supposed to be his.**

13-year-old boy, Kasese

**I was beaten severely by my stepmother for wetting the bed.**

12-year-old girl, Iganga

**Immediately I stepped home, he held me, beat every part of my body and mostly the head. From that time my eyes started paining up to now. By then I was 10 years, but I have never forgotten.**

17-year-old boy, Iganga

**I forgot to untie goats and I was beaten and made to sleep outside.**

9-year-old boy, Apac

**Teachers beat us badly when we are late, and yet we come from far.**

10-year-old girl, Kasese

**A child of 13 was beaten while tied on a tree.**

16-year-old girl, Apac



## Children's Voices

**Our neighbour burnt her daughter with hot water in the back, because she had refused to wash dishes. Other neighbours threatened to report the mother to police if she burnt her daughter again, but for this particular act she was not reported.**

13-year-old boy, Wakiso

**My father beat me like an animal on every part of my body while saying that I am a lazy useless boy.**

12-year-old boy, Iganga

**One day I went to put the cows to graze and one cow got lost. When I returned home, my father beat me almost to death, and I sustained wounds all over my body.**

17-year-old boy, Nakapiripirit

**I was accused falsely for stealing money from my neighbour's wife, and her husband gave me seven very painful strokes.**

13-year-old girl, Kasese

**Some children are burnt just because of stealing 50/=.**

15-year-old girl, Wakiso

**One of our neighbours burnt her 3-month-old daughter with boiling water.**

16-year-old girl, Wakiso

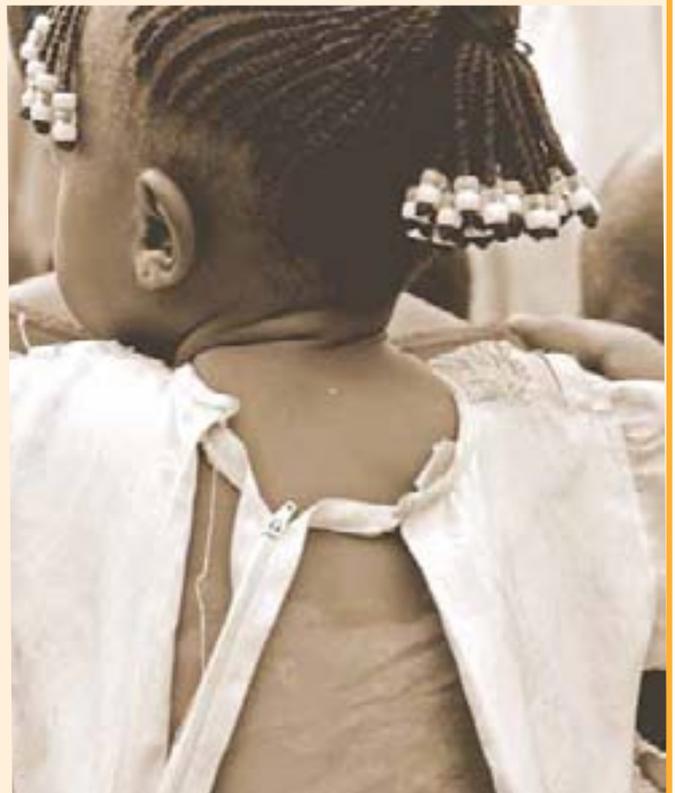
**Teachers call students' buttocks "government meat."**

12-year-old boy, Wakiso

**On the way, sometimes community members meet you and slap you over small things.**

**For example, he can say that you have not greeted him so you are a bad mannered boy.**

12-year-old boy, Kasese



## QUESTION 3

### Have you experienced emotional violence?

#### Emotional Violence:

Any act or interaction in which the adult intentionally attacks children's feelings, withholds affection from children, or undermines children's opinions of themselves, and, as a result, adversely affects children's self-confidence.<sup>7</sup>

Of all the forms of violence reported, children talked most emphatically about the impact of emotional violence. They talked about the rage and intense sense of injustice it provoked within them. Many children declared in indignation that physical pain would be preferable to a constant assault of threats, insults, and humiliation.

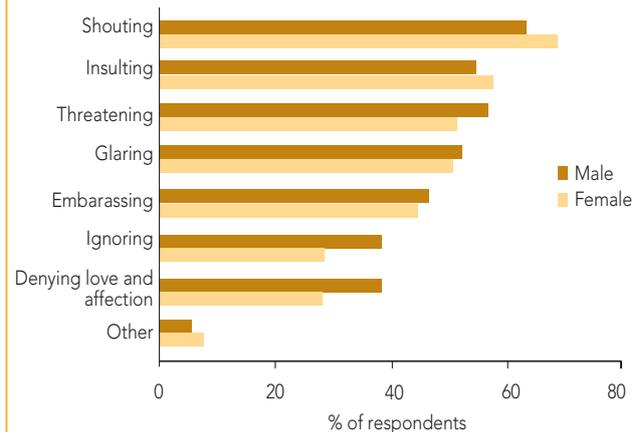
***It is better that he gives me two canes, instead of letting me sit in fear all the time and by looking at me with fire in his eyes.***

*12-year-old girl, Wakiso*

Of the children consulted in this study, 98.2 percent reported having experienced emotional violence, such as shouting, insulting, threatening, glaring, or embarrassment. In regard to frequency, 36.5 percent of the children reported experiencing emotional violence at least once a week, and 16.7 percent said they experienced it "everyday."<sup>8</sup> As to where the violence occurred, 42.6 percent of the children said they experienced emotional violence mainly at home; 21.2 percent said mainly at school; and 35.5 percent said at home and at school.

Acts of omission, such as withholding love and affection or exclusion from discussions, were

**Figure 2.4** Types of emotional violence experienced by children, as per sex of respondents



aimed at children who were expected to respond to a subtle form of emotional punishment. For example, children with perceived higher status in their families, such as boys or in-school children, reported being ignored or denied love with higher frequency. On the other hand, humiliation or acts meant to provoke intense emotional reactions, such as being publicly berated or locked out of the house, were aimed at children who were already seen as a "disappointment." Thus it appears that adults choose the emotional punishment they inflict on the child deliberately based on the level of injury it was likely to cause to the specific child.

Children who had a lower status in their families, such as girls or out-of-school children, reported being shouted at and insulted with higher frequency. They were also more vulnerable to incidental and random emotional violence and were more likely to be a scapegoat for no apparent

<sup>7</sup> See note 4.

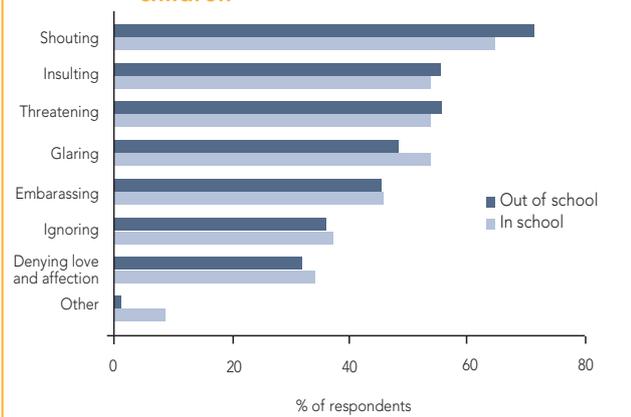
<sup>8</sup> See note 5.

action of their own. In focus group discussions and through narrative role plays, young girls and out-of-school children related stories of how they bore the brunt of anger or frustration they felt had nothing to do with them.

***My stepmother abuses me with harsh words when she is angry with my father. “Look at this prostitute, she is just like her father, useless and lazy.”***

*14-year-old girl, Apac*

**Figure 2.5** Types of emotional violence experienced by in and out of school children



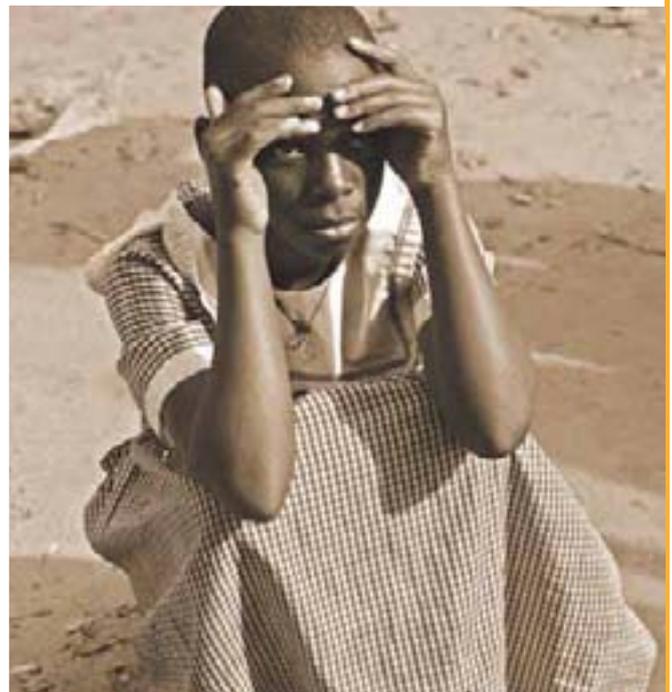
The level of injury experienced by children from emotional violence seemed to depend on who was inflicting the violence. For example, in focus group discussions, children overwhelmingly identified the stepmother as the main perpetrator, yet when options were presented in questionnaires, the father was reported as the most frequent perpetrator. This discrepancy suggests that children experience greater injury when they feel that the perpetrator has no right to inflict violence on them, and they minimize

the violence when it comes from the people they expect it from (i.e., parents or teachers).

Emotional violence was closely linked with children’s assessment of their self-worth, and many children reported a sustained reaction to this form of violence. It severely damaged their sense of belonging within their families and their attachment to the perpetrator of the violence. In discussions and interviews, memories of emotional violence evoked profound feelings of loss, and many children articulated bitterness and resignation at the powerlessness of their situation.

***What is left for me here? No one cares about me. They torture me with words, and my heart is sick. It is better that I die than live this way.***

*15-year-old girl, Kasese*





### Have you experienced emotional violence?

**He says I am useless and lazy and ugly. He says I am worthless.**

9-year-old girl, Nakapiripirit

**Parents stare at you and you get scared.**

16-year-old girl, Kasese

**For me, I am violated so much. I am being harassed by my maternal uncles such that even if an old sick woman tempts me and gives me somewhere to stay I would go with her!**

18-year-old boy, Iganga

**My mother said I am bewitched by a community member and have bones in my stomach.**

11-year-old girl, Iganga

**I was locked out and told to go back where I have been.**

17-year-old girl, Kasese

**Even when I try to do my best and please my father, he finds fault with me and shouts. I do not know if he just hates me or what!**

17-year-old boy, Iganga

**My father says to me that I look like a dog.**

15-year-old boy, Kasese

**They say I am so stupid, I can't even tie my shoe-laces without falling over. I can! It's not true!**

8-year-old boy, Wakiso

**Threatening to cut me into pieces with a panga [machete].**

16-year-old girl, Wakiso



## Children's Voices

***She threatens to throw me in the latrine if I don't do as she says.***

*8-year-old girl, Apac*

***There is no peace. She shouts, embarrasses me, and then says she will throw me out if I don't do what she says.***

*13-year-old girl, Apac*

***Who am I to eat in his house, he asks. "You are not even my daughter!"***

*12-year-old girl, Kasese*

***They jeer and laugh at me because I am crippled. They hold their nose and say I smell bad.***

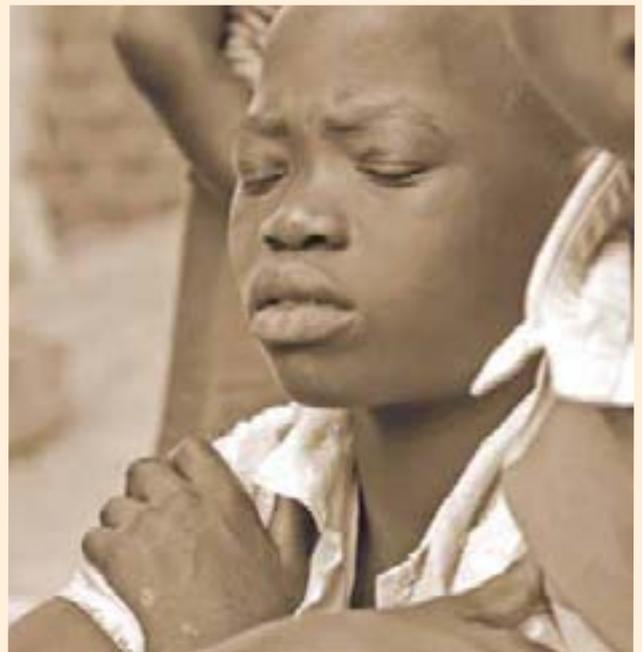
*18-year-old girl, Apac*

***I am so tired of him [father] insulting me all the time. 'I look that, I smell, my teeth are rotten...' All the time he keeps laughing at me and says I am stupid.***

*12-year-old boy, Kasese*

***I think words are more painful than a stick. I feel too bad when my mother insults me in front of everyone.***

*15-year-old girl, Nakapiripirit*



## QUESTION 4

### Have you experienced sexual violence?

#### Sexual Violence:

Any act or interaction in which the adult exploits a child's sexuality for his or her own gratification or benefit.<sup>9</sup>

The sensitive topic of sexual violence often only emerged in individual interviews, questionnaires, or towards the end of a discussion in which trust had been established. Children talked with shame and confusion about what was happening to them or someone they knew. They expressed disgust at the adults who were sexually exploiting children and felt a profound betrayal that nothing was being done about it.

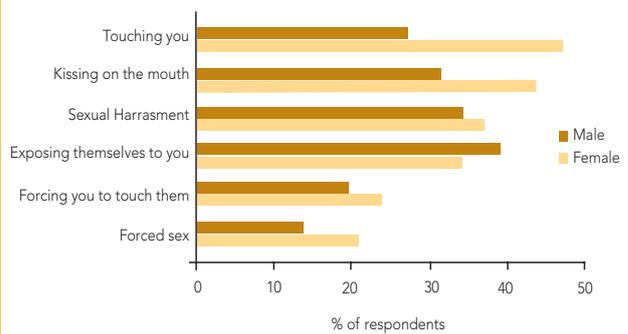
***Men in the streets touch my breasts as if it is public property. No one says anything. They just laugh.***

*16-year-old girl, Iganga*

Of the children consulted in this study, 75.8 percent reported having experienced sexual violence, such as being touched, given unwanted attention, being exposed to adults having sex or being sexual, being forced to touch adults in sexual ways, or being forced to have sex.<sup>10</sup> In regard to frequency, 10.7 percent of the children said they experienced sexual violence at least once a week, and a further 8.3 percent said it happened "everyday."<sup>11</sup> As to where the violence occurred, 32.2 percent of the children said they experienced sexual violence mainly at home; 24.3 percent said mainly at school; and 34.2 percent said at home and at school. A further 9.3 percent of children said they had experienced sexual violence within the community,

such as in public spaces on the way to school or home.

**Figure 2.6 Types of sexual violence experienced by children, as per sex of respondents**



Generally, girls experienced sexual violence more often than boys. Of the girls, 46.5 percent reported being touched sexually against their will, and a similar number reported being coerced to kiss an adult or an older boy on the mouth. Alarminglly, 20.5 percent of the girls (1 in 5) reported being forced to have sex. While adults were the primary perpetrators of this violence, many girls, especially schoolgirls, related stories of being harassed and pressured by older boys at school. Clearly, this is an urgent problem that could have major implications on the psychological as well as the reproductive health of girls.

Boys too reported a considerable level of sexual violence. A total of 13.3 percent of the boys reported being forced to have sex, and 27 percent reported being touched sexually against their will. A large number of boys (39 percent) claimed to being exposed to adults having sex, although when this was explored in focus group discussions,

<sup>9</sup> See note 4.

<sup>10</sup> The words "forced sex" were used as opposed to rape, based on comments from the children's advisory group that the word "rape" would exclude, for many children, coercive sex where the adult did not physically force themselves on the child, but instead subjected the child to intense psychological or economical pressure to submit.

<sup>11</sup> See note 5.

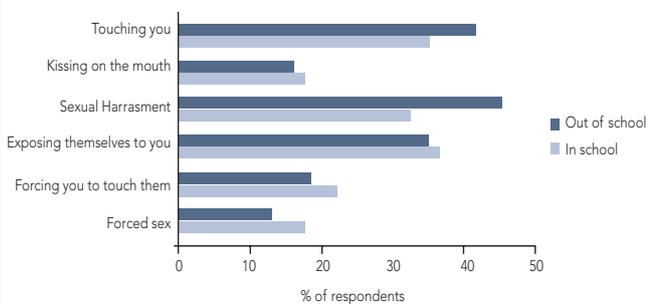
it emerged that many boys were referring to video shows or pornographic materials rather than adults they knew. Nevertheless, many boys reported being teased about their sexuality, made subjects of lewd gestures, or often threatened with castration by older men if they misbehaved or continued to annoy them. There appears to be an oversight around sexual vulnerability of boys and a further more detailed study is needed to understand the extent of the problem.

**Why is it that they [adults] ignore defilement of boys?**

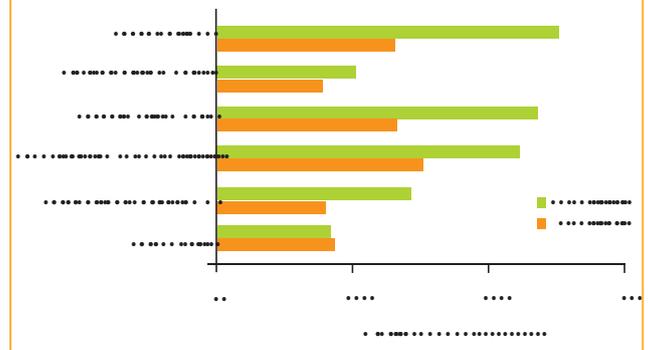
*14-year-old boy, Nakapiripirit*

Out-of-school children demonstrated greater vulnerability to having sexual acts done to them, as opposed to in-school children who were more frequently forced to do things to others. For example, out-of-school children reported with greater frequency being touched against their will or being sexually harassed. In-school children reported with greater frequency being forced to touch or kiss on the mouth. This difference may be a consequence of accessibility as well as the culture of compliance imposed in the school environment.

**Figure 2.7 Types of sexual violence experienced by in and out of school children**



**Figure 2.8 Types of sexual violence experienced by children, as per age of respondents**



Although older girls (15 to 18 years old) generally reported with greater frequency sexual violence against them, in all age groups approximately one in six children, (in and out of school) reported being forced to have sex. This would suggest that forced sex was an opportunistic act, while other forms of sexual violence were at least partially targeted towards selected children.

Sexual violence is closely linked with children’s sense of safety within their families and communities. Children who reported sexual violence felt betrayed not only by the perpetrators but also by the other adults who were supposed to protect them. They felt unprotected in a way that seemed distinct from other forms of violence.

**When a man touches me and nobody says anything, I feel nobody cares about me or respects me. I feel so ashamed.**

*15-year-old girl, Iganga*

<sup>12</sup> The word “defilement” has gained common currency in Uganda as a reference to sex with a child, although legally it specifically refers to sex with a girl. Sex with a boy by an adult is legally treated as an assault.



