

# Violence can be prevented

Sonke Gender Justice encourages men to care for children and prevent violence



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We all know that violence is a big problem in South Africa, and children and young people are particularly vulnerable. But the good news is that violence can be prevented.

People across South Africa are starting to work together to create safe homes, schools and communities where children and young people are free to follow their dreams and reach their full potential.

**Find out more about what we can do to break the cycle of violence.**

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## Know your rights!

Children have the right to be protected from **violence\*** and **abuse**.

These rights are protected by our Constitution, the highest law in South Africa. And government has put in place laws and programmes to protect young people from violence.



## \* Key words

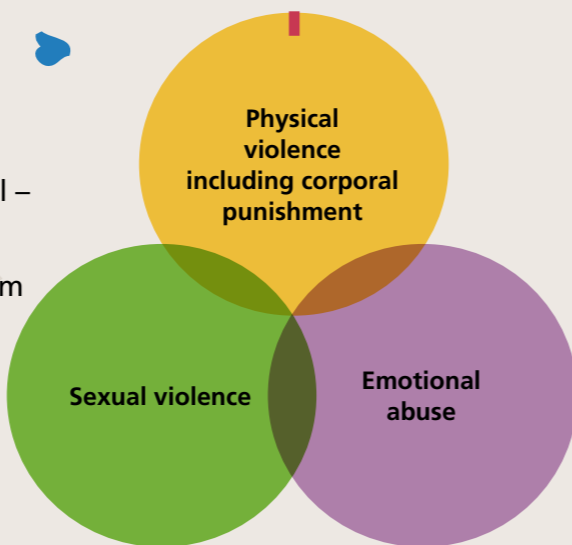
Some of the words we use maybe new to you or have a special meaning. So take a look at our list of key words on the back page.

# What is violence?

Violence against children takes many different forms including:

- **physical abuse** (hitting, pinching, beating or shaking children),
- **harmful and humiliating punishment**,
- **bullying** or picking on someone to make them feel small – including **cyberbullying**,
- **emotional abuse** (hurting children's feelings, calling them names, making them feel small), and
- **Sexual violence** (forcing someone to have sex without their consent) or sexual **harassment**. For example: touching a girl in a way that she doesn't want to be touched or making her feel uncomfortable.

Often children experience more than one form of violence. For example, they may be told they are "stupid" and "worthless" at the same time as being beaten.



## The pattern of violence changes as children get older

Children of any age can experience any form of violence, but typically:

- **Young children** are most at risk of physical abuse and **corporal punishment** at home
- **Primary school children** are at increasing risk of sexual violence.
- **Young men** are at risk of physical violence in the community. **Young women** begin to experience **intimate partner violence**.



## What are the effects of violence?

There's a lot more to violence than cuts and bruises. Violence also causes long-lasting **psychological** damage, and may lead to:

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| ☹️ fear                       | ☹️ difficulty forming healthy relationships and friendships |
| ☹️ distress                   | ☹️ substance abuse  |
| ☹️ poor self-esteem           | ☹️ mental health problems                                   |
| ☹️ poor performance at school | ☹️ suicide  |
| ☹️ aggression                 | ☹️ physical injury, disability, death.                      |
| ☹️ risky sexual behaviour     |   |

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## What is the cycle of violence?

Children who have witnessed or experienced violence are more likely to become violent or become victims or violence in later life. So violence against children affects the well-being of children, communities and the next generation.

For example: Dad gets angry and hits mum. Mum hits her children. Her son grows up and hits his wife, and her daughter stays with a boyfriend who hits her.



## Where do children get hurt?

- We know that children experience violence in their homes, schools and communities.
- Newspapers warn us of stranger danger. But most children are hurt by someone they know and trust, which makes it difficult for children to speak out and report abuse.
- Over 50% of children have experienced some form of physical abuse by a **caregiver**, relative or teacher.
- Children also experience violence and abuse on the way to school and on their phones and social media.

## Is it okay to use violence?

- Many people believe it is okay for parents to beat their children, and for young men to beat their girlfriends. But violence doesn't teach children respect. It causes fear and distrust and creates a **vicious cycle** of violence.
- They say violence is normal, it's the way things have always been done, or "it's my culture". But we know that violence is not natural. It is a learned behaviour that can be prevented.

