

Preventing Violence Against Children in Sri Lanka

Country Discussion Paper



**End Violence
Against Children**
THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP



unicef  for every child

Preventing Violence Against Children in Sri Lanka

Country Discussion Paper

1. Key Findings

- 2. Agenda 2030 Targets to End Violence Against Children
- 3. Introduction

4. The Issues: Violence against Children in Sri Lanka

- 4. Quality of the evidence on violence against children
- 5. Physical and humiliating punishment
- 6. Sexual and gender-based violence
- 7. Children in institutions
- 8. Child marriage
- 8. Online safety
- 9. Emotional wellbeing and mental health

10. The Current Response: Opportunities and Challenges for Preventing Violence against Children in Sri Lanka

- 10. Foundations for a Strong Child Protection System: Mapping Recommendations
- 10. Tier One Priorities
- 11. Tier Two Priorities
- 13. INSPIRE: A Global Model for Ending Violence
- 13. Implementation and enforcement of laws
- 14. Norms and values
- 15. Safe environments
- 15. Parent and caregiver support
- 16. Income and economic strengthening
- 16. Response and support services
- 17. Education and life skills
- 18. Multisectoral actions and coordination
- 19. Monitoring and evaluation
- 19. Opportunities and challenges for Sri Lanka as a Pathfinder Country

20. The Partners: Building a Coalition to End Violence against Children in Sri Lanka

21. The Pathways: Opportunities for Sri Lanka to End Violence against Children

- (1) Conduct a study on the drivers of violence against children in Sri Lanka
- (2) Accelerate action to end sexual violence
- (3) Tackle physical and humiliating punishment in family, school and institutional settings
- (4) Build momentum with some quick wins

23. The Next Steps: Becoming a Pathfinder Country

- (1) Constitute the Global Partnership for the Sri Lankan context
- (2) Launch Sri Lanka as a pathfinder country for the Global Partnership
- (3) Develop a bold and evidence-informed Roadmap
- (4) Develop a Streamlined Implementation Plan

25. Reference List

Acknowledgements

The Country Discussion Paper on Violence against Children in Sri Lanka is a landmark publication which the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs has developed this year. In contrast to other documents that give strategic direction to end violence against children in Sri Lanka this paper bases its recommendations on empirical evidence. It also points out areas that we do not have adequate data to make management decisions.

This publication would not have seen the light of day, if not for the support provided to the Ministry by UNICEF and other members of the National Partnership to End Violence against Children. I owe a special note of appreciation to Mr. Tim Sutton, the UNICEF Representative, Dr. Paula Bulancea, Deputy Representative, UNICEF, Mr. Ramiz Behbudov, its Programme Manager, Child Protection, and Dr. Hemamal Jayawardena, UNICEF Child Protection Specialist for all the support extended for the initiative to create the National Secretariat to End Violence Against Children, in my Ministry to the extensive consultative process that has led to the finalization of this Country Discussion Paper. Ms. Sonali Gunasekera and Ms. Svetlana Abeysekara, of the Secretariat, who did most of the coordination of this activity have been valuable assets.

I am also thankful to all our colleagues in the Ministry and affiliated Departments, the National Child Protection Authority, Non-Governmental Organizations, Private Sector Organizations, Academia, UN colleagues and Donors who have contributed to making this publication a worthy one, including Children who gave us valuable inputs through their consultations.

In addition to my team from the Ministry including Ms. Chandima Sigera and Ms. Asoka Alawatte, this publication was fortunate to be enriched with the knowledge provided by Ms. Chandila Colombege (World Vision), Ranjan Weththasinghe (Save the Children), Buddhini Withana (Save the Children), Kirthi Hettiarachchi (SOS Children's village), Nevedita Jeevabalan (LEADS), Nalaka Siriwardene (ChildFund), and Champa Gunasekara (FISD), United Nations colleagues, Dr. Nilmini Hemachandire (WHO), Ritsa Nacken (UNFPA), Sharika Cooray (UNFPA), Bimali Amarasekera (UNDP), and T. Suveendraan (WHO) and private sector colleagues Kanishka Weerasinghe from the Employment Federation of Ceylon (EFC), Kamalini De Silva (Cargills Bank), Gillian Nugara (Ceylon Chamber of Commerce) and Ms. Elizabeth Davnie-Easton from US AID.

A very special thank you goes out to the two academics Dr. Harini Amarasuriya (Open University Nawala) and Dr. Gameela Samarasinghe (Colombo University) for their contribution towards overlooking the final stages of the research.

Last, but not least, the Ministry acknowledges the great work done by Ms. Juliet Attenborough of Development Pathways as the Principal Investigator of this Research, along with her Development Pathways colleagues, Mr. Manolo Cabran and Ms. Michelle Szaraz.

Thank you,
Chandrani Senaratne
Secretary, Ministry of Women and Child Affairs

Key Findings

Strong foundations

Sri Lanka has enshrined children's right to be protected from all forms of violence through international commitments and national laws and policies. The Government's leadership in mapping the child protection system in 2016, taking the decision to draft a National Policy on Child Protection, and joining the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children as a pathfinder country, reaffirms their commitment to keeping children in Sri Lanka safe.

Urgency

There is inadequate data available on the prevalence, drivers and impacts of different forms of violence against children in Sri Lanka, but the data that is available already shows that many children are exposed to different forms of violence, and stakeholders agree on the urgent need to act to protect children accordingly.

Prevention

There is clear consensus among stakeholders in Sri Lanka on the need to increase their focus on the prevention of violence against children. The INSPIRE package for the prevention of violence against children, which is based on well validated global evidence, is an excellent tool to inform an increased investment in preventing – and not just responding – to violence against children.

Learning

The Government and its partners are already implementing a number of programmes in line with the INSPIRE Strategies. However, not many of these have been monitored or evaluated, and there is not a strong culture of sharing lessons learned between stakeholders. A more robust approach to evidence-informed programming based on good monitoring, evaluation, learning and sharing of information and experience will help to make existing investments more effective.

Joining the dots

At community level there are many entry points to connect with children, parents and carers, and communities about prevention violence against children. Integrating child protection into the core competencies of grassroots staff and into existing projects will help to embed child protection at the local level.

Partnerships

There is already a strong network of child protection actors in Sri Lanka. There are, however, opportunities to strengthen this network and to bring important new partners onboard, including the media, the private sector and faith-based leaders.

Stepping up for children

Sri Lanka's decision to become a pathfinder country for the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children is commendable. The priority now is to develop and implement a bold and well-defined roadmap for action that will help stakeholders, with support from the Partnership, to end violence against children in Sri Lanka. This roadmap will need to link with – and complement – existing and planned strategies and action plans.

Agenda 2030 Targets to End Violence Against Children

End violence against children...

16.2	End abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence against and torture of children
5.2	Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking, and sexual and other types of exploitation
5.3	Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation
8.7	Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms
4.7	...ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge... [for] promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence...
4.a	...provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all

...reduce the impact of violence in families, communities and all settings...

16.1	Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere
11.2	...provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all...
11.7	...provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children...

...and ensure access to fair and effective institutions and to justice for all...

16.3	Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere
16.9	...provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all...
16.a	...provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children...

...by mobilizing an effective multi-stakeholder partnership.

17.16	Enhance the Global Partnerships for Sustainable Development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries...
17.17	Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnership, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships

Introduction

Sri Lanka has enshrined children's right to be protected from all forms of violence through its ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Building on this strong foundation, the Government has recently taken a number of landmark steps to build on this commitment. For example, the Government with UNICEF support completed a mapping the child protection system in 2016, and the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) is currently drafting a National Policy on Child Protection. The decision to join the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children as a pathfinder country further reaffirms Sri Lanka's commitment to keeping children safe.

Agenda 2030 sets targets to end all forms of violence against children. The Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children provides a platform for national governments, civil society, faith-based groups, academics, the private sector, international organisations and other partners to work together to deliver these targets. Sri Lanka's decision to join the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children as a pathfinder country further reaffirms the country's commitment to accelerating action to preventing and responding to violence against children.

As a pathfinder country, Sri Lanka's aim is to build on the progress it has already made to prevent and address violence, and to provide a platform for renewed ambition to end violence against children. There is an opportunity to align national commitments with the ambitions of Agenda 2030 to end all forms of violence against children (SDG16.2) and related targets. Sri Lanka's efforts as a pathfinder country will be informed by a new INSPIRE package of seven proven strategies to prevent violence against children that has been developed by WHO, UNICEF, UNODC, the World Bank, the Pan-American Health Organization, Together for Girls, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Drawing from decades of global research and lessons learned, the new INSPIRE strategies comprise: the implementation and enforcement of laws; norms and values; safe environments; parent and caregiver support; income and economic strengthening; response and support services; and education and life skills. These seven strategies are underpinned by two crosscutting strategies: multi-sectoral action and coordination as well as monitoring and evaluation.

The purpose of this discussion paper is to reflect on the current state of play in terms of violence against children in Sri Lanka, to identify priorities for protecting children from violence, and to map out Sri Lanka's way forward as a pathfinder country. The paper is based on a series of consultations with national stakeholders conducted in March 2017, a literature review of existing evidence, and an analysis of current national strategies and plans related to violence against children.

