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STUDY OF SOCIAL NORMS IN GUYANA

AS IT PERTAINS TO

SEXUAL, PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL VIOLENCE

AGAINST CHILDREN



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FINAL REPORT UNICEF

STUDY OF SOCIAL NORMS IN GUYANA AS IT PERTAINS TO SEXUAL, PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL VIOLENCE
AGAINST CHILDREN

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FOREWORD



The Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana remains committed to promoting meaningful and measurable changes in the lives of vulnerable children across Guyana by improving their social and emotional well-being through fostering healthy and supportive conditions that will enable them to develop and thrive.

The Government welcomes the study of Social Norms as it pertains to Sexual, Physical and Emotional Violence against Children in Guyana and wishes to thank UNICEF for its continued support, specifically facilitating this nation's quest towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The study will further advance and inform our national strategies and interventions in policy, practice guidelines and implementation on violence prevention and will further enable this Government to utilize the findings effectively to accelerate progress, tackle existing problems and initiate actions to address emerging issues in order to afford every child throughout Guyana, the opportunity to develop his or her potential.

Guyana has made tremendous strides over the years so that every child can enjoy the fruits of our growing democracy and will continue to endeavour to uphold our laws and international treaty obligations on children's rights.

The best interest of the child has always been the primary consideration of this nation state and we look forward to future collaborations with UNICEF and other key stakeholders to eliminate all forms of human rights violations against our children.

Hon. Amna Ally, MP
Minister of Social Protection

MESSAGE FROM SYLVIE FOUET, REPRESENTATIVE OF UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (UNICEF)



Epidemic violence (sexual, physical and emotional) underpinned by harmful social norms or attitudes makes growing up challenging for children and adolescents in Guyana. Understanding what drive violence against children is key as well as what can be done to address it.

Social norms, shared perceptions about others that exist within groups, are critical drivers that can either prevent or perpetuate violence. Violence at home such as incest, violence in school in the form of corporal punishment, bullying, violence against children with disabilities or differing sexual orientations and violence in all settings are examples of these manifestations.

Partnering with the Ministry of Social Protection (Child Care and Protection Agency), UNICEF has supported this study on social norms as a basis to understand and prevent the root causes of these manifestations of violence. Better understanding of what makes a

belief a social norm and decreasing harmful practices will contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 6 aiming at promoting gender equality and empowering women.

The Study has shown that there are several contributing factors, such as poverty, frustration, lack of knowledge, neglect, drug or alcohol abuse and the perception that it is okay to use violence because they (abusers) too were abused as a child. In addition, inadequate parental guidance or supervision and lack of financial support to satisfy the basic needs were major factors that led to violence against children (VAC) in Guyana. Violence is observed across race, class, ethnicity or gender with a higher incidence when the victim is differently abled or has different sexual orientation.

According to the report, physical abuse is highly viewed (73.1%) as an accepted way of 'managing and controlling' children. Emotional abuse takes the form of harmful words that are said to children. 76.9 % of the respondents indicated that it was accepted even though they do not prescribe to this practice. Informants suggested that grooming contributes to sexual VAC adding it should not be tolerated even though it may be acceptable in some communities. Analyzing how social norms interact with structural determinants is helping to identify causal pathways to inform strategies and prevent violence.

I commend the leadership of the Minister of Social Protection and Child Care-Protection Agency to address violence against children. UNICEF is committed to work with all concerned actors to address every form of violence against children in Guyana

KEY TERMS

Key Terms	Working Definition
Anti-social behavior	Actions taking place that are likely to cause harassment, alarm, or distress to individuals who do not come from the same household
Apathy	To show a degree of indifference or insensitivity
Attitude	A settled way of thinking or feeling about an issue
Breadwinner	The person in the household who earns the most income
Bullying	The act of oppressing another physically, emotionally, psychologically causing harm, alarm or distress
Child neglect	A form of child abuse and implies a deficit in meeting the child's basic needs
Childhood	Span of life that ranges from birth to adolescence
Corporal punishment	Physical punishment inflicted on an individual in response to negative behavior
CPA	Child Protection Agency
Descriptive norms	Refers to what people actually do
Differently-abled	Handicapped or disabled
Domestic violence	Acts of violence or abuse against a person living in one's household, especially a member of one's immediate family
Emotional violence	Involves trauma to a victim caused by acts, threats of acts or coercive tactics
Emotional wellbeing	A condition which is vital to living a life of wholeness, balance and contentment
Flogging	To beat with a whip, stick, etc., especially as punishment; whip; scourge
Focus group	A representative group of people questioned together about their opinions on political issues
Grooming	Befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child with the intention of lowering the child's inhibitions for the purpose of sexual abuse
Homosexual	An individual sexually attracted to members of his/her own sex
Incest	Sexual relations between persons closely related; the crime of sexual intercourse, cohabitation, or marriage between persons within the degrees of consanguinity or affinity wherein marriage is legally forbidden
Injunctive norms	Attitudes on what people believe is right based on their moral values
Key Informant Stakeholders	Key person or group which has an interest in the issue area (e.g. Child rights)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
Partner violence	Physical and sexual violence, stalking and psychological aggression by a former or present intimate partner
Perpetrator	A person who commits, an illegal, criminal, or evil act

Key Terms	Working Definition
Physical violence	The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual against another person which can result in injury, death, psychological harm or mal-development
Poverty	The state or condition of having little or no money, goods, or means of support; condition of being poor
Rape	Any unlawful sexual intercourse or any other sexual penetration of the vagina, anus, or mouth of another person, with or without force, by a sex organ, other body part, or foreign object, without the consent of the victim
Residential care	Provision by a welfare agency of a home with social-work supervision for people who need accommodation
Safe space	A place or environment where an individual or group can feel confident that they will not be exposed to discrimination, harassment or any other physical, sexual or emotional harm
Sexual violence	A sexual act committed against a person without his/her free given consent
Social investigation	Enquiry method founded on techniques of collection and processing of information to analyze social situations
Social norms	Informal understandings that govern the behavior of a community
Socialization	The transmission of society's norms and values to the individual
Spanking	A common form of corporal punishment involving hitting of the buttocks
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
Youth	Defined by the United Nations as those individuals between the ages of 15 and 24

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

It is generally agreed that the physical, psychological and emotional well-being of children are significantly impacted by all forms of violence. While the protection of children from all forms of violence is a fundamental right guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it has been globally recognized that the nature and impact of violence against children have grown significantly. Additionally, while it has been posited that some forms of violence committed against children are socially accepted or condoned, other arguments contend that drivers of violence may be related to “structural or interpersonal risk factors”.

The UNICEF Situation Analysis (2016) articulates that, “the main causes and bottlenecks of child abuse are rooted in social norms and social and cultural practices that are being conducted for years in the country. These are strengthened by lack of implementation of the legislation, weak monitoring of cases, underreporting and impunity” (UNICEF 2016).

METHODOLOGY

For a successful execution of this project, both qualitative and quantitative methods of social investigation were utilized. These are based on the Guyana’s demographic, ethnic class, religious and gender representation to define the normative components and contexts around the drivers of violence against children in Guyana. In phase one a very detailed desk review was undertaken in order to have a greater understanding of the social norms in Guyana as they pertain to sexual, physical and emotional violence in all local settings. Phase two consisted of a number of Focus Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews with the identified stakeholders from the Government, Civil Society organisations and Development partners and community members. Due to the sensitive nature of the issues related to VAC, the researcher encouraged frank responses, which were followed-up by complementary questions to reduce the risk of political bias in the responses. This was followed by a bottleneck and barriers analysis, following the socio-ecological model. Finally, there has been a clear SMART behavioural objectives/results analysis that was based on the prioritisation of issues and the findings of the research exercises. With the coordination of researchers, quality control was ensured at each stage of the process.

Additionally, the third phase was the finalization of the report by analysing the data. The data analysis for the report was undertaken using qualitative and quantitative methods as have been employed in the data gathering exercises. As a limitation, it can be noted that the research was not able to interrogate each and every opinion or view of the interviewees, due to the scope of works. While the major concerns were registered and further investigated by way of follow-up questions, this was not possible in every case of the non-critical issues.

THE SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL MODEL

This model can be a useful tool when dealing with the issue of violence against children in Guyana. It was

initially developed to increase the understanding of the dynamic interrelations among various personal and environmental factors. In order to fully understand human behavior and norms, one can assume that it is necessary to investigate the complete ecological system in which this development occurs, while at the same time being cognizant of the relevance of biological and genetic aspects of the individual's behaviour.

This methodology requires an understanding of the contributing factors that lead to different types of violence against children in Guyana, while being cognizant of the complex interplay between factors that affect the individual, the relationships, the communities, and the societal factors. It presents the range of factors that place children at-risk for being victims of violence, sexual, emotional and psychological. In diagrammatic terms, the overlapping rings highlight the interplay between the factors affecting violence against children and the relationship between the factors.

At the individual level, the theory advocates the identification of factors that contribute to the violence that is perpetrated on the children. At the relationship level, the model suggests that one needs to interrogate the factors that put the child at risk as they are affected or influenced by personal relationships with close friends and peers. The community level investigations would necessarily commence with the schools, places of worship, social groups and workplaces. The strategies for intervention at this level are generally aimed to alter the physical and social environments in order to reduce the incidences of violence against children. At the societal level, the model is primarily concerned with the broad societal factors in which the climate for abuse is maintained and is also aimed at developing policies to reduce the incidences of violence against children in Guyana.

KEY FINDINGS

After numerous Key Informant and Focus Group interviews it has become apparent from their responses that violence against children in Guyana exists and the incidences cross lines of race, class, ethnicity, and gender. The research has further indicated that females are more at-risk of being victims of violence against children, in both the urban and rural areas in Guyana, and there is a higher incidence of this abuse when the victim is differently abled or has a different sexual orientation. This occurs among these groups because they are perceived as easier targets than others in society, as in most cases of crime and violence, the perpetrator usually selects victims who they perceive will put up the least resistance.

The view was advanced by the key stakeholders that inadequate parental guidance and supervision as well as the lack of financial support to satisfy the basic needs of the homes were major factors that led to violence against children in Guyana. Historically, in the Guyanese context, the mother was primarily responsible for child care and housework, while the father went out to work to bring finances to the household and family. In contemporary times the situation has changed somewhat, where the female while being responsible for her traditional functions in the family, is increasingly responsible for bringing the economic resources to the family and household.

This has occurred for a number of reasons, including but not limited to, absence of male adults in the

household, harsher economic times that requires increased income to effectively run the households, the increase incidences of single parenting where in most cases this translates to female single parent households. These increasing responsibilities on the females in the family usually take them away from the household in search for employment. This necessarily reduces the time that they spend bonding and socializing with their children, and as such, they have less influence in the development of the children's norms and values.

It has also been suggested that there needs to be targeted programs of training, education and re-education (in best practices in child care, identifying children at risk and similar training) for all people who have access to or responsibility for children and their welfare. Further, it is recommended that there is need for the establishment of more safe homes with accommodations for both boys and girls where the safety and security of the children should be assured.

Data also indicated that that physical abuse is generally viewed (73.1%) as an accepted way of management and controlling children of children in households throughout Guyana. Some also argued that while it may not be justified, can be seen as a necessary mechanism. While there is some degree of disagreement on the use and value of corporal punishment 57.7% of respondents indicated that it was not justified and 30.8% of respondents stated that it was justified. Interviewees stated that it is not necessarily an issue of societal acceptance, but rather one of their personal beliefs and experiences as it relates to child rearing and discipline. Thus, there appears to be a social norm as it pertains to violence against children, where many feel physical punishment is acceptable.

In relation to physical abuse generally, the majority of stakeholders (73.1%) indicated that violence against children is accepted as a social norm in communities throughout Guyana. Interestingly, advocates of spanking, and corporal punishment do not see this action as a form of violence against children and as such do not hold the perpetrators responsible for any breach of ethics, morals or law. Further, those who view violence against children as an accepted social norm are of the opinion that physical violence against children is an acceptable and efficient way to manage and control children and this is seen as a time-honored tradition. Additionally, it is generally believed that children with disabilities, different sexual orientation and those in residential care are equally susceptible to physical abuse as those in family care, and the respondents indicated that this occurs regardless of their ethnicity, gender or class in Guyana.

In terms of emotional abuse, which generally takes the form of harmful words that are said to children, 76.9 % of the respondents indicated that it was generally accepted even though they do not prescribe to this type of abuse.

The majority of the respondents (73.1%) indicated that the issue of child neglect is commonplace in Guyana. They further suggested that some of the major factors leading to neglect of children are employment, and the use and abuse of alcohol and drugs.

Respondents also acknowledged that sexual abuse is taking place in Guyana, but they do not believe that it

is generally accepted as a social norm. Sexual abuse of children is a problem in Guyana, and 65.3% of the respondents indicated that it was accepted as a social norm in Guyana, while 23.1% of respondents stated that sexual abuse was not accepted. Further, 76.9% of informants suggested that grooming contributes to sexual violence against children in Guyana, and feel that it should not be tolerated even though it may be acceptable in some communities, particularly the poorer, more economically depressed communities.

To combat these issues of abuse that plague the children of Guyana, a number of strategies have been suggested, including C4D strategies, increased information sharing and functional collaboration among agencies responsible for child care and child protection. Further, increased education, training, media campaigns are critical, and an holistic approach needs to be adopted that deals with victims, perpetrators, government agencies and Ministries, faith-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, community groups, and other stakeholders.

Essentially, it is being recommended that physical, emotional and sexual abuse can be reduced through the introduction of Communication for Development (C4D) strategies – which will educate the community and nation on the issue of violence as well as their rights and responsibilities. In reference to the differently-abled and those with different sexual orientation, C4D strategies should be developed to ensure that they are aware that they are not obligated to consent when approached for sexual activities. These C4D strategies can be implemented through multiple channels including radio, television, newspaper advertisements the social media, pamphlets, and other forms of communication which will reach board cross-sections of the population regardless of race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation. Further, it should be ensured that all persons are knowledgeable about the appropriate places to file reports and receive protection.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Guyana is located at the northern tip of South America, and is bordered by Brazil, Venezuela and Suriname. According to the Bureau of Statistics of the Government of Guyana (2016), the population of the country is 746, 955. The age structure is as follows: 0-14 years, 30.1% (male 114,132 / female 110,715); 15-24 years, 19.82% (male 74,099 / female 73,981); 25-54 38.17% (male 141,710 / female 143, 443); 55-64 years, 6.76% (male 24,524 / female 26, 032); 65 years and older, 5.13% (male 17, 340 / female 20, 979).

“Child abuse is a complex term that defies a precise, timeless definition. What one generation may regard as acceptable, even desirable child discipline may be regarded by another as unacceptable and abuse” (Child Abuse Encyclopedia, p. 160). In spite of the precise definition used, Alekseeva (2007) has argued that, “Children make up the segment of society that is the most defenseless, vulnerable, and completely dependent on adults”.

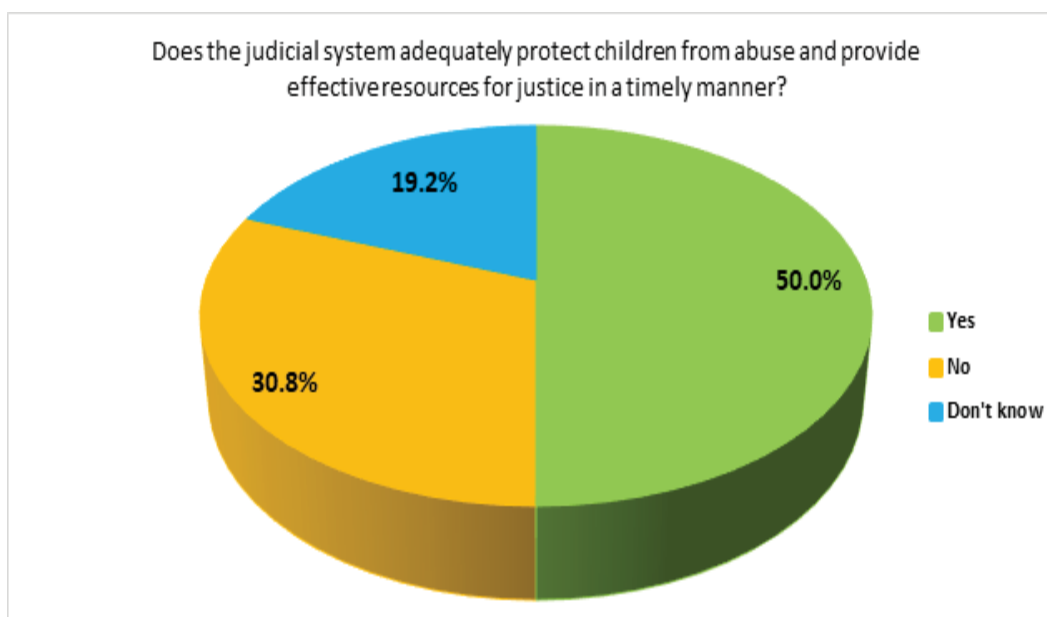
It is generally agreed that the physical, psychological and emotional well-being of children are significantly impacted by all forms of violence. While the protection of children from all forms of violence is a fundamental right guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, It has been globally recognized that the nature and impact of violence against children has grown significantly. Additionally, while it has been posited that some forms of violence committed against children are socially accepted or condoned, other arguments contend that drivers of violence may be related to “structural or interpersonal risk factors”.

Culture and norms play a large role in influencing the behaviour of the citizens of Guyana. As it relates to child abuse, in some instances, cases of child abuse are often presented as other acts in order to disguise them as acts other than child abuse. One aspect of child abuse, is child neglect. The KII has indicated that in the case of Guyana, single parent females who often work at nights (mainly as security guards) leave their children unprotected and unsupervised in their homes. These female heads of households do not consider their absence as neglect, but rather as a survival mechanism to provide for the basic needs for the family. This view has been supported by a member of the religious community in Guyana who stated that “parents are forced to neglect their children because...the home structure is now mainly single parent. Thus in order to support her children, she (the single mother) needs to work and leave the child alone to get to school or to be home’. An NGO noted that “neglect is commonplace in Guyana and tends also to be a factor which influences violence against children. The highest groups of neglect tend to be disabled children, those with different sexual orientation and those in residential care’. Further the NGO observed that *‘neglect leads to violence against children because they have no guidance and this leaves them susceptible to be taken advantage of’*.

Bellis et al (2017) state that “Violence is a major public health concern that impacts on the lives of billions of men, women and children across the globe, contributing to death, disease and disability”. UNICEF (2014) states that “Violence against children occurs every day, everywhere: the slaps of an upset parent to control

an ‘unruly’ child, the sexual victimization of a teenager by a peer or a neighbour, the bullying of one child by another in the schoolyard, the emotional degradation of a child bride by her spouse. Too many children worldwide are affected by such violence, yet it is rarely acknowledged, in part because it is so commonplace. The repercussions are not inconsequential, with ripple effects throughout society as well as future generations”.

The UNICEF Situation Analysis (2016) articulates that, “the main causes and bottlenecks of child abuse are rooted in social norms and social and cultural practices that are being conducted for years in the country. These are strengthened by lack of implementation of the legislation, weak monitoring of cases, underreporting and impunity” (UNICEF, 2016). In this study 50% of the Key Informants indicated that the judicial system does offer some protection to children from abuse and provide effective resources for justice in a timely manner. However, 30.8% of the respondents disagreed with this statement and approximately one fifth (19.2%) indicated that they ‘did not know’. Religious bodies who formed part of the KII indicated that ‘they are working’. ‘The system at times may be slow as in most countries, but they are doing the best they can’. Further, UNICEF Ending Violence Against Children: Six Strategies for Action (2014) states that “The impact of this violence against children can be lifelong, and even passed from generation to generation. When young people experience violence, the likelihood of their becoming future victims and of acting violently themselves as adults increases. A victim can become perpetrator. Yet, violence is not inevitable. We can and must break the cycle.”



Another KII representing the State noted ‘there are some things happening for the benefit of the children, but there is still so much to be done’. Yet another KII from an independent commission stated ‘they are trying, because with the establishment of the Sex Offenders Court, they are getting cases, and the court has produced results and it’s a work in progress to better the lives of the Guyanese children’. Further, another member of the NGO community stated that ‘the judicial system is not well resourced to handle these issues of abuse and much change is required to tackle this problem’.

In responses provided in KII and Focus Group interviews, it has become apparent from their responses that violence against children in Guyana does exist and the incidences cross lines of race, class, ethnicity, culture

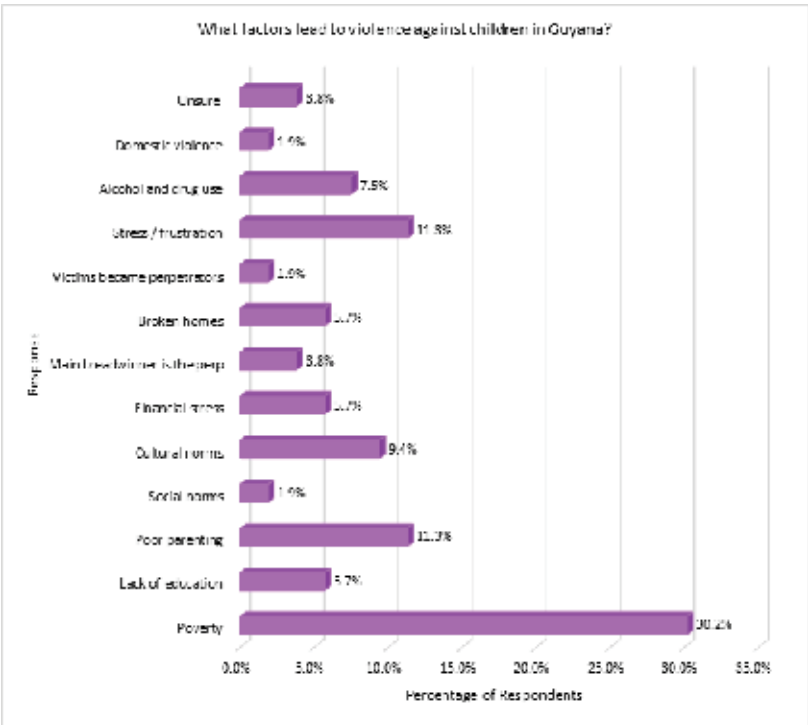
and gender. Further, members of the religious bodies stated that ‘culture plays an important role in Guyana and that is what we need to address...culture is the basis of the acceptance and normalization of abuse in Guyana’. Additionally, another KII from an independent commission stated that ‘in the Amerindian community there is a high rate of incest compared to the coastal areas’.

The research has indicated that females are more at-risk of being victims of violence against children, in both the urban and rural areas in Guyana, as is the case with individuals who are differently-abled and have different sexual orientations than the general population. This occurs among these groups because they are perceived as easier targets than others in society, as in most cases of crime and violence, the perpetrator usually selects victims who they perceive will put up the least resistance.

The research also revealed that the social norms in Guyana are deeply-rooted and the challenge arises in relation to the modification of and changes to these norms. Notwithstanding, there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that these norms have been cultivated over a significant period of time, and are highly resistant to change, as is the case with social norms that exist in every society.

Violence against children does exist and is a real challenge in Guyana, but the observations and suggestions by the respondents have provided a starting point for developing intervention programs to curb this behavior in the short term and modify the social norms in the medium to long terms.

With respect to the factors which lead to all types of violence (physical, sexual and emotional) against children in Guyana, a significant majority (58.5%) of the key stake holders indicated that poverty, the pressures of single parenting and parental stress were identified as the root causes of all types of violence against children, regardless of race and ethnicity.



A member of a State agency indicated that ‘it is clear that poverty has a great contribution in this (violence against children)’, and an independent commission member stated that ‘there are several factors that lead to violence. When we look at the socio-economic conditions of many families we should be conscious that Guyana has some levels of poverty that impacts families and their wellbeing. With that being said, poverty and hunger are factors that can lead to violence’. Another independent commission interviewee indicated that ‘one of the factors that lead to violence against children is poverty and Guyanese children are particularly vulnerable to child labor’. Similarly another independent commission interviewee stated that ‘the factors that contribute to violence against children are frustration, lack of knowledge in dealing with certain issues, ignorance to a certain point, poverty, child neglect, drugs and alcohol abuse and the perception that it is okay to use violence because they too (abusers) were abused when they were a child’.

The view was advanced by the key stakeholders that inadequate parental guidance and supervision, as well as the lack of financial support to satisfy the basic needs of the homes were also factors that lead to violence against children in Guyana. Historically in the Guyanese context, the mother was primarily responsible for child care and housework, while the father went out to work to bring the necessary financial resources to satisfy the needs of the household and family. In contemporary times, the situation has changed to some extent, where the female, while being responsible for her traditional functions in the family, is increasingly responsible for bringing the economic resources to the family and household.

This has occurred for a number of reasons, including but not limited to, male abandonment of the family, harsher economic times that require increased income to effectively manage the households, and the increased incidences of single parenting where in most cases this translates to female single parent households (Sharpe, 1996). These increasing responsibilities on the females in the family usually take them away from the household in search of employment. This necessarily reduces the time that they spend bonding and socializing with their children, and as such, the mother has less influence in the development of the children’s norms and values.

Interviewees highlighted the fact that mothers are spending less time in the homes as they are searching for and engaged in employment, and as such relinquish some of their parental responsibilities to older siblings and other family members. Of equal significance is the fact that society’s expectations of motherly responsibilities have not waned over time to match the economic realities in the Guyanese society. One NGO member stated that ‘a single parent home does not allow the amount of time to be given to children, it poses challenges since parents do not have time to answer questions that children have, which leads to neglect.’ One member from a government ministry stated that ‘yes, it happens often, and children have to fend for themselves and look after their younger siblings...’. Another KI from an NGO stated succinctly that ‘the factors that contribute to violence against children include poverty, single parenting and stress’.

Further, this has occurred in all communities whether they were identified as Afro, Indo or Amerindian Guyanese. Additionally, other reasons identified for the prevalence of violence against children include the absence

of parental love and caring and a breakdown in communication between parents and children. One of the KI interviewees from an independent commission stated ‘the factors that lead to violence against children include lack of love in the home, the breakdown of communication between parents and children’. Further, a member of the religious community indicated that ‘there is violence against children in Guyana because adults lack education and do not know what the meaning of love is or what it means to love. A lack of parental love encourages the violence against our children and this has been passed down for generations’. There was also the view that especially among teenage mothers, the concepts of family and family values were absent in the homes, and while it affects the entire community, it was suggested that it was the mother’s role to instill such values.

Further, alcohol and drug abuse were cited as contributing factors to the physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children in Guyana, and the main perpetrators in this case were the males of the households. This would suggest that the use of alcohol is culturally acceptable in Guyanese society. Stakeholders indicated that in some recorded cases, parents intentionally become intoxicated with the intention of returning home and inflicting violence on the children and wives/partners in the households, and as noted previously, males were identified as the major perpetrators; while this occurs it is not accepted as a social norm. It has been suggested that this occurs due to the high levels of frustration in the society, particularly among the members from the lower socio-economic strata, as abuse that occurs in the home is usually a manifestation of psychological, mental and financial stresses that play on the perpetrators. Interviewees suggested that campaigns about the ill effects (and negative effects on family life) of drugs and alcohol abuse should be a national priority, as KI and focus group interviewees suggested that drug and alcohol abuse is on the rise in Guyana, especially among the poor.

Other factors have been identified as contributing to the levels of child abuse and these include the negative forms of interaction between parents in their individual households, namely the relationships between parents and their neighbors and the relationship between the parents and members of the community. Where positive relationships exist with members of the community, there is the presence of community engagement with children and allows neighbors and community members “to keep an eye on” each other’s children. It was however indicated that currently, due to deterioration in community cohesiveness, there has been a reduction in the level of trust and this has impacted negatively on community relations, and reduced the impact of neighbors ‘watching over’ the children. As this phenomenon increases, the interviewees indicated that there is increasingly less responsibility put on the neighbors but also less is being expected from the community in terms of molding, mentoring, and ‘looking out’ for children in the neighborhood.

As previously indicated, child abuse is related to poverty and fragmented families (an example is the single parent homes, usually with a mother as the parent present). In many situations, parents have difficulty in finding employment and even when they do, in many cases they have to commute to urban areas especially Georgetown to take up employment opportunities. Due to the high cost of transport and meals, in many cases the individuals are left with very little finances from their salary and, as many stakeholders indicated, the

benefits of employment are negligible. It was also observed that parents spend much time away from their children, and as a result they only have limited input in their daily lives and lose the emotional and parental bonds with their children, which lead to increased levels of frustration.

