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**SOCIAL PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE:  
GOVERNMENTAL BODIES AND NGO COOPERATION**

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## INTRODUCTION

**Actuality of the research problem.** There is an increasing concern among government of states, international no-governmental organizations, regional organizations, child rights organizations, the civil society about the prevalence and increasing growth of child abuse and neglect. That has prompted many researchers to embark on projects that are geared towards finding solutions to end child abuse and neglect.

Sierra Leone as a country is also faced with the challenge of child abuse. Stake holders have been battling with the same challenge of child abuse for years now. For instance, of all the cases reported to the Family Support Units (FSU) of the Sierra Leone police, child abuse and neglect have been ranked as the highest. That shows that special attention must be paid to the issue of child abuse.

The ministry of social welfare gender and children's affairs (MSWGCA) is the leading government organization that is responsible for protecting the interests of children in the country. They have been doing this together with other government agencies, inline ministries, non-governmental organizations (international and local), and the civil society.

Together with the constitution of Sierra Leone, the Child Right Act of 2007, are serving as the guiding principles in the country that are providing the legal framework that are helping stakeholders in the performance of their duties. In line with the CRA, the government of Sierra Leone through the Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs and the Family Support Unit of the Sierra Leone Police is committed to strengthening the capacity of child welfare workers so they can effectively handle issues of child abuse in the best interest of both the children and their parents or care givers.

This research is intended to identify the types and effects of child abuse that are common in Sierra Leone. It will also identify key organizations that are working on

child welfare issues in the country and their contributions in making sure that children are protected. Significant also, is the fact that this project will pay special attention on the theories and models of child abuse. Also, it will look at the perception of the public on child abuse issues in Sierra Leone. Significant is that this research work will make possible recommendations to overcome the challenge of child abuse.

**Literature Review.** Child abuse as a practice occurs when a parent/ guardian or caretaker physically, emotionally, or sexually mistreats or neglects a child. Laws regarding child abuse seek to protect children, while at the same time allowing parents the right to raise and discipline their children as they see fit. Controversies over child abuse laws can arise when parents or guardians feel that the government is interfering in their private family life. In order to have a clear footing on how to examine child abuse as a challenge we need to make a critical analysis of some of the most significant literatures that have been published by previous writers of this topic.

The literatures we are about to review will not only serve as yard sticks for this work but also a source of recourse material which this writer and subsequent researchers can rely on.

“Child abuse has a lengthy history. Children have always been subject to abuse by their parents or other adults, and for many centuries laws failed to protect them. Children under English common law were considered the property of their fathers until the late 1800s; American colonists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries carried this tradition to the early years of the United States” (FindLaw 2013).

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines Child Abuse and neglect as “all forms of physical and/or emotional - treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship or responsibility trust or power”.

According to a report published by The United Nations Children's Fund on the issue of issue of child abuse particularly child circumcision, (UNICEF 2008), what is

more inappropriate is the fact that the individuals carrying out the circumcision are not trained and qualified health workers and the instruments they use to carry out the procedure are not sterilized. The report also highlighted the prevalence of child rape and the possibility of them contacting sexually transmitted diseases from adults. This research report tried to identify genital mutilation as a form of child abuse and it also emphasised on the health implication it has on the child.

Sierra Leone has been rated as one of the worst countries in the world to be child. Children have suffered from different forms of abuses and this includes child labour. Over the years the government of Sierra Leone in a bid to minimize the challenge of child labour has developed the Act of parliament (Child Right Act 2007). This act states that the minimum age for engagement of children in “light work” is 13 years. The Act described light work as that work that is not likely to be harmful to the health of the child that is engaging in it. Also, it should not hinder the development of the child or does not affect the child’s attendance at school. That is not the case in Sierra Leone; instead many parents or care givers are forcing children to do jobs that are meant for adults. These may include farming, carrying heavy loads, construction and so on.

EDCI we are survivors Blog viewed the concept of child abuse from a theoretical perspective (EDCI 2013). In a publication entitled, Research theories about Child Abuse, released on their Blog on Thursday June 6, 2013. EDCI in their publication viewed the causes of child abuse the Social Learning theory, Attachment theory, the family system theory, ecological theory, Self – Efficiency Theory, Resilience Theory. They believe that child abuses just don’t happen like that but depending on the circumstance or environment one of the above theories has the tendency of causing child abuse. The theories did not only explain what causes child abuse they also highlighted why it has continued to be a challenge in the world. Significantly, knowing the causes and severity of a research problem is part of knowing the solution to the challenges the problem causes.

Thomptone & Crispin in their work Mapping and analysis of child protection system in Sierra Leone (Thomptone & Crispin, 2010, P32), explained about the conventions that that Sierra Leone as a country has ratified. Among these conventions are the convention on the Right of the Child (CRC) and also a signatory to the African Charter on the Right and Welfare of the Child. It has also ratified the optional protocol to the CRC to the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the optional protocol to the Convention of the Right of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts. However, it has not ratified the International Labor Organization (ILO) Minimum Age Convention 138 or ILO Convention 182 on the worst forms of Child Labor. It has also signed, but not yet ratified, the optional protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Traditional Organized Crimes. According to Thomptone and Crispin the purpose of this is to show commitment to the fight against child abuse in Sierra Leone. This work has significantly contributed in raising awareness on issues relating to the rights of the child and also, the consequences of the violation of those rights.

Another outstanding work that explained the importance of social partnership in Preventing Child abuse and neglect is: the technical guide for policy, norms and programmatic activities (Forton et. al, 2016). This work clearly spelled out the organogram and responsibilities of stakeholders in preventing child abuse. It includes the Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs, district councils, chiefdom level, the Sierra Leone police (family support unit department), ministry of education, ministry of health, the justice sector, religious organizations, non – government organizations and so on. Forton and his colleagues believe that child abuse is global challenge and that solution to tackling such challenge includes effective partnership. Every sector or department in society should have their respective responsibilities to achieve a desirable result. Although this work failed to

consider the parents or guardians and the child as integral part of the solution to tackling child abuse, it created and is still creating a positive impact.

Belgorod scientists also considered child abuse issue. Volkova Olga in her work “Child abuse in Russia as a course of social orphan hood”, informed us about the fact that in spite of the existence of some form of child abuse in some parts of the Russian society. The Russian people has continued to frown on perpetrators of child abuse that includes parents, care givers, teachers and other adults who tramples into the rights of children. The Russian society is well informed on the importance of protecting children in order to allow them to develop healthy and vibrant so the future generation will be productive (Volkova, O., 2013). She further explained the existence of a modernized culture of child protection awareness into the fabric of the Russian society. This she believes will help to minimize the existence of child abuse and in turn create a better platform for children to have a better life and be productive in the future. Kovalchuk O. V and Korolyova K. Y. discuss the issues of violence of social institutions and family towards children in a range of publications. The authors observe different theoretical approaches as a background for the causes of violence, and also regard sociocultural factors of violence as a big challenge. The papers present the actual tendencies of family violence as a social issue in the contemporary Russian society and shows possible ways of solving the problem.

**Object of the Research** – social prevention of child abuse.

**Subject of the research** – cooperation of governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations for social prevention of child abuse.

**Aim of the Research:** the overall aim is to establish social prevention of child abuse by developing the pattern of Governmental Bodies and NGO cooperation

The **objectives of this research** are as follows:

- to identify the immediate causes of child abuse.
- to determine its effects on the community and children in particular.

– to reveal the problems of preventive social work and develop the model of cooperation of governmental bodies and NGOs to tackle the challenge of child abuse.

**Hypotheses of the Research.** The effects of child abuse maybe felt even long after the wounds have been healed. Neglected children are more likely to experience mental health problems and may find it difficult to cultivate good relationship in their lives. Risk may be greater for children at various stages of development and may have long-term effects.

When the composition of the household frequently changes there will be high probability of abuse and neglect. Communities with high level of poverty rate tent of have inferior physical and social infrastructure for the development of children.

The partnership of government and non – governmental organization may serve as a move in the right direction to prevent child abuse.

**Research Methodology.** The research work based on wide range of theories. Social learning theories predict that children who are victims of assault or who witness assault tend to learn that violence is an acceptable way of life (resolving problems and expressing emotions). Resilience theories help to explain how the severity of the abuse and relation of the child with the supportive adult can determine the child’s adjustment later in life. Socio ecological theories are macro in nature, meaning they focus on the disintegration of the whole society as the major cause of child abuse. Family system theories are micro in scope as the focus on the family system. Parent-child interaction theories and psychological theories has contributed to developing cooperation model.

This research work involves both quantitative and qualitative form of analyzing data. This research aims to contribute to a better understanding of violence against children in Sierra Leone. Based on the children’s perspective on violence, this research intends to build upon existing data and analysis. It also aims to offer new insights on the causes and consequences of violence by taking into account children



and child's right organizations understanding of violence. This research also sheds light on children and organizations capacities to identify the causes of violence and to propose solutions to prevent child abuse.

**Empirical basis of the Research.** This scientific research has been conducted using empirical evidence. In a bid to expose, the seriousness of child abuse challenges in Sierra Leone this work investigates five theoretical risk models predicting child maltreatment potential. Significant also it analyzes the data conducted by two different surveys (primary and secondary data). In the secondary data a total of 661 conversations throughout the country following a "purposive sampling" technique as the study aimed to represent the cultural and social diversity with equal gender representation has been analyzed (Search for Common Ground Research Report on violence against children and youth in Sierra Leone, 2015). The purpose of this data is to expose the nature of the challenge these organization are fighting against.

Furthermore, in order to test our theoretical hypothesis the poll was conducted. The primary data were intended to target around 400 respondents from different parts of the country. The interviewer focused his questions that will demand responses on the perception of the Sierra Leonean public on of Child Protection system.

**Scientific Novelty:** the scientific novelty of the master thesis is to elaborate an integral managerial model that could be useful to organizations working on domestic violence issues in Sierra Leone for effective preventive practices.

**Thesis statement.** Child abuse has caused serious physical, psychological and emotional problems for children in Sierra Leone. Although there are different types of child abuse, but they all have similar destructive consequences on the children in their further life and social environment.

Social partnership of government, non-governmental organizations and the civil society is very vital in the fight against child abuse. Thus, there is the need to focus on enhancing the social partnership in intervention effort. The relationship between government, non – governmental organizations and the local societies in which they

operate were described in cooperation model for child abuse prevention within three levels hierarchy.

**Practical significance of my research.** Undertaking this research was very relevant and timely. The evidence is due to the increasing recognition among stakeholders (especially those working on child protection), that child abuse and neglect has over the years become a major challenge. Based on that, this researcher has undertaken this project of doing a thorough investigation on the topic.

This research will be relevant in the following ways:

- the research will help stakeholders (government, NGOs, civil society) to identify the root causes of child abuse. The fact that knowing the cause of the problem is part of the solution to the problem, this work will help find solution to the problem of child abuse in Sierra Leone;
- this research will also help to raise the awareness of the society on the issue of child abuse and its negative consequences on the society. It will help people to see why they should mobilize against child abuse, eradicate or at least try to minimize it;
- this work will be relevant for policy makers, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, because it will help them with knowledge on how tackle child abuse issues;
- this work will also serve as a resource material in the library, for other students, policy makers, researchers, university lecturers and so on.

**Work Structure.** The thesis consist of two chapters with two paragraphs each at 91 pages. This structure of the work contributes to revealing key concerns of child abuse and developing practical recommendations on preventive work. The bibliography contains 74 sources. The summary contains main conclusion and recommendations.

# 1. CHILD ABUSE UNDER CONSIDERATION OF SOCIAL WORK THEORY

## 1.1. Origin, types and effects of child abuse

For the whole of recorded history, there have been evidence to acts that can be described as child abuse or neglect, but the professional enquiry into the topic is generally considered to have begun in the 1960s. The 1962 publication of “the Battered Child Syndrome” by Pediatric Psychiatrist C. Henry Kempe represent the era that child abuse and maltreatment was recognized as a challenge in the world. Prior to the publication of his article, injuries to children, even repeated bone fractures were not considered as the result of internal trauma. Instead, doctors often looked for undiagnosed bone diseases or explanations submitted by parents of accidental mischief such as, falls or assaults by neighborhood bullies.

Since the beginning of the 20th century and until the 1970s, in some western countries, children from ethnic minorities were forcefully separated from their parents or caregivers and communities, either by the state or church authorities and forced to “assimilate”. Such policies include the stolen generation (in Australia for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children) and the (Canadian Indian residential school system (in Canada for first nation, Metis and Inuit), with such children often suffering from severe abuse and neglect.

Definition of what constitutes child abuse vary across professionals, and other sectors of society which deals with issues, such as child protection agencies, legal and medical communities, public health officials, researchers, practitioners and child advocates. The term, abuse and maltreatment are often used interchangeably. Child maltreatment can be an umbrella term for all forms of child abuse and child neglect. Since members of various fields tend to use their own definitions, communication

across disciplines can be limited, hampering efforts to identify, assess, track, treat and prevent child abuse. [23]

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines Child Abuse and neglect as "all forms of physical and/or emotional - treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship or responsibility trust or power".[70]

More than half the world's children are at risk of poverty, conflict and discrimination against girls, according to a report by Save the Children. The charity's second End of Childhood index says more than 1.2 billion children face these threats, with 153 million facing all four. While the global situation has improved compared with the previous years, the charity says progress is not fast enough. According to save the children these children are at risk of being robbed of their childhoods and future potential. [72]

Child abuse can be categorized into four different types. They are: physical abuse, neglect, psychological abuse and sexual abuse.

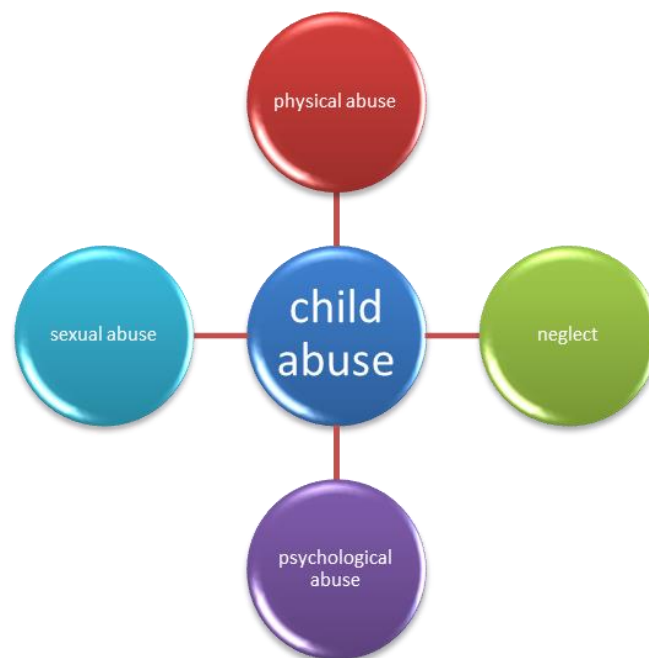


Figure 1: Types of child abuse

*Physical abuse:* Physical abuse can be defined as any intentional act causing injury or trauma to another person or animal by way of bodily contact. Although adults can also be victims, as in cases of domestic violence or workplace aggression but in most cases, children are the most common victims of physical abuse. Most times child physical abuse is done under the guise of discipline. Most parents, caregivers or school teachers see corporal punishment as a way of controlling children to behave well. They fail to realize that, instead the children learn how to avoid being hit but not to behave well and grow as good citizens. The effects of physical abuse includes, the mistreatment of a child that causes physical injury, inflict pain, bruises, burns, impairment or endangerment. The effects of physical abuse may last for life time, and can include brain damage and vision and hearing loss resulting to disability. Child physical abuse may also lead to severe emotional behavior problems in children. [69] In cases where abuse may course brain injury it can result to cognitive delays that could adversely affect the child's growing brain and his or her quality of life throughout her experience. Immediate effects can also result to pain and medical problems and in severe cases, even death. The effects of child abuse are felt even long after the wounds have been healed. The long term effects of physical above include psychological distress later in life and inferiority complex towards peers.

*Neglect:* Child neglect is defined as a type of maltreatment related to the failure to provide needed, age-appropriate care. Unlike physical and sexual abuse, neglect is usually typified by an ongoing pattern of inadequate care and is commonly practiced by individuals in close contact with the child (parents or guardians). Child neglect is divided into seven groups including: refusal of health care; delay in health care; abandonment or desertion; expulsion or blatant refusal to care for the child; custody related issues, such as repeatedly leaving a child with others; inadequate supervision; and other physical neglect such as inadequate nutrition. [25] Neglect can be really difficult to identify, making it hard for professionals to take early actions to protect the child. Children who have been neglected are more likely to experience mental

health problems including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. Also, the lack of love and care from their parents or care givers they may find it difficult to maintain healthy relationships later in their lives, including their own children. [2] Neglected child may also attempt to run away from home, abuse drugs or alcohol or involve in dangerous relationships. This practice has course many children to run away from their homes the world over. In Freetown (Sierra Leone's capital) alone, there are more than 1500 street children. Like many of their colleagues in other parts of the world, they are exposed to drugs, prostitution, being recruited into gang groups, trafficking and so on.

*Psychological Abuse:* Psychological abuse of a child is a pattern of intentional verbal or behavioral actions or lack of actions that convey to a child the message that he or she is worthless, flawed, unloved, unwanted, endangered, or only of value to meet someone else's needs. Withholding emotional support, isolation, or terrorizing a child are forms of psychological abuse. Domestic violence that is witnessed by a child is also considered a form of psychological abuse. This is divided into: close confinement (which is a restriction of movement such as binding or tying); and verbal assault, which includes habitual patterns of belittling, denigrating or other forms of rejecting treatment, and other abuse which is overtly punitive, exploitative or abusive. It may also include allowing children to witness the physical or emotional abuse of another child, or allowing them to use illegal drugs.

The effect of psychological abuse can result to children being fearful of parents or care givers. Also they may seem emotionally immature when compared to their peers. They exhibit sudden changes in behavior, such as doing poorly in school. Psychological abuse can also lead to insomnia, excessive sleepiness, and sleep apnea. [42]

During the civil war in Sierra Leone children were recruited forcefully into rebel groups. They were put on drugs so they can't have sympathy for people. These child soldiers were more dangerous than the matured ones. Some of them grew up in

the jungle to become dangerous rebel commanders that were very dangerous and difficult to handle.

Most of them didn't even know what they were fighting for. They were just victims of circumstance. They were just taken away from their families; brain washed and put on drugs which make them see pleasure in causing atrocities (killing, burning houses and raping women and girls). It took Sierra Leone many years after the war to rehabilitate and re-integrate those children into society.

