

SUBMISSION to the 8-9 October 2009
Dignity Development and Dialogue event - Geneva
DEFINING OBLIGATIONS TO PREVENT VIOLATIONS

WWSF GUIDE
FOR NGO AND CITIZEN ACTION – PREVENTION IS KEY!

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Before starting to present the WWSF GUIDE FOR NGO AND CITIZEN ACTION - PREVENTION IS KEY, I would like you to remember that our work is **WIND IN THE SAIL** of many large organizations that have over many years worked to save the children, especially Unicef, which is the lead organization for the children of the world.

Let me briefly share the work of the WWSF children's section of which the guide is one of its empowerment programs. Regular programs include:

- I. **The global campaign for prevention of abuse and violence against children** which has an international coalition of hundreds of member organizations in 135 countries which registered their participation.
- II. **World Day for prevention of child abuse - 19 November**, a World Day created in synergy with the anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the child - 20 November. Launched by WWSF in 2000, the 19 November World Day serves as a focal point for many governmental and non-governmental bodies, institutions, organizations and networks, educators, experts, professionals and parents to rally a collective stand via divers programs for zero tolerance of abuse and violence against children and to help create a culture of prevention. How many among you have heard of the Day or are a member?
- III. **The Prevention Education Week - 13-19 November**, to help increase knowledge of prevention measures and to promote the Guide for NGO and citizen action
- IV. **The WWSF Prize for prevention activities** - awarding annually innovation in the field of prevention to coalition member organizations
- V. The **WWSF clearing house of good practice prevention programs** published on the Internet
- VI. The **WWSF yellow ribbon campaign** to declare your personal stand for prevention
- VII. The **WWSF TV spots and public service announcements** in English and French. I have some DVDs with me for you to share with your national TV stations.

VIII. **YouthEngabge-International**, a new campaign for young people to pledge to prevent abuse and violence among children and adolescents.

SO WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse is any kind of harm done to children, including through neglect, physical, sexual or mental violence by persons responsible for them, or have power over them, that they should be able to trust.

Child abuse is any form of violence against children when it is done by someone who is responsible for them, or has power over them, that they should be able to trust.

The guide uses the definition of a "child" contained in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) which states, every human being below the age of 18, unless under applicable law majority is attained earlier (Art. 1). **The Convention defines 'violence'** as "all forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse" (Art. 19).

WHAT IS PREVENTION

Prevention is key! It is the most effective way to protect children from abuse and violence. It contributes to creating a culture of non-violence and is about setting up guidelines and learned behavior, which create obstacles to perpetrators. Prevention should be implemented through social and general policies involving the families, schools and professionals.

While there is no doubt about the need to assist victims (of abuse and violence) and to guarantee their safety, priority should always be given to preventive measures." (WHO 2006)

Prevention is a broad discipline. Its basic goal is to create an environment that:

- i. Challenges social norms which tolerate abuse and violence, and
- ii. Enhances the capacity of all of us to build safer homes, workplaces and communities for our children.

We all have a role to play, whether as law and policy makers, active members of civil society or in our capacity as workers or members of families and communities.

- i. **For law and policy makers**, this may involve developing a legal and policy framework that prohibits all forms of abuse and violence against children.

- ii. **For civil society**, this may involve lobbying governments to address underlying causes of abuse in policies and programs and allocate adequate resources for prevention.
- iii. **For citizens**, this may involve increasing our knowledge and skills so we can better prevent abuse in our daily lives.

All these actions are central to creating a culture of prevention.

Prevention actions can be classified into three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary prevention.

- I. **Primary prevention targets the general population.** Actions are focused on raising awareness about child abuse. These may include media campaigns aimed at children and adults. For example, public service announcements that encourage positive parenting and/parent education programs that focus on child development. *
- II. **Secondary prevention targets " at risk" sections of the population.** Actions are focused on "specific sections of the child population considered to be more at risk of being abused and specific sections of the adult population considered to be more at risk of abusing". For example, young parent support services and/or respite services. (Australian Institute of Criminology Journal 2000).
- III. **Tertiary prevention focuses on families where abuse has already occurred.** Actions are focused on seeking to reduce the negative consequences of abuse and to prevent its recurrence. These may include mental health services for children and families affected by the abuse and/or parent/mentor programs with non-abusive families (Child Welfare Information Gateway).