Additionally, family ties are weak, and in many situations, parents have to leave their children alone which at times produce negative results. According to the interviewees, there have been recorded cases where the older sisters and brothers are left to take care of their younger siblings and in this environment, the younger children are particularly vulnerable. In many cases, the older siblings who take care of the younger ones are either school dropouts or left with the responsibility for which they are not prepared and are not able to make informed choices about child rearing, discipline and other related matters. As one focus group indicated ‘Yes it often happens. Most of the parents are single parents and work as security guards. There are often young ones looking after their younger siblings; even at the age of 11/12 they become the mother to their siblings’.

Further, some of the focus groups presented the view that these older siblings have been found to be users of marijuana in the homes and around the younger children and sometimes are found under the influence of these substances when supervising the younger children. This situation exposes the younger siblings to conditions of neglect and this is seen as particularly disturbing as eventually they have to depend on the older ones for their survival.

It was also observed that, in many cases, the caregivers lack the necessary information to empower themselves to make informed decisions in relation to child care, and this occurs in all communities that have been surveyed, regardless of ethnicity. Additionally, it was indicated that family values are no longer a priority issue and the concept of ‘the nice village’ is now challenged. Interviewees highlighted that family values and religious values are necessary to change the social norms of these communities in Guyana. A KII from an independent commission stated ‘first off times have changed’. ‘I grew up with not just my parents but the village. Anything that I needed, if my parents were not there, I still had other “parents”, the village raises the child. After independence we saw that the family was being disintegrated by migration from country to town, or from internal to external’.

Additionally, it has been suggested by KI and focus group interviewees that violence against children (physical, emotional and sexual) occurs in the schools as well as the homes. One of the reasons put forward by interviewees is that this occurs because of the lack of training and orientation of the teachers and this is compounded by acts of bullying which occur among the children at school. One member of the religious community suggested that in some cases the school and teachers advocate the ‘spare not the rod and spoil the child principle’, and this can lead to abuse of children. One member of a government ministry indicated that ‘...it (violence against children) still continues, the teachers should find other means of disciplining children. There are parents and teachers who lack the education / knowledge, and the only thing they know is to physically discipline the children and use corporal punishment as a tool’. Another member from a government ministry stated that ‘...the actions of teachers who use physical punishment as an instrument of control and management are doing harm to the children’. While the incidences of these types of violence are

increasing, it should be noted that interviewees also indicated that it is the general and normal expectation of members of society that their children will be protected from all types of harm when in the school's care, and this includes all types of violence against children.

It was observed that in some communities like St Ignatius, there was a high level of apathy and indifference with respect to neglect of children. This apathy is as a result of the preoccupation with survival where more emphasis is placed on earning and daily coping mechanisms, rather than issues related to child neglect.

Other stakeholders indicated that if corporal punishment is not meted out to children, they would not be positive citizens in the future, as this has been the case in their personal lives and experiences. One member of the religious community stated that 'The elders justify corporal punishment because they were beaten as children and think that the youth today should also be beaten'. Another KII from a religious organization stated that corporal punishment is justified 'because parents do not know what to do. They grew up with it and turned out well, so they have the idea that they can do the same with their children'. It was further noted that in recent times, young people including teenagers are raising children without structured parenting skills and this has led to physical abuse of children as their first priority in the effort to discipline children. Further, children are physically abused out of frustration and as some stakeholders indicated, there were cases when children are beaten when they were hungry and this took place out of frustration by the parents since they could not satisfy the basic need.

CHAPTER 2: SOCIAL NORMS IN THE GUYANA CONTEXT

It must be observed that a component of this study is aimed at providing clarity on the understanding of the concept of ‘social norms’ in the UNICEF context. According to UNICEF, “Knowledge, attitudes and practice (KAP) research provides information on what people know, how they feel and how they act or behave in relation to specific issues” (UNICEF, 2015).

One’s knowledge of an issue is generally based on the individual’s understanding of the issue as well as that individual’s perception of that particular issue. When confronting issues of social norms, one has to be cognizant that people’s understanding of the issues affects their perception of what constitutes social norms. Undoubtedly, the individual’s attitude to any issue, inclusive of social norms, is based on the knowledge that the individual has about the particular issue. Attitudes affect not only the way individuals perceive situations but also how each reacts to these situations, and as such these attitudes are affected by experiences, cultural norms, social-economic status, religious beliefs and the like. This is consistent with the finding of Blume (2008), who states that cultural and social norms are important considerations when dealing with issues of violence against children; these are rules or expectations of behavior within a specific cultural or social group. These norms dictate to the social group what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

Violence and childhood are both socially constructed concepts, and as such a clear ontology needs to be developed when dealing with not only the issues, but the possible suggestions for the eradication of violence against children in Guyana.

As such, the analysis has utilized the definition of violence proposed by the World Report on Violence and Health which defines violence as:

“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, mal-development, or deprivation”. (World Report, Chapter 1 – Violence - A global public health problem).

This general definition then further divides violence into three sub-types:

1. Self-directed violence such as self-mutilation and suicide.
2. Interpersonal violence, which refers to violence between individuals and encompasses domestic as well as community violence. Child abuse, youth violence and criminal violence fall under this category.
3. Collective violence or violence involving larger groupings of people such as economic, political and social violence.

EMOTIONAL

In addition violence is understood to take the form of physical, sexual and psychological violence as well as deprivation and neglect (Butchart et al, 2004). A KII from a religious organization stated ‘emotional abuse is a problem for both the child and the parent’. Another interviewee from a religious organization said that ‘some persons take a stand against it (emotional abuse) but children have to make a conscious decision not to listen to it. It essentially lowers the children’s self-esteem and self-worth’. Yet another KII stated that ‘we often hear persons talking about physical and sexual abuse probably because of lack of knowledge of emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is often more damaging than other forms of abuse; you are not seeing the scars but this abuse takes longer to heal as it is an attack on the self-esteem of the individual’.

ATTITUDES

Attitudes play a role in how individuals react to situations, and as such an individual’s behavior can be seen as a reflection of his/her attitudes. Similarly, social norms are molded by factors such as social-economic status, religious beliefs, culture, policy and regulation. These cultural and social norms provide the parameters of behavior for the members of social groups and society. They exist as individuals and operate within the given parameters assuming that others will do the same and abide by the same rules of the community.

Both attitude and knowledge affect how we behave and react to situations. Practice by individuals and groups are usually a result of learnt behavior, and to change unwanted behavior requires proper knowledge about the issue at hand. As such, one needs to be cognizant of the link between attitudes, knowledge and practices when attempting to design programs that seek to change behavior, or more importantly, to change the attitudes that are prevalent in any community. This is particularly problematic for policy implementation in the CARICOM region, as different child protection agencies in the region use different definitions of what constitute normal attitudes to issues of abuse and in this way it is difficult to formulate a regionally accepted definition. Exacerbating these issues is the fact that in any one Caribbean territory there may be various cultures and sub-cultures that hold differing views on what constitutes norms on behavior towards to children and what constitutes child abuse.

Violence against children is a human rights violation that has been deemed to have crossed cultural, social and economic lines according to the UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys. This violation manifests itself in a multitude of ways inclusive of, but not limited to relationships in the home (with family and family friends), at school (with other students, teachers and others in authority), at church (with members of the clergy and other worshippers), and in the wider community. It should also be noted that violence experienced by a child can be both direct and indirect in nature. Direct violence usually manifests in aggression being targeted at the child, whereas indirect aggression results from the child witnessing acts of violence.

SOCIAL NORMS

Social norms are shared perceptions about others that exist within social groups and are maintained through

group approval and disapproval (Mackie, Moneti, Denny, & Shakya, 2012). There are two broad types of social norms: 1. descriptive norms: perceptions about what members of social groups do and, 2. injunctive norms: perceptions about what members of a social group think others ought and ought not to do (Lilleston, Goldmann, Verma & McCleary-Sills, 2017). In the Guyanese context, it is necessary to determine the difference between the descriptive and injunctive norms.

In essence, one needs to go beyond describing what members of the community do, and investigate what members of the community believe others ought to do in situations. A KII from a religious body stated that ‘the first thing we need to address is that most families are not aware of emotional abuse and what it can do to a child. Only after we educate them on this type of abuse can we go from there’. Another KII from an NGO indicated that ‘it is the role of the government to protect each group and ethnicity. Society has to be governed with rules, adherence to rules and observance of rules is critical.’

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Similarly, it is therefore necessary to move beyond recognizing why people perpetrate violence against children in the community in the form of ‘hitting’ in order to determine what members of the community think could have been alternative strategies for discipline, behavior modification and the like. One must be concerned about the reasons why individuals feel pressured to carry out certain kinds of behavior rather than others, usually through real or perceived social benefits or sanctions. To further present the example of ‘hitting’, “the use of physical force is intended to cause pain, but not injury, for the purpose of correcting or controlling a child’s behavior” (Straus and Donnelly, 2005: 3-7). The concept is further elaborated by Gershoff (2002) who posited that acts of corporal punishment are behaviors, which do not result in significant physical injury (e.g., spank, slap), whereas behaviors that risk injury (e.g., punching, kicking, burning) are considered physical abuse (Gershoff, 2002: 539-579). A KII from an NGO stated that ‘parents are pressured to enact violent discipline on their children because of the economic and mental state that they (the parent) are in’.

Generally, it is accepted that corporal punishment tends to lead to more immediate compliant behavior in children, notwithstanding that it is also associated with physical abuse. While in the Caribbean, corporal punishment remains a widely used discipline technique, it has recently come under scrutiny by international agencies, policy makers, non-governmental organizations, civil society groups, psychologists and others. Gershoff (2002) posited that while there is a desirable association between corporal punishment and increased immediate compliance, he also found “strong associations” between corporal punishment and increased child aggression and anti-social behavior. Nevertheless, Gershoff (2002) also cautioned that her findings did not indicate that all children who were subject to corporal punishment displayed aggressive and anti-social behaviors. In the study, one KII indicated that corporal punishment is not the best method of discipline for managing children, as evidenced by the statement by this KII who observed that ‘...corporal punishment has been reported from the actions of teachers...who use this tool as an instrument of management and control’.

Berkowitz (2003) suggests that for social norms to persist, it is in fact less important what individuals think or believe about social practices, than what they believe or think that the majority in the social group believe. Persons in these groups whose opinion are most important to the individual are known as the 'reference networks' (Bicchieri, 2006). Borsari & Carey, (2003) postulate, that social norms do not in all cases reflect the reality in the community, suggesting that cases occur when members of the community believe an activity exists, when in fact it does not. In Guyana, while corporal punishment is still used because many people think it is used by the general population and the school system, there are in fact advocacy movements to reduce the incidences of this type of violence against children. It has been suggested KII and focus group interviewees that with increased knowledge of the movement away from corporal punishment, the veil of ignorance will be removed and its incidences will be reduced. One KII from an NGO stated that 'corporal punishment is not justifiable in any way whatsoever. Educate teachers and administrators from the old ways to the new ministry-driven approach of finding alternatives.'

Individuals pursue, perpetuate, challenge or condone behavior, deviant or otherwise for any number of reasons, inclusive of the need for approval, fear of sanctions, or the internalization of normative behavior (Bandura, 2004; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977; Marcus & Harper, 2014). The beliefs about behaviors and social norms are inculcated in the individual from a very young age, and as such are seen as normal, and to challenge these beliefs may lead to feelings of guilt and shame or the fear of being labelled negatively by the group.

Authors such as Eagly & Chaiken (2007) have cautioned that social norms are distinguishable from behavior and attitudes of the individuals, even though they are clearly linked. This may culminate in a situation where the individual may behave in ways that are contrary to his/her personal beliefs but is consistent with what he/she believes are the social norms of the community. It is important to note that in cases where this incongruity occurs, it has been found that social norms have an increasingly significant influence on the individual's behavior.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Research has also shown a positive correlation between emotional abuse and neglect of the child. Authors, Brassard, Hart, and Hardy (1993) define the concept of psychological maltreatment as "a repeated pattern of behavior that conveys to children that they are worthless, unloved, unwanted, or only of value in meeting another's needs" (p. 715). As such, this may manifest itself through activities such as isolating, rejecting, terrorizing, lack of emotional responsiveness or availability, degrading/devaluing, exploiting, among others. This range of abusive behaviors can emanate from a range of abusive environments. The research has indicated that abusive environments typically exist in situations of poverty, stress and isolation. This has been highlighted in relation to incest in hinterland communities (isolation), neglect and abuse by economic circumstances of the single parent (poverty and stress).

Qualitative differences in emotional abuse experiences are likely to have different effects, just as different

general abuse subtypes contribute to diverse outcomes (Goldsmith and Fryed, 2005). When looking at the Guyana situation and one recognizes that the children of today are the adults of tomorrow who have to become productive members of society, the resolution of the issue of emotional abuse becomes more critical. Research has indicated that depressed individuals are less productive than others in society, and research also highlights the fact that there is a positive correlation between emotional abuse and adult depression (Gibb, Butler, & Beck, 2003; Gross & Keller, 1992;), suicidality (Bifulco, Moran, Baines, Bunn, & Stanford, 2002), anxiety (Harkness & Wildes, 2002; Kent & Waller, 1998), dissociation (Harkness & Wildes, 2002), and drug and alcohol use among college students (Jelley, 2003). The research has indicated that attempts can be made to reduce the ill-effects of emotional abuse on children. A number of KIIs recommended that ‘awareness campaigns be established through the media (print and electronic) and through programmes of re-education for adults.’ Another suggestion presented was that ‘the first thing is to accept that emotional abuse is happening. Sensitization is needed in the communities’. The view was also advanced by another KI that ‘we need to talk more with our children about all aspects of life. We need to be more open to their concerns and short comings. It is also important to first understand the heavy weight of this form of abuse.’

The psychological effects on children who experience emotional violence are daunting and disconcerting. Berman, et al (2000) have clearly highlighted the link between the exposure to violence and distress symptoms that are evident in children. The child who is emotionally abused usually displays a range of symptoms including, but not limited to, feelings of isolation, manifest self-destructive patterns of behavior, difficulties in establishing and maintaining healthy sexual relationships and trusting others (Murphy, 1998). This is supported by Lowenthal (1998) who posits that signs of emotional abuse contribute to the following, an impaired sense of self-worth, failure to thrive, intense fears, anger and/or depression, delayed physical, emotional or intellectual development and finally extremes of behavior such as being extremely compliant and passive or extremely aggressive.

Psychologists Kent, Waller, and Dagnan (1999) indicated “emotional abuse to be the only type of abuse that predicted unhealthy eating attitudes among adult women, and Kent and Waller (1998) discovered that emotional abuse predicted more depression and anxiety than other forms of abuse” (Goldsmith and Fryed, 2005). Emotional neglect may often occur when children are unaware that their needs are not being met, and Erickson and Egeland (1996) use the term “psychological unavailability” to describe a common form of emotional neglect. In the case of Guyana, while facilities exist, it has been argued that children tend to be victims of emotional abuse. One KII from the NGO community stated that ‘usually what happens is that children with special needs just go through the system and what we found as it relates to physical and sexual abuse (emotional) is that they are the children most susceptible to abuse.’

As victims of emotional abuse in the form of emotional neglect, children usually demonstrate anxious attachment (Egeland & Sroufe, 1981) and internalizing problems (Erickson & Egeland, 1996, major depression (Yamamoto, Iwata, Tomoda, Tanaka, Fujimaki, & Kitamura, 1999) and personality disorders (Johnson, Smailes, Cohen, Brown, and Bernstein, 2000). Similarly, Loos and Alexander (1997) found children who

experienced emotional neglect were more susceptible to loneliness and social isolation than those who were subjected to other types of maltreatment.

Inequality is the source of many types of abuse and violence, and will continue once these inequalities exist in society. The perpetrators use physical, sexual and emotional/psychological abuses to establish and maintain control and power over the victims. Further the view has been advanced that violence against children can cause long-term physical and mental health problems, and that violence and abuse affect not just the individual children involved but also their siblings, peers, families, and communities. These effects may be long-term and influence the mental and emotional health of the individuals for their entire lives. These incidences can be found in Guyana in relation to grooming. One KII on grooming stated that ‘grooming contributes to sexual abuse and is occurring in close circles and by or among relatives’. Similarly another KII stated that ‘trusting someone and being abused by them can be confusing and therefore young ones don’t consider grooming abuse’, and this speaks to the issues of power and control by the perpetrator.

When considering violence against children, the observer usually looks for and considers evidence of physical abuse. However, research has shown that psychological violence can be just as debilitating and destructive to the child. The UN Study on Violence Against Children (UNVC, 2006: 91), posits that “all physical and sexual violence involves some psychological harm; but psychological violence can also take the form of insults, name-calling, ignoring, isolation, rejection, threats, emotional indifference and belittlement – that can be detrimental to a child’s psychological development and well-being.”

In many cases, the incidences of emotional abuse are not reported, and Hart, Brassard, and Karlson (1996) acknowledge that tracking the incidence and prevalence of emotional abuse is extremely challenging. In support of this view, the focus group interviewees from across the regions indicated that under-reporting limits the effectiveness and the capacity to track these incidences. This is seen as extremely important as efforts and policies to understand and prevent such behavior are dependent on identifying the behavior. To be sure, victims of emotional abuse are likely to have experienced a range of abuse, and significantly, it is often the psychological aspects of physically and sexually abusive acts, as much as the acts themselves, that contribute to post-traumatic symptoms (Claussen & Crittenden, 1991; Gross & Keller, 1992; Vissing, Straus, Gelles, & Harrop, 1991). One focus group stated that ‘sometimes, even if it is clear in the neighborhood that there is some type of abuse happening (especially sexual abuse) and they want to do something about it, the parents will deny it and we just stop and no report is done. Often because mothers are also being physically abused, they even don’t report or they don’t want to bring shame to the family’.

BEHAVIORAL CHANGE

Because the choices of some individuals invariably influence the choices of others, strategies to change behavior and norms must take this into account. As such, successful attempts to change social norms must by necessity focus on changing individuals’ perceptions. It is normally done by targeting behaviors that need to be changed, by targeting social norms directly and by changing attitudes and beliefs (dispelling myths and providing information and evidence) with the aim of changing the prevailing social norms.

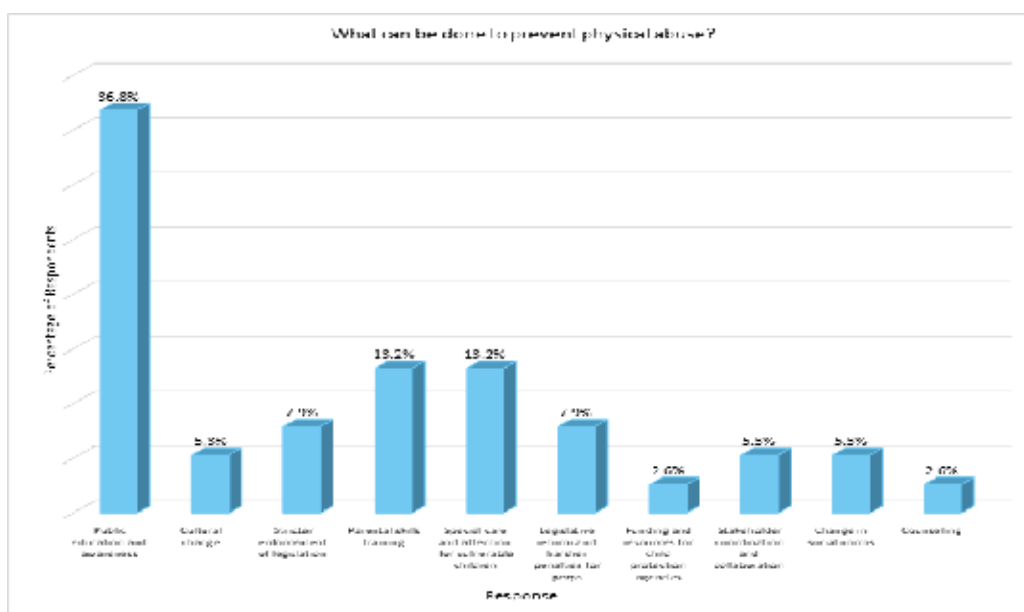
The views have been advanced by focus group and KII from across the regions that changes in behaviour can be achieved through parenting classes, media campaigns, advocacy, increased education on the different types of abuse, access to counselling, and these all influence the changing of social norms in society. Additionally, one KII from an independent commission stated that ‘education is the key to changing people’s perceptions and behaviour in relation to child abuse.’

SOCIAL NORMS THEORY

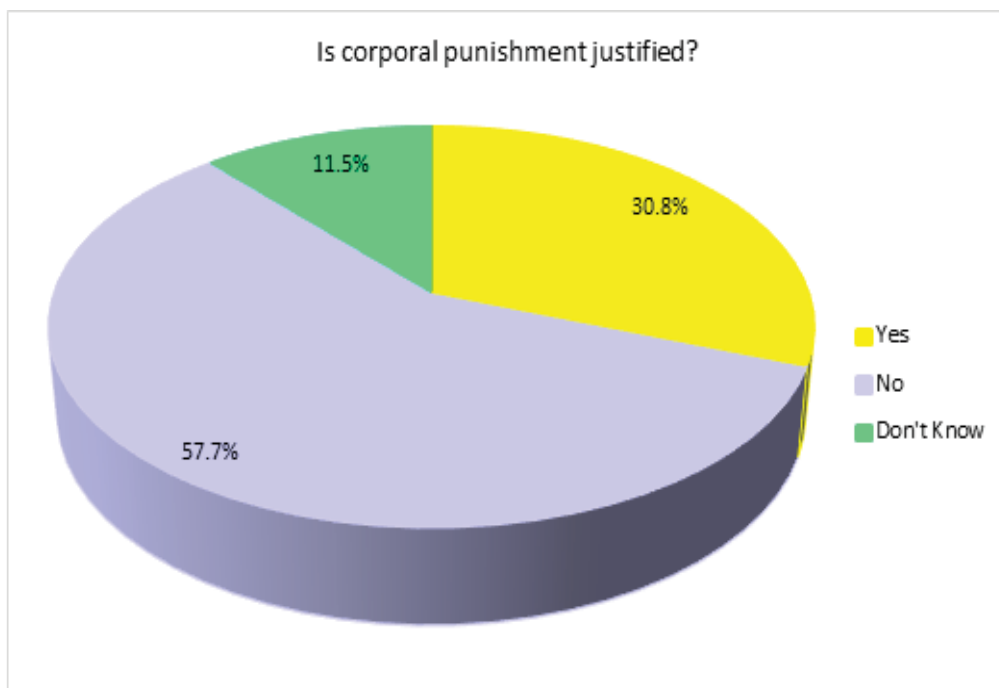
It is generally agreed that social norms can be useful or harmful to individuals, and are always highly influential in shaping the behavior of individuals. It has been generally agreed that beliefs or expectations of behavior within a cultural or social group tend to encourage a certain type of behavior, and interventions that challenge these cultural and social norms supportive of violence or negative behavior can serve to prevent acts of violence in the communities.

Every society has cultural and social norms and they exist due to the individuals’ willingness and preference to conform to these norms, with the general expectation that others will also do so. Notwithstanding, there are numerous internal and external influences and pressures on the individual to maintain these norms through the process of socialization, and as such individuals are encouraged to conform to the group’s social norms, through social approval and rewards, and discouraged from deviating from them through social disapproval or punishment.

Interventions that correct misperceived social norms are critical for effective change of these unwanted social norms, such as violence against children. This approach suggests that persistently communicating accurate norms to the target population will effectively reduce the socially undesirable behavior over time. The KIIs (52.6%) highlighted the need for awareness and sensitization campaigns, increased education through the formal and informal systems, increased access to counselling and advocacy at the national and community levels.



This social norms approach provides a theory of human behavior that has important implications for violence prevention and the promotion of healthy norms in relation to violence against children. In support of this view, the opponents of corporal punishment point to the number of studies that have identified a link between corporal punishment in children and psychological and behavioral disorders they develop in adult life, particularly depression, drug and alcohol abuse, withdrawal, and impulsiveness (McCord, 1991). While KII and focus group participants were of the view that corporal punishment is becoming less acceptable in Guyana, one KII indicated that ‘corporal punishment has no place in the 21st century. It may have been justified many years ago when we did not know better, but, we want to move towards positive discipline of the children.’ Another KII indicated that ‘corporal punishment is not justified, but in some communities it is normalized because it is learnt behavior.’



The theory advocates that behavior is influenced by incorrect perceptions of how other members of the community and social groups think and act. As such the theory is concerned with how individuals perceive attitudes of their groups toward certain phenomena (such as violence against children), whether overestimating or underestimating approval and acceptance. It is generally assumed that an overestimation of the level of acceptance will exacerbate the problem, while underestimation of the acceptance will tend to discourage its continuance. To reduce the negative effects of corporal punishment, some countries such as Denmark, Norway and Finland have banned this type of punishment in schools, as they believe that it actually leads to increased violence in schools (Larzelere, 1999). This violence, according to Hyman (1988) is seen as being self-perpetuated as the supporters of corporal punishment have been the recipients of it in their childhood, thus encouraging the maintenance of the cycle of violence, and this has been indicated earlier in this report by a KII.

This approach focuses on peer relations, and they are deemed more important on the individual's behavior than other factors such as religion, culture, personality or even biological factors (Berkowitz & Perkins, 1986a; Borsari & Carey, 2001; and Perkins, 2002). These influences are based more on what the individual believes that others think and do, (known as the 'perceived norm') rather than what they actually think or do, (known as the 'action norm'). It is the difference between the perceived and the real norms, known as 'misperception' that lays the foundation for the social norms approach to be implemented. To implement this strategy, one must ensure that the correct information is presented to the audience as this will dispel the misconceptions and reinforce the desired social norms.

This approach advocates reducing disruptive and anti-social behavior while at the same time reinforcing positive and desirable behavior patterns, and this is done by dispelling the myth that the undesirable behavior is the norm in the community or society (everybody beats their children). The real norms need to be communicated in a comprehensible way to all members of the community and society, and in Guyana as recommended by all focus groups and many KII, the most efficient way to do this is through media campaigns using social media, seminars and workshops in the education system as this will also reach a large portion of the population, and potential victims, television and radio advertisements and call-in talk shows.

INJUNCTIVE AND DESCRIPTIVE NORMS

For the purpose of this research, it is important to separate the two different types of norms, namely injunctive norms and descriptive norms. Injunctive norms refer to attitudes on what people believe is right based on their moral values and beliefs, whereas descriptive norms refer to what people actually do.

While both injunctive and descriptive norms are widely surveyed in social norms efforts, it has been argued that the most successful interventions have used descriptive norms, while opponents of this view state that using injunctive norms may be more useful as points of intervention because they are generally more conservative than actual behavior. It is important to note that individuals have multiple connections in society, their friends, family, peers, school and work mates, church colleagues, associates and acquaintances, and all of them have particular norms (which may agree or conflict) that exert influences in the individual's behavior.

In operational terms, social norms theory is useful for altering social norms and behaviors in society, and it can focus on the three identified levels of prevention that are identifiable, namely the indicative, selective and universal interventions (Berkowitz, 1997). Indicative prevention strategies are primarily directed at individuals who have been identified as displaying the negative behaviors (child abusers), selective prevention strategies are directed towards at-risk groups (unemployed people in low income areas), and universal prevention strategies are directed towards all members of the population regardless of their risk status.

While the intentions may be good, or the practice based on historical norms, it is argued that the use of violence against children reinforces the use of physical aggression as an acceptable and effective means of moulding

or eliminating unwanted behavior. Smith & Mbozi (1993), in their UNICEF publication ‘Removing Corporal Punishment from Schools’ theorised that the negative impacts of corporate punishment have been accepted and this has caused the emergence of a movement to eradicate corporal punishment in schools in Guyana; as part of the movement advocating the end of violence against children everywhere and in every setting. The authors further posit that “Not only is corporal punishment generally accepted as an appropriate means of discipline; there is little or no infrastructure to support caregivers in learning and practicing alternative forms of discipline” (Smith & Mbozi 1993).