### Have you experienced sexual violence?

***My uncle forces me to kiss him on the mouth.***

*12-year-old girl, Iganga*

***My friend's father disturbs her [makes sexual advances] at night when her mother travels to the village.***

*13-year-old girl, Kasese*

***I was forced to marry with an old man of over 30 years who had raped me.***

*16-year-old girl, Nakapiripirit*

***Our neighbour defiled his 9-year-old child. When he was got, he said, "The mother queen eats her own ants." The man was 45 years old.***

*14-year-old boy, Iganga*

***When my mother asks my father to be quiet at night in bed, he says, "Let him hear! He will have to learn what he has to do with a woman."***

*13-year-old boy, Apac*

***A young girl got pregnant and her mother chased her away because she had ashamed them. It is common here for girls to get pregnant when they are in school, and their parents mistreat them and chase them away from home.***

*12-year-old boy, Wakiso*

***One of the teachers in my former school wanted to defile my friend. He asked her to take books to his house and he takes advantage of her but she escaped. She reported it to the headmaster who ignored it. He did not take it serious.***

*16-year-old girl, Wakiso*



## Children's Voices

**Relatives, especially the males, make love affairs with girls in homes and when they make them pregnant they deny or take them for abortions and sometimes the girls die.**

13-year-old boy, Apac

**Everyone thinks it is common to have your buttocks pinched. "What's the problem," a man can ask. "Don't you like it?"**

16-year-old girl, Iganga

**A teacher defiled a girl in our school and the parents refused to take him to court. They just accepted 700,000/= he paid them. Nothing happened to the teacher.**

12-year-old boy, Wakiso

**There is a woman who gives a boy money to let her touch him and to make him do things to her.**

13-year-old boy, Iganga

**Some girls are asked by their parents, "What will we eat today?"**

14-year-old girl, Apac

**A young girl was taken forcefully by a man of 30 years old from her father's house. He paid the cattle and got his friends to help him carry the screaming girl. It is common here.**

16-year-old boy, Nakapiripirit

**They touch my breasts, my buttocks, anything! These boda-boda [scooter] men are too much. Someone should do something.**

16-year-old girl, Iganga

**You cannot walk through the market without a man touching you. He squeezes your breasts as if he owns them.**

15-year-old girl, Apac

## QUESTION 5

### Have you experienced economic violence?

#### Economic Violence:

Any act or interaction in which the adult intentionally and unjustly withholds from the child access to family resources or coerces the child to contribute labour or resources that are, by any reasonable standards, excessive.<sup>13</sup>

Children reported contributing an enormous amount of labour to their families, yet having little access to the family's resources and virtually no say regarding the expenditure of the family's wealth. Many orphaned children reported being left destitute and at the mercy of relatives.

***My father died, and my uncle took over his shop. Now he refuses to pay my school fees. I am now living with my grandmother who has nothing and is encouraging me to drop out of school and find a job.***

13-year-old boy, Kasese

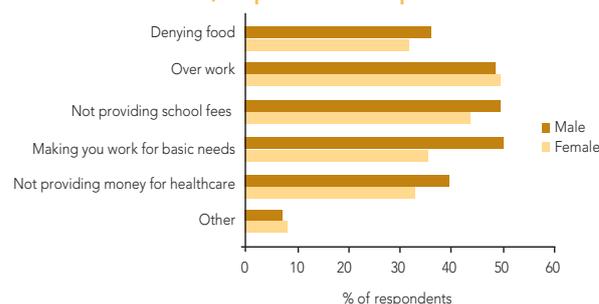
Of the children consulted in this study, 74.4 percent reported having experienced economic violence, such as being denied school fees or money for school related needs, assigned excessive work, made to work for basic needs, denied money for health care, or denied food as a form of punishment. In regard to frequency, 29.9 percent of the children reported experiencing economic

violence at least once a week, and 19.3 percent said they experienced it "everyday."<sup>14</sup>

As to where the violence occurred, 75.3 percent said they experienced economic violence mainly at home; 9.3 percent said mainly at school; and 15.3 percent said at home and at school.

Boys and older children reported a much higher frequency of experiencing economic violence: 61.2 percent of 15 to 18 years old children reported being assigned excessive physical work compared to 39.2 percent of 8 to 14 years old children. This difference may derive from an explicit decision by adults regarding physical ability, but it may also reflect a growing expectation of many adults that older children should make a larger economic contribution to the family.

Figure 2.9 Types of economic violence experienced by children, as per sex of respondents



#### ARE CHILDREN ASSETS?

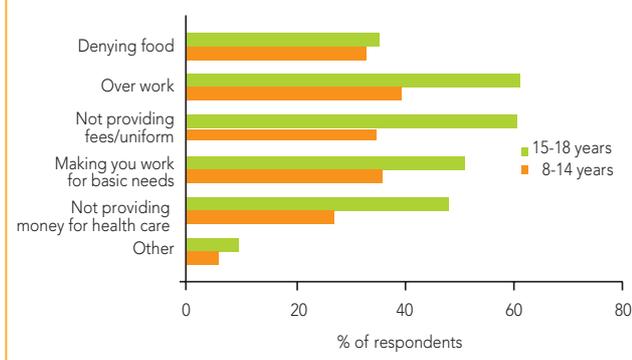
Many children related stories about how their parents saw them as an economic asset rather than an individual. Indeed many adults talked about

children being an "investment." They expected the boys to provide for them in the future and girls to contribute to the family's wealth through "bride-

<sup>13</sup> See note 4.

<sup>14</sup> See note 5.

**Figure 2.10** Types of economic violence experienced by children, as per age of respondents



Of out-school-children consulted in this study, 74.8 percent said they dropped out of school primarily because they had been denied school fees; 32.9 percent of the same group reported that they had been denied food as a form of punishment. These two findings may suggest that dropping out of school is a multi-causal event (not just poor academic performance), since falling out of favour so explicitly must have complex antecedents. This appears to be corroborated by many adults who claimed that their willingness to support a child or pay school related costs was dependent on their overall approval of the child. If they deemed the child unworthy, they would withdraw this support.

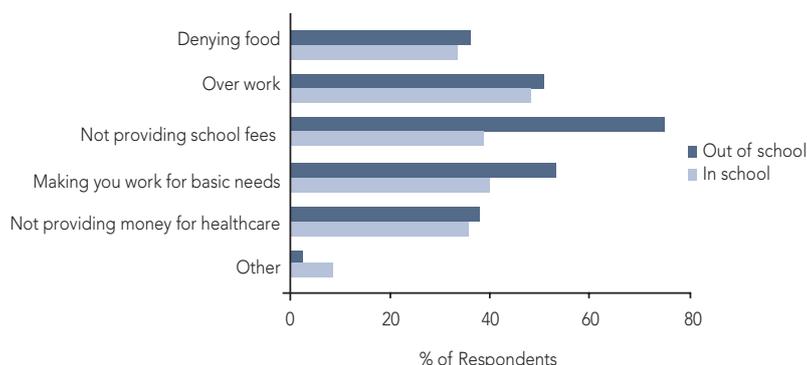
Most children in Uganda contribute a substantial amount of labour to their families and schools. Many children, as young as 5 or 6 years old, take care of their younger siblings, and most of the

water for household use is fetched by children. Children’s reports suggest that adults discount this economic contribution.

Furthermore, adults commonly expect children to wake up early to begin their duties before school and to continue working when they return until late at night. Schoolchildren’s reports reveal the stress this workload created for them, causing them to feel exhausted and hungry in the classroom and to fall asleep during lessons. Reports of stress and exhaustion at school worsened for children whose parents could not afford the monthly charge for the school’s lunch. These children reported not eating from early in the morning until late in the evening, likely feeding into a cycle of underperformance.

***I wake up early and have to sweep and then fetch water and cook porridge for everyone. Then when I come from school, I have to wash clothes, pound cassava, cook supper, and wash plates. I am so tired by the time I go to sleep. There is little time to study.***  
13-year-old girl, Wakiso

**Figure 2.11** Types of economic violence experienced by in and out of school children



price.” In the meantime, throughout childhood, many children were expected to contribute a considerable amount of labour to earn their basic upkeep. While it could be cogently argued

that children should contribute to their families according to their ability, is it in a child’s best interests to be seen primarily as an asset rather than as an individual?

### Have you experienced economic violence?

***I was made to carry 10 basins of sand from two kilometres away for building a latrine, as a punishment in school.***

*12-year-old boy, Kasese*

***My experience is that from 12 years I was told to pay for myself. When a child is 14 years he is asked to build his own hut and fend for himself.***

*15-year-old boy, Apac*

***I should make 120 bricks over the weekend 60 on Saturday and 60 on Sunday and after that I have to go and fetch water. It is too much.***

*15-year-old girl, Kasese*

***I am forced to pound cassava for food at home, as well as put the cows to graze after school, fetch water for cooking, and yet my parents are seated, so I wonder why.***

*15-year-old girl, Iganga*

***I carry six bunches of bananas to the market by force. I ferry one at a time and sell. When I bring the money home to my mother and ask for 200/= to buy kerosene to put in a lamp to read my books, my mother abuses me and refuses.***

*17-year-old boy, Kasese*

***I am given hard labour everyday. I dig everyday for my uncle and he does not pay me, yet he sells the produce and I do not know where all the money goes, and he does not even buy for me a shirt.***

*15-year-old boy, Apac*

***My stepmother gives me hard work like fetching water, collecting rubbish from the garden in holidays. At school I feel I am resting more.***

*11-year-old girl, Nakapiripirit*

***When my parents died my uncle took over their business and I went to live with him. He refused to take me to school and beat me all the time. Sometimes he chased me away from home, and he really mistreated me.***

*16-year-old boy, Apac*

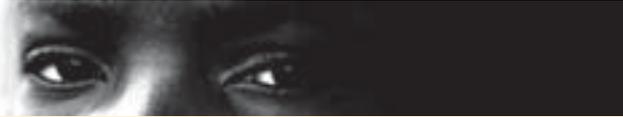
***The school management sends us every day to fetch firewood in a distance of two kilometres.***

*13-year-old girl, Iganga*

***I was forced to fetch 10 20-liter jerry cans of water in one day.***

*12-year-old girl, Nakapiripirit*





## Children's Voices

**I was working for money, got 2500/= and bought a hen. It laid eggs and hatched 12 chicks. Later I exchanged these chicks for a goat. When my father fell sick, my mother sold my goat without talking to me. I had gone to school, when I returned in the evening I found it gone. I have never forgiven her.**

16-year-old boy, Iganga

**I dig for people in their gardens and each time I dig they give me 200/=, and I use this money to buy books and pens because my father made it very clear that his duty is to pay school fees and its upon me to work and get the other requirements.**

12-year-old boy, Iganga

**Sometimes I do a lot of work. I dig every day before coming to school. When I go back home after school, I fetch water, collect firewood, and sometimes go back in the garden to dig.**

13-year-old girl, Apac

**I never have lunch. My aunt cannot allow me to pack lunch, yet porridge that is served at school is for children who have paid for it. I never get money to pay.**

13-year-old girl, Iganga

**My father abuses my mother that she is wasting money when she pays school fees for me, arguing that he did not go to school but he is alive and can afford to drink everyday.**

12-year-old boy, Wakiso

**One man arrested me for fishing young fish, yet nets that had young fish were not mine. I pleaded but he took me to Kasese prison, and I spent there two nights just in July 2004. Then my parents came and bailed me out. But I had a nightmare in the cells with another boy. We slept on cold cement and fell sick, till now I feel bitter about that.**

14-year-old boy, Kasese

**They give a lot of work to do everyday, and my mother just sits or goes to drink then comes back and beats me if all the work is not done.**

15-year-old girl, Nakapiripirit

**I work all day but no one even notices. It is like I am a donkey to them.**

14-year-old boy, Apac



## QUESTION 6

### Who commits violence against you?

Children reported that a wide range of adults committed violence against them. They felt vulnerable in the presence of adults, because the violence could manifest at any time and from any adult. Most of the time, children would be expected to tolerate the violence and would be considered impertinent if they tried to respond in any way other than submission.

**Any big person can punish you, even if you are doing nothing wrong. There is nothing you can do about it.**

*8-year-old boy, Apac*

#### AT HOME

At home, girls were most vulnerable to violence from relatives. For older girls, this often meant sexual violence, while younger girls mostly described emotional violence. Girls were almost

twice as likely as boys to experience violence from others beyond the family, such as neighbours, community leaders, and strangers.

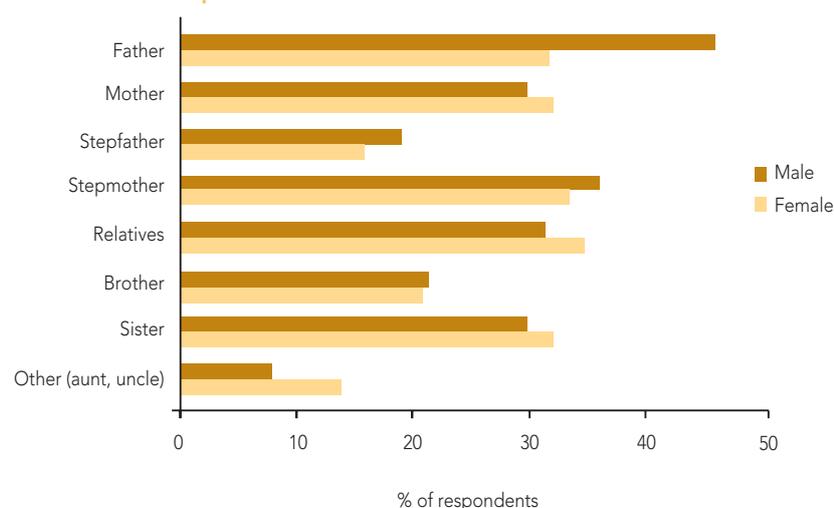
Girls reported comparable amounts of violence from stepmother, mother, and father. However, boys, particularly older out-of-school boys, named their father as the person who committed the most violence against them.

As a group, schoolchildren reported the highest level of violation from relatives and were more than twice as likely to be violated by others beyond the family. These numbers could suggest that the school system cultivates submission in children.

#### AT SCHOOL

Older children and teachers were the most commonly cited perpetrators of violence at

Figure 2.12 Persons who commit violence against children at home, by sex of respondents



school. Many older children seemed to mimic the behaviour of adults, and, as a result, victimized younger children. Bullying was reported as a major problem, especially by girls and younger children.

***When children grow up they keep what was done to them in mind and in the end they also do the same to those younger than them, especially at school. Some people become mentally disturbed.***

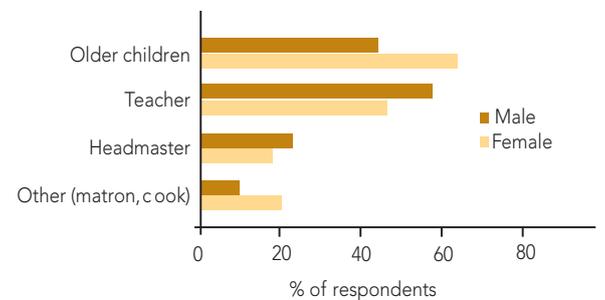
*14-year-old boy, Wakiso*

Boys and older children reported teachers as the most likely perpetrators of violence. Many older boys reported that male teachers appeared to be targeting them, often humiliating them. When these statements were explored in discussions and interviews, many boys claimed that the male teachers were competing for the attention of older girls. It is also likely that teachers feel reluctant to beat older boys due to fear of retaliation and thus resort to an alternative that exploits their positions of power.

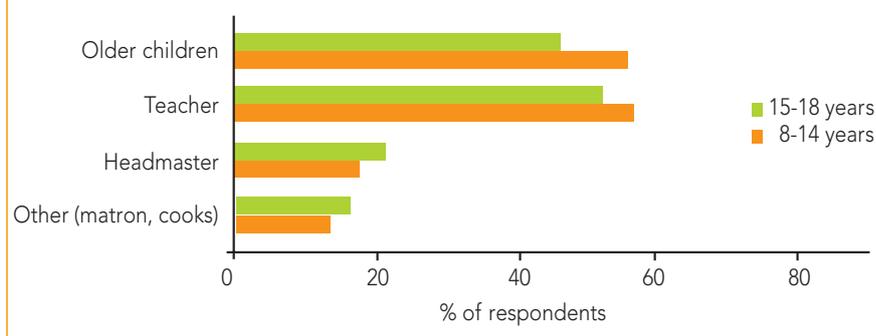
***He [teacher] punished me with five strokes in front of the whole class and then sentenced me to fill a five-litre jerry can with water from the well, with a 100 millilitre test tube. It took me more than 50 trips to the well! All of this because he thought I was too friendly with the girl he likes. Everyone calls me the "test tube boy" now.***

*17-year-old boy, Iganga*

**Figure 2.13 Persons who commit violence against children at school, by sex of respondents**



**Figure 2.14 Persons who commit violence against children at school, by age of respondents**



### Key Informant Interview

#### A young person with a disability

*Q: How did you come to be here at this boarding school?*

*A: I was brought here from my village by the priest, and I started staying with the nuns because at home no one was taking care of me, and I was denied education, and yet all the other normal children were taken to school [cries while speaking]. I came here, that was June 1995, then I started schooling in P1 [Primary one].*

*Q: Why were they not taking care of you at home?*

*A: I don't know. Maybe they think I am useless.*

*Q: What kind of violence did you experience as a child who has a disability?*

*A: I underwent so many problems. For example, when I excreted near the home, I would be thoroughly beaten. All people would leave me home alone with no one to help me with even water to drink. My stepfather would abuse my crippledness saying, "You are crippled, am I the one who crippled you?"*

*My stepfather would hurl many abuses over me and my crippledness, and when he would buy something good like fish or meat and people are eating, I would not be given. For example, one day my stepfather bought fish and my other sisters cooked, and while I was still eating beans, he started beating me, without any fault, saying to me that my father died without feeding any of his children. He collected millet from the compound into a big saucepan, placed it on my head, then the saucepan fell down and I also fell down, then he continued to beat me until blood started flowing from my head. My mother came back and went to the local council leader, and they said he should be imprisoned, but he asked for forgiveness saying he did it because he was drunk, yet he used to beat me daily. Then he was told to take me to hospital, which he did twice and stopped even before the wound healed. From then on whenever I would see him I would crawl to the bush near home, and when he goes away or sleeps in the night my mother would come and carry me and bring me in the house.*



*My elder sisters and brothers who were normal would abuse me and refuse to bathe me. They only used to call me the "lame one who is crippled and cannot walk." The final blow was when someone had set the grass-thatched house on fire while I was sleeping inside. One of the neighbours came and braved the fire and carried me out of the house, and after that I was brought to the mission where I started studying up to P7 in 2002, and now am a store keeper with the school, and I do not miss home because here I am loved and taken care of.*

*Q: How did you feel when all the violence was committed against you?*

*A: I felt bad. I felt like committing suicide. In fact one day I tried suicide on a tree but failed as I could not climb high enough on the tree.*

*Q: What thoughts do you have about the way the community treats children with disabilities?*

*A: The normal people in the community take crippled people as useless. For example in our village there was a lame child who was dumb as well, and she was mistreated, denied food until she died. These children are thoroughly beaten with big sticks or even thrown away into the bush because they want you to die. I personally was thrown away into a sisal plantation and then my brother came back from school and carried me back home. People should stop this kind of violence against disabled children so that they do not suffer, because we were also born by blood like the other children.*

18-year-old girl, Apac

## QUESTION 7

### How do you feel when violence is committed against you?

Children's response to this question was overwhelming. The question elicited powerful and animated responses and revealed reactions to violence that spanned a broad spectrum of emotions including fury, rage, bitterness and resignation. Many children felt that adults did not give due weight to the depth of their feelings and felt frustrated by how seldom anyone would understand their reaction. Most of the time, children seemed unresolved about what to do with their feelings.

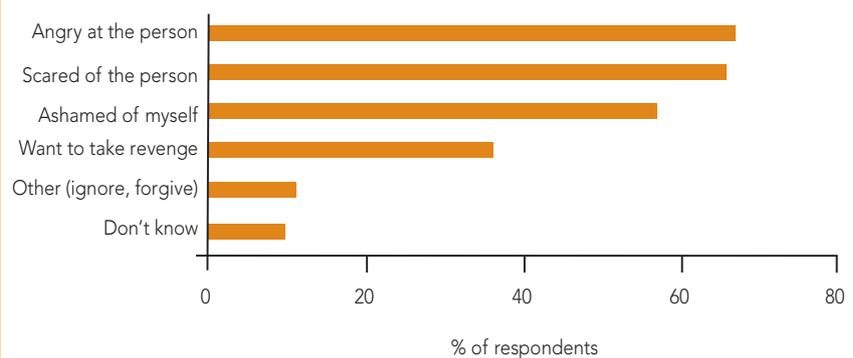
***I feel like my heart will explode if I start saying how I feel about her. She treats me worse than an animal and there is nothing I can do about it. I feel like running away and becoming a prostitute.***

*14-year-old girl, Kasese*

Most children (66.7 percent) reported feeling "anger." In focus group discussions, many children talked about feeling indignation followed by despair regarding the powerless situation in which they found themselves. Children often reported that they did not understand or accept the logic of the punishment, that adults ignored their pleas to be taken seriously, to engage in a dialogue, or to receive an explanation as to why they were being treated in that manner. Many children learned from such transactions that a person with more power does not have to be accountable.

