The Optimus Study on Child Abuse, Violence and Neglect in South Africa
What are we exploring? The child’s exposure to violence

- Sexual abuse
- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect
- Violent crime (e.g., robbery, theft, assault)
- Cyberbullying
- Witnessing violent incidents
- Exposure to family violence
OPTIMUS STUDY ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Population Survey

Household Survey:
- N=5,635
- 15 to 17 year old
- Multi-stage area probability sample

School-based survey:
- N=4,095
- Cluster sampling (matched to h/h)
- Grades 8 to 10

Administered questionnaires
Self-completed forms

Instrument:
- Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire (Finkehor et al, 2005)

* Sample: de=3, CI=95%, RR=90%
Study Findings
Study Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Households %</th>
<th>Schools %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>55.7</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>44.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“At any time in your life, did a caregiver hit, beat, kick, or physically hurt you in any way?”

CHILD PHYSICAL ABUSE
Child physical abuse

• **One in three** (34.4%) reported physical abuse
• Girls reported more physical abuse than boys
• Other rates reported:
  – In schools interviews: 20.8%
  – In home interviews: 18.0%
  – In home self-administered questionnaires: 26.1%
• Global average: 22.6%
“At any time in your lifetime, did you get scared or feel really bad because grown-ups (adults) in your life called you names, said mean things to you, or said they didn’t want you?”

CHILD EMOTIONAL ABUSE
Child emotional abuse

• **One in six** (16.1%) reported emotional abuse
• Girls reported more emotional abuse than boys
• Other rates reported:
  – In home interviews: 12.6%
1. Was there a time in your life that you often had to look after yourself because a parent drank too much alcohol, took drugs, or wouldn't get out of bed?
2. Was there a time in your life when you often had to go looking for a parent because the parent left you alone, or with brothers and sisters, and you didn't know where the parent was?
3. Was there a time in your life when your parents often had people over at the house who you were afraid to be around?
4. Was there a time in your life when you lived in a home that was broken down, unsafe, or unhealthy? For example, it had broken stairs, toilets or sinks that didn't work, trash piled up, and things like that?
5. Was there a time in your life when your parents did not care if you were clean, wore clean clothes, or brushed your teeth and hair?

CHILD NEGLECT
Child neglect

• **One in five** (21.3%) reported having experienced one form of neglect
• Girls reported more neglect than boys
• Other rates reported:
  – In schools interviews: 7.9%
  – In home interviews: 8.9%
  – In home self-administered questionnaires: 17.0%
• Global average: 16.3%
Child neglect

- Ever experienced ANY neglect:
  - Respondents ever had to go looking for a parent because the parent left them alone, or with brothers and sisters, and they did not know where the parent was: 0.9%
  - Ever a time when parents did not care if respondents were clean, wore clean clothes or brushed their teeth or hair: 1.6%
  - Respondents ever had to look after themselves because a parent drank too much alcohol, took drugs, or would not get out of bed: 1.3%
  - Respondents ever often had people over at their house whom they were afraid to be around: 1.7%
  - Respondents ever lived in a home that was broken down, unsafe, or unhealthy: 7.9% (Schools) 8.9% (Households)

%
Whether adolescents had been exposed to:

- coerced (unwanted or by force) and consensual sexual touching,
- exposure to intimate body parts or pornographic images
- sexual harassment
- penetrative and non-penetrative sexual intercourse (actual or attempted),
- ... by or with an adult or similar aged peers.
Child sexual abuse and maltreatment

• **One in five** young people reported having experienced some form of sexual abuse in their lifetimes.

• This rate is higher than the global average, but no worse that the highest rates identified in studies from Australia and other countries in Africa.

• Although boys reported *similar* rates of having experienced some form of sexual abuse:
  – girls were more likely to experience **forced and penetrative sexual abuse**, and other forms of sexual abuse that involve contact with the abuser,
  – boys were more likely to report **forced exposure to sexual acts** and material.
Child sexual abuse (schools)

- Ever experienced ANY sexual abuse: 19.8%
  - Unknown adult ever touched respondents’ private parts or forced them to have sex: 0.9%
  - Any child or teen ever made respondents do sexual things against their will: 2.1%
  - Known adult ever touched respondents’ private parts or made respondents touch their private parts: 2.4%
  - Anyone ever tried to hurt respondents’ feelings by saying or writing something sexual about their bodies: 2.4%
  - Anyone ever tried to force respondents to have sex of any kind, even if it did not happen: 3.2%
  - Anyone ever made respondents look at their private parts by using force or surprise, or force respondents to watch them masturbate or view nude pictures or videos: 4.1%
  - Respondents ever do any sexual things with anyone 18 or older, even things they both wanted: 7.1%
  - Self-administered: 12.9%
  - Interviewed: 15.7%
Child sexual abuse (households)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Self-administered</th>
<th>Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ever experienced ANY sexual abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown adult ever touched respondents’ private parts or forced them to have sex</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Known adult ever touched respondents’ private parts or made respondents touch their private parts</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anyone ever try to hurt respondents’ feelings by saying or writing something sexual about their bodies</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anyone ever tried to force respondents to have sex of any kind, even if it did not happen</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>7</td>
<td>2.2</td>
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Lifetime exposure to sexual abuse, by gender

- There were large differences between the interviewer-administered and self-administered questionnaires, in both schools and households.
- In the schools questionnaires, male responses increased from 10.8% in the interview to 20.3% in the self-administered questionnaires.
- Female responses increased from 15% in the interview to 19.2% in the self-administered questionnaires.
- A similar pattern is true for the household sample.
Identity, age and knowledge of the abuser (schools)

- Schools questionnaire: 2.4% stated in the interview that a known adult had sexually abused them
- Schools self-administered: 5.7%
- Schools questionnaire: 0.9% stated in the interview that a unknown adult (stranger) had sexually abused them
- Schools self-administered: 5.5%
Full report available....


• And there is more to come!