With the growth of the social norms approach, some commentators have expressed concerns about its efficacy in general and its usefulness with specific populations. Concerns have been raised about the constraints related to implementation strategies including access to the messages by some members of the population, but this limitation can be reduced by the strategies suggested from the KII and focus group participants as indicated earlier in this report. According KII and focus groups in Guyana, another issue that needs to be prioritized is that of adequate monitoring and evaluation. Similarly, other concerns include the decision surrounding the issues of whether the social norms intervention strategies should be a stand-alone approach or whether it should be part of a larger campaign. Additionally, KII and focus group participants recommended that consideration should be given about whether it would be useful to make the change in social norms against violence against children a part of a larger campaign against destructive and harmful behaviors like alcohol and drug abuse, or if it should be a stand-alone campaign against violence against children exclusively. Further, it was noted by KII and focus group participants that decisions have to be made about whether the campaign should be targeting homogeneous sub-groups or large communities.

A serious challenge for any intervention addressing cultural or social norms is to take into account the fact that the society and its communities consist of many social and cultural groups who may not share the same social norms and it was indicated by KII and focus group participants that interventions should be specifically designed for each target group, rather than addressing the general population.

TYPES OF VIOLENCE

Physical Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Violence is an acceptable way of resolving conflict• Individuals in different social groups within society are not tolerated (homosexuals)
Child Neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It is acceptable to leave children at home alone when you go to work
Physical Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical punishment is an acceptable or normal part of rearing a child
Corporal Punishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Corporal punishment helps to discipline children
Partner Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A man has a right to assert power over a woman and is socially superior• A man has a right to "correct" or discipline female behavior
Emotional Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It's acceptable to motivate children by calling them names
Sexual Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sexual violence such as rape is shameful for the victim, which prevents disclosure• Sexual violence is an acceptable way of putting women in their place or punishing them
Grooming	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It is acceptable for adult males to bring gifts for young girls and boys whose parents cannot afford to do so

Figure 1: Examples of Social Norms that Support Violence

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

In order to successfully execute this project a mixed methods approach was utilized to determine the normative components and contexts around the drivers of violence against children in Guyana. A specific methodology for the project which included both qualitative and quantitative methods of social investigation based on the Guyana's demographic, ethnic class, religious and gender representation.

Phase 1

Initially a comprehensive Desk Review was undertaken to gain a greater understanding of the social norms in Guyana as they pertain to sexual, physical and emotional violence in all settings locally.

The research instrument was developed and pretested to solicit the relevant information to fill the gap left by the dearth of reliable research and data analysis on these issues in the communities. It became evident that while opinions have been shared, they are based on the limited experiences and expertise of the individuals and, in the absence of reliable empirical data have been seen as a reality.

Phase 2

In addition, Focus Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews were conducted with the identified stakeholders from Government, Civil Society organisations and Development partners and community members. Additionally, 'a bottleneck and barriers analysis was conducted following the socio-ecological model in order to identify behavioral and social barriers at the level of policy, the individual, the family, the community and present the final draft report to the relevant stakeholders such as government counterparts, development partners, international and national NGOs, and youth groups'. Further a clear SMART behavioural objectives/results, based on the prioritisation of issues and the findings of the research exercises. Quality control was ensured by the coordination of researchers at each stage of the process.

Phase 3

Data analysis for the report was undertaken using qualitative and quantitative methods as have been employed in the data gathering exercises. Qualitatively, the data was coded for major words and phrases and entered into excel for analysis. Quantitatively, the data was also coded and entered into the software Statistical Package for Social Sciences where it was analyzed for themes and trends.

Limitations

Due to the scope of works, the research was not able to interrogate each and every opinion or view of the interviewees. While the major concerns were registered and further investigated by way of follow-up questions, this was not possible in every case of the non-critical issues.

SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL MODEL: THE APPLICATION IN GUYANA ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

The social-ecological model can be a useful tool when dealing with the issue of violence against children in Guyana. Initially it was developed to increase the understanding of the dynamic interrelations among various personal and environmental factors. It is assumed that in order to fully understand human development, it is necessary to investigate the entire ecological system in which this development occurs, while at the same time being cognizant of the relevance of biological and genetic aspects of the individual's development.

The individual's reality is continually affected and modified by its immediate physical and social environment (microsystem) as well as interactions among the systems within the environment (mesosystems). The reality is also affected by other economic, social, and political conditions (exosystem) which ultimately influence the structure and availability of microsystems and the manner in which they affect the child. It should be noted that these economic, social, and political conditions are further influenced by the general beliefs and attitudes (macrosystems) shared by members of the given community.

The philosophical foundation of the model states that prevention of acts and situations that are undesirable requires an in-depth understanding of the factors that contribute to that behavior. For its application, this model is separated into four distinct levels, each representing unique realities that allow for distinct intervention strategies being applied to each. It is this separation and intervention strategy that allows for the successful alteration of norms which in turn will affect those types of behaviors that are exhibited in the environment.

This methodology necessitates that an understanding of the contributing factors that lead to different types of violence against children in Guyana, while being cognizant of the complex interplay between factors that affect the individual, the relationships, the communities, and the societal factors. It presents the range of factors that place children at-risk for being victims of violence, sexual, emotional and psychological. In diagrammatic terms, the overlapping rings highlight the interplay between the factors affecting violence against children and the relationship between the factors.



Figure 2: The Social-Ecological Model

In an effort to reduce violence against children in Guyana, it is suggested that by utilizing the socio-ecological model, solutions can be attained by tackling the problems at different levels simultaneously; as it is assumed that this approach is more sustainable than other intervention strategies that are uncoordinated.

At the individual level, the theory advocates the identification of factors that contribute to the violence being perpetrated on the children and these include age gender, race, levels of education, employment status, the use of alcohol and drugs and level of familial isolation. To be sure, it is suggested that interventions at the individual level should be targeted to promote norms and values that will ultimately reduce violence against children. In the Guyanese context, this can be done through increased access to education and skills training.

At the relationship level, the model suggests that one needs to interrogate the factors that put the child at risk as they are affected or influenced by personal relationships with close friends and peers. In this way, one should investigate the nature and intensity of relations with family members, friends, peers and employers. Strategies for intervention may include parenting seminars, mentoring or apprenticeship programs, among others.

Community level investigations would necessarily commence with the schools, places of worship, social groups and workplaces. The strategies for intervention at this level usually aimed to alter the physical and social environments in order to reduce the incidences of violence against children. These strategies may include interventions into the physical infrastructure of communal spaces where children congregate, the processes at schools and the workplaces, as well as the living arrangements of the children.

At the societal level, the model is primarily concerned with the broad societal factors in which the climate for abuse is maintained and is also aimed at developing policies to reduce the incidences of violence against children in Guyana. As such, it focuses on social and cultural norms that facilitate violence against children and seeks to concentrate on policy issues such as health, education, child protection, economic policies and cultural norms.

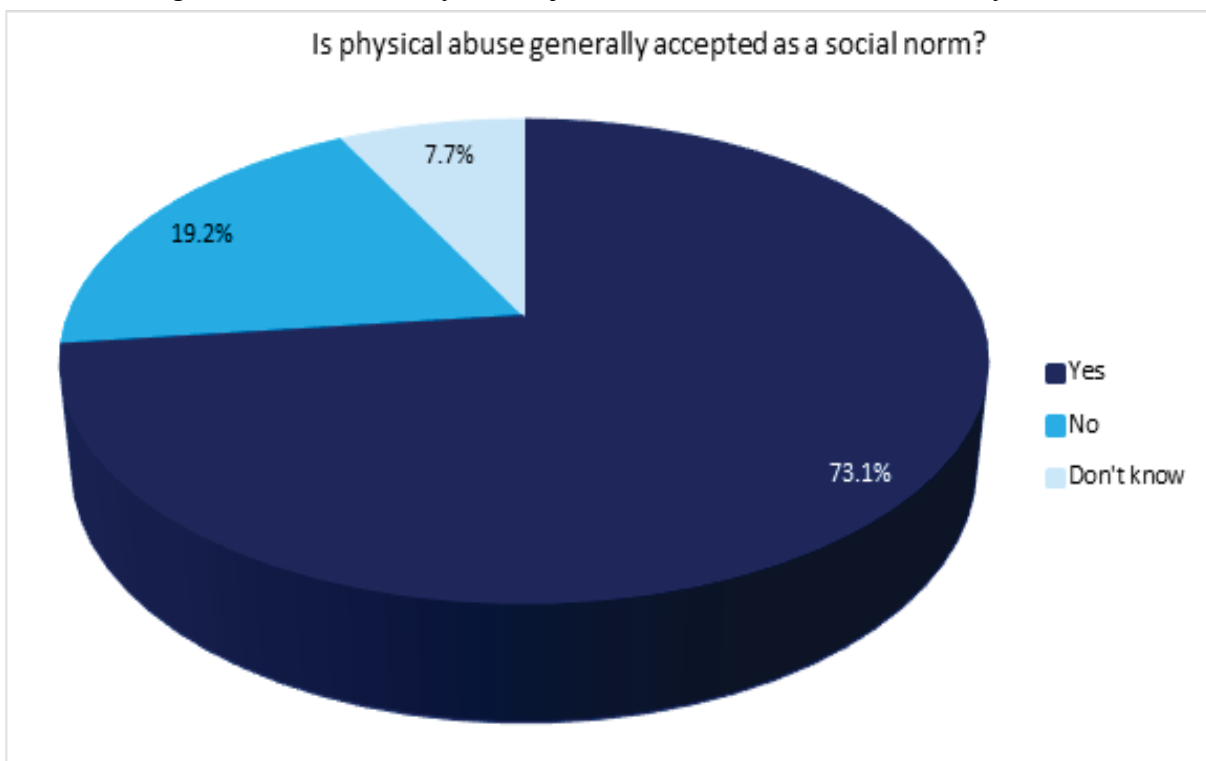
CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF KEY FINDINGS FROM KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS, STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS AND INDIVIDUAL CHILD INTERVIEWS

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

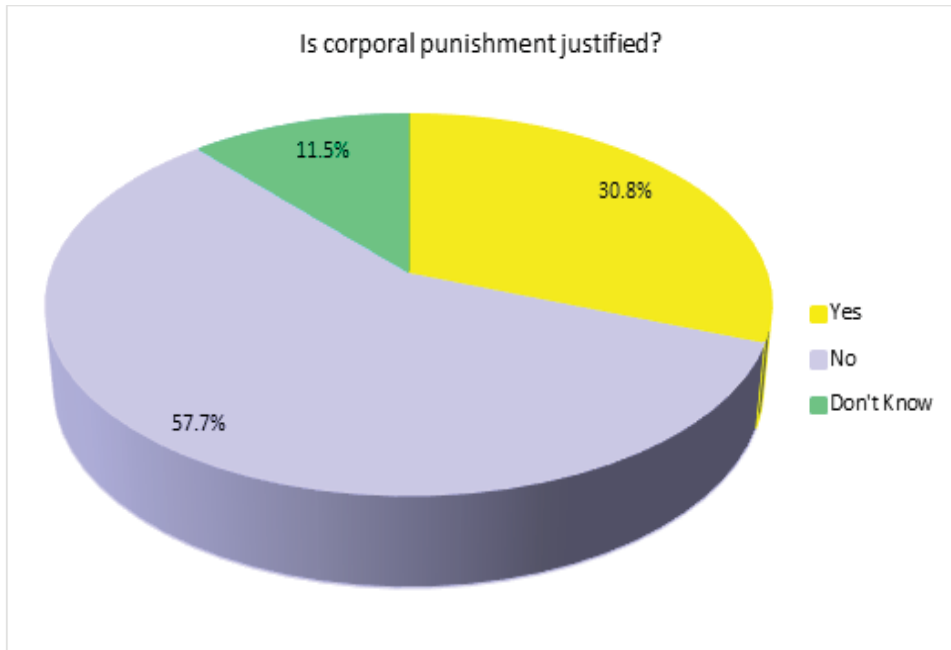
It is generally accepted that physical violence against children is not justified under any circumstances. According to the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child Article 19, “Children have the right to be protected from being hurt, physically or mentally. Governments should ensure that children are properly cared for and protect them from violence abuse and neglect from their parents, or anyone else who looks after them.”

In the case of Guyana, it has been observed that children exposed to violent environment sometimes have difficulty learning in school. Many times, children have stories about witnessing violent acts (for example chopping and beating) and then this affects them mentally, resulting in changes in attitudes towards violence and in other cases negatively impacting their school performance.

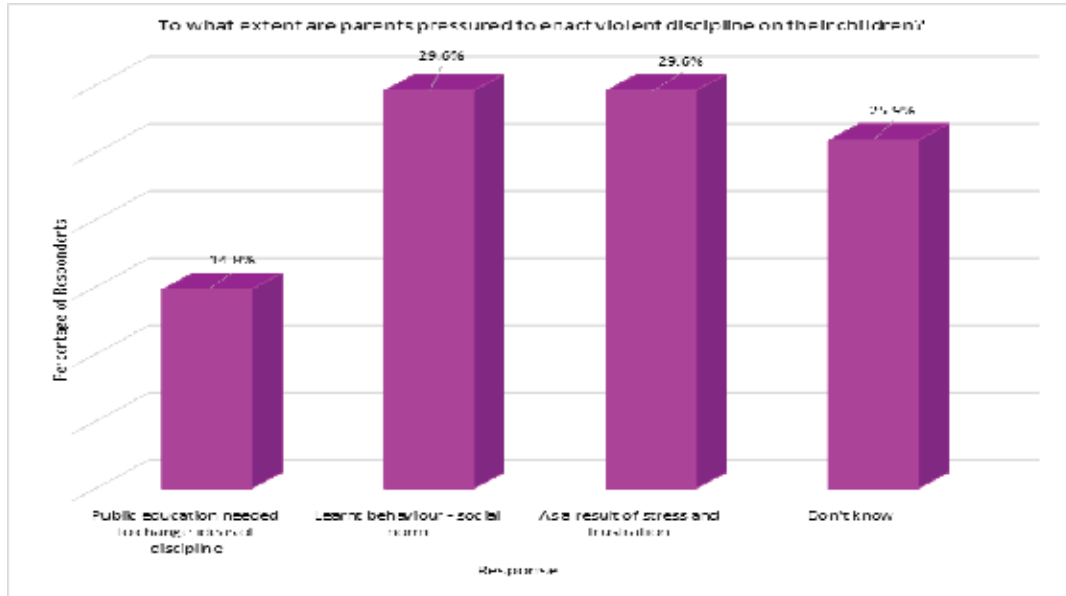
As noted previously, some respondents indicated that physical abuse is an accepted way of management of children in households throughout Guyana. From the interviews, it was noted that 73.1% of the respondents accepted that physical abuse was an acceptable means of managing and controlling children in households in Guyana. Some also argued that while it may not be justified, can be seen as a necessary mechanism.



The research indicated that there are different positions related to the practice of corporal punishment as 57.7% of respondents indicated that it was not justified and 30.8% of respondents stated that it was justified. Interviewees stated that it is not necessarily an issue of societal acceptance, but rather one of their personal beliefs and experiences as it relates to child rearing and discipline.



When asked to what extent are parents pressured to enact violent discipline (spanking etc.) on their children, 74% of respondents were of the opinion that parents from all communities are pressured to inflict violent punishment on their children as a way of releasing stress, and as a means of maintaining social acceptance in their communities.



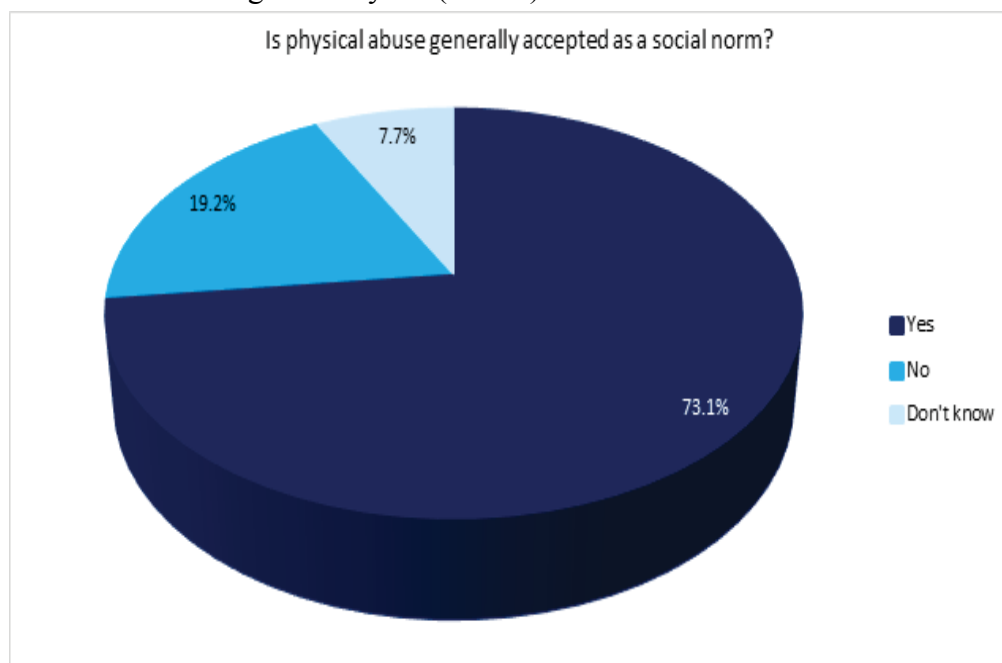
Additionally, it is believed that some parents do not feel pressured to instill physical punishment on their children but see spanking a child as a normal method of correction (29.6%) and it has been suggested that this practice usually refers to the families from the lower socio-economic brackets of society. To a large extent, spanking and other acts of violence against children have been a part of the Guyanese society for a long, time and as a consequence spanking is seen as a normal use of discipline and the perpetrators are not seen as pariahs to the rest of the community.

It was agreed by both KII and focus group participants that parents are sometimes embarrassed by the children's bad behavior in public and then feel pressured to inflict corporal punishment on them in order to maintain the illusion of control and to curb the behavior of the child immediately. It was posited that this is a function of the level of education of the adult, as this affects how they treat the children, and how they feel generally about violence against children.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

As a point of departure on this issue, The UN's Secretary-General's Study on Violence Against Children, Adapted for Children and Young People states that "there are things that help to reduce violence against children. In the home but also in other settings, children are less likely to experience violence if adults know how to be good parents, how to form a strong bond with their children and how to discipline them without using violence. Violence at school can be reduced by establishing clear rules for all staff and students that violence and discrimination are never allowed. And there is less violence in communities where all adults and children live together in a peaceful way without conflict and discrimination. (2006)

The stakeholders were asked to provide reasons why physical abuse is generally accepted as a social norm. Based on the research which has been conducted, data indicate that violence against children is accepted as a social norm in communities throughout Guyana (73.1%).



However, there is disagreement among stakeholders with regard to the acceptance of violence as a social norm where 19.2% do not accept violence against children as a social norm. Its acceptance is part of the culture since traditionally there has not been public discourse related to development of alternatives to physical abuse and corporal punishment.

It has been noted that generally, advocates of spanking, and corporal punishment do not see this action as a form of violence against children and as such do not hold the perpetrators responsible for any breach of ethics, morals or law. Conversely, there is a group that believes that any type of physical violence against children

(corporal punishment and spanking included) is unacceptable and perpetrators should be held accountable for these infractions. Further, the Positive Discipline Campaign in Guyana promotes the use of alternative methods of punishment and interaction with children rather than taking the physical approach. Notwithstanding, data from UNICEF has indicated that corporal punishment is still the preferred method of punishment in Guyana.

The key informants indicated that physical abuse is a norm due to the process of socialization in the Guyanese context in Afro, Indo and Amerindian communities alike. It has been suggested that persons who have experienced physical abuse as children believe that in the absence of discipline, they would not have become productive and disciplined members of society. Some informants also indicated that as Guyanese society shifts from the use of corporal punishment as a way of discipline, this has resulted in increased deviant behavior among youth in the society, and as a consequence feel that the reintroduction of this method of discipline would benefit the youth, the communities and the Guyanese society in general. .

It was observed by some focus group participants that in some communities, physical abuse and the use of corporal punishment have been reduce. Additionally, as mentioned earlier in this report, some stakeholders indicated that there is still underreporting of incidents of physical abuse since in some communities it is seen as a family issue. One stakeholder from an NGO stated that ‘parents are pressured into accepting norms and there is a lot of under-reporting, especially when there is a single parent who is the bread winner and is abusing the child’. Another stakeholder from a religious organization indicated that there is the view that ‘culturally persons are brain washed and trained to the extent that whatever happens in the family stays in the family’, thus accounting for the issues of under-reporting of violence against children to the relevant authorities.

In many focus groups, those who consider violence against children as an accepted social norm, presented the opinion that physical violence against children is an efficient way to manage and control children in the household and it has been a time-honored tradition; while the opponents feel that the perpetrators should be held accountable and punished for these abuses. Focus group participants indicated that “the people are of the belief that if a child is disobedient they need to be beaten; children do what they want and do not listen to their parents.” Another proponent of physical punishment from a KII from an independent commission stated that ‘there is a place and time for everything and one measure may not work for everyone. However, when corporal punishment becomes the only way of discipline and turned into abuse, it is not okay’. A KII from a state agency said ‘it is not acceptable, and if it still continues, it should be dealt with’.

Physical abuse:

A child is ignoring the parent when he/she is being asked to do a chore. The parent, frustrated with life and feeling annoyed at being ignored by the child, pulls the child by the hair and slaps him/her. As the child starts to cry, the adult say ‘you want something to cry about?’, and proceeds to get a pot spoon and hits the child all over his/her boy.

The view was also advanced by a NGO interviewee that in order to reduce physical abuse against children, Guyana can adopt a program like “Women’s Center of Jamaica Foundation Program for Adolescents” where teenage mothers are educated through the regular curriculum and are also provided with parental skills training. It has been argued that physical abuse can be prevented by focusing on the parents, because they are the main perpetrators of violence against children. It was recommended by a number of KII and focus group participants as a matter of policy, counselling should be mandatory to all persons guilty of committing physical abuse against children. As one KII from an NGO stated, ‘generally physical abuse is a very serious problem that can be prevented by advocacy and awareness’; and another independent commission interviewee concurred with the view and indicated that ‘it can be prevented through education, awareness, discussion in the communities, schools and agencies’. Another KII independent commission interviewee posited that ‘the law is there to prosecute the perpetrators, the thing that is lacking is that there is nothing in place to rehabilitate the victim and perpetrator, there should be facilities where persons can go to express their feelings and get help. Awareness programmes need to be created and a confidential environment should be present at the different agencies so that people will have more trust in them’. It was also recommended that a new approach to child rearing be developed, centered on love within the family and the strengthening of family values. It was further observed that parents need to exemplify love and compassion in the family, and this will create an environment for better communication between parents and children, which in turn will lead to increased problem solving and conflict mediation.

It is generally believed that children with disabilities, different sexual orientation and those in residential care are equally susceptible to physical abuse as those in family care, and the respondents indicated that this occurs regardless of their ethnicity, gender or class in Guyana. As one focus group indicated, ‘...These children are more abused. It also depends on the knowledge and wisdom of the parents. They are sometimes not aware of the needs that these children have. As for those with different sexual orientation, they are also abused a lot because it is something strange in the community, as they don’t think it is normal’. Further, a KII from an independent commission stated that ‘it happens that children with a disability are treated differently and are hidden from the community, this is wrong and they also have the right to interact with the community’.

Further it was posited that these children in residential homes are outside the reach of their natural parents and family members who have a natural desire to protect and nurture them, so in the absence of this protective environment, abuse and neglect find a fertile environment. In cases of children with disabilities and different sexual orientation, KII and focus group participants indicated that they are usually more prone to abuses as they are typically viewed as different or abnormal, and as such engender less sympathy and protection from caregivers who are neither family nor friend.

In the case of violence against children with disabilities, one KII from an NGO presented the view that ‘although there is a national disability center, children with disabilities are very forsaken and we really don’t have a lot happening in the disability realm. The special needs education policy through the Ministry of Education has been sitting there in draft for a while, but nothing has been happening with it as it relates to

children with special needs'. It was also stated that while children in this category from the upper socio-economic groups are somewhat isolated, there is still the general concern about overall care for all categories of children with disabilities.

According to an independent commission interviewee, 'it was observed that while there is a draft of the special education policy, the Ministry of Education has not yet fully implemented measures to be put forward for parliamentary approval'. It was further observed that children with special needs are not provided with alternative facilities to deal with their needs, and they become more susceptible to abuse. In some cases, grooming also takes place since these children with special needs seek love and attention and want to be treated like other children in their environment.

As mentioned earlier in this report, there was also the view of KII and focus group participants that physical abuse can be reduced through the introduction of awareness campaigns which will educate the community and nation on this issue. These campaigns can be implemented through television, the social media, pamphlets, newspaper advertisements and other forms of communication which will reach broad cross-sections of the population regardless of race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

The issue of corporal punishment is becoming more prominent in the media and in different forums in Guyana. When asked if corporal punishment was justified, respondents indicated that in the first-place, parents use corporal punishment since they have no other tools or coping mechanisms. The view was that the state's continuing support of corporal punishment in schools demonstrates acceptance of this form of discipline, thus reinforcing this social norm. The Ministry of Education has a manual which stipulated the size of the instrument which can be used against children found in breach of school regulations, where there is a designated teacher assigned for this purpose, usually the headmaster/headmistress.

This punishment is meted out to girls and boys alike; however many focus group interviewees suggested that in most cases the punishment is harsher when delivered to boys rather than girls. It has been argued that the rampant use of corporal punishment is to a large extent affected by the education, socio-economic status and community of residence of the perpetrator. Further, it is argued that this tolerance in the poor communities is a function of the history of these communities and a consequence of the 'culture of poverty' thesis. In these communities corporal punishment is expected and accepted, it is deemed necessary as a tool to manage and control the behavior of the children, and parents who do not subscribe to this accepted tool of discipline are chastised by other members of the community.

Conversely, some of the respondents believed that corporal punishment is not generally accepted and it should be banned in school. One NGO interviewee stated that 'corporal punishment is not justified but in some communities it is normalized because it is learnt behavior'. Another KII from a state institution stated that 'Corpo-

ral punishment is uncalled for. Hitting and beating is not acceptable; the child is in a developmental state and this can affect the child. Corporal punishment is not justified', thus maintaining the view that alternative ways of discipline and management need to be found in the education system and they indicated an urgent need for mechanisms to change this social norm as it is physically and psychologically harmful to the children.

NGOs and professionals working with persons with disabilities suggested that the problem is compounded by the fact that many teachers are young and do not have the requisite training and awareness to know that this method of punishment is unacceptable to many stakeholders. The informants indicated that in many cases, teachers simply follow the norms that exist in the particular schools, and they assume that approach is acceptable. In these circumstances, the lack of knowledge limits the young teachers to physically discipline a child and use corporal punishment as a tool.

Other respondents suggested that corporal punishment is needed to some extent, thus justifying it as a social norm and its role to guide the behavior of the child, and to serve as a deterrent to deviant behavior. One independent commission interviewee stated that 'students cannot learn without discipline. Discipline comes in forms of how you dress, how you keep your books etc. corporal punishment is needed to some extent', thus justifying its use.

Some KII and focus group participants indicated that they grew and developed in a culture of being physically punished and suggested that it was necessary and helpful at a certain stage of their lives. The respondents indicated that they benefited positively from corporal punishment and became more disciplined. However, excesses in corporal punishment have been reported in relation to schools and law enforcement authorities who have been using this form of punishment as an instrument of management and control. On the other hand, the literature identifies the view that corporal punishment instills long term fear in the individual and has a negative impact on the psychological development of the child.

Corporal punishment

While in class, the teacher is asking the students to solve math problems. The teacher asks John to solve a problem, and after several attempts John cannot solve the question. The teacher, in an effort to discipline John and encourage him to study harder, takes out a ruler and proceeds to beat John.

The view was also advanced that in some homes, corporal punishment occurs with increasing frequency due to the frustrations of parents as they attempt to control their children. Particularly when there is a large number of children, the view was advanced that it was easier to administer corporal punishment rather than to convince the children to change their deviant behavior.