It is important to understand the findings of this discussion paper in the context of Sri Lanka emerging from over 30 years of violence and conflict. Many Sri Lankan boys and girls were born during the war and in different ways directly experienced atrocities associated with the war until its end in 2009. These include: multiple displacements; losing family members; the loss of material belongings; living in fear; escaping bombs; exposure to sexual harassment and abuse; the presence of the military; and disruption of school and family life. (Emmanuel et al., 2015; Trivedi, 2013) Children of all ages – from young children born during the final years of the war through to teenagers – are now having to adjust to a different life, including regular schooling, a semblance of a routine, and interaction with other children. Boys and girls born during the conflict but living in other parts of the country and therefore not directly affected by the war have also experienced violence while growing up, including bullying in school, and sexual harassment and abuse at different levels (Doole, 2016). It bears noting that this context of violence and militarization has influenced norms and values in society as well as institutional structures and processes.

The Issues: Violence against Children in Sri Lanka

Quality of the evidence on violence against children

Overall there is a lack of up-to-date and disaggregated data on the prevalence, trends and drivers of all forms of violence against children in Sri Lanka (Walker, Bandara, & Silva, 2016). The few prevalence studies that have been conducted are not fully representative and are already quite dated. Indeed, given the scale of change experienced in Sri Lanka over the past decade, including the end of the conflict in 2009, even studies less than 10 years old may already be outdated. There is limited information available on the evolving risks that boys and girls face at all stages of childhood. There is also a need to better understand the drivers of all types of violence, including the pathways through which different children are exposed to violence. There is little disaggregated data on children with disabilities. Sri Lanka is a diverse country and national data can easily mask disparities between and within regions: for example, health and education statistics differ sharply from region to region. Future research on violence against children should be sensitive to this trend to be able to identify and explore disparities.

Consultations with stakeholders based on their years of experience on the ground is a common source of available data, and is drawn on in this discussion paper. However it is also important to independently validate these findings: there can be a disconnect between service providers' perceptions of the factors contributing to violence, and those identified through research (Goonsekere & Amarasuriya, 2013).

Administrative data is an important – but underutilized – source of information on the performance of the child protection system in preventing and responding to violence against children. Administrative data relating to child justice is not regularly collected, consolidated and shared in a systematic way. For example, there are no consolidated records on numbers of children in conflict with the law, children in detention, children engaged in continued case management, and associated convictions. Data collected by the National Child Protection Authority is another potentially rich source of data on violence against children but is yet to be fully explored and analysed.

Accordingly, the data presented below should not be over-interpreted: while the available evidence clearly demonstrates that children in Sri Lanka are indeed at risk of violence in many forms, there is a need to further investigate the contexts and drivers of violence to understand how it impacts Sri Lanka's diverse population of children.

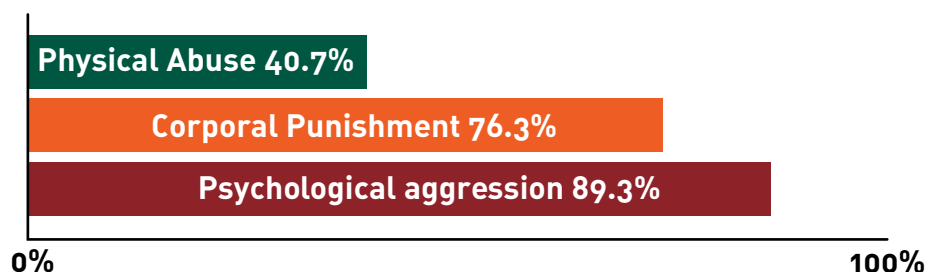
There is mixed support among stakeholders for addressing the lack of evidence on violence against children in Sri Lanka. On the one hand, many stakeholders recognise that there is inadequate data to support evidence-informed responses. However, there is also a strong agreement that there has been enough 'talk' and more than enough 'reports' on violence against children: it is now time for concrete and committed action.

Given the lack of robust data, the Government is currently planning to conduct new research on violence against children. Building on global experience, Sri Lanka can commission research that will generate a much clearer picture of which children, under which circumstances and in which settings, are vulnerable to which forms of violence, and why. It is also important to identify what has worked in the past to address different forms of violence. To do this, and to better link evidence, practice and learning, strong operational research principles can be incorporated into upcoming programmes and district learning events can be held to reflect on what has worked in the past.

Physical and humiliating punishment

Many child protection stakeholders consider physical and humiliating punishment to be a critical issue needing urgent action. The normalization of violence as a form of punishment is considered to be widespread in schools, homes and institutions across the country. For example, Figure 1 below highlights the high levels of aggression and violence that children face at home. Partners confirm that corporal punishment also extends to other settings, such as schools and alternative care and religious institutions. Consistent with global evidence, a study of children found that corporal punishment is indeed associated with psychological harm (P de Zoysa, Newcombe, & Rajapakse, 2008).

Figure 1 Rates of psychological aggression, corporal punishment and physical abuse by parents (Piyanjali de Zoysa, n.d.)



Note: 'Physical abuse' included the following acts: hit with a fist or kicked hard; grabbed around the neck and choked; beaten up; burned or scalded; hit on some part of the body besides the bottom with something like a handle of a big spoon, broom, cane, a stick or some other hard object; threatened with an axe, pestle or knife; or thrown or knocked down their child.

The concerns about physical and humiliating punishment raised by the child protection sector are in sharp contrast to broader public perceptions: there appears to be firm acceptance of the practice among many parents, teachers, and leaders. For example, 96 per cent of respondents to a knowledge, attitudes and practices study (N=450, of which 150 were children) indicated that "shaking, tying up and boxing a child's ears, belittling and socially discriminating a child is 'bad' but are 'accepted' as a form of punishment to 'discipline' or 'correct' the child." (UNICEF, 2015a) A group of children consulted for this paper unanimously agreed that it was acceptable for a teacher or parent to hit a child if they'd been naughty; in some cases, they also thought it was acceptable for a stranger to do so.

Physical and humiliating punishment is still legal at home, in schools, in certain penal institutions (such as remand homes, approved homes and certified schools), and in alternative care settings (Norbu, 2014). Addressing these legislative gaps is important and could be an entry point to combatting the practice. Given the widespread support for the practice, a strong and sustained investment in challenging current norms and values about harmful punishments, while building the capacity for positive discipline among parents and teachers, might be the most effective platform to start addressing this issue. To support these efforts, the media will need to be brought on board as a key stakeholder. Through the Global Partnership, Sri Lanka can learn from the success of other countries in moving away from corporal punishment.

A school-based child discipline study is currently being finalised. This study is expected to help to identify positive discipline practices that are working well in a range of school contexts, while also providing updated data on the use of physical and humiliating punishment. The Global Partnership can help to convene stakeholders including the Ministry of Education to agree on how to operationalize the study's recommendations to combat physical and humiliating punishment and to promote positive discipline for teachers as well as parents. This could be leveraged to push for full legal prohibition of physical and humiliating punishment and to support the implementation of a Ministry of Education Circular from 2005 that prohibits corporal punishment in school settings, which is yet to be resourced and fully implemented (Walker et al., 2016).

Sexual and gender-based violence

Sexual abuse is the most hidden and under-reported form of violence against children and youth in South Asia, affecting both boys and girls, often within the family, in schools, and in the community (SAIEVAC, 2015). Child protection focal points across Government, as well as key NGOs and UN agencies, have all expressed concern about sexual violence. There is little data available on the prevalence, trends and drivers of sexual violence in Sri Lanka, but existing studies present a worrying picture: in one study, 14.4 per cent of late adolescent girls and 13.8 per cent of late adolescent boys reported having been subjected to some form of sexual abuse (Perera & Ostbye, 2009), while in another study 27.2 per cent of ever-partnered Sri Lankan men aged 18-49 reported having experience some form of sexual abuse as a child (Fonseka, Minnis, & Gomez, 2015). According to Police data there were 10,593 cases of rape between 2010 and 2015, of which three-quarters were statutory rape cases. 1,161 out of 9,210 rape suspects were children below 18 years of age (Save the Children, 2017).

Figure 2 Police data on sexual offences against children (Save the Children, 2017)

Offence	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Rape and incest	1,463	1,861	1,842	1,680	1,723
Unnatural offences and grave sexual abuse	557	758	790	705	793
Procurement and trafficking	36	12	7	9	13
Sexual harassment	1,012	1,208	1,258	1,361	1,462
Total	3,068	3,839	3,897	3,755	3,991

Sri Lanka is a destination and source country in terms of the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism, with both male and female predators active. (Hawke & Raphael, 2016) While not a new phenomenon, the growing tourism industry in Sri Lanka following the end to the civil conflict brings with it a renewed set of risks for children in tourism contexts.

There appears to be a common misconception in Sri Lanka that violence against children is something that happens outside a child's immediate circle of trust. Respondents in a knowledge, attitudes and practices study did not associate cruelty against children with members of their 'inner-circle', instead reporting that it happens through strangers (96 per cent), adult non-relatives at home (86 per cent) and drivers (85 per cent). Respondents also felt that sexual abuse happens to 'someone else', not in their family or among people known to them. They believed that sexual abuse is primarily perpetrated by people in the outer circle (such as strangers). In contrast, one study found that the offender in 96 per cent of child sex abuse cases was someone known and trusted by the child, with 50 per cent of offenders being from the child's immediate family. (Government of Sri Lanka, 2016; UNICEF, 2015a) Helping the public – and particularly children and the adults charged with responsibility to care for them – understand where risks to children lie in terms of sexual violence would be a powerful launching pad to begin to address this issue.