The second most common response (65.9 percent) was "fear." Many children reported that they lived in perpetual fear of the adults around them. They learned that fearing adults was the safest way of avoiding violence, and, as a result, they created relationships of compliance and obedience rather than mutual affection. A higher percentage of older and in-school children reported fearing adults around them, compared to their younger and out-of-school counterparts. This difference could suggest that adults use fear as a tool for asserting their authority, especially in schools or in situations where they feel their control over children could be undermined.

**Figure 2.15** Types of feelings children have when experiencing violence



The third most common response (56.6 percent) was “feeling ashamed of oneself.” This shame translated most commonly into a withdrawn demeanour, intense shyness, or lack of self-esteem. Girls (60.3 percent) and out-of-school children (65.3 percent) reported feeling ashamed in higher proportion to their counterparts. This could be a consequence of the generally marginalized positions both these groups of children occupy within their communities and within their families, thus being particularly vulnerable to internalising blame for what happens to them.

More than one third of the children (36 percent) harboured fantasies of revenge, as they grappled with what to do with their feelings. They often acted out these fantasies on younger children, and, accordingly, many younger children reported being victimized by older children.

Disturbingly, a significant proportion of children, particularly orphans and those living with a stepparent, revealed transitional thoughts of committing suicide.

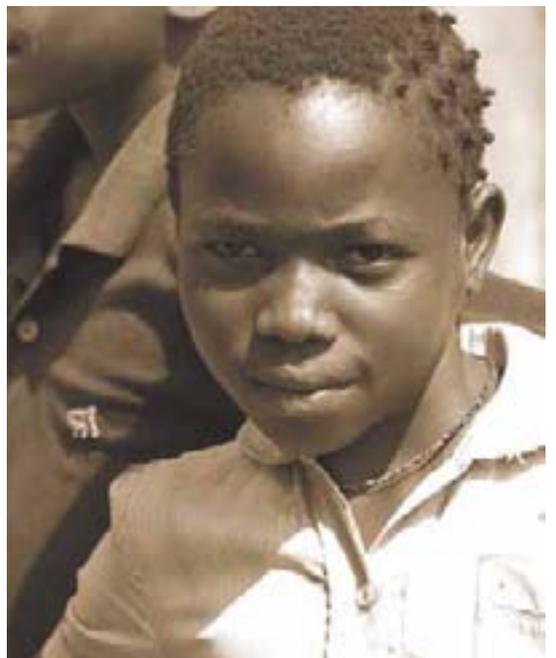
***Sometimes I think about joining my parents in paradise where they are waiting for me. What is left for me here?***

*16-year-old boy, Iganga*

When these thoughts of suicide were explored in focus group discussions, many times children revealed that this was the only act they had control over that might get adults to pay attention to their concerns.

***If they come to bury me, at least they will have to ask why I had to die.***

*14-year-old girl, Nakapiripirit*





### How do you feel when violence is committed against you?

***I feel like my heart is paining.***

12-year-old boy, Kasese

***I feel like growing up quickly so that I can revenge.***

15-year-old boy, Nakapiripirit

***I feel like going to hang myself.***

16-year-old girl, Nakapiripirit

***Sometimes when I do not have the strength to fight back I just hate the person.***

13-year-old girl, Nakapiripirit

***I get regrets why I was born.***

13-year-old girl, Apac

***I feel like going in the middle of the road to be crushed by a car.***

10-year-old boy, Iganga

***I feel like taking poison.***

15-year-old girl, Wakiso

***I feel bad but I have no options.***

13-year-old boy, Apac

***I feel like I am useless.***

16-year-old girl, Apac

***I feel like dying and joining my late parents.***

14-year-old boy, Iganga

***I feel threatened and feel like I am in jail not school.***

18-year-old boy, Wakiso

***I get very worried. I have attempted to kill myself. I swallowed a watch cell and did not die.***

9-year-old boy, Apac

***I feel like revenging, but I do not because these parents are big. I can do nothing.***

12-year-old boy, Apac

***I feel like killing that person. I want to get murdering lessons from murderers.***

16-year-old boy, Kasese

***I wish I were a baby again, just suckling the breast with no problems in this world.***

12-year-old girl, Kasese

***I feel like revenging.***

17-year-old girl, Nakapiripirit

***I feel like cutting up the person with a machete.***

15-year-old girl, Apac

***I feel too much anger. I just sleep and cry.***

9-year-old boy, Kasese

***I become very irritated, angry. I feel like taking poison.***

14-year-old girl, Iganga



## Children's Voices

**Feel like joining the army so that when I come back with a gun I can make them pay.**

15-year-old boy, Apac

**I feel so bad and think that my brothers who died have rested. I joined the army to put my mind at rest at 15 years, but again there was a lot of beating and I came back home. Sometimes I feel like dying.**

17-year-old boy, Apac

**I feel like burning them in the house or getting a spear and stabbing them to death.**

16-year-old boy, Nakapiripirit

**When I over think, it reached to a point of madness, but what has helped is being born again Christian. Otherwise I would be mad.**

15-year-old girl, Wakiso

**I feel like doing anything so I can go to prison and have peace there or suffer in the hands of the strangers.**

17-year-old boy, Apac

**I feel miserable.**

9-year-old girl, Apac

**I feel sad and depressed.**

14-year-old girl, Wakiso

**I feel my heart is about to burst.**

16-year-old girl, Wakiso

**I feel like revenging or killing him, but feel powerless.**

16-year-old girl, Nakapiripirit

**I feel like committing suicide.**

13-year-old boy, Kasese

**I feel like it's a mistake for me to have been born.**

8-year-old boy, Iganga

**Feeling of frustration, hopelessness, but what to do.**

14-year-old boy, Iganga

**I feel so much angry that I would die.**

13-year-old girl, Nakapiripirit

**I wish I could be a big person and not suffer.**

12-year-old boy, Apac

**I feel like committing suicide.**

13-year-old girl, Nakapiripirit

**I wonder if there is any one who suffers like me.**

12-year-old girl, Kasese

**I feel my heart is swollen.**

15-year-old girl, Kasese

**You regret why you were born and realize that your life is very hard and you are unlucky.**

10-year-old boy, Wakiso



## Children's Voices

**You feel ashamed.**

12-year-old boy, Iganga

**I feel so worried and so lonely.**

13-year-old girl, Wakiso

**I get so annoyed and feel if any boy just comes to propose to me I will just go and be married to him.**

16-year-old girl, Apac

**I just say that "oh, it's because I am a child that's why they are beating me and I have nothing to do."**

12-year-old girl, Kasese

**It's unfair, but I do not want any revenge for my aunt, because she is the only one caring about me.**

13-year-old girl, Kasese

**I feel like hiding away from my friends.**

14-year-old girl, Apac

**I feel embarrassed that my friends are going to laugh at me.**

12-year-old boy, Wakiso

**I always forgive those who beat me, because the Bible instructs me to forgive whoever offends me.**

13-year-old girl, Kasese

**I feel pain but accept it, because my father is training me to become a strong man and one who can look after myself even when he is dead, so I forgive my father.**

12-year-old boy, Kasese

**I feel like committing suicide.**

15-year-old girl, Kasese

**I feel very angry but do nothing about it, because they are stronger than me and older.**

13-year-old girl, Kasese

**It's like a curse.**

17-year-old girl, Apac

**I feel like getting a gun and I shoot the person, but I don't have the capacity of getting one.**

15-year-old boy, Kasese

**I feel like revenging, but I see that if I do that I will lose the chance of staying with him even though he does not take care of me very well.**

15-year-old boy, Kasese

**I feel very sad and ashamed especially when I see my friends going to school and am just digging all the time. Sometimes I hide from them so that they can think that maybe I also once in a while go to school. This hurts me a lot, because tomorrow these very people I am growing up with will be driving and call me to wash their cars, simply because my father has refused to give me school fees. God will pay him one day, because he has money but he says that he also never went to school.**

17-year-old boy, Iganga

**I justify the violence for the home people, but those who stop me on the way, I feel they have some bad heart towards me and it is unfair.**

18-year-old girl, Apac



## Children's Voices

***I feel like leaving home and staying with anyone who cares about children.***

18-year-old girl, Nakapiripirit

***I feel like going to become somebody's housegirl.***

15-year-old girl, Kasese

***I keep the anger in heart against the offender, but I do not tell the person.***

15-year-old girl, Nakapiripirit

***I feel like maybe God does not like me.***

14-year-old boy, Wakiso

***I feel like I will revenge when I finish my education. I will go and stay somewhere then come back home later and ask them about the bad things they used to do to me, then start helping them and tell them never to do such things to their children.***

15-year-old boy, Nakapiripirit

***I feel like killing myself all the time and am disturbed, worried with a lot of thoughts.***

17-year-old girl, Iganga

***I feel like the person who has hurt me should die that very moment.***

15-year-old girl, Kasese

***I cry a lot when I am beaten. I normally forget and forgive, because I love my parents and sometimes they beat me with a reason, when I have committed a mistake.***

11-year-old girl, Apac

***I feel very bad when people go unpunished, like the father who raped his daughter was not punished yet he is also a teacher.***

16-year-old girl, Wakiso

***I go into deep thoughts of regret as to why I was not born somewhere else and could still go to school. I feel desperate and wonder where my parents expect me to get money when they refuse to provide for me.***

14-year-old boy, Iganga

***I do not feel like revenge. I am just resigned to my fate, because I have to obey my parents and I have nowhere to go.***

17-year-old boy, Kasese

***I got so hopeless and helpless and tried to commit suicide.***

15-year-old girl, Kasese

***I feel like escaping and going to another place.***

15-year-old boy, Nakapiripirit

***I feel as if instead of insulting and shouting at me you would rather beat me.***

14-year-old boy, Wakiso

***You feel like you are taken as a slave.***

16-year-old boy, Iganga

***I feel that people do not love me.***

12-year-old girl, Apac

## QUESTION 8

### What do you do when violence is committed against you?

This question revealed the resourcefulness of many children and how they actively tried to find a solution to their situation. While many children expressed despair that adults did not take their concerns seriously, they often took the responsibility of becoming protagonists for their own causes.

***If you don't try to do something, you can end up just suffering without end!***

*15-year-old girl, Wakiso*

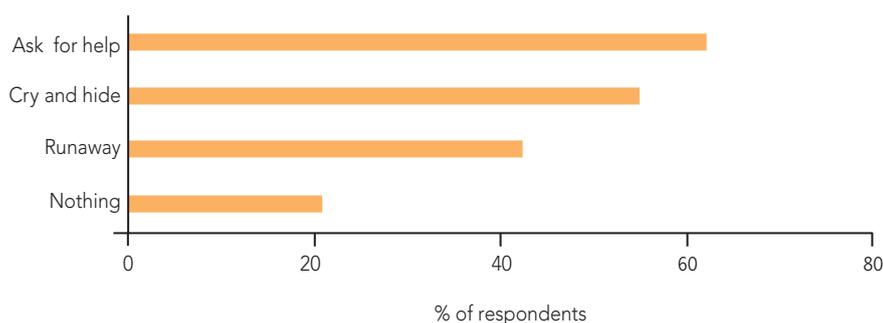
Of the children consulted in this study, 62.3 percent said they would try to find someone that they trusted for help, although in discussions they often felt that this would only produce a short-term solution. In comparison, 54.7 percent said they would cry and hide so that at least they would attract attention and deflect further immediate

pain; and 42.5 percent said that in serious cases they would runaway for a short or prolonged period of time, to stay at a relative's house and temporarily diffuse the situation. Only 20.7 percent of the children said they would do nothing.

Girls reported with higher frequency that they would cry and hide, while a greater number of boys would go to someone for help. Younger children and in-school children reported with higher frequency that they would do nothing. This difference suggests that the more dependent a child is on the perpetrator, the less likely they are to seek help.

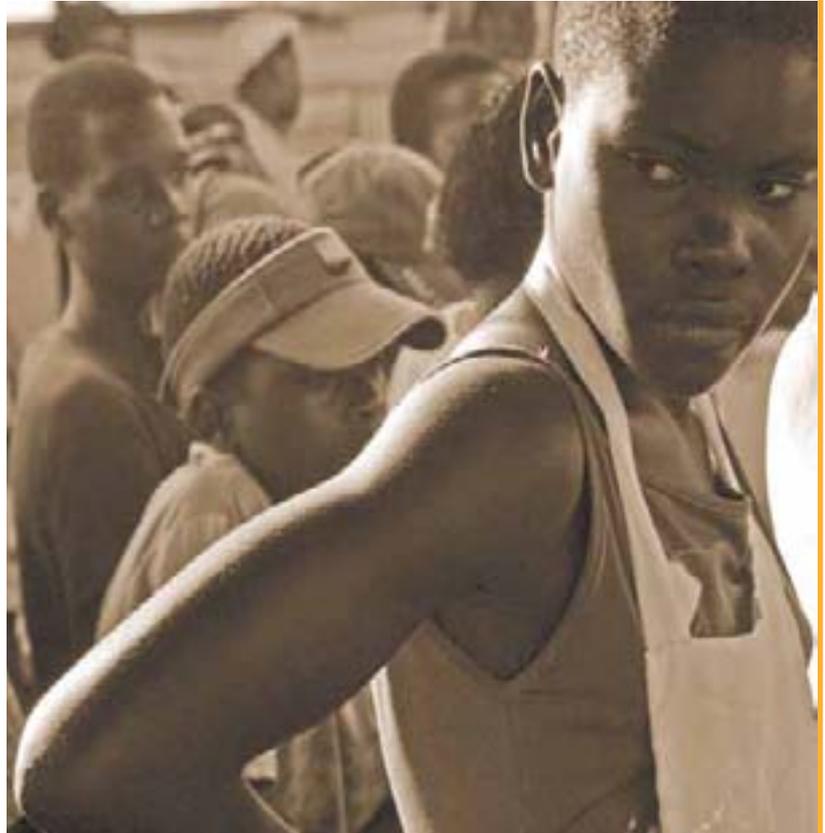
Children, in large numbers, still preferred and sought the protection of their parents. When asked whom they would turn to for help, 56.9 percent named the other parent; 50.6 percent said

**Figure 2.16** Actions of children when they experience violence



they would turn to their neighbour; and 48.9 percent said they would approach a teacher. Children reported that they would approach a local council member only in what they viewed as a serious situation needing official intervention. This pattern suggests that many children are reluctant to approach an outsider or a public official for help, because they fear that it would exacerbate the situation.

When girls and younger children experienced violence, they tended to rely more on teachers (at school) and the other parent (at home) for help. While boys and older children were more likely to approach neighbours and local council members. This difference suggests that girls generally hope for an internal solution, while boys are more likely to approach external persons for help if the situation deteriorates sufficiently.



Many children continued to believe and hope that an adult would help them. However, they also believed that any intervention would likely offer only a short-term solution. Children knew that many adults were unwilling to confront another adult on their behalf, even if a clear act of violence had been committed. The burden of proving the injustice they experienced would still rest on them.

***People just listen to you and then say to stay away from him [perpetrator] until he cools down. Some might offer you food or allow you to stay for a while but then you have to go back.***

*13-year-old boy, Kasese*



## Children's Voices

### What do you do when violence is committed against you?

***I just keep quiet so that they can feel ashamed of what they have done.***

*12-year-old girl, Nakapiripirit*

***I run to my mother.***

*13-year-old girl, Wakiso*

***I go to my grandmother for help or just stay there until things cool down.***

*15-year-old, boy Nakapiripirit*

***I run to our neighbour who is also my auntie.***

*13-year-old boy, Apac*

***I hide and pray to God to forgive that person who has beaten me.***

*15-year-old girl, Kasese*

***Do nothing at all because there is no solution.***

*10-year-old boy, Iganga*

***I beat any child who is passing by.***

*14-year-old boy, Wakiso*

***When they deny me food, I steal it.***

*13-year-old girl, Kasese*

***I do not turn to anyone I just run to the street.***

*12-year-old girl, Kasese*

***I would not run to anyone, because if I did, that would get more problems at home. Instead, I just protect myself from what is raining on me while screaming.***

*13-year-old girl, Apac*

***I don't settle when I think they are going to beat me. I just be as if I do not have life and quake with fear a lot.***

*12-year-old boy, Kasese*

***I try as much as possible to tolerate it. I have nowhere to run to, otherwise I would have run away. I do not tell anyone, because the people I tell might spread it around that that's how my parents treat me, and I do not want others to know this.***

*12-year-old boy, Wakiso*

***After crying, I just keep quiet and just bear it, waiting for when I will grow up and leave home.***

*14-year-old girl, Wakiso*

***I just pray, because when I go and tell anyone what has happened it is like the situation worsens.***

*16-year-old girl, Apac*

***I cry loudly so everyone will notice what is happening.***

*15-year-old girl, Iganga*

## What kind of relationships do we want to create with children?

Many children reported fearing the adults around them. Their level of anxiety increased in the presence of adults, and many of them became shy and unable to express themselves. They felt that adults were not willing to listen to their concerns and that adults saw children as needing to be controlled rather than understood. They did not expect fairness, only critical judgment, regarding their shortcomings. Through narrative role plays as well as journals, children described feeling vulnerable when an adult interacted with them, expecting the adult to embarrass or humiliate them. These children craved a different kind of relationship, within a context of love and affection, rather than fear and shame.



When adults were asked what kind of a relationship they wanted to create with children, their overriding concern appeared to be their responsibility to guide children on how to behave and create a value system that reflected the traditions of their community. Despite contrary experience, many persisted in believing that fear and shame were the most potent tools for achieving this and that it was in the best interests

of children to be subjected to this form of discipline to create cohesive communities.

Clearly, adults as a group do not persist in this belief because they harbour animosity or hatred towards children. Most adults are trying to

construct a relationship with children within the belief that by asserting their power over children, they are acting in the interest of the child. Yet in this study it also became clear that there is a crisis of confidence in this approach. Only a third of the adults, for example, believe that beating children actually changes their behaviour (see page 80). Many adults recognized that associating fear and

shame with an act does not teach the child what is wrong with the act and hence help them grow, but merely creates fearful and shamed children who repress their true nature to survive. Is that our intention? Is that what we as a community are embarked on?

***I wish he would listen to me before beating me all the time. A small mistake - slap! Laugh too loud - a cane! Many times I don't even know why he is beating me.***

*14-year-old girl, Wakiso*

## QUESTION 9

### What, if anything, should be done about violence against children?

Children found themselves in a dilemma when this question was discussed. On the one hand, they wanted the violence to stop, yet they also knew that the adult might respond to an intervention by becoming entrenched in their anger. There was a genuine fear of reprisal, since they had to live with these adults or see them at school the following day.

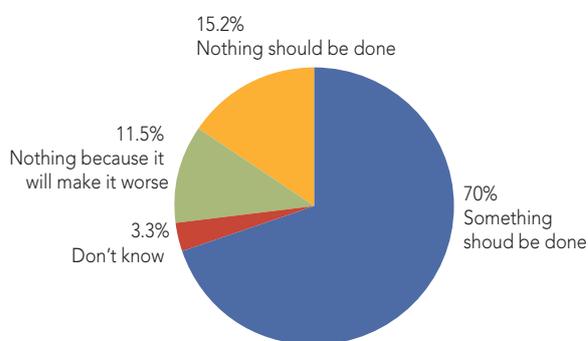
***If I say something to anyone, he will say, "Go let him keep you!" He may even start beating me more.***

*10-year-old girl, Apac*

When asked broadly, "Should something be done," 70 percent of children said something should be done; 15.2 percent said nothing should be done; and 11.5 percent said nothing should be done because it would make things worse for children. When this last statement was explored, many children related stories of how the violence got worse when other adults approached the issue insensitively. It is likely that these children, who were usually dependent on the perpetrator, were making a delicate calculation regarding the potentially positive outcomes and the potentially adverse economic or emotional consequences of an intervention. When the question was asked more specifically with options attached (i.e., "What should be done...") more than 98 percent of children chose an option that indicated their desire for action.