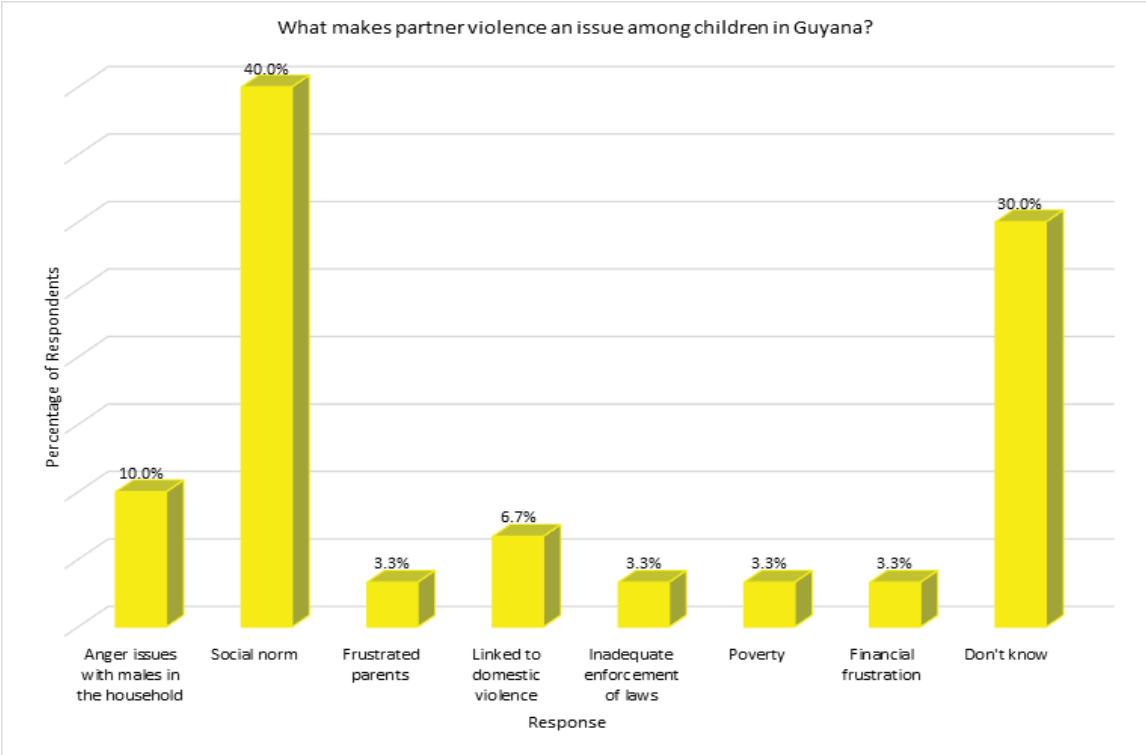
Among focus groups, some respondents also indicated that the rejection of use of corporal punishment in schools by the Afro-Guyanese community is based on the colonial legacy of slavery where there was exces-

sive cruelty including flogging. One KII from the NGO community stated that ‘Corporal punishment is still legal in Guyana, which should not be the case. For Guyana when looked at the history, it is evident that it is riddled with violence, indentureship and the slave trade and because of this history corporal punishment nowadays is being justified’. Some of the respondents indicated that given this perception, there must be renewed efforts to ban corporal punishment and to establish alternative measures and acceptable educational mechanisms for dealing with punishment.

PARTNER VIOLENCE

When asked about the issue of partner violence among the youth, the KII and focus group respondents indicated that they believe that it is on the rise. One KII respondent from the religious community indicated that “monkey see, monkey do”,...if children grow up in a home where it is acceptable...then the child grows up believing it is acceptable.’ It has been argued that this is due to the fact that many children (especially those from the lower socio-economic groups in society) grow up seeing partner violence in their homes and in their communities, so they are desensitized against it and come to see it as a natural and normal way of relating with the their sexual partners, and this is irrespective of sexual orientation (40%).

This was supported by the view from a KII from the religious community who stated that ‘Partner violence is also in issue that is happening in Guyana. It is caused by frustrated parents that don’t know how to deal with that, and it is also created by poverty’. Further, one KII from the NGO community stated ‘Partner violence is happening in Guyana and this may cause the children thinking that it is an accepted norm. It is a psychological thing, because it is evident that the victims usually find it normal for their partner to hit them if they don’t do so they think their partner doesn’t love them’.



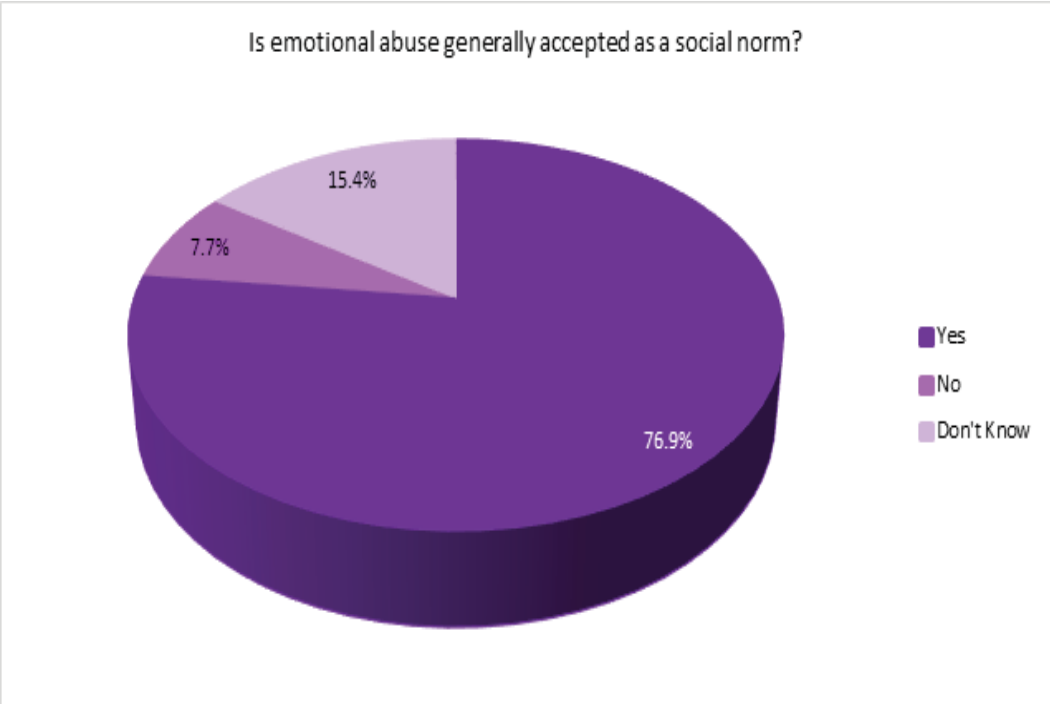
The general acceptance of this type of violence is disconcerting, and will affect the social norms of tomorrow where an entire new generation of children will grow up thinking it is a normal and natural way of relating.

It was generally suggested that partner violence is a prevalent issue which has an impact on the children in Guyana. With respect to its impact on children, respondents (focus groups in Region 4, 6 and 9) indicated that witnessing partner violence has often created anti-social behavior among the youth as they have become desensitized to violence among partners, and as such this social norm needs to be addressed and eradicated. Additionally, focus group participants in Region 4, 6 and 9 suggested that the influence of partner violence impacts children since in many cases the male is the main perpetrator thus maintaining the stereotype of Guyanese male ‘machismo’, and reinforcing this harmful social norm. Further, it was suggested by both KII and focus participants that with sufficient campaigns to sensitize the population on what are acceptable ways of interacting with sexual partners, there can be a positive influence on behavior which can help shape and change the social norms as they relate to partner violence in Guyana.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

There have been several attempts to define child neglect in the literature. Child neglect is defined very similarly in both scholarly and oral discussions as any effect which does not allow the child to thrive in an environment that allows for the child’s physical, emotional, educational and social wellbeing (Henry, 2017).

It was generally agreed by both the KII and focus group participants that emotional abuse can be defined as the use of words that are harmful to the children. When asked to define emotional abuse and indicate if it was generally accepted as a social norm, 76.9 % concurred with the view that it was generally accepted even though they believed that no form of abuse is, or should be accepted as a social norm.



Notwithstanding, emotional abuse is generally accepted as a social norm and it does not get much attention in the media nor does it form part of normal everyday conversations. It has been seen as a significant issue in Guyana and it has been argued that emotional abuse precedes the other types of violence against children. There is the view among the participants for this study that emotional violence also takes the form of ignoring the children, calling them 'bad' names, and doing or saying things that will make them feel badly about themselves. Many respondents in the focus group interviews presented the view that emotional abuse is prevalent and has long term psychological effects on the child. There were mixed views with 7.7% indicating it was not acceptable to see emotional abuse as a social norm, both in the home and the school system. It was generally agreed among the respondents that the use of language which is harmful to children produces negative psychological effects on their self-esteem.

It was generally agreed among the participants of the research that in the school system, there is a tradition of emotional abuse, along with other tools such as corporal punishment to motivate children. As a result, and to a large extent, emotional abuse is accepted and expected especially in the poorer communities. It was also generally agreed by the participants of the research that education and training are necessary to change this practice in the school system as it can inflict immense harm to the emotional and academic development of youth in Guyana.

The view was also advanced at focus group sessions in all the Regions that there is a link between physical abuse and emotional abuse, as adults may perpetrate physical and emotional abuse on their children as a tool of control and management, and over time this practice has been woven into the fabric of society, thus becoming a social norm. Whilst excessive emotional abuse is not seen as the preferred mechanism by some respondents, it has been argued at some levels, that its use may be necessary to garner the desired behavior by children. Like physical abuse, it has been argued that emotional abuse has negative impacts on the lives of the victims, especially when they internalize these incidences throughout their lives. Emotional abuse also occurs through communication of negative thoughts which can, in some cases have disastrous impacts on the behavior of the child. Further, some respondents from focus groups indicated that since suicide is highly prevalent, in some cases emotional abuse has contributed to the high incidence of this phenomenon.

Respondents from both KII and focus group interviews indicated that they believed that emotional abuse can be prevented if the parents and teachers are educated about the negative effects this form of abuse has on the child's emotional, psychological and academic development. They further stated that another approach which can be utilized is counselling for individual and family as well as care givers and guardians both at home and in institutions. A KII from the NGO community suggested that 'it is important that the children are removed from the homes in which they are subjected to abuse. However, children are sometimes re-victimized when removed...there is a holistic approach needed to solve this problem. In the education system teachers should become more aware of what they say to children. The self-esteem of teachers and children should be built via awareness programs, small group information and discussion sessions and finally the proper resources are needed to effectively carry out the prevention methods. Social cohesion is also needed'.

Some respondents indicated that, because of the sexual orientation of some children, there is discrimination both at home and in school which at times results in emotional distress and in some extreme reported cases, acts of suicide. A KII from the religious community stated that ‘the differently-abled now are not seen as outcasts and are part of society. Some people find that a person with disabilities is unable to perform or achieve certain things in life...if as a family you see your child has certain potential, you will try to assist that child’.

It is also noted from participants of the study that there should be greater efforts to raise the awareness within the Guyanese population about children with different sexual orientation and disabilities so that there could be greater understanding and consciousness of the need to eliminate emotional abuse against these groups. As one KII from the NGO community suggested, ‘emotional abuse can be prevented via education, training, and awareness and by counselling individual and families. And even when people see it happening they think of it as being a personal or family matter and don’t want to intervene, in that case it needs to be stipulated that people speak out’. Another KII from the NGO community stated ‘it can be prevented if the parents are looked at, because they are a contributing factor to this problem. Another method can be counselling and finally education and re-education of everyone that works with children. Society has to be vigilant and any form of neglect should be reported. Civil society and members of other agencies should all work together to bring an end to the problem’.

In relation to sexual abuse, an interviewee from an independent commission indicated that ‘it is still happening in the schools in the hinterland. The factors that contribute to this, is the lack of cultural awareness and the academic level of the teachers isn’t very high. Children with a different sexual orientation are not being abused, in fact they are very involved in the community and play a very important role.

Emotional abuse:

A child is not doing well in school and is not doing his/her chores at home. The parent now feels frustrated and tells the child how useless he/she is, and that is why they are failing at school. In addition to the initial verbal abuse, the adult continues by telling the child that he/she will amount to nothing in life because he/she is lazy and ‘good for nothing’.

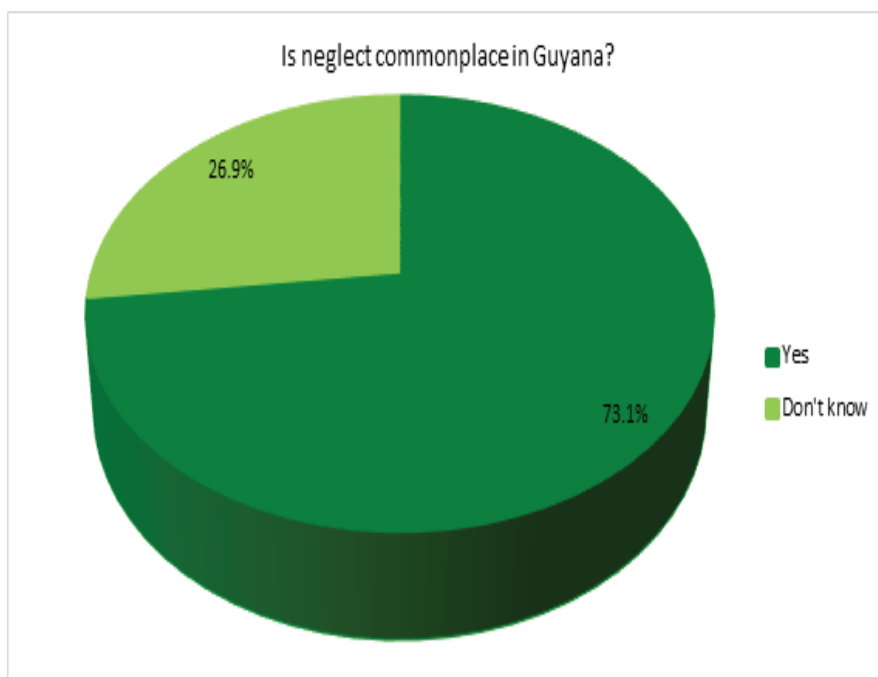
The view was advanced by all of the focus groups that emotional abuse does exist in the communities but cannot be justified. They indicated that there are several factors which contribute to this issue including stress and lack of education. Some respondents argued that this abuse can be linked to Guyana’s history which included slavery. It was suggested that Guyanese have evolved as people who struggle, and in some ways both socially and psychologically may resist the old practices of abuse. It was noted that given the traditions of abuse, many communities cannot abandon this practice and education and awareness are needed to break this cycle.

Focus group respondents in all of the regions advanced the view that emotional abuse is often underestimated,

even though it may be one of the most damaging forms of abuse. It was also noted that some persons may justify emotional abuse as a mechanism to correct deviant behavior among children. However, it was generally agreed that whether working with, supervising or rearing children, a certain amount of patience and education is needed to ensure that emotional or physical damage is not inflicted on the children. It was also the view that in some communities, emotional abuse was seen as socially accepted and this attitude needs to change with efforts made by family, communities and other major stakeholders to reduce this form of abuse.

CHILD NEGLECT

Focus group interviews in all the Regions indicated that the issue of child neglect is commonplace in Guyana.



These respondents suggested that one of the major factors leading to neglect of children is alcohol and the use of drugs. It was suggested that these practices have led to serious problems amongst youths and have contributed to the destruction of families. It was further suggested by all focus groups that if community members were exposed to both religious and secular education, that all parties will be better equipped to face these issues and reduce the incidences of neglect of the children. Research indicates that child neglect is not generally expected or accepted in Guyanese society and the action of the perpetrators, while sometimes receiving some levels of sympathy, is deemed unacceptable.

Both KII and focus group interviewees advanced the view that neglect is prevalent in Guyana and a significant number of them indicated that there was a correlation between poverty and child neglect. It was noted that while the law mandates that every child must attend school, there are increasing numbers of school dropouts because parents cannot afford to send children to school, and this is a problem related to the socio-economic realities of the individual families.

Neglect, as mentioned above, is fairly commonplace as parents have to spend a significant amount of their time engaged in employment to provide resources to satisfy the basic needs of the household, particularly as they cannot afford to pay for care of their children in their absence. These parents have to leave their homes due to the requirement of employment and are unable to spend the required time with their children. It has also been argued that in these situations, among the poorer families, older children have to fend for themselves. Focus group participants in all Regions have indicated that children have to fend for themselves and look after their younger siblings or are left with other family members who are often ill-equipped or ill-prepared for the responsibilities related to child rearing. It was also suggested that child neglect is more widespread in the rural areas of Guyana. On the other hand, focus group respondents from all Regions have lamented that some Guyanese, especially single mothers, are forced to leave their children alone or in the care of the older siblings in order to provide the basic necessities and this should not be perceived as neglect but rather as a coping mechanism for survival under adverse circumstances.

KII and focus groups participants indicated that this situation is clearly problematic as neglect is a serious issue in Guyana since it contributes to all forms of abuse including physical and sexual violence against children. Respondents also suggested that since children are often left at home unsupervised in many reported cases, these children leave home in search of food or other material goods from strangers, which produces extreme vulnerability which at time results in physical and sexual abuse. It is also important to note that some parents do not support the notion of neglect since they see themselves as leaving home to work in order to provide a better quality of life and living conditions for their children, as this is their socio-economic reality. Since neglect has been identified as a problem, individuals and groups in Guyana have to be vigilant, and any form of neglect should be reported. Additionally it was felt that civil society must also be engaged in providing solutions to this national challenge.

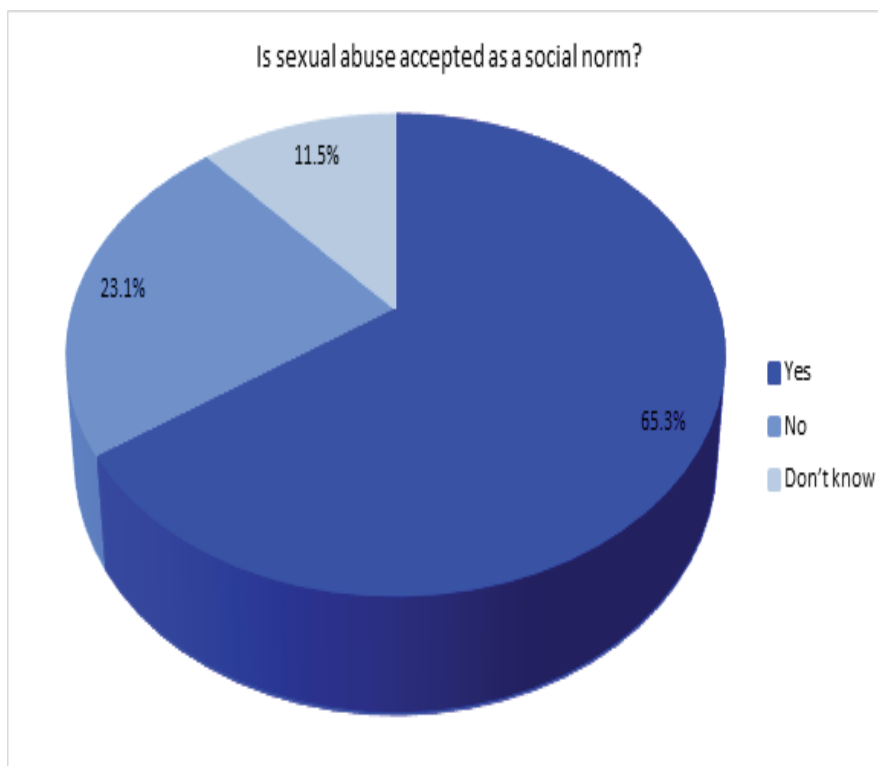
In the KII and focus group interviews, along with the it was observed by those who sympathize with the single mother from the working class, that neglect occurs as a result of economic hardship and societal realities and do not ascribe direct blame to the parent who has to dedicate excessive amounts of time to earning a living. On the other hand, there are those who believe that the parents who are guilty of child neglect should be held responsible and are to blame for their individual situations. It has been suggested that while every effort needs to be made to assist the children, the parents are ultimately the ones to be held accountable.

SEXUAL ABUSE

In relation to the question of what can be done about sexual abuse against children, the view was advanced that there was a need to educate the population about parenting and children's rights, to sensitize the population with respect to the Protection Of Children Act, 2009 and to empower children with the understanding of their rights. An interviewee from an NGO stated that 'sexual abuse can be prevented through education and more importantly, through the education of adults; children are powerless and cannot save themselves so we need to talk to and educate parents, communities and leaders'. Similarly an independent commission interviewee suggested that 'sexual abuse can be prevented via robust education on the prevention aspect and by educating

children about their rights'. It was observed that currently, children do not have a clear understanding of their rights and that with greater empowerment they would be a stronger tendency to speak out and in the long run, this would serve to reduce the level of violence against children.

In response to the question which asked if sexual abuse was generally accepted as a social norm, 65.3% of the respondents indicated that sexual abuse was accepted as a social norm in Guyana, while 23.1% of respondents stated that sexual abuse was not accepted.



All the stakeholders frowned upon the sexual abuse of children and the perpetrators of such abuse. However, some respondents from the focus groups indicated that certain levels of sexual abuse may be tolerated by community members as a social norm. The respondents defined sexual abuse as any activity which exposes a child to innuendo, touching, caressing or penetration by an adult. Respondents also acknowledged that sexual abuse is taking place in Guyana, but they do not believe that it is generally accepted as a social norm.

It was argued by both KII and focus group participants that in many cases, that sexual abuse is tolerated to some degree especially in situations of poverty where the mother is usually dependent on a male for financial support and allows the male to have sexual relations with her child/children. They presented the view that further exacerbating this situation is the fact that people who have knowledge of this type of behavior in the community, usually feel that they should not interfere in such issues and therefore do not report incidents to the authorities.

The position was advanced by focus groups that while sexual abuse is not generally accepted, it is more prevalent in the rural and indigenous communities, accompanied with other social ills such as high levels of

teenage pregnancies. This was especially reported during focus group sessions in Regions 1, 2, and 9. It has been argued that one of the challenges with this issue is that the authorities do not effectively follow-up on the reports, and so individuals do not regularly report such activities.

A respondent cited an example from Region 3, at a school where a 15 year old girl has been abused by her father for the last 7 years. She, her brother and sister (18 and 12 years) are being abused while her mother is fully aware of it, and is sometimes present in the same room when the abuse is taking place. It was reported that this is a normal activity accepted in the family. The girl only discovered that it is wrong when she started to see public service announcements related to sexual abuse. Respondents indicated that in Guyana, there is only limited communication among parents, children and school authorities related to sexual abuse.

In response to the question ‘what can be done to prevent sexual abuse?’ both the KII and focus groups indicated that one of the first interventions is a process of education of children about their rights. Further, adults as well as organizations should communicate more frequently to the youth about issues related to sexual abuse. Additionally, it was observed that the law should be framed so that victims are at all times protected, therefore reducing the fear about reporting such issues. As noted earlier in this report, both KII and focus groups also noted that there should be sensitization campaigns to ensure that all persons are knowledgeable about the appropriate places to file reports and receive protection.

It was generally agreed that sexual abuse can be prevented if all agencies which work with children demonstrate full and unambiguous dedication the task of abolishing all types of abuse against children. To this end, there needs to be targeted programs of training, education and re-education for all persons who have access to or responsibility for children and their welfare. Additionally, it was recommended by the FBOs, NGOs, Government Officials and Health Professionals interviewed that counselling and more public awareness campaigns should also be implemented in an effort to reduce incidences of sexual violence against children. It was also suggested that education and awareness can help change people’s perceptions on child abuse.

It was generally agreed by the KII and focus group participants that children, including those with disabilities or different sexual orientations, need to understand that they are not obligated to consent when approached for sexual activities. It was reiterated that the institutions established to deal with sexual abuse against children should have the necessary mechanisms to facilitate effective support for the victims. It was also agreed that strict measures should be put in place to discourage such behavior in the future.

Both KII and focus groups noted that in most cases, sexual abuse is perpetrated by someone known to the child. It was generally agreed therefore that parents, the schools and the communities have the responsibility to create a safe environment for children. Further, it was stressed by both focus group participants and KII that individuals and communities need to feel responsible and to take a strong and firm position in relation to violence against children. Further, it was agreed that there is a need to create a national conversation and awareness campaigns to create greater awareness of the ill-effects of abuse against children.

Focus groups across the regions indicated that children with disabilities and/or different sexual orientations are probably more in danger, because they are sometimes not in a position to speak out for themselves, and additionally, they are often not aware of the mechanisms or institutions which can be approached to assist them.

Sexual abuse:

A child is at home watching television or listening to music. The adult comes home from drinking alcohol at the bar with friends, and when he/she reaches home, he/she enters the child's room and tells him/her that he/she is looking nice and asks the child to come sit on the bed. At this point the adult starts touching the child in an inappropriate manner with the hope of having sexual intercourse.

Focus group interviews from across Region 4 indicated that there is a different level of violence against persons who are homosexuals. These groups suggested that the individuals are more prone to sexual violence as they are seen as 'different' and 'abnormal', and this perception allows the perpetrator to feel justified in committing violent and heinous acts against those individuals. It was posited that this can be combatted to some extent with education and information, and there needs to be media campaigns to inform the victim and perpetrator alike of the issues and rights related to individuals with different sexual orientation, and in this way reduce their status as targets and victims in the society.

Focus groups across the regions indicated that sexual abuse can be prevented by creating a mechanism that ensures that when the abuse has been reported, it will be followed through and that justice will be served. Further, the groups indicated that all necessary instruments and institutions will need to be in place in order for this to be realized. They also posited that this will necessitate ensuring security for the victims, since some communities, especially those in Amerindian communities in the hinterland, do not have a police station in close proximity or safe-houses available for them. It was noted that in many cases, individuals with low socio-economic status are often coerced to accept financial inducements in order to withdraw from legal proceedings and this has influenced an increased level of underreporting.

It was also observed by focus groups that there have been several campaigns by organizations including Child Link, offering training for teachers and students on certain aspects of child abuse. This organization (Child Link) suggested that this model could be adopted by all schools and civil society organization which work with children throughout the nation.

Respondents from both KII and focus groups indicated that in Guyana, people and communities seem to be in a state of moral crisis. It was suggested that socialization begins at home and when children are not taught or cared for at home, they become increasingly vulnerable to persons showing them the love that is absent in their lives and this makes them more vulnerable and at risk for abuse.

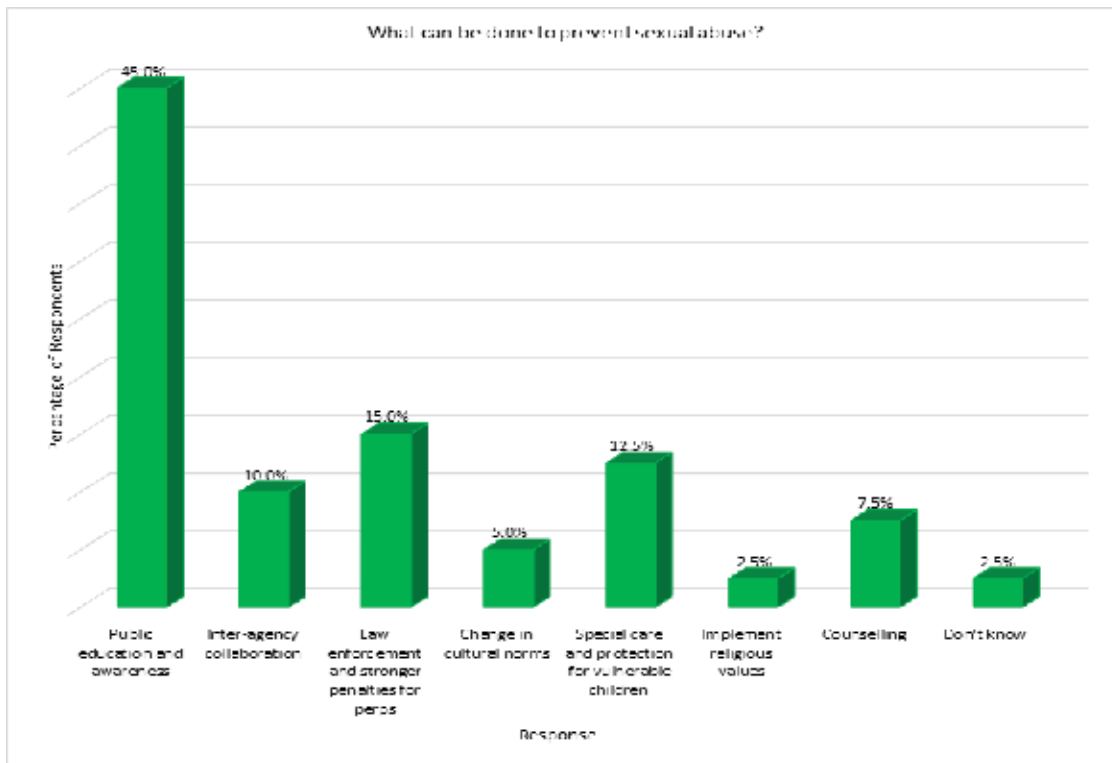
When asked how they feel about persons who commit emotional abuse, 17.9% of the respondents indicated that the persons who commit emotional abuse against children should face harsher punishments so that the

victim feels that justice has been served, which will in turn cause them to have more confidence in the judicial system. It was also noted that harsher punishments may act as a deterrent for these acts of violence against children and contribute to its reduction in Guyana.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE: INCEST, RAPE, CHILD AND TEEN PREGNANCIES

Both KII and focus group participants indicated that there are different types of sexual abuse but indicated that to a large extent, sexual abuse is perceived solely as rape. On the other hand, cases of teenage pregnancies or incest are seen as normal and acceptable in some communities. It was noted that communities often do not consider the seriousness of these issues, because they are not aware of the impact which this form of abuse has on a child. Abuse usually occurs in families where the perpetrator is the bread winner which makes the child a victim. It was also noted that in many cases, the other parent will not report acts of sexual abuse for fear of loss of financial support to the household. It is also noted that in several cases, the parent is left with no alternative but to leave the child with individuals and without recognizing the potential for abuse. Additionally, it was noted that access to internet and pornographic movies also provide the environment for abuse of children.