Apart from experiencing Post- traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), children and teens that have gone through psychological trauma often have other types of problems. Even though, much of what we know about the effects of trauma on children comes from the research on child sexual abuse. This research shows that sexually abused children often have problems with:

- fear, worry, sadness, anger, feeling alone and apart from others, feeling as if people are looking down on them, low self-worth, and not being able to trust others
- behaviors such as aggression, out-of-place sexual behavior, self-harm, and abuse of drugs or alcohol are possible consequences.

*Sexual abuse:* Sexual abuse, also referred to as molestation, is usually referred to as undesired sexual behavior (advance) by one person upon another. It is often perpetrated using force or by taking advantage of another. When force is immediate, of short duration, or infrequent, it is called sexual assault. The offender is referred to as a sexual perpetrator. The term also covers any behavior by an adult or older adolescent towards a child to stimulate any of the involved sexually.

The use of a child or other individuals younger than the age of consent, for sexual stimulation is referred to as child sexual abuse or statutory rape. These include: intrusion, which means evidence of actual penile penetration; molestation, which includes genital contact without intrusion; and other sexual abuse which includes acts such as folding or inappropriate supervision of a child's sexual activities. [68]

The effects of child sexual abuse on the victims may include guilt and self-blame, flash backs, nightmares, insomnia, fear of the objects associated with the abuse (including objects, smell, places, doctor's visit etc.) , self-esteem difficulties, sexual dysfunction, chronic pain, addiction, self-injury, suicidal ideation, somatic complaints, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and physical injury to the child among other problems. Children who are victims of sexual abuse are at high risk of sexually transmitted infections due to their immature system and high potential for mucosal tear during forced sexual contact. The practice of female genital mutilation can also be attributed to sexual abuse. It is a common practice in Sierra Leone for young girls to be circumcised without their consent. What is more inappropriate is that the individuals carrying out the circumcision are not trained and qualified health workers and the instruments they use to carry out the activities are not sterilized.

Apart from the four types of child abuse mentioned above, many children in the world we live also suffer from other forms of abuse which have caused negative impacts on the development of not only children but also the world as a global community. These abuses are as follows:

*Child labor:* this includes the engagement of children in unlawful work. According to the Child Right Act 2007 of Sierra Leone, no individual or organization (employer) should employ a child below the age of 15 years. Child labor can also be referred to as the labor undertaken by children who are very young to do the kind of job they are forced to do. This may also have the tendency to deprive the child of primary education. Worth noting also, is the fact that the Child Right Act 2007, states that the minimum age for engagement of children in "light work" is 13 years. The Act described light work as that work that is not likely to be harmful to the health of the child that is engaging in it. Also, it should not hinder the development of the child or does not affect the child's attendance at school. That is not the case in Sierra Leone; instead many parents or care givers are forcing children to do jobs that are meant for



adults. These may include farming, carrying of heavy loads for the purpose of construction work and so on. [11]

*Child trafficking*: this is referred to as the unlawful movement of a child from one location to another by an adult for the purpose of exploitation. The indicators of child trafficking include but not limited to involvement in prostitution, exposure to forced labor (may be used as domestic servants, street trading, stone breaking and so on). Child adoption both national and international has negative impacts in Sierra Leone. From the national perspective, some people in the capital city or provincial centers take their siblings in the villages with the promise on giving them quality education instead engage them as sources of income (street trading, prostitution). In the international perspective, trafficking of children from Sierra Leone to other countries started during the civil war in the late 1990s, when some local non-governmental organizations took child for adoption abroad. The whereabouts of those children are not known until now. The affected parents have voiced their concerns to the authorities concerned but they are yet to get positive response.

UNICEF is working with development partners (governments and Non-governmental organizations) in a bid to prevent, protect, and prosecute and support evidence based research to help improve adequate interventions.[35] UNICEF also works with different societies to change the norms and practices that encourage children's vulnerabilities to trafficking.[54]

*Harmful Traditional Practices*: this is another form of child abuse that is presently affecting the development of children in Sierra Leone. This includes the early/ forced marriage of children. According to the Child Right Act 2007 of Sierra Leone, the legal age of marriage is 18 years, but this is not the case in many parts of the country. The reason for this challenge can be attributed to cultural clash. In most parts of the rural areas where culture plays a very significant role in the lives and living patterns of the people they tend to conduct forced marriages without the consent of the teenager involved.[63]

Also worth noting, is the early and forced initiation of children into “secret societies”, like match making, secret societies are part and parcel of the living pattern of the people of Sierra Leone. Although it is an accepted cultural practice it is also regarded as abusive when children are forced into joining them, more especially if the child is under 18 years and or it affects his or her educational progress.

*Child to Child abuse:* for many people as soon as they hear child abuse what comes into their mind is an abuse by an adult. This is not always the case sometimes an older child can abuse a younger child. This form of child abuse is common worldwide. This form of abuse can be categorized into sexual and bullying. Bullying may can include hitting, kicking, theft, spreading rumors, names calling, tribal comments and so an. These practices are more common in schools and playgrounds when parents or an adult is not around to protect younger children.

*Authority abuse:* in Sierra Leone most people in authority who are supposed to have the moral right to protect the dignity and ensure rights of children are recognized tent to flout the rules by misusing their responsibilities of protecting children to abusing them. However, there are instances of incidents where in school teachers, police officers (FSU), religious leaders, care givers, humanitarian agency workers who took advantage of their positions in society by abusing and exploiting children. For instance, it is common to see a school teacher impregnating a school girl.

Today Child abuse is more common than many people care to believe. Millions of Children experience abuse each year and for the past 10 years there has been growing attention in regards to this major issue affecting so many children. In Sierra Leone more than 1 million reports of child abuse are made each year which involve almost 2 million children, every ten seconds a report is made about a child being abused, and hundreds more die every year as a result of abuse. Others are being horribly mistreated every day by adults who are supposed to protect, love and care for them. Along with physical damage there are also equally devastating emotional wounds created by harsh words or neglect.

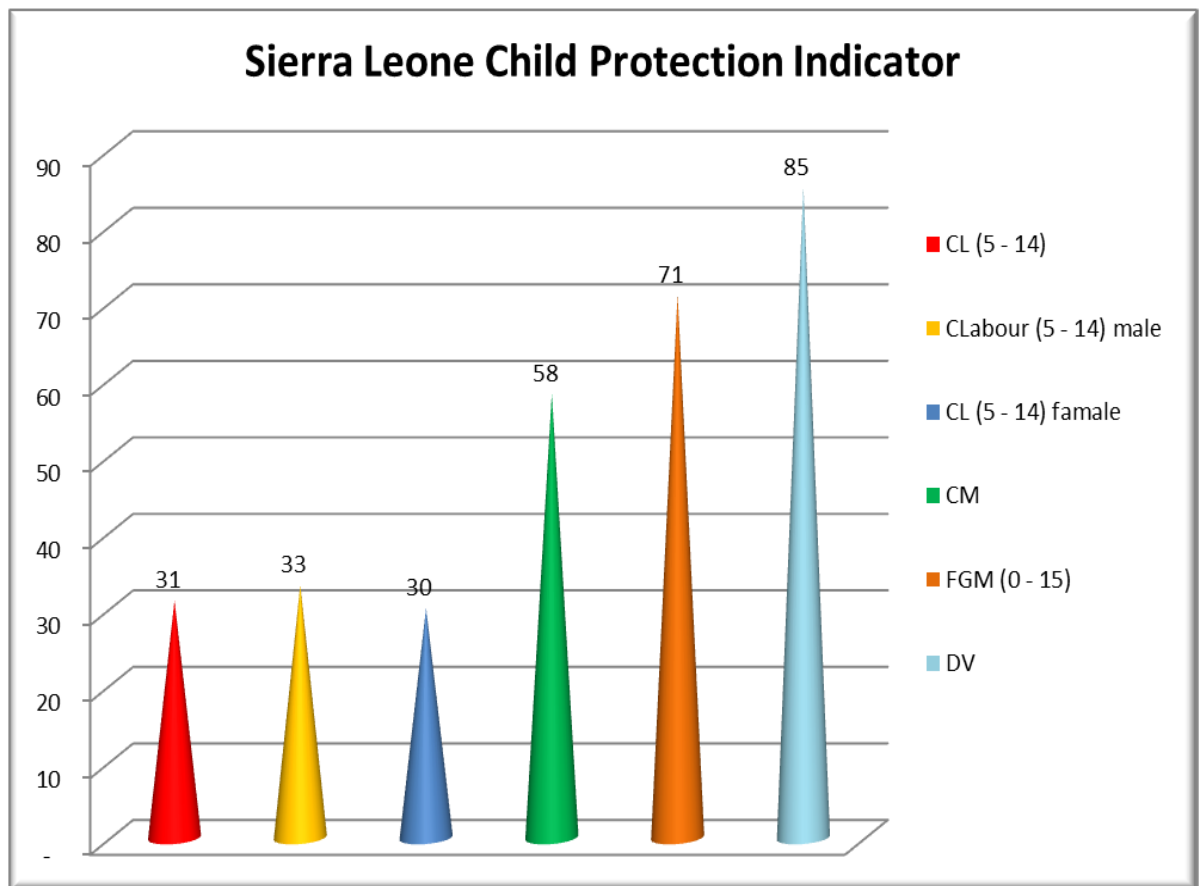


Figure 2: Sierra Leone child protection indicator

*Child Labor, CM- Child Marriage,  
FGM- Female Genital Mutilation,  
DV- (Domestic Violence/Physical Abuse)*

Looking at the prevalence of child labor, child marriage, physical abuse and female genital mutilation more especially in the rural areas of the country, girls are believed to be more vulnerable to abuse than boys. Although 18 years is legal age for marriage in Sierra Leone, 58% of girls are married before then, and most of these marriages are compromised by parents or care givers because of financial or material benefit. Child labor is also a social security challenge with 31% of children being victims. Boys constitute 33% of this figure and girls 30%; this might be attributed to the fact that boys can do more physical jobs than girls. Domestic violence against girls by dear parents/guardians or close relatives is at 85%.

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is also a widespread practice affecting 71% of girls. This practice has some cultural acceptance and almost all the circumcisions are done during initiation ceremonies into secret societies. The above graph has demonstrated that violence (physical abuse 85%) and FGM (71%) are the biggest challenges faced by children in Sierra Leone.

In the first section of this chapter we looked at the background of child abuse as a subject of research. The background highlighted the nature of the problem. Another main focus is explaining the origin, types and effects of child abuse. Child abuse can be categorized into four different types. They are: physical abuse, neglect, psychological abuse and sexual abuse. It also went further to explain the effects of these types of abuse on society in general and the child particular.

In the following sub topic we will looking at different theories of child abuse and their effects on the types of abuses we studied in this chapter.

## 1.2. THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO SOCIAL PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE

Over the years there have been several publications on child abuse, its causes and consequences on both the child and the society. In trying to explain their views on the challenge these writers has postulated different theories which they believe are the reasons behind the prevalence of child abuse. These theories are like a two edged sword, that is to say they have both advantages and dis advantages. Each theory first tried to explain the positive impact of its views and then went further to give criticisms (negative views) that have been levied on it. For the purpose of this work we will analyze the views of the followings theories on child abuse: social leaning, Attachment, family system, Ecological, self-Efficiency, Resilience and Psychological theories.[29] And the end of this section we are expected to be able to see how each

theory complement each other in identifying the causes, effects and prevention of child abuse in our societies.

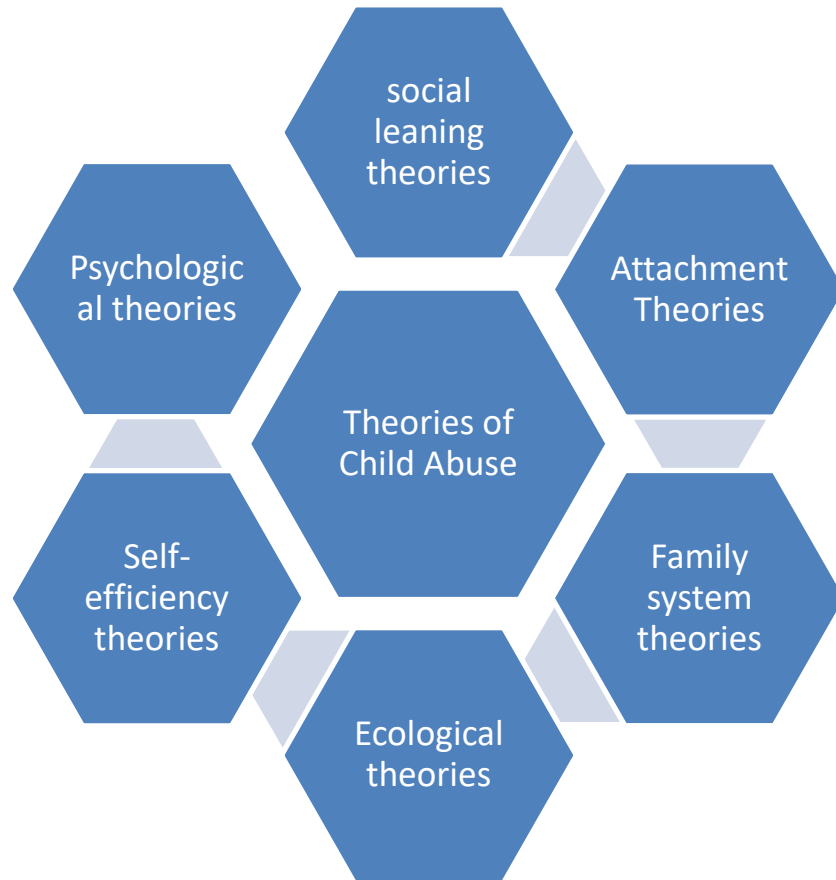


Figure 3: Theories of child abuse prevention

*The Social Learning Theories:*

These theories explain that behavior is learned through two different methods. We (individuals) either learn by being rewarded for our actions (practical learning) or through observing or copying the actions of those around us (modeling). Some theorists believe that children learn to be aggressive from these two methods and in most cases continue these abusive behaviors for the rest of the lives. The pattern of learned aggression is referred to as the "Cycle of Violence" or the intergenerational transmission of violence. The circle of violence is questioned by some researchers pointing to findings that only 20 - 30% of child abuse and neglect victims became involved in abusive and criminal behavior. They believe that interventions based on

social learning theory have the purpose of teaching both parents and child appropriate relationship skills within the family.

Any discussion of theory must begin with the observation that humans are social animals and that our way of living is determined more by culture and socialization than by instincts. Viewing the social cultural nature, of human beings it should come as no surprise that social learning theory has over the years emerged as a dominant perspective in the study of deviant behavior. Significantly, it is also important in the study of child maltreatment.

Social learning begins with process, in which a person learns social and cognitive behaviors by simply observing and imitating others. When children are exposed to violence, they are exposed to a set of norms and rationalizations that justify violence and violent behaviors. They are also deprived of the opportunity to learn appropriate and nurturing forms of adult-child interaction. Children in most cases develop the idea that violence is an acceptable way, or perhaps even the acceptable manner, of resolving family conflict and expressing emotions and feelings. In addition, learning takes place through observation of people's behaviors or through rewards and punishment dispensed to the learner. As applied particularly to the concept of child maltreatment, observing or experiencing violence (e.g., father hits child for putting up bad behavior) and reinforcement of violence within a social context (i.e., child shuts up) teaches children that violence is acceptable. Violence is reinforced as a way of getting what one wants. [20]

A large number of studies have successfully linked childhood victimization to violence in adulthood. Although the intergenerational pattern has not been proven to be perfect, it is clear that adults with abusive childhood histories are more likely to abuse their own children. Evidence also suggests that children who witness abuse (e.g., between parents) but who do not experience abuse directly may learn violent interpersonal interaction life styles. Through witnessing negative interactions, children learn inappropriate or violent methods of expressing anger, reacting to stress,

and coping with conflict. Studies have consistently demonstrated that adults who abuse children are more likely to have come from homes characterized by considerable marital discord and violence and to a limited degree, the intergeneration pattern.

Several studies have also found frequent reports of sexual abuse against another family member in offenders' families of origin, and others have noted a relationship between sexual abuse perpetration and high rates of physical abuse in the backgrounds of offenders.

While it is difficult to question the intergenerational patterns, many researchers found out that there are many methodological challenges with the social learning research theory. First, there has been an overreliance on self-report and retrospective data. Retrospective reports are problematic because they depend on the memories and perceptions of violent adults concerning their childhood experiences. Second, there has been a general lack of comparison groups of nonviolent adults also asked to provide retrospective reports. Also worth noting is that, childhood maltreatment is often perceived as the cause of adult perpetration, and this conclusion is most often challenged as not scientifically proven. Childhood abuse is neither a necessary nor sufficient cause of adult violence. At best, the data suggest that children who were abused (or who witnessed abuse) are more likely to be abusive adults. [47]

In spite of the above postulation made by different researchers this writer is of the view that it is not always like that because, they are not predetermined to be abusive. I have reviewed the empirical literature on this question and concluded that the rate of intergenerational transmission is approximately low (30%) which means that 70% of those who were abused as children do not go on to become abusive adults. Clearly, the majority of abused children do not grow up to be abusive adults.

*Attachment or parent-child interaction theories:*

Attachments theorists believe that humans develop behavior as a result of how their caregivers nurture them. They believe that the type of bond that develops

between the child and caregivers affects the child's future relationships. They developed the following types of bonding:

- Secure and Insecure: secure attachment pattern develop from a consistent and nurturing caregiver whereas insecure attachments are as a result of inconsistent emotionally neglectful and/or abuse care giving.

- Preoccupied: children with preoccupied attachment have the tendency of moving easily between their caregiver and stranger when looking for comfort but will sometimes resist the comfort they get.

- Dismissive: Children who experience dismissive attachments show distrust of the caregiver and have the inability to be comforted because they are not treated well by the caregiver.

- Fearful: This attachment pattern is characterized by erratic behavior or the child unable to recognize which behavior gain favorable attention from the caregiver. This may happen as a result of the repeated negative reaction of the caregiver towards the child. Many researchers subscribe to the fact that almost all abused children exhibit insecure attachment. [58]

Parent-child interaction theories suggest that difficult child behaviors interact with specific parental behaviors to result in child maltreatment. That is, it is the behavior of both parent and child, rather than the behavior of either alone, that promotes violence. Some parents may lack the skills to manage children who are annoying, argumentative, defiant, or vindictive, for example, and this may lead to abusive interactions. Also, in other cases the attitude of the child may trigger violent response from the parent or guardian.

