

KEYS TO PROTECT DAVID FROM VIOLENCE

The Role of National Child Protection Systems



“

When I was a child, my step father used drugs and when my mother went out, he used to fondle me and touch my private parts. I didn't know what was happening. I was just a child, six years of age.

He used to tell me that this should be kept a secret between the two of us and that I shouldn't tell anyone. Sometimes he would do things that hurt. I felt ashamed and didn't want others to see me, so I would hide. ”

- David -

National child protection systems are necessary in order to prevent and respond to all forms of violence against children, including sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect, corporal punishment, children in hazardous work, recruitment of children into armed groups, early marriage and other harmful traditional practices.

The following are the keys to a national child protection system ▶▶▶



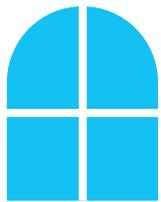
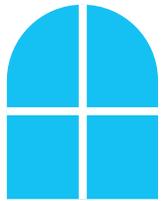
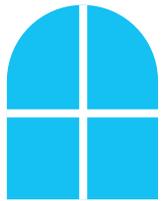


A national strategy ensures that a plan of action to prevent situations like David's is already in place.



NATIONAL STRATEGY

A national strategy, policy or plan of action to stop violence against children with realistic and time bound targets and an implementation strategy should be developed.



Action

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“ I finally told my friend what had happened to me and he convinced me to talk to my teacher. My teacher had a hard time believing me at the beginning but he also explained to me that what my father did is not right and is illegal. ”



LEGAL FRAMEWORK

National laws must prohibit all forms of violence against children in all settings, including in the home and should be effectively implemented and monitored.



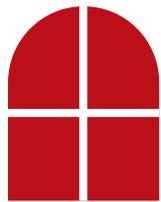
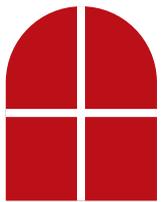
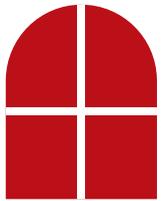
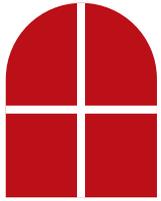


COORDINATING AGENCY

A coordinating agency at national level is responsible for the implementation of the national strategy and should have the capacity to involve and coordinate across governmental sectors (social welfare, health, education, justice, etc...) and involve civil society, international agencies, families and children in a safe way.

“ My teachers finally accompanied me to the police to report what had happened. The police called a man from the social service department, Bob, who became my contact person. He accompanied me to a doctor and talked to my mother.

My mother was shocked at first, but then she became very angry with my step father. She decided that we should stay with my grandmother for some time. Bob agreed with this decision. ”





“ During the coming months I received a lot of help from Bob and others, including regular visits to the doctor. My counsellor asked me to make a drawing of what had happened to me. At times I cried and screamed and I could not see any joy in life. My counsellor was very patient with me and he helped me a lot.

At first I did not want my step father to be punished as I felt it was all my fault. By talking to Bob and the counsellor, I understood and agreed that my step father needed to be punished, as well as to be supported so to realise that what he had done to me was wrong.

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LOCAL PREVENTIVE AND RESPONSIVE SERVICES

The local level of Government holds the primary responsibility for ensuring accessible, child-sensitive, preventive and responsive services which include reporting and referral mechanisms and recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes.





CHILD FRIENDLY JUSTICE SYSTEM

“ After some time my step father was taken to court. I did not want to meet him in the court so Bob made sure that I could tell the judges what had happened by recording a video tape. I was told that my step father will be in prison for 5 years.

I was no longer ashamed, but of course I also missed my step father and the good things we did together, like going to the Zoo when I was little. ”

The State establishes a child-centred, specialized justice system which ensures that children can report on the violence they experience and that perpetrators are brought to justice.





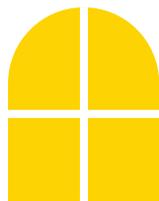
“ After a few months I started feeling much better, with the help of my counsellor. Bob asked me what I wanted to do and how he could best support me. I wanted to go back to school and I also wanted to inform other children about sexual abuse. I started a children's club.

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CHILD PARTICIPATION

States should listen to girls and boys and involve children directly in the design and implementation of policies (and programmes) that address violence they experience. Children's own actions to address violence should be supported.