From the interviews conducted, 45% of respondents suggested that to reduce the different types of sexual abuse of children, there is need to establish public awareness, education, training and sensitization programmes. In relation to sexual violence, NGOs and government officials indicated that perpetrators should face the full extent of the law and should also be subject to rehabilitation in order to reduce recidivism.

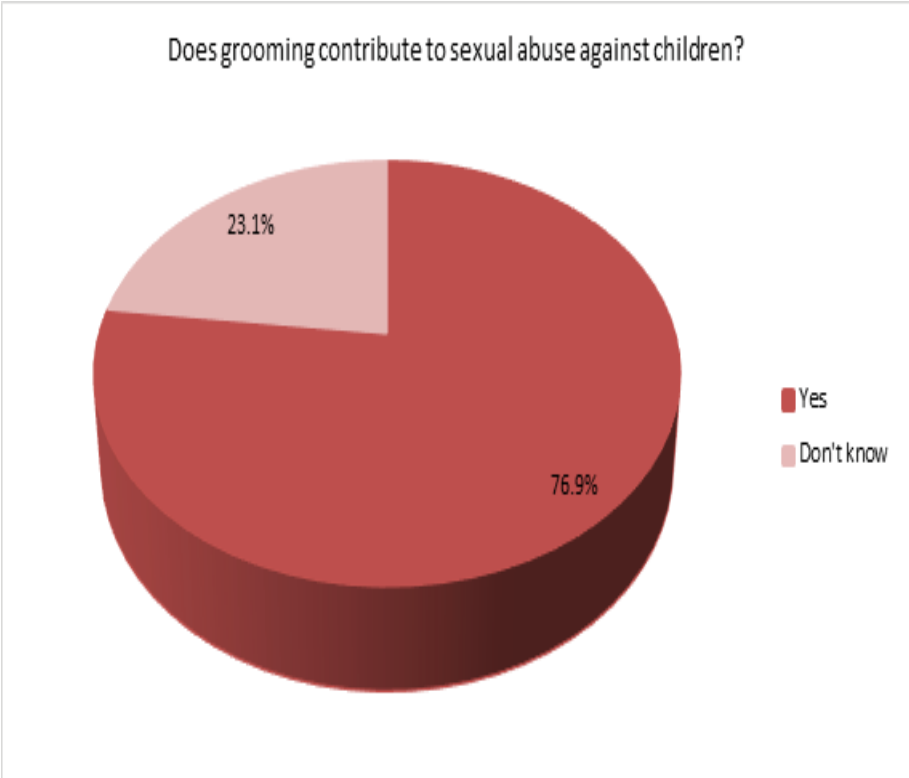


It was the general view in all focus groups that in some communities, while sexual abuse exists, there is a general practice to ignore the activities in order to protect family pride and family reputations. Further, it

was noted that incest in some communities has increased but is considered a social norm in some of these communities. These respondents observed that this type of behavior is accepted and is imbedded in the social and moral fabric of the community. In such cases, the perpetrators are not seem as violating any moral or social code, so this behavior goes unreported and no stigma is attached to the perpetrator or victim. It was also suggested that some communities consider it as a normal phenomenon. It was however agreed by KII and focus group participants that with increased sensitization and education, there could be a reduction in violence against children, including incest and other forms of violence against children. It was also observed in some situations that young girls are sometimes encouraged by their own mothers to develop relations with older men for financial gain so as to alleviate the condition of poverty within the family. It was reiterated by some respondents that in some cases, the family and community would undervalue the gravity of the issue of violence against children. Focus group respondents across the Regions recommended that a sex offender registry be established as this can be used to effectively monitor the activities of perpetrators of sexual violence within the individual communities and across the nation.

GROOMING

According to both KII and focus group participants, the practice of grooming has been increasing in Guyana, where adults are using situations and monetary favours to entice children (male and female alike) to engage in sexual activities. To solicit the requisite information about this issue, the informants were asked ‘to what extent they think grooming contributes to sexual abuse against children’.



In response, 76.9% of informants agreed that grooming contributes to sexual violence against children and is

also prevalent in Guyana, and it is not to be tolerated even though it may be acceptable in some communities, particularly the poorer, more economically depressed communities. They indicated that grooming is often carried out by persons who are trusted by the victims, and these victims while traditionally female, now includes male children with increased frequency.

Focus group respondents from across the regions indicated that poverty and lack of knowledge of what constitutes grooming are contributing factors, and as a consequence children from poorer households and communities are at a considerably higher risk of being victims of grooming. It was noted that people are sometimes not aware that they are being groomed and respondents have suggested that in socio-economically challenged communities, the need for food and financial support often leads to grooming of children.

Grooming:

A girl/boy is given gifts from an adult over a period of time, then the ‘donor’ make suggestive statements to the child about how nice he/she looks, and how they are ‘growing up well. While the gifts were usually given in open space, the ‘donor’ is now encouraging the child to come home for the gifts of cell phone cards, money or clothes. When the child goes to get the customary gift from the donor, the adult now starts touching and fondling the child in the hope of getting sexual favors.

The respondents suggested that grooming of children usually begins with increased attention being given to the individual and is accompanied by the offering and provision of gifts such as items of clothing and cell phones which leads to sexual abuse. These incidences are increasing and becoming more public and there seems to be a growing trend in society to accept this as a norm. While the incidences of grooming are evident in Guyanese society, there is a general sentiment that this should not be accepted as it is considered violence against the child, and perpetrators should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

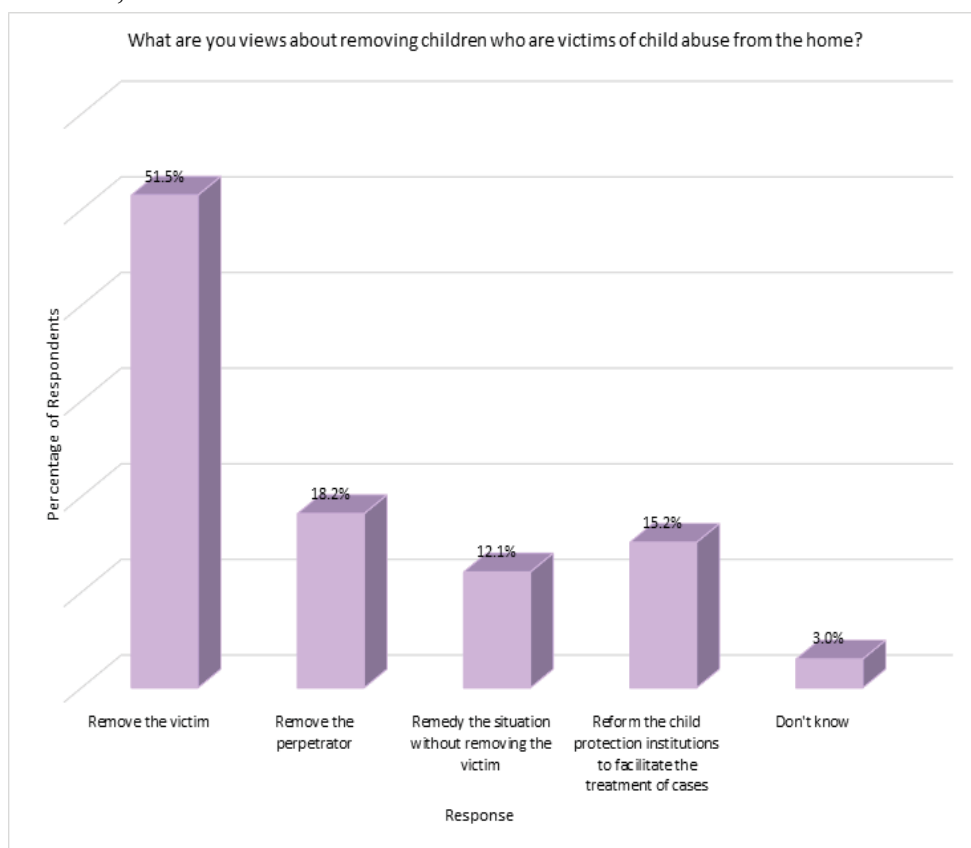
According to the focus groups in Region 4, it has been argued that parents do not understand the consequences of grooming. These respondents also indicated that they believed that some perpetrators may be unaware that they are engaged in the practice of grooming. It was also observed that in many situations, the act of grooming is done unconsciously as perpetrators were once victims. According to one KII from the religious community, ‘grooming contributes to sexual abuse and is a cause of neglect. Children will go in search for the things that they are missing in their homes such as love and finances. When it comes to children with disabilities they feel wanted if they get attention and love, so they are taken advantage of’.

INSTITUTIONAL / RESIDENTIAL CARE

Studies have shown that emotional and psychological violence increases the incidence of mental health problems in children, which can persist for the entire life span of these individuals. Further, in their study Greenfield and Marks (2010) posited that frequent experiences of psychological violence can place individual children’s long-term mental health at risk. They state that “psychological violence may be the product of uncontrolled frustration, or it may have a similar purpose to that of corporal punishment...”. In any case, this has a long term effect on the child’s ability to interact normally in society and breeds an environment of distrust, low self-esteem, fear, humiliation, and rejection.

This psychological abuse is not restricted to the households, but persists into other institutions of society such as schools and state-run institutions such as orphanages, and detention centers. It has been recorded that while being housed in detention facilities, children regarded as anti-social or criminal have a higher probability of being psychologically abused than other individuals in these facilities or children in other environments (UNVC, 2006: 109).

When asked their views about removing children who are victims of child abuse from their homes, many of the respondents (51.5%) believed that children should indeed be removed from homes in which they are victimized and abused, particularly if the parents do not have the finances to make alternative arrangements for their accommodation, as the case with families from the lower socio-economic strata.



However, it was observed that once the children are placed in other homes, they are usually re-victimized as the public homes are over-crowded and under-staffed and the levels of stress and abuse are seen as particularly high. Both KII and focus group respondents further noted that if abuse is taking place in those institutions, then they should cease to operate, or they should be re-structured with new facilities, staff and programs to ensure the safety of the children under their care.

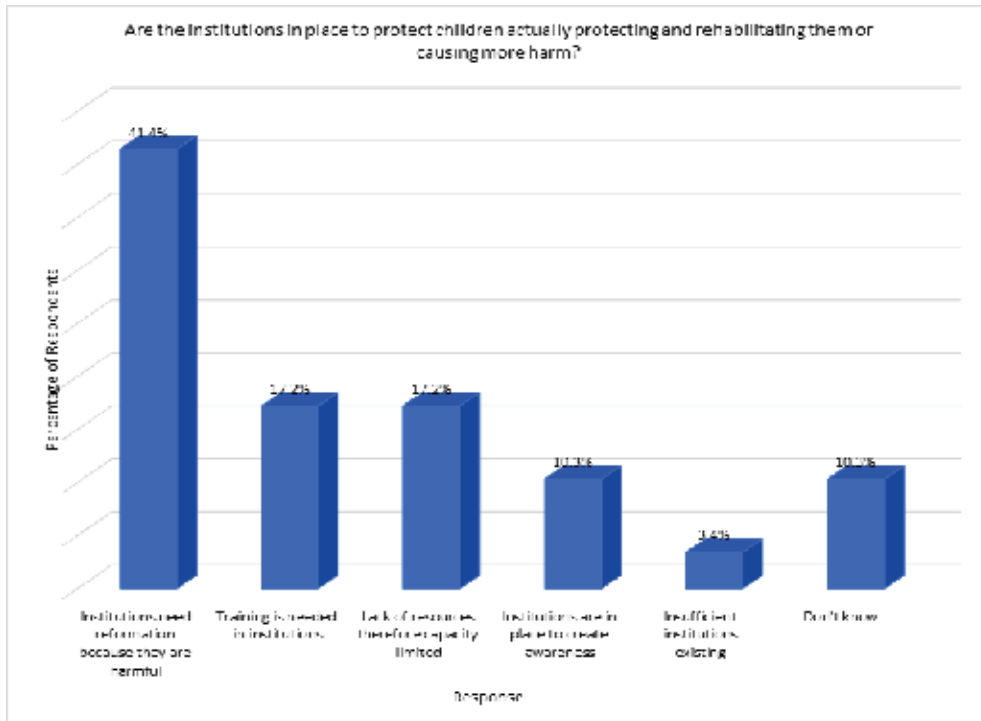
Among both the KII and focus group participants it generally agreed that there is need for the establishment of more safe homes with accommodation for both boys and girls where the safety and security of the children should be assured. It was also noted as an example that while Region 9 does not have a single safe place for persons who are abused in that region, the Women Miners Association in Region 1 provides such services to protect women and their children from abuses perpetrated by the males in their households and communities.

In cases where the perpetrator is a family member (financial supporter of the home – father, uncle, step-father, mother’s boyfriend or child perpetrators, etc.) respondents in both categories suggested that in some extreme cases due to sexual and physical abuse, children must be removed from their home.

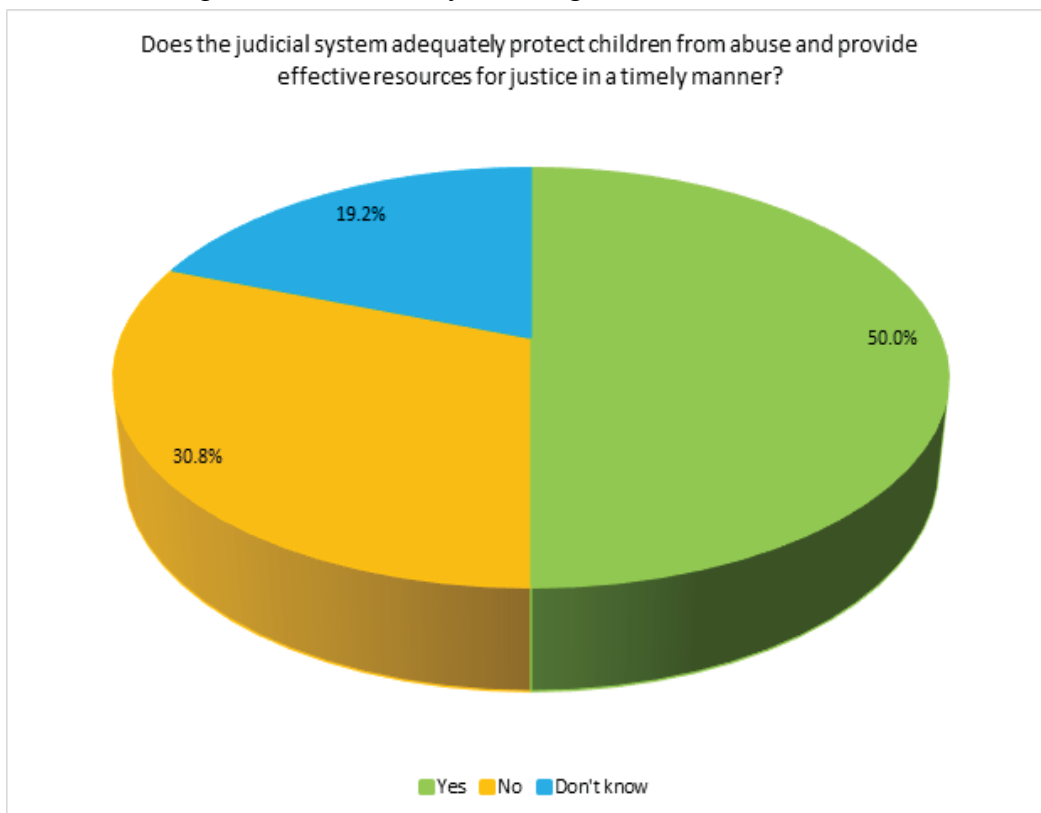
Respondents from both KII and focus groups indicated that in some cases, probation officers should work with the family and deal with the situation in their home. It was also suggested that in cases of sexual violence in the home, the child should be removed and social agencies should engage the parents to reintegrate the child into the family structure. It was noted that there is no structured arrangement available which allows for the monitoring of cases where the perpetrator is removed from the homes. Some respondents indicated that this becomes increasingly challenging since when the perpetrator is the major breadwinner in the household, this can be used as a mechanism to manipulate the position of the family member in relation to legal intervention.

It was also suggested by both KII and focus group that when children are removed, they sometimes feel that they were responsible for the wrong doing. Some respondents suggested that at times it would be better that children remained in the home environment rather than being institutionalized. These respondents also noted that removing children is a disadvantage for them, especially in institutions that are not professionally staffed to provide counselling and other related services. It was also reported by the respondents that the institutions established to protect the children are understaffed and lacking resources to rehabilitate them. It is noted, for example, that the Sophia Holding Centre facilities were inadequate and that at the New Opportunity Corps, cases of abuse were reported.

When asked if ‘the institutions (children’s homes, child protection agencies, etc.) in place to protect children are actually protecting and rehabilitating them or causing more harm?’ there was general agreement among the respondents with 41.4% of them agreeing that there are institutions in place to protect children. However, they suggested that these agencies and institutions require restructuring and reorganization, as well as the provision of adequate funding. These include the Rights of the Child Commission, Child Protection Agency, ChildLink, Help and Shelter, Ministry of Social Protection, New Opportunity Corps and Blossom Inc. However, KII interviewees and focus group participants suggested that there are some serious gaps in the operations of these institutions which impact their effectiveness and efficiency and these include the limited financial resources, inadequate and high turnover of staff and insufficient training of personnel.

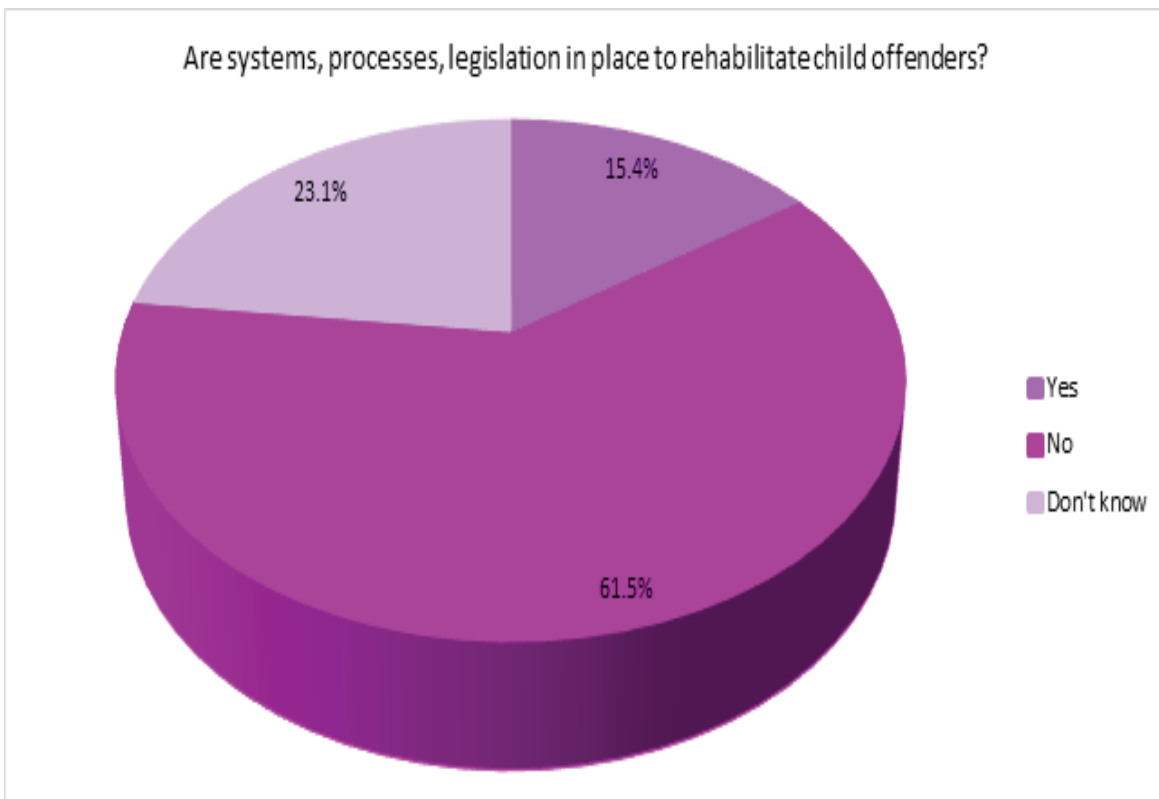


When asked if the judicial system (police, courts, etc.) adequately protects children from abuse and provide effective recourse for justice in a timely manner, 50% indicated a positive response, and 30.8% disagreed indicating there was some disagreement among the respondents in relation to the level of protection afforded the children by the judicial system. Among those who disagree, there was the view that the judicial system does not protect children to the extent that it should, since loopholes, bottlenecks and lack of coordination among agencies inhibit the operational efficiency of the agencies.

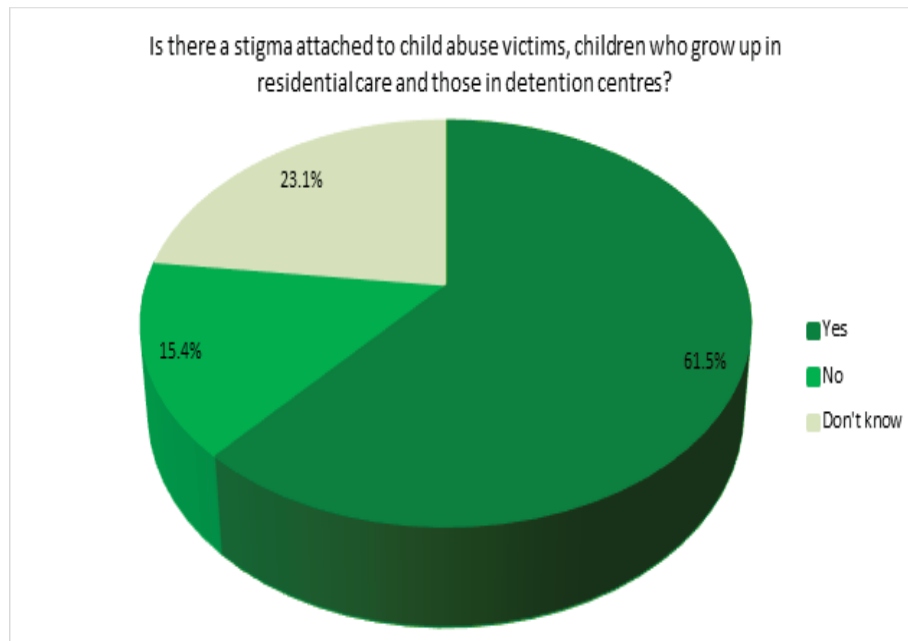


Further, when asked if they were confident that all types of abuse will continue to be reduced, there was a degree of optimism among both KII and focus group participants, where it was suggested that abuse may not be totally eradicated in Guyana, but the situation is changing, violations are being reduced, and there have been new laws enacted to protect the rights of the children across the nation. It was also observed that the judicial system is being strengthened, and as an example, the establishment of a special court for sexual offences which was established in 2017 was noted. Additionally, there was the establishment of the sex offenders' court which is now operational, and is being seen as a work in progress to enhance the conditions of life for children in Guyana. It was also recognized that the judicial system works in collaboration with institutions such as ChildLink and Blossom Inc. which have established counselling services and safe spaces for the victims and their families.

In response to the issues of systems, legislation and institutions' existence and efficiency with regards to rehabilitation of child offenders, the was the general opinion of the interviewees that to date, there is no legislation and formal institutions in place to rehabilitate child offenders (61.5%) . Further, it was noted that there is no formal rehabilitation program in existence and respondents indicated that there is the need to develop programs to work with the perpetrators while they are incarcerated so that behavioral changes could take place and reduce the risk of recidivism among the offenders.

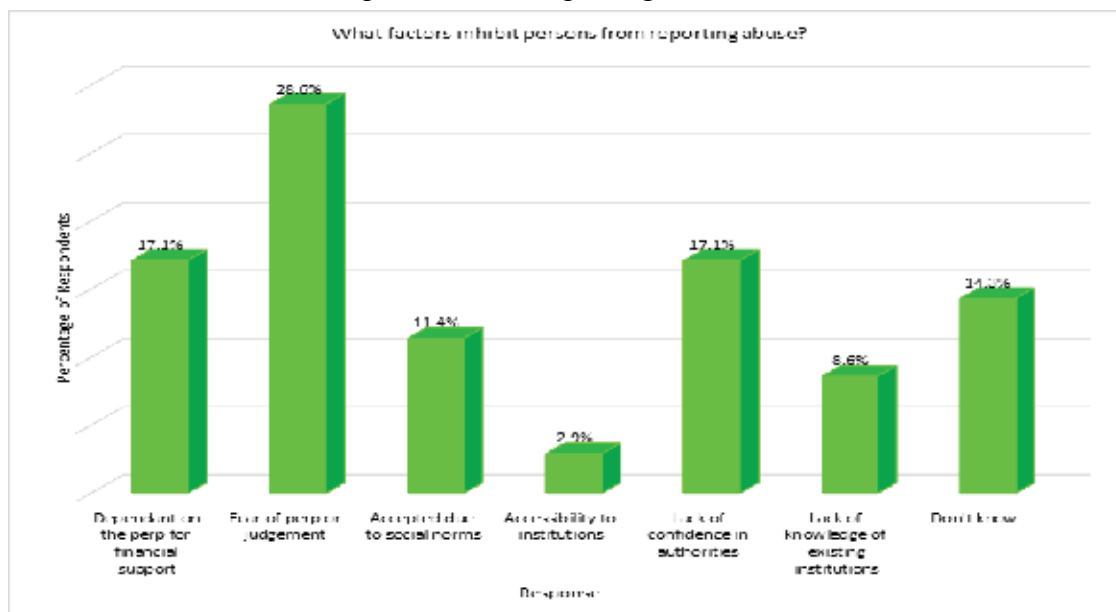


When asked about their views on the issues of stigmatization of children who were abused or were a product of residential care and detention centers, the respondents indicated that there seems to be a stigma attached to children who were subjected to abuse and were removed from their homes.



It was also noted that especially in small communities, incidences of child abuse become public knowledge very quickly. They stated that there is evidence to show that those who have been subjected to abuse are negatively affected and are in need of community-based intervention. Respondents indicated that when children are abused and taken away from their homes, they often do not want to go back to the community because of potential for embarrassment. In cases where they have been institutionalized, there is a perception that the stigma is greater. Similarly, it has been argued that the degree of stigmatization depends on the situation and the level of respect that the perpetrator has in the given community. It was also stated that communities and individuals are willing to ignore the claim of the child depending on the status of the perpetrator and this affects the level of stigmatization.

With reference to the issue of reporting instances of abuse, the respondents in the study presented the view that there are several factors which inhibit persons from reporting instances of abuse.