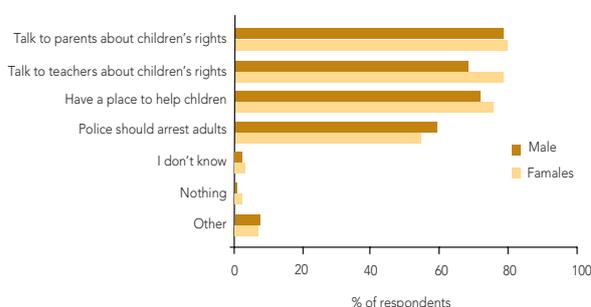
In response to the question, "What should be done?" most children preferred non-punitive interventions. Although children often proposed

**Figure 2.17 Children's opinion on whether something should be done**



that legislation or local council bylaws be put in place, when this idea was further explored, it appeared that many children hoped these laws would act as a deterrent and that no actual arrests or prosecutions would be necessary.

**Figure 2.18 Children's ideas for action to be taken when adults mistreat children, by sex of respondent**



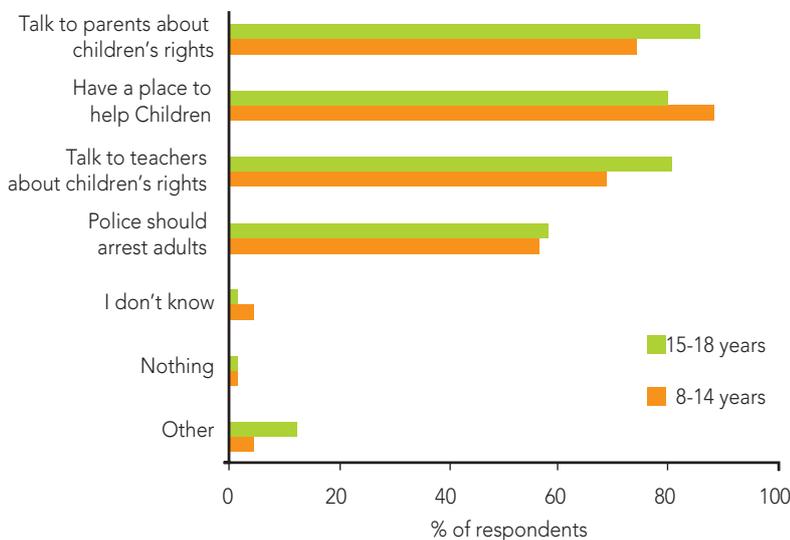
Children’s suggestions focused on raising awareness of children’s rights<sup>15</sup> and increasing support for children: 79.4 percent of the children said other adults should talk to parents about children’s rights; 73.9 percent said teachers should be sensitised to understand children’s rights; 73.5 percent said that communities needed places that responded to children’s needs and assisted them when they reported violence. A comparatively lower percentage of children suggested intervention by the police (56.9 percent).

Girls preferred the options of sensitising teachers and developing community-based responses, with slightly higher frequency than boys. Boys

suggested police intervention with slightly higher frequency than girls. This difference could be related to the finding that boys experienced more severe forms of physical violence compared to girls.

Older children suggested more frequently that teachers and parents should be engaged in a dialogue, while younger children proposed more frequently that there should be local response mechanisms in place. This difference would suggest that older children were less hopeful of any response mechanism actually resolving the issue to their satisfaction. In discussions, many older children expressed doubt about whether an adult would side with them against another adult.

**Figure 2.19 Children’s ideas for action to be taken when adults mistreat children, by age of respondents**



Most children urged caution and sensitivity when addressing cases of violence against children. Beyond reprisal, they also feared losing their teacher’s approval or their parent’s love and affection. They emphasized the need for broader community awareness-raising approaches that addressed the attitudes of adults towards children, rather than singling out individuals for punitive action.

<sup>15</sup> When this concept was explored it appeared that most children were using the words “children’s rights” to imply that they should be treated better and with more respect. They were not referring to a specific right.



### What, if anything, should be done about violence against children?

**The government should teach parents how to treat children.**

12-year-old girl, Kasese

**Parents should handle children well and should talk to children when they do something wrong instead of beating them.**

17-year-old girl, Nakapiripirit

**Not all parents are bad and not all parents are good. Some are bad because they don't know about children's rights.**

15-year-old boy, Nakapiripirit

**Counselling for both children and parents should be done by grandparents or clan members.**

15-year-old boy, Apac

**Sensitize the leaders such as LCs, teachers, parents, and students on how to handle children.**

11-year-old girl, Wakiso

**Government should pass a strict law to make sure parents don't mistreat children.**

15-year-old girl, Nakapiripirit

**Government should develop policies that protect children. If a drunken teacher punishes children, he should also be punished.**

13-year-old boy, Nakapiripirit

**There should be by-laws to handle those who violate children.**

13-year-old girl, Apac

**Counselling services be made available.**

15-year-old girl, Iganga

**Children should not be overloaded with hard work.**

14-year-old girl, Kasese

**Parents should stop forcing young girls from marrying, because some of them end up committing suicide.**

13-year-old girl, Nakapiripirit

**Local councils should come up with strict laws on how the children should be treated by adults.**

16-year-old girl, Iganga

**People should turn to God.**

15-year-old boy, Kasese

**Carry out campaigns against child abuse.**

16-year-old girl, Wakiso

**Children should be taken to boarding schools to help them survive the daily violence at home, because sometimes at home you are punished for nothing. At least there is no burning at school.**

12-year-old girl, Nakapiripirit



## Children's Voices

**The government should not employ corrupt officials, because they would take bribes and let the perpetrators free.**

17-year-old boy, Iganga

**The government should know about the existence of all schools and find out whether the children's rights are protected. For example, some teachers only care about making money and treating the children the way they want.**

13-year-old boy, Wakiso

**Government should advise those who mistreat children.**

8-year-old girl, Apac

**Government should set laws against those who break children's rights.**

12-year-old girl, Apac

**Establish village level councils to attend to children's rights.**

9-year-old boy, Wakiso

**Teachers should organize a day and call parents and sensitize them on children's rights.**

13-year-old boy, Iganga

**Community should also be responsible for the development of children in their area.**

15-year-old girl, Wakiso

**Government should get ways of helping abusive parents.**

12-year-old boy, Iganga

**They should guide teachers to give only 2 strokes, not 40.**

13-year-old girl, Kasese

**We should be put in boarding schools or live elsewhere so that we are not at home.**

9-year-old boy, Apac

**The perpetrators of child violence should be imprisoned and have the same acts done on them so they feel how it hurts.**

18-year-old boy, Kasese

**The local councils should be involved in advising parents not to cause pain or violence against their children.**

12-year-old girl, Nakapiripirit

**The teachers should be advised to stop beating the child before they have told you what is in their heart.**

12-year-old girl, Kasese

**Parents who torture and burn their children should be arrested.**

12-year-old boy, Kasese



## Children's Voices

**Sensitize elders and parents on how to guide children and help them to do the right things without beating or hurting children.**

13-year-old girl, Wakiso

**Advise children to report people who do bad things to them other than keeping quiet, and also teach children to report their fellow children who do bad things to them to elders so that they do not fight one another.**

13-year-old boy Wakiso

**Counsellors should be invited regularly to schools to counsel and guide children so that children can know how to prevent violence against them and grow up as people.**

13-year-old boy, Wakiso

**Take photos of bad acts that happen to children and those who do them to the children, and advise children how to avoid falling victims of such acts. Take them round in different schools to make children aware that those acts are wrong and should not be done to them.**

13-year-old girl, Wakiso

**The local leaders should intervene in families and schools and warn those that do such acts.**

14-year-old boy, Wakiso

**Parents should be sensitised by government on how to live happily with children with out torturing them.**

18-year-old boy, Nakapiripirit

**Children should be given their respect and rights and not treated like animals.**

15-year-old boy, Nakapiripirit

**Children should study and learn their parents' characters and moods in order to tell whether the parents are annoyed or not and react to what the parents want immediately and escape beatings or falling into trouble.**

15-year-old boy, Kasese

**The government should teach people how to protect children's rights, like buying for them clothes and educating them.**

15-year-old girl, Kasese

**They should fine parents and guardians who mistreat children.**

15-year-old girl, Kasese

**Local councillors should talk to parents about the way of treating children and also force able parents with money to pay their children's school fees – like my father.**

17-year-old boy, Iganga

**Elders from the clan should support children and talk to parents to respect children's rights so that children can stop suffering.**

17-year-old girl, Iganga

**Parents should show love to their children and not shout at them when they make a mistake, because children fear their parents when they shout at them all the time.**

18-year-old girl, Nakapiripirit

**Old men who marry young girls should be taken to court for prosecution.**

15-year-old girl, Kasese



## Children's Voices

**Badly beaten children should be provided with alternative homes.**

15-year-old boy, Kasese

**Government should put laws convicting men who harass young girls and lure them into sex, especially old men and the boda-boda [scooter] men.**

15-year-old girl, Kasese

**Policemen and local leaders should be put on the way to stop all children carrying heavy loads and later punish their parents so that parents can stop mistreating children.**

15-year-old boy, Kasese

**The government should sit down and sensitise parents on how children should be treated.**

15-year-old girl, Kasese

**Sensitising those who violate children about children's rights, especially stepmothers, uncles, and mothers.**

13-year-old girl, Apac

**Parents should be sensitised about children's rights so that they know that children are human beings.**

13-year-old boy, Wakiso

**Parents and guardians should be sensitised by local councillors about the value of education so that they do not pull children out of schools.**

17-year-old girl, Iganga

**Children should be asked how they should be punished instead of just beating them.**

12-year-old girl, Apac

**Sensitise parents on how to handle children, not to deny them their rights and avoid giving corporal punishment. This way, the violence would stop.**

16-year-old girl, Nakapiripirit

**Parents should guide their children and help them to learn how to do certain things in a friendly way, without using a stick.**

15-year-old boy, Nakapiripirit

**Teachers should treat all children in school equally and stop hurting and punishing some particular children all the time, because we are all people.**

15-year-old boy, Nakapiripirit

**The school should put the money for lunch on school fees, not to be paid separately.**

16-year-old girl, Wakiso

**Local leaders should also intervene and advise parents to stop mistreating their children.**

15-year-old boy, Wakiso

**Announce over the radio and warn parents to stop mistreating children.**

14-year-old girl, Apac

**Teachers should guide students and show them their mistakes without beating.**

8-year-old girl, Iganga

**I feel like the community should gather all adults and teach them to stop beating children.**

8-year-old girl, Apac

## KEY FINDINGS

More than 90 percent of children participating in the study reported experiencing violence at the hands of adults they knew at home, at school, and in their communities. These reports came from children living in broadly divergent circumstances and geographically and culturally diverse districts. Young children and older children, in-school and out-of-school, girls and boys all said with clarity and unanimity that the violence against them was too much, and that something needed to be done urgently. While the specific experiences of violence sometimes varied according to age, sex, and district, almost every child talked about the negative impact that these experiences had on their self-confidence, and their trust in these adults who were supposed to be their allies.

Key findings from the study of children's experiences include the following:

### **1. Violence against children exists in the nature of the relationship between adult and child and not only in the act of violence itself.**

Children understood that violence is not just an act but also the context and the tone of their relationship with adults. They expressed anxiety and a profound alienation when asked to talk about how adults treated them. They talked about being fearful of adults and ashamed of themselves in many transactions. They learned over a period of time that adults had more power in the adult-child relationship and that adults often misused this power.

### **2. Children's experiences of violence are multifaceted.**

It was apparent that if a child was experiencing one form of violence, they were also vulnerable

to other forms of violence. Most children talked about experiencing physical and emotional violence concurrently, about being beaten when they asked for school fees or threatened if they reported sexual abuse. Many children talked about experiencing several forms of violence from the same adult.

### **3. Children's experiences of violence depend on their sex, age, and status within the family.**

While no child is immune to any of the four forms of violence discussed in this study, certain forms of violence were reported more often by certain groups of children. Older girls were more vulnerable to sexual violence, while older boys were more vulnerable to extreme forms of physical punishment. Younger children were more vulnerable to being bullied by older children and to emotional violence. Children with a disability were more likely to be denied access to education, and out-of-school children were more likely to be disowned. However, despite the variety, they all talked about a common underlying sense of powerlessness.

### **4. Children have an intense reaction to violence against them.**

Children talked of a broad range of feelings spanning from rage and fantasies of revenge to despondency and feelings of powerlessness. They felt a deep sense of betrayal and a consequential loss of trust in adults. A significant proportion of the children talked about transitory thoughts of suicide. Older children often displaced their anger on younger children or girls by victimizing them at schools or in the community.

## 5. Children experience most of the violence at home.

For every form of violence discussed in this study, higher proportions of children reported experiencing the violence at home. The home acts as the most common place for violence, likely due to the lower adult-to-child ratio in comparison to schools. It was also apparent to children that homes were also the environment in which adults felt least accountable for their treatment of children. This finding has practical implications, since many of the current interventions are aimed primarily at schools.

## 6. Children experience considerable violence at school.

Most reports of violence at school focused on the injustice of the act rather than the act itself. Children reported being beaten for no apparent reason and being victimized by teachers. Older boys talked about being humiliated by male teachers and younger children and girls talked about being bullied by older children. Girls also talked about sexual violence against them from teachers as well as older boys. There appeared to be a chain of transference at school (teacher to older boys to younger children and girls) similar to the chain of transference at home (father to mother to children). The most damaging aspect of this violence at school was that it was unpredictable and often a result of actions that individual children had no control over. Children learned from this experience that adults with authority do abuse their power without consequences.

## 7. Children also experience violence in the community.

Most adults felt that they had the authority to castigate and beat any child, if, in their opinion, the

child was doing something wrong. This often led to ad hoc violence in the streets against children, from random caning for not appearing purposeful to abuse by street vendors or bus conductors. Older girls, in particular, reported considerable sexual harassment in the streets.

## 8. Orphans and children living with a stepparent were most vulnerable.

Although all children were vulnerable to violence, a wide range of children reported orphans as the most vulnerable group. The same person often abused them physically, emotionally, as well as economically. Girls were often targeted by the stepfather or a male relative for sexual abuse.

## 9. Children have no resort when they need help.

Most children had no one to turn to when they needed help. Adults regularly undermined children's plea for help by not believing them or discounting their anxiety. Children received warnings to behave better or avoid situations that provoked the adult, but rarely received any serious acknowledgement of their concerns. Furthermore, most children had no access to a formal mechanism for reporting their complaints or even seeking assistance.

## 10. Children just want the violence to stop.

Most children did not want a confrontational or a punitive solution. They just wanted the violence to stop. They wanted their concerns to be taken seriously and the adults to respect them as human beings. When children were asked what should be done about violence against them, the single most popular response was that adults should be sensitised to understand children's rights.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> See note 15



# PART THREE

## Adults' Rationale for Violence against Children

WHAT IT MEANS TO THEM

WHAT THEY DO

WHY THEY DO IT

WHAT THEY THINK SHOULD BE DONE ABOUT IT

**Through various methods of data collection, adults responded to these questions:**

Are children punished in your community?  
Do you punish children?  
How often do you punish children?  
In what ways do you punish children?  
Who do you punish?  
Why do you punish children?  
Are there ways in which adults mistreat children?  
What should be done when adults mistreat children?

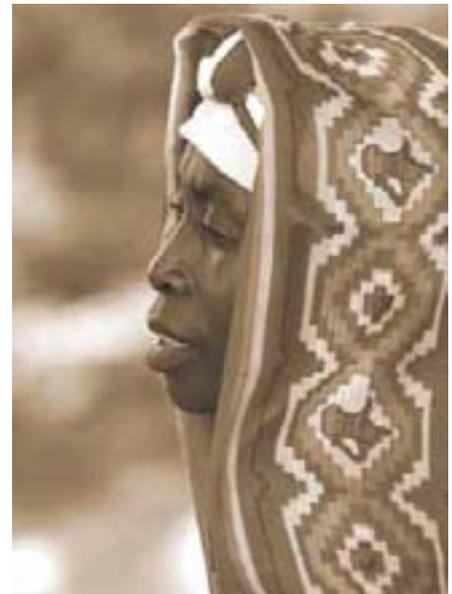
Part three of this report provides an overview of the consultations with adults by juxtaposing adults' voices taken directly from research notes and the analysis of the data collected. It ends with a summary of key findings.

## Adults' Rationale for their Violence Against Children

The concept of violence against children generated much debate amongst adults. It led to heated discussions about what it meant, its implications for the adult-child relationship, and how it has challenged deep-seated, traditional values. The discussions consistently came back to adults' belief that any concessions around the issue could lead to erosion of the absolute authority adults claimed over the actions of children.

During formative research, many members of the adult advisory group asserted that adults had a duty to guide children, and that physical and emotional pain served as useful tools in enabling adults to fulfil that duty. They insisted that these interventions should be understood as "punishment" to correct children's behaviour and that excessive punishment should be seen as "mistreatment," not violence. These adults believed it should be taken for granted that they had the best interests of children at heart, and that lapses in adults' judgment should be seen as an aberration rather than a way of interacting with children. They further asserted that the majority of adults intuitively knew the difference between guiding children through punishment and mistreating them. They were suspicious of what they perceived as an external value system (i.e., the rhetoric of children's rights) undermining the status quo.

Thus, the dialogue with adults, as reported in the following pages, was conducted on their own terms. The concept of "punishing children" was used instead of "violence against children." The questions were phrased with the intention of ascertaining the nature, frequency, and motivation for the "acts" as opposed to what the acts meant to the perpetrators. (for further discussion on terminology used see page 12 and 13).



# QUESTION 1

## Are children punished in your community?

Punishing children has become normalized. Many adults use it as their primary method for teaching children how to behave. Most adults consulted in this study talked with pride about how the adults within their communities punished children to control their behaviour.

**You are not a serious [responsible] adult if you don't punish children.**

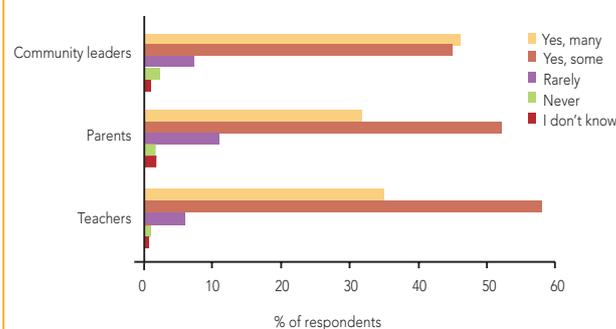
*male, community leader, Nakapiripirit*

Of the adults consulted through questionnaires, 90 percent said that children were being punished in their communities. More than one third of them (35.2 percent) said "many" children were being punished, and very few (8 percent) said that children were "rarely" punished in their communities.

More women (38.7 percent) than men (31.7 percent) said that "many" children were punished, while more

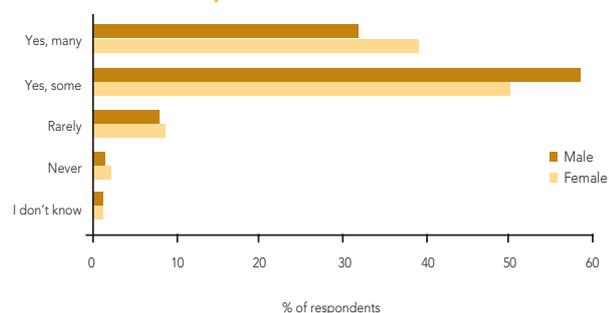
men (58.4 percent) than women (49.9 percent) said that "some" children were being punished. This difference suggests that men are not aware of or discount punishment that is meted out to children on an ad hoc basis.