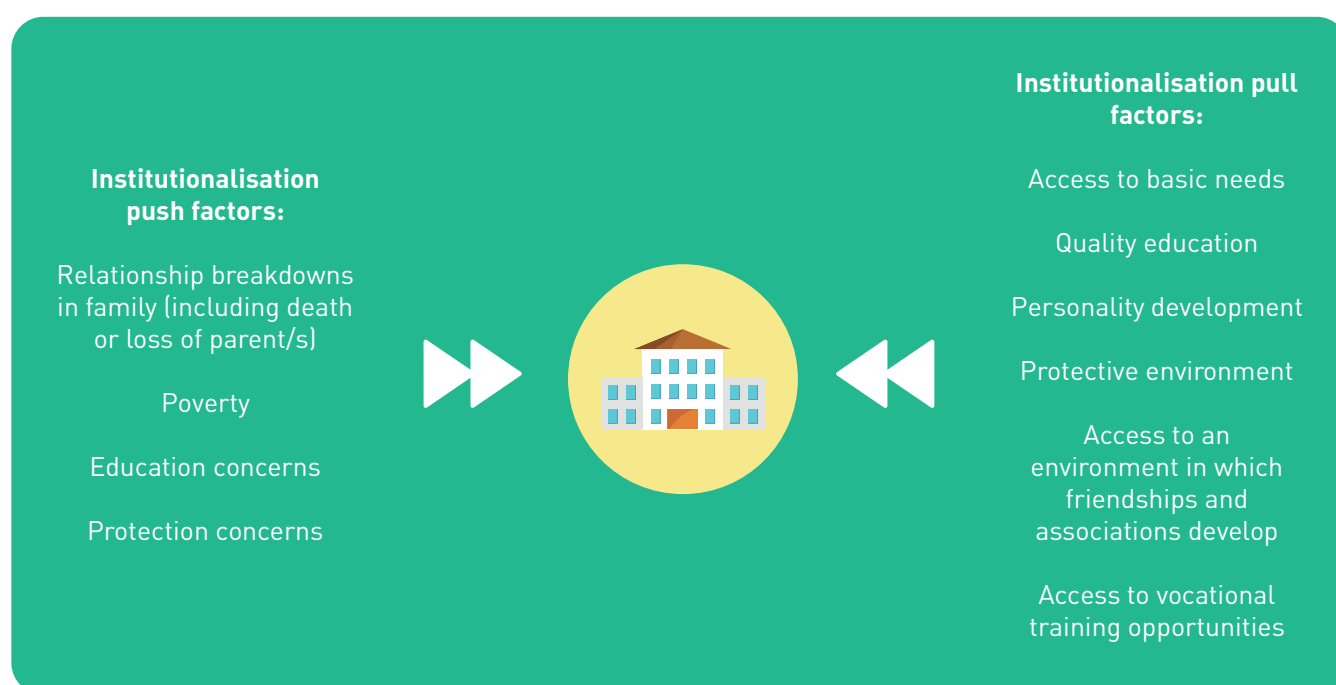
The focus in Sri Lanka to date has been on responding to cases of sexual violence; there is now a need to increase the focus on prevention, as found in the recent mapping of the child protection system (Walker et al., 2016). The National Action Plan of Action to Address Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) in Sri Lanka recognizes the urgency of addressing SGBV against children given the negative impact it has on a child's health, social development, and interpersonal relations, as well as its broader harm to society. Accordingly, the Plan has a strong focus on prevention of various forms of sexual and gender based violence, including commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking. Furthermore, the Plan recognizes the need to work through a multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral approach. Accordingly, this Plan is a valuable entry point for scaling up investments to prevent sexual and gender-based violence against children provided there is sufficient funding and support for its implementation.

Sexual violence against children is largely considered to be incompatible with the values of Sri Lankan culture, and as such is likely to attract support from a range of stakeholders. However, it is also a highly sensitive topic, particularly for institutions where violence might be taking place, such as schools, religious settings, residential and alternative care settings, and sporting groups. The commercial sexual exploitation of children in tourist settings offers an incentive for the private sector to engage in issues around sexual violence. Furthermore, media reporting on sexual violence is highly problematic, with cases sensationalized and victims often sexualized and blamed in media representations. (Goonesekere & Amarasuriya, 2013)

Children in institutions

Some individual stakeholders reported are worried that children living in institutional settings could be overlooked in efforts to address violence against children. As of 2014, there were 414 institutions operating in Sri Lanka, and 14,175 children in institutions. These services lack quality facilities, including the amenities required to meet the needs of children with disabilities. The quality of these services is further undermined by a lack of trained staff and the low wages paid to staff. Anecdotal reports indicate that children in institutional care face emotional and physical abuse, although there is no data to validate this feedback. (UNICEF Sri Lanka, 2016) A lack of appropriate childcare institutions across the country can leave Magistrates with no option but to place children in conflict with the law and child victims of crime in the same institution (e.g. a Remand Home). These institutions are punitive in nature, and have the potential to further traumatise child victims of crime and expose them to further violence (Verite Research, 2017). Anecdotal reports highlight concerns about the risks to children living in monasteries, with stakeholders highlighting the need for further research on children in these settings. (UNICEF Sri Lanka, 2016)

Figure 3 Push and Pull Factors into Institutionalisation (N. De Silva & Punchihewa, 2011)



Strengthening parent and caregiver support, including through income and economic strengthening for vulnerable households, might help to address some of the push and pull factors into institutional care. Parents also need to understand the risks to children of institutionalisation. At the same time, it is important to ensure that children in institutional care understand their right to be protected from violence – the establishment of a Children’s Ombudsman or Children’s Guardian that can advocate on behalf of children in care could help empower children in care to know and claim their rights while monitoring their wellbeing and protection. Appropriate standards and protocols are needed to guide all aspects of alternative care, including ensuring that decisions to place and keep a child in alternative care are in their best interest.

Child marriage

Child marriage can expose victims to a number of forms of violence. As of 2009, 13.8 per cent of women in Sri Lanka were married by the age of 18, with 1.7 per cent marrying before the age of 15 (Sri Lanka Department of Census and Statistics, 2009). Most service providers consulted in a qualitative study in 2011 indicated that there had been a rise in reported incidents of child marriage, though many felt that this was a sign of increased reporting rather than an increase in cases; indeed, many believed that child marriage rates were declining (Goonesekere & Amarasuriya, 2013). This is consistent with DHS data, which shows a slight decrease in the proportion of women who married before 18 over time (Sri Lanka Department of Census and Statistics, 2009). The legal age of marriage is 18 years, and the age of sexual consent is 16 years, with statutory rape being a punishable offence. However, there are legislative gaps that expose Muslim girls to early marriage and concomitantly to violence: the age for statutory rape in Muslim cases is only 12 years. (Goonesekere & Amarasuriya, 2013) The NCPA is currently investigating how best to address these gaps at community level. A 2011 qualitative study found that child marriage in Sri Lanka is largely driven by teenage sexuality and cultural concerns around unmarried girls being sexually active (with marriage intended to 'legitimise' sexual behaviour, including in the context of statutory rape). Furthermore, the study found that statutory rape and/or early marriage and cohabitation hinders girls' education, economic security and autonomy, lowering their status within the family and community, and increasing their domestic and care burdens. It also led to emotional stress and trauma, for which most girls received no support to address. (Goonesekere & Amarasuriya, 2013)

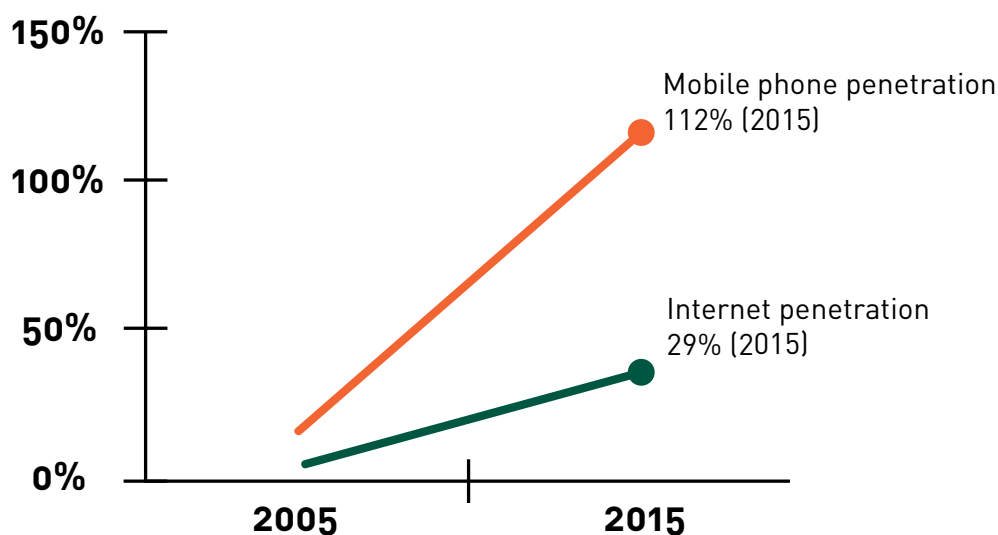
Against this backdrop, there is a feeling among key stakeholders that improved life skills for adolescents – and particularly improved sexual and reproductive health and rights knowledge – is critical to address these drivers of child marriage. Equally, there is a need to influence the norms and values that lead parents and carers to seek marriage in response to adolescents becoming sexually active.

Online safety

The Government is taking increasing action to educate children about online safety due to increased threats of violence through telephone and Internet technology. Figure 4 highlights the rapid increase in internet and mobile phone penetration.

The increasing access to information and communication technologies has brought with it a concern that children will be exposed to harm through these platforms. While there is little data on the prevalence, drivers or trends of violence against children linked to information and communication technologies – and therefore a distinct need for better evidence and analysis – there is certainly an active concern that it poses an active threat to children in Sri Lanka.