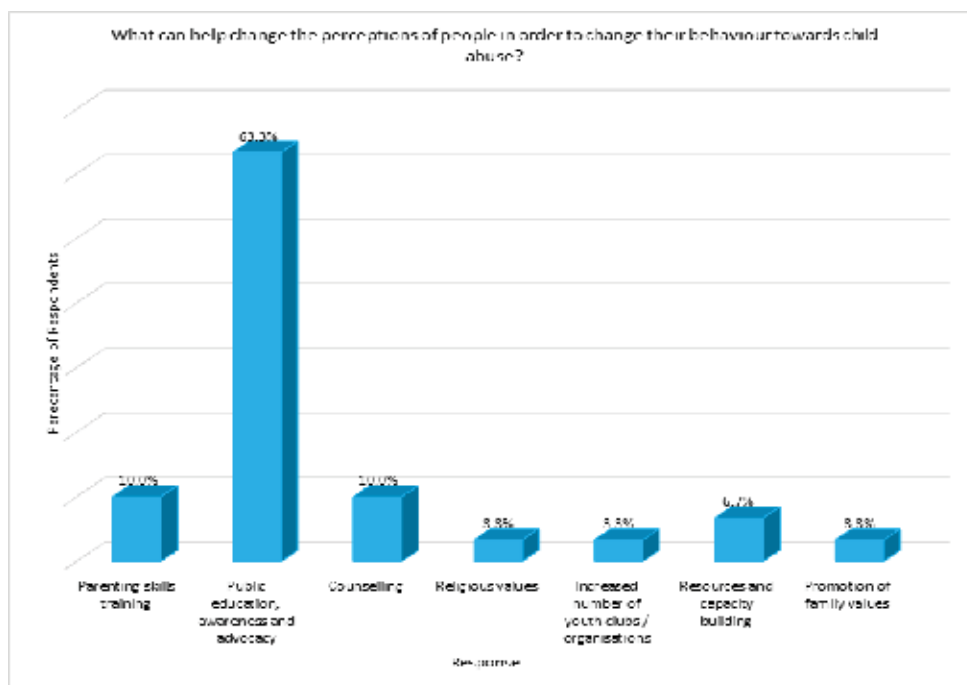


17.1% of the respondents stated that in most cases, the perpetrator is usually the breadwinner and this inhibits persons for reporting, especially in the families from the lower socio-economic groups, because the absence of the breadwinner will have serious negative impacts on the welfare of the family. It was generally observed that the lack of knowledge and education were also factors which need to be considered and that abuse is accepted as a cultural norm in some communities, thus contributing to reduction in reporting the incidences of abuse.

Another factor which inhibits reporting, as indicated by the interviewees is the fear of embarrassment. It was noted by focus group participants (Regions 1, 2 and 9) and KII especially in remote hinterland communities, persons do not report violence against children, because the costs related to travelling to report to authorities are prohibitive. In some cases, it was noted that a lack of knowledge of institutions which have been established to deal with issues related to child protection inhibits persons from reporting incidents of child abuse. It was also the view that the complicated nature of the legal and judicial system also inhibits persons from reporting child abuse cases. While the interviewees indicated that it is not necessarily expected or accepted that children will be abused, they presented the view that the above mentioned factors all contribute to the lack of reporting of these incidences, and until these issues are resolved, it is predicted that the low levels of reporting will continue to persist.

PERCEPTIONS AND AWARENESS

In many cases, norms are reinforced by perceptions of the general population. The informants were asked what they thought could help change the perceptions of people in order to change their behavior towards child abuse. In response, 63.3% of the respondents presented the view that people’s perception and their behavior could be changed through sustained education and awareness campaigns, and these campaigns should highlight the long-term consequences of child abuse and the negative impacts on the life of the abused children.



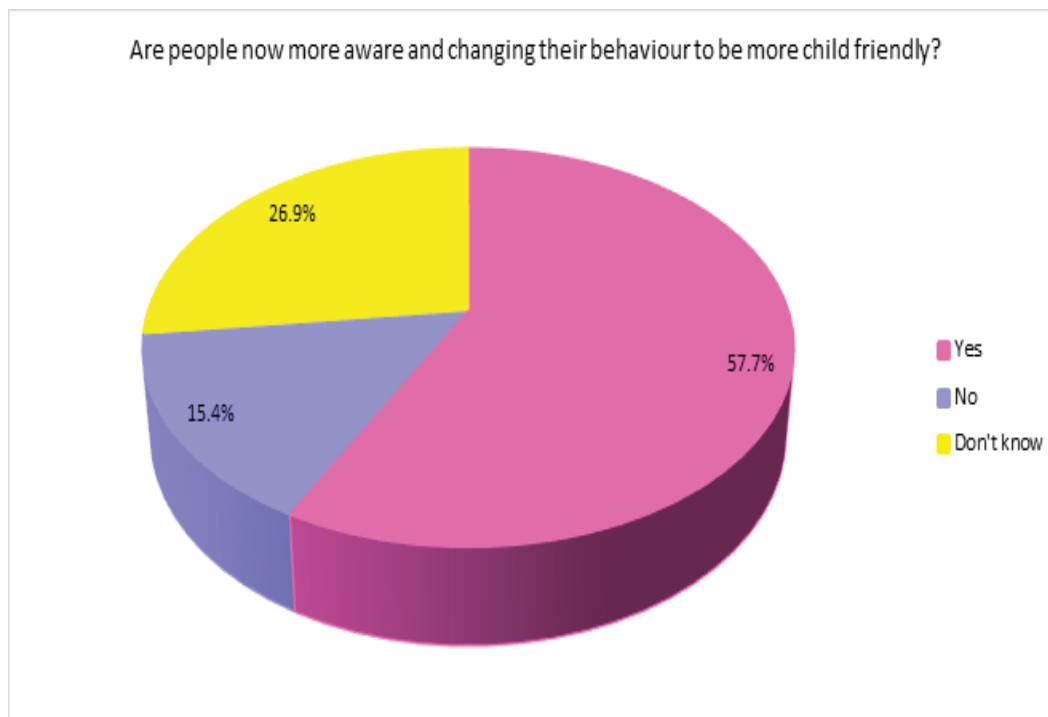
These campaigns should also promote the love for children, child rights and moral and family values. Additionally, it was recommended by KII and focus groups that agencies need to target at-risk communities and create youth clubs and other activities which could provide the basis for greater awareness. It was also suggested that a multidimensional approach be adopted and facilitated by community leaders, community groups (police youth, sports, youth and women's groups), NGOs, churches and other stakeholders. The general view was expressed that in the recent past, with the provision of more information related to different types of child abuse, there has been a rise in the general level of consciousness and awareness in relation to violence against children. This has manifested itself in the establishment of groups which participate in outreach programs and campaigns designed to defend the rights of children and speak out against the abuses. Notwithstanding, KII and focus groups were of the view that culturally this is still a challenge in the indigenous communities as the different types of violence against children seem to persist.

It was also observed that safe spaces need to be provided for people to reach out to counsellors and other authorities in times of need and that agencies such as the Guyana Police Force, CPA, Rights of Child Commission, and other agencies must provide prompt and effective responses to violence against children. Further, it was also observed that laws must be clear and unambiguous in order to ensure the protection of children against violence.

While recognizing that social norms do exist and some of them may be harmful to children, the informants were asked if they believed that social norms for abuse are changing in Guyana. In response, it was generally believed by KII and focus groups that civil society groups are leading the way in promoting issues related to violence against children including sexual abuse. However, it was further observed that more efforts have to be made to promote a shift in attitudes on issues related to violence against children. According to both KII and focus group participants, professionally designed education campaigns utilizing social media, planning and implementation of workshops and community outreach should be priorities for both government and civil society. It was also noted that social norms related to violence against children are gradually changing to some extent as is evidenced by increasing numbers of perpetrators being charged and convicted for violence against children.

Further, both KII and focus group participants indicated that on the other hand, violence against children continues to be a challenge in Guyana and that priority must be given to the provision of resources, both human and financial, to deal with the challenge of violence against children.

When asked if people now are more aware and changing their behavior to be more child friendly, the informants (57.7%) indicated that individuals and communities are becoming more child-friendly and to a large extent there is greater sensitivity to issues relating to violence against children.



Some respondents indicated that while citizens are becoming more aware, this is occurring at different rates in different parts of the country. They suggested that in certain communities, especially in the interior and the Amerindian communities, greater emphasis needs to be placed on education and consciousness-raising programs to reduce the levels of abuse against children.

It was also indicated KII and focus groups that the government is placing greater emphasis on the establishment and strengthening of institutions to effectively protect children and to provide a healthy environment for them.

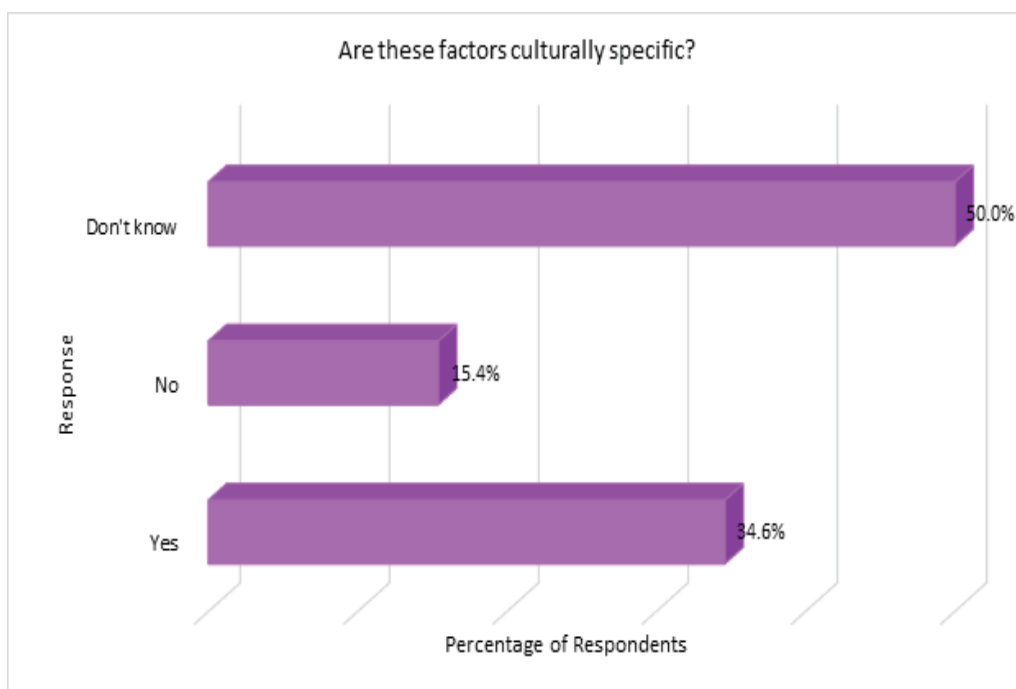
CULTURAL NORMS

When asked about the contributing factors to the different types of child abuse in Guyana, that pertain to factors such as race, social class, ethnicity, religion and family structure, it was generally agreed by both KII and focus group participants that many of these factors do not play a significant role by themselves but are seen as contributing to child abuse. Notwithstanding, there was also a general agreement that children from poorer households are at a higher risk-level of being victims of abuse. Further, it was also agreed that children from hinterland and Amerindian communities are at a higher risk due to accepted social norms and the excessive abuse of alcohol which heighten the risk factors for abuse against children.

Both KII and focus group participants presented the view that education and awareness in relation to child abuse in all forms, plays an influential role in the individuals' treatment of children. While some respondents

indicated that education alone could not guarantee an individual's behavior towards children, some respondents indicated that individuals with low socio-economic status clearly understand the issue of child abuse. On the other hand, it was observed that those in the high socio-economic brackets tend to suppress incidences of child abuse.

In relation to cultural specificity, there were differences in opinion about the factors that influence people's perception of child abuse. Some respondents suggested that while abuse in all forms is present in all groups in society, there is evidence of a higher rate of child abuse in the hinterland areas (34.6%) compared to the urban centers. Of equal significance is that 50% indicated that they 'did not know'.



According to the respondents from the focus groups in Region 9 (Lethem) and Region 2 (Mainstay), to some extent, these factors can be classified as culturally specific. They suggested that because of limited access to education in the hinterland areas, there is a tendency to accept these practices as a norm. Further it was noted that since many adults have experienced some levels of abuse in their childhood, it was generally accepted since they have no knowledge of any other approach. It was noted that with increased access to education and the development of a broader perspective of children's rights, changes in these communities' perceptions of what are acceptable social norms and boundaries of social interaction will continue to change. It was also observed that the process of change starts with a reformation of people's thinking and their views on society and socially accepted behaviors.

It was noted that some other aspects of culture including music and television shows also serve to perpetuate violence against children and the degrading of females, as noted by focus groups in Region 4. There was also a general consensus among KII and focus groups that the religious community must increase its responsibility and role as part of a broader effort to deal with the challenges of child abuse.

When asked if they believed that some communities perpetrate more of one kind of violence, there was the general view among both KII and focus group respondents that in the Amerindian and hinterland communities, there is a higher rate of incest compared to the coastal areas. Similarly, it has been suggested that more cases of teenage pregnancies can be observed in hinterland and Amerindian communities where this phenomenon is seen as a cultural norm.

Both KII and focus groups indicated that in some communities, incest is taking place but, in many cases, it is not discussed in the wider community as it is seen as a private or a family matter. -Additionally, it was noted by respondents that the incidences of incest occurred to a large extent in the rural, hinterland and sugar producing areas. It was also noted that the absence of recreational activities and the presence of alcohol and drug use, result in a high rate of child abuse. In these communities it was noted that some adults encourage child/early pregnancies, since this is a culturally accepted practice.

Focus group participants (Region 6, Rose Hall, New Amsterdam; Region 9 Lethem, St. Ignatius; Region 1 Mabaruma, Port Kaituma) indicated that culturally, in these communities, early pregnancies are encouraged as it means more unpaid labor in the agricultural areas, so the earlier the age of childbirth, the more children that can be produced during the life span of the mother. Additionally, it has been argued that there is a correlation between the number of children and the welfare of the parents when they get old. In other words, in these cultures it is expected that one or more of the children will take care of the parents in their old age, ergo, the more children the parents have, the greater the possibility and quality of them being cared for in their old age.

It has been argued that in the urban areas, social services and other instruments are relied upon to take care of the elderly, but in the rural and Amerindian communities, this task falls to the offspring of the parents, and as such early child and teenage pregnancies are accepted and even encouraged.

In Guyana, there are two main sub-cultures, the Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese culture. Respondents from one of the NGO community indicated that each sub-culture has specific characteristics which influence the perceptions and responses to child abuse. They suggested that for Afro -Guyanese culture, there is a certain amount of aggression which they claim is due to the remnants of the historical condition of slavery, while in the Indo-Guyanese community it was suggested that the culture of submission is highly valued especially among the females.

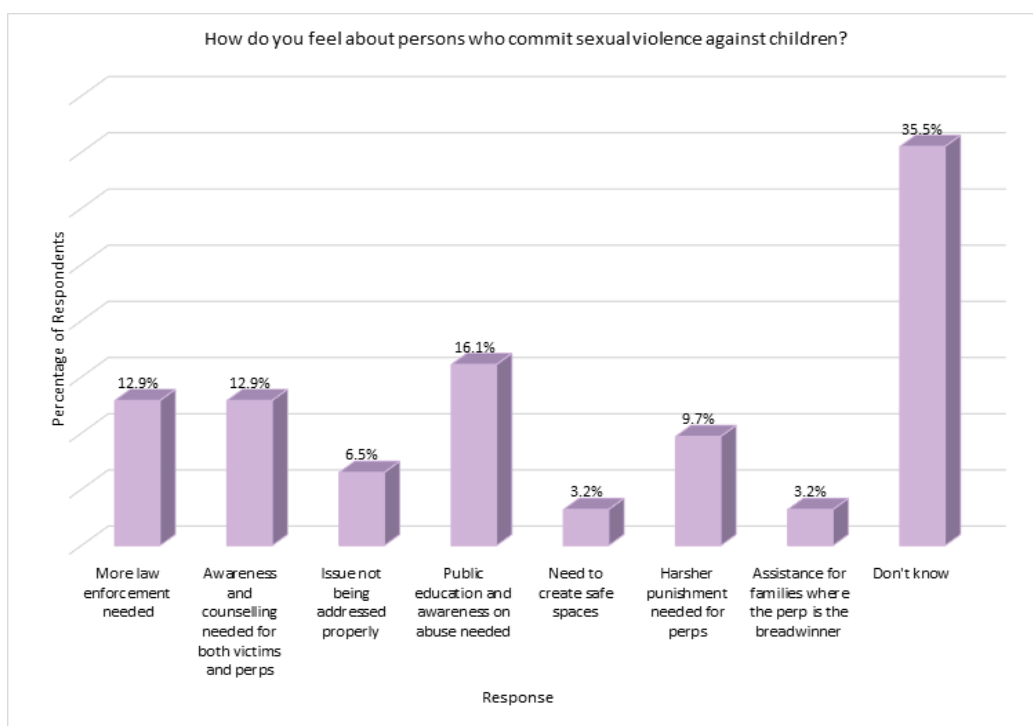
In response to the questions that asked about how families, children and communities think and feel about physical, emotional and sexual violence, both KII and focus groups indicated that there exists, especially among low income female-headed households, a trend where mothers encourage their daughters to have relations with older men for financial reasons. The view was also advanced that poverty and the need to satisfy the basic needs of the family are factors which influence this behavior.

The view was also advanced by KII and focus group participants that in the Amerindian community, incest is acceptable as it has become part of the culture, coupled with the fact that the society is closed and access to extra-community mates are rare and limited. Further, the high levels of alcohol abuse in these communities contribute to the incidences of incest. This activity is not perceived as acts of violence against children, and consequently the perpetrators are not perceived negatively by the community.

The perception that violence against children is more apparent in some groups of the population and is based on anecdotal evidence. Both KII and focus groups presented the view that there is no organized repository of data on the cases which have been reported, and it was recommended that there should be increased data collection and analysis on these issues so that more information-based decision making can take place at the policy level.

PERPETRATORS OF CHILD ABUSE AND VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

When asked how they feel about persons who commit physical, emotional and sexual violence on children, the majority of the informants (51.6%), agreed that perpetrators of violence against children should be subjected to the full extent of the law, receive counselling, or have access to public education, while 35.5% indicated that they ‘did not know’.



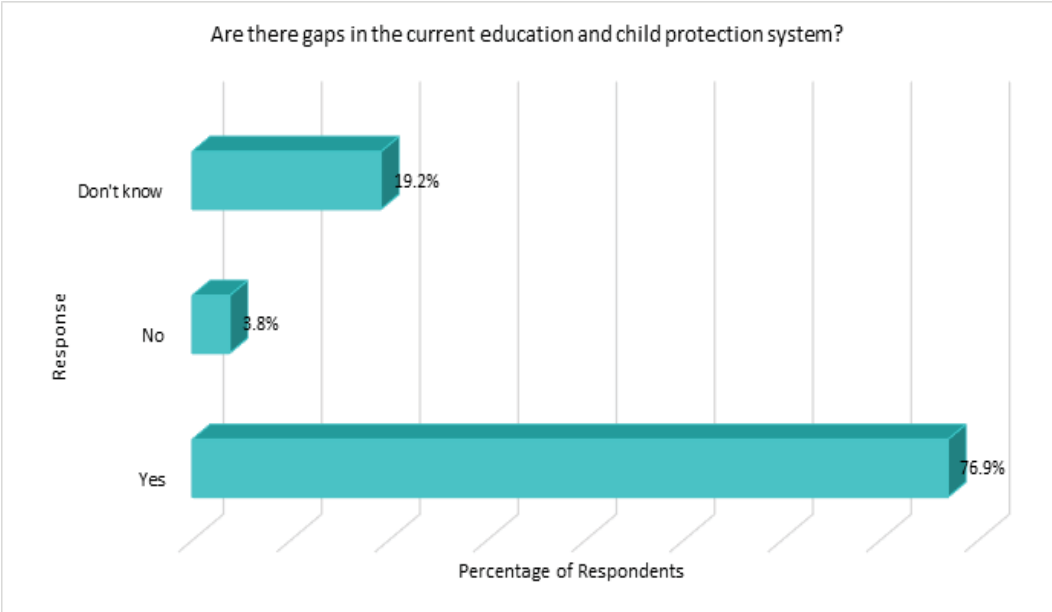
It was noted that emotional abuse is a complex phenomenon as is not easily detected or measured. This means therefore that it difficult to label and confer liability, and respondents in the study recommended that educational programs be established to encourage children to indicate when they feel they are being emotionally abused.

Another issue raised by the respondents from all regions is related to the prevalence of ‘children having children’. It was argued by both KII and focus groups that the young age at which females become pregnant limits their understanding of the concept of parenting and the responsibility associated with child rearing. Focus group participants from all the regions indicated that the challenge becomes greater since there is no institutional arrangement for the provision of training in the communities and it was recommended that targeted programs be implemented especially in the area of family life and parenting.

Both KII and focus group respondents suggested that the high levels of abuse in Guyana stem from the presence of a large number of uneducated citizens especially in the rural and hinterland communities. It was reiterated by KII interviewees and focus group participants that only when awareness campaigns are executed will more citizens become aware of the issues of violence against children. It was also noted that training is needed for the community workers to make them aware of the issues and increase the availability of resources for detection and counseling for the victims must be provided for each community.

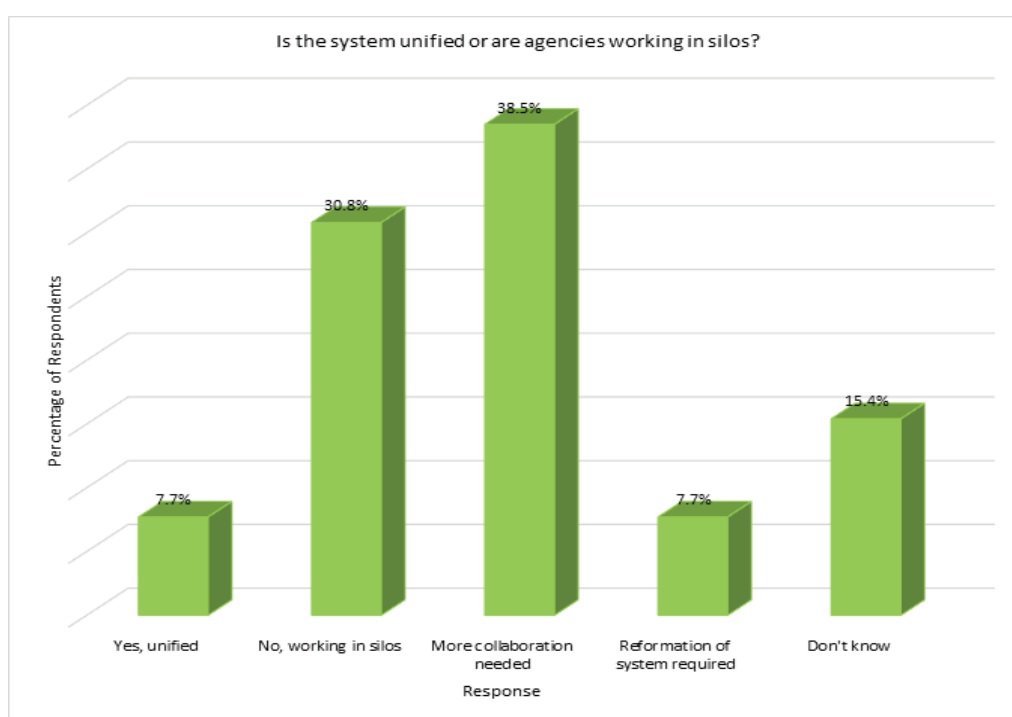
It was also posited by both KII and focus groups that various strategies should be adopted to deal with perpetrators. In the case of rape of a child, it was recommended that other strategies need to be developed since imprisonment does not serve as a deterrent and is also seen as a burden on the country’s taxpayers. It was also indicated that perpetrators of violence against children should be rehabilitated since from a psychological perspective, perpetrators may have some disorders, or they may have experienced some trauma in their own childhood.

In relation to the issues of possible gaps in the current education and child protection system, there was the general agreement among both KII (76.9%) and focus groups that there are gaps in the current education system and it was observed that teachers are not trained sufficiently to deal with the issues of identification and treatment of abused children.



It is also noted that the education system needs more human resources and financing in order to facilitate sustained campaigns to combat violence against children. Additionally, focus group participants from all regions noted that the current curriculum does not include topics such as effective parenting, child rights and general life skills. These focus group participants further indicated that another challenge relates to the lack of facilities for the children with special needs, and this must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

In order to reduce these gaps, it was recommended that the different parts of the education system need to develop a collaborative approach to reduce violence against children. To this end, it was generally observed that agencies were operating in silos (30.8%) and that the systems established to protect children from violence are disjointed (38.5%). Respondents indicated that there is inadequate information sharing among the agencies that are mandated with the protection of children in Guyana.



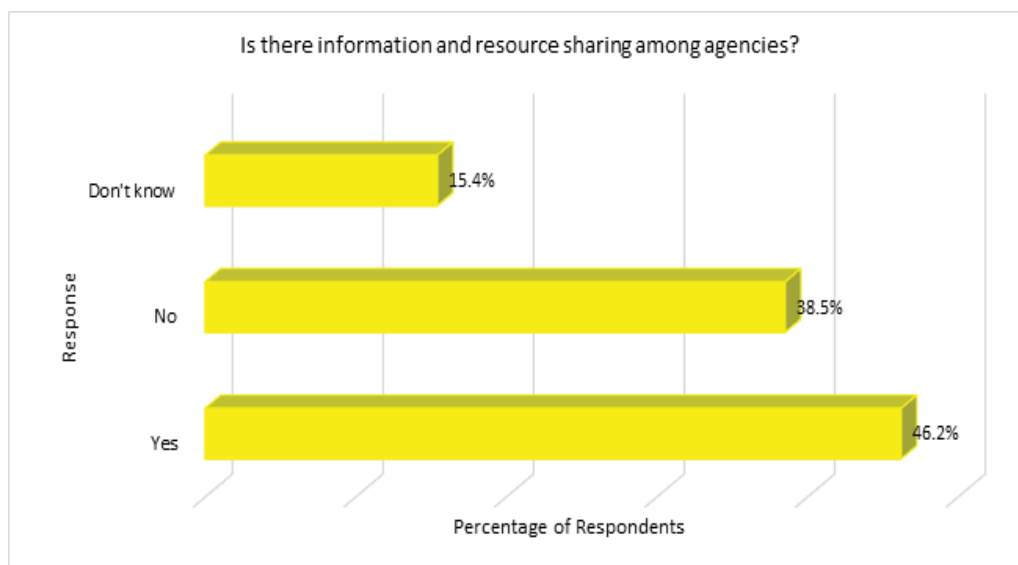
Both KII and focus group participants across the regions presented the view that there is a culture of fear of sharing information, because some of the information is sensitive and usually does not remain confidential. According to the interviewees, this lack of trust in partner agencies hampers the agencies' ability to effectively execute their mandates, thus ultimately having a negative impact on the children.

It is observed by both KII and focus group participants that the system can become unified if agencies are instructed to share information, increase the levels of confidentiality and educate the workers on the benefits that can be accrued through collaboration. It was noted that the Ministries of Social Protection, Public Security, Indigenous Peoples Affairs among others, are currently addressing the issue of coordination and collaboration on issues related to child abuse.

From the research, it was observed that there were examples of effective coordination between agencies, as has been evidenced by the operations of Child Link. There is a Child Rights Alliance consisting of 18 organizations which are working together in three regions (3, 4 and 5) and are focused on ways to curb violence against children and they coordinate their efforts for the benefits of the children. Child Link provides the management and coordination of the Child Rights Alliance, and employs counselors to provide counseling, parenting and sensitization work in the primary and secondary schools.

THE NATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM

When asked about information and resource sharing among agencies in the country, the respondents indicated that there is no consistency in the pace and process of information sharing and this negatively impacts the ability of the institutions to deal with the cases with the desired levels of efficiency. Data indicate that 46.2% believe that there is sharing of information, while 38.5% disagree. The respondents recommended that in every region there should be a regional committee which will facilitate collaboration among the agencies. Respondents indicated that it would be beneficial for information and resource sharing to be developed and include the international agencies such as UNICEF and NGOs which could develop joint programs, pool human and financial resources and execute programs which can benefit the community.



In relation to violence against children, the issue of child prevention was raised rather than child protection. To this issue, respondents across the regions suggested that “prevention is always better than cure”. They observed that the major tool for prevention is education and the formulation and articulation of programs such as parenting and life skills are critical upstream measures. The view was also advanced that civil society must play a greater role in dealing with issues of prevention and state institutions must be strengthened to be able to execute their mandates related to the protection of children against violence. The view was also presented that strategies to prevent violence against children must involve religious leaders, community leaders, women’s groups, police groups, teachers, youth groups, health services, welfare services and protective services in the communities.