How can we become better agents for prevention and how can we educate and mobilize NGOs and citizens?

Two ways might deepen our awareness and understanding of

- 1. Factors that place some children more at risk of abuse than others (a)**
- 2. Children and their rights (b)**

This knowledge advances our capacity to prevent abuse in our daily lives. This is explained further in the guide.

Abuse and violence against children is never acceptable. Extreme forms of abuse and violence against children - including sexual exploitation and trafficking, female genital mutilation, the worst forms of child labor and the impact of armed conflict - have provoked international outcry and achieved a consensus of condemnation, although there is still no rapid remedy.

Many children are routinely exposed to physical, sexual and psychological violence in their homes, families, schools, and care and justice institutions, in places they work and in their communities. Children in such situations as forced or bonded labor; prostitution, pornography and trafficking are especially vulnerable. Much of violence against children remains legal, state-authorized and socially approved.

The guide also supports implementation of the UN Secretary General Study on Violence against Children of which the key message is "no violence is justifiable, all violence against children is preventable".

Our motto: Better prevent than to cure. From our perspective, prevention of violence and abuse can be more important than the pursuit of perfect implementation of conventions and declarations.

The UN Study was a global effort to paint a detailed picture of the nature, extent and causes of violence against children, and to propose clear recommendations for action to prevent and respond to it. The Study marks the first time that the reality of violence against children around the world has been documented and global recommendations made to stop it. Professor Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, the independent Expert who led the Study, presented the final Report to the UN General Assembly in 2006. One of the 12 recommendations is **PRIORITIZE PREVENTION**, which empowers our vision and mission to create a world fit for children and re-enforces our annual campaigns convened since the year 2000 **to help create a culture of prevention of abuse and violence against children.**

Selected statistics from UN sources stress the urgency for social mobilization and awareness raising campaigns. It is estimated that

- 40 million children suffer from abuse and neglect
- 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 9 boys will be sexually abused before the age of 18
- Approx. 2 million children are used in the sex industry each year
- More than 1 million images of tens of thousands of sexually abused children are posted on the Internet
- Victims of child sexual abuse are at greater risk of being involved in commercial sexual exploitation as a means to survive

- In 184 countries, over 50 per cent have no laws addressing child pornography. In 138 countries, possession of child pornography is not a crime
- Between 60 million and 100 million girls are missing from the world's population. They are victims of gender based infanticide, malnutrition, and neglect
- 3 million girls are subject to Female Genital Mutilation each year
- Some 180 million children work in the worst forms of child labor
- Over 120 million children will never go to school. 6 out of 10 are girls
- 300'000 children work as soldiers, transporters, and mine detectors, among other violations

Statistics used in the WWSF Guide are taken from many different sources, which university student interns researched and collected for the purpose of the guide. Most of the information presented indicates the source and a list of web links is included.

Child abuse and violence is often **under reported** for various reasons. Very young children lack the capacity to report violence. Children often fear reprisals by perpetrators or interventions by authorities, both of which may worsen their overall situation. Sometimes parents are perpetrators of violence against their children, or parents may remain silent when violence is committed by other family members or by powerful members of the community or society.

Many governments **lack adequate systems for consistent registration of birth**, leaving babies and small children without the protection offered by a formal identity. Similarly, **lack of consistent marriage registration makes early and forced marriage difficult to track**. Few governments consistently record placement of children in institutions, alternative care and detention, and even few report and record incidents of violence in these settings.

But it is the **persistent social and legal acceptance of some forms of violence** against children that too often leaves such violence unnoticed and unreported. Children, along with perpetrators of violence and the public at large, may accept degrees of physical, sexual and psychological violence as an inevitable part of childhood. Corporal punishment and other forms of cruel or degrading punishment, e.g. bullying, sexual harassment and a range of violent traditional practices may be perceived as normal, particularly when no lasting physical injury results. **The Convention on the Rights of the Child requires States to protect children from all forms of violence, to prevent and respond to violence, and to provide support to children who are victims of violence (Art. 19) the two Optional Protocols to the Convention (the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography) and several other human rights instruments include specific protections against violence and abuse. These actions are not optional; they are immediate obligations under international law.**

So why a guide for NGO and citizen action?