Figure 4 Trends in internet and mobile phone penetration (The World Bank, n.d.-a, n.d.-b)



A number of stakeholders are taking action in response to this emerging concern, making this an issue that is likely to benefit from traction with a wider range of partners. The NCPA is collaborating with other partners to develop learning modules on the safe use of the Internet, focusing on cyber-bullying and other cybercrimes, while trained Internet Safety Teams comprised of teachers and peer leaders have been put in place in schools to provide further advice on safe Internet use. The private sector, specifically Microsoft Sri Lanka and Dialog, are raising awareness among children and youth on safe Internet use, with Microsoft having developed an online safety curricula for potential use in schools. Similarly, NGOs such as Grassrooted are engaging with adolescents about online safety and the risk of online sexual exploitation. (Data & Society Research Institute, n.d.) A consultation with the private sector confirmed that the issue of online safety is likely to resonate with the private sector given its relevance to businesses working in information and communication technologies.

A process of consolidating experience and lessons learned from existing initiatives could act as a launching pad for work on online safety, building consensus about the priorities, sharing learning about what has been working effectively to protect children in these settings, and building momentum for coordinated action. There is also a need to update laws to reflect and respond to the increasing risks of violence children in this context.

Emotional wellbeing and mental health

While there is not extensive data on emotional abuse against children in Sri Lanka, one study found that 31.3 per cent of late adolescent males and 25.4 per cent of late adolescent females reported experiencing emotional abuse in the past three months (Perera, Ostbye, Ariyananda, & Lelwala, 2009). Some stakeholders are worried that parents, in their concern for their child, can inadvertently abuse their children psychologically. The need to perform well at school and on Grade 5 exams (at the age of around 9-10 years of age) leads parents to exert huge pressure on their children, damaging their wellbeing despite parents acting out of love and concern for their child's future with no intention to cause harm.

According to stakeholders, peer-based violence in schools is an issue that is experienced differently by girls and boys. Boys can be victims of bullying and sexual abuse, while girls more commonly experience emotional and psychological violence. The practice of shaming can be particularly damaging for girls considering how critical it is to maintain your reputation and 'respectability' in social relationships.

Suicide and self-harm rates reportedly remain high in Sri Lanka, particularly among young people. Parent-child conflicts account for many self-harm episodes. This is particularly so for adolescent girls, who struggle to conform to the strict rules of morality and respectability that are imposed on them. Self-harm in turn becomes a means of expressing their feelings of anger and shame due to family conflict. (Marecek & Senadheera, 2012).

Stakeholders are also concerned about the harmful emotional impacts of the 20 per cent of children who are 'left behind' due to their parents migrating for employment. The external migration of women with children for employment has been linked to increased risk of violence for their children, who lack a female caregiver and the additional layer of protection that this can provide (Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, 2017; Squire & Wijeratne, 2008; Walker et al., 2016).

The post-conflict context in Sri Lanka brings with it complex mental health and wellbeing challenges for children and their families, particularly in the Northern and Eastern provinces. Some children affected by the conflict show a combination of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) alongside affective and somatic problems (Catani, Jacob, Schauer, Kohila, & Neuner, 2008; Catani, Schauer, & Neuner, 2008; Elbert et al., 2009). Some have experienced emotional, sexual and physical abuse, or have witnessed violence and death. Many are in deep psychological distress and require special care, support and protection. The war has had complex multifaceted effects on family life, on parenting behaviours, and on the social and economic conditions that affect the family, all of which can impact children negatively (Catani, 2010). Stakeholders report that there are over 40,000 people missing due to the war, whose family members include children. It is important that the reconciliation mechanisms being set up by the Government are designed to assist children emotionally in their search for the truth about the missing person, with an assurance of no further abuse or suffering when accessing and engaging in the mechanisms.

Given the lack of data, further research on the drivers of psychological violence, along with research on the emotional and mental health impacts of violence, would be helpful.

The Current Response: Opportunities and Challenges for Preventing Violence against Children in Sri Lanka

Foundations for a Strong Child Protection System: Mapping Recommendations

In 2016, the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, in partnership with UNICEF, conducted a mapping of Sri Lanka's child protection system and its key actors in order to:

- Support development of a more coherent child protection system that delivers better protection outcomes for girls and boys in Sri Lanka.
- Support development of a plan of action that identifies short, medium and longer term wins for child protection policy and programming

The report identified a number of priorities to strengthen Sri Lanka's child protection system. The Steering Committee constituted to support the mapping further refined these to identify a smaller set of high-level priorities. Tier One Priorities were agreed to be the most critical recommendations to take forward, while Tier Two Priorities were also considered to be important recommendations to take forward.

Tier One Priorities

- 1.1** Refocus child protection programs to increase investments in preventing child abuse.
- 1.2** Establish a central overarching mechanism to coordinate child protection policy and programming.
- 1.3** Build the capacity of current and future child protection actors:
 - Train/sensitise existing professionals working with children on the foundations of child protection.
 - Build a longer term social work workforce cadre by strengthening tertiary qualifications for social work.

Tier Two Priorities

- 2.1** Develop a National Alternative Care Policy.
- 2.2** Develop a multi-sectoral child protection strategy to guide the evolution of the child protection system.
- 2.3** Develop a case management and referral system for use by all child protection actors.
- 2.4** Move forward with the draft Children's (Judicial Protection) Bill, and ensure that it fully aligns with the CRC and draws on global best practice in child justice.
- 2.5** Develop approaches to facilitate open communication with children and families about child protection, promoting their empowerment and communicating their rights and responsibilities
- 2.6** Strengthen data management, including through:
 - Agreement with the Department of Census to collect data in
 - Development of suitable information management tools for child protection
- 2.7** Develop and enforce minimum standards for child protection service delivery
- 2.8** Strengthen NGO coordination for child protection through the National Action and Coordinating Group against Violence against Women and Children under South Asia Initiative for Ending Violence against Children.



Credit: UN Photo Library

INSPIRE: seven strategies for ending violence against children

The World Health Organization (WHO) initiated preparation of the INSPIRE package, in collaboration with the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), End Violence Against Children: The Global Partnership, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the President's Emergency Program for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), Together for Girls, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the World Bank (agencies with a long history of galvanizing a consistent, evidence-based approach to preventing violence against children). The strategies are:



Implementation and enforcement of laws



Norms and values



Safe environments



Parent and caregiver support



Income and economic strengthening



Response and support services



Education and life skills

INSPIRE: A Global Model for Ending Violence

The Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children will act as a platform for the implementation of a package of evidence-based interventions for preventing and responding to violence against children in line with the INSPIRE Strategies. INSPIRE sets out seven strategies to end violence against children, supported by two cross-cutting approaches to support quality delivery of these strategies through multi-sectoral action and the use of data and evidence to plan implementation and measure impact.

The INSPIRE package is not designed for implementation as a standalone programme. Rather, it is intended to revitalise and refocus current multi-sectoral efforts to end violence against children, while increasing ambition and underlining the need for implementation at scale if significant, sustained, and measurable reductions in violence are to be achieved. Furthermore, the implementation of the INSPIRE strategies needs to be adapted and localized for the national context. In line with this backdrop, this section of the report uses INSPIRE as a framework to review Sri Lanka's work to prevent and address violence against children, drawing on stakeholder interviews and a literature review of published material.

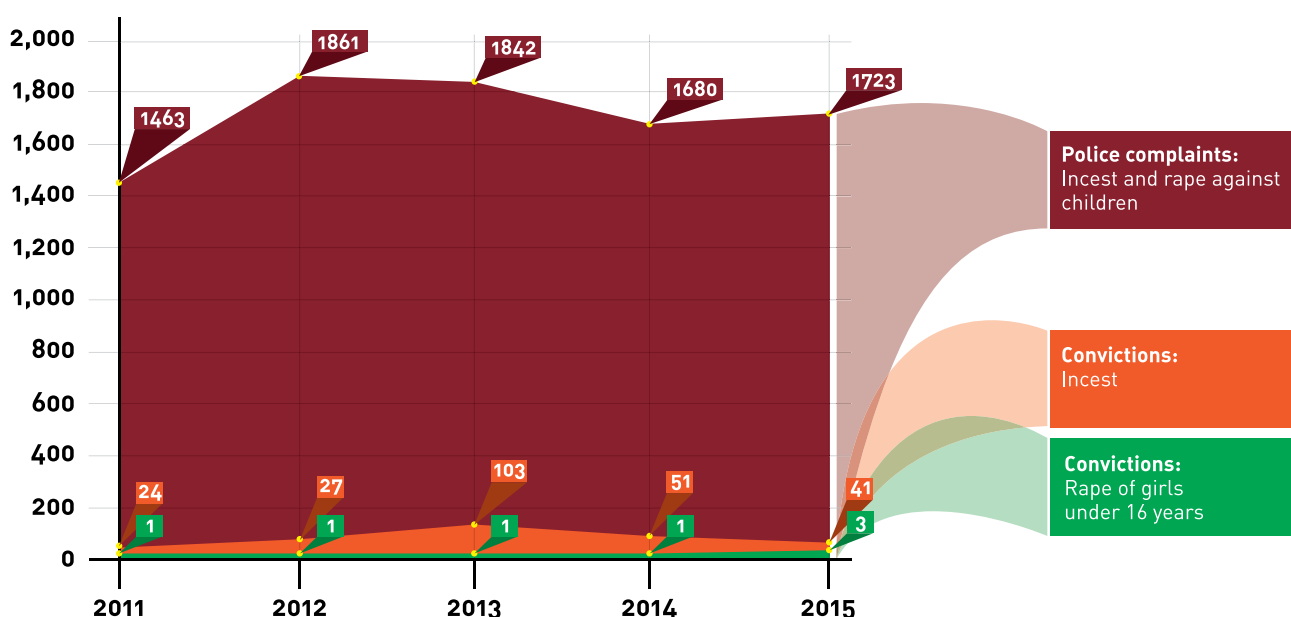
The following section provides an overview of the range of actions that Sri Lanka is already taking to prevent and respond to violence, reflecting on the work being undertaken by all key sectors and actors. It also identifies opportunities for the Government and its partners to refocus and refine Sri Lanka's approach to protecting children from all forms of violence.