Respondents from KII and focus groups noted that as part of the prevention strategy, mechanisms should be created to promote good parenting to avoid child abuse, but they also highlighted the need for greater resource allocation to effectively execute these strategies. The view was also advanced that prevention strategies should also include awareness campaigns, information sharing, parental skills seminars, general support and greater coordination among agencies.

THE SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL MODEL

Based on the underlying philosophy of the social-ecological model, as a part of this process investigating the issue of violence against children in Guyana, the first task was to harness a better understanding of the dynamic interrelations between the various personal and environmental factors that affect the Guyanese communities. The socio-ecological model necessitates an investigation of the entire system, inclusive of the microsystem (immediate physical and social environment), the mesosystems (the interactions among the systems in the environment), and the exosystem (social, economic and political conditions in the system). One must also be cognizant of the fact that the components of the exosystem are significantly affected by the macrosystems (general beliefs and attitudes shared by community members).

The model calls for the separation of the four levels, each of which is unique and will require different strategies of intervention, each which has to work with the others to ensure sustainable interventions and success in the application of strategies designed to modify behaviors. The model prescribes that this separation and subsequent intervention strategies are critical for the successful alteration of norms, and it is assumed that when the strategies are successful that there is a greater likelihood of altering the behaviors of the individuals.

This methodology investigates the complex interplay between factors that affect the individual, the relationships, the communities, and the societal factors. It presents the range of factors that place children at-risk for being victims of violence, sexual, emotional and psychical.

The chosen approach using the socio-ecological models presupposes that one can reduce the violence against children in Guyana, as solutions can be accomplished by deal with the issue at different levels simultaneously.

At the individual level, the factors that contribute to the violence being perpetrated on the children include age gender, race, levels of education, employment status, the use of alcohol and drugs, level of familial isolation, number of siblings and employment status. Respondents have suggested that the use of alcohol and drugs has increased the incidences of violence against children, and to reduce this violence requires a reduction in the use of these substances. Similarly, increased levels of education should reduce violence against children as lack of education is seen as one of the major contributors to these incidences. Frustration caused by poverty and lack of employment also contributes at the individual level, along with factors such as age, gender, number of sibling in the household and the levels of isolation felt by the individual. Once these factors are taken into consideration along with the other three levels in the socio-ecological model, it will be easier to

tackle the problem of violence against children and allow for informed targeted strategies to be formulated, leading to greater levels of success and sustainability.

Interventions at the individual level should target to promote norms and values that will ultimately reduce violence against children in the community, and in the Guyanese context, this can be done primarily through increased access to education, skills training and employment.

The second level is the relationship level where one needs to investigate the factors that put children at risk as they are affected or influenced by personal relationships with close friends and peers. Issues that need to be investigated specifically are levels of tension, peer relationships, levels of emotional support offered by the family, levels of communication within family and among peers, familiar stability in relation to divorce and separation, and levels of tension in these relationships.

Prescribed strategies for intervention may include parenting seminars, mentoring or apprenticeship programs, conflict mediation seminars, counseling sessions, among others.

Community level investigations would necessarily commence with the schools, places of worship, social groups and workplaces. This level is important because it brings members of the community in close proximity to each other, and has the ability to influence large groups efficiently. Issues to be considered include the physical layout of the neighborhood, the level of attrition of residents as they leave the community, the amount of recreational facilities in the community, the general level of social cohesion, the amount of employment in the community and the access to economic opportunities.

Strategies to combat these factors include interventions into the physical infrastructure of communal spaces where children congregate (the creating of safe spaces, the development of playing fields and similar facilities), the levels of interaction and social cohesion (establishing social clubs, youth clubs and other community-based organizations), and developing increased economic and employment opportunities in the community (in collaboration with business communities, churches, government agencies and non-governmental organizations).

In the fourth level which is the societal level, the model is primarily concerned with the broad societal factors in which the climate for abuse is maintained and is also aimed at developing policies to reduce the incidences of violence against children in Guyana. It investigates the macro issues such as policies related to education and health of the youth, economic and child protection policies, along with the cultural social norms that support the use of violence against children, which need to be altered.

Utilizing the socio-ecological model, the behavioral and social barriers to the prevention of violence against in children in Guyana are outlined below.

Level of the SEM	Behavioral and Social Barriers
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Age/Gender – Alcohol use – Drug use – Level of education – Level of isolation – Number of siblings – Employment status
Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Fights, tension, or struggles among family members – Marital instability, divorces or separations – Poor communication between parents – Poor supervision or monitoring of children – Association with aggressive or delinquent peers – Emotionally unsupportive family
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Level of residents' social connectedness – Income level of neighborhood – Rate of residents moving in and out of a neighborhood – Lack of neighborhood organization – Limited economic opportunities – Lack of recreational opportunities – Poor physical layout of a neighborhood
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Social norm that it is acceptable to use violence to resolve conflict and that consequences are minimal – Cultural norms – Health policies – Economic policies – Educational policies

UNICEF's Communication for Development (C4D) supports behavior and social change strategies that are aimed at producing specific outcomes and changes in behaviors. This approach is synergetic to the SEM model as both dissect the organism and environment to determine where the interventions should occur.

Communication for Development (C4D) is a systematic, planned, and evidence-based approach to promote positive and measurable behavioral and social change, and this approach is appropriate for the purpose of changing the social norms in Guyana as they relate to violence against children. This approach incorporates inputs from all levels of the society inclusive of the individuals, groups, communities and agencies and organizations with the aim of enhancing the quality of life. This approach highlights the need to strengthen capacity in the communities and build collective efficacy, determine their needs, and evaluate their assets in order to address the gaps in the system.

BOTTLENECK AND BARRIER ANALYSIS: AN ANALYSIS OF THE PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN GUYANA

The bottleneck analysis, originally proposed by Dr. T. Tanahashi in the 1970s, helps to identify constraints to the determinants needed to provide care and protection to children. The ten essential determinants have been developed to guide the identification of bottlenecks and barriers faced in the realization and provision of care and protection to children in Guyana.

These ten determinants have been categorized into:

1. The enabling environment
2. Supply
3. Demand
4. Quality of services / interventions to children

The determinants utilized in the bottleneck and barrier analysis emphasize the dynamic correlations of social norms and social and cultural practices and beliefs, and their influence on the national child protection framework and the subsequent outcomes for children.

The successful and positive fulfillment of these determinants assist in ensuring that social norms, practices and beliefs that prevent the violence, abuse and neglect of children are being promoted and established, and that service delivery systems are operating efficiently to respond to and prevent violence against children.

The determinants which were investigated were the social norms, social and cultural practices and beliefs, legislation and the quality of services/interventions. In terms of the social and cultural norms and practices it was evident that certain practices and norms were inherently harmful to the children and promoted violence against children in Guyana. The research highlighted the fact that in many instances and communities, corporal punishment is seen as acceptable and in many cases necessary for the management and disciplining of children, in many cases and communities it was also highlighted that child neglect exists and in some cases is accepted by the community. Similarly, emotional abuse is seen to be occurring in society and yet not much is being done to reduce the incidences of this type of violence, and lack of education and communication create a barrier for changing these unacceptable forms of violence against children.

The use of the education and health systems can create environments for conversation and training with the aim of changing the levels of violence against children and alter the social norms that exist which support these cases of violence. This can be done through medial campaigns, seminars and workshop being presented in school (for parents and children), counselling offered in schools and the health centers for victims and perpetrators of violence against children. Additionally, it has been suggested that home visits by nurses, social workers, probation officers and other government official will help to spread the message as well as document incidents thus providing more support and assistance or the victims of the types of violence.

In terms of legislation and policy, one has to look at issues such as legislative review and reform required for the clear and unambiguous protection of children, the need to adopt legislation and policies in relation to a more rehabilitative approach to child offenders, fast track the Special Education Policy which is currently pending approval, and increase preventative polices to address child abuse nationally.

Policy formulation is critical in this aspect as well as the support and sponsoring of legislation that have the objective of reducing the levels of violence against children in Guyana. This includes a new approach which now calls for preventative policies, not ones that are purely reactive to crimes that have been committed. This support should also translate into financial support for the programs that are being recommended to protect the welfare of the children in Guyana, and this needs to be done from the level of the Parliament.

Wirth respect to coordination and management of the process as well as the programs, there needs to be more resources and efforts dedicated to these tasks. To be sure, there are many agencies that have responsibility for some part of child protection and child services, but these agencies have to be collapsed under one umbrella to better utilize the available human and financial resources. Further, such enhanced coordination will allow for better monitoring and provision of programs which are responsible for reducing the violence against children in Guyana. To be most effective this coordination, development and execution of programs will necessitate data being collected, analyses and distributed among all agencies to that information-based decision making can become the norm.

Similarly, the availability of necessary inputs as well as human and financial resources is critical to the development of these policies and approaches. Many departments consider their funding inadequate to carry out their mandates and this puts unnecessary stress on the departments as they have to constantly prioritize their deliverables as well as compete with other departments or the resources available. As this approach is not one that is open to coordination and cooperation, the levels of efficiency in these departments are minimal. Further, the issue of child protection requires the availability of safe spaces for the victims and those at-risk, but at this time such space is limited and inadequate. This coupled with the training of staff to respond efficiently to the reports, and negate the red tape in the system is also critical to increase the protection of children in the system.

As mentioned before there are numerous issues in the system and in the communities that make the provision

of these services particularly challenging, and these include weak family and community ties, lack of strong family values, lack of information in the system accessible by family members to know what services are available to them, lack of coping mechanism and parenting skills, and lack of public education and advocacy on alternative methods of discipline and management of children.

Another issue of importance is that of continuity of use of the services, and this is plagued by limited financial resources, the inadequate amount of staff to deal with the number of cases, and the high turnover of staff due to dissatisfaction, low wages and frustration. Further, this is exacerbated by the situation of insufficient training for personnel who deal with child welfare and child protection, and this has a negative impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of child protection agencies in the provision of continued care and services.

The bottleneck and barriers analysis of the child protection system in Guyana is outlined as follows.

		DETERMINANTS OF BOTTLENECKS AND BARRIERS	FINDINGS
ENABLING ENVIRONMENT	Social Norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Corporal punishment regarded as necessary – Child neglect meted with apathy – Emotional abuse accepted as a norm – Parents abused as children regarding abuse as a ‘norm’ – Violence while regarded as unacceptable, also seen as sometimes necessary – Lack of communication between parents and children 	
	Legislation/Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Legislative review and reform required for the clear and unambiguous protection of children – Legislation and policies needed to adopt a rehabilitative approach to child offenders – Special Education Policy pending approval – Lack of preventative polices to address child abuse nationally 	
	Budget/Expenditure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Fiscal resources are limited 	
	Management/Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Inter-agency collaboration and coordination in the provision of care and intervention services requires coordination and strengthening – Dearth of organised and collated repository of data to support evidence-based decision making 	

	DETERMINANTS OF BOTTLENECKS AND BARRIERS	FINDINGS
SUPPLY	Availability of essential commodities and inputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Lack of financial and government support inhibits preventive and responsive services and infrastructural resources
	Access to adequately staffed services, facilities and information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Safe spaces lacking and required – Improvement needed to augment the prompt and efficient response to service and protective agencies in the child protection sector – Child protection agencies lack requisite human resources to match caseloads
DEMAND	Financial Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Limited financial resources available to stakeholders in the children protection sector
	Social and cultural practices and beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Family ties are weak – Caregivers lack the necessary information to make informed child-care decisions – Family values are no longer a priority – Lack of parenting skills has a positive correlation to child physical abuse – Lack of public education and advocacy on alternative forms of disciplining children
	Continuity of use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Limited financial resources, inadequate and high turnover of staff, as well as insufficient training of personnel impact the effectiveness and efficiency of child protection agencies in the provision of continued care and services
QUALITY	Quality of services / interventions to children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Lack of coordination, monitoring and oversight among agencies – Cultural apprehension regarding information sharing – Lack of trust among partner agencies

The determinants prioritized by the bottleneck and barrier analysis of the protection of children against violence in Guyana were:

1. Social Norms
2. Social and Cultural Practices and Beliefs
3. Legislation / Policy
4. Quality of Services / Interventions to Children

The determinants of the bottleneck and barrier analysis however, are interdependent and work collectively to prevent violence against children, and provide care and protection for children who have been victims of abuse. The determinant analysis utilized in the bottleneck and barrier analysis is grounded in systems theory, and assumes that the ten determinants are mutually dependent conditions for achieving an effective and efficient child protection system.

Therefore, while objectives and strategies need to be implemented to address the identified prioritized bottlenecks and barriers, all bottlenecks and barriers should be addressed for a cohesive and proficient child protection system that effectively treats with and prevents the violence, abuse and neglect of children in Guyana.

THEORY OF CHANGE

In keeping with UNICEF's prior work – 'Hidden in plain sight: A statistical analysis of violence against children'⁶ and 'Ending violence against children: Six strategies for action'⁷ – this theory of change addresses all forms of interpersonal violence (e.g. physical, sexual and emotional) against girls, boys and adolescents that occur in the home, in and on the way to school, in the community, in workplaces and through information and communication technologies such as mobile phones and the Internet (UNICEF, 2017).

The Theory of Change is important because it allows one to understand why some people practice socially accepted behaviors and ascribe to the norms of the group, while at the same time contributing to the identification of necessary information needed to efficiently design intervention strategies. Once these steps are taken, this approach should provide the necessary guidance and insights to design the required program. As such, this theory seeks to explain how activities are understood to create a set of outcomes that contribute to achieving the final intended impacts in the case of this project, it will guide how one conceptualizes the problem of child abuse, seeks to achieve targeted outcomes, and develops strategies to achieve these outcomes.

As a point of departure, the theory assumes that context is crucial for understanding any situation, especially if the ultimate goal is to make changes, especially when dealing with issues like social norms which affect the way people conceptualize and contextualize the problem of violence against children. While cultural norms, power relations and lack of information may be the root causes of violence against children, these present themselves in different socio-cultural contexts, and cannot be treated like simple events.

When evaluating the issue of violence against children in Guyana, one has to take a number of factors into consideration, including where it occurs (home or school), the type of violence (incest, rape), the level that the violence occurs (intimate partner or teacher), and the population (children, differently-abled, sexual orientation).



A situational analysis is critical at the incubating stage of the process to have a greater comprehension of the specific factors that affect violence against children in Guyana. This has been achieved by asking questions

related to the perpetrator, the norms, the victims, the location of violence, causes, and types of violence.

To be sure, this approach recognizes that the state has a pivotal role to play in addressing the issue of violence against children in Guyana, and in the process of shaping/changing the social norms that lead to this type of behavior. While donor agencies, NGO, civil society and other community groups in the country have a part to play, the governments is most important because the crimes occur in their national jurisdiction and as such they have the ultimate responsibility for the drafting and passing of laws, policies and institutional services related to reducing the incidence of violence against children in Guyana. Ergo, all efforts will fail if they do not have the support of the government. It is this holistic approach, with multiple partners interacting at multiple levels, in different sectors, over multiple time frames that make the possibility of success greater than independent or less coordinated approaches. As such the primary recommended indicators to measure and address the issues related to violence against children in Guyana are:

- 1) 50% increase in the availability of education, like-skills and outreach programmes for children by 2020
- 2) Establishment of nationwide parenting skills programmes and family workshops by 2020
- 3) Establishment of nationwide public education and advocacy campaigns for the prevention of violence against children by 2020
- 4) Implementation of a capacity development and strengthening plan within the child protection sector by 2020
- 5) Implementation of a systemic review of child protection legislation and policy by 2020

HOLISTIC AND MULTI-SECTORAL APPROACH

Multiple Levels	Across Sectors	Multiple time-lines
Individual	Justice	Short-term (2-5yrs)
Relationship 	Welfare 	Medium-term (5-8yrs)
Community	Security	
	Education	
	Health	
Society	Economic life	Long-term (8+yrs)

The theory utilized the Social Ecological Model as its epistemological starting point, it assumes that these four levels exist and they are to be used as the bases of investigation, analysis and intervention. To be sure, interventions on one or two levels may have limited success, but for real change in social norms, a holistic multi-tiered approach is suggested in the aim of achieving long term sustainable results. We posit that the social norms need to change on all four levels of the model in order for change to be real, sustained and effective.

One recognizes that change takes place over time and different changes take place over different periods of time, so for this model to be effective it has to take into consideration the different objectives, and the time frames for each desired change based on the different strategies. History has shown that programs with short term objectives usually meet their targets, but the results are not sustainable. It is being suggested that the results desired in the Theory of Change require long term strategies (to work in tandem with short and medium term ones) as they are dealing with sophisticated and complex social change as their targets.

As an expected outcome, it is assumed that violence against children will be reduced significantly and it will actually stop before it occurs as the perpetrators will see that violence as it is, being a violation of the rights of the child and an act that hurts the individuals, the community and the society.

The approach taken recognizes the links between response interventions and prevention, with the former necessarily requiring coordination of social services, welfare, the judicial system, law enforcement and a host of ministries that all deal with the protection of children in some form, as part of their mandates. In this approach the government needs to spearhead the process by assuming the role of coordinator, to ensure cooperation from all actors in all sectors as they work towards the goal of social norms change to reduce the violence against children in Guyana. This reduction in violence against children in Guyana can only be achieved by initiating serious social change which will affect attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, practices and values as they relate to the issue.

HOLISTIC AND MULTI-SECTORAL STRATEGIES

	Short-term (2-5yrs)	Medium-term (5-8yrs)	Long-term (8+yrs)
Individual	School seminars and workshops, develop mentorship scheme	School seminars, participation exercises, poster competitions and similar activities	Increased reporting, peer intervention, peer mentoring, forums for child participation
Relationship	Counselling (individual and group/peer)	Developing campaigns	Increased reporting, peer intervention, peer mentoring integrate into drama clubs, etc.
Community	Outreach, seminars, workshops	Community cooperation in programs with community groups, stakeholders, church, NGOs, donors, government agencies	Regular activities at the community level to reinforce the norm change
Society	Media campaign	Media campaign, coordination of ministries and stakeholders	Media campaign, coordination of ministries and stakeholders

SPECIFIC PROGRAMS FOR REDUCTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

	Short-term (2-5yrs)	Medium-term (5-8yrs)	Long-term (8+yrs)
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School seminars and workshops • Increase reporting • Train teachers and institutional caregivers • Increase social services • Increase in safe houses • Media campaign, • Coordination of ministries and stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School seminars • School competitions – posters, plays, adverts • Increase in safe houses • Media campaign, • Coordination of ministries and stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased reporting, • Peer intervention, • Peer mentoring, • Forums for child participation • Increase in safe houses • Media campaign, • Coordination of ministries and stakeholders
Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling (individual and group/peer) • Media campaign, • Coordination of ministries and stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling (individual and group/peer) • Media campaign, • Coordination of ministries and stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling (individual and group/peer) • Increased reporting, peer intervention, peer mentoring integrate into drama clubs, etc. • Media campaign, • Coordination of ministries and stakeholders

	Short-term (2-5yrs)	Medium-term (5-8yrs)	Long-term (8+yrs)
Sexual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach, seminars, workshops in schools • Increased reporting • Media campaign, • Coordination of ministries and stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community cooperation in programs with community groups, stakeholders, church, NGOs, donors, government agencies • Increased reporting • Media campaign, • Coordination of ministries and stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular activities at the community level to reinforce the norm change • Increased reporting • Media campaign, • Coordination of ministries and stakeholders

THEORY OF CHANGE – SOCIAL NORMS

By 2020, the Government of Guyana and other stakeholders including children have access to information to guide public policy and to identify and report incidences of physical abuse and assist in changing social norms in Guyana.

Legal Policy/Framework

National and sub-national capacity in place, to conduct equity-focused analysis and to create, capture, assess, monitor and evaluate information, about the most disadvantaged children

Assumption: Legalization will continue to be in line with the best-practices in the global arena in relation to the protection of children, and the agencies of this information and pro-active with their intervention strategies.

Risk: Sufficient human and financial resources need to be dedicated to the development of the skills and tools necessary to ensure greater protection of children against violence.

Sexual

The development and implementation of public awareness campaigns and the institutionalization of reporting structures that will reduce the incidences of sexual abuse against children in Guyana

Emotional

Encourage the reduction of the incidences of emotional abuse and neglect by educating the population of the damage inflicted on children who are victims of this type of abuse

Support enabling environment for addressing social norms issues in Guyana

Knowledge generation and dissemination which will include Communication for development (C4D)

Assumption: Agencies and Ministries are willing to enhance their capacity and work in collaboration with other agencies that are mandated to reduce the incidences of violence against children in Guyana.

Risk: Agencies and Ministries may be unable to absorb the required human and financial resources in the short-run, and this can lead to added frustration and ineffectiveness of workers mandated to increase the protection of children in Guyana.

TARGET OUTCOMES

Target Outcomes	Strategies	Recommended Objectives
1. 50% increase in the availability of education, life-skills and outreach programmes for children by 2019	School-based programs that help students develop social, emotional and behavioral skills to build positive relationships	Allows children to investigate their emotions and develop ways for emotional growth and maturity
	After-school program that provides tutoring to increase academic performance	Will increase the academic performance of the children
	Workshops to increase knowledge and understanding of healthy dating relationships	Will teach appropriate methods of interaction and conflict mediation and management
	Classroom based health programs that teach about alcohol and drug use, human rights and life skills	Will educate on the use and effects of these substances and short and long term consequences
	Mentoring/apprenticeship program that pairs youth with caring adults	Develop positive role models who will serve as living examples of admirable persons
	A peer program that teaches youth how they can promote positive norms for dating	Educate teens on appropriate sexual behavior and conflict management skills
	Develop programs to deal with bullying and peer pressure	Reduce the incidences of bullying and create secure environments for the younger children
2. Establishment of nationwide availability of parenting skills programmes and family workshops by 2020	Training programs which teach parents skills for age-appropriate care	Allows the young parents to develop appropriate parenting skills and coping mechanisms
	Workshops on education and family support to promote positive child/parent development	Will develop proper relationships between parents and children in the homes
	Relationship workshops where couples work with other couples on respectful communication strategies	Develop appropriate communication skills among young people
	Create safe employment opportunities	Create safe employment opportunities to distribute wealth within the communities
3. 20% increase in available community based programmes and activities by 2020	Residents organize and make physical improvements to their neighborhoods	Develop an attractive view of the neighborhood to reflect positivity and hope
	Develop safe recreational areas for residents	Create safe areas for the children to play
	Establish and organize community associations	Establish different types of association to engage all the youth people, males and females alike
	Develop a series of after-school programs for youth, in and out of school	The availability of after school programs in the community offer a layer of supervision and monitoring, increase recreational opportunities for youth and increase their level of social connectedness
4. Establishment of nationwide public education and advocacy campaign on prevent of violence against children by 2020	A media campaign including TV, radio, newspaper, and Internet methods of communication to create awareness and change the way people think about violence	Generate easily available information on VAC and related issues, inclusive of differently abled persons and those with different sexual orientations
	A media campaign designed to reduce the stigma associated with self-directed violence being considered only a mental health problem	Create greater understanding about victims of child violence and encourage greater empathy
	A media campaign informing children of their rights, 'safe touch / unsafe touch' and who they can turn to for help	Create greater awareness among children regarding what constitutes child abuse and who they can turn to for support
	A public education campaign on child abuse prevention tips and signs to look out for that can signal that a child is being abused	Promotes the prevention of child abuse and neglect
	A media campaign encouraging the public to report suspected cases of child abuse to the authorities	Reduces the disregard for children being abused and the fear of reporting such cases

Target Outcomes	Strategies	Recommended Objectives
5. Implementation of a capacity development and strengthening plan within the child protection sector by 2020	Support policies for coordination of service agencies dedicated to reducing VAC	Allow for greater policy coordination among agencies
	Advocate for greater governmental support and resources for child protection agencies	Reduces the operational, human, and infrastructural constraints of child protection agencies
	Establishment of multi and inter agency protocols	Facilitates enhanced and streamlined inter-agency collaboration and coordination in the provision of services
	Host stakeholder engagement events to build trust and bolster networks among the child protection agencies	Encourages trust among partner agencies and promotes collaboration
	Create a central repository for data on violence against children	Allows for evidence-based policy development, decision making, and resources allocation
6. Initiate a systemic review of child protection legislation and policy by 2020	Support legislation to encourage employers to offer family-leave options and flexible schedules to both men and women	Create caring work environment
	Support policies for reporting VAC	Allow for more efficient collaboration and information sharing among agencies
	Review legislation to address perceived loopholes and ensure alignment with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child	Creates a robust and comprehensive child protection legislative framework
	Draft legislation to create a rehabilitative approach to juvenile justice	Facilitates the rehabilitation and treatment of juvenile offenders to reduce recidivism and promote development

MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM

In addition to the objectives listed above, it is also recommended that a strong monitoring and evaluation system be implemented with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, periodic targets and key performance indicators to measure the achievement of the objectives targeted at reducing the violence against children in Guyana.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSIONS

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

EVIDENCE	CONCLUSION	RECOMMENDATION
<p>Drug use and Abuse</p> <p>Drug use and abuse causes abuse of children in the households.</p>	<p>This type of abuse exists and the issues need to be raised at the household, community and national levels.</p>	<p>To deal with the issue of abuse and its negative consequences on the family, education programs need to be implemented using the media, and other tools.</p>
<p>Spanking and corporal punishment</p> <p>Physical abuse exists at home and in schools as 'spanking' is seen as an acceptable way of disciplining children.</p>	<p>One of the reasons put forward by interviewees is that this occurs because of the lack of training and orientation of the parents and teachers. Further, this is compounded by acts of bullying which occur among the children at school.</p>	<p>It is generally expected that children will be safe from violence at home and in schools and as such there needs to be more training in schools for the parents and teachers to make them aware of the issues, the rights of the children and their responsibilities as care-takers and educators. Further, this can be achieved through workshops and media campaigns to inform and educate.</p> <p>Further, By having life skills programs for the children, training for the teachers, and guest lectures for members of the NGO and donor communities, child protection agencies and the police and justice to highlight the issues, there is a greater chance of changing the social norms related to child abuse in Guyana.</p>
<p>Residential Care - Disabilities and sexual orientation</p> <p>It is generally believed that children with disabilities, different sexual orientation and those in residential care are equally or more susceptible to physical abuse as those in family care.</p>	<p>The children who are most vulnerable need to be protected and special attention needs to be placed on their situation and special needs.</p>	<p>To resolve this issue, a needs assessment is required to determine what facilities are needed, what facilities exist and how these facilities will be updated, financed, staffed and made adequate in a sustainable way to deal with the cases that are referred to them.</p>
<p>Disabilities and sexual orientation</p> <p>The cases of children with disabilities and different sexual orientation highlight the fact that they are usually more prone to abuses as they are typically viewed as different or abnormal.</p>	<p>Children with disabilities and those of different sexual orientation and particularly vulnerable and special attention needs to be given to ensure their protection.</p>	<p>To remedy this situation, a comprehensive campaign needs to be developed to make the public aware of these issues, further, the staff of these residences need to have specialized training so that they treat the individuals with the requisite amount of care and respect.</p> <p>Further, Essentially, it is being recommended that physical abuse can be reduced through the introduction of awareness campaigns which will educate the community and nation on the issue of violence. These campaigns can be implemented through television, the social media, pamphlets, newspaper advertisements and other forms of communication which will reach board cross-sections of the population regardless of race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation.</p>
<p>Partner Violence</p> <p>Partner violence is on the rise in Guyana, and this is based on social norms that advocate that males are supposed to be in control of females, and females need to be submissive to the males; and if challenged or embarrassed (real or perceived) the male has the right to physically discipline the female.</p>	<p>Partner violence affects not only the direct victim (usually the female) but also has negative behavioural and emotional impacts on the witnesses (usually the children).</p>	<p>To change this social norm and make this type of violence unacceptable to the society, a public campaign needs to be developed as well as education programs in schools to teach the youth that this type of behavior is unacceptable. Further, individuals need to report these incidences so that the authorities can get involved and increase the level of protection that they give in the community.</p>