Many researches have suggested that these difficult behavioral patterns affect the parent-child relation during the early years of the abused child. Attachment is a significant enduring emotional bond between the parents and the child that develops progressively during the early years of an infant's life while the infant is completely dependent on his or her caregiver for survival and protection. This bond serves an



important function for a healthy development.[45] Through this caretaker-child relationship, the child develops a sense of trust, love and security, a sense of self, and an ability to learn and explore and surrounding. Failure to form a secured sense of attachment early in life may contribute to difficulties in adulthood, such as the inability to cultivate close personal relationships.

For instance, envision a child who is born with a particular characteristic such as a difficult temperament or a physical disability. Attachment theory suggests that these challenges have the tendency to interfere with the development of a secure attachment between the parent and child in question. This vulnerability may in turn lead to further difficult child behaviors and increased challenges for the parent. The problems may escalate and result in physical abuse when the challenges exceed the parent's tolerance or capability threshold. Several studies have found that, compared with parents who don't maltreat their children, maltreating parents more frequently have insecure attachments to their infants. The cause of this insecure attachment is because of the repeated occurrence of abuse. In addition, findings from several studies support a theory of negative escalation in abusive parent-child relationship.

It is important to note that while the child's behavior is relevant to abuse, the behavior of a child should never be accepted as an excuse for an adult's violent behavior. The fact that the adult has the ability to reason objectively than the child it is his or her responsibility ignore the any negatively attitude of the child. The adult also has alternative ways to train that child, and abusing the child must not be one of those options. When an adult inflicts injury on a child, he or she is responsible for that behavior. Children cannot be held responsible for their own victimization. Legal statutes governing adult behavior, furthermore, do not grant adults the right to inflict physical injury on children who are difficult. In addition, it is important to remember that although characteristics of the child are important, they are only one factor among many that contribute to child maltreatment. Attachment theories further enforced the fact that when parents pay proper attention to the child during the first five years of

development, can help the child grow happy, secure and confident. The child's brain will grow accordingly at each stage of growth. [6]

*The family system theories:* This theory was developed in the 1950s by Dr. Bowen from the idea of a general theory that looked at different types of systems. Family system theorists focus mainly on the family. It is a process of identifying problems of child abuse as a result of dysfunctional relationship among family members. For instance, in cases of incest where the father is the perpetrator the deliberate refusal of the mother to make timely intervention may appear to be tacit approval. This they believe will serve as a contributing factor of repeated abuse. [51] Family system theorists believe that state institutions alone cannot solve the problem of child abuse, they should therefore, work as a larger network, with other systems in the society which includes parents, that functions cooperatively and supportively as a family with their children. The family's involvement in child abuse prevention is complex that is true because of the following contradictions: as much as parents can play a crucial role in working towards solutions to the problem, they can also in some cases be the source of the problem.[46] Their major are further divided into: patterns, rules, boundaries, roles and equilibrium. However, some critics are concerned about the failure of this theory to recognize the influence of power and society on human behavior.

*Socio-ecological theories:* this theory holds that abuse and neglect of children in most cases is as a result of multiple factors. These are divided into four systems: the individual, family, community, and culture. For individuals and families involved in child abuse and neglect, the degree of influence may dramatically differ. For example, a child who has been sexually abused may be committed to school, involved with peers but disassociated with the family. In another family, a sexually abused child may be disconnected from the community and isolated from peers. So if, child abuse is the result of multiple factors from various systems, then there is the need to

implore different strategies to address and implement effective programs to address each factor and system.

Social ecology theory is macro in scope, placed deviance in the breakdown of environmental controls. Sociologists who study crime and deviance sometimes referred to this tradition of thought as the Chicago School, because the original research was conducted by sociologists at the University of Chicago during the 1920s. For sociologists, social ecology theory suggests that when there is a breakdown in a social system the community suffers. As results of this all residents are obliged to share responsibilities, entire neighborhoods can become prone to deviance. In many poor, inner-city neighborhoods, for example, there is geographic instability, heterogeneity of residents, and a breakdown of churches and other community-building institutions. Residents of these neighborhoods may have few emotional attachments to one another and may care little about the community in which they live. When the residents lose their links to one another and to their community, they also lose the ability to monitor (i.e., sanction) the behaviors of others. This in turn may lead to the breakdown of the whole system.[52] This system in question is supposed to be regularly interacting or interdependent group of people forming an integrated whole surrounded and influenced by its environment, described by its structure and purpose and expressed in its functioning.

From this perspective, child maltreatment is a breakdown in the social bonds that tie people to society's expectations. One such theory is Travis Hirschi's (1969) social bonding theory. Social bonding theory begins with the assumption that humans by nature are inherently motivated to commit deviant acts. Therefore, while most theories of child maltreatment attempt to answer the question "Why do adults abuse children?" social bonding theory turns this question on its head: Given the cultural and structural factors that encourage family violence, why don't adults abuse children? That is, what social forces prevent most adults from abusing children? According to Hirschi's theory, people refrain from committing deviant acts when

strong social bonds give them a stake in conformity. Three components of the social bond are most relevant to child maltreatment discussions: Commitment refers to the degree to which the individual is invested in conventional activities and conventional success. People with a lot to lose (e.g., home, family, career, and standing in the community) have a tremendous stake in conformity and are less likely to abuse children because of what they have at stake. Attachment refers to the bonds people feel with significant others in positions similar to theirs. Attachments create strong bonds to society because we do not want to disappoint people who are important to us. People with few significant attachments are freer to commit deviant acts by virtue of their position. A significant belief is the degree to which one feels the laws on child abuse are justified and right. There is variation, for example, in the degree to which some people believe hitting children is wrong. There are also people who believe that children are their property and that society has no right to tell them what they can or cannot do to their child. They believe they have the right to train their children how they want them to be. Obviously, this belief results in an increased probability of deviant behavior. We see support for these perspectives in research, which suggests that social isolation (including a lack of extended family or peer support networks) is correlated with child maltreatment. This understanding has been categorized within two models: the psychodynamic and sociological models. More recently, both views have been incorporated in a more comprehensive 'ecological' theory. This presents child abuse as occurring within the context of the child's environment at different, groups. The ecological paradigm is currently the most comprehensive model we have for understanding child abuse, providing a systematic framework in which to conduct both research and child protection practice.[57]

Worth noting is that, the challenge of strain and frustration are not only limited to the lower classes. Any incident that is associated with levels of stress within families might contribute to child abuse and neglect. Ecological theorists found that physical abuse is generally associated with large numbers of stressful life events as

well as stress associated with parenting. Stressful situations include the presence of a new baby in the family, illness, death of a family member, poor housing conditions, and larger-than-average family size. Other situational variables associated with physical abuse include high levels of stress in the family from work-related problems and pressures, marital discord, conflicts regarding a child's school performance, illness, and a crying or fussy child.

Compared with non-abusive parents, abusive parents have relatively fewer contacts with peer networks as well as with immediate family and other relatives. Ecological theorists evaluated social support networks both within and outside the family in terms of the presence of family social support, child-rearing help, and the size of any existing support networks. They found that abusive mothers reported less family social support, less child-rearing help from peers and professionals, and smaller peer networks than non-abusive mothers. Children who live in communities or societies with low social capital are believed to be at greater risk for child abuse and neglect than children who live in communities with well-developed social networks and community connections. Drawing from the above analysis we can make an informed conclusion that the origins of abuse can be organized into a framework of four principal systems: the child, the family, the community, and the society.[60]

The effects of social ecological risk factors of child abuse are, of course, multiple. No single risk factor is likely to explain much. Yet much of the research on this model has focused on single risk factors, thus the idea of particularly limiting the hypothetical power of the model. These 10 risk factors included items such as education for pregnant teens, family size, legal marital age, maternal age, and maternal history of abuse, socioeconomic status, maternal depression, and low self-esteem were identified as major risk factors.

*Self – Efficiency Theory:* Historically, child abuse and neglect research and interventions were grounded in the belief that inevitably the victim is damaged by trauma. However, factors such as severity of a particular type of abuse, age of the

victim, and his or her relationship to the perpetrator can predict later adjustment. Furthermore, factors such as support, parental warmth, and the victim's healthy relationship with a supportive adult can influence the child's healthy development and avoidance of delinquent behavior.

This theory focuses on how personal characteristics of the child and especially the parents, influences family functioning. Self-efficiency theory looks at how a parent's expectation of effectiveness impacts their motivation and behavior. An individual's expectations dictate if they will start and continue actions to achieve a goal. This theory help bridge a gap between knowledge and behavior. This is apparently when parents know they should not hit their children but are unable to seek out method to achieve this goal. Self- efficacy theory further states that this knowledge/behavior gap is due to the parents' belief that they cannot behave in a manner that would stop them from abusing their children.[7] Many theorists criticized this theory as being limited because; it does not incorporate a development perspective. The theorists of self- efficiency believe that society has the potential of moving from the primitive state to the modern stage.

*Psychological theories:*

Numerous psychological theories of abuse have been developed over the past few decades. Psychological theories focus on explaining human thought and behavior through different developmental, cognitive, social, behavioral, or affective process. The vast majority of psychological theories of child abuse focus on psychological abuse, adult male-perpetrated rape and child molestation, physical abuse although a small number focus on subcategories of offences (e.g., sexual sadism or female-perpetrated abuse).

There are no psychological theories available to exclusively explain child abuse, although many. Psychological theories provide a conceptual model of the psychological problems facilitating child abuse. This makes such theories significant

for development or formulation of treatment interventions in order to achieve effective rehabilitation success.

*Classifying Psychological Theories* Psychological theories of child abuse vary according to how much they generally recognize or incorporate other theoretical stances (e.g., biological or societal factors). Psychologists have usefully divided theories of sexual offending into three categories: single factor, multi factor, and micro level. According to them Single factor psychological theories examine only a single form of empirically associated theories with sexual violence/abuse (e.g., intimacy deficits). Multi factor psychological theories combine various theoretical explanations into wide range of factors and causal relationships associated with child abuse. Although such accounts focus on psychological factors, they will also generally include some non-psychological clarifications as well (e.g., biological). Micro level psychological theories give premium to series of cognitive, affective, behavioral, and contextual events that result in a single stage of child abuse. They are generally descriptive explanations developed from testimonies given by victims of abuse on their experiences. Because micro level theories are concerned more on how the abuse occurs rather than why it occurs they are believed to be much less prevalent than single or multi factor theories. For psychological theorists they believe that these levels are like two branches of the same root.[1] However, they focus more on the psychological aspect of the abuse.

*Examples of Psychological Theory Applied to Sexual Violence/Abuse.* Single and multi-factor psychological explanations of male perpetrated rape and child molestation are well established. Several researches have showed that factors such as lack of intimacy, inappropriate sexual interests, emotional control, and offence supportive thinking are all psychological components associated with the commitment of sexual assault against adult or children. Numerous psychological theories describe the relations of these factors alongside non-psychological mechanisms to varying degrees of complexity in the facilitation of sexual abuse. The most recent

psychological theory that was developed to particularly explain child molestation is Ward and Siegert's Pathways Model. This theory is a combination of the positive aspects of previous theories into a concept designed to describe five specific dimensions to abuse by complex interactions between learning, biological, and cultural factors. In other words, five subtypes of child molester are described and each of them is predicted to have its own unique approach and prominence of single psychological factors or vulnerabilities. These subtypes are traditionally known to be the psychological factor predicted to be most dysfunctional for that subtype (i.e., emotional regulation, sexual scripts, intimacy, antisocial thinking, and multiple dysfunctions). [71] So, for example, the intimacy subtype refers to individuals whose most prominent psychological vulnerability motivating their sexual offending against children is a lack of intimacy with adults and associated loneliness. Multiple dysfunction perpetrators, on the other hand, refer to child molesters who hold problems on all four psychological factors. The reasons why men have the tendency of rape is predicted to the fact that they are naturally programmed to prefer impersonal sex, which is likely to be optimized by coercive sex. With regards to the factors that cause rape, it is predicted that a confluence of risk factors motivate, disinhibit, and provide the general context for sexual offending (e.g., hostile masculinity, antisocial personality). Such men may also have tendency to be more hostile towards women than men who are not sexually violent.[28] Numerous other theories of sexual violence and abuse are available but they are not developed specifically to explain rape and instead focus on both rape and child sexual assault. During adolescence, it is predicted that as hormonal activity increases so too do aggressive impulses. While the majority of males are predicted to successfully control and suppress such impulses, psychological vulnerabilities created via numerous avenues (e.g., biological, developmental) are predicted to interact with contextual factors (e.g., intoxication, sexual arousal) and impair normal inhibition processes heightening the likelihood of sexual aggression. Psychological Theory Applied to Subsystems of sexual Abuse



While male perpetrated rape and child molestation are associated with different psychological theories, very little information is available to explain particular categories of sexual violence or abuse. However, in other areas such as teenage sexual abuse, it is believed that existing theories are not sufficient to explain the gender differences of female perpetrators. The advantages and challenges of Psychological theories provide a perfect approach of the range of cognitive, social, developmental, and behavioral factors associated with sexual violence and abuse at the individual level. [27] As such they enable professionals working with perpetrators of sexual violence/abuse to pinpoint the range of psychological factors that facilitate sexual offences, and highlight those psychological factors that require treatment interventions. A significant challenge faced by such theories, however, is that psychological factors tend to be emphasized over and above societal or biological mechanisms. However, even the most controversial psychological theories at least give premium to these factors to a very large extent.

These different theories mentioned above can serve as yard sticks in helping policy makers, governments of states, international non-governmental organizations, researchers and child right agencies in identifying the root causes of child abuse. Intellectuals and researchers have come to the conclusion that the root causes child abuse is not the result of human nature or evil people. They believe that its root lie in the very nature of the family itself. [26]

It is no hidden secret that the youths of today are the future generation. For the sake of peaceful world order, continuity and development, governments of States must partner with international nongovernmental organizations, civil societies, families, parents and caregivers in making the world a better place for children. Creating a friendly and peaceful environment for children will not only make them grow healthy and happy but also allow them to realize their potentials.

Chapter summary

There are several social structures and cultural pointers to child abuse that serve as yard sticks to help us understand why child abuse continues to exist in our respective societies. Cultural practices set the stage for child abuse, especially negative cultural forces that may allow or promote negative parent- child interaction. In many African societies for instance, corporal punishment is viewed as an accepted way to train children. Worth noting also, are the effects of cultural practices like FGM, early marriage, accepted parental aggression plays in these societies that were highlighted in this chapter. Structural characteristics of the social system may also contribute to child abuse. Some negative family practices like giving absolute power to parents (power imbalance); make children vulnerable targets of abuse. Also, family privacy of hiding incidents of violence from the rest of society encourages the reoccurrence of abuse. In most cases incidents are settled in house without involving the relevance authorities.

Social learning theories predict that children who are victims of assault or who witness assault tend to learn that violence is an acceptable way of life (resolving problems and expressing emotions). Resilience theories explain how the severity of the abuse and relation of the child with the supportive adult can determine the child's adjustment later in life. Socio ecological theories are macro in nature, meaning they focus on the disintegration of the whole society as the major cause of child abuse. Family system theories are micro in scope as the focus on the family system. For them dysfunctional relationship among family member may encourage child abuse. Family system theory has suffered a lot of criticism over the years for being ineffective. Finally, psychological theories focus on the human thought and behavior. This they went on to categorize as developmental, cognitive, social behavior or effective process.

In order to effectively implement the theories of child abuse prevention that we discussed in this chapter, society needs a very viable social structure that encourages partnership of governmental organizations and non- governmental organization. In the

next chapter we will look into the partnership and activities of those organizations and the impacts they have made in the child protection system of Sierra Leone.

## 2. CHILD ABUSE SOCIAL PREVENTION IN SIERRA LEONE: STRUCTURAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

### 2.1. Child protection organizations in Sierra Leone: threats and challenges

This section will examine the roles of inline ministries, government departments, non-governmental organizations, religious organizations working on child protection in Sierra Leone. We will also examine existing national laws and policies formulated to tackle the challenge of child abuse as well as regional and international child protection institutions that Sierra Leone is party to. An overview of the Child Right Act of 2007 will be included. As compliment to the official legislation in place, traditional religious authorities continue to play an important role in the fight against child abuse.

As the official recognized legislation that is formulated to promote child right and social protection in Sierra Leone the 2007 Child Right Act of Sierra Leone, defines a child as any person under the age of 18 years. Also, included in in the Child Right Act is a statement of children's welfare and provides solutions on how to handle children in conflict of the law as well as children in need of protection. The CRA also amended the old and outdated laws in other to move with the trend of changing global situation. These include; the Corporal Punishment Act (repealed), the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act and Young Persons Act.

In other to overcome the challenges of child abuse and neglect and enhance social security for children, the government of Sierra Leone has ratified the convention on the Right of the Child (CRC) and also a signatory to the African Charter on the Right and Welfare of the Child. It has also ratified the optional protocol to the CRC to the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the optional protocol to the Convention of the Right of the Child on the

involvement of children in armed conflicts. [44] However, it has not ratified the International Labor Organization (ILO) Minimum Age Convention 138 or ILO Convention 182 on the worst forms of Child Labor. It has also signed, but not yet ratified, the optional protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Traditional Organized Crimes.

In 1997, the ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs of Sierra Leone was merged with the ministry of Social Welfare and was renamed as the ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA). Although, the two institutions operate from different locations but they are supervised by the same minister. The 1991 constitution of Sierra Leone and other laws provide the statutory framework and mandate for the MSWGCA. The Child Right Act (CRA) of Sierra Leone gives the ministry of social welfare gender and children's affairs the responsibility for promoting the right and welfare of children all over the country, this they do in tandem with other inline ministries, departments, agencies of government and non-government organizations. The ministry also has the responsibility to monitor, supervise, and coordinate the activities of child welfare committees, in providing them with training, advice, guidance and support (administrative and logistics), and also for the formulation of rules and regulations on how the committees should function.[12] Although, there is no central authority for the overall management and regulation of child protection services in Sierra Leone, but the child right act does give the MSWGCA the responsibility for regulating foster care and for regulating approved foster care home/ orphanages for children.

The organization of the ministry is based in a traditional civil service model, comprising of directorates. The directorate of children's affairs in the MSWGCA directly deals with problems affecting children and develops possible solutions to those challenges. Like all other directorates, there is a structure of divisions with each having the mandate to cover certain aspects that deals with the welfare and protection

of children. These include; the division of Child Trafficking, Child Abuse (female genital mutilation, corporal punishment, rape, early child marriage) and Child neglect and welfare.

