

PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



Debotosh Sinha | Sukumar Pal | Neelmani Jaysawal

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Edited By

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Preface

This book is a compilation of papers authored by academicians, practitioners, researchers who are the witnesses to increasing challenges in mitigating violence against children. Children are considered to be the backbone of human development. Violence against children is a multi-dimensional phenomenon which consists of all forms of physical, mental torture, injury, abuse, neglect, maltreatment and sexual abuse perpetrated on them. It is very evident that children experience certain forms of violence at their various stages of life. Global evidence suggests that girls and boys in certain contexts are more vulnerable to violence (UNICEF, 2017). For instance, vulnerability may be heightened for children living with disabilities, in institutional care and deprived of liberty; those living in extreme poverty, unaccompanied or separated from family; children on the move (migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced children); and children living with HIV, facing discrimination for their sexual orientation or gender identity, belonging to marginalized social or ethnic groups, and those living with other social and economic disadvantages. While individual factors that increase the risk of violence are clearly important, there is broad consensus in the field that violence prevention and response must not focus too narrowly on individual characteristics of victims and perpetrators rather the focus should be enlarged to give more attention to broader social, economic, normative and institutional environments in which children and adolescents live.

Globally, there is an urgent need for reporting mechanisms and response services for violence against girls, boys and adolescents across all sectors. Victims of violence need access to high-quality reporting mechanisms and response services across all sectors, as well as compassionate, competent, comprehensive care and support from professionals and para-professionals. All duty-bearers, professionals and para-professionals who interact with children and adolescents regardless of sector, need to understand their responsibilities for recognizing and responding to cases of abuse. Key to a compassionate response is attitudes that support victims and avoid stigma, blame and minimize the violence or that prioritizes the reputation of perpetrators (or institutions) over the well-being of victims. The prevention of violence and strategic responses are very much inter-complementary. The multi-sectoral coordination may assist in bringing a universal solution to this problem. No individual sector can provide a comprehensive package of prevention or service responses that child victims may need, and all sectors need to consider how to contribute to referral networks that link or integrate health, law enforcement and social services; coalitions and task forces for planning and prevention; and community-based child protection mechanism that mobilize grassroots leaders and organizations. Institutions may also need to ensure that

they have enough female and male service providers to make reporting and response services accessible to both girls and boys. Once reporting systems and response services are prepared to respond to cases of violence against girls and boys in appropriate ways, with referral systems and support services of adequate quality, the next challenge is to increase access to and coverage of those services. The broader societal and community environment has an important influence on whether or not girls and boys are protected from violence and receive adequate care and support when they experience it. Raising awareness and changing social norms that support violence are essential components of long-term prevention and better responses to violence. Community mobilization may also have potential to reduce social, economic, legal and political power imbalances based on generation, gender and other social or economic disadvantages and to increase community and bystander engagement in violence prevention and response. It also focuses on gender-equitable relations within the household, including violence against women in the home. Evidence suggests that exposure to partner violence against women often co-occurs with physical on child; it may also increase the risk of violent discipline as well as children's risk of perpetrating or experiencing other types of violence during adolescence and adulthood. The solution for mitigation of child-centric violence lies in redressal of all kinds of grievances ranging from social, economic, political, and familial to institutional bottlenecks. A variety of positive parenting and caregiver support programmes have promise for improving parent-child relationships, increasing positive parenting and preventing violent discipline and other forms of child maltreatment and neglect. Another intended change is to help children and adolescents build more gender-equitable, non-violent relationships, including with peers, romantic partners, family members and others in the community. Another set of changes is to help adolescents postpone sexual debut until an appropriate age, and to postpone marriage and childbearing until they are ready to take on adult responsibilities (UNICEF, 2017). Therefore, the prevention of violence against children lies in multi-pronged approaches which may provide ample opportunities to mitigate it.

This book will be very useful resource for academicians, scholars and professionals working in the field of child rights and prevention of violence against children.

Editorial Team

Date: 25-08-2021

Foreword

I feel privileged to write the foreword for the book titled “Prevention of Violence against Children: Challenges and Opportunities”. This edited volume is an outcome of various research papers on diverse issues pertaining to children, with a focus on child sexual abuse, child labour, PVTG children, street children, effects of Intimate Partner Violence on children, impact of domestic violence on children, corporate intervention in mitigating child labour, role of MGNREGA in child welfare, role of ICDS in child rights, feminist and post-colonial overview of child sexual abuse. This book reflects various cross-cutting issues of socio-cultural and economic nature affecting children’s welfare and further institutional intervention to facilitate their welfare. The elimination of violence against children is called for in several targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Violence against children is predictable and preventable, and government has committed to end it through their adoption of these targets within the Sustainable Development Goals. Despite several efforts including legislations and legal provisions formulated and implemented to control this abhorrent crime, violence against children remains widespread across the country. It is well-established that positive change to address any sociological or developmental challenge cannot ride on such systemic and procedural tools alone, and preventing or eliminating this kind of violence is no exception. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), within the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India states in its Crime in India’ 2016 Report that the number of crimes against children in India has increased from 58,224 in 2013 to 1,06,958 in 2016 (KSCF, 2018). The form of abuse varies from penetrative assault to non-penetrative assault, besides forms that do not necessarily have physical contact, such as grooming over the internet, forcing a child to watch pornography, or conversations with sexual innuendos for the benefit of the abuser. The sheer vulnerability of a child and the very low priority accorded to children in policy and programme, decision-making arenas makes the situation even more complicated. It is these norms that need to be challenged through behavioural and attitudinal changes in communities if we have to achieve long-term and sustainable solutions. This book will be very useful resource for academicians, scholars and professionals working in the field of child rights and prevention of violence against children.

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