## Where can I get help?

If you have been hurt or abused, it is important to get help and support. You can:

- ➡ Tell a friend or an adult you trust
- ➡ Speak to a social worker
- ➡ Go to your nearest clinic or hospital
- ➡ Go to the police
- ➡ Phone **Childline** on **08000 55555** toll free. There will be someone to listen and help you any time of day or night.
- ➡ **Keep telling until someone listens and takes you seriously.**

Remember  
it's not your  
fault!



# Prevention is better than cure

## What is prevention?

Preventing violence is about taking action before children get hurt. We need to reduce the risks and strengthen things that protect children from violence in their homes, schools and communities.

	What puts children at risk?	What protects children from violence?
Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Caregivers who are stressed</li> <li>Domestic violence</li> <li>Alcohol and drug abuse</li> <li>Not enough support from friends and family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Healthy communication in the home</li> <li>Warm, loving and sensitive parenting</li> <li>Positive discipline</li> <li>Support within and outside the family</li> </ul>
School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor school management</li> <li>Nowhere for children to report violence</li> <li>Failure to deal with people who abuse children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Violence and bullying are not tolerated</li> <li>Safe places to play after school</li> <li>Teachers model positive ways of dealing with conflict</li> </ul>
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poverty and unemployment</li> <li>High levels of violence, crime and gang activity</li> <li>Easy access to alcohol, drugs and weapons</li> <li>Not enough support services</li> <li>Gender inequality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong leadership and social support</li> <li>Positive activities for young people</li> <li>Access to quality education and jobs</li> <li>Access to social services</li> <li>Good policing</li> </ul>

## What can we do to prevent violence?

### Young children

1

- Parents need to learn about **positive discipline** and ways of teaching children right from wrong without hitting them or making them feel small.
- Parenting programmes** offer support to parents and caregivers of babies and young children, and teach them how to use positive discipline.
- We also need to make sure that prevention programmes reach children and families that need help. **Clinics and crèches** are good places to identify vulnerable children and caregivers and offer them support.



Child and youth care workers give children care and support

### Primary school children

2

- Safe parks help create **safe spaces** for children to play after school.
- Some schools have started **“walking buses”** where children walk together to school.
- The Departments of Education and Social Development are working together to create safe schools and provide **care and support for learners** and teachers.
- One-stop centres** like the Thuthuzela Care Centres bring together nurses, doctors, social workers, prosecutors and the police to help children who have been physically or sexually abused.
- Diversion programmes** help teach children who have committed violent crimes to be responsible for their actions and teach them life skills to help them stay out of trouble.



Isibindi gives children safe places to play

3

### Adolescents

- Life-skills programmes** are helping prevent violence between young men and their partners.
- Schools** are a good way to reach young people including their friends, parents and teachers.
- Young people also need **quality education and access to jobs** so they can achieve respect without turning to violence.



Amanda EduFootball promotes fair play

# STOP VIOLENCE



# PREVENTION

## is everyone's business

Prevention requires strong leadership and government, NGOs, caregivers and children all need to work together to prevent violence.



**Children** can support their peers and encourage one another to speak out to stop violence and abuse.



**Social service professionals** can support and strengthen children and families, and mobilise other service providers to address local risk factors.



**Parents and caregivers** can learn about children's developmental needs, use positive discipline, and seek help when violence occurs.



**Doctors and nurses** can refer vulnerable children and young people to social services or a community health worker and report cases of abuse.



**Family, friends and neighbours** can offer to help with child care, encourage families to get the support they need, and report abuse.



**Police officers** can mediate conflict and provide sensitive support to children and young people who have been abused.



**Teachers** can use positive discipline in the classroom and build children's life skills and self-esteem.



**Political, religious and traditional leaders** can lead by example and speak out against violence and corporal punishment.



RAPCAN sees children as part of the solution.

We owe our children - the most vulnerable citizens in society - a life free from violence and fear.

Nelson Mandela

## We also need to make services work for children

- Health, education and social services also need to **work together** to build a strong safety net for children and families.
- Most social services for children focus on children who have been abused, so government needs to **increase the budget** for prevention services.
- Government must also make sure there are enough **social workers and child and youth care workers**, and that they get the training they need to run effective prevention programmes.
- We also need to make it easier for children to report violence and then use this information to **plan services** that respond to areas of greatest need.

## What can you do to stop the violence?

Here are some ideas about what you can do to stop you and your friends getting hurt.