*District Level:* All district councils are responsible by way of constitutional provision for protecting the rights and promoting the welfare of all children within their constituencies. Each district council has a district council planning officer who has the responsibility to develop an annual strategic plan and budget which the council will present to the finance and budgeting department. The purpose of this budget is for child welfare and development programs in the district. These programs include sensitization, scholarship allocation to children, supporting orphans and vulnerable children. Each district has a small team of social development officers, who are under the supervision of a social development officer. This team in many cases is based in the district headquarters, but the social development workers are posted to the field and are expected to report to the social development officer who in turn report to the district council. Their role includes issues relating to children in conflict with the law and the protection of children in areas where the district council cannot reach [15].

*Village and chieftom level:* At the village and chieftom level issues pertaining to child welfare are handled by village headmen, informal village committees. These structures at village level have always been there. However, with the introduction of the Child Right Act, the ministry formalized them. At the apex of the village structure is the chieftom welfare committee. Its function is to monitor sub- committee and to handle cases of child abuse in the respective villages. The administration of local courts is governed by the Local Courts Act of 1963, which also outlines jurisdictional limits and an appeal process leading in principle through the justice (court) system up to the Supreme Court, even though such appeals are extremely rare [61].

Village headmen also preside over minor cases of abuse, fine or punish those that are in conflict with the law. They also facilitate fund raising activities for child

welfare programs. Because of the fact that village headmen in Sierra Leone have the opportunity to interact with their subjects more than the central government does, they have the advantage to influence their activities. This has led child protection agencies, INGOs, to partner with them in overcoming challenges of child abuse [43].

The ministry of MSWGCA has also, formed powerful partnership with inline government ministries, agencies, departments, to seek the interest of Sierra Leonean children. Like the MSWGCA, these organizations also have the mandate to protect the welfare of children.

*Sierra Leone Police (SLP):* Under the memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed by the ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs, since 2007 police stations all over the country is required to establish a family support unit (FSU). These family support units are responsible for dealing with cases that has to do with juvenile offenders, sexual abuse, maltreatment, domestic violence and so on. There are over 40 FSUs around the country, with each district having at least two. These FSUs are dedicated to ensuring that children's right are protected, alleged perpetrators are arrested, investigated and punished if found guilty. A social worker is assigned to each FSU. The responsibilities of the FSU police officer are to investigate alleged cases of child abuse, arrest perpetrators and prepare cases for the public prosecution (DPP)[55]. The Social Development Worker (SDW) also ensures that interview processes are child sensitive, family liaison and assessments are conducted; referrals are conducted where it is necessary and reintegration of the child is monitored.

*Ministry of Health and Sanitation:* The ministry of Health and Sanitation also compliment the effort of the MSWGCA in protecting and safeguarding the health of children in Sierra Leone. The ministry of health has District Health Management team (DHMT) working in the district level. They have the primary responsibility for safeguarding the health of children within the district. Although hospitals are found in each major town, the DHMT operates in peripheral health units (PHU) targeting

smaller communities. They are the first point of call for majority of the population living outside the major towns and serve as the primary health care providers for the greater number of the population.

The paramount role of the PHU (particularly community health officers, CHOs) is to provide free healthcare services for victims of child abuse (physical, sexual). Under the National Referral Protocol for victims of sexual and gender based violence (2009), the PHU staff have the responsibility to present initial medical assessment and refer the case to the District Health Medical Team (DHMT). The Chief Medical Officer has the mandate to arrange for a forensic examination of a victim of child abuse at the hospital as and when requested by the Family Support Unit (FSU) of the Sierra Leone Police.

*Ministry of Justice:* The child Right Act (CRA) of Sierra Leone made provision for the quasi – judicial and judicial structures for the handling of civil and criminal matters at the district level. The Child Right Act of Sierra Leone also gives right to the district family court jurisdiction in all matters that concerns parentage, access, custody and maintenance of children, which include orders in relation to child who is in need of protection. This court constitute a panel made up of two to four members of the community appointed based on their experience in child right issues, one of them must be a social welfare officer. Criminal cases that involve child abuse are heard by either the magistrates or the high court of Sierra Leone, depending on the nature and seriousness of the crime committed. [37]

*Civil Society and NGO Structure:* Worth noting, is the significant contribution of the international child right/welfare organizations, they have formed powerful partnership with the government of Sierra Leone in eradication child abuse and neglect. Most of these organizations have national representatives of the larger international organizations. The ministry of social welfare maintains contact with all the NGOs working in the country to protect children. Some of the NGOs that are presently operating in the country are as follows:



- UNICEF;
- GOAL;
- Plan International;
- Save the Children;
- Street Child;
- International Rescue Committee;
- Child Fund;
- Don Bosco;
- Defense for Children.

Many of these NGOs were instrumental in protecting children during the civil war in the 1990s and also during outbreaks. Some of them have broader child right focus and work on several issues including education of the girl child, health, gender and development. Plan International is an international NGO that is leading the way in increasing child protection in Sierra Leone. The local chapter of Plan International is called Plan Sierra Leone. This NGO is working tirelessly to ensure that all children in Sierra Leone are free from abuse and neglect and are assured of social security. Plan Sierra Leone has undertaken different child protection programs. Their child protection programs have helped to strengthen community – based child protection mechanisms and national child protection systems. Plan Sierra Leone has worked with communities to carryout extensive awareness raising resulting in increased reporting of incidents of teenage pregnancy, sexual abuse (harassment), early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation, gender based violence, child labor, corporal punishment, child trafficking, child molestation, drug abuse, child violence and so on.[53]

Plan Sierra Leone has also formed partnership with the Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children’s Affairs, the media, school authorities, paralegals, and social workers, helping them to access training programs on topics such as child safe

guarding, community – based child protection mechanisms and child programming. Many villages and communities from about 12 chiefdoms across their operational areas haven taken advantage of such training and are now well informed on topics such as child right Act of 2007, referral pathways and reporting channels for child abuse, gender – based violence and violence against children.

The Ebola disease outbreak in 2014 left many children displaced, Plan Sierra Leone played a pivotal role. As family tracing and reunification lead, Plan Sierra Leone supported the government through the ministry of social welfare, to identify children who were unaccompanied or separated from their families. They either reunified them with their family members or placed them in appropriate interim or alternative care arrangements.

In response to escalating threats to children’s survival, development and protection as a result of outbreaks, Plan Sierra Leone established case management teams to support the MSWGCA in responding to protection alerts received by ministry- led protection desk at district response centers. As a member of the child protection case management steering committee Plan Sierra Leone also supported the MSWGCA and UNICEF to pilot case management tools in many parts of the country in advance of the national launch of the child protection information management system. [62]

Also, very significant is the role of religious organizations in embarking on programs that seek to protect children. During the civil war in Sierra Leone, faith based organizations played pivotal role in rehabilitating and re- integrating child soldiers. They sometimes form partnership with other NGOs and government in tackling challenges affecting children. [48] This is because religious organizations are uniquely positioned to promote equitable outcomes for the most vulnerable children and families. Their moral influence and extensive networks give them access to most disenfranchised and deprived groups, those that government and NGOs are sometimes less able to reach effectively.

In light of the above description of the role of government bodies and non-governmental organizations to fight against child abuse this research has employed the statistical data of a secondary researcher. The researcher conducted a total of 661 conversations throughout the country following a “purposive sampling” technique as the study aimed to represent the cultural and social diversity with equal gender representation.

The researcher also focused his efforts to engage with marginalized groups such as disabled or street children. This research was conducted in poor and rural areas as well as urban settings. The target population was children and adults aged 10 -35, but a special attention was paid to children and youths between the ages of 10 - 17.

Table1:

Number of conversations by sex, age, and region

	children		adults		Total
	boys	girls	men	women	
Moyamba	13	25	47	27	112
Kono	16	15	10	19	60
Kambia	18	10	15	13	56
Western area	20	20	25	32	97
Portloko	17	19	10	10	56
Tonkolili	12	12	18	14	56
Bombali	20	11	13	12	56
Bo	20	19	35	10	84
Pujehun	28	15	20	21	84
Total	164	146	193	158	661

A total of 304 women and girls were reached during conversation representing nearly 46% of the total of the sample. The “snowball” sampling technique was used

for key informant interviews in order to target the principal actors in child protection in Sierra Leone. A total of 661 respondents were interviewed from different districts of the country including children and adults (parents, civil society workers, FSU police, social workers and more). The highest number of respondents came from Moyamba (112) followed by western area (rural and urban 97). More adult men (193) were interviewed than the rest of the variables in the sex categories. In the children category more boys (164) were interviewed than girls (146). Interviews were also conducted with representatives from international and national NGOs and representatives from ministries and the family support unit of the Sierra Leone police force [18].

For the purpose of this study the research was focused on the following types of violence, exclusive violence in the community, violence at school, violence against women (girls), child exploitation, teenage pregnancy and early marriage and violence at home, because they are the most prevalence in the country.

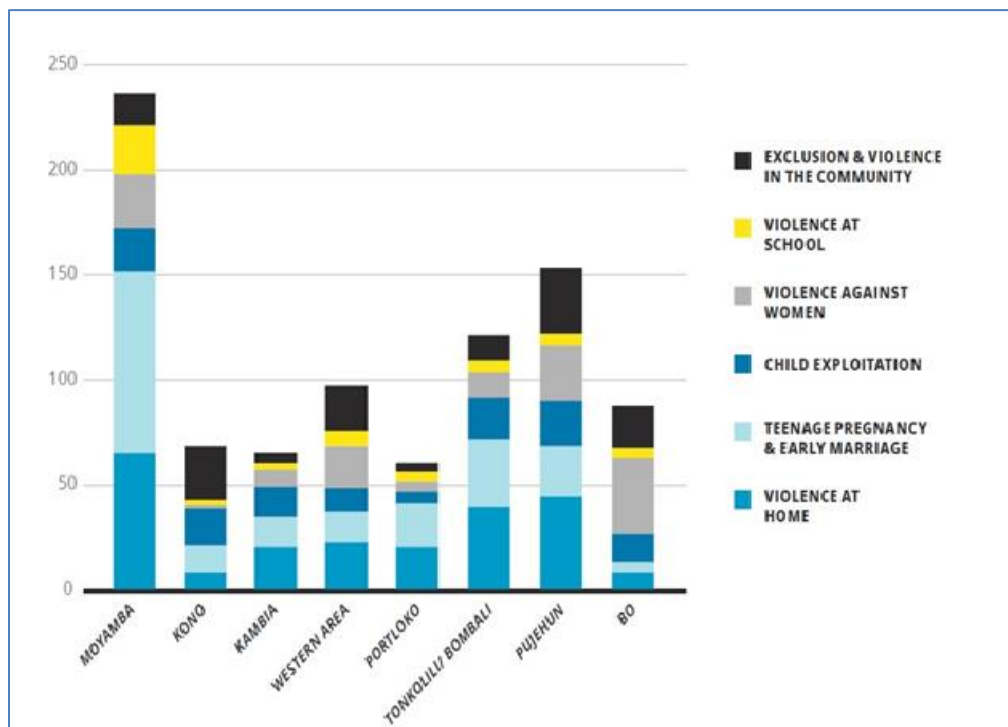


Figure 4: Violence categories by region

*Note: The data are adapted from Search for Common Ground Research Report (2015) on violence against children and youth in Sierra Leone*

After taking a close look at the above graph (figure 4) you will come to realise that these violence categories are repartitioned by regions. These regions are Moyamba, Kono, Kambia, Western Area (rural and urban), Portloko, Tonkolili / Bombali, Pujehun and Bo. Special attention is also paid to the existence of 6 different forms of abuse (exclusive violence in the community, violence at school, violence against women/girls, child exploitation, teenage pregnancy and early child marriage and violence at home) practiced in each region. From the graph we saw that Moyamba experience the highest forms of abuse with teenage pregnancy and early child marriage identified as the most prevalence abuse in the region followed by violence at home. Second highest is Pujehun with the highest form of child abuse there being violence against children at home. Pujehun is followed by Tonkolili/Bombali, western area, Bo, Kono, Kambia, and Port Loko, which was identified as the region with lowest existence of child abuse in the country.

Worth nothing is the fact that Moyamba, Pujehun and Bo, which are located in the southern part of the country, put together experience the existence child abuse more than Tonkolili/Bombali, Kambia and Port Loko (northern part of the country) put together. Kono and Western area where the capital city Freetown is situated experience lesser forms of abuse. Reason being that there are more NGOs, civil societies, religious organizations and child advocates organizations operating there. Significant also is the high level of literacy rate in the western area that has helped to reduce child abuse as compared to the other regions. Traditional practices and cultural beliefs of the people in the respective regions also affected the figures in the data collected.

Also very significant is that figures 5 to 12 disaggregated the types of violence categories by gender.

Despite the fact that a lot of effort has been made and laws been passed that have given them right to be protected, Sierra Leone is still experiencing the

prevalence of child abuse. A range of factors have been identified as causes of child vulnerability that was portrayed in the above graphs. Among the factors that have been identified are lack of access to quality education, rural–urban migration, displacement due to armed conflict or natural disaster, trafficking, harmful traditional practices, gender-based violence and discrimination due to gender, ability, political, ethnic or religious background. An effective national child protection system recognizes that the state has the ultimate responsibilities and human rights obligations towards children. [8]

CDC's Division of Violence Control for instance believes, that by building and strengthening child protection systems in any society that are based on children's rights, measures to protect all children will be holistic, inclusive, sustainable and well-coordinated. That is to say, rights-based systems will lead to better protection for children.

They believe that there should be a national child protection system consisting of; laws and policies that protect children from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence; also a central government mechanism for child protection which brings together all government departments, provincial administrations, the local levels of government and civil society to form a mechanism that will bring perpetrators to justice. It also needs effective regulation and monitoring at all levels, for example in childcare institutions and schools and a committed workforce with relevant competencies and mandates. [9]

In addition, a functioning child protection system should provide child-friendly services at all levels and be informed by children's views and experiences. It strengthens families in the care and protection of their children. The services are regulated by quality standards and delivered by the government or accredited social agencies.

Most Non- governmental organizations working with children are of the view that most of the third world countries in the world, have a long way to go before

reaching this level and we therefore work to find strategic entry points for advocacy and capacity building in each country. These strategies range from a focus on individuals, families and relationship, to broader community and societal change. [59] These strategies are needed to better address the interplay between individual-family behavior and broader neighborhood, community and cultural contexts.

*Public perception of Child Protection system (Community, Civil society and the media)*

In Sierra Leone, the community plays a pivotal role in the security and development of the child. Social security of the child is achieved by providing access to basic needs (shelter and food), quality and affordable education and medical care. These together with parental guidance and love, as well as peaceful and conducive home serve as important factors for ensuring that children feel safe.

Worth noting, is the significant role that the traditional institutions are still playing in the lives and living patterns of the people of Sierra Leone more especially in the area of children issues, and the perceptions of the communities in responding to the challenges they are facing. Each community has its leaders that serve as a bridge between the community and the government. It is still common practice to see chiefs presiding over cases that involves child abuse. Traditional resolution to these cases continues to play an important role over the present formal arrangements of government. They perceive child abuse issues as community problems which can be settled at community level by community elders or religious leaders rather than the central government. [33]

Sierra Leone's tradition recognizes the child as a property of the community and because of that everybody in the community has the morale responsibility for ensuring the wellbeing and protection of every child residing in that community. This includes the resolution of crimes committed against any child by another member of the community. Most community members in Sierra Leone are of the view that child

abuse may have far-reaching effect than the way most people will think. They believe that it has the potential of causing stigma to not only the child but also the family.

Both the electronic and print media in Sierra Leone have played a significant role in making sure child abuse and neglect is seen as a thing of the past. As a powerful platform for the dissemination of information, the media has always been propagating messages of child abuse prevention. They have been engaging stakeholders (governments, civil society (including NGOs), and communities in the bid to finding ways to address the urgent need of a solution to child abuse and neglect. For instance, it is common for someone to hear a jingle on radio or television talking about child right protection or radio soap opera on the same topic. In the case of the print media you will always find a column in many of the newspapers educating people on how to protect the interest of the child.

The media in Sierra Leone is trusted by majority of the people as being credible, reliable, objective and free from political influence. They have always been using microphone as a tool of communication in reaching the length and breadth of the country, to help reduce child abuse, poverty, support the people (both parents and children) in understanding their rights as well as their responsibilities to each other. Recently in Sierra Leone, there was rampant occurrence of rape cases involving children which has thrown the issue of rape and sexual violence of children into the spotlight. The media saw it as their corporate social responsibility to help people of Sierra Leone to understand why and how the country will have a healthy, vibrant and productive future general if they protect the rights and social welfare of children of Sierra Leone and provide them with welfare materials.

The media of Sierra Leone has also organized community engagement programs in other to identify why there is child abuse and ways of finding possible solutions to overcome the challenge. For instance, a popular television and radio program called “Tok Bot Salone” recently engaged the then deputy minister of social welfare gender and children’s affairs Mr. Mustapha Bai Atilla who is a former



journalist, the president's gender adviser, the head of the department of sexual abuse in the Sierra Leone police force, representatives from the Legal Access to Women, Community leaders, civil society groups in a bid to identify the causes and preventions of sexual abuse with particular attention on abuse against children.

At the end of the program the media identified the following factors as possible reasons for the prevalence of child abuse and neglect in Sierra Leone. Firstly, they identified lack of proper education on the Child Right Act of 2007 and also the fundamental human right issues (especially the right of the child). Secondly, they identified the absence of proper civic education in communities and schools as another contributing factor. The media help stake holders to see the need for the inclusion of civic education into the curriculum of schools. The media believed that will enhance the awareness of children as well as their parents or caregivers on their rights and responsibilities towards each other. [31]

The media has also actively followed alleged cases of child abuse and neglect that are being investigated in police stations (FSU) as well as those in court that are being heard or waiting for judgments.

Primary school education is supposedly free but schools demand fees and also charge for uniforms and books. Sexual abuse of children is a major and growing issue, and the government takes little action against it. Sierra Leone is a signatory of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, but not the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. It has had a Child Rights Act since 2007, but the law has been far from fully implemented. Marriage of girls under 18 is illegal, but forced child marriage is widespread, with more than half of females marrying before age 18. Child prostitution is also on the rise, with most of the street children in cities working as prostitutes. There is little effort by the government to do anything about this state of affairs. [34]

The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone expressed concern in 2011 that pregnant girls had been removed from an examination hall during the administration

of an important test, the Basic Education Certificate Examination, an action that is described as “a denial of the right to education.” [32]

This research conducted a survey on the perception of the Sierra Leonean public on of Child Protection system. The following tables and analysis are the outcome of the research survey that was conducted. 220 of the 400 questioners printed and distributed were returned to be analyzed which gives us response rate of 55%.

### *Response Demography*

The following tables table with provide us with a breakdown on the response the demography of the research.