Implementation and enforcement of laws

Overall, there is good legal coverage to protect children from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect. There is a substantive body of legislation covering most child protection issues, and Sri Lanka has signed up to most relevant international treaties and conventions. However, some legislative gaps remain: for example, there is a need to remove existing provisions that allow some children under 18 to marry and the age of criminal responsibility remains low at 8 years. The draft Children's (Judicial Protection) Bill will be a critical piece of legislation for child justice, and needs to be finalised and passed urgently, however amendments are first required to strengthen provisions for juvenile justice in the Bill (Verite Research, 2017; Walker et al., 2016). A recent assessment of juvenile justice in Sri Lanka provides concrete recommendations to enhance the

Figure 5 Police data on child rape and incest: complaints and convictions (Save the Children, 2017)



Bill ahead of its finalisation (Verite Research, 2017). It is also important to ensure that child rights are fully enshrined into the proposed new Constitution.

While it is important to address existing legislative gaps, the larger challenge comes in the implementation of these laws. A lack of knowledge by law enforcement actors around some legal provisions, a tendency to attribute blame for violence on the victim and reflect harmful norms and values, along with slow and inaccessible justice processes all combine to limit the effective enforcement of laws intended to protect children from violence. For example, statutory rape laws are applied inconsistently and not always in the interests of the child. Stakeholders are concerned about the trend of the courts using discretionary powers to impose suspended sentences in rape cases, including statutory rape cases. At the same time, underage boys accused of statutory rape should be processed through the juvenile justice system rather than through regular criminal trial courts. (Goonesekere & Amarasuriya, 2013) Figure 5 below illustrates the unacceptably low conviction rates for child rape and incest compared to the number of complaints.

Many stakeholders are particularly concerned about the alarming delays in moving cases through the justice system: there is currently an average delay of around seven years to complete court proceedings. Furthermore, these delays show no sign of easing without significant investment and intervention. To reduce these delays in the short-term, there are recommendations to appoint retired magistrates or judges to hear outstanding cases and reduce the backlog (Verite Research, 2017). Training for law enforcement officials and the development of management information systems to case manage and monitor child victims throughout the justice system could also help to address these barriers (Verite Research, 2017).



Norms and values

Some public norms and values continue to expose children in Sri Lanka to various forms of violence. Corporal punishment continues to be normalized in a range of settings. Gender norms have an impact on violence against children: men report a sense of entitlement in enacting sexual violence on women, and both men (79 per cent) and women (75 per cent) report that 'some women ask to be raped by the way they dress and behave' (Mel, Peiris, & Gomez, 2013). Furthermore, some communities appear to 'legitimize' statutory rape through marriage or cohabitation, pressuring girls to marry the perpetrator (Goonesekere & Amarasuriya, 2013). Stakeholders note that authoritarian and patriarchal attitudes can shape parenting practices, making it difficult for children to express themselves fully. The media plays an important role in reflecting – and indeed shaping – public norms and values. Stakeholders have expressed concern that the mass media in Sri Lanka, and particularly television, currently reinforce ethnic and gender stereotypes and promote violence as a conflict-resolution tool. (UNICEF Sri Lanka, 2016) Media reporting of child marriage and statutory rape has been found to be sensationalised, with girls often stigmatised, and often failed to reflect correct information about relevant laws (Goonesekere & Amarasuriya, 2013). Rights-based child protection training and minimum standards are needed to help protect children from harmful media reporting.

The Government and other stakeholders have invested in a range of communication campaigns to shift harmful or regressive public attitudes and practices related to child protection. However, there is a lack of monitoring or evaluation information about each of these campaigns, which would help to make sure that future investments are effective. A stronger focus on monitoring, evaluation and learning across current and future communications campaigns is needed to ensure impact.

Faith based leaders are deeply influential, and are important potential partners in addressing violence against children. Their role as community leaders, particularly in shaping and guiding values and morals, is pivotal and needs to be harnessed. For example, during consultations some faith-based leaders reflected a worrying view that abuse should not be discussed or reported.

There appears to be some interest among faith-based leaders to collaborate on ending violence against children, but this is certainly not a universal position and more work is needed to nurture a partnership with these important stakeholders. This is perhaps best managed through existing faith-based partnerships for child rights and child protection, which in Sri Lanka is convened through World Vision. Finding country contexts to promote learning with other faith-based leaders that are relevant to Sri Lanka will also be helpful.



Safe environments

Overall there isn't a huge body of research on children's safety in environments outside of the home and school in general. However, certain risks and contexts are easily identifiable, and efforts have been put in place to address these risks. Children can be vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation in and around tourist settings, and a range of campaigns have been launched to address children's risks to exploitation and abuse in these tourist contexts. (Hawke & Raphael, 2016) Children and communities in the North and the East are grappling with the legacy of the conflict, including war trauma, multiple displacements, and loss of family, kin, friends, homes, employment and other valued resources (Somasundaram & Sivayokan, 2013). The Government has been investing to improve children's access to services and support across the North and the East, including through education programmes, school building refurbishment, recruitment of teachers, building of vocational training capability, micro-credit schemes, and increased probation, child care and social worker capacity and support. (S. T. G. R. de Silva, Somatunga, Janakan, & Senanayake, 2008) As outlined previously, there are also concerns that children in institutional settings are at increased risk of violence. Finally, while estate sector areas are recognized as being particularly deprived, there isn't disaggregated data to understand the specific risks of violence faced by children in the estate sector. Furthermore, while consulted girls in these areas reported harassment, overall children were reluctant to share issues related to violence that directly affected them. (UNICEF Sri Lanka, 2016) The risk of children in estate settings needs to be better understood.

It could be interesting to invest in research with children to map the safety of their community – this would help to contextualize the spaces where children perceive there to be risks of violence to them and to build a better understanding of how different public spaces, including in urban, rural and estate settings, impact on children's safety. This could be implemented in part through Children's Clubs.



Parent and caregiver support

Ensuring quality parental care and support is critical for children's wellbeing. For example, while mass trauma and family violence were significant risks for child mental health among children in Northern Sri Lanka, good parental care was linked to fewer behavioural problems (Sriskandarajah, Neuner, & Catani, 2015).

Many parents and carers face challenges in providing an optimal level of care for children, which can expose children to an increased risk of violence. A key economic strategy for Sri Lanka has been the external migration of women for employment, many of whom have young children. This has however led to many children lacking the protection of a female caregiver, which has in turn been linked to higher levels of domestic sexual abuse. (Squire & Wijeratne, 2008) Across Sri Lanka, 23 per cent of households are female-headed. Female-headed households are reportedly at increased risk of violence and exploitation, while also facing barriers in accessing services and navigating social and economic marginalisation. (UNICEF Sri Lanka, 2016)

There is no record of programmes having been designed to target particularly vulnerable parents, such as young parents, those living with disability or poor mental health, or those struggling with

alcohol or other drug issues. Similarly, there is no data on the particular challenges facing these parents and carers, or the potential impacts for their children's protection.

It is critical to develop incentives and build the capacity of all parents and caregivers to promote positive discipline as an alternative to corporal punishment, given the normalisation of corporal punishment among parents and carers. While there have been a number of pilot initiatives to empower parents and caregivers to adopt positive discipline practices, there is no clear picture as to how developed these programmes are, including their coverage and efficacy. Similarly, it is important that caregivers in out-of-home care settings are equipped to protect children from violence, including corporal punishment. It is important to assess the effectiveness of existing parental support programmes, and to identify successful strategies and approaches to take to scale. There is significant global evidence available to support this process.

Existing child protection officers and other frontline officers who work for and with children could benefit from increased capacity for engaging parents and carers. The health sector is an important potential platform for engaging parents and carers and connecting them with knowledge, skills and supports. For example, Family Health Workers provide antenatal and postnatal care to women across the country, including through an estimated 4,000 community-based antenatal clinics across the country. Some stakeholders recognise that there is an excellent opportunity to disseminate parenting information and skills. Furthermore, while it is valuable for Family Health Workers to understand child protection and good parenting practices, it is not necessary to overload them by asking them to deliver parenting training: instead, Child Rights Promotion Officers could be brought in to lead sessions on parenting skills during antenatal clinics.



Income and economic strengthening

While somewhat fragmented, there are several initiatives and pilots to improve families' household income including through cash transfers, subsidies, and micro-credit schemes, and Sri Lanka has several social security measures in place. The largest of the existing schemes is the Samurdhi (Divi Neguma) Subsidy, which reached 1.48 million beneficiary households in 2013 – 23 per cent of households nationwide. (Hodges, 2014)

Despite these investments, there is no overarching national strategy for developing an inclusive and child-sensitive social security system. Furthermore, the broader impacts of these programmes on child wellbeing or human development are not known, but are likely to be very small particularly given the small value of the transfers. There have never been rigorous impact evaluations, so it is difficult to know whether Samurdhi, the Public Assistance Monthly Allowance or any of the other programmes have had impacts in fields such as nutrition, education or child labour. (Hodges, 2014)

In terms of violence against children, a first step could be to review existing social security programmes to understand how they interact with children's protection and wellbeing, and explore strategies to strengthen their child-sensitivity to better meet the income and economic needs of children and their families with a view toward refining existing investments to help reduce key economic drivers of violence against children.