**Figure 3.2 Percentage of adults who punish children, by role of respondents**



As a group, 45.9 percent of the community leaders reported that "many" children were being punished in their communities, and 44.7 percent said "some" children were being punished. In discussions, many adults talked with pride, especially community leaders and parents, about how they were contributing to upholding the values of the community by ensuring that children obeyed their elders. If community leaders are assumed to represent the values of the community, then these numbers suggest that the punishment of children is common and is seen as a good thing for the community. It reflects well on adults of the community if they publicly demonstrate that they are "controlling" children.

**Figure 3.1 Perception of norms regarding punishment of children, by sex of respondents**



### Are children punished in your community?

**Yes. We beat them. How else will they learn respect for elders?**

female, parent, Nakapiripirit

**Parents don't like to beat, but sometimes you have no choice.**

female, parent, Wakiso

**There are two groups [of children]. Those for whom a look is enough and those who have to be beaten senseless to put some sense in them!**

male, community leader, Apac

**Yes, many. Some parents even bring their children when they are tired of beating them and ask us to put some manners in them. "Don't have mercy until he changes his ways," they say.**

male, teacher, Wakiso

**Yes, most children are punished in this community if and when they commit misbehaviour. Although some people do it excessively, but others give normal punishment in order to teach their children good behaviour and set them on the right path.**

male, community leader, Apac

**That's not a serious question! Of course they are.**

male, community leader, Apac

**A few people spoil their children and do not punish them at all, but these are few.**

female, parent, Iganga

**It is common. All children are punished. The boys need more punishment because they are unruly. Girls are always obedient.**

male, teacher, Kasese

**It's everyday. That is normal and right, otherwise there would be no discipline in our houses.**

female, parent, Nakapiripirit

**Many children are punished, because when they are young they tend to annoy their parents more.**

male, parent, Apac

**Yes. We get children from all types of homes in this school. We must put them right [by punishing].**

female, teacher, Iganga

**Yes, many are punished, especially stepchildren. In this school we have many children who are tortured at home by their stepmothers.**

female, teacher, Iganga



## Adults' Voices

**Culturally, we watch the girls and punish them most keenly. If we do not punish her then we ruin the whole nation.**

female, community leader, Iganga

**It [punishment] is common in schools. Children come here when they are wild!**

male, teacher, Nakapiripirit

**Children are undisciplined and have to be punished.**

male, community leader, Kasese

**Children today are very stubborn and have to be punished.**

female, community leader, Kasese

**Yes, all children are punished because that is what is expected from all responsible parents.**

female, community leader, Iganga

**All children need disciplining, from birth till when they are old. Without punishment, they become wild.**

male, parent, Nakapiripirit

**Spare the rod, spoil the child. Even the Bible says punish your child to make him a good child. We punish everyday.**

male, parent, Apac

**Every child needs punishment to grow. Yes, I beat. The harder you beat, the better he will learn what you are teaching.**

female, teacher, Nakapiripirit

**We as teachers rarely beat children.**

female, teacher, Kasese

**Punishment is as old as man, because even God punished Adam, so we will not hesitate to punish. We punish regularly.**

male, community leader, Wakiso

## QUESTION 2

### Do you punish children? How?

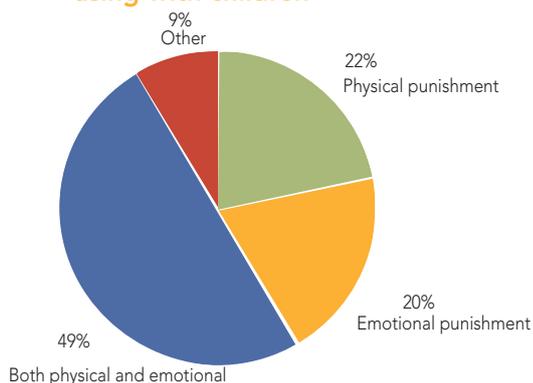
Only 1.2 percent of the adults said they never punished children. Apart from teachers, most adults reported without hesitation that they punished children. They emphasized the duty of an adult to guide children on how to behave and saw the punishment of children as a tool for fulfilling this duty.

***I punish all children I come in contact with if I see them misbehaving. How else will they learn how to behave?***

*male, community leader, Kasese*

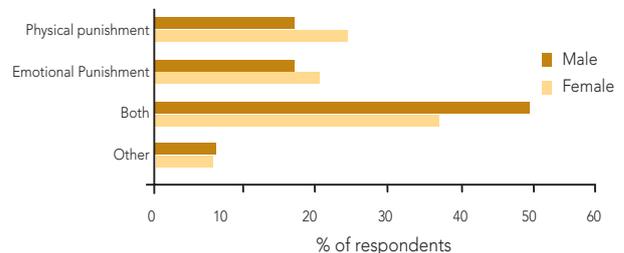
Of the adults consulted in this study, 91.3 percent reported using physical or emotional punishment to guide children. Of these adults, 21.6 percent said they primarily used physical punishment; 20.3 percent said they primarily used emotional punishment; and 49.4 percent said they used both physical and emotional punishment.

**Figure 3.3 Types of punishment adults report using with children**



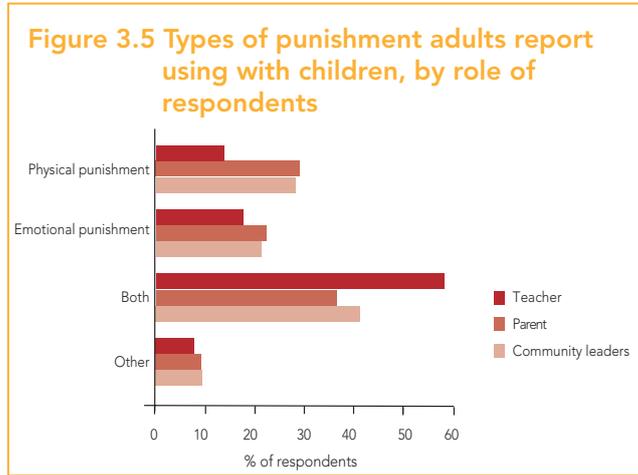
A higher percentage of women (24 percent) compared to men (19.3 percent) said they primarily used physical punishment. Men and women reported using emotional punishment with comparable frequency. However, men reported with higher frequency using both physical and emotional punishment compared to women. In discussions, it emerged that women tended to lash out more with physical punishments, such as slaps or caning, due to higher contact hours between children and women. Men generally only saw children in the evening and were often not involved in supervising their household chores.

**Figure 3.4 Types of punishment adults report using with children, by sex of respondents**



As a group, parents and community leaders reported with the highest frequency the predominant use of physical punishment, while teachers reported with highest frequency the use of both physical and emotional punishment to discipline children. In discussions and interviews, teachers generally tended to underreport use of physical punishment within the school due to fear

of being reported to higher authorities. Collectively, this might suggest that teachers are more aware of personal consequences to them, if violence against children is reported while parents and community leaders feel greater security in using physical punishment against children. This is corroborated by findings from discussions with children, who were generally more reluctant to report adults on whom they were dependent.





### Do you punish children? How?

**Yes, I punish any child that does not know how to behave.**

*male, parent, Nakapiripirit*

**I do. It is my duty to make sure children behave well. If I don't punish they will get out of control.**

*female, community leader, Kasese*

**There are as many ways to punish a child as there are children. What is important is that the child experiences pain and remembers the pain.**

*male, community leader, Wakiso*

**Depends on what he has done. Small, small mistakes, I shout at him. If he has insulted an elder, I beat him. If he has stolen, I seriously beat him, lock him up, and don't speak to him for a few days.**

*male, parent, Iganga*

**Most parents mix according to the situation. If you have a stubborn child, you use a stick. If you have an obedient one, a look is enough.**

*female, parent, Iganga*

**As teachers, we rarely punish. We refer to the headmaster.**

*female, teacher, Apac*

**There is not one way to punish. Different children need different things. But generally I leave it to my wife to do all the correction, since she is with them all the time. If something serious happens, that's when I step in.**

*male, parent, Nakapiripirit*

**I just react. I throw something at him or use my tongue, or anything.**

*female, parent, Iganga*

**I try to talk with them before punishing, but most times they know why I am angry, so there is no need to waste my words. I just stop talking to them or let my stick do the talking.**

*male, community leader, Kasese*

**Nowadays parents are spoiling children. They beg [children] to behave better as if that's what an adult should be doing. If the child doesn't fear your look or hasn't felt the pain of your palm, then you have failed as a parent.**

*male, community leader, Kasese*

## How often do you punish children?

It was difficult to ascertain the frequency of punishments, as most adults had a limited conception of how frequently they administered them. Most adults (64.2 percent) said they punished “when needed” in response to “bad behaviour.”

***Sometimes I punish three times a day and sometimes I don’t punish for three days. It all depends on what he does.***

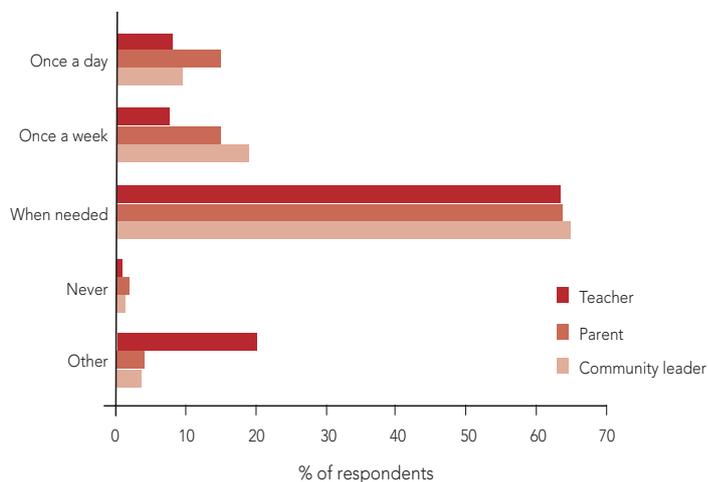
*female, parent, Iganga*

When asked broadly, 13.6 percent of adults claimed they never punished children, and almost an equal number, 13.1 percent, said they punished often. When this question was asked more specifically, after discussing various types of punishment that adults use, the percentage of adults saying they never punished children decreased dramatically from 13.6 percent to 1.2 percent. Accordingly, the number of adults saying they punished often rose. This shift suggests that adults discounted much of the violence they perpetrated against children and were often unaware of it. In discussions, it emerged that only major interventions were being counted when adults were asked how often they punished. For example, throwing an object at a child, threatening a child with a stick, or pinching a child’s ear were not being considered punishments.

As a group, more parents (14.8 percent) reported punishing once a day, although a considerable number of community leaders (18.8 percent) reported punishing once a week. Many teachers claimed that they would only punish when other avenues had been exhausted, as indicated by the 19.9 percent who chose “other.” However, again, it is suspected that teachers were underreporting, since a large number of students reported being punished regularly at school, and teachers were fearful of official repercussions for reporting about physical punishment in the schools.

Women were more likely to be the day-to-day disciplinarian in the family and punished children

**Figure 3.6 Frequency of punishment as reported by adults, by role of respondents**



more often than men. For example, 13.4 percent of women said they punished everyday and a further 13.7 percent said they punished once a week. In discussions and interviews it became clear that this difference might be because women spent more time with children compared to men.

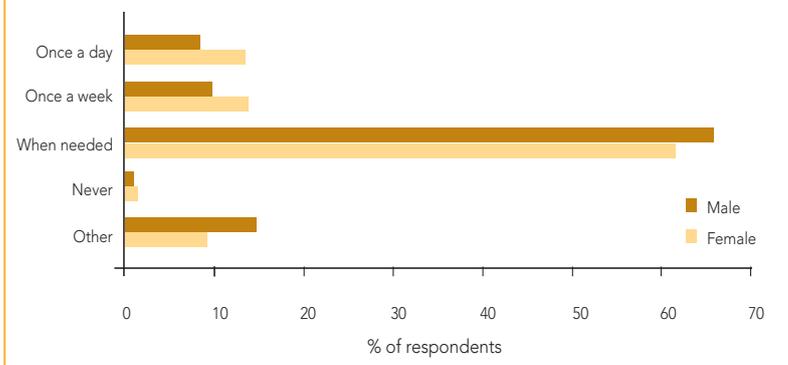
Men tended to punish less regularly, with 65.6 percent of the men claiming that they punished children when needed.

There appeared to be a widespread expectation that men would become involved in “disciplining” children when a child committed a serious offence, and in those instances, the punishment was usually severe.

***For me, I don't bother with a slap or a cane. His mother can take care of that. I only get involved when serious punishment has to be given. I tie him up and beat him thoroughly. A father's punishment should be like that or else he will get used to it. That is why I don't punish often, but when I do, he will not forget it.***

*male, parent, Iganga*

**Figure 3.7 Frequency of punishment of children as reported by adults, by sex of respondents**





### How often do you punish children?

***In a week I can punish him five or six times.***

*female, parent, Nakapiripirit*

***Depends on the situation, the child, and the crime he has committed.***

*male, parent, Apac*

***I am teacher. I can punish 10 times a day.***

*male, teacher, Apac*

***I punish when he commits a mistake.***

*male, parent, Wakiso*

***I rarely punish. The child has to really upset me before I give strokes, because I don't want him to get used to the punishment or it will lose its power.***

*female, teacher, Kasese*

***If I were to estimate, I would say I punish her seriously maybe once every week.***

*female, parent, Kasese*

***You can't go a whole day without punishing. It can be shouting or it can be a slap. You know how children are. They keep making new mistakes all the time, everyday.***

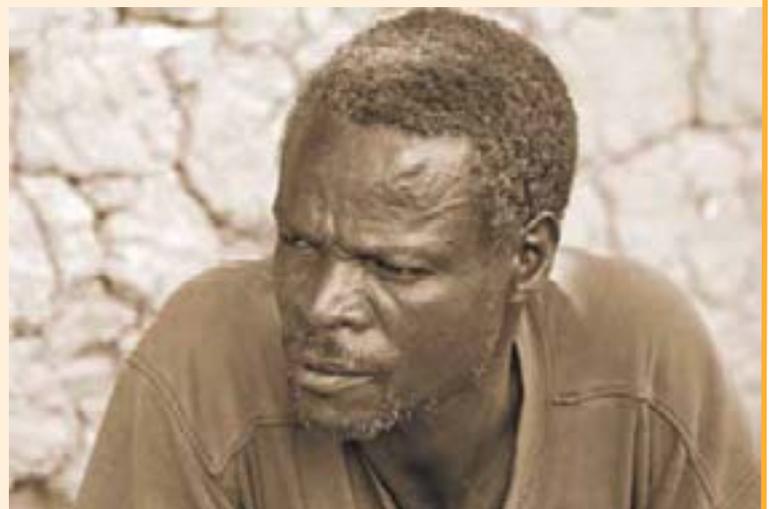
*female, community leader, Wakiso*

***As a parent, I am on duty all the time. Even my presence means a child is scared of misbehaving.***

*female, parent, Apac*

***I am not educated like you people so I don't count how many times I punish them. All I can say is that my children are well behaved because they know the consequences of bad behaviour.***

*male, parent, Nakapiripirit*



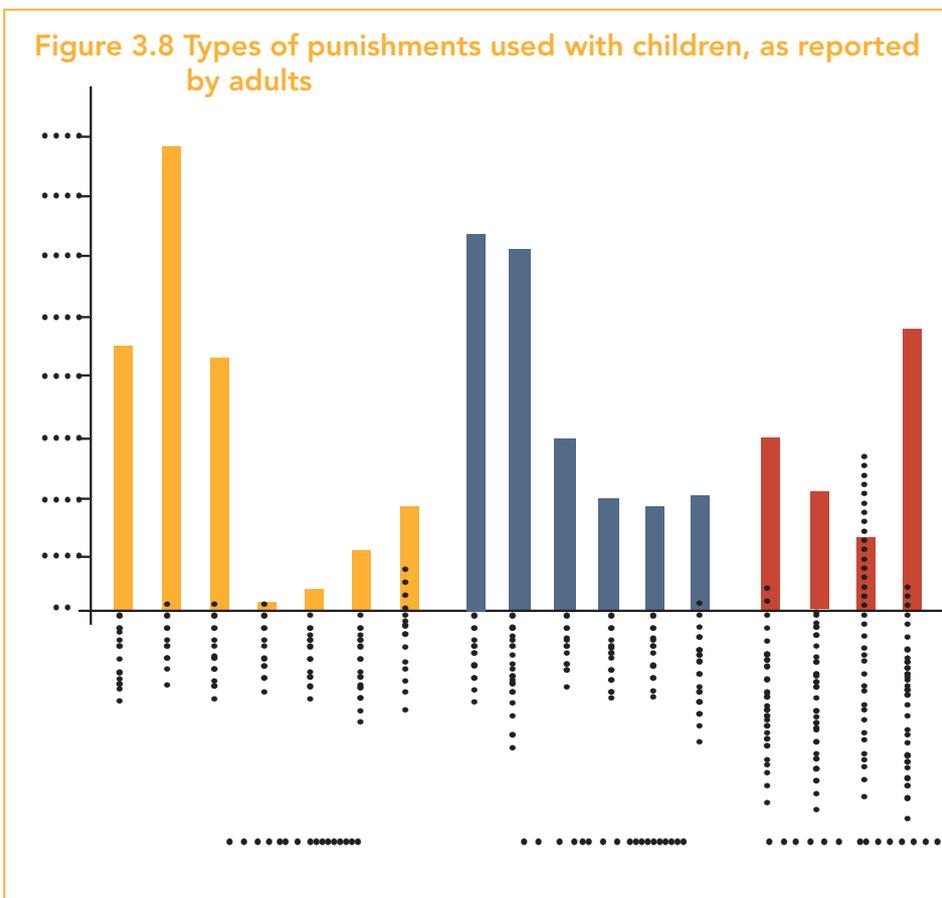
## QUESTION 4

### In what ways do you punish children?

Although a wide array of punishments was reported, most adults tended to use caning, shouting, glaring, slapping, pinching, and assigning physical work. Most adults recognised that the punishments involved inflicting pain or deprivation on children and that it provoked powerful reactions in children, yet they also insisted, that it was for the children's own good.

***My child knows that I beat him because I care about him. I don't want him to be spoilt like other children.***

*female, parent, Nakapiripirit*



# In what ways do you punish children?

## Physical Punishment

Although an overwhelming majority of adults (78.3 percent) said they caned children, only 45.7 percent of adults said they slapped children as a form of punishment, and 42.8 percent said they pinched children. Almost 1 in 5 adults (19.3 percent) said they assigned excessive work to punish children, and more than 1 in 10 (11.4 percent) said they locked children up. Apart from caning, these figures are considerably lower than the experiences reported by children. Most noticeably, 80.4 percent of children reported being slapped by adults, yet only 45.7 percent of adults reported slapping children. Similarly, 61.6 percent of children reported being pinched by adults, yet only 42.8 percent of adults reported pinching children.

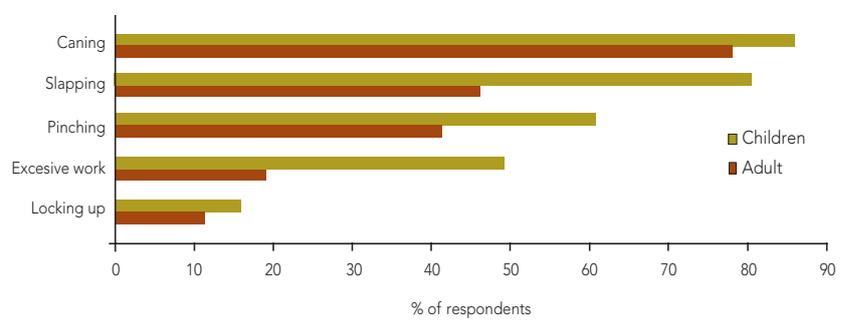
This discrepancy confirms an observation discussed earlier (see page 65) that many adults are under-representing and perhaps even under-perceiving the amount of violence inflicted on children. In discussions and interviews, many adults tended to discount ad hoc incidences of violence against children as inconsequential.

