Developing guidance for preventing and responding to child sexual abuse and exploitation

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Background and purpose

- UNICEF works in more than 150 countries and territories: in more than 70 countries support is provided to Government and civil society efforts to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse and exploitation, in and out of emergencies.

- UNICEF and partners identified a need for evidence based consolidated guidance for those working at country, regional and global levels on preventing and responding to child sexual abuse and exploitation.

- Two publications were commissioned, an Evidence review (covering a review of research and published guidance) and guidance.
Methodology

Research problem → Research responses → Review guidance

Review literature

Expert review

Select case studies
Methodology

Desk based reviews of:


2. Research on interventions to prevent or respond – 17 research databases searched, 10,837 readings identified of which 118 were included.

3. Published guidance on child sexual abuse and exploitation, 110 guidance publications were found, 81 were included in the analysis.

Independent expert review 21 experts (14 Evidence, 13 guidance)

Case study selection
Rating the evidence

- Evidence on prevalence:
  - Criteria based on Boyle, 1989.

- Evidence on nature & impact:
  - Based on NICE checklists 2009

- Evidence on interventions:
  - Tested effective
  - Promising
  - Emerging promising
  - Pioneering
  - Low

- Guidance:
  - Clarity and scope
  - Construction of guidance
  - Dimensions of work covered
  - Focus on children
    - Explicit reference to children’s rights?
    - Children meaningfully consulted?
  - Diversity
  - Provision of supportive material
    - Tools for practitioners, etc.
Challenges in evidence on prevention and response

- Research bias to HICs
- Focus on interventions rather than policy, coordinated responses or systems
- Lack of evidence on outcomes
- What works, for whom, where & in what circumstances?
- Fragmented approaches – GBV, HIV, economic development, VAC
- Similar and different issues GBV & violence against children
- Sufficient evidence for action
# Overview of findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tested effective</th>
<th>Promising</th>
<th>Emerging promising</th>
<th>Pioneering</th>
<th>Low/harmful</th>
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<tr>
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<td>National</td>
<td>System</td>
<td>Responses</td>
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<td>More known</td>
<td>about what</td>
<td>does not work</td>
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<td>Prevention</td>
<td>Identification and Protection</td>
<td>Recovery and Reintegration</td>
<td>Low/harmful</td>
<td>Pioneering</td>
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Guidance review

• No guidance covers the full scope of child sexual abuse and exploitation - 5 areas: sexual exploitation/trafficking (13), GBV/VAW (33), broad sexual violence/abuse (14), child protection (9), data collection & monitoring (12).

• Gaps in responses for boys, on perpetrators, young people who sexually harm, online, equity issues.

• Just under 30% (24) were rated high on evidence content.

• Consensus in the guidance reviewed over key principles to inform methods of working.

• Many show commitment to children’s rights but lack a theory of change/outcome focus.
Summary of risks

Society
- Social norms
- Male sexual entitlement

Community
- Poor victim support
- Weak perpetrator sanctions
- Inequality
- Discrimination
- Armed conflict
- Humanitarian crisis

Family & relationships
- Family 'honour'
- Tolerance of CSA or CSE
- Poverty
- Victimization response
- High level violence
- Weak legal sanctions
- Child & early marriage

Individual
- Mental health
- Substance abuse
- Gender
- Age
- Disability
- Attitudes
- Parenting problems
- Gangs
- Sexually aggressive peers
- Child abuse
- IPV

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Actions needed at each level

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Theory of Change Model

- **Supremacy:**
  - Realisation of the rights of children to be protected from all forms of violence, exploitation and abuse

- **Impacts:**
  - Progress towards development goals as a key barrier to development for children and factors of inequality are removed

- **Outcomes:**
  - Girls and boys of all ages are safe and free from all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation in all the settings and contexts in which it occurs.

- **Outputs:**
  - Children who have reached adolescence can make informed decisions about sexual content without coercion, discrimination or exploitation
  - Those in contact with children in all settings and contexts are protected from sexually abusing and exploiting children

- **Intermediaries:**
  - Socio-cultural norms, structural inequalities, beliefs, behaviours and practices that allow child sexual abuse and exploitation to happen no longer exist

- **Interventions:**
  - Gather evidence to identify the extent, nature & consequences of the problem and current responses
  - Change social norms and behaviour that support child sexual abuse and exploitation and gender-based violence
  - Build capacity for child protection systems, professionals and all adults to prevent, intervene early, protect and support children

- **Barriers:**
  - Failure to implement CRC, poor legal protection and govt resources
  - Poor level of child autonomy, consultation and participation

- **Problems:**
  - Sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of male and female children and adolescents perpetrated by adults, including caregivers, or peers in the settings of the home, school, community, workplace, media & online environment, in residential accommodation, justice system or ‘in care’, in travel, tourism and leisure, in the context of armed conflict or humanitarian crisis

- **Components:**
  - Families, peers, communities and staff of sectors have knowledge, resources and motivation to take effective action
  - Vulnerable children are identified and have effective interventions to reduce risk and prevent sexual abuse and exploitation
  - Children know how to identify sexual abuse and exploitation and can access information, help and support directly themselves
  - Sexually abused and exploited children are identified, effectively protected and given help for recovery and reintegration
  - Perpetrators are identified, prevented from getting access to children, given appropriate sanctions and stopped from committing further offenses

- **Early response prevents re-victimisation and resulting harmful consequences**

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Interventions

- Step 1 – Gathering evidence on the problem (Chapter 4). (Chapter 5 discusses evidence gaps).
- Step 2 – Creating an enabling national framework (Chapter 6).
- Step 3 – Changing norms and behaviour (Chapter 7).
- Step 4 – Reducing risks (Chapter 8).
- Step 5 – Building capacity to respond (Chapter 9).
- Step 6 – Special measures for humanitarian crisis situations, including armed conflict (Chapter 10).
- Step 7 – Children’s participation (Chapter 11).
- Step 8 – Monitoring and evaluating change (Chapter 12).
Some case study examples

- Gathering evidence on the problem – VAC Tanzania
- Reducing risks – Stepping Stones Uganda; Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents
- Building capacity to respond – Families Matter! Barnahus children’s house; Romanian Children’s Helpline
- Zambia apprenticeship model of trauma recovery
- Humanitarian crisis contexts – child friendly spaces
Next steps
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Connect Research Centre website  
http://www.uclan.ac.uk/research/environment/groups/connect_centre_int_research_new_appoaches_prevent_violence_harm.php

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