Table 2:

### Respondents by Gender

Gender	Number of responses	Percentage of responses	Population estimate as of march 2018
Male	73	33.2	48
Female	147	66.8	52
Total	220	100	100

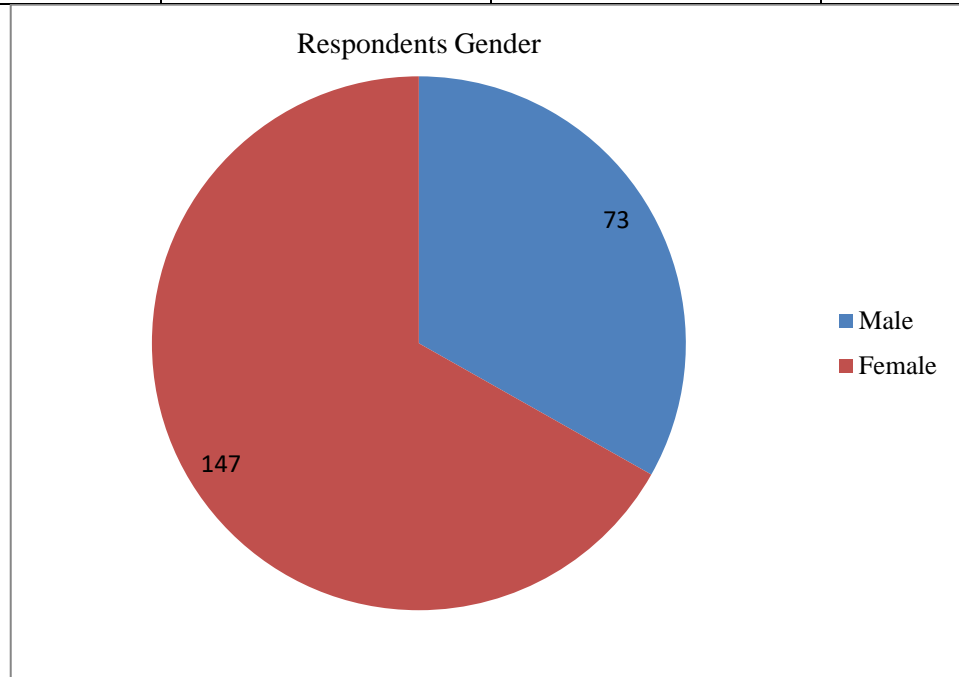


Figure 13: Responses by gender

The above table and pie chart indicates that 66.8% of female responded as against 33.2% of male respondents. This means that the sample is little but bias towards the perception of female respondents. The reason behind the gender disparity in our sample can also be attributed to the fact that the female population (52%) in Sierra Leone a little bit greater than the male population which is 48%. Also significant is the fact that women are more willing and comfortable to participate in the survey. The reason behind their overwhelming consent to participate is that they are well informed with the topic of research (child issues).

Table 3:

## Age of respondents

Age	Number of responses	% of responses
18 - 25	21	9.5
26 – 35	56	25.5
36 – 45	66	30
46+	55	25
Do not wish to say	22	10
Total	220	100

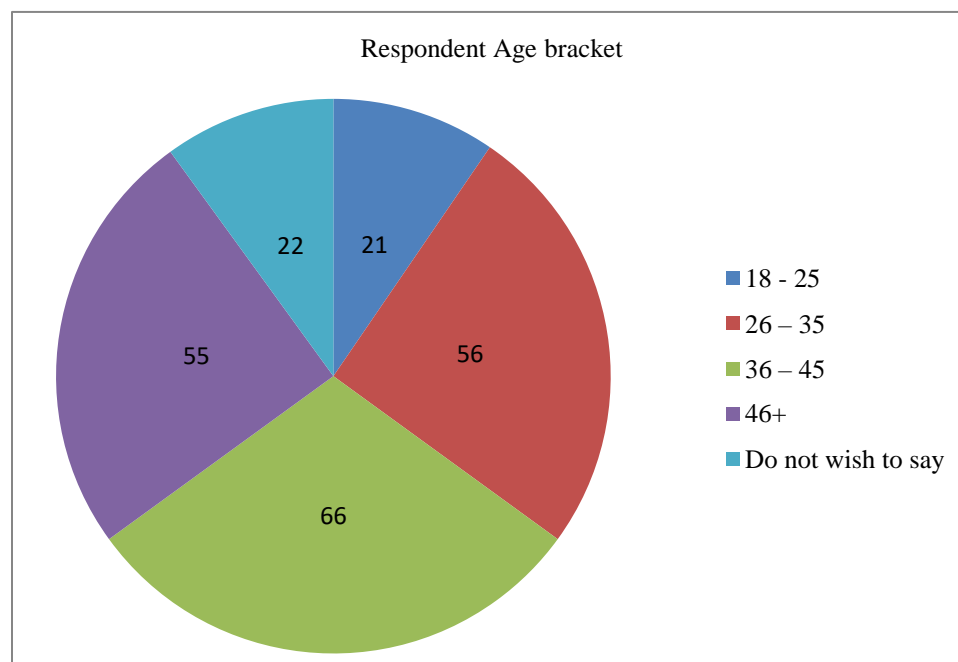


Figure 14: Responses by age bracket

Base on the above data we could see that the youths between 18 – 25 are underrepresented in the responses with only 9.5%. This is owned to the fact that they always shy away from responding to surveys. The highest response rate came from adults between the ages of 36 – 45. Their response rate is 30%. Apart from the fact that they are familiar with the topic they are also more matured and easy to convince to participate. We also got 25.5% responses from the age range of 26 – 35 and 25% from 46 and above. 10% of the respondents preferred on to disclose their age.

Table 4:

## Employment status

	Number of responses	% of responses
Work Part Time	32	14.5
Work Full Time	108	49.1
Self Employed	38	17.3
Unemployed	10	4.5
Students	20	9.1
Others	12	5.5
Total	220	100

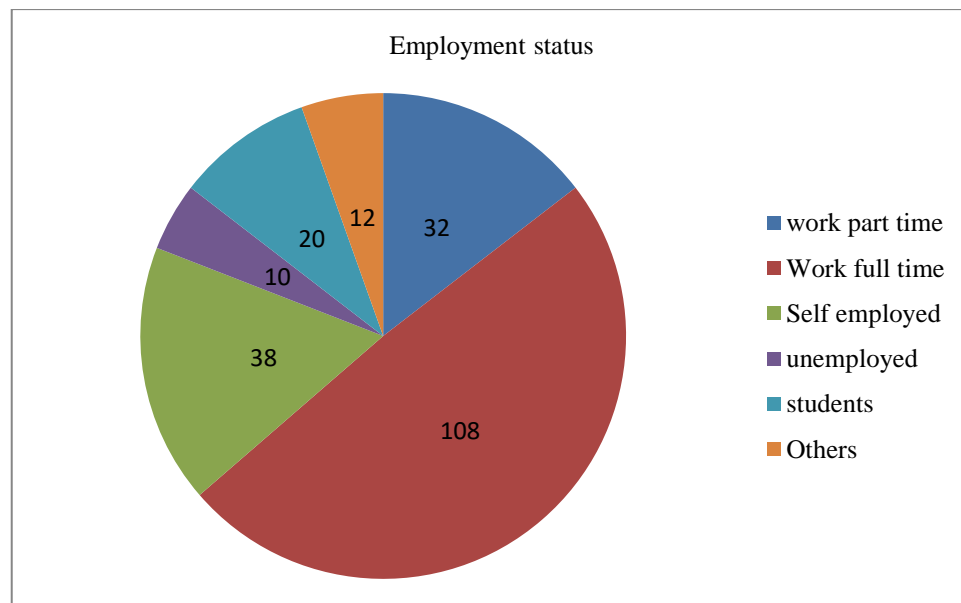


Figure 15: Responses by employment status

The above data represent the employment status of the respondents. We could see that 32 respondents representing 14.5% of our sample said they work part time. 108 respondents which are 49.1 are full time workers. 38 (17.3%) respondents said they are self-employed. 10 respondents which makes 4.5% of our sample are unemployed. The data further shows that 20 respondents are students, which is 9/1% of the sample. The remaining 12 respondents which are 5.5% fell under other categories. We had a low turnout of unemployed people, only 5% of them participation in answering the questioners. Most of these unemployment people fall within the category of illiterate category of the population and because of that they were shy to participate in the survey. Their orientation is that surveys are organized for educated people who can read and write.

Table 5:

Question: Men or women who do you believe are more likely to abuse children?

Table 5:	Number of responses	% of responses
Men	188	94.5
women	11	5.5
total	199	100

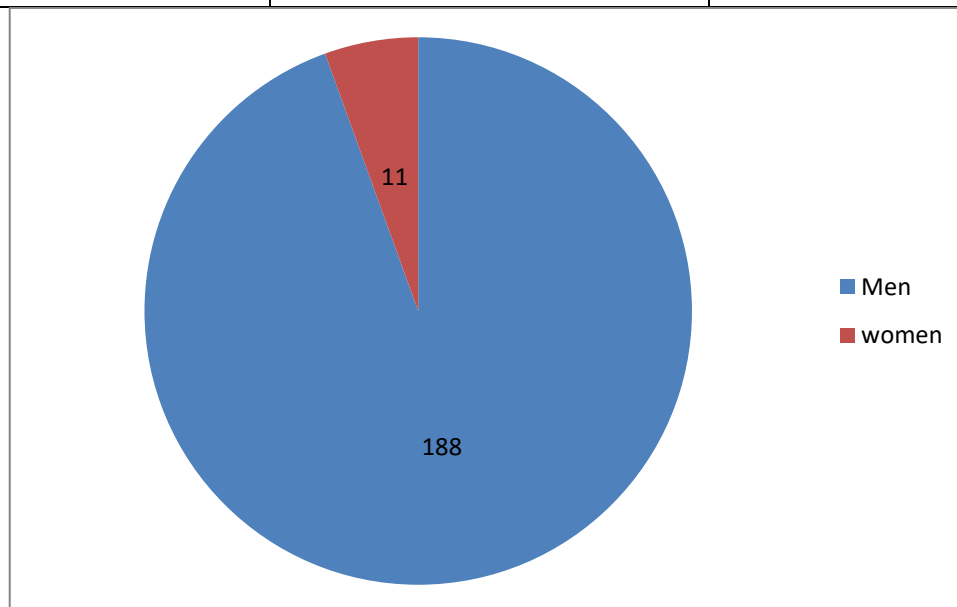


Figure 16: Gender most likely to abuse a child

199 respondents choose to answer this question and 94.5% of those respondents believed that men are more likely to abuse children as against 5.5% of women. The reason behind this huge difference could be attributed to the fact that greater maternal altruism is purely biological; that women have evolved over human history to care more than men about the welfare of their children.

The maternal bond is typically the relationship between a mother and her child. While it typically occurs due to pregnancy and childbirth, it may also occur between a woman and an unrelated child, such as in adoption. There are hundreds of factors, physical and emotional, which influence the mother-infant bonding process. Because of the bond that is mostly cultivated between women and their children they can't hurt them or in any form afford to see them suffer.

On the other hand most Sierra Leonean men have the perception that their responsibility is to provide for the family. They fail to find time to cultivate cordial relationship with their children. In the case where there is little or no bond it is easy for abuse to happen, either physical or psychological abuse. Although some of these abuses happen unconsciously out of ignorance from the side of the men or lack of understand the needs of the children (absent of communication).

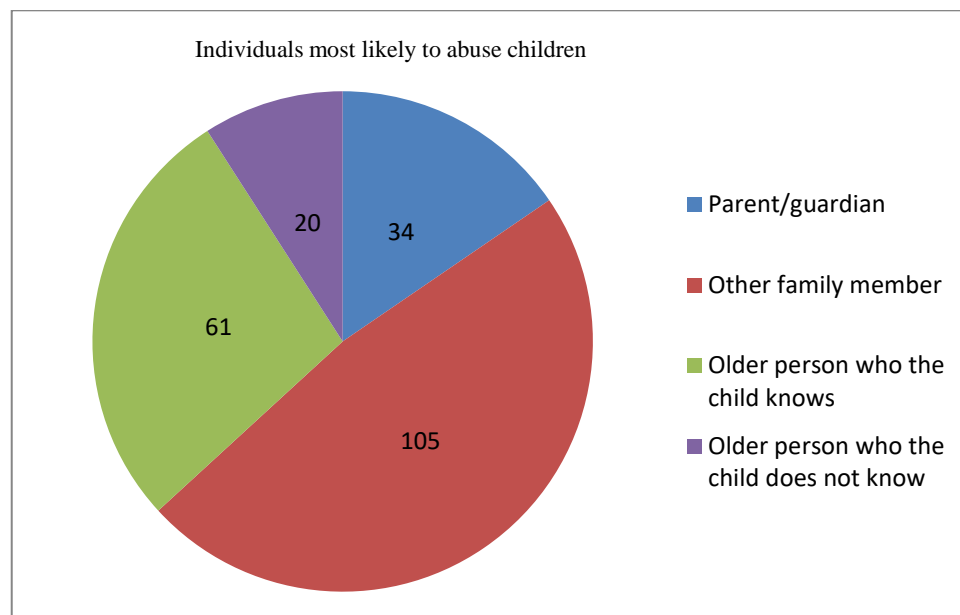


Figure 17: Individuals most likely to abuse children

Table 6:

Question: which of the following individuals do you believe is the most likely to abuse a child?

	Number of responses	% of responses
Parent/guardian	34	15.5
Other family member	105	47.7
Older person who the child knows	61	27.7
Older person who the child does not know	20	9.1
Aggregate results	Number of respondents	% of respondents
Someone known to the child	200	90
Strangers	20	10
Total	220	100

After given a close attention to the data in figure 17 we could realise that close relatives/family members most likely have the tendency to abuse children. The response rate shows that 105 which makes 48% response rate believe that other family member apart from the child's parents or guardians mostly violate their rights.

34 respondents goes for parent or guardians whiles 61 respondents (28 %) of the sample size choose older persons who the child knows. The remaining 20 respondents (9%) of the total responses choose adults that the child does not know.

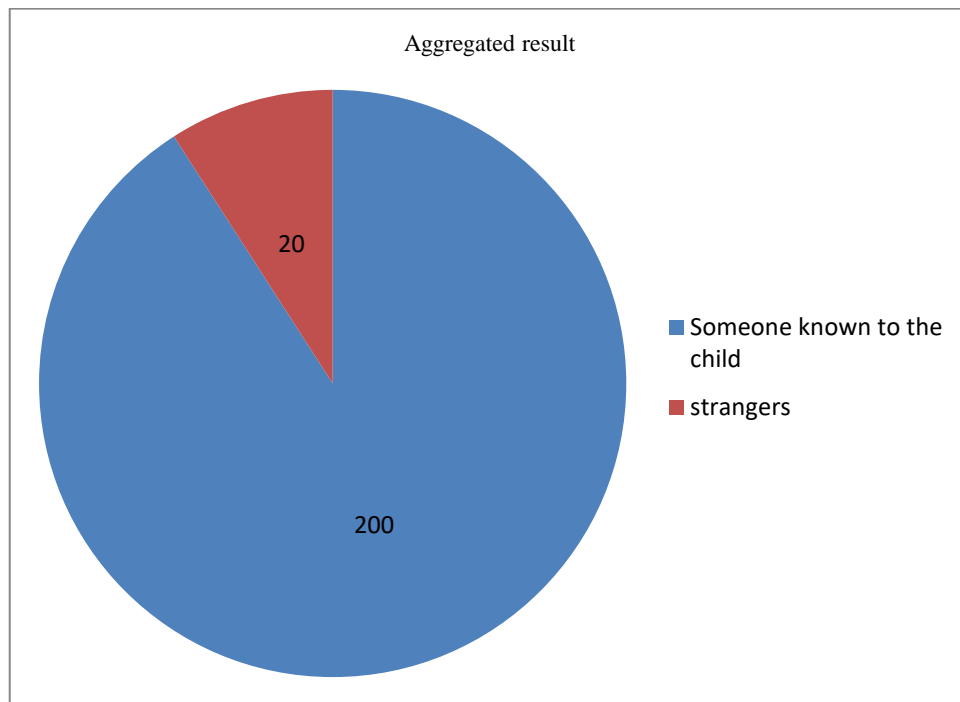


Figure 18: Aggregated results of individuals most likely to abuse children

All the respondents choose to answer this question which makes it 100% response of the sample size. From the responses above we can see that the general consensus among respondents was that it would be someone known to the child who is likely to commit child abuse against the child (91%). The result of this data clearly manifest that children are mostly violated by people very close to them. From our sample size which is 220 respondents we could realise that 200 respondents believe that someone known to the children has the potential of abuse them as against 20 respondents (9%) that choose strangers.

The table below portrays the views of respondents on their ability to identify inappropriate behavior against a child. 205 (12%) respondents choose to answer this question. 25 respondents said they are very confident in identifying inappropriate behavior. 129 respondents which are 63% of our sample choose fairly confident. 38 respondents said they are not very confident and the remaining 13 respondents said they are not at all confident of identifying any form of inappropriate behavior. From



the outcome of the responses we could realize that the highest number of respondents choose fairly confident.

Table 7:

Question: How confident are you that you could identify inappropriate behavior of an adult towards a child that may suggest possible child abuse?