***Small, small actions such as looking with hot eyes or a quick slap are not important. It quickly puts the child right and you continue doing what you were doing before. If I were to count those, they would be too many!***

*female, parent, Wakiso*

As expected, not many adults admitted to using excessive forms of physical punishment. For example, 19.1 percent of boys and 15.1 percent of girls reported being burned, yet only 2.9 percent of adults reported using burning as a form of punishment. Similarly, 14.4 percent of children reported being tied up, yet only 3.4 percent of adults admitted to tying up children. This would suggest that at least at some level, a significant number of adults are aware that other adults would understand some of the punishment they inflict on children as mistreatment. This emerged more clearly during discussion under question 7 although often it was reported in the third person.

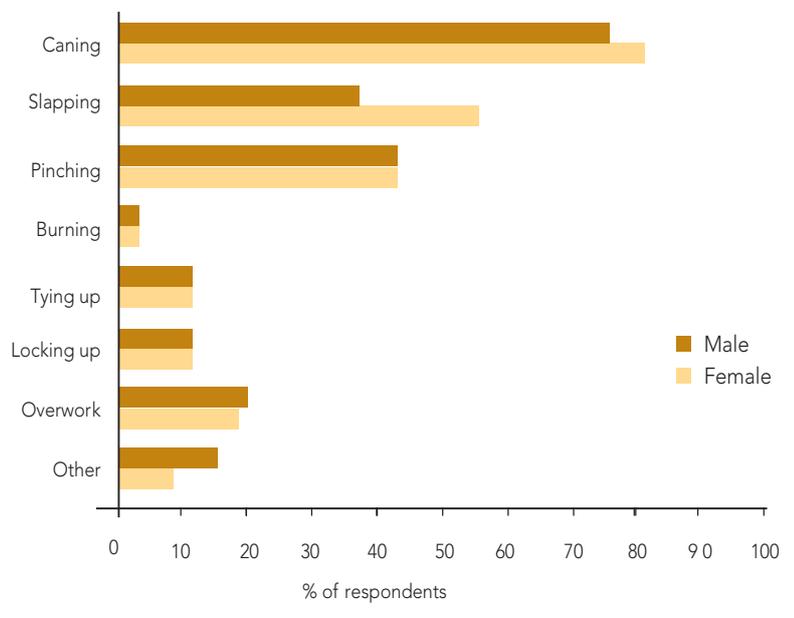
**Figure 3.9 Comparison of children's and adults' reports of use of physical punishment**



Slapping and caning were the only two forms of physical punishment that had significant differences between men and women. A higher percentage of women reported slapping children (55.6 percent) and caning children (81.2 percent) compared to men (37.1 percent and 75.7 percent respectively). This difference suggests that these forms of punishment are opportunistic and are dependent on the accessibility of children.

Pinching was the only form of physical punishment where there was a significant difference between groups. A higher percentage of teachers reported pinching (51.1 percent) compared to parents (34.6 percent) or community leaders (31.8 percent). Many children reported that pinching was used in a group setting to single out a particular student for a public humiliation.

**Figure 3.10 Types of physical punishment used by adults, by sex of respondents**





### In what ways do you punish children?

#### Physical Punishment

**Physical pain is a good teacher. It burns lessons in your head in a way that soft-soft words never can. I make sure the child feels the pain when I slap him.**

*male, teacher, Wakiso*

**I give them 10 strokes of the cane.**

*male, teacher, Kasese*

**I tie him to a tree for a whole day without food or water and cane him once or twice during the day.**

*male, parent, Nakapiripirit*

**I twist his earlobe so that he will feel the pain.**

*male, teacher, Kasese*

**If I want to punish him quietly, I press his finger near the nails really tight.**

*female, teacher, Apac*

**I use my fingernails to squeeze her earlobe until it can even bleed.**

*male, parent, Iganga*

**If he becomes wild and I can't manage, I invite mob justice. I call his age-mates and ask them to beat him up.**

*male, parent, Nakapiripirit*

**I make them slash the grass on a large area of land in the hot sun.**

*female, teacher, Wakiso*

**Me as a teacher, I don't punish, but as a parent I give strokes, I shout, and I even deny her food if she fails her tests.**

*female, teacher, Apac*

**I don't joke around. When I slap, the child knows he has been slapped. I don't believe in this soft approach of staring at your child or giving warnings.**

*male, parent, Nakapiripirit*

## In what ways do you punish children?

### Emotional Punishment

Shouting and glaring at children were reported with highest frequency as forms of emotional punishment. Adults saw both of these acts as mild forms of punishment that were administered as a warning before a “more serious” action would follow.

Shouting (63.6 percent) was seen as a normal way of communicating with children. Many adults felt that it added emphasis to a point when they raised their voices.

***You know how these children are. If you talk to them with a normal voice, they ignore you, but if you raise your voice, they start taking you seriously. If you don't shout at them, they will start sitting on your head!***

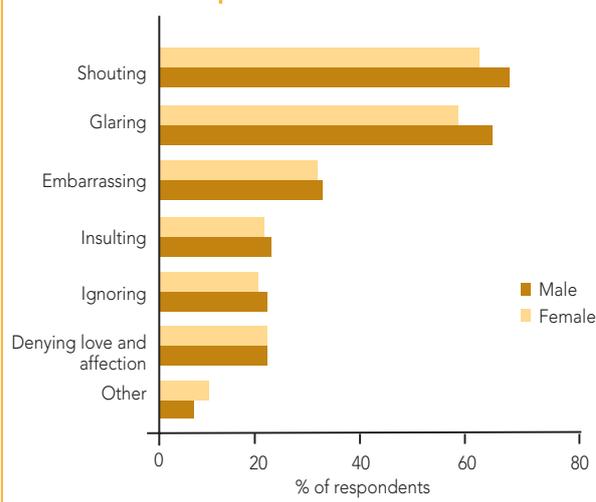
*female, teacher, Iganga*

Glaring was the only form of punishment that was reported with higher frequency by adults than by children, with 61.3 percent of adults saying they glared at children and only 51.7 percent of children reporting being glared at. This difference may exist because many adults mentioned with pride that glaring was enough to stop their children from misbehaving. It was seen as an indication of having instilled enough fear of consequences that their children did not need to be told again.

***One look from me and he knows what he has to do. I do not need to raise my hand to show him that I am displeased.***

*male, parent, Apac*

**Figure 3.11** Types of emotional punishment used by adults, by sex of respondents



In discussions and interviews, many adults indicated that emotional punishment was an effective tool for maintaining control over children. For example, approximately one in five adults said that they insulted (20.7 percent), ignored (19.6 percent), or denied love and affection (20.5 percent) when they were displeased with children. Almost one in three adults (30.6 percent) said they humiliated children when they misbehaved as a way of ensuring that they wouldn't repeat the mistake. The aim, it appeared, was to shame children or exploit their need to be loved in order to coerce them into behaving differently.

***You have to show the child that your love is not for free. He has to earn it. If he doesn't do what you say, why should you show him love? The child should get what he deserves. Nothing more, nothing less.***

*male, parent, Kasese*



### In what ways do you punish children?

#### Emotional Punishment

***I lock her in the kraal with the animals, so she will know that if she behaves like an animal, I will treat her like that.***

*male, parent, Nakapiripirit*

***I show him hot coal. I tell him I will brand him like an animal on his face.***

*female, parent, Wakiso*

***I threaten to throw her down the latrine.***

*male, parent, Apac*

***I send him away saying he is no longer my son.***

*male, parent, Nakapiripirit*

***I ignore her and make her feel bad.***

*female, parent, Apac*

***I threaten to burn him with a hot knife.***

*female, parent, Wakiso*

***If I walk into a class, they know that I have to be able to hear a pin drop. If not, they know what will happen.***

*male, teacher, Iganga*

***I insult them publicly, and then if they continue, I administer several strokes.***

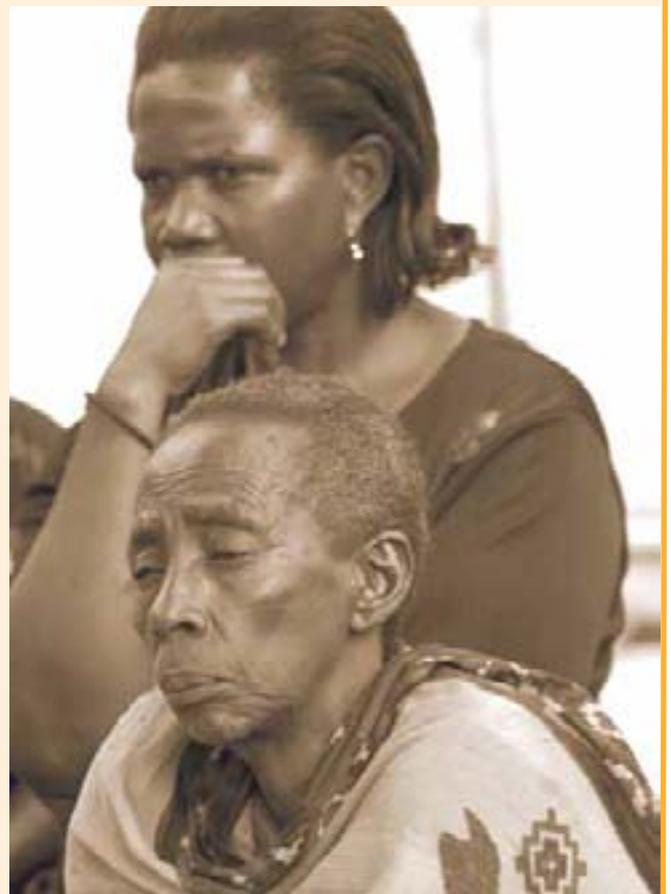
*male, teacher, Apac*

***It depends on my mood. If she is annoying me, I can say poisonous things, I can pinch her, or I can refuse to give her food. As I said, it all depends.***

*female, parent, Iganga*

***I believe a tongue is more powerful than the cane. I make her feel bad by my words, and she will be so ashamed that she dare not repeat the mistake.***

*female, parent, Wakiso*

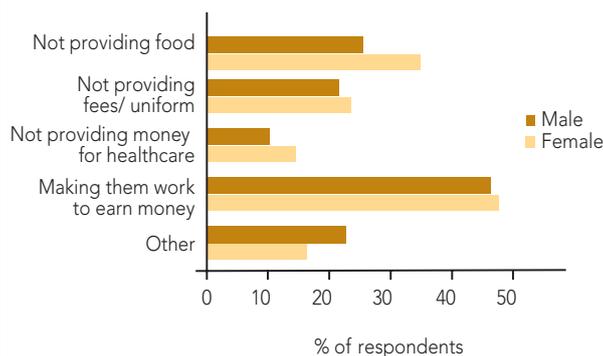


## In what ways do you punish children?

### Economic Punishment

Controlling children's access to their families' resources was reported by adults as an important way of controlling behaviour. Children were expected to make a significant contribution to the family's economy through their labour, yet their access to the family resources was seen as a privilege that can be withdrawn as a punishment. Indeed, a critical quality of the economic punishment was its overt injustice, otherwise the act was not perceived as punishment.

**Figure 3.12 Types of economic punishment used by adults, by sex of respondents**



This was also an area where, in interviews and informal conversations, many adults acknowledged that children were routinely being abused. A significant proportion of adults acknowledged in discussions that although they realized that children have a right to have their basic needs met, as parents they would still continue to impose economic penalties that curtailed access to basic needs for perceived misbehaviour.

**Children have to show that they are worthy of being educated, otherwise it is better they stay home and contribute to the family by working.**  
male, parent, Wakiso

Of the adults consulted in this study, 46.8 percent said that if they were displeased with children, they withdrew financial support and forced children to earn money for some of their basic needs.

Approximately, one in eight adults (12.2 percent) said that they refused to provide children with money for healthcare if children misbehaved. Almost one in three adults (29.7 percent) said they denied children food as a form of punishment, and over one in five (22.3 percent) said that they only provided money for uniforms or school related costs if they deemed the child worthy of it.

In every category, women were more likely to impose economic punishments on children. For example, 34.8 percent of women said they would deny food to children as a punishment, compared to 25.2 percent of men. Similarly, 14.5 percent of women said they would deny money for healthcare to children, compared to 10.1 percent of men. However, this difference may be more related to access and context rather than characteristic differences between women and men. Women control access to food, and children generally tend to approach their mothers for their financial needs. Furthermore, in many cases, it is likely that men are in overall control of the family's resources, and that women are merely conduits of decisions already made by the male head of the family.



In what ways do you punish children?

### Economic Punishment

***I tell her, "tonight you will not eat."***

*female, parent, Apac*

***A child has to contribute to the family. Nobody should get anything for free. If he doesn't behave, why should I support him? He is not my son if he embarrasses me in my community.***

*male, community leader, Kasese*

***I stop paying school fees. Why should I if he doesn't deserve it?***

*male, parent, Kasese*

***I make them fetch firewood from faraway for cooking school lunch if they are late, even by a few minutes.***

*female, teacher, Wakiso*

***I send him away saying he is no longer my son.***

*male, parent, Nakapiripirit*

***Children are not serious, these days! All they want to do is play. They don't want to work hard for their families. It is good discipline to make them do heavy work, especially when they misbehave.***

*male, community leader, Apac*

***I make them fetch four 20-liter jerry cans of water.***

*female, parent, Iganga*

***I threaten to collect the bride-price from the old man who wants to pay me 50 cows for her.***

*male, parent Nakapiripirit*

***I know sometimes she has too much work, but I am preparing her to be a good wife. If she becomes lazy, who will pay a bride-price for her? Toughening her up is good.***

*female, parent, Nakapiripirit*

***It is children's duty to collect water for the family. I make her collect more when I am angry with her.***

*female, parent, Wakiso*

***A child should never get tired of doing work, otherwise she will become lazy and start expecting everything for free. The more work she has the better behaved she will be.***

*male, parent, Nakapiripirit*

## QUESTION 5

### Who do you punish?

This question sparked much debate. It seemed to penetrate to the core values and attitudes behind adults' relationships with children. During focus group discussions, adults challenged each other about the meaning of being an adult in that community. When reflecting on who they punished, many adults lamented the erosion of their authority over children. They were no longer sure if they could claim absolute respect from children. They expressed confusion as well as nostalgia over the loss of certainty in their roles as guardians of the community's values.

**Children these days are too much. Any small thing you do, they want to take you to police! They don't understand that I am older and I know what is best for them. If I beat them, it is to improve them. Instead they want me to say "sorry" and beg for forgiveness. I will not do it!**

*male, parent, Nakapiripirit*

Despite this discussion, 81.7 percent of adults said they punished their own children. More than half of the adults (57.9 percent) said they punished children in their communities, and one third of the adults said they would punish any child they saw misbehaving. Compared to men, a higher proportion of women (39.3 percent) reported that they would punish any child they saw misbehaving.

***In the old days, all adults were responsible for all children and there was more harmony in our communities.***

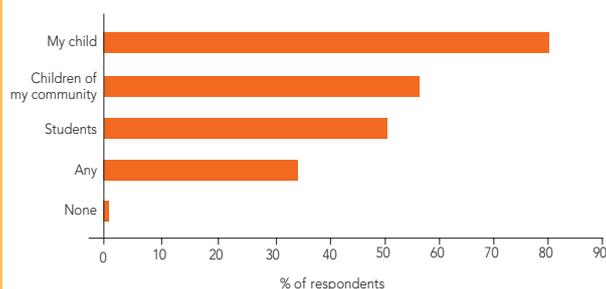
*female, community leader, Apac*

Among teachers, 80.1 percent claimed to punish their own children, whereas only 60.4 percent claimed to punish their students. Similarly, 89.4 percent of the community leaders claimed to punish their own children, whereas only 22.4 percent reported punishing other children. This pattern could suggest that with the possibility of personal consequences, adults exercise greater caution when punishing other children or, at least, when speaking about it publicly.

***This business of child rights is too much. You give one slap and you could find yourself in court responding to charges of abuse.***

*male, teacher, Iganga*

Figure 3.13 Who adults punish

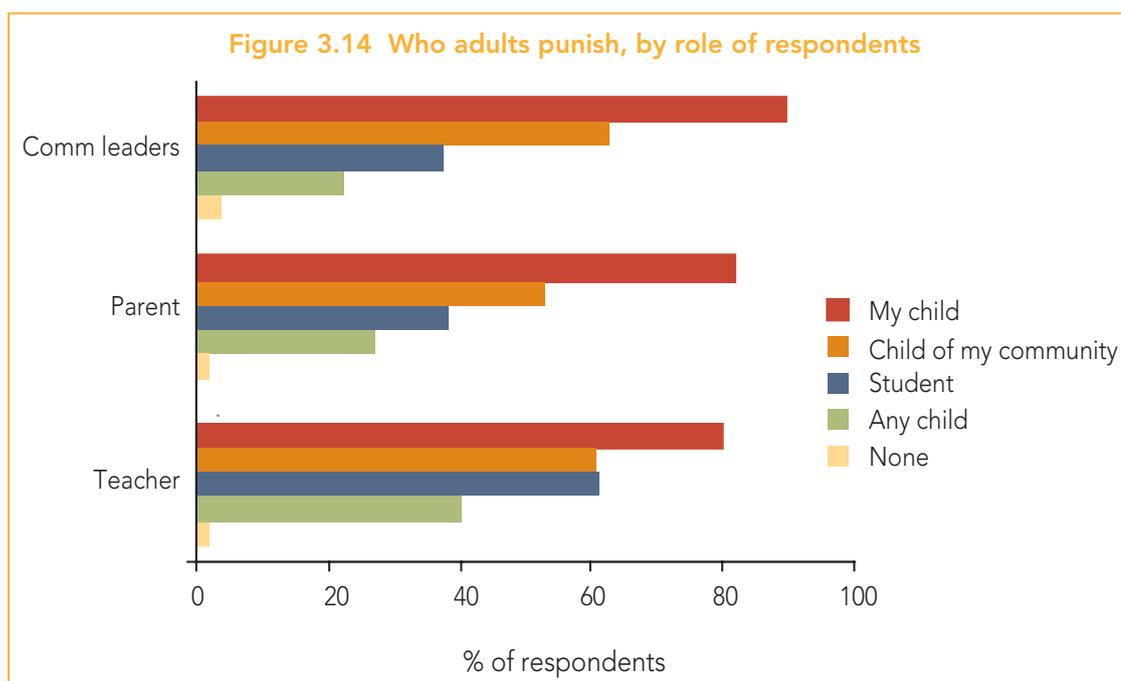


In interviews, many teachers admitted that they did not want to be seen as teachers who physically punish students. However, when discussing other forms of punishment and punishing their own children, these same teachers showed little concern. They explained that as teachers they were responsible for ensuring all children behaved well. They reported, with much higher frequency than other groups, that they would punish any child they saw misbehaving.

Researchers questioned adults about the seeming contradiction between their initial reports of losing authority over children and their later reports of extensive punishment against children. In response, adults talked about their resentment at having to be careful about how they discuss their approach to punishing their children. Many of these participants felt that their power over children is entirely legitimate and found it intolerable that their behaviour towards children could be questioned.