Prevention of abuse and violence against children is the responsibility of all of us.
Change just doesn't happen; we collectively can make it happen!

Objective of the guide: to **inspire** and **mobilize** NGO and citizen action to:

- **Create** a global culture of abuse and violence prevention
- **Accelerate** knowledge of better prevention measures and **support** coalition members and active network partners in the field
- **Focus** and **help implement** the framework provided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) - a global obligation for governments
- **Follow-up** on the recommendations of the UN SG Study on Violence against Children
- **Empower, inform** and **facilitate** the participation of young people in preventing abuse and violence against them
- **Lobby** governments and use suggestions given in the guide

The guide is aimed at **all citizens - men, women and children - worldwide**. This embraces all civil society organizations, in particular non-governmental organizations (NGOs), educational settings, grassroots groups, faith-based organizations, the media and various networks dealing with child abuse, child rights and development issues.

WWSF especially encourages the participation of children and young people. "It is essential that their views are taken into account when formulating abuse and violence prevention and elimination policies. Research shows that most children suffering violence do so silently, and therefore special efforts are required to make it possible for them to feel safe enough to discuss violent incidents..." www.violencestudy.org

Introduce the Guide

Take your guide and go to page 3, you will find a list of 25 child abuse categories. We have briefly covered in the guide with an introduction to or definition of the theme, some facts, followed by suggestions on what NGOs and citizen can do, what young people and children can do, and lobbying points for what governments should do.

This list of abuse situations is not exhaustive. There exist many others neglect factors and abuses of children's rights. The guide made a selection to empower NGOs and citizens to better address abuse and violence and find ideas for actions. We do not claim that we have all the answers, but believe that it is civil society which needs to take on to educate and carry out better prevention measures, and to pressure our governments to show political will to make prevention a priority as recommended in the UN Study.

A few suggestions on how to share and use the Guide:

- translate the guide into your national language

- use it for awareness raising in your families, communities, schools, the media, churches, sports clubs, and places of work, etc.
- organize panel discussions, give a lecture and stress that the guide is meant to help create a global culture of prevention
- network with existing NGOs and activists working for the rights of the child and for better prevention measures
- form your own group and organize an event on 19 November - World Day for prevention of child abuse, and include activities during the Prevention Education Week 13-19 November
- Share the ideas and suggestions for action and collect new ones, especially if you see action that is missing in the guide. Please share them with us so we can include them in an updated edition of the guide
- Celebrate our community's desire to take action in a spirit of "YES WE CAN do something about child abuse!"
- Use the WWSF mobilization/Signature card "Yes to prevention of child abuse", translate it into your national language, and send us the signed copies to be transmitted to the UN Special Representative of the SG on Violence against children (Elly show card and share cards)
- Create practical and high visibility and involve the media
- Build bridges to the local government and create a positive and productive relationship with your authorities and local United Nations representatives
- Invite your city Mayor and the municipal authorities to declare your city as a "City for prevention of child abuse", and involve them in your campaign programs
- Join the WWSF international coalition to stay connected with the global campaign and to receive our annual posters and Call to action with all coalition members printed on the back of the poster and on Internet. (Elly show poster)
- Use the WWSF TV spot, adapt it to your language, and have it broadcasted
- Use the yellow ribbon sticker and create one in your own country
- Become a WWSF member and receive our regular communications
- And lastly, become a financial supporter for our annual prevention campaign.

Please remember that our motivation in compiling this guide was to contribute in **advancing the need for better prevention**. We believe, that if one child benefits from our efforts and escapes abuse and violence, our efforts have been worth it. **The guide is a living document, which will be occasionally updated with new prevention tools and suggestions. You are Key to make child abuse history.** For your further information, contact our children's section coordinator at wdpca@wwsf.ch who will give you all the information you need.

Civil society needs to demonstrate its concern about the increase of violence against children. You do not need to become an expert or have 20 years of experience in Human Rights or child rights to become an active prevention agent, you need to simply care for children who are in today's world more than ever exposed to all kinds of abuse that we, my generation, did not have to face.

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