Add your ideas to the list:

- I will not be violent
- I can ask for help
- I will speak out to stop bullying
- I will be there to help my friend
- I encourage my friends not to use violence
- I will be a peace ambassador
- I will start a Facebook page where children can talk about how to stop violence



**What happens now:**  
more money goes to services for children who have been abused

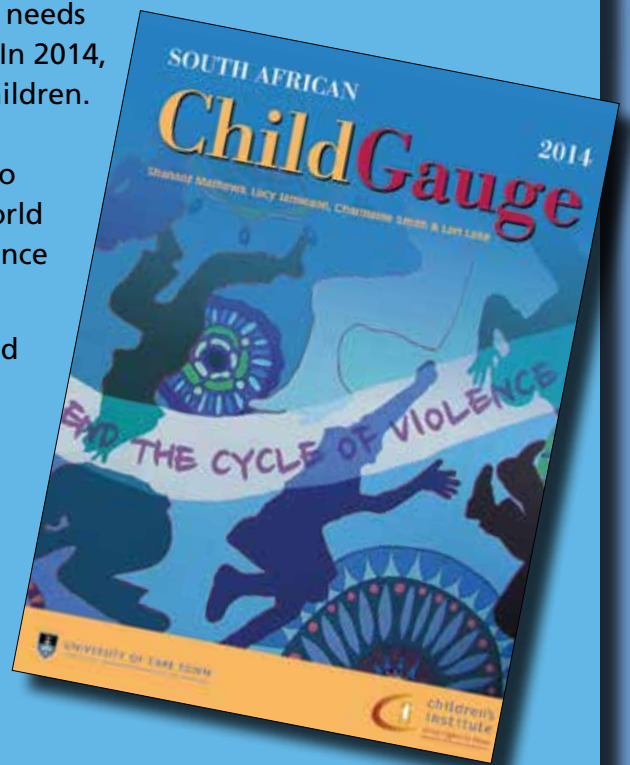
**What should happen:**  
more money should go to programmes that prevent violence against children

# What is the *South African Child Gauge*?

The *South African Child Gauge* is a book that looks at what needs to be done to improve the lives of children in South Africa. In 2014, the book looked at how we can prevent violence against children. It was published by the Children's Institute at the University of Cape Town in partnership with UNICEF, the Programme to Support Pro-Poor Policy Development in The Presidency, World Vision South Africa, the FNB Fund, and the Safety and Violence Initiative of UCT.

This guide was developed with the support from UNICEF and with input from young reporters from the Children's Radio Foundation, including: Ongeziwe Mgidi, Kuhle Speelman, Kamvelihle Yekelo, Lusanda Speelman, Thokozani Nqwili, Amanda Maxongo, Jabulile Thwala and Khanyisile Nqcolo, Karsten Huizies, Ricky Huizies, Clyde de Lewis, Bonita de Lewis, Mika Adams, Tristan Adams, Te-Cara Meyer, Sergio Willemse and Vionne Van Greunen.

You can find the book at [www.ci.org.za](http://www.ci.org.za). For more information, call the Children's Institute on 021 650 1473 or write to [info@ci.org.za](mailto:info@ci.org.za).



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## \* Key words

**Abuse:** to hurt, threaten or treat someone badly, causing physical or emotional harm.

**Caregivers:** anyone who cares for children, such as a parent, family member or older child.

**Corporal punishment:** punishment that causes pain or physical discomfort, such as slapping, pinching or hitting a child.

**Cyberbullying:** using the internet, facebook or cellphone to threaten, humiliate or bully someone.

**Domestic violence:** violence or abuse in the home between partners such as a husband and wife or girlfriend and boyfriend.

**Gauge:** to measure things. The *South African Child Gauge* measures how well the country is doing in meeting children's rights.

**Gender inequality:** treating men and boys as more important and valuable than women and girls.

**Harassment:** to keep on behaving in a way that is designed to annoy, upset or intimidate someone.

**Humiliating:** Making someone feel small.

**Intimate partner violence:** physically, emotionally or sexually abusing your boyfriend or girlfriend.

**NGOs:** non-governmental organisations

**Positive discipline:** rewarding children for good behaviour rather than punishing them for bad behaviour.

**Rights:** things that every child should have or be able to do. For example, the right to education. These rights are protected by our Constitution, the highest law in the land.

**Prevention:** stopping something from happening.

**Psychological:** thoughts and feelings

**Violence:** hurting someone physically or emotionally.

**Vicious cycle:** things keep getting worse and worse.

**Vulnerable:** easily hurt