	Number of respondents	% of respondents
Very confident	25	12.2
Fairly confident	129	63
Not very confident	38	18.5
Not at all confident	13	6.3
Aggregated results	Number of respondents	% of respondents
Confident	154	75
Not confident	51	25
Total	205	100

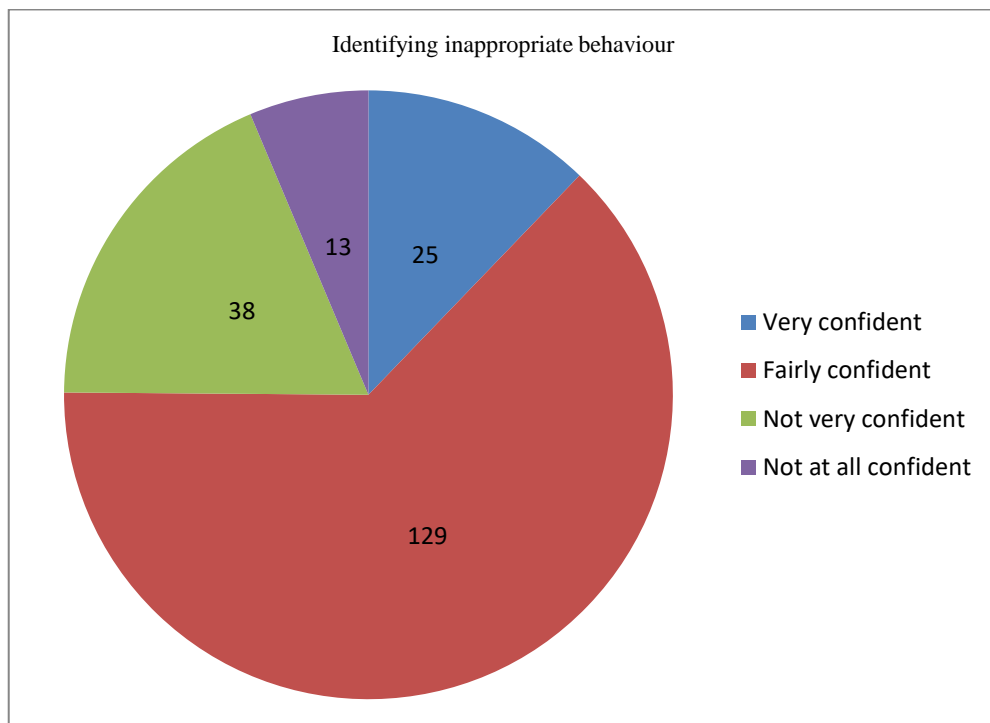


Figure 19: Identifying inappropriate behavior towards children

Reason been it is very difficult to identify child abuse in the first instance. We could recall from figure 18, that people that are very close to the child are the ones most likely to abuse the child. Because of that it takes time for an out sider to just conclude that an abuse is taking place unless he has to carry out a thorough investigation to make sure that his/her guess is correct.

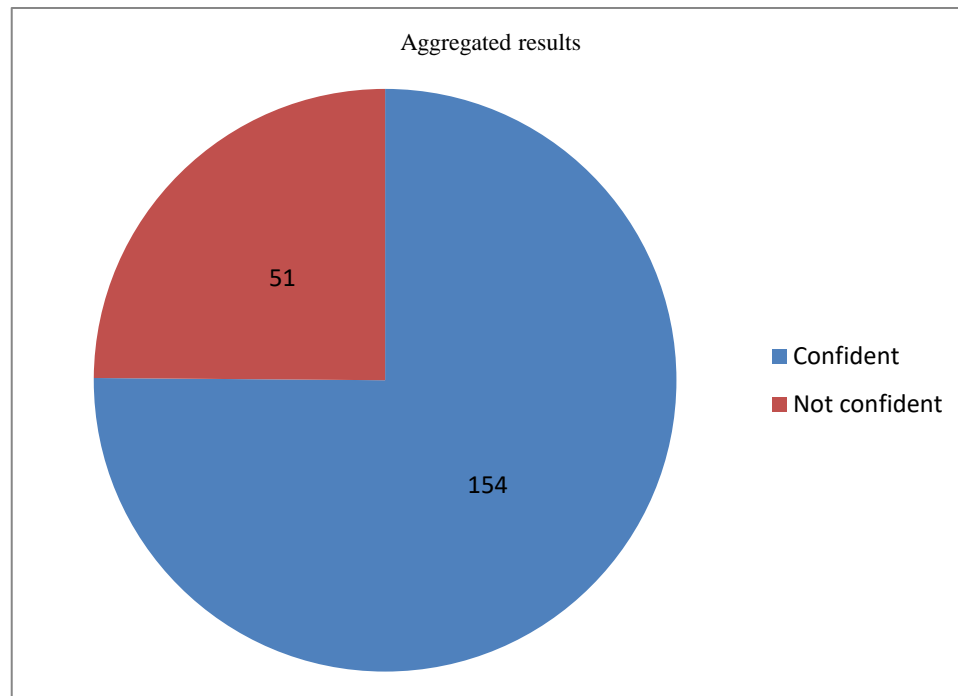


Figure 20: Aggregated results of Identifying inappropriate behavior towards children

205 respondents choose to answer this question. 75% of the respondents stated that they were confident that they could identify inappropriate behavior that may suggest possible child abuse. On the other hand, 25 % stated that they are not confident that they could identify inappropriate from adult perpetrators that may suggest possible child abuse. The confident section of the aggregated result include very confident and fairly confident respondents that sum up to 154(75%) of the sample and the not confident section include not very confident and not at all confident respondents that sum up to 51(25%) of the sample.

Table 8:

If you suspect that, a child was at risk of abuse from an adult. What would you do in the first instance?

	Percentage of responses
Contact social service	50
Contact police	65
Speak to the child's parents/guardians	49
Speak to another adult	48
Contact religious/community leaders	45
Others	10

*Note: Question: The following table outlines the responses. This question was analyzed as multiple choice style questions. The percentage of responses will not total 100%.*

The above table illustrates that more than half the respondents 65% prefer to talk to the police in the first instance. Also, half of the respondents 50% prefer to talk to the social service. 49% choose parents, 48% another adult, 45% religious/community leaders, 10% others respectively.

Child abuse and neglect has also been a serious challenge for policy makers and professionals working with children in Russia. It has become difficult to protect the rights of children, particularly with the increasing incidents of child abuse all over the country. Several presidential programs and legislations have been undertaking to address the issue of child abuse. These programs are at the center of domestic public discussions; but because of the lack of sufficient budget to finance the programs, together with the restrictions of the operations of non – governmental organizations have been major challenges.

Erroneous public perceptions matter because they influence policy. In spite of the enormous challenges they are facing in combating child abuse, the Russian society is recognized as a modern society. The Russian Constitution, which was adopted in 1993, provides for the state protection of childhood, motherhood, and the family

(Russian Constitution, Article 38). According to the Constitution, hundreds of laws, presidential decrees, government resolutions, executive regulations of specific agencies, and legal acts of the constituent components of the Russian Federation are supposed to secure rights of children. [16] The primary documents in this field are the Family Code of the Russian Federation and the Federal Law on Basic Guarantees of the Rights of the Child in the Russian Federation of July 21, 1998. (Family code, Russia federation 1996).<sup>18</sup> Child protection policy is also affected by the implementation of relevant provisions of such legislative acts, as the Civil Code, Labor Code, Housing Code, Criminal Code, Criminal Correctional Code, Fundamentals of Health Care Legislation, Federal Law on State Assistance to Individuals having Minor Children, Federal Law on State Support of Youth and Children's Organizations, Federal Law on Social Assistance, and many others.

Several targeted programs aimed at creating opportunities for children's development and protection of their rights were developed by the federal government and the President of Russia. [22] These programs are dedicated to such aspects as the development of gifted children, the organization of summer vacation for children, protection of children whose parents are refugees or forced migrants, treatment of catastrophe victims, family planning, counteraction to drug abuse, and some others. Per Russian tradition, issues included in government or presidential programs receive better financing; their implementation is better controlled by the responsible government agencies; and legislative support is provided. Over the years Russia as a country has been struggling with the challenge of child sexual abuse. Child prostitution is more evidence in St. Petersburg and other cities bordering the Scandinavian countries.

Inspire of all these challenges the Russian society has continued to frown on perpetrators of child abuse that includes parents, care givers, teachers and other adults who tramples into the rights of children. The Russian society is well informed on the importance of protecting children in order to allow them to develop healthy and

vibrant so the future generation will be productive. Significantly, Nongovernmental organizations, universities, religious groups, civil society groups are all complimenting the effort of the Russian government to develop social welfare programs for less privileged children all over the country. Worth noting also, is their effort on organizing awareness raising programs for parents and children on their roles and responsibilities to each other and to society as a whole. [66]

The above analysis has demonstrated that although child abuse is a universal problem with similar causes and effects on the society in general and children in particular. In spite of that, having done a comparative study of Russia and Sierra Leone it shows that it is more prevalence in Sierra Leone than Russia. Reason being, Russia as a first world country has progressed to the modernization stage. This means, their society is more enlightened on child right issues; they have stronger child protection institutions. Sierra Leone on the other hand is a developing country in the global south with plenty of institutional challenges. Also, worth noting is the low level of civic education among the population coupled with the cultural beliefs of most people, especially in rural areas that corporal punishment and other forms of treating children are accepted norms.

Notwithstanding, both societies share a common value in the way that government organizations partner with non-governmental organizations ( local and international) in tackling the challenges of child abuse in their respective societies.

In the next sub topic will critically analyze the Model of Governmental Bodies and NGO Cooperation/partnership for child abuse prevention. It will explain how they complement each other's effort for the prevention of child abuse in our respective societies.

## 2.2. Model of Governmental bodies and NGO cooperation for child abuse prevention

To understand what a systems approach to child abuse and protection is, one has to start with the definition of a system. References to systems are ubiquitous; many if not most endeavors refer to systems in one way or another. For the purpose of this project, the discussion will be based on key cross-cutting themes that emerged from this literature, with a particular emphasis on human right protection, education, and social services and security systems of the child.

It is a fact that every society has to think deliberately about how it will protect its children. Normative standards such as laws, culture, and religion may influence how members of a community choose to protect children and the choices they make may well affect the very nature of childhood. Nevertheless, the essential question remains: how will children be protected from violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect, as well as man-made and natural emergencies, as a matter of a child's fundamental rights.

When it comes to protecting children, the family plays a central role, particularly during the child's earliest days. Children are also part of a broader community where their relationships, engagement, and roles deepen over time and take on increased significance. [73] For this reason, protecting children is both a private and a public responsibility.

### *Factors increasing a child's vulnerability*

A number of studies, mostly from the developed world, have suggested that certain characteristics of children increase the risk for abuse (child vulnerability). The following are some of the factors:

### *Special characteristics*

Premature infants, twins and handicapped children have been shown to be at increased risk for physical abuse and neglect. There are conflicting findings from

studies on the importance of mental retardation as a risk factor. It is believed that low birth weight, prematurity, illness, or physical or mental handicaps in the infant or child interfere with attachment and bonding and may make the child more vulnerable to abuse.

#### *Caregiver and family characteristics*

Research has associated certain characteristics of the caregiver, as well as features of the family environment, to child abuse and neglect. While some factors – including demographic ones – are related to variation in risk, others are related to the psychological and behavioral characteristics of the caregiver or to aspects of the family environment that may compromise parenting and lead to child maltreatment.

#### *Family size and household composition*

The size of the family can also increase the risk for abuse. A study of parents in Guinea, for example, found that families with four or more children were three times more likely to be violent towards their children than parents with fewer children. However, it is not always simply the size of the family that matters. Data from a range of countries indicate that household overcrowding increases the risk of child abuse. Unstable family environments, in which the composition of the household frequently changes as family members and others move in and out, are a feature particularly noted in cases of chronic neglect.

#### *Personality and behavioral characteristics*

A number of personality and behavioral characteristics have been linked, in many studies, of Child abuse and neglect. Parents more likely to abuse their children physically tend to have low Self-esteem, poor control of their impulses, mental health problems, and to display antisocial behavior. Neglectful parents have many of these same problems and may also have difficulty planning important life events such as marriage, having children or seeking employment. Many of these characteristics compromise parenting and are associated with disrupted social relationships, an inability to cope with stress and difficulty in reaching social support systems. Abusive

parents may also be uninformed and have unrealistic expectations about child development. Research has found that abusive parents show greater irritation and annoyance in response to their children's moods and behavior, that they are less supportive, affectionate, playful and responsive to their children, and that they are more controlling and hostile.

#### *Prior history of abuse*

Studies have shown that parents maltreated as children are at higher risk of abusing their own children. The relationship here is complex, though, and some investigations have suggested that the majority of abusing parents were not, in fact, themselves abused. While empirical data suggest that there is indeed a relationship, the importance of this risk factor may have been overstated. Other factors that have been linked to child abuse – such as young parental age, stress, isolation, overcrowding in the home, substance abuse and poverty – may be more predictive.

#### *Violence in the home*

Increasing attention is being given to intimate partner violence and its relationship to child abuse. Data from studies in countries as geographically and culturally distinct as China, Colombia, Nigeria, Egypt, India, Mexico, the Philippines, and South Africa have all found a strong relationship between these two forms of violence. In a recent study in India, the occurrence of domestic violence in the home doubled the risk of child abuse. Among known victims of child abuse, 40% or more have also reported domestic violence in the home.

In fact, the relationship may be even stronger, since many agencies charged with protecting children do not routinely collect data on other forms of violence in families. [21]

#### *Other characteristics*

Stress and social isolation of the parent have also been linked to child abuse and neglect. It is believed that stress resulting from job changes, loss of income, health problems or other aspects of the family environment can heighten the level of conflict



in the home and the ability of members to cope or find support. Those better able to find social support may be less likely to abuse children, even when other known risk factors are present. In a case–control study in Borno state, northern Nigeria for instance, children living in single parent families were at significantly greater risk for abuse than those in two-parent families. The risk for abuse was lower, though, among those who were better able to gain access to social support.

### *Community factors*

#### *Poverty*

Numerous studies across many countries have shown a strong association between poverty and child maltreatment. Rates of abuse are higher in communities with high levels of unemployment and concentrated poverty. Such communities are also characterized by high levels of population turnover and overcrowded housing. Research shows that chronic poverty adversely affects children through its impact on parental behavior and the availability of community resources. Communities with high levels of poverty tend to have deteriorating physical and social infrastructures and fewer of the resources and amenities found in wealthier communities. [10]

#### *Social capital*

Social capital represents the degree of cohesion and solidarity that exists within a community. Children living in areas with less “social capital” or social investment in the community appear to be at greater risk of abuse and have more psychological or behavioral problems. On the other hand, social networks and neighborhood connections have been shown to be protective of children. This is true even for children with a number of risk factors – such as poverty, violence, substance abuse and parents with low levels of educational achievement – who appear to be protected by high levels of social capital.

#### *Societal factors*

A range of society-level factors are considered to have important influences on the well-being of children and families. These factors – not examined to date in most

countries as risk factors for child abuse – include: the role of cultural values and economic forces in shaping the choices facing families and also, shaping their response to these forces.

- . Inequalities related to sex and income – factors present in other types of violence and likely to be related to child maltreatment as well.

- . Cultural norms surrounding gender roles, parent–child relationships and the privacy of the family.

- . Child and family policies – such as those related to parental leave, maternal employment and child care arrangements.

- . The strength of the social welfare system that is, the sources of support that provide a safety net for children and families.

- . The nature and extent of social protection, and the responsiveness of the criminal justice system

- . Larger social conflicts and war, many of these broader cultural and social factors can affect the ability of parents to care for children – enhancing or lessening the stresses associated with family life and influencing the resources available to families. [56]

#### *Main types of actors in the child protection system*

The multiple elements of a child protection system operate at different levels of the ecology of the child, from the micro to the macro level. This ecology of the child could be represented into the following diagram:

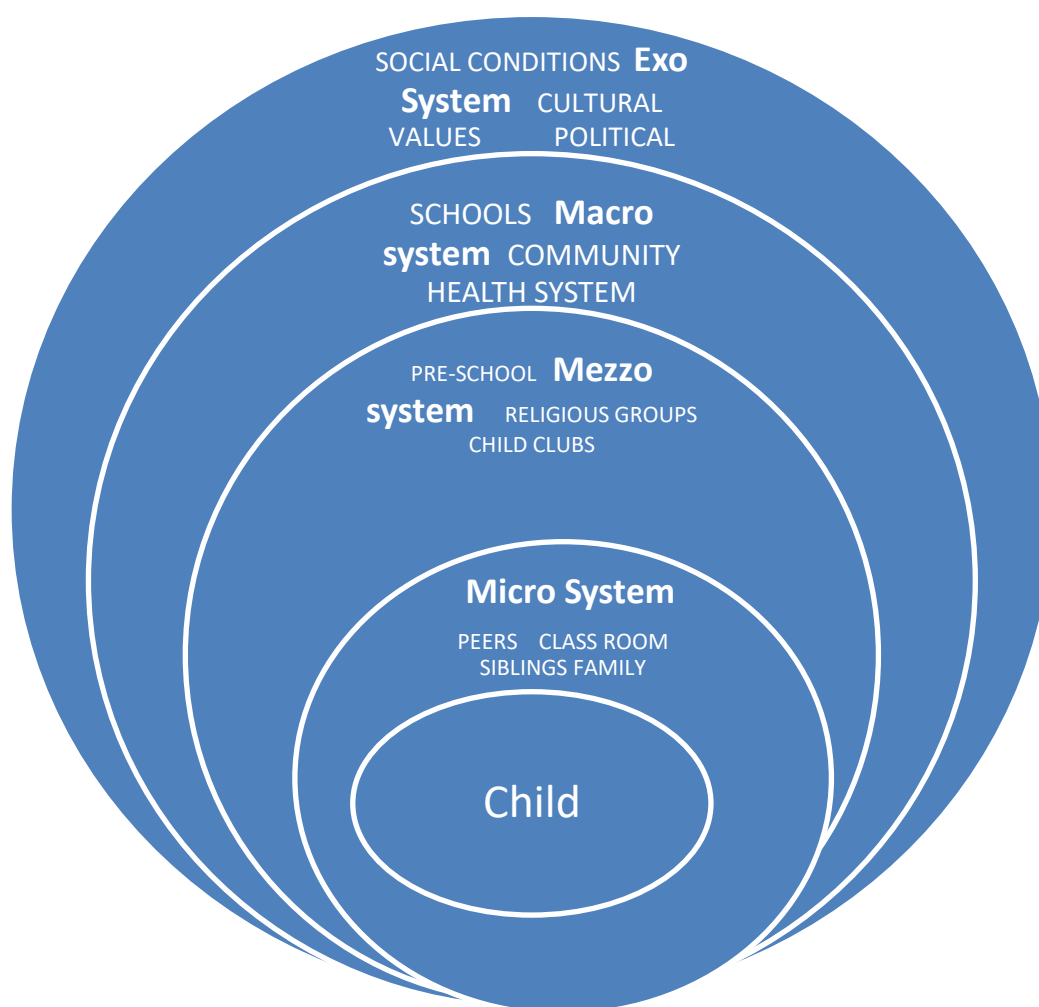


Figure 21: The Eco-system of child protection system

Children's well-being depends on their relationships with others and the social, political, spiritual, physical and Environmental contexts in which they live. The ecology of the child shows us the different levels and types of Influence on a child's development and protection, from the closest (e.g. Families and peers) to the farthest (e.g. Political and cultural systems and structures). International non-governmental organizations like World Vision have identified five main types of actors in the child Protection system which has an impact on various levels of the ecology of the child. (See Figure 21)

The five types help to conceptualize different contributors and roles in the child protection system, and recognize different entry points for impacting the child

protection system. Each type of actor might cover multiple levels of the ecology of the child. Also, these categories are not mutually exclusive – some people or institutions might fit in more than one type of actor. Below is a brief explanation of the five main types of actors in the child Protection system.