EMOTIONAL VIOLENCE

EVIDENCE	CONCLUSION	RECOMMENDATION
<p>Home</p> <p>Emotional abuse was defined as the use of words that are harmful to the children and it was believed that this like other types of abuse is unacceptable and the social norms enforcing it need to be changed.</p>	<p>Emotional abuse hinders the psychological, emotional and academic development of children.</p>	<p>As it has been argued that emotional abuse precedes the other types of violence against children, it is imperative to initiate a campaign in the media as well as in schools to make people aware of the ill-effects of emotional abuse, inclusive of negative self-esteem, academic, psychological and developmental issues.</p> <p>A complimentary approach which can be utilized is counselling for individual and family as well as care givers and guardians both at home and in institutions.</p>
<p>Neglect</p> <p>Mothers spending large amounts of time in employment, and less time in child rearing and child care, and this leads to child neglect.</p>	<p>Parental care (primarily with mothers) is needed for proper child care, protection and development.</p>	<p>Safe spaces need to be provided to care for the children when the primary care giver is at work.</p> <p>Further, training programs and increased education can increase the chances of females getting work during the day time hours.</p>
<p>Drug use and abuse</p> <p>It is generally agreed that child neglect is becoming commonplace in Guyana, and one of the major factors leading to neglect of children is the use of alcohol and drugs. Drug use and abuse causes abuse of children in the households.</p>	<p>This type of abuse exists and the issues need to be raised at the household, community and national levels.</p> <p>It was suggested that the practices have led to serious problems amongst youths and have contributed to the destruction of families. The issue of neglect is complex and sometimes difficult to quantify, for example there are increasing numbers of school dropouts because parents cannot afford to send children to school, and this is a problem related to the socio-economic realities of the individual families; but is also considered neglect.</p>	<p>To deal with the issue of abuse and its negative consequences on the family, education programs need to be implemented using the media, and other tools.</p> <p>Education and sensitization are the best ways to combat this problem, as it will make people aware of what is unacceptable as it relates to child neglect as a form of violence against children.</p>
<p>Schools</p> <p>Emotional abuse exists in schools as using harsh and hurtful is seen as an acceptable way of disciplining children.</p>	<p>One of the reasons put forward by interviewees is that this occurs because of the lack of training and orientation of the parents and teachers. Further, this is compounded by acts of bullying which occur among the children at school.</p>	<p>It is generally expected that children will be safe from hard and violence at home and in schools and as such there needs to be more training in schools for the parents and teachers to make them aware of the issues, the rights of the children and their responsibilities as care-takers and educators. Further, this can be achieved through workshops and media campaigns to inform and educate.</p> <p>Further, By having life skills programs for the children, training for the teachers, and guest lectures for members of the NGO and donor communities, child protection agencies and the police and justice to highlight the issues, there is a greater chance of changing the social norms related to child abuse in Guyana.</p>
<p>Sexual Orientation</p> <p>Due to the sexual orientation of some children there is discrimination both at home and in school which at times results in emotional distress and in some extreme reported cases, acts of suicide.</p>	<p>Vulnerable groups of children deserve special attention, and by extension, special protection against violence that s perpetrated against them in society.</p>	<p>It is also noted that there should be greater efforts to raise the awareness within the Guyanese population about children with different sexual orientation and disabilities so that could be greater understanding and consciousness of the need to eliminate emotional abuse against these groups.</p>

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

EVIDENCE	CONCLUSION	RECOMMENDATION
<p>Drug use and abuse</p> <p>Drug use and abuse causes abuse of children in the households.</p>	<p>This type of abuse exists and the issues need to be raised at the household, community and national levels.</p>	<p>To deal with the issue of abuse and its negative consequences on the family, education programs need to be implemented using the media, and other tools.</p>
<p>Physical abuse</p> <p>Physical abuse exists in schools as teachers are seen to have relations with children.</p>	<p>One of the reasons put forward by interviewees is that this occurs because of the lack of training and orientation of the parents and teachers. Further, this is compounded by acts of bullying which occur among the children at school.</p>	<p>It is generally expected that children will be safe from hard and violence at home and in schools and as such there needs to be more training in schools for the parents and teachers to make them aware of the issues, the rights of the children and their responsibilities as care-takers and educators. Further, this can be achieved through workshops and media campaigns to inform and educate.</p> <p>Further, by having life skills programs for the children, training for the teachers, and guest lectures for members of the NGO and donor communities, child protection agencies and the police and justice to highlight the issues, there is a greater chance of changing the social norms related to child abuse in Guyana.</p>
<p>Sexual abuse</p> <p>The respondents defined sexual abuse as any activity which exposes a child to innuendo, touching, caressing or penetration by an adult. Respondents also acknowledged that sexual abuse is taking place in Guyana (particularly in low income and Amerindian communities), but they do not believe that it is generally accepted as a social norm</p>	<p>It has been argued that this occurs in situations of poverty where the mother is usually dependent on a male for financial support and allows the male to have sexual relations with her child/children; so to combat this, it is necessary to find ways of increasing the employability of the females, particularly from low income communities.</p>	<p>In combatting sexual abuse in the communities, one of the first interventions should be to educate individual, communities and the general population about their rights.</p> <p>Further, adults as well as organizations should communicate more frequently to the youth about issues related to sexual abuse.</p> <p>Additionally, it was observed that the law should be framed so that victims are at all times protected, therefore reducing the fear of reporting such issues. It was also noted that there should be sensitization and information campaigns to ensure that all persons are knowledgeable about the appropriate places to file reports and receive protection.</p> <p>To further combat the issue of sexual abuse, efforts should be made to ensure that all agencies which work with children are dedicated to the task of abolishing all types of abuse against children. To this end, there needs to be targeted programs of training, education and re-education for all people who have access to or responsibility for children and their welfare.</p> <p>Additionally, it has been recommended that counselling and more public awareness campaigns be implemented in an effort to reduce incidences of sexual violence against children.</p> <p>It was also argued that education and awareness can help change people's perception on child abuse. It was further suggested that there is need for the establishment of more safe homes with accommodations for both boys and girls where the safety and security of the children should be assured.</p>

EVIDENCE	CONCLUSION	RECOMMENDATION
<p>Disabilities and sexual orientation</p> <p>Children with disabilities and who have different sexual orientations are particularly target for sexual abuse.</p>	<p>These children need to be protected and special attention need to be given to their protection and they need to be aware that this violence perpetrated against them is un acceptable.</p>	<p>In reference to the differently-abled and those with different sexual orientation, campaigns need to be developed to reach them through the media, schools, poster and the like to ensure they understand that they are not obligated to consent when approached for sexual activities. Again, this can be combatted to some extent with education and information, and there needs to be media campaigns to inform the victim and perpetrator alike of the issues and rights related to individuals with different sexual orientation, and in this way reduce their status as targets and victims in the society.</p> <p>It has been argued that sexual abuse can be prevented by creating a mechanism that ensures that when the abuse has been reported, it will be followed through and that justice will be served. This means that all necessary instruments and institutions will need to be in place in order for this to be realized.</p> <p>It was observed that there have been several campaigns by organizations including Child Link, with the respect to training for teachers and students on certain aspects of child abuse. It is suggested that this model could be adopted by all schools and civil society organization which work with children throughout the nation.</p>
<p>Grooming</p> <p>Grooming takes place particularly among the lower socio-economic groups in Guyana.</p>	<p>It is necessary to provide special attention to these occurrences to ensure that children are shielded from this type of violence.</p>	<p>Grooming is often carried out by persons who are trusted by the victims, and these victims while traditionally female, now includes male children with increased frequency.</p> <p>Because poverty and lack of knowledge of what constitutes grooming are contributing factors, one of the first actions needs to be the dissemination of information making people aware of what constitutes grooming (it has been suggested that people are sometimes not aware that they are being abused) and what are the ill-effects of this type of violence.</p>

GENERAL NORMS

In many cases, norms are reinforced by perceptions of the general population. People’s perceptions and their behavior could be changed through sustained education and awareness campaigns, and these campaigns should highlight the long-term consequences of child abuse and the negative impacts on the life of the abused children and the community. These campaigns should also promote the love for children, child rights and moral and family values. Additionally, it was recommended that agencies need to target at-risk communities and create youth clubs and other activities which could provide the basis for greater awareness. It was also suggested that a multidimensional approach be adopted and facilitated by community leaders, community groups (police youth, sports, youth and women’s groups), NGOs, churches and other stakeholders.

It was also observed that safe spaces need to be provided for people to reach out to counsellors and other authorities in times of need for victims and their families. It was also noted that agencies such as the Guyana Police Force, CPA, Rights of Child Commission, and other agencies must provide prompt and effective responses to violence against children. Further, it was observed that laws must be clear and unambiguous in order to ensure the protection of children against violence. Specifically, professionally designed education

campaigns utilizing social media, planning and implementation of workshops and community outreach should be priorities for government, donor agencies, the NGO community and civil society.

Additionally, children from hinterland and Amerindian communities are at higher risk due to accepted social norms and the excessive abuse of alcohol which heighten the risk factors for abuse against children, as a response, it is suggested that in these communities, greater emphasis needs to be placed on education and consciousness-raising programs to reduce the levels of abuse against children.

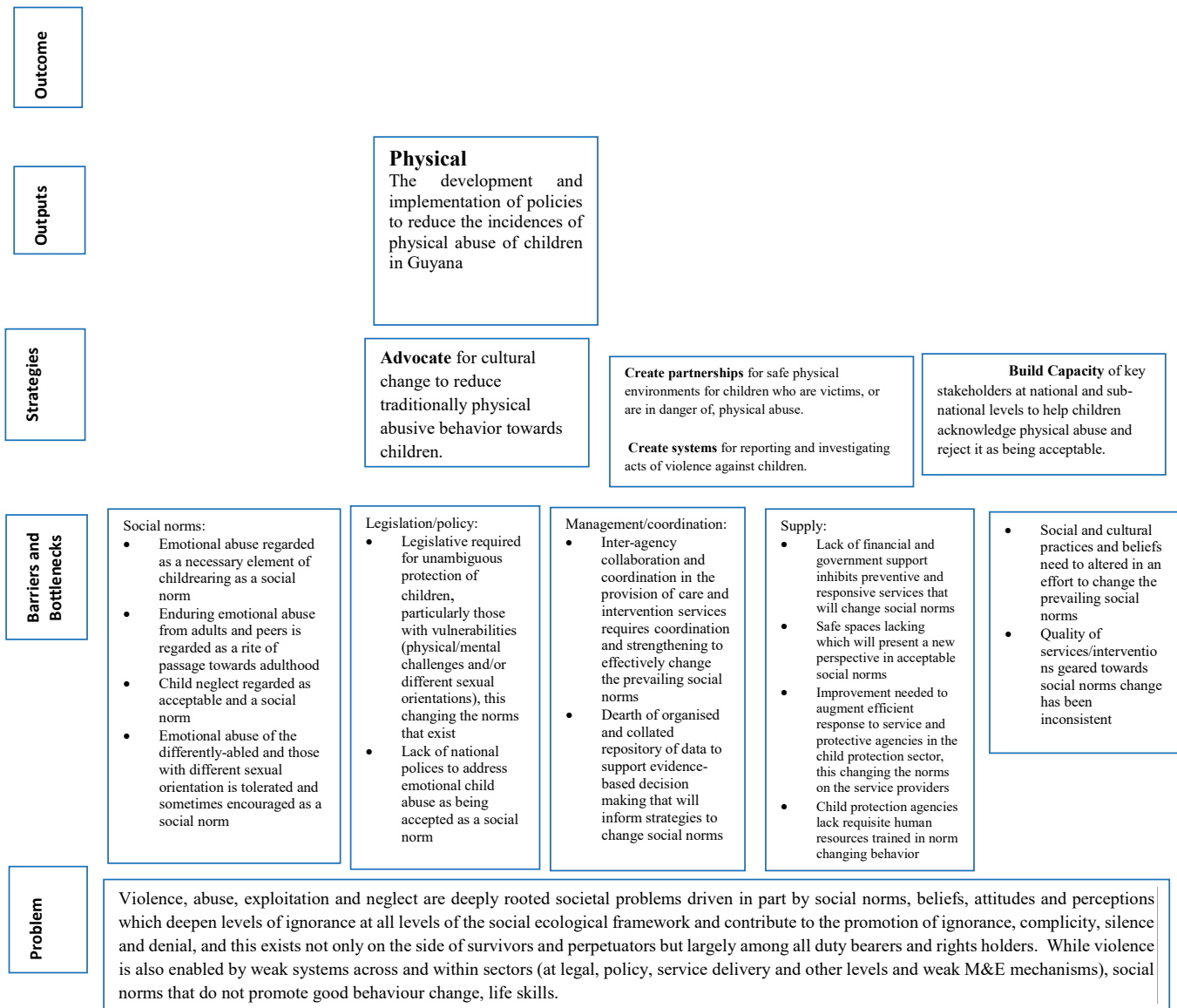
The issues of confidentiality and information sharing is critical when it comes to the protection of victims of child abuse, and to this end, it is recommended that the system can become unified if agencies are instructed to share information, increase the levels of confidentiality and educate the workers on the benefits that can be accrued through collaboration. This lack of trust in partner agencies hampers the agencies’ ability to effectively execute their mandates; thus, ultimately having a negative impact on the children. It was noted that the Ministries of Social Protection, Public Security, Indigenous Peoples Affairs among others, are currently addressing the issue of coordination and collaboration on issues related to child abuse.

Further, in terms of collaboration, it would be beneficial for information and resource sharing to be developed and include the international agencies such as UNICEF and NGOs which could develop joint programs, pool human and financial resources and execute programs which can benefit the children and the national community. This approach can be expanded to include religious leaders, community leaders, women’s groups, police groups, teachers, youth groups, health services, welfare services and protective services in the communities.

BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES

Theses behavioral objectives are based on prioritization of issues found by the study.

Issue	Current Status/Finding	Prescription	Targeted Outcome
Children with disabilities	Children are ill-treated and subjected to violence	Monitoring the facilities and homes by social workers and health officials Increase reporting of violations Increase awareness and education of care givers, community and society	Increase level of treatment and reduce violence against children



Issue	Current Status/Finding	Prescription	Targeted Outcome
Children with different sexual orientation	Children are ill-treated and subjected to violence at home and at school	<p>Increase reporting of violent incidents</p> <p>Sensitize the public about the issue of sexual orientation</p> <p>Increase awareness and education of community and society</p>	<p>Increase levels of awareness and acceptance</p> <p>Reduce violence against this group</p> <p>Reintegration of this group into community and society</p>
Physical violence	Children are being subjected to physical violence	<p>Sensitize the public about the issue of physical violence</p> <p>Increase awareness and education of community and society</p>	Reduction in physical abuse against children
Corporal Punishment	Children are being beating in schools	<p>Sensitize the public about the issue of corporal punishment</p> <p>Increase awareness and education of teachers, parents, community and society</p> <p>Increase reporting of incidents</p>	Change rules of the Ministry of Education so beating is banned.
Partner violence	Children are being abused by their sexual partners	<p>Sensitize the public about the issue of physical violence</p> <p>Increase awareness and education of community and society</p> <p>Increase reporting of incidents</p> <p>Increase involvement of social services and community groups (FBO, etc.)</p>	Reduce partner violence across the nation
Sexual violence	Children are subject to sexual violence	<p>Sensitize the public about the issue of sexual violence</p> <p>Increase awareness and education of community and society</p> <p>Increase reporting of incidents</p> <p>Increase involvement of social services</p>	Reduce sexual violence against children across the nation

Issue	Current Status/Finding	Prescription	Targeted Outcome
Institutions	Levels of care are low and levels of abuse are high	<p>Increase funding to these institutions</p> <p>Hire qualified staff</p> <p>Institute mandatory training for all staff</p> <p>Develop monitoring and evaluation systems for these institutions</p> <p>Increase involvement of social services</p>	Increase vigilance, reporting and standards of care in all institutions interacting with children
Emotional violence	Children are being emotionally abused	<p>Sensitize the public about the issue of emotional violence – targeting teachers and parents</p> <p>Increase awareness and education of community and society</p> <p>Increase reporting of incidents</p>	reduce the incidents of emotional abuse across the nation
Child neglect	Children are suffering from child neglect in the homes	<p>Sensitize the public about the issue of child neglect, particularly parents and teachers</p> <p>Increase awareness and education of community and society</p> <p>Increase involvement of social services and community groups (FBO, etc.)</p> <p>Get more community involvement in the care of children</p> <p>Increase reporting of incidents</p>	Reduce the cases of child neglect across the nation

Issue	Current Status/Finding	Prescription	Targeted Outcome
Grooming	Children are victims of grooming	<p>Sensitize the public about the issue of grooming, especially teachers and parents</p> <p>Increase awareness and education of community and society</p> <p>Get more community involvement in the care of children</p> <p>Increase reporting of incidents</p>	Reduce the incidences of grooming across the nation
Incest		<p>Sensitize the public about the issue of incest, particularly the at-risk communities</p> <p>Increase awareness and education of community and society, particularly the at-risk communities</p> <p>Increase involvement of social services and community groups (FBO, etc.)</p> <p>Increase reporting of incidents</p>	Reduce the incidences of incest across the nation
Teenage Pregnancies	Children are becoming pregnant in their childhood and teen years	<p>Sensitize the public about the issue of sexual violence</p> <p>Increase awareness and education of community and society, particularly the at-risk communities</p> <p>Increase involvement of social services and community groups (FBO, etc.)</p> <p>Increase reporting of incidents</p>	Reduce the incidences of teenage pregnancies across the nation

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APPENDIX 1: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS BY REGION

REGION	COMMUNITY
Region 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mabaruma • Port Kaituma
Region 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Opportunity Corps • Lake Mainstay
Region 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Coast - Helena Mahaica • Buxton • Georgetown • Sophia Holding Centre • Agricola • Grove
Region 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Amsterdam - Angoy 's Avenue • University of Guyana, Tain Campus • Black Bush Polder • Rose Hall
Region 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St. Ignatius • Lethem
Region 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wismar • Mackenzie

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF KII AND FOCUS GROUPS

Name of Stakeholder	Organization
Amerindian Peoples Association	Ms. Jean La Rose
Anglican Diocese	Father Davidson
Blossom Inc.	Ms. Dean
Buxton Youth Developers	Mr. Lennox Shuffler
Catholic Church	Bishop Francis Alleyne
Child Link Guyana	Ms. Kean Chase
Childcare and Protection Agency, Lethem	Ms. Sophia Best
CIOG	Mr. Moen ul Hack & Nadeen Ramsaran
Guyana Dharmic Maha Sabha	Dr. Vindya Persaud
Guyana Human Rights Association	Mr. Mike Mc Cormack

Name of Stakeholder	Organization
Guyana Police Force	Ass. Comm. Paul Williams & Asst. Supt. Leslyn Halley-Smith
Guyana Rastafarian Council	Ras. Leon Saul/Ras Khafua
Help and Shelter	Ms. Kurtzious
Indigenous Peoples Commission	Mr. Neil Bacchus
Methodist Church	Ms. Gestruide Scott & Ms. Gillian Phillips
Ministry of Legal Affairs	Mrs. Stuart-Edgehill
Ministry of Health	Dr. K. Boyle
Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs	Mr. Alfred King
Ministry of Social Protection	Ms. Ann Greene
National Commission on Disabilities	Ms. Oslyn Smith
National Tosaos Council	Mr. Lennox Shuman
New Opportunity Corps	Mr. Singh
Red Thread	Ms. Karen De Souza
Rights of the Child Commission	Mr. Amar Panday
SASOD	Mr. Joel Simpson
Sophia Holding Centre	Ms. Evette Sancho
St Francis Developers	Mr. Alex Foster
University of Guyana, Tain Campus - Social Work Unit.	Ms. Paulette Henry
Women Across Differences	Mrs. Samuels-Boston
Women and Gender Equality Commission	Ms. Indra Chandarpal & Ms. Nicole Cole
Focus Groups	
Agricola Training Centre	Ms. Philominea Jones
Buxton	Mr. Lennox Shuffler / Mr. Robin Phillips
Community of Positive Women and Girls	Mrs. Samuels-Boston
Golden Grove Community Development Strategy Group	Mr. David Chung
Kitty Women's Group	Ms. Watterman
Lethem	Ms. Sophia Best
Linden/ Region 10	Mr. Carwyn Holland
Mabaruma	Ms. Donna Wilburg
Ministry of Education NCERD	Ms. Abigail Baveghems
NDC-Diamond	Ms. Nafeeza Rodrigues
Whim - Corentyne	Ms. Singh
Mainstay Region 2,	Mr. Joel Fredricks
Vreed en Hoop Region 3, West-Demerara	Ms. Verna Johnson
Mocha Focus Group	Mr. Joyce
New Amsterdam	Ms. Roseita De Castro

APPENDIX 3: INFORMED CONSENT FORMS

INFORMED CONSENT FOR STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

The Anatol Institute of Research and Social Sciences

Description of the Interview:

This is a structured interview in which a number of different questions will be asked to prompt a discussion on social norms in Guyana as it pertains to sexual physical and emotional violence against children, as well as the structures and processes in place to protect children, provide assistance and facilitate treatment. Cultural and social norms are important considerations when dealing with issues of violence against children, these are rules or expectations of behavior within a specific cultural or social group. These norms dictate to the social group what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior Your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time, without prejudice, should you object to the nature of the research. You are entitled to ask questions throughout the interview process. The interview is being recorded for the purposes of this study, however you should feel the need to share information off the record, please indicate such with the researcher conducting the interview.

Purpose of Study:

You are being asked to participate in a research study being conducted by The Anatol Institute of Research and Social Sciences on behalf of UNICEF Guyana. This study covers an array of areas in which the main purpose is to establish baseline indicators for social norms and attitudes in Guyana as it pertains to the sexual, physical and emotional violence against children.

You have been selected as a key stakeholder within the child protection sector in Guyana and the purpose of this interview is to garner your professional feedback and opinions on questions based on your experience and expertise with the aim of achieving the objectives of this study. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear, or for which you require more information.

Contact Information:

If you have questions regarding your role as a key stakeholder in this interview process, or if problems arise which you do not believe you can discuss with the researcher conducting the interview, you can contact the Team Leaders for the study, Dr. Raymond Mark Kirton (mark.kirton@sta.uwi.edu) and/or Dr. Marlon Anatol (marlonanatol200@yahoo.com).

CONSENT:

I have read and understand the provided information and have had the opportunity to ask any questions I may have. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Participant's Name: _____

Interviewer's Name: _____

Interviewer's Signature: _____ Date: _____

INFORMED CONSENT FOR FOCUS GROUPS

The Anatol Institute of Research and Social Sciences

Description of the Focus Group:

This is a focus group in which a number of different questions will be asked to prompt a discussion on social norms in Guyana as it pertains to sexual physical and emotional violence against children, as well as the structures and processes in place to protect children, provide assistance and facilitate treatment. Cultural and social norms are important considerations when dealing with issues of violence against children, these are rules or expectations of behavior within a specific cultural or social group. These norms dictate to the social group what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior Your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time, without prejudice, should you object to the nature of the research. You are entitled to ask questions throughout the focus group process. The focus group is being recorded for the purposes of this study, however you should feel the need to share information off the record, please indicate such with the researcher conducting the focus group.

Purpose of Study:

You are being asked to participate in a research study being conducted by The Anatol Institute of Research and Social Sciences on behalf of UNICEF Guyana. This study covers an array of areas in which the main purpose is to establish baseline indicators for social norms and attitudes in Guyana as it pertains to the sexual, physical and emotional violence against children.

You have been selected as a key stakeholder within the child protection sector in Guyana and the purpose of this focus group is to garner your professional feedback and opinions on questions based on your experience and expertise with the aim of achieving the objectives of this study. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear, or for which you require more information.

Contact Information:

If you have questions regarding your role as a key stakeholder in this research process, or if problems arise which you do not believe you can discuss with the researcher conducting the interview, you can contact the Team Leaders for the study, Dr. Raymond Mark Kirton (mark.kirton@sta.uwi.edu) and/or Dr. Marlon Anatol (marlonanatol200@yahoo.com).

CONSENT:

I have read and understand the provided information and have had the opportunity to ask any questions I may have. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Participant's Name: _____

Interviewer's Name: _____

Interviewer's Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX 4: QUESTIONNAIRES

QUESTIONS FOR KEY STAKEHOLDERS ON SOCIAL NORMS

1. What do you think are the factors that lead to violence against children in Guyana?

Physical Abuse

2. Is physical abuse generally accepted as a social norm? Can you define physical abuse?
3. What are the short term effects of physical abuse against these children?
4. What are the long term effects of physical abuse against these children?
5. What can be done to prevent physical abuse?
6. What about children with disabilities?
7. What about children with different sexual orientation?
8. Is corporal punishment justified? In what circumstances?
9. To know extent do you think partner violence is an issue among children in Guyana?

Emotional Abuse

10. Is emotional abuse generally accepted as a social norm? Can you define emotional abuse?
11. What are the short term effects of emotional abuse against these children?
12. What are the long term effects of emotional abuse against these children?
13. What can be done to prevent emotional abuse?
14. What about children with disabilities?
15. What about children with different sexual orientation?
16. Do you think neglect is commonplace in Guyana?
17. In what context do you see this as a problem?

Sexual Abuse

18. Is sexual abuse generally accepted as a social norm? Can you define sexual abuse?
19. What are the short term effects of sexual abuse against these children?
20. What are the long term effects of sexual abuse against these children?
21. What can be done to prevent sexual abuse?
22. What about children with disabilities?
23. What about children with different sexual orientation?
24. To what extent do you think grooming contributes to sexual abuse against children?

General

25. What can help change the perceptions of people in order to change their behavior towards child abuse?
26. Do you think social norms about abuse changing in Guyana?
27. Are people now more aware and changing their behaviour to be more child-friendly?
28. What influence do these factors play in changing perceptions and behavior?
 - a. Educational/Intelligence level of the perpetrator
 - b. Social class of the perpetrator
 - c. Ethnicity of the perpetrator
 - d. Gender of the perpetrator
 - e. Religion of the perpetrator.
 - f. Family structure of the perpetrator.
29. Are these factors culturally specific? Do some communities perpetrate more of one kind of violence (such as incest? Non-education? Corporal punishment? Early marriage?)

Targeted Questions on Social Norms in System, Legislation and Rights

30. What are our views about removing children who are victims of child abuse from the homes, especially in cases where the perpetrator is a family member (financial supporter of the home – father, uncle, step-father, mother’s boyfriend etc.)
31. Are the institutions (children’s homes, child protection agencies etc) in place to protect children actually protecting and rehabilitating them or causing more harm?
32. Does the judicial system adequately protect children from abuse and provide effective recourse for justice in a timely manner? Are child abusers charged and convicted? What are the gaps?
33. In your view, are systems, processes, legislation and institutions in place to rehabilitate child offenders?
34. Do you think that there is stigma attached to the victims of child abuse as well as children who grow up in residential care?
35. What factors inhibit persons from reporting instances of abuse? (or make them hesitate to report)
36. Are there gaps in the current child protection system?
37. Is the system unified or are agencies working in silos?
38. Is there information and resource sharing among agencies/ institutions – does it happen, is it feasible, would it be beneficial? Discuss the issue of child protection prevention rather than protection – what strategies, policies, legislation, and public education needs to be drafted or put in place to push an agenda of prevention.

QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUPS

1. Demographic data to be recorded.
2. In your community is violence against children accepted?
3. What do you think are the factors that lead to violence against children in Guyana?
4. What are the short term/long term effects of physical abuse against these children?
5. What can be done to prevent the different types of abuse against children?
6. What about children with disabilities?
7. What about children with different sexual orientation?
8. Is corporal punishment justified? In what circumstances?
9. To know extent do you think partner violence is an issue among children in Guyana?
10. In what context do you see this as a problem?
11. To what extent do you think grooming contributes to sexual abuse against children?
12. To what extent is partner violence a problem among children?
13. What can help change the perceptions of people in order to change their behavior towards child abuse?
14. Do you think social norms about abuse changing in Guyana?
15. Are people now more aware and changing their behaviour to be more child-friendly?

16. What influence do these factors play in changing perceptions and behavior?
 - a. Educational/Intelligence level of the perpetrator
 - b. Social class of the perpetrator
 - c. Ethnicity of the perpetrator
 - d. Gender of the perpetrator
 - e. Religion of the perpetrator.
 - f. Family structure of the perpetrator.

17. Are these factors culturally specific? Do some communities perpetrate more of one kind of violence (such as incest? Non-education? Corporal punishment? Early marriage?)

Consider the following stories and tell me what could have led to this behavior by an adult, in other words, why it occurred:

18. An adult in the household has sexual contact with one or more of the children in that household.
19. A mother beats a child with a broom and locks him/her in the room without dinner.
20. An adult refuses to compliment a child or acknowledge when the child achieves something or excels at school, sports or helps other people.
21. A parent knows that a child is engaging in sexual activity and does nothing about it.

Please suggest other ways that the adult could have reacted that would result in acts of violence to the child.