***It is not that I don't punish my children or other children. It is just that there is a chance that I could be taken to court or the parent of the child could quarrel with me. I have to be careful what I do and I don't like it. I am an adult and my value should be more than the child's. When another adult compares what I say with what the child says with equal weight, I feel insulted.***

*male, parent, Nakapiripirit*





### Key Informant Interview

#### Female Community Leader

**Q:** What is commonly done when people punish children in your community?

**A:** *Beating is commonly used, glaring, quarrelling with children, shouting, insulting, neglecting, refusing to take children to school even when parents are able.*

**Q:** Are many children punished in your community?

**A:** *Yes, most children are punished regularly, both boys and girls.*

**Q:** Do you punish your children or other children you come in contact with?

**A:** *I punish all children, whether mine or not, who are doing wrong and they are within my community, because it is our responsibility as elders to guide our children. I don't discriminate between boys and girls. It only depends on who has done wrong.*

**Q:** How do you punish them?

**A:** *I always use a stick for boys. I also take them to school and ask teachers to beat them so hard, because me as their mother, even if I beat, they only cry and repeat the same mistakes. But when a stranger beats them, they fear and change. I sometimes shout at them, but I so much believe in the stick. For girls, I send them to fetch water*

*because girls have to be protected against getting scars, so that in future many cattle can be paid for bride price.*

**Q:** In your opinion, does punishing children in this way help them learn what they have done wrong?

**A:** *Yes, because when you beat a child, she rarely does the same mistake or takes long to repeat it, because they fear the pain of the stick or feel ashamed.*

**Q:** How does punishing children make them feel?

**A:** *They feel very scared of the parent and don't do any wrong in the parent's presence. They don't feel happy, some feel sorry for the wrongs they have done and come and apologize. Even though the child feels hated and always avoids the mother or the person who punishes them, the good ones in their heart know that they are being punished for their own good.*

**Q:** Can you share with us how you feel or what you are thinking when you are punishing children?

**A:** *I feel pain and sometimes cry after beating my children, but I do it for their own good. Sometimes I am not happy and regret when I realize that I have beaten the child so hard and she is swollen or has small wounds. At*



## Adults' Voices

**times, I feel happy when I punish and my children change and even apologize to me, because then I know I punished them for a right cause.**

**Q: In your opinion, do children have a right not to be punished in a way that hurts them physically or makes them feel bad about themselves?**

**A: No, children don't have that right. It is their parents to show them what is good and bad, and they cannot see this on their own.**

**Q: Are there ways in which adults mistreat children in your community?**

**A: Making children of 8 years carry heavy 20-liter jerry cans of water, excessive beating, most children are neglected because parents don't take care of them and just go and drink alcohol. Children are not given medical care. You see them walking around with sores and nobody cares. Girls of 12 years are forced to marry old men, because they offer cattle to their fathers.**

**Q: What should be done when adults mistreat children?**

**A: You reason with the adult, because often they just want what is good for the child. You should not be too quick to take them to higher authority, even if they sometimes beat badly.**

**Q: Do you have any other thoughts or feelings about how children are treated in your community?**

**A: Many, too many, children are abused in our community, but it is hard for adults too. We need help to find better ways of solving our problems instead of just beating. Government should reach out to us.**  
female, community leader, Nakapiripirit

## QUESTION 6

### Why do you punish children?

Adults responded to this question with a surprising amount of candour and forthright discussion. This question elevated the discussion from posturing to collective problem solving. Participants shared deep-seated reasons for punishing children, many going beyond the seemingly right and defensible reasons within their community.

***I punish for many reasons. Sometimes it is to guide the child, sometimes because he is getting in my head, sometimes because I am angry, and sometimes because I don't know what else to do. Sometimes I do it because there is no one else to blame.***

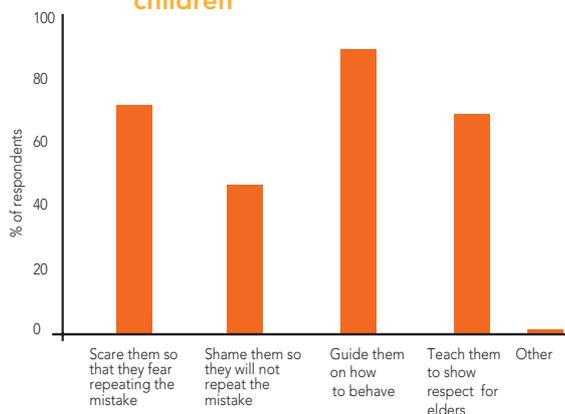
*female, parent, Kasese*

Of the adults consulted in this study, 87.9 percent said that the goal of punishing children was to guide them on how to behave. In focus group discussions and interviews, as well as informal

conversations, adults highlighted three qualities they were trying to instil in a child through punishment: compliance, respect for elders, and allegiance to traditional values espoused by the community. To instil these qualities, 91.3 percent of adults reported using physical or emotional punishment. However, 51.9 percent of adults expressed ambivalence when asked if in their experiences punishing children resulted in intended change of behaviour. Among teachers, only 32.6 percent actually believed that punishing children would change their behaviour, and 61.2 percent said that punishing children only changes behaviour "sometimes." However, although many adults acknowledged this contradiction individually, in a group, adults continued to emphasize the importance of punishment.

When adults were asked how the punishments they used might achieve the stated goals, 72.7 percent of the adults said that they used punishment to associate fear with the misbehaviour, and 43.3 percent said they used punishment to shame children. Many adults agreed that neither fear nor shame helped children understand how they had misbehaved yet when asked what punishing demonstrated, 80.7 percent of adults said that punishing showed you cared about children, and 75 percent said that punishing showed you were a good parent or teacher.

**Figure 3.15 Adults' rationale for punishing children**

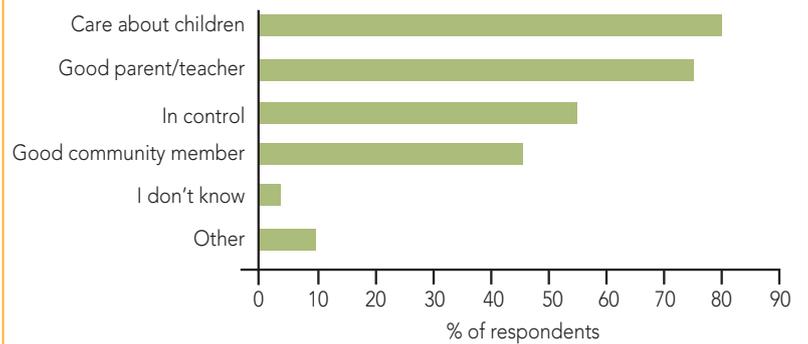


***I know beating her has not changed what she does. In fact I am tired of beating her, but if I don't continue to beat, she will get out of control. What else can I do?***

*female, parent, Iganga*

Clearly there is a crisis of confidence in the current approach, yet in the absence of a credible alternative, many adults have chosen to cling to the familiar way of relating with children. Adults want to demonstrate to their children that they care about them and want to feel respected as members of their communities, yet they have inherited an unworkable model of the adult-child relationship. Therein lies an opportunity for all child-centric activists: to develop a credible, equitable, and workable model of the adult-child relationship that serves the needs of both parties.

**Figure 3.16 What adults believe they demonstrate when they punish children**





### A Teacher Against Violence

#### A testimony

I was born in a village in a family where my father had two wives. He was a respected man because he had land. He provided for both families, but me and my brothers and sisters were afraid of him. He was so harsh. He would beat you for any small mistake.

He beat me and shouted at me all the time. If I didn't do the housework or did not do my homework or did not greet somebody properly, he would beat and he would shout. He was terrible to all my siblings and me. He gave our mother money for food and expenses and said that it was no business of hers how he chose to discipline his children. My mother tried to help us but what can she do?

All through my school years, I feared everyone and remained quiet and obedient. I tried to avoid troubles. I thought men were just like that and there is nothing I can do. But then when I was 22, I met my now husband. He is kind and never shouts. At first I thought he was just trying to tempt me, but till now he has remained like that. Perhaps violence is not about being a man or a woman but what kind of person you are.

We now have two children and at first I used to beat them and shout at them just like my father used to do to me. One day I saw how afraid my daughter was about everything and I thought of how I was when my father used to beat me. I talked to my friend about it and she helped me see what I was doing to my daughter. I felt sorry and apologized to her. Then I attended a workshop about children's rights and learned that it does not have to be like that. My husband and I talked about it and have decided that we will never beat our children the way we were beaten by our parents. I do not want my children to be afraid of everything, the way I was. We even try to help our neighbour's children when they beat them too much.

I don't know if it was the workshop that changed me. I knew in my heart that violence was wrong because I know what it feels like. The workshop helped me understand what was in my heart. Now I work at this school where the headmistress has made a rule that corporal punishment is not allowed. Sometimes it is hard, but I also think it is right. I wish all schools were like ours . . .

*female, teacher, Apac*

## Are there ways in which adults mistreat children?

The discussion for this question began by asking adults to differentiate between punishment and mistreatment of a child. Many adults talked about 'excess' as the defining criterion for mistreatment (except sexual abuse). Beating or making a child contribute labour was not seen as mistreatment but excessive beatings or overworking children was (see page 12 and 58 for further discussion). It was clear that adults were talking in third person about what others did, rather than what they did. Placing of the question toward the end of the discussion also allowed adults to talk more openly about their concerns.

**To beat one or two canes is not bad. But to use 20 canes for a small mistake or to make a six-year-old carry a 10-liter jerry can of water over a long distance is. Everyone knows that!**

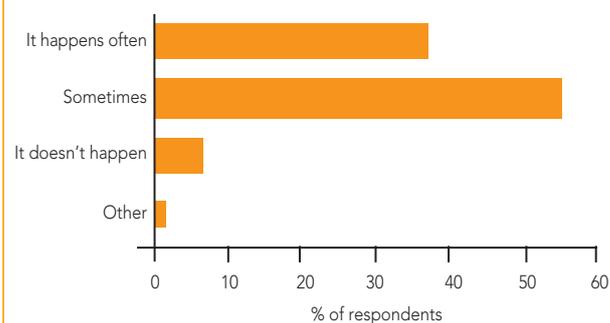
*male, community leader, Wakiso*

Only 6.4 percent of adults said that children were not mistreated in their communities. More than one third of adults (37 percent) said, without hesitation, that children were mistreated in their communities. When adults were asked how children were mistreated, excessive beating (79.5 percent) and making children do all the housework (76 percent) were the two most common forms of mistreatment mentioned by the participants. More than one third of the participants (34.7 percent) said adults tied-up children, and almost a quarter (23.3 percent) said adults burned children. More than half of the participants (62.8 percent) said children were forced to have sex with adults, and just under half (48.2 percent) said children were forced to touch adults in sexual parts.

It is important that these numbers are understood in context. While reports of other forms of mistreatment appear to be credible based on reports from children themselves, reports of sexual abuse are based on conjecture since it often happens in a private space. However considering such a large number of adults are reporting sexual abuse of children, it merits a more detailed investigation.

Four of the top six forms of mistreatments mentioned by adults involved exploiting children's labour. This corresponds well with children's own claims of being made to do excessive work, burdened with taking care of younger siblings or being made to carry heavy loads over long distances. In most communities, children appeared to be primarily responsible for fetching water for domestic use often from far away.

**Figure 3.17 Adults' response regarding if children were mistreated in their community**



This was the first explicit discussion of abuse of children as defined by the subjects of the study rather than the researchers. Three central issues emerged from these reports.

Firstly, despite a calculated silence, a large number of adults are aware that children are being abused in their community yet are either unwilling or unable to protect children from such abuse.

Secondly, despite assertions to the contrary, a significant proportion of adults were unable to retain a reliable perspective on where the boundary lay between guiding (“punishing”) and abusing (“mistreatment”) of children. Many adults related stories of children being grossly abused, such as being burned or caned heavily for minor offences or being worked well beyond their capacity, yet adults kept insisting in formal conversations that they always act in the best interests of their children.

Thirdly, far from being engaged in a systematic method to guide children’s behaviour, some adults were often merely releasing their frustration on the child and subsequently justifying their action as punishment.

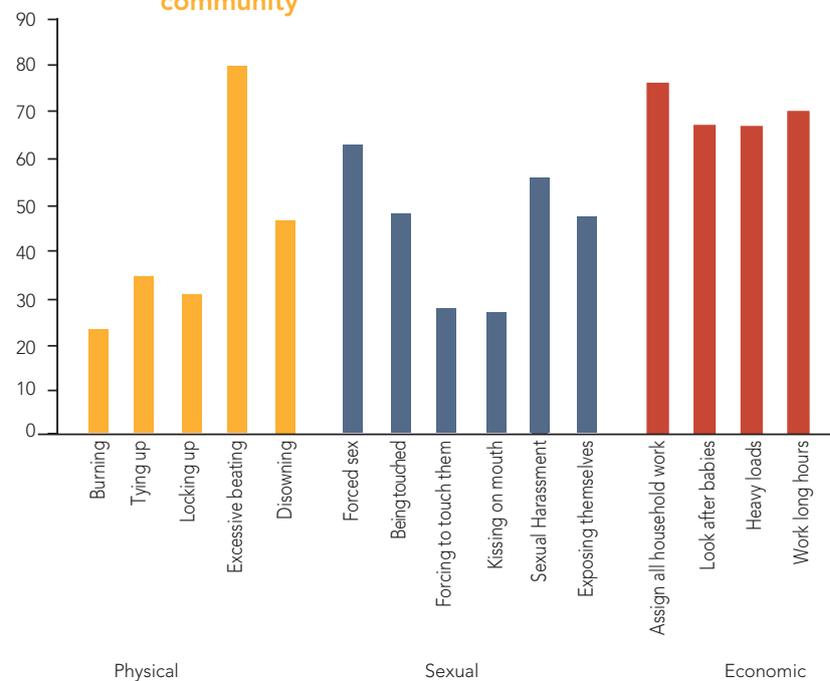
Clearly many adults are willing to maintain a duplicitous stance to avoid accountability regarding how they relate with children. However, in conversations that went beyond

defensive postures, many adults shared their anxiety and confusion. Many felt conflicted about where their loyalties lie and what their duty ought to be as moral adults.

**Yes, many children are being mistreated here. Some people treat their children worse than animals. They make them work long hours, and many stepfathers abuse their daughters. Others just shout and kick their children even if they have done nothing wrong, simply because he [adult] is drunk or angry at something else. Sometimes it pains my heart but what can I alone do? I don’t know what to tell them [the parent]. I don’t know what to do.**

*female, parent, Nakapiripirit*

**Figure 3.18 Adults’ perception of child mistreatment in their community**





### Are there ways in which adults mistreat children?

**Yes, it's there [mistreatment], it's common, and it's everywhere.**

male, parent, Iganga

**Excessive punishment. A child can be burnt for stealing 100 shillings.**

male, parent, Kasese

**Children are made to do too much work. They are sometimes responsible for all the housework.**

male, community leader, Apac

**Sexual abuse, especially of orphan girls. The man may pay school fees but later demand repayment from the girl in the form of sex.**

female, parent, Iganga

**Most children are beaten unnecessarily. Every small offence is punishable by canes. Sometimes the caning is severe even for small offences.**

male, community leader, Apac

**Children are humiliated all the time. They can be slapped in front of everyone for laughing too loud or not knowing what to say. It is too much.**

female, parent, Wakiso

**Too much heavy work given to especially young children, like carrying a 20-liter jerry can to a 9-year-old child.**

female, teacher, Apac

**Boys are beaten harshly for small mistakes. Like one boy was beaten until he was bleeding badly and fell unconscious, because he lost a goat.**

male, community leader, Nakapiripirit

**Yes, children are denied food, yet parents eat a lot. Some are denied medical care and others don't even have a clean pair of clothes. This happens a lot with orphans.**

female, parent, Kasese

**They make young children carry the heavy load of sorghum to take to the market every week.**

female, teacher, Kasese

**Many children don't get medicines they need. You see them walking around with big sores or shaking with malaria, and the parent will just ignore it.**

female, community leader, Nakapiripirit



## Adults' Voices

**Children are made to miss school every week to carry heavy loads on market days. I know one girl who had to walk two kilometres, to the market with two heavy bunches of bananas.**

male, teacher, Kasese

**Overworking girl children at home. They are made to do all the household work, such as sweeping, cooking, grinding millet or sorghum, cleaning utensils, and all this while she is carrying a young baby on her back.**

female, community leader, Apac

**Many girls are by force circumcised and then married to older men.**

female, parent, Nakapiripirit

**Many parents refuse to pay school fees or money for lunch, yet you find them drinking from morning to night.**

female, teacher, Apac

**Mob justice [under instruction from the parent] of peers is common in this area, especially when the child proves to be a menace to parents.**

male, parent, Nakapiripirit

**Some parents take their children to the police station and ask them to lock him up for two to three days. Imagine doing that to your own child especially when we all know what those cells are like.**

female, parent, Kasese

**Girls are seen as property for the family. They think of her as the number of cows they are going to get for the bride price.**

female, teacher, Nakapiripirit

**Parents sleep on comfortable mattresses, while children are made to sleep on mats or banana leaves on the floor.**

male, teacher, Wakiso

**Children are denied food, while they work all day for the family. The father eats the best meat, and children get left over juice or nothing.**

female, community leader, Wakiso

**A child can wake up early and still be working till late at night. This is too much for young children.**

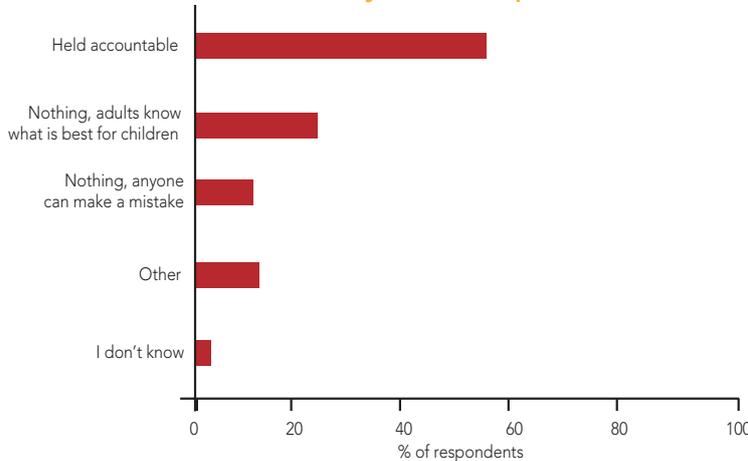
male, parent, Apac

## What should be done when adults mistreat children?

Just as it did with children, this question plunged many adults in a dilemma. It raised the fundamental question; were they willing to speak out against other adults on behalf of children? Many adults felt conflicted about the issue and in discussions many participants were not willing to commit themselves to a single option. The anxiety appeared to be that speaking out against the mistreatment could create disharmony amongst neighbours and community members and that it would create an onus to act under many common circumstances. Most adults could readily describe an instance of mistreatment that they had witnessed that they had not done anything about.

Although many of the respondents said that the adult should be held accountable, a significant number (36.6 percent) said that, regardless of how adults mistreat children, no action should be taken against them. Two thirds (23.9 percent) of those who chose no action believed that adults knew what was best for children, and one third (12.7 percent) said that anyone could make a mistake. These rationales for inaction explicitly articulate on behalf of a significant minority what earlier responses subtly implied: injustice against children does not matter or matters less.

**Figure 3.19** Adult's suggested response to child mistreatment, by role of respondents



A higher percentage of women (63.1 percent) compared to men (53.1 percent) said that adults should be held accountable. However, these numbers by themselves may be misleading. In discussions and interviews, a significant minority of participants felt deeply opposed to any concessions regarding the accountability of adults on how they treat children, and many of these participants were women. Ultimately what may matter more than mere numbers for those wanting to prevent violence against children is the willingness to engage with this entrenched and influential minority in a deeper discussion of why they hold such a punitive stance.

48 percent of community leaders, 42 percent of parents and 28.4 percent of teachers said no action should be taken against adults who mistreat children. Considering that other adults often act as the first layer of response in cases of violence against children, this is a discouraging finding.

In focus group discussions, adults emphasized that prosecuting or arresting adults should be the final option exercised for persistent offenders or those who sexually abuse children. The preferred responses to adults mistreating children included an intervention by respected neighbours or elders, counselling from religious leaders or trained community members, and the ongoing sensitisation of the entire community.