### *The Child.*

The child is the focus of the child protection system, as well as an important factor in the system. The effectiveness of the system is ultimately measured at the level of the child – whether children are safe from abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of violence. Children are also one of the actors in the system, and as such have a major role to play in their own protection. Life skills and spiritual development can build children’s capacity to make good decisions, influence their environment positively and build resilience to difficult situations. Their innate skills of self-protection, plus their growing capacities to manage themselves and influence their environment, mean that they are able not only to protect themselves but other children as well. It also means that they are equally able to do harm to other children.

### *MICRO LEVEL*

#### *Family*

The family often plays the most influential role in the quality of care and protection that each child receives. The Role of the family is determined through the knowledge, attitudes, capacity and beliefs of each family related to the care and protection of children. However, families rarely operate outside community boundaries and are critically influenced by local culture, including traditional attitudes, behaviors and practices. [50] It is important to recognize local cultural understanding of the definition and roles of family, as well as the protective roles and responsibilities of families. For example, in some cultures the extended family has a critical role to play in the protection and care of children, and gender often determines different roles which are played within families.

#### *Peers and Classroom*

In ways similar to the community, the peer group becomes an agency of enculturation and learning. Even very young children develop a sense of self from their perceptions of important people in their surroundings, including relatives, teachers, and peers. Socioeconomic status, ethnic identity, and parents' occupations affect how families view themselves and the process by which they socialize their children. Later, as children leave the home setting, their self-perception and socializing skills become influenced by how their peers view them.

When children move out from family to child-care center, school, and the community at large, they begin to form attachments, and friendships emerge through their play. These relationships influence behavior. Even infants and toddlers are observed reacting to other infants by touching them, by crying when others cry, and later by offering nurturance or comfort. By about age three, early friendships begin to form and children's peers begin to have a more lasting influence.

### *Siblings*

In large families, young kids can't always get a lot of individual attention from parents - but healthy interactions with an older sibling might help compensate for that, a new study suggests. How older children interact with their siblings is tied to the younger children's development, Canadian researchers found. "The idea is that here is this effect of being in a large family where you don't get that many resources, but if you get an older sibling that's really attuned to your needs that would be a modifying effect," Jennifer Jenkins told Reuters Health.

What children learn from their siblings when they are growing up has a considerable influence on their social and emotional development as adults, an expert on family relationships has said.

According to Prof Laurie Kramer of the University of Illinois, while a parent's influence on a child's development is obviously important, the influence of a sibling should not be under-estimated.

“What we learn from our parents may overlap quite a bit with what we learn from our siblings, but there may be some areas in which they differ significantly,” Prof Kramer said.

She pointed out that while parents are better at teaching the social niceties of more formal settings, such as how to act in public or at the dinner table, siblings are better role models when it comes to informal behavior, such as how to act at school or how to act around friends. These constitute the bulk of a child’s everyday experiences. [13]

### *MEZZO LEVEL*

#### *Child and religious organizations*

Children usually acquire the religious views of their parents, although they may also be influenced by others they communicate with such as peers and teachers. Aspects of this subject include rites of passage, education and child psychology, as well as discussion of the moral issue of religious education of children. Parental, couple, and familial religion are linked with youngsters’ pro-social behavior. However, religion can undermine child development when it is a source of conflict among families. The investigation concludes with a specification of implications and directions for future research.

### *MACRO LEVEL*

#### *Community*

In communities, both formal and informal elements are at work, and their combination will depend on the particular context. In places where the government system is decentralised, the presence of formal system elements such as special police forces or services may be greater. [67] In other contexts, the informal elements may be dominant. For example, in many communities in Sierra Leone, there are informal child Protection committees, youth clubs or other Structures that perform prevention and Protection functions. This level includes most Civil society organisations as well as businesses. Individual community members also have important roles to play in the

protection of children, whether as neighbors, mentors, friends or other positive figures. Community members and families together also have a critical role in building assets which will help children to thrive while also preventing abuse, neglect and exploitation.

### *EXO-LEVEL*

#### *Cultural values*

Culture shapes experiences and influences children's development. Through their culture children learn which behaviors and temperaments are preferred or discouraged. For example, independence and self-esteem are valued in some cultures; interdependence and the strong connections are preferred in other cultures. One universal trend is that children who are pro-social and non-aggressive are liked by other children.

Early childhood professionals should be trained to understand and bridge the cultural orientation of children in their classrooms. Intervention programs should always be flexible enough to adjust depending on culture and to help families to incorporate services smoothly into their life.

We all need to understand how culture shapes child development in order to improve the lives of children in a way that respects their cultural backgrounds.

#### *Social condition*

For decades, the medical community has understood the important influence an individual's environment has on their health. This has led to many health promotion interventions which focus on improving health by improving the environment of a community. This has also led to increasing calls for future health promotion efforts to move beyond attempting to change individual behaviors and instead focus on creating a healthy environment, which are conducive to health.

An individual's social environment, including the social relationships an individual makes within it, can also have a profound impact on the quality of parenting, which in turn affects a child's health development and future achievements.

57M Inclusive social environment which provide support to parents have been shown to enhance parents' capacity to care for their children and in doing so promote better child health and development. They have also been shown to have a positive effect on the family system, and families who are well connected to networks of supportive individuals are better able to cope with factors which may negatively influence their health.

#### *State*

The state is a critical actor, given its role and responsibility in the implementation of children's rights to protection, which are articulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The majority of formal components of the child protection system are put in place and implemented by the government authorities at different levels; however, the state is strongly affected by informal elements of the child protection system. This level includes, People hired by the state who have roles to play in the protection of children, including teachers, health workers, Police officers and others.

#### *International structures and actors*

International structures and actors play a significant role by supporting the implementation of child rights to protection and holding states accountable as duty-bearers pursuant to the CRC and other international rights instruments. They often do this through establishing mechanisms for reporting, review, monitoring and evaluation, complaints, and limited redress. The international entities also contribute to the development of research, data analysis, information and database management, and advocacy campaigns. Some entities, such as UN entities, act as lead agencies to coordinate efficient and effective responses in emergencies. International child-focused non-governmental organizations are also actors in the child protection system. They often are actor in the informal elements of the system, as they advocate and build capacity of children, family members, partners and government to fulfil their responsibility in protecting children. In some rare cases, NGOs might be part of



the formal elements of the child protection system if they are providing services under the formal mandate of the government. International Non- governmental organizations must be careful not to contribute to the creation of parallel, competing, non-sustainable structures in child protection systems. This is prevented through ensuring that their work is sufficiently rooted in collaboration with the government and communities.

*The role of the family in the social protection of the child.*

In response to the problem of child abuse and neglect there have been a series of community-based preventive measures. After examining the potential roles of parents in child abuse preventive programs, we might want to recommend certain measures. These measures include: the necessity of developing a strong partnership between parents and community; the use of gender-neutral terms as “abusive parents” which serve to disguise who actually abuses and who is held responsible for protecting the child; the reaction to what is perceived as intervention in the family. These issues are very important to consider because trust is necessary between the family and societal institutions.

The child as an individual has an interdependence with the state. Their issues are not limited only to harm and abuse but rather their overall development and wellbeing. This demonstrated in the policies of many countries in the world in protecting the interests of the child. [24]

We shall examine the family as a solution to the challenges of child abuse. The family as we know is the blood of every human society. The family always accepts its members for who they are, and will do anything to make sure its member are happy. Also love them unconditionally at all times. The life of every child starts in the family a place where love never ends.

*Education and socialization-* The family is also the means of support of new life, the natural refuge for children, and the first and foremost school to teach the values necessary for the well-being of children and society. The family truly is our

link to the past and bridge to the future. [30] The family is the only place where children learn a lot after school. In school, teachers taught children about the subjects which will help them to find good jobs in future. In the home, family teaches children about habits, rules, values, tradition, disciplines which not only help them to find job but also help them live a perfect life in future. Early education starts with the family when babies are born, they see they see their parents and there after they spent most of the time with their families until they go to school. The first 3 to 4 years is really important for babies to get to know good habits from their parents, brothers or sisters. This period babies brain triple in weight and they can learn habits and discipline from their families only.

*Protection of vulnerable members* - the family stands with its members in any situation. This is one of the biggest advantages of the family any of us never realize. The families protect and defend its members from external influence. The family has the responsibility to give psychological support to its members, especially when they are faced with critical situations. In addition to childcare support, families typically provide protective care and support for their disabled, frail, ill, and other vulnerable members who cannot care for themselves. The the family is a social arrangement in which an individual has extensive reciprocal duties, obligations and responsibilities to his relations outside his nuclear family. [49] The child may have lots of friends and play mates but parents, brothers and sisters are the only ones who will stay with the child in hard and difficult times. For instance, if a child has a school function, competition in school the family may decide to support the child by boosting the child's moral, this can serve as a motivation, driving away all sort of fear and giving the child the confidence him/her needs to perform very well. Also, if the child is sick and admitted in the hospital family members will visit the particular child encouraging him/her that everything will be fine. This may serve as a psychological boost to help the child recover fast from the illness.

*Domestic economy-* also, very significant is the role of the family in developing the human capital of its members. In most cases senior members of the family system may pass on creative skills the acquired from their predecessors to the future generation. Empowering young boys and girls is a form of security against any form of abuse. The more the child is kept independent and confident the more he/she will be able to resist any form of intimidation and bully. This fact is enforced in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states “motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance,” [64] and, as stated in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, every child should, “wherever possible, grow up in the care and under the responsibility of his [or her] parents.” [17] Most teenage girls in Sierra Leone are sexually violated because of material things. This can only be avoided in situations where the family was able to empower the girl child to be able to provide her needs for herself.

*Leisure and entertainment-* this is another reason why the family is important in the life of the child. The first source of entertainment for children is the family. It is the responsibility of parents to always keep their children happy. There is a saying “a happy child is a healthy child”. It is common practice that most of the time one or both parents are busy finding income for the family. In spite of this they are expected to take time off from job so they get time with the children. This may include staying at home as a family, playing games, singing and dancing, telling family stories or family outings (site seeing or cinema). The family also encourages children when they pass every advance stage. This is why the family is important in the child’s development. It can also help to unite the family, making it a stable environment for upbringing. Significantly if the child is happy at home it will positively reflect on their academic progress and then can be able to fully realize his potential.

*Social selection-* class system is evident in Sierra Leone’s family system. “Matchmaking” is one of the common practices that portray that. Most of the ethnic groups in the country fix-up marriages for their sons and daughters to people that they

believe they share the same values. All the major ethnic groups regard children as precious gift from God and that whoever is blessed with one or more must take good care of them. This justifies the common practice of social selection in settlement, marriage unions, and social clubs/organizations. The people believe that they will better be able to interact with people of their kind.

Apart from the fantastic job that the family system in Sierra Leone is playing in preventing child abuse, some families have deliberately refused to cooperate with government to provide social security for their children. This is more common in single parent families and it has been a major challenge for policy makers. This signifies that the same person has the responsibility of playing both roles. The following are some of the challenges:

*Sexual life regulation-* it is a tradition in Sierra Leone for the family to regulate the sexual activities of its members, especially the teenagers. This is not always the case with single parent families. These families are mostly dysfunctional and unstable as compared to normal families. It is no secret that raising a child needs proper attention, constant monitoring, care, discipline and so on. In the case of a single parent family this will be difficult to achieve. Overwhelmed with their enormous responsibilities single parents mostly don't get time to properly monitor the activities of their children or be there for them when they need somebody to talk to for guidance and counselling. These children are always vulnerable to sexual harassment by older men and other forms of abuses.

*Economic function-* it is the responsibility of the family to provide economic support for its members. Deliberate refusal by parents to provide economic support for their child is considered as an abuse of the particular child's right. Under the 1991 constitution of the republic of Sierra Leone all children are entitle to physical and economic security by their parents. Parents are expected to work in tandem with the government in providing economic security form their children. This is not the case in all families; some parents deliberately refuse to save enough for their children. They

deprive the children from enjoying basic facilities. Depriving these children from those facilities not only directly abuse their right but make them vulnerable to external abuse.

Sometimes even in their families children feel like strangers, when they are given the following unfair treatments; blamed for all family problems, blamed for things over which child had no control, parent didn't set alarm clock and gets fired; blamed for all problems, witness verbal or physical abuse of loved ones, brutality or torture and other forms psychological abuse.

A perfect family in any civilized society should be a great example of the whole society. Father, mother, children all of them have the responsibility of working towards building a perfect family. If anyone of them fails, then whole family suffers. Each and every member (father, mother, and children) in the case of a nuclear family is expected to play his or her role in a positive way.

An ideal society is not only built by government alone but also, each and every family member. This brings us again to the ancient wisdom that the world cannot be put in order without first putting in order the family. [36] So each family is the principal key to societal development. This is why the family is important in protecting the child from abuse. The role of the family is also vital in creating a peaceful environment for the child to develop into a healthy adult. It is important that the family work in tandem with other institutions in making the world a better place for children to live.

## CONCLUSION

To summarize, everything it should be noted that there is high level of child sexual abuse (especially female genital mutilation) in Sierra Leone. The practice of illegal method of upbringing children has resulted to the aggressive response reaction of children and leads them to offences. It is believed to be the contributing factor of homelessness, deviant behavior, runaways; it also hinders the chances of positive values, norms, and social roles played by children and youth in the society.

The most common types of child abuses identified in both countries (Sierra Leone and Russia) are physical, psychological, sexual abuse and neglect. It has coursed negative effects in both societies. This work also attempted to use theories as yard sticks to identify the root causes of child abuse and neglect.

However, despite the intervention of government, non-governmental organizations, religious groups, the civil society, child abuse has still remained to be a major challenge in Sierra Leone. More especially now that traditional activities are influencing the lives and living patterns of Sierra Leoneans. As far as overcoming the challenge of child abuse and neglect is concern Sierra Leone has a lot to learn from Russia. The organizational structure of agencies and department working on child abuse and the determination of the Russian people to participate in eradication of child abuse from their society are the two most important characteristics that Sierra Leone need to copy.

### *Recommendations*

The following are series of recommended strategies that aim to address some of the immediate challenges of child abuse and neglect. They aim at the creation of efficient and effective child protection and welfare system in Sierra Leone. The recommendations are categorized into two parts. The first part outline preventive measures and the second part focused on the structural and institutional arrangements.

Stakeholders (government, nongovernmental organizations, and civil society) are expected to study the following recommendations and endeavor to implement them in order to provide social security for all children regardless of tribe, creed, or region.

*Preventive Strategies by government*

The government of Sierra Leone through the inline ministries, agencies and departments with the support of NGOs (international and local, working on child rights protection) must try to implement the following strategies:

They should strengthen economic support to families. They may be realized by strengthening the financial security of families by formulating family-friendly work policies for working parents.

Work towards changing the social norms of people (especially parents, teachers and care givers) to support parents and positive parenting. To achieve this there must be public engagement and education campaigns, also, the formulation of legislations to prohibit or reduce corporal punishment.

Government together with stakeholders must provide quality care and education early in life. This can be achieved by the provision of preschool enrichment with family engagement. They can also, improve quality of child care through licensing and accreditation

They must endeavor to enhance parenting skills to in order to promote healthy child development. This can be realized through the practice of early childhood home visitation. Improving parenting skills and family relationship approach is also vital in achieving healthy child development.

Government through the authorities responsible must vibrant and ready to intervene to lessen harm and prevent future risk. This can be realized by enhancing primary care, introducing behavioral parent training programs, treatment of lessens harms of abuse and neglect exposure, and treatment to prevent problem behavior and later involvement in violence.

A comprehensive exercise should be undertaken to identify a long-term sustainable vision for a functioning system for child protection, located within a broader strategy of social welfare. This program must be guided by international best practice but founded upon the positive customs and practices of Sierra Leone to ensure a meaningful system.

The government of Sierra Leone must develop a clear strategy for addressing the social norms and behavior that support child vulnerability, especially abuse and neglect in the home environment.

#### *Structural and Institutional Arrangements*

Government must establish a National Commission for children in order to ensure broader oversight, decision-making and monitoring for the protection of children. This commission must have offices all over the country to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of its programs.

The government of Sierra Leone must develop a more formalized and regulated role for the new district councils, including their own child protection committee: these councils should be very vibrant and they will serve as bridge between various organizations (government and non-governmental organizations) and the people.

Develop long-term care and protection services for children and families that will be independent from the law enforcement role of the Family Support Unit (FSU) and courts provisions and also, empowering the Social Development Officers (SDW) to provide appropriate follow up children and families (CDC, 2016).

The role of the NGOs should be clearly defined (in the context of helping to protect children) in providing children and partnering with government agencies and the civil society in the fight against child abuse.

#### *Technological prevention*

Adults (parents/guardians) can take simple steps to protect your child from exploitation and child abuse, as well as prevent child abuse in your neighborhood or community. The goal is to provide safe, stable, nurturing relationships for children.



For example, offer your child love and attention. Nurture your child, listen and be involved in his or her life to develop trust and good communication. Encourage your child to tell you if there's a problem. A supportive family environment and social networks can foster your child's self-esteem and sense of self-worth.

Don't respond in anger. If you feel overwhelmed or out of control, take a break. Don't take out your anger on your child. Talk with your doctor or therapist about ways you can learn to cope with stress and better interact with your child.

Think supervision. Parents should not leave a young child home alone. In public, keep a close eye on your child. Volunteer at school and for activities to get to know the adults who spend time with your child. When old enough to go out without supervision, encourage your child to stay away from strangers and to hang out with friends rather than be alone and to tell you where he or she is at all times. Find out who's supervising your child for example, at a sleepover. It is important for parents know their child's caregivers. Parents should make irregular, but frequent, unannounced visits to observe what's happening. And not allow substitutes for their usual child care provider if you don't know the substitute.

Parents or guardians should emphasize when to say no. they must make sure their child understands that he or she doesn't have to do anything that seems scary or uncomfortable. Encourage your child to leave a threatening or frightening situation immediately and seek help from a trusted adult. If something happens, encourage your child to talk to you or another trusted adult about the episode. Assure your child that it's good to talk and that he or she won't get in trouble.

Teach your child how to stay safe online. Put the computer in a common area of your home, not the child's bedroom. Use the parental controls to restrict the types of websites your child can visit, and check your child's privacy settings on social networking sites. Consider it a red flag if your child is secretive about online activities. Cover ground rules, such as not sharing personal information; not responding to inappropriate, hurtful or frightening messages; and not arranging to

meet an online contact in person without your permission. Tell your child to let you know if an unknown person makes contact through a social networking site. Reach out and meet the families in your neighborhood, including parents and children. Consider joining a parent support group so you have an appropriate place to vent your frustrations. Develop a network of supportive family and friends (CDC, 2016).

