

Lift the Children Fact Sheet on Child Abuse, Neglect and Abandonment

UN Violence against Children Report

The UN Secretary-General's 2006 Study on Violence against Children states that:

- The vast majority of violent acts is perpetrated by people who are part of the child victim's immediate environment.
- Violence against children in the home or family includes physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse and neglect
- Identifiable factors at the household level—poverty, hunger, overcrowding, unemployment, and social isolation—increase the risk of child maltreatment.
- The estimated number of children witnessing violence in the home is:
 - Latin America and Caribbean: 11.3-25.5 million
 - Commonwealth of Independent States: 900,000 to 3.6 million
 - South Asia: 40.7-88 million
 - Sub-Saharan Africa: 34.9-38.2 million
 - Developed countries (including the U.S.): 4.6-11.3 million
 - **Global Estimate: 133-275 million**
- The World Health Organization estimates that almost 53,000 child deaths in 2002 were homicides.
- Only 2.4% of the world's children are legally protected from corporal punishment in all settings.
- Violence against children is considered a human rights problem as outlined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 19: "States parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical and mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardians or any other person who has the care of the child."

Child Separation from Families

The term "vulnerable children" is commonly used to refer to children in a community who are at the greatest risk of losing their basic rights to parental care, healthcare, equality, education and protection. Lift the Children uses the term "vulnerable children" to refer to all those under the age of 18 who lack, or are in danger of losing, family-based care. According to the World Bank's definition of orphans and vulnerable children, "Orphans and vulnerable children are the children who, in a given local setting, are most likely to fall through the cracks of regular programs, policies and traditional safety nets and therefore need to be given special attention when programs and policy are designed and implemented."

- The separation of children from their families can result from many causes, including abandonment, the death of one or both parents, parents who abuse alcohol or drugs, family or community violence, gender or cultural discrimination, displacement due to armed conflict, human trafficking, or the inability or unwillingness of the family to provide care.
- The roots of separation can also be found in behavior problems, relationship difficulties, abuse, or neglect.
- Separation is also caused by larger systemic issues such as poverty, conflict, natural disaster, or HIV/AIDS.
- Prevention of family separation is called for in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (article 16) and is integral to the Convention the Rights of the Child (articles 5–9, 18, 24, 27-29). These rights apply to all families and children, regardless of their nationality, or status.

Source: Better Care Network, www.crin.org/bcn/

Shaken Baby Syndrome

- It is estimated that 21-74 per 100,000 children worldwide are victims annually.

Source: ISPCAN, 2008

Guatemala

- 50% of under-18 population (around 3.7 million girls, boys and adolescents) lives in poverty
- The situation is dramatically worse among children in rural areas and indigenous children and adolescents where 76% and 80% respectively lives in poverty.
- Nearly 23% of children over three months and under five months of age suffered from general malnutrition and almost ½ suffered from chronic malnutrition in 2006.
- Scarce financial resources for household expenses and the resulting child labor are some of the main reasons why girls and boys do not move forward in their educational path and cannot break the cycle of poverty in the future.
- 23% of children and young people between 7 and 16 were part of the country's labor force.

Source: www.unicef.org/infobycountry/guatemala.html?q=printme

UNICEF Romania

- The adjusted maternal-mortality ratio of 49 per 100,000 live births is high. Abortion-related deaths account for a large proportion of these deaths; Romania's abortion rate is five times higher than rates in western European countries. Abandonment by mothers is a continuing problem.
- Poverty and poor food fortification contribute to malnutrition.
- Although HIV/AIDS incidence is low, it is concentrated largely in children infected between 1986 and 1991. But the situation could change drastically over the next few years as those teenagers become sexually active, because the level of knowledge about HIV/AIDS transmission and about public health is poor.
- More than 80,000 children live in institutions or substitute families, deprived of parental care.

- The understaffed education system is in need of resources and modernization. Roma children face challenges in participating in education.

Source: www.unicef.org/infobycountry/romania_background.html?q=printme

Orphanages vs. Family or Community Care

By offering shelter, clothing, food and medical care, and providing for basic educational needs, orphanages can provide an immediate and necessary solution for children who have lost parents and caregivers. In some cases, where children have been separated from their families in times of conflict or natural disaster, or in cases of physical and sexual abuse, temporary shelters can extend a critical lifeline to children in urgent need of care.

Yet orphanages and other forms of long-term residential care may unintentionally deprive children of a family setting. The very nature of these institutions makes it difficult for them to adequately support children's healthy emotional and physical developmental needs, which extend beyond food, medical care and schooling. In the worst cases, orphanages hinder children's development and fail to protect them from harsh treatment or conditions resembling child labor. Sexual abuse has been reported in many institutions which do not have the systems or structures to monitor and prevent it. Few developing countries have up-to-date laws to regulate orphanages, certify staff, and generally abide by international standards governing institutional care.

One study shows that providing institutional care costs six times more than local fostering. Where an institution is available, it may actually undermine the community's (or country's) motivation to develop family strengthening services or other initiatives that will provide the necessary supports that keep children in their families and prevent abandonment.

Lift the Children is committed to family strengthening support that reduces the stressors leading to abuse, neglect, and abandonment.