Response and support services

There are a number of government and non-government actors working at national, provincial and district levels to deliver services and support to child victims of violence. For example, initiatives such as the Women and Children's Desks in police stations have helped to connect child survivors of violence with more accessible services, and child survivors can access respite care

through both Government and non-government organisations. There appears to be sufficient human resources on the ground to deliver child protection services, but workloads across individuals and agencies are not always evenly distributed. There is also a need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of various actors to remove existing confusion and ambiguity about how different institutions should work together. (Walker et al., 2016)

The quality of service provision to respond to violence is inconsistent, fragmented, and subject to the commitment and personality of individual service providers. Response services often fail to meet the needs of children, revictimising them due to poor coordination, disjointed case management and the limited capacity of key providers. The health sector has taken responsibility to develop case management protocols to respond to abuse, and these guidelines mandate medical staff to lead many case management processes. This will invariably continue to sideline Probation Officers and is likely to propagate a disconnect between these guidelines and the prevention and early intervention case management guidelines that are currently under development. Without a clearly mandated focal point to support children to navigate the child protection system across a continuum of care, it seems likely that children will continue to face fundamental barriers in accessing protection and justice. Coherent case management protocols that clarify roles and responsibilities across agencies at all levels and identify an appropriate and consistent lead focal point for case management, coupled with minimum standards for service delivery, could help to improve the quality and coordination of services. There is a need to professionalise the social work cadre. Related to this, extensive training on child rights and service standards will be necessary. Finally, initiatives to address norms and values should ensure coverage of professionals in contact with children in all settings.



Credit: UN Photo Library



Education and life skills

Excellent education levels offer an important first layer of protection for children in Sri Lanka. Persistent investments in education have delivered outstanding – and still improving – school enrolment rates: net primary school enrolment increased between 2006/07 and 2012/13 to reach 99.7 per cent, with gender parity. After 14 years of age the number of children in school declines, with 86.1 per cent of adolescents aged 15 to 16 years and 59.8 per cent of adolescents aged 17 to 18 years remaining at school. Declining school attendance is most acute in the estate sector and rural areas, affecting boys more than girls. Poor academic performance, financial difficulties, and the need to find a job are common reasons for school drop-out, while punishment and

teacher attitudes have also been highlighted. (UNICEF, 2014a; UNICEF Sri Lanka, 2016) The Government's recent commitment to extend compulsory education to 13 years of schooling will further build on these already impressive results. Only 7.3 per cent of pre-school age children are out of school, but children in the lowest wealth quintile are three times as likely to miss out on pre-primary school than their peers in the highest wealth quintile and exclusion rates are much higher for children in the estate sector at almost 20 per cent. (UNICEF, 2014a)

Beyond just being accessible, schools need to be safe and nurturing environments for children, offering protection and support. Corporal punishment, while prohibited through a Ministry of Education circular, remains commonplace in school settings. Reported negative attitudes towards children with disabilities by teachers and principals (UNICEF, 2014a) need to be better understood. Bullying and ragging is a concern in schools and universities respectively. The National Plan of Action to Address Sexual and Gender Based Violence in Sri Lanka has a strong focus on preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence in schools, providing an excellent entry point to address violence against children in school settings (Government of Sri Lanka, 2016). It is also important for children to develop important life skills to help them prevent violence, such as communication, conflict management and problem solving skills, while fostering positive peer relationships. Schools in Sri Lanka have access to some valuable life skills curricula, but many teachers are reportedly uncomfortable with the content, particularly around sexual and reproductive health and rights. The National Youth Health Survey found that knowledge of sexual and reproductive health was not satisfactory, and that young people had particularly poor knowledge of the sexual and reproductive systems of the opposite sex (Family Health Bureau, 2015). There is concern that the lack of sexual and reproductive health and rights information available in schools is leading children to turn to unverified online information, including online pornography. (Data & Society Research Institute, n.d.) The NCPA is working with the Parliamentary Oversight Committee and the Ministry of Education to develop a new curriculum on sexual and reproductive health – it will be important to ensure that this is fully implemented upon completion.

It is equally important to connect children with like skills opportunities outside of school, particularly given school drop-out rates among older adolescents. At the local level, Children's Clubs are an existing entry point for building children's life skills, knowledge and participation, of which there are 3,867 across the country (Save the Children, 2017; Walker et al., 2016). There have also been initiatives to pilot life skills and vocational training for children living in state children's homes (UNICEF, 2014b). Around 100,000 Muslim children ages 5 – 18 years reportedly participate in after-school classes that provide an opportunity to impart life skills. Finally, Sports for Development initiatives have been piloted in seven districts (UNICEF, 2015b). There is a lot of potential to incorporate child protection initiatives into sports programmes: this could be an interesting entry point for Sri Lanka to consider through the Global Partnership.

Given the many initiatives in place, a review of existing life skills programmes, and a reflection on how to ensure children's access to life skills, could help to strengthen this aspect of prevention. This should include particular attention to the needs of children who are out of school, including working children.



Multisectoral actions and coordination

There is a need to develop an overarching child protection coordination mechanism to help support various actors to coordinate more effectively, reducing horizontal and vertical duplication of mandates and powers. Enhanced coordination and partnership with NGOs and other actors such as the media, private sector, faith-based leaders, and children and families is needed to amplify the efforts of the Government and offer new alliances and partnerships. Bringing all stakeholders around a common vision of protecting children from violence is an important first step for improved coordination and cooperation. However, it will be necessary to address

the existing structural challenges in terms of roles and responsibilities outlined above under Response and Support Services. Without clarifying mandates and functions across key Government organisations, any effort at coordination is unlikely to succeed.

There is a need to engage children and youth not only as beneficiaries but as partners and agents of change. The children who were consulted for this discussion paper sent a loud and clear message: they can be part of this partnership, they want their voices to be heard, and they want to be part of the solution. Their preferred consultation approach is for face-to-face engagement in small single-sex groups without teachers or parents in the room. Given the increasing access to information and communication technology among children, online forums for dialogue could also be explored. The Government's Child Participation Guidelines can help to inform this work.



Monitoring and evaluation

The Government of Sri Lanka and its partners are working extensively to address violence against children, with a number of structures and interventions in place. Stakeholders consulted for this discussion paper agreed that an increased focus on monitoring and evaluation of these approaches is critical to better determine what works, under what circumstances, to prevent and respond to violence in all its forms. This data is also critical for demonstrating the value for money of investing in children's protection. Strong monitoring and evaluation data will also help to drive an increased focus among stakeholders for shared reflection and learning.

Moving forward, monitoring and evaluation data, along with more attention to shared learning, will help to sharpen Sri Lanka's investments to end violence against children. This may require a systematic review of existing M&E frameworks for key policies and programmes, and refinement (or indeed development) of these frameworks as needed. It will certainly require strong coordination platforms that give stakeholders forums to share their successes – and challenges – in collectively ending violence against children.

Opportunities and challenges for Sri Lanka as a Pathfinder Country

During consultations for this discussion paper stakeholders identified several opportunities – and challenges – in Sri Lanka's efforts to step up to end violence against children as a pathfinder country:

Opportunities	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harness INSPIRE package to focus on effective and evidence-informed prevention strategies. • Bring on board new stakeholders including the media, private sector and faith-based leaders. • Build on existing plans and strategies to ensure alignment to national priorities. • Generate lessons learnt from existing programmes and approaches. • Mobilise to respond to a few key priority issues that impact on children's protection from violence. • NCPA and Police data is being digitized which will enable easier analysis. • Strengthen linkages and the incorporation of child protection into other sectors such as health and education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate accountability for child protection service providers, who are also disempowered and at times sidelined from managing child protection cases. • Many existing plans and strategies are unfunded and are not fully implemented • Limited mainstreaming meaningful participation of children. • Many children being at risk of violence, but key drivers and contexts not being well understood. • Most of the priorities for action identified have been documented and tabled before: the Global Partnership will need to help identify and navigate the underlying reasons why many previous efforts have been unsuccessful before moving forward.

The Partners: Building a Coalition to End Violence against Children in Sri Lanka



Credit: UN Photo Library

With the support from key international non-government organisations along with UNICEF, the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs has established a Secretariat for Sri Lanka's National Partnership to End Violence Against Children.

There is interest – and, indeed, strong commitment – among all key stakeholders consulted for this paper to support efforts to end violence against children in Sri Lanka. To help coordinate these efforts, a number of existing and new platforms have been identified. It is unlikely that the partnership will be able to operate exclusively through existing platforms, as some are not particularly strong or active, and others have limited membership and rigid protocols about including new stakeholders. The Secretariat is currently scoping options to best to leverage these platforms, along with possible new mechanisms, to support multisectoral collaboration to end violence against children.

Consultations confirmed the importance of long-time key child protection stakeholders such as the Government, international non-government organisations, local non-government organisations, and UN agencies in this Partnership. In addition, it highlighted the need to nurture stronger partnerships and alliances with stakeholders such as the private sector, the media, academia and faith-based leaders.