An effective national child protection system recognizes that the state has the ultimate responsibilities and human rights obligations towards children. Building and strengthening child protection systems that are based on children's rights, measures to protect all children will be holistic, inclusive, sustainable and well-coordinated. In essence, rights-based systems will lead to better protection for children.

A national child protection system consists of; laws and policies that protect children from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence; a central government mechanism for child protection which brings together central government departments, different provinces, central and local levels of government and civil society and mechanisms that bring perpetrators to justice. It also needs effective regulation and monitoring at all levels, for example in childcare institutions and schools and a committed workforce with relevant competencies and mandates.

In addition, a functioning child protection system should provide child-friendly services at all levels and be informed by children's views and experiences. It strengthens families in the care and protection of their children. The services are regulated by quality standards and delivered by the government or accredited social agencies.

Save the Children recognizes that most countries in the world have a long way to go before reaching this level and we therefore work to find strategic entry points for advocacy and capacity building in each country. These strategies range from a focus on individuals, families and relationship, to broader community and societal change. These strategies are needed to better address the interplay between individual-family behavior and broader neighborhood, community and cultural contexts.

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## APPENDIXES



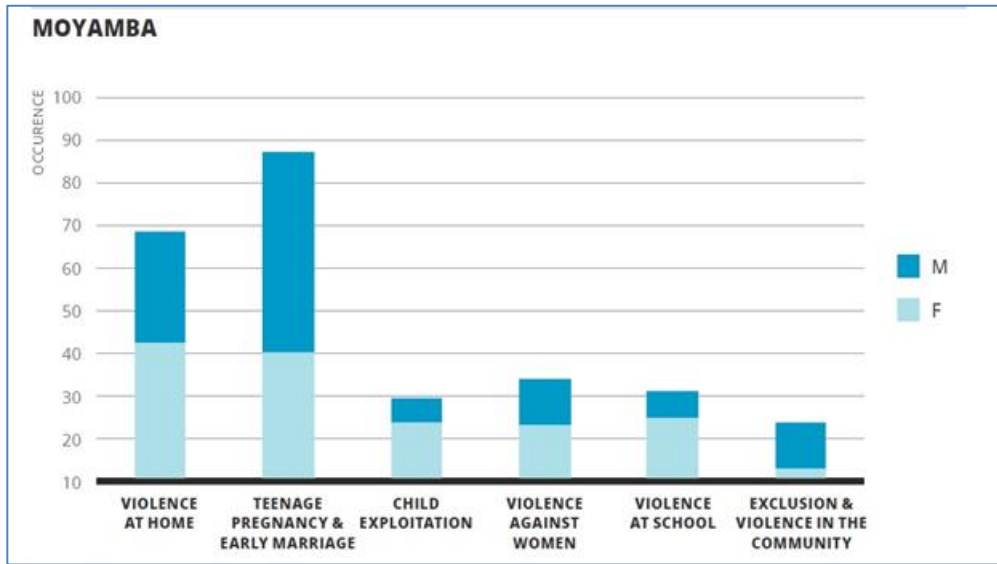


Figure 5: Categories of Violence in Moyamba, disaggregated by gender

CATEGORIES OF VIOLENCE

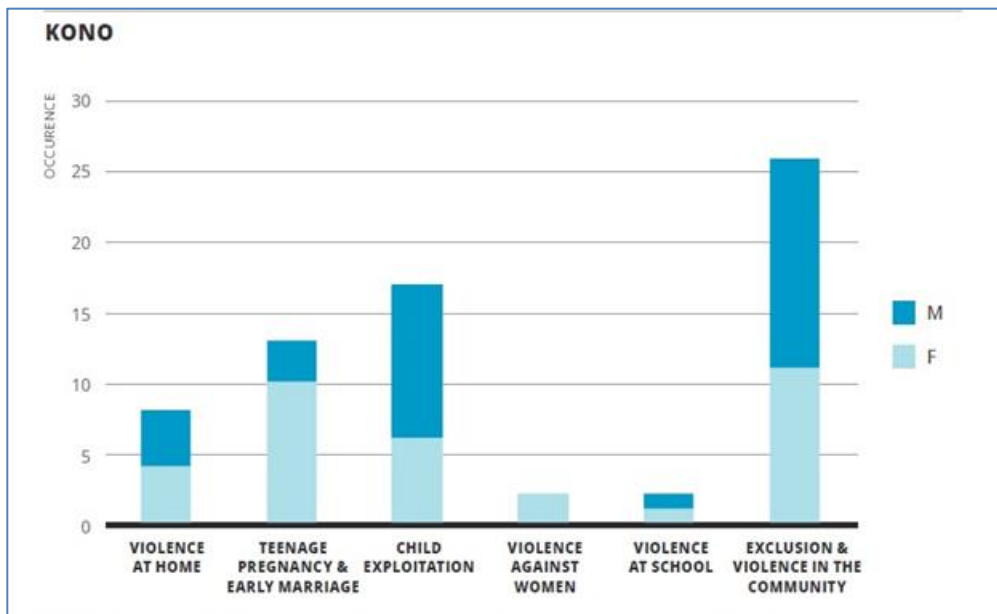


Figure 6: Categories of violence in Kono disaggregated by gender

CATEGORIES OF VIOLENCE

Appendix 2

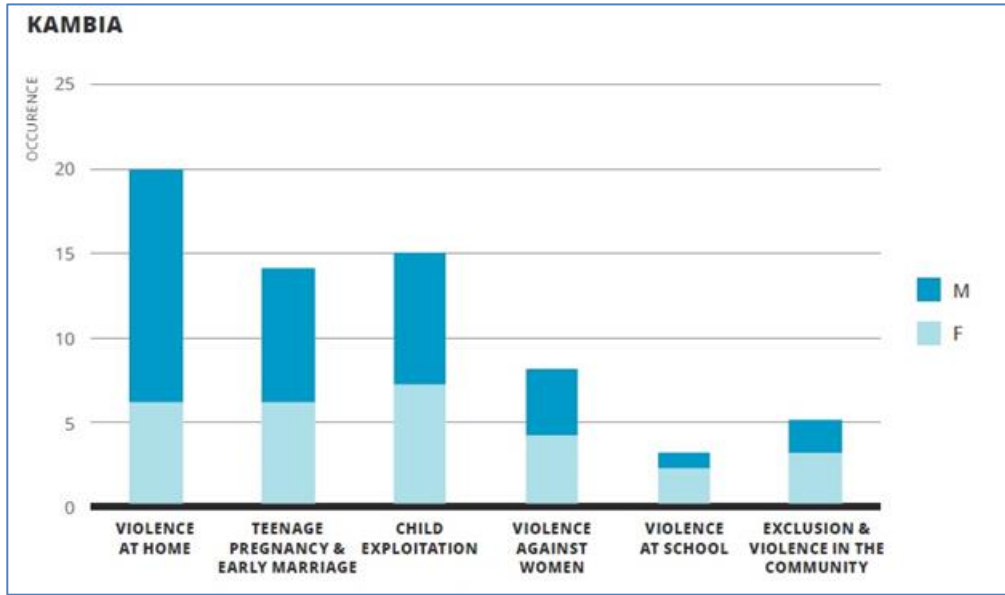


Figure 7: Categories of violence in Kambia disaggregated by gender

CATEGORIES OF VIOLENCE

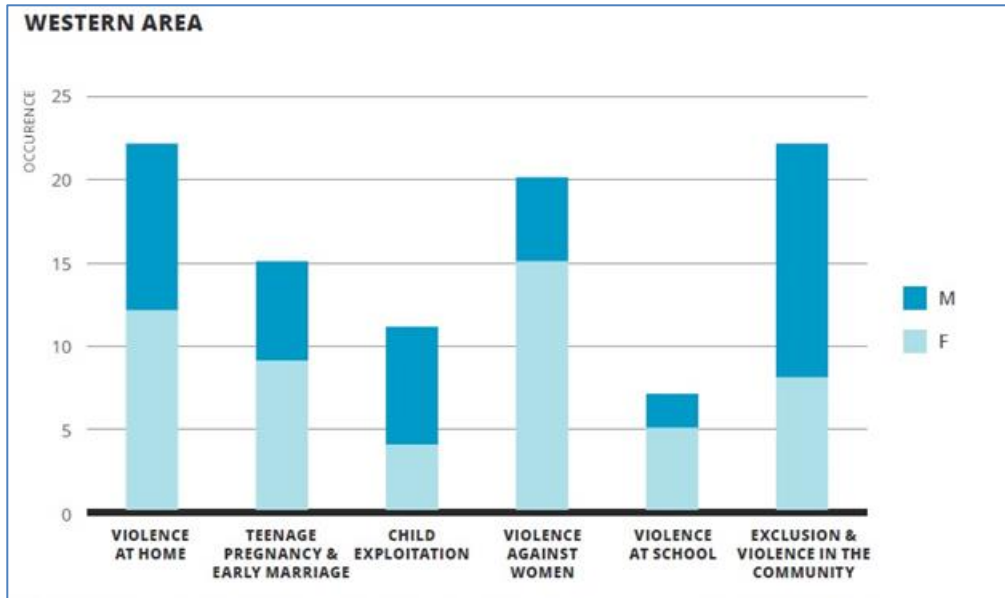


Figure 8: Categories of violence Western Area disaggregated by gender

CATEGORIES OF VIOLENCE

Appendix 3

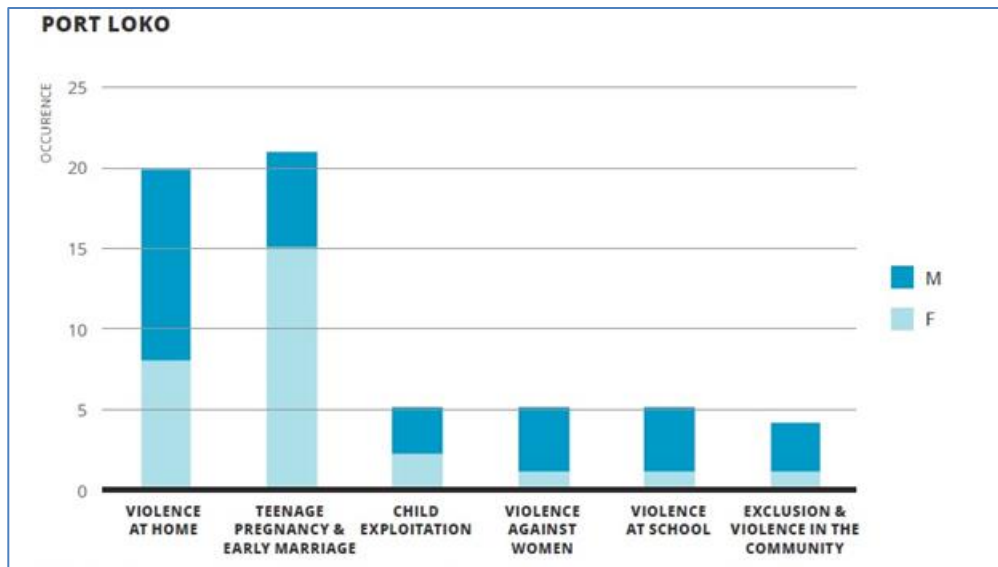


Figure 9: Categories of violence in Port Loko disaggregated by gender

CATEGORIES OF VIOLENCE

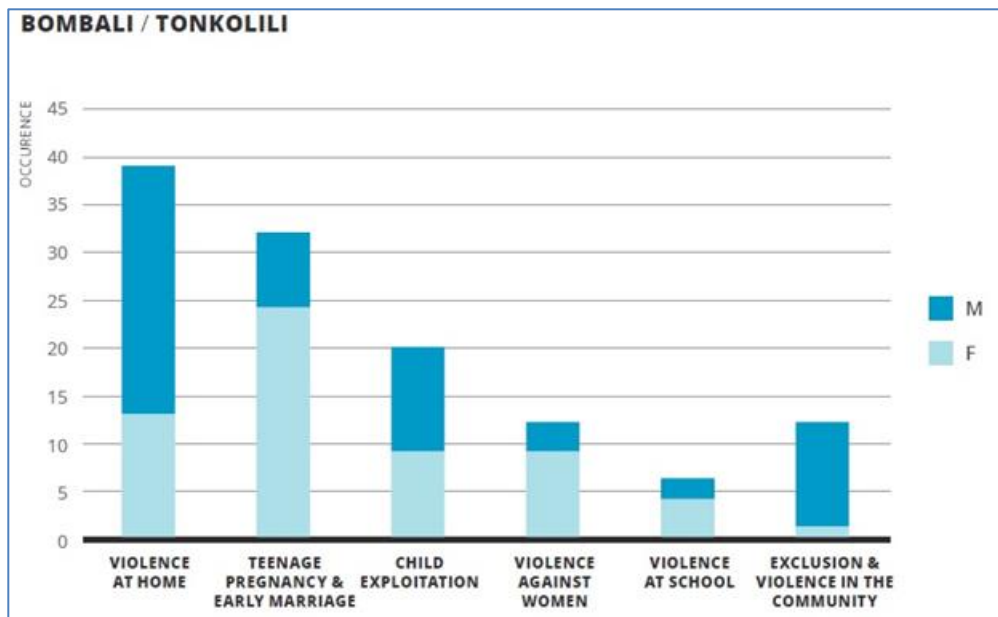


Figure 10: Categories of violence in Bombali and Tonkolili disaggregated by gender

CATEGORIES OF VIOLENCE

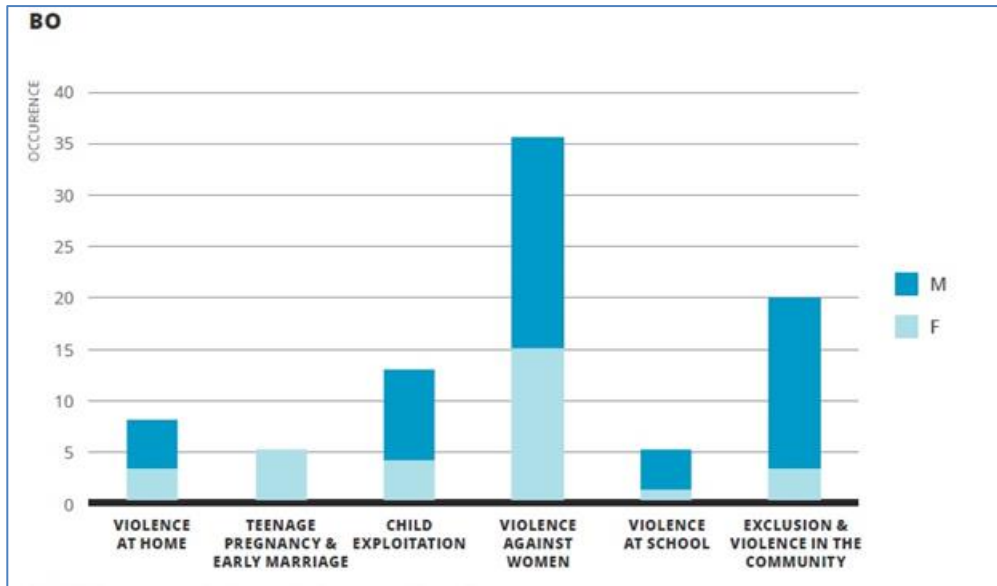


Figure 11: Categories of violence in Bo disaggregated by gender

CATEGORIES OF VIOLENCE

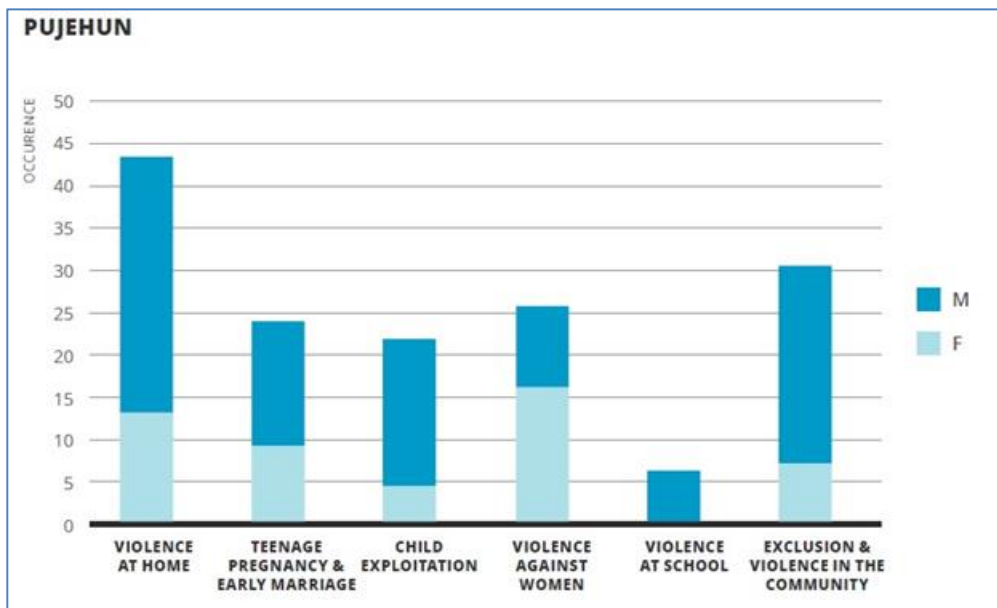


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CATEGORIES OF VIOLENCE

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CDC	Centre for Disease Control
CRA	Child Right Act
CHO	Community Health Officers
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DHMT	District Health Medical Team
DPP	District Public Prosecution
FSU	Family Support Unit
ILO	International Labour Organization
PHU	Peripheral Health Units
PTSD	Post- traumatic Stress Disorder
MSWGCA	Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs
NGO	Nongovernmental organizations
SDW	Social Development Officers
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

## SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Date.....

1. Name:.....

2. Gender: Male  Female

3. Age: 18 – 25  26 – 35  36 – 45  46 +

4. Employment Status:

a) Work part time

b) Work full time

c) Self employed

d) Unemployed

e) Student

5. Men or women who do you believe are more likely to abuse children?

Men  Women

6. Which of the following individuals do you believe is the most likely to abuse a child?

a) Parent/guardian

b) Other family member

c) Older person who the child knows

d) Older person who the child does not know

7. How confident are you that you could identify inappropriate behavior of an adult towards a child that may suggest possible child abuse?

- a) Very confident
- b) Fairly confident
- c) Not very confident
- d) Not at all confident

8. If you suspect that, a child was at risk of abuse from an adult. What would you do in the first instance?

- a) Contact social service
- b) Contact police
- c) Speak to the child's parents/guardians
- d) Speak to another adult
- e) Contact religious/community leaders
- f) Others