### What should be done when adults mistreat children?

***I think a parent should be cautioned but not arrested. After all you can't arrest a father for beating his child. It is his right to do what he wants.***

*male, parent, Nakapiripirit*

***Look, anyone can lose his temper sometimes. We should not take occasional abuses too seriously. Even if the child bleeds, he knows that the parent was trying to teach him something.***

*male, parent, Wakiso*

***I think a parent should be held accountable if they mistreat children. First you talk with them and if they don't reform, then we have to take more serious steps.***

*female, teacher, Kasese*

***A parent always knows what is right even if they sometimes don't show it correctly.***

*female, parent, Nakapiripirit*

***I think we should not be so quick to take a child's side against the parent. This talk of children's rights is a curse on parents.***

*male, parent, Apac*

***People who don't understand what it is like to correct children should not try to tell us what to do.***

*male, parent, Nakapiripirit*

***I think that if the child does not bleed we should just finish it there, otherwise we have to open a case.***

*male, community leader, Iganga*

***Children have feelings too. I think older people should know how to treat children well or else they should face the law.***

*male, teacher, Kasese*

***Five strokes are fine. Beyond that, the teacher is not teaching but injuring.***

*female, teacher, Wakiso*

***I think people who sexually abuse young children should be arrested and locked away for seven years.***

*male, community leader, Iganga*

***Us elders should talk to the abuser. We should counsel them about how to properly guide children.***

*female, community leader, Apac*

***Government should sensitize the community about correct ways of guiding children.***

*female, parent, Iganga*

## KEY FINDINGS

It stands to reason that the rampant violence against children cannot simply be explained by assuming that the perpetrators are cruel and unsympathetic individuals. The numbers are simply too large and widespread to sustain that assertion. It was clear in this study that the rationale adults offered was complex, conflicted, and imbued with contradictions. The explanations and narratives that emerged suggested that a large number of adults are simply trying to make sense of how to cope with the immense pressures of a rapidly evolving social climate. Many are facing intense economic pressures that form an overarching context for how they construct their personal relationships. Most are reacting to children based on divergent inputs, including traditions, an inherited value system, and peer pressure. Thus, for most adults, their relationship with children is a consequence of this confluence.

Key findings from the study of adults' experiences include the following:

### 1. Adults have a different understanding of violence compared to children.

The issue of violence against children is controversial for adults. Many adults asserted that a moderate amount of beating, shouting, or other acts, broadly conceptualised as "punishing" children, were a legitimate exercise of adults' responsibility to guide children under their care. Many adults believed that violence was a matter of excess of certain acts, rather than the act itself.

### 2. Adults under-report and discount violence against children.

Adults consistently underestimated how often they punished children and often insisted outright that certain acts did not really count as a serious transaction. Ad hoc slaps, pinching, embarrassing comments, or threats towards children were seen as a normal part of adult-child interactions, if adults were to get children to do what they wanted them to do. These acts were administered to extract immediate

compliance and were not seen as part of an overall approach to guide children into becoming responsible adults. In these instances, adults did not feel that the slap or the threat even needed an explanation.

### 3. Adults feel threatened and undermined by the rhetoric of children's rights.

Adults expressed a considerable level of resentment, possibly even backlash, regarding children's rights. Many adults regretted that the rhetoric of children's rights was beginning to erode the absolute deference that they expected from children. They often claimed that their authority was being undermined by children who impertinently threatened to report them to a higher authority, yet few adults could point to a specific example of this actually happening.

### 4. Adults are aspiring to create compliant children.

Most adults reported that the long-term outcome sought from "punishing" children was to create a compliant child who deferred to authority. They wanted to create children who would repay adults' "investment" in them and promote traditional values. Many adults anxiously believed that their children may be subscribing to a radically different value system (often referred to as "modern") and, as a result, would undermine the traditional culture that the parents deeply cherished.

### 5. The dialogue around children's rights has been experienced as confrontational and out-of-context.

While there is broad awareness among adults of the rhetoric of children's rights, there is also much misunderstanding. Most adults had been simply told about children's rights rather than helped to understand how it could lead to a more fruitful adult-child relationship, how they could practically integrate the concept into their lived experiences. This perhaps is the greatest challenge and successfully addressing this issue could unlock the barriers that have limited many child rights interventions.

### **6. Adults believe in a hierarchy of violence.**

Adults tended to punish based on their personal ranking of the severity of each punishment. Caning and shouting were seen as less injurious than tying up or burning, and were therefore commonly used. Humiliation was often seen as less severe than beating, and shaming was seen as subtler than inducing fear.

### **7. Adults claim jurisdiction over children.**

Adults as a group believed that they had absolute domain over children. Parents, in particular, insisted that they expected unconditional obedience and deference. Furthermore, other adults also demanded immediate submission from children. They saw punishment as a legitimate exercise of adults' higher status, if children were not behaving in the way the adult expected.

### **8. There exists a disjuncture between declared intention and practice.**

Most adults claimed that the intention of punishing children was to guide their development and behaviour. However, many adults did not take a systematic approach and often simply reacted with anger on an ad hoc basis to the perceived misbehaviour. Often the same behaviour on the part of the child elicited radically different responses from the adult, and often adults did not do the more difficult work of helping children see the error in their behaviour.

### **9. Women were more likely to be the day-to-day disciplinarians.**

Generally, children interact more frequently with their mothers who supervised their assigned chores. They were also more likely to approach their mothers or stepmothers with requests for their needs. As a result, mothers generally tended to administer punishments more frequently. Fathers, when they did get involved, tended to administer the punishment more severely.

### **10. Chain from father to mother to children.**

Many children experienced violence from mothers who were being abused by the fathers. Stepchildren frequently reported being abused by stepmothers who

resented their father bringing an additional "burden" to the family. Also, women often denied children money for their basic needs if the father reneged on his contribution to the family's budget.

### **11. Adults express clear indignation about sexual abuse of younger children, but not older children.**

There was a unanimous condemnation of the sexual abuse of younger children. Most adults felt that it was a repugnant act and often talked about it as happening in a neighbouring community rather than their own. However, there was a marked difference when the abuse in question was directed at older children, particularly girls. This, while not explicitly condoned, was tolerated with resignation and, occasionally, with nervous complicity.

### **12. Adults feel conflicted regarding the efficacy of violence.**

Many adults admitted to harbouring ambivalence regarding the efficacy of using violence to change the behaviour of children. However, they said they continued using it because they could not see clear alternatives. "If not beating then what?" was a common refrain.

### **13. Adults are not a monolithic group with homogeneous views.**

A variety of contradictory views exist, even within the same individual. Many adults are struggling to make sense of what they believe and how it should influence their actions. Some hold contradictory beliefs regarding violence against children and feel conflicted regarding how to reconcile these beliefs. For example many proponents of 'moderate beating' of children also admit that most of the time adults are simply reacting to children rather than engaged in guiding them. Many had an unreliable grasp of what is moderate punishment and in the grip of anger found it difficult to retain a clear perspective. These adults struggle with the dilemma and need help to find a resolution.



# PART FOUR

## Recommendations

### WHAT WOULD IT TAKE TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN?

Through analysis of key findings, this section highlights key recommendations for the following six groups of duty-bearers.

**Policy Makers**

**School Administrators**

**Civil Society**

**Children**

**Local Government Officials**

**Community Members**

**Development Partners**

Part Four of this report proposes key recommendations for various duty bearers. It ends with a final call for action to prevent violence against children.

**Violence against children manifests in many forms. It has become normalized and entrenched in how we relate with children and therefore a holistic, multifaceted, long-term, and a comprehensive response is required to address this problem.**

## What does this mean in practice?

First, we must insist that children play a central and a meaningful role in all the efforts aimed at addressing violence against them. They must be protagonists for their own cause and their experience, views and ideas must form an integral part of any intervention aimed at preventing violence against them. We must learn new ways of listening to them and learning from them.

Second, we must recognize that adults are not the enemy. It would be a profound mistake to develop interventions based on divisive models that cast adults as retrograde individuals with little or no sympathy for children. Many adults are operating under intense pressures, immersed in a belief system that propagates the status quo. They need to be convinced that creating alternative models of the adult-child relationship is in their best interests as much as children's, and that the current model is serving neither.

Third, we need to focus attention on preventing violence against children rather than simply responding with palliative or punitive action. A focus on prevention involves working with a broad cross section of the community and using practical

and pragmatic programs to reassess children's social status and value as human beings.

Fourth, we need to develop the infrastructure that will allow alternative models of the adult-child relationship to flourish. Developing this infrastructure requires the establishment of community-based responses and support mechanisms and the development of local capacity to promote alternatives and provoke discussions.

Fifth, we need long-term strategies that address the problem on many fronts and in gradation. Our responses should recognize that influencing deep-seated perspectives requires a progressive ongoing engagement that promotes dialogue rather than a series of random, fragmented interventions that prescribe solutions and attack adults. Adults need long-term support to resolve their conflicted beliefs about how best to relate with the children they care about.

Any action based on the following recommendations must embody these central principles. The following recommendations reflect the observations of the researchers and the analysis of the findings. These recommendations target six groups of duty-bearers: policy makers, school administrators, civil society organizations, children, local government officials and community members, and development partners.

## 1. Policy Makers

### 1.1 COMPREHENSIVE CHILD-CENTRIC LEGISLATION

Develop comprehensive child-centric legislation<sup>19</sup> that would legally protect children from all forms of violence, including physical, sexual, and economic violence, as well as many forms of emotional

<sup>19</sup> While the Children Act, Cap 59 is a step in the right direction, it needs to be strengthened to address preventative aspects of violence against children and particularly violence against children in schools. Several other bills pending, including Domestic Relations Bill should incorporate children's concerns about violence against them. Sexual Offences Bill should ensure that sexual violence against children, including boys, is treated as a specific offence, as opposed to an assault.

violence. The legislation should include all provisions of the UNCRC and prescribe clear action when these rights are denied to children. It should ensure that sufficient resources and mechanisms are in place to respond to children who need to access the protection provided in this legislation.

## **1.2 ACCOUNTABILITY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Ensure resources are allocated and mechanisms are established to train, on an ongoing basis, Local Council 1 leaders (LC1) and the Secretary for Children's Affairs (SCA) on how to fulfil their roles as promoters of children's rights, including taking a proactive interest in children's welfare, exercising the full power vested in them by the law to respond to children's concerns, and reporting on all actions they have taken to protect children.<sup>20</sup>

## **1.3 INVEST IN PROBATION OFFICERS**

Ensure that there is sufficient investment in the District Probation Officers so that they are able to meaningfully respond to children's needs. Apart from building skills, it is crucial that budgetary allocations are sufficient to enable them to undertake meaningful outreach in their districts.

## **1.4 POLICY DIRECTIVES FOR SCHOOLS**

Send each school a binding policy statement that articulates the responsibility of the administration to ensure that all children are protected from violence. This statement should outline the steps the administration is required to take in the case of a staff member contravening the policy. It should outline a mandatory child-friendly process in which children learn about the policy and it should request an annual progress report from each school regarding compliance with the policy.<sup>21</sup>

## **1.5 AN OMBUDSPERSON DEDICATED TO TAKE ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN**

Establish an independent ombudsperson who is mandated by the Government of Uganda to reach out to children regarding their experiences of violence, and who reports to the civil society as well as a parliamentary committee regarding compliance with established policy as well as hold various duty-bearers accountable through the power of the law.

## **1.6 GUIDELINES ON CHILDREN AND LABOUR**

Commission a study on how children's labour is used by their schools and families, including an analysis of how children are involved in making water accessible to their families and the health consequences for children who are made to carry heavy loads. Develop guidelines on children and labour based on the results of the study.<sup>22</sup>

## **1.7 FREE LUNCH AND REDUCED COSTS AT SCHOOLS**

Amend the policy around Universal Primary Education to make provisions for all students to have access to free lunch at school. In addition, uniforms and shoes should be encouraged, but lack of these amenities should not disqualify a child from attending school. No child should be required to make an additional contribution to be able to remain in school.

<sup>20</sup> Local Council 1 leaders as well as the Secretary for Children's Affairs are key actors who have been vested with the power to protect children at a local level. However, they are often unaware of their responsibility and frequently end up undermining children's interests.

<sup>21</sup> The Commissioner of Education issued a circular in 1997 that explicitly restricts administration of corporal punishment to the head teacher, as a last resort. Although this circular has helped in raising awareness of the violence against children in schools, there is considerable flouting of the directive. A follow-up action with clear backing of the Ministry of Education and Sports is needed to reinforce the message.

<sup>22</sup> This study could be coordinated by the Working Children's Unit. Furthermore, there are initiatives planned or in place such as Plan of Action on Working Children which could promote these guidelines.

## 2. School Administrators

### 2.1 CODE OF CONDUCT

Develop a Code of Conduct at your school to which all staff and the administration are required to adhere, including a written directive on what happens when a staff member contravenes the code.

### 2.2 STUDENT COUNCIL

Establish a Student Council in your school that represents all students, reports students' concerns to the administration, and advocates on students' behalf. The Student Council should consist of elected students trained to discharge their duties as representatives.

### 2.3 POLICY AGAINST VIOLENCE

Create a written policy against violence in school that emphasizes the responsibility of administrators and teachers regarding adult-to-student violence, inappropriate disciplining, and violence between students (bullying). Post the policy on public notice boards within the school. Write an annual report regarding the implementation of the policy, and submit it to the Student Council for comment.

### 2.4 TEACHER TRAINING

Ensure teachers receive training on the alternatives to corporal punishment, the consequences for disobeying the school's policy against violence, and how to protect students from older children or other teachers inflicting violence.

### 2.5 SUPPORT TO CHILDREN

Keep at least one teacher on staff at all times who has training in how to respond to and support

children who are experiencing violence. Children should be assured that this service is confidential and will respect their wishes regarding action to be taken.

## 3. Civil Society Organizations (NGOs, CBOs, FBOs, etc.)

### 3.1 CHILDREN'S CAPACITY

Develop children's capacity to assume a meaningful role in preventing violence against them. This could be done by sponsoring training, creating forums within which children's views are solicited, or developing communication materials that impart knowledge and skills.

### 3.2 ADVOCACY

Advocate for child-centric policies and policy frameworks at a national and local level that address prevention of violence against children.

### 3.3 CHILD-CENTRIC COALITION

Assemble a coalition of child-centric organizations to focus attention on the issue of violence against children. This coalition could develop a long-term strategic plan to comprehensively address the issue.

### 3.4 BUDGET ANALYSIS

Analyse resource allocation in the national budget through the lens of the prevention of violence against children.

### 3.5 NATIONAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Mount a national awareness-raising campaign through the media as well as through existing infrastructure.

### **3.6 RESEARCH**

Commission research that collects child-centric information on violence against children, with specific implications for policy and practice.

### **3.7 LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

Invest in developing local infrastructure to respond to children experiencing violence. This work includes developing capacity at a local level and encouraging local mechanisms to respond to children's needs regarding violence against them.

### **3.8 SUPPORT TO SCHOOLS**

Develop a conceptual framework for child-friendly schools that could be widely implemented, including a model policy against violence. Support a selected number of schools in demonstrating the implementation of this framework.

### **3.9 NATIONAL EXPERTISE**

Establish a national pool of trained resource persons who could support violence prevention initiatives in various parts of the country.

### **3.10 ANNUAL EVENT**

Implement an annual event to increase support nationwide for the elimination of violence against children, at which an annual report on the nation's progress would be made public.

### **3.11 TOOL DEVELOPMENT**

Develop programmatic tools that enable a wide range of practitioners to work efficiently to prevent violence against children.

### **3.12 NATIONAL VOICE FOR CHILDREN**

Strengthen the status and capacity of a national body such as National Children's Council, that speaks-out with a credible voice on the issue of violence against children.

## **4. Children**

### **4.1 CHILDREN SUPPORT EACH OTHER**

Respect all children and listen to them. Help your friends, fellow students or your neighbours who are experiencing violence.

### **4.2 WORK WITH LOCAL ORGANISATIONS**

Approach a local organisation (NGO or CBO) to help you work with your teachers to develop rules about how corporal punishment is used in your school.

### **4.3 TEACH OTHERS**

Learn from local child friendly organisations about ways to avoid violence at home and at school and teach other children about it.

### **4.4 BECOME INVOLVED**

Learn about the consequences of violence on children and talk to adults, teachers and other children about how it is hurting everyone.

### **4.5 DISCUSSION CLUBS**

Start a discussion club of children at school or in your neighbourhood about violence against children. Discuss how it happens, who commits it, how it makes children feel, how you can support each other and what action can you take as children to prevent it.

#### **4.6 CHILDREN'S COMMITTEE**

Organize a committee of children in your school or neighbourhood that will hold children who bully other children accountable. Involve teachers or LC1 leaders to help you set it up.

#### **4.7 SPEAK OUT**

Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper or probation officers drawing attention to violence that may be occurring in your community.

#### **4.8 LEARN MORE**

Ask your teacher to talk to your class about violence and how it affects children and what can be done to prevent it.

#### **4.9 SAFETY FIRST**

Remember in all these actions, your safety must come first. Seek help from others if you feel you are in danger.

## **5. Local Government Officials and Community Members**

#### **5.1 AWARENESS GROUP**

Lead the local community in establishing an awareness group that advocates on behalf of children experiencing violence.

#### **5.2 MONITORING BY PROBATION OFFICERS**

Ensure the probation officer meets regularly with the LC1 and the SCA to ascertain the status of children within their area and to remain vigilant for vulnerable children.

#### **5.3 REFERRAL MECHANISM**

Establish a referral mechanism at a local level, to be led by the probation officer, to ensure that children who want to report violence have options.

#### **5.4 COMMUNITY DIALOGUES**

Ensure the probation officer, in collaboration with the SCA and the LC1, holds regular community dialogues during which violence against children is discussed, including the exploitation of children's labour at home and at school.

#### **5.5 SUPPORT TO PARENTS**

Encourage neighbours and elders to counsel parents who are violent towards their children and to discuss with these parents the alternatives to violence.

#### **5.6 RELIGIOUS INTERVENTION**

Involve religious leaders in preventing violence against children.

#### **5.7 PROTESTS**

In cases of egregious violence, organize a protest with leadership from the SCA, and implore police to take action.

#### **5.8 SEXUAL HARASSMENT ZERO TOLERANCE CAMPAIGN**

In collaboration with the police and school administration, mount a zero tolerance campaign against sexual harassment in the streets, schools, and homes.

## **5.9 COMMUNITY SENSITISATION**

Introduce outreach projects through which the police, probation officers, LC1 and SCA proactively sensitise the community about violence against children.

# **6. Development Partners (donors, cooperating agencies, etc.)**

## **6.1 POLICY FRAMEWORK**

Sponsor a multi-agency collaborative process that develops a holistic policy framework for preventing violence against children.

## **6.2 10-YEAR PLAN**

Sponsor development of a comprehensive 10-year national plan to address violence against children.

## **6.3 FORUMS**

Create regular forums for broader discussion of violence against children.

## **6.4 POLICY INITIATIVES**

Encourage policy initiatives that address violence against children. Work closely with the Ministry of Education and Sports to develop a comprehensive policy and action plan to address violence against children in schools. Work with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development to address violence against children within the home.

## **6.5 CAPACITY FOR BUDGET ANALYSIS**

Develop the capacity of the government as well as the civil society to analyse the national budget and resource allocation for the prevention of violence against children.

## **6.6 SUPPORT FOR DATA COLLECTION AND RESEARCH**

Support initiatives to collect, analyse, and disseminate information regarding violence against children and its consequences. Encourage academic institutions to undertake research on violence against children.

## **6.7 ENABLE LOCAL ACTIVISM**

Support community based initiatives that respond directly to children as well as work at the local level to prevent violence against children.

## FINAL WORD

No other form of violence has the social legitimacy or tacit consent associated with violence against children. In every strata of society, within every political view, from the educated and the affluent to the illiterate and the impoverished, the tolerance of violence against children is pervasive. A large section of the adult population sees children as instruments of their elders' will, as right holders in waiting, as having to pay the price of obedience and subservience for their reliance on adult support. This power-based construction of the adult-child relationship has become the engine that perpetuates violence against children.

We live in a society where more than 90 percent of the children consulted from diverse backgrounds said they have experienced violence at the hands of people who are supposed to be the guardians of their rights. A third of these children reported that they experience violence at least once a week, and a half of those said they experience it regularly. Yet there is no public outcry or a clearly organized movement to change this reality. Parents and teachers continue to violate children despite deep in their hearts knowing that it is not teaching the child anything except fear and shame.

Can we continue operating within the status quo, oppressing a vast number of human beings on a daily basis and yet ignore its potential consequences? Does it not stand to reason that these children will learn that aggression is normal and that violence is an acceptable way of getting your way? Uganda, and indeed the world, has had a history of violent conflicts in which individuals have too quickly decided that violence is an acceptable way of resolving differences and imposing ones' will on others.

We are at a critical moment. Worldwide momentum is gathering and political will is being generated to address violence against children. We have an historic opportunity to truly influence the experience of childhood for all the children of Uganda. The question is, will we respond to this challenge?











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