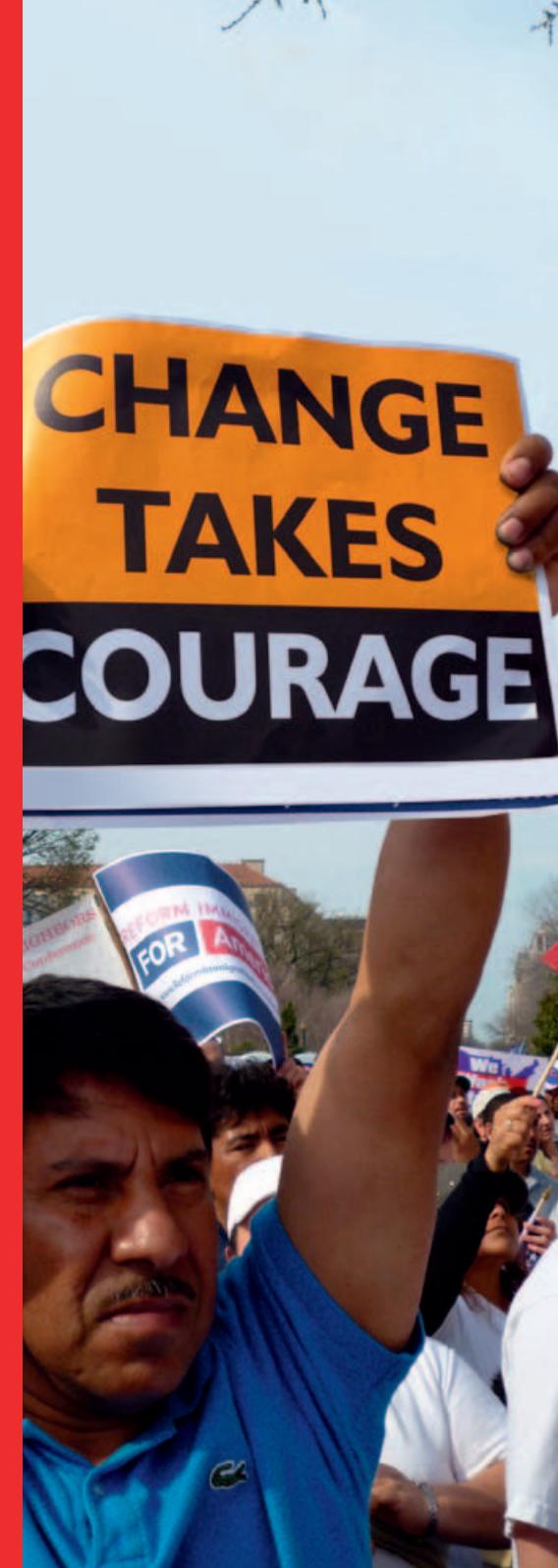
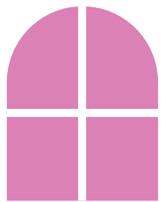
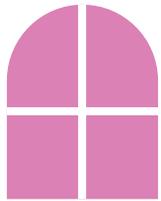


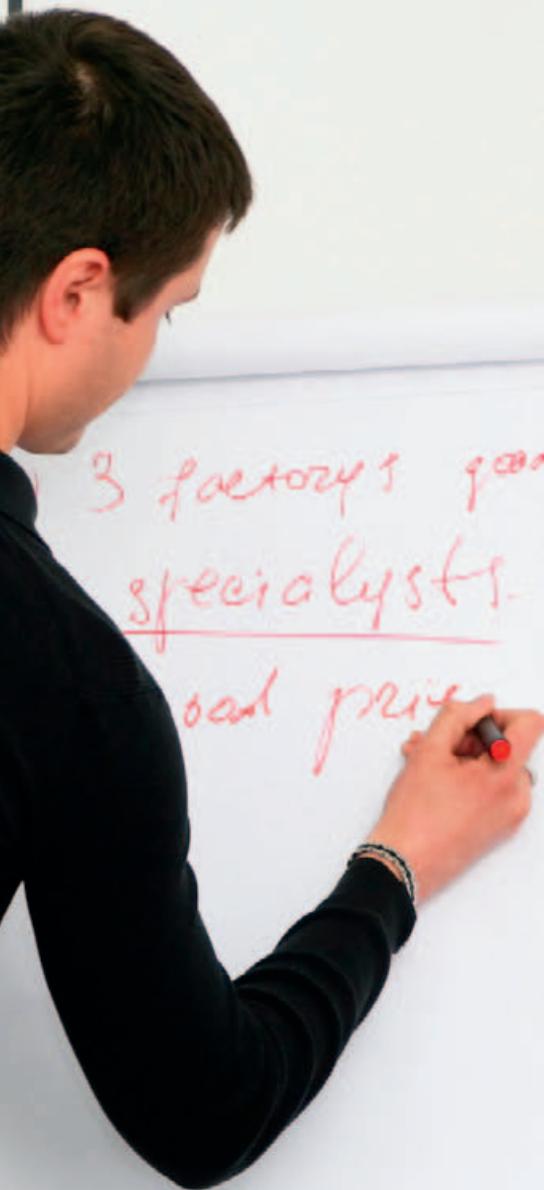
“ My child club started to mobilize children and adults to take action against child abuse, and advocate the Government to do more. As people often do not want to talk about sexual abuse, the local Government was not very open to the idea.

But after a while, the Government decided to start an information campaign. The local newspaper wrote articles to inform teachers and other parents about child abuse. ”

 **AN AWARE AND SUPPORTIVE PUBLIC**

An aware and supportive public should be involved in efforts to prevent harm to children and respond to child protection issues in their communities, neighbourhoods and in wider society.





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Due to pressure from the civil society, some schools started including child abuse in the teachers training curricula and schools and other institutions working for children adopted child protection codes. All professionals working for children received information and training about child abuse so that they could identify a child at risk.