Children consulted for this discussion paper expressed their interest to be actively engaged in the Global Partnership. It will be important to build multiple platforms to engage with children. School-based platforms are valuable given the number of children who can be reached through school. However, Children's Clubs, sporting groups, Children's Councils, community-based forums, and even online platforms can all also be leveraged. Particular attention will be needed to reach children living in institutional settings, along with children who are out of school. Sri Lanka has a strong Youth Parliament that can also be engaged to bring the voices of young people into the Global Partnership.

The Pathways: Opportunities for Sri Lanka to End Violence against Children

Key stakeholders in Sri Lanka agree on the need to harness the opportunity of being a pathfinder country to help deliver concrete results for children. There is a sense of urgency and commitment across the various stakeholders, and strong leadership from within the Government of Sri Lanka to steer this movement forward. Most importantly, there is absolute consensus on the need to work together to deliver real and lasting results for children. This discussion paper – and the consultations leading up to it – marks the beginning of an ongoing dialogue within the country on how best to work together to end violence against children.

Stakeholders from all sides emphasized the need for Sri Lanka to focus on a limited number of strategic milestones under the Global Partnership: there is agreement that focused collective action is needed to effectively demonstrate impact against a few key priority issues. Against this backdrop, the following pathways have emerged from the literature review and in-country consultations as high-potential priorities to move forward through the Global Partnership. These remain initial proposals, and will need to be further validated, refined and prioritized during the formulation of the Roadmap.

1

Conduct a study on the drivers of violence against children in Sri Lanka

This study is critical to help unpack the trends and drivers of violence against children in Sri Lanka. It will help to understand how certain children – including the children of migrant workers, children in institutions, children with disabilities, and children grappling with the traumatic legacy of the war – might be particularly vulnerable to violence, which can help to inform the design of specialist interventions. Good evidence on the risks and drivers of violence will help to focus and prioritise collective action to end violence against children. It is critical that this study be designed with methodologically sound principles to ensure high quality data.

2

Accelerate action to end sexual violence

While this is not currently perceived as the highest-level priority, it is an issue that resonates with all key stakeholders and offers an opportunity for all sectors and stakeholders to contribute: the sexual abuse of children is incompatible with the norms and values of Sri Lankan society and therefore resonates widely. Furthermore, the limited data available shows that sexual violence is indeed a problem in Sri Lanka, providing a clear rationale for action. Each of the INSPIRE strategies can be refined with a view towards better keeping children safe from sexual violence, including statutory rape which remains a significant concern for stakeholders. Defining ambitious targets for reducing sexual violence against children, and channeling the collective action of all partnerships toward achieving these targets, would allow Sri Lanka to be very concrete and focused in its efforts as a pathfinder country.

3

Tackle physical and humiliating punishment in family, school and institutional settings

There is not yet wide popular support for ending physical and humiliating punishment, but the child protection sector is energized and keen to address this issue. A multipronged approach will be necessary, including: building the capacity of parents, teachers and caregivers to adopt positive discipline practices; increasing support for them to manage stress and conflict without violence; and prohibiting corporal punishment by law.

4

Build momentum with some quick wins

It is important that through the Global Partnership Sri Lanka not just strive to tackle the more complex bottlenecks that hinder children's protection from violence. It is also important that smaller wins be secured to build momentum and to keep all stakeholders energized and engaged. While these quick wins are unlikely to be major game changers individually, they offer important opportunities to deliver tangible results in the short-term, even as stakeholders collaborate on longer-term barriers to children's protection from violence.

Some of the quick wins that Sri Lanka could consider investing in that would directly support the goals of the Global Partnership include:

- Ensure finalization of the National Policy for Child Protection, ensuring that it reflects Sri Lanka's commitment to end all forms of violence against children.
- Convene a series of Grassroots Learning Forums: These forums will harness the collective experience of frontline workers and stakeholders addressing violence against children, along with children themselves. These forums will seek to: identify what has worked – and not worked – in preventing and responding to violence against children in line with the INSPIRE package; understand and problem-solve bottlenecks and opportunities to improve the protection of children from violence; explore potential entry points and linkages with existing programmes in other sectors including health and education to incorporate messaging and training on violence against children; reflect on lessons and solutions for ending violence against children that can be shared with other districts and internationally. This approach can be tested initially in one district per province.
- Explore pathways for working constructively with the Private Sector.
- Support the necessary amendments to the Children (Judicial Protection) Bill and advocate for its finalization and enactment.

The Next Steps: Becoming a Pathfinder Country

Sri Lanka's next steps for moving forward are outlined below:

1

Constitute the Global Partnership for the Sri Lankan context

A Secretariat for the Global Partnership was constituted on 1 March 2017, and is now sitting in the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs. The Secretariat reports to the Secretary for Women and Child Affairs, who is also Sri Lanka's focal point for the Global Partnership. The immediate priorities for the Secretariat are to:

- Develop appropriate institutional arrangements, along with coordination and accountability mechanisms, that align to Government systems and processes while enabling the full partnership of non-government stakeholders – central to this will be the establishment of a multisectoral stakeholder group to coordinate the National Partnership;
- Conduct outreach and follow up with existing and new stakeholders to build stronger alliances and to lay foundations for the development of the Roadmap;
- Localise the Global Partnership concept to ensure its continued relevance and sustainability in the Sri Lankan context: Sri Lanka is passionate about contributing to a global vision for the protection of children, and welcomes the opportunity to exchange lessons and experiences with other countries through this Global Partnership. However this movement is first and foremost a platform for national partnership and coordination, and it will be important to work accordingly.

This Secretariat is an important institutional mechanism that can help Sri Lanka to move forward as a pathfinder country, but it bears noting that it will require support and partnership to succeed in its objective of spearheading coordinated action to end violence against children in Sri Lanka. It is vitally important that all stakeholders share responsibility for the Roadmap and Implementation Plan, and that it not be seen to be owned by the Secretariat alone: without shared ownership at every step, Sri Lanka will not be effective in achieving its Global Partnership goals.

2

Launch Sri Lanka as a pathfinder country for the Global Partnership

A high-level event is being planned for May 2017 to officially launch Sri Lanka's role as a Global Partnership pathfinder country. The launch will include intensive media coverage of the programme, and will seek to engage a range of stakeholders from all relevant sectors. The launch is an opportunity to generate awareness about the Global Partnership concept, and more importantly to highlight violence against children as critical and urgent public issue for Sri Lanka to tackle.

3

Develop a bold and evidence-informed Roadmap

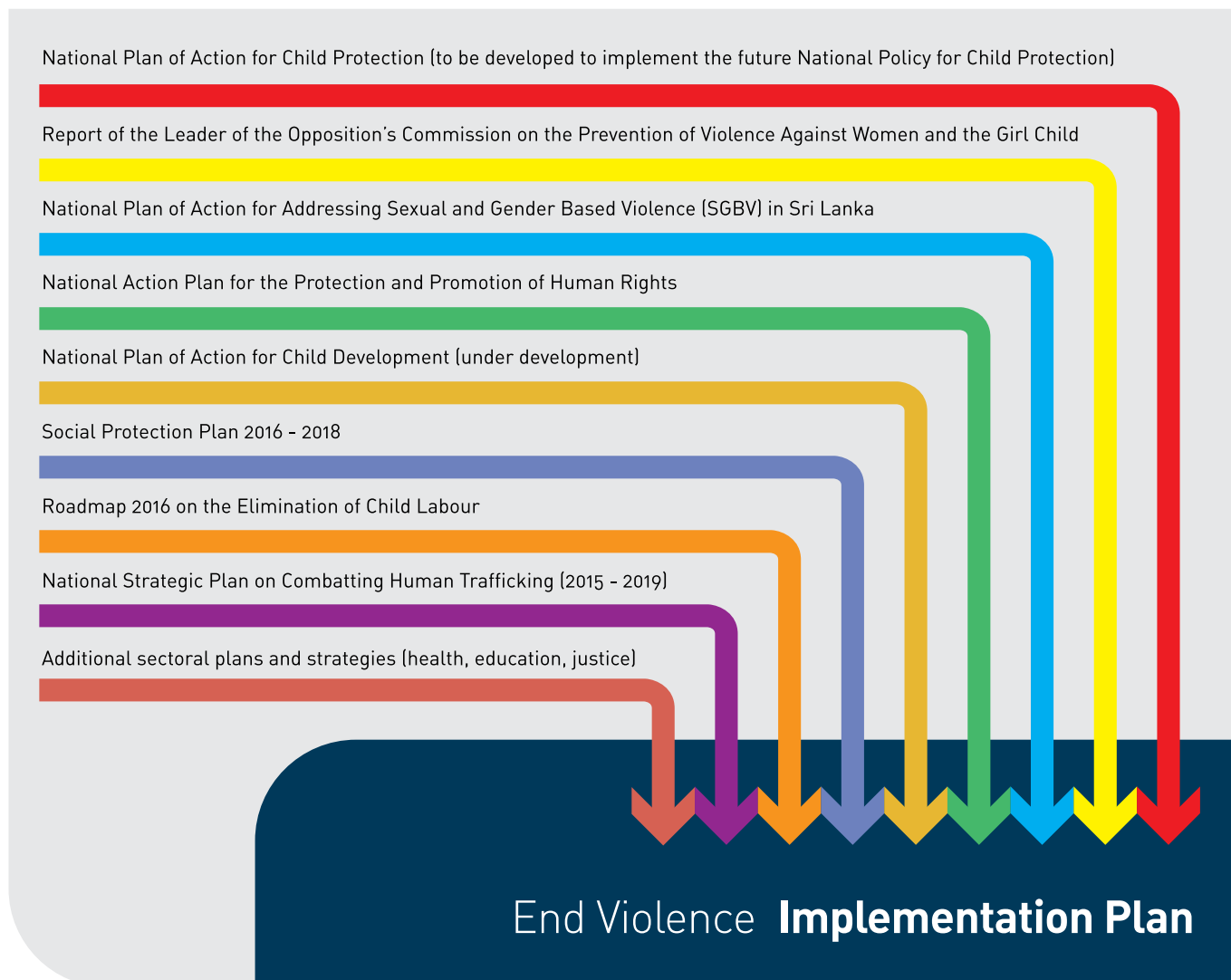
This discussion paper has highlighted possible pathways for addressing violence against children in Sri Lanka through the Global Partnership. A collaborative and inclusive process will be put in place to agree on Sri Lanka's Roadmap as a pathfinder country. This process will commence as soon as the Global Partnership is formally launched. Through this process, the potential pathways identified in this paper will be further considered and refined.

