Parenting, Gender Socialisation and the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect in Low- and Middle-income Countries

SVRI/Oak Foundation Research Seminar
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Outline

• Background to the literature review
• Methodology
• Incidence and prevalence of CSA in SSA
• Impact and consequences
• Profile of perpetrators
• Risk factors
• Protective factors
• Promising regional practices
• Policy implications
• Research priorities
Background

- **Review objectives:**
  - Understand the spectrum of CSA experienced, determinants, and consequences;
  - Determine the magnitude
  - To identify the existing policy and programme responses policies and programs devoted to combatting child sexual abuse, and gaps
  - Make recommendations re a comprehensive inter-sector programmatic response
Methodology

- Core group
- Technical working group
- Request for information via listservs
- Reports of international/national agencies/NGOs/UNCRC Country Reports
- Electronic data base searches
- On-line searches via Google
- Most countries in SSA covered – 47 in total
Methodology

• Limitations:
  – Varying definitions
  – Interchangeable terminology
  – Methodological differences between studies – variability in prevalence estimates
  – Differing samples – large surveys, clinical samples, anecdotal information
  – Almost no information on certain types – e.g. boys
Incidence and prevalence of CSA

• Sexual harassment:
  – High rates across SSA, including at primary schools – from 16-60%
  – Boys also vulnerable
Incidence and prevalence of CSA

• Rape
  – High rates across all regions of SSA
  – Number of studies from SA but fewer (to very few or none!) from other parts
  – Incidence rates from 5% to over 60%
  – High rates of rape also in conflict areas
Incidence and prevalence of CSA

• Exploitation, prostitution, transactional
  – Data scanty and patchy
  – Based mostly on children identified and repatriated
  – Rates high across the region
  – Prostitution, production of pornography
  – Boys and girls
Impact of CSA

- Denial of fundamental rights
- Undermining development goals
- Health complications
- Social and behavioural problems
- Psychological consequences
- Perpetuating the cycle of violence
- High socio-economic costs
Consequences of CSA

- Poor school performance, and impediment to completing education
- Rejection by family and society
- Family disharmony
- Poor parenting and abusive behaviour in later life
Consequences of CSA

• Physical consequences:
  – HIV infection and STIs
  – More severe genital injury
  – Unwanted pregnancy and unsafe abortion
Impact of CSA

• Reproductive health consequences:
  – pregnancy-induced hypertension
  – anaemia,
  – infections (including malaria and HIV),
  – premature labour and delivery,
  – low birth-weight,
  – peri-natal and infant mortality,
  – maternal mortality, and
  – obstructed and prolonged labour
Impact of CSA

• Mental health consequences:
  – Debilitating fears, anxieties, regressive behaviours, nightmares, withdrawal
  – depression, anger and hostility, self-injurious behaviours, low self-esteem
  – Inappropriate sexual behaviour
  – severe psychiatric disorder
  – negative effects are life-long
  – boys have same range of negative consequences
Impact of CSA

- Mental health consequences:
  - Changes girls’ view of their bodies – see them as bargaining tools
  - Serious negative emotional and psychosomatic consequences for the child’s caregiver
Profile of perpetrators

- Fathers
- Mother’s male partner
- Other children
- Strangers
- Neighbours
- Teachers
- Relatives
Risk factors - environment

- Home
- School
- On the way home from school
- Immediate neighbourhood
- Other people’s homes
- Public places
Risk factors - environment

• Terminology in use in schools in Togo:
  – Bush stipend or chalk allowance
    • Sexual compensation for teachers
  – BF (bordello fatigue)
    • Experienced by a girl involved in multiple sexual relationships with teachers, punning on a common brand of soap
  – Africell
    • ‘A free sell’ refers to girl students coming to class without undergarments to sexually titillate teachers.
Risk factors

- Alternate care
- Prison
- Work places
- Care arrangements – exacerbate vulnerability
- Poverty
- Violence
- Cultural construction of gender, power
- Perceptions of male sexuality
- Ways in which children are perceived
Protective factors

- Children never vulnerable in just one way, and vulnerability to other forms of abuse exacerbates vulnerability to CSA
- Holistic and coordinated response is key
- Children best protected from CSA when ‘the system’ is protective of all children
Protective factors

• Strategies for protection:
  – WHO-AFRO (2004):
    • Advocacy
    • Law enforcement
    • Development of standardised protocol, clinical care and management
    • Multidisciplinary and coordinated responses
    • Rehabilitation of CSA survivors
    • Community-based surveillance, support and reporting
Protective factors

• Strategies for protection:
  – ACPF (2008) - countries most protective of children:
    • ratify international treaties
    • institute appropriate laws to protect children; and
    • ensure adequate budgetary commitments to child-related services
    • have a juvenile justice system
    • free education
    • effective plans of action and coordinating structures
Protective factors

• VERY important to work with boys and men
• Training and capacity-building of service providers
• Adequate resourcing
Promising regional practice

- Kenya: *Be a champion for children campaign*
- South Africa: RAPCAN’s Healing Pack
- 14 countries in SSA: Child helplines (and growing)
- Senegal, Kenya: free legal services to victims
- Uganda plus several countries: Stepping Stones programme
Policy implications

• Broad and coordinated (prevention and response)
• Adequate resourcing
• Provision of services:
  – Response teams
  – Early identification and child-friendly reporting systems
  – Targeted services designed for children
Policy implications

• In criminal justice system:
  – Sensitive and responses to children’s needs
  – Prosecute effectively – no impunity
  – Train personnel specifically in dealing with traumatised children
  – Ensure accessible services
  – Supervision of service provision
Policy implications

• In schools:
  – Improve professionalism of teachers
  – Prohibit sexual relations with pupils
  – Display codes of conduct and sanctions on sexual relationships prominently
  – Increase number of female teachers
  – Improve conditions of service
Research implications

• Gendered nature of CSA, and links to construction of power
• Linkages to intimate partner violence
• Better understanding of why CSA is (a) high frequency and (b) so deeply stigmatised
• Costs of failing to prevent CSA
Research implications

• Variables such as:
  – place of residence
  – rural or urban setting
  – level of education
  – child birth order
  – Family structure
  – Parents’ income
  – Degree of social cohesion
  – Role of traditional systems of sexual control
Thank you

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