If the teachers had been trained they could have realised that something was wrong in my life. For example my teacher at school may have noticed that I was sometimes hiding and crying and could have identified what was wrong.

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COMMITTED WORKFORCE

All professionals working with or for children such as police, teachers, Government staff, caregivers, judicial officers, health professionals and social workers should be trained to identify violence, provide referrals and ensure care and confidentiality.

Preventive measures such as information, campaigns and training on child rights and protection and support to parents and caregivers should be provided.





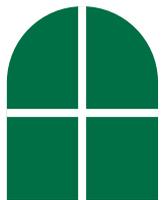
“ More resources were needed to ensure that all children in the country were better protected from all forms of violence.

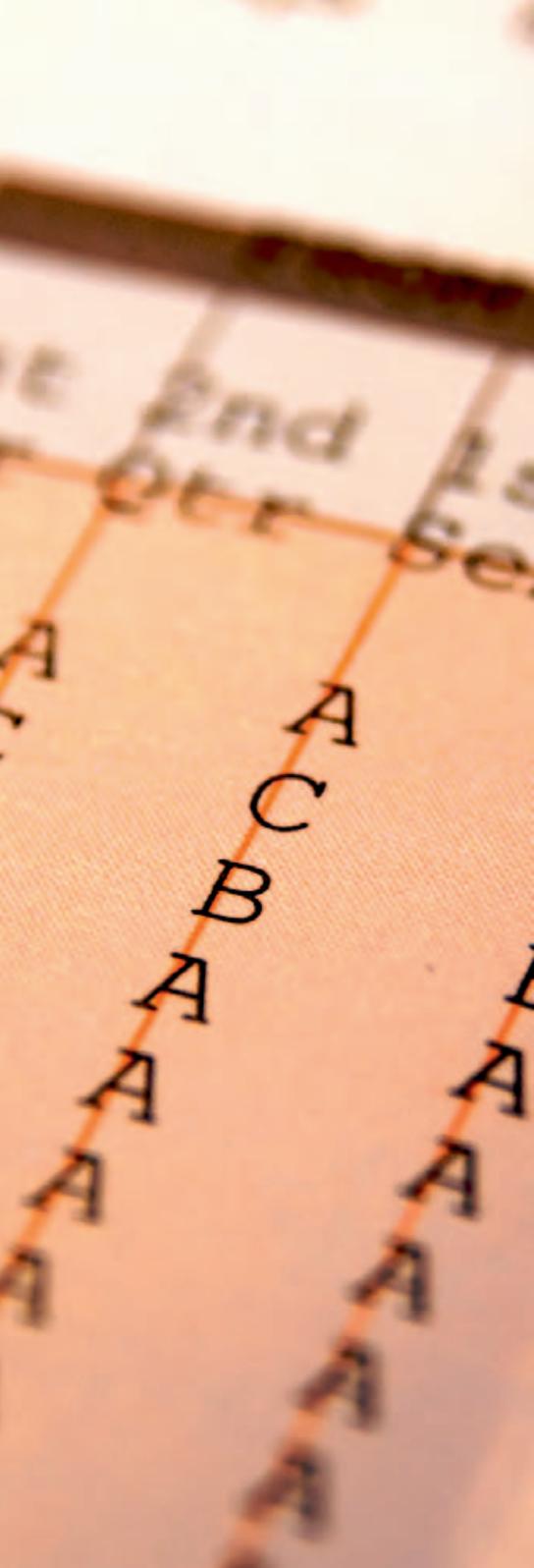
A few years later, thanks to the advocacy of the civil society, the Government increased the budget to be able to fully support families to better care for their children and prevent all abuse. ”



ADEQUATE RESOURCES

Adequate and appropriate resources should be allocated to stop all forms of violence against children.

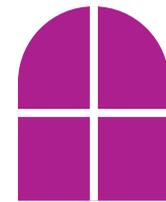
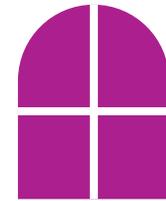




“ The Government also decided to adopt standards for the alternative care of children and introduce a monitoring system to ensure that professionals working for and with children follow the correct procedures. ”

STANDARDS, REGULATIONS, MONITORING AND OVERSIGHT

The State is responsible for ensuring services and responses are effectively regulated and monitored.





DATA COLLECTION SYSTEMS

Each state should develop a centralised data collection system, which ensures regular information on both the prevalence and knowledge of child protection issues and good practices.

“What is still lacking is a functional data collection system that enables the Government to estimate the scale of the problem, the number of children who has received support and the number of children who have been fully rehabilitated. The Government is committed to its establishment and with the help of some donors we hope it will be in place soon.

I am now 20 years old and lots of things have changed in my country. Despite everything that the Government and others have done, some children are still being sexually abused. We therefore have to continue to fight for children's right to protection.”



The story of David is fictitious. It illustrates the situations of many children around the world. Unfortunately, in many countries, there are not always prompt responses and effective services, as in David's case. The story was created to demonstrate how national child protection systems can prevent and respond to all forms of violence against children.

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OUR MISSION is to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children, and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives.