4

Develop a Streamlined Implementation Plan

Consistent with the convening and coordinating focus of the Global Partnership, Sri Lanka's Implementation Plan as a pathfinding country will be a consolidation and prioritisation of existing and emerging plans for the protection of children from violence. Figure 6 below highlights the key existing and upcoming plans and strategies that will inform the development of the Implementation Plan. New initiatives planned under the Global Partnership will be incorporated into upcoming plans, such as the National Plan of Action for Child Development and the anticipated National Plan of Action for Child Protection, to ensure that initiatives and commitments are fully embedded within Government systems for monitoring and accountability. The Streamlined Implementation Plan should also take account of the recommendations put forward in the recent Supplementary Report on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: these are well developed recommendations that will help to end violence against children. It is critical that the Streamlined Implementation Plan be fully funded to allow this approach to be effective in ending violence against children.

Figure 6 Integration of key plans and strategies into the End Violence Implementation Plan.



Reference List

- Catani, C. (2010). War at Home - a Review of the Relationship between War Trauma and Family Violence. *VERHALTENSTHERAPIE*, 20(1), 19-27. <https://doi.org/10.1159/000261994>
- Catani, C., Jacob, N., Schauer, E., Kohila, M., & Neuner, F. (2008). Family violence, war, and natural disasters: A study of the effect of extreme stress on children's mental health in Sri Lanka. *BMC PSYCHIATRY*, 8. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-244X-8-33>
- Catani, C., Schauer, E., & Neuner, F. (2008). Beyond Individual War Trauma: Domestic Violence against Children in Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 34(2), 165-176. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/5439458_Beyond_Individual_War_Trauma_Domestic_Violence_Against_Children_in_Afghanistan_and_Sri_Lanka
- Data & Society Research Institute. (n.d.). *Online Sexual Exploitation of Children in South Asia*, UNICEF.
- de Silva, S. T. G. R., Somatunga, L. C., Janakan, N., & Senanayake, L. (2008). *National report on violence and health in Sri Lanka*.
- de Zoysa, P. (n.d.). *A Study on Parental Disciplinary Practices and an Awareness Program to Reduce Corporal Punishment and Other Forms of Negative Parental Practices*. Retrieved from <http://www.cpcnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Report-on-Corporal-Punishment.pdf>
- de Zoysa, P., Newcombe, P. A., & Rajapakse, L. (2008). Consequences of parental corporal punishment on 12-year old children in the Colombo district. *Ceylon Medical Journal*, 53(1), 7-9 3p. <https://doi.org/10.4038/cmj.v53i1.218>
- Doole, C. (2016). Child sexual abuse in Sri Lanka may be a bigger problem than you imagined. Retrieved May 3, 2017, from <https://roar.lk/reports/child-sexual-abuse-sri-lanka-may-bigger-problem-imagined/>
- Elbert, T., Schauer, M., Schauer, E., Huschka, B., Hirth, M., & Neuner, F. (2009). Trauma-related impairment in children-A survey in Sri Lankan provinces affected by armed conflict. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 33(4), 238-246. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2008.02.008>
- Emmanuel, S., Wettasinghe, K., Samuels, F., Thambiah, S., Rajendran, I., & Galappatti, A. (2015). Failing Adolescents: Social Control, Political Economy & Human Development in post-war Sri Lanka. *Stability-International Journal of Security and Development*, 4(1), 1-18. Retrieved from <http://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.f/>
- Family Health Bureau. (2015). *National Youth Health Survey 2012/13: Sri Lanka*.
- Fonseka, R. W., Minnis, A. M., & Gomez, A. M. (2015). Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences on Intimate Partner Violence Perpetration among Sri Lankan Men. *Plos One*, 10, e0136321. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0136321>
- Goonsekere, S., & Amarasuriya, H. (2013). *Emerging Concerns and Case Studies on Child Marriage in Sri Lanka*. Unicef.
- Government of Sri Lanka. (2006). *United Nations Study on Violence against Children. Response to the questionnaire received from the Government of the Republic of Sri Lanka*.
- Government of Sri Lanka. (2016). *Policy Framework and National Plan of Action to address Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) in Sri Lanka 2016 - 2020*.
- Hawke, A., & Raphael, A. (2016). *Offenders on the Move: Global Study on Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism*. Retrieved from <http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/docpdf/global-report-offenders-move-final.pdf>
- Hodges, A. (2014). *Thematic paper 1 Social protection and children in Sri Lanka*.
- Marecek, J., & Senadheera, C. (2012). "I drank it to put an end to me": Narrating girls' suicide and self-harm in Sri Lanka. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 46(1-2), 53-82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/006996671104600204>
- Mel, N. de, Peiris, P., & Gomez, S. (2013). *Broadening Gender: Why Masculinities Matter: Attitudes, Practices and Gender-Based Violence in Four Districts in Sri Lanka*. Retrieved from http://www.care.org/sites/default/files/documents/Broadening-Gender_Why-Masculinities-Matter.pdf
- Ministry of Women and Child Affairs. (2017). *Ministry of Women and Child Affairs Trust Fund Action Plan 2016 - 2018*.
- Norbu, J. et. a. (2014). Prohibition of Corporal Punishment of Children in South Asia Progress and Proposals for Reform South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children Prohibition of Corporal Punishment of Children in South Asia : Progress and Proposals for Reform. SAIEVAC.
- Perera, B., & Ostbye, T. (2009). Prevalence and correlates of sexual abuse reported by late adolescent school children in Sri Lanka. *International Journal of Adolescent Medicine and Health*, 21(2), 203-11.
- Perera, B., Ostbye, T., Ariyananda, P. L., & Lelwala, E. (2009). Prevalence and correlates of physical and emotional abuse among late adolescents. *The Ceylon Medical Journal*, 54(1), 10-15. <https://doi.org/10.4038/cmj.v54i1.466>
- SAIEVAC. (2015). *The South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC) Workplan 2010 - 2015*. Retrieved from http://srs.violenceagainstchildren.org/sites/default/files/political_declarations/SAIEVAC5YEARoWORKPLAN2010.pdf
- Save the Children. (2017 draft). *Child Rights Governance Analysis and Child Rights Situation Analysis of Sri Lanka*. [publication pending]
- Silva, N. De, & Punchihewa, A. G. (2011). Push and Pull Factors of Institutionalization of Children: A Study Based in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka.
- Somasundaram, D., & Sivayokan, S. (2013). Rebuilding community resilience in a post-war context: developing insight and recommendations - a qualitative study in Northern Sri Lanka. *International Journal of Mental Health Systems*, 7(1), 3. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1752-4458-7-3>
- Squire, J., & Wijeratne, S. (2008). *Sri Lanka Research Report: The Sexual Abuse, Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Children in Sri Lanka*. Retrieved from http://www.childtrafficking.com/Docs/trafficking_report_srilanka_17_12_08.pdf
- Sri Lanka Department of Census and Statistics. (2009). *Sri Lanka Demographic and Health Survey 2006-07*.
- Skiskandarajah, V., Neuner, F., & Catani, C. (2015). Parental care protects traumatized Sri Lankan children from internalizing behavior problems. *BMC Psychiatry*, 15(1), 203. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-015-0583-x>
- The World Bank. (n.d.-a). Internet Users (per 100 people).

Reference List (cont.)

The World Bank. [n.d.-b]. Mobile Cellular Subscriptions (per 100 people).

Trivedi, A. (2013). Sri Lanka Struggles to Contain a Growing Epidemic of Child Abuse. Time. Retrieved from <http://world.time.com/2013/08/13/sri-lanka-struggles-to-contain-a-growing-epidemic-of-child-abuse/>

UNICEF. (2014a). *Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children: South Asia Regional Study Covering Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka*. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/education/files/SouthAsia_OOSCI_Study_Executive_Summary_26Jan_14Final.pdf

UNICEF. (2014b). *UNICEF Annual Report 2014 - Sri Lanka*. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Sri_Lanka_Annual_Report_2014.pdf

UNICEF. (2015a). SRI LANKA, ROSA #ENDviolence INITIATIVE / INITIATIVE TITLE.

UNICEF. (2015b). *UNICEF Annual Report 2015: Sri Lanka*. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Sri_Lanka_2015_COAR.pdf

UNICEF Sri Lanka. (2016). *Children Rights and Sustainable Development in Sri Lanka: A Situation Assessment and Analysis*.

Verite Research. (2017). *Legal and Institutional Assessment of Sri Lanka's Juvenile Justice System*.

Walker, D., Bandara, I., & Silva, S. de. (2016 draft). *Sri Lanka Child Protection Systems Mapping Report*. [publication pending]

¹Ragging is defined under the Education Institutions Act as "any act which causes or is likely to cause physical or psychological injury or mental pain or fear" (Government of Sri Lanka, 2006).

