# FINAL REPORT

## EveryChild Guyana
## In Collaboration with
## Help & Shelter

KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE & PRACTICES ON
the Prevention of Child Abuse and the
Support to Children who have been
abused.
(Baseline Study)

## Sophia
## Georgetown
## Guyana

## April, 2008

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# Maybe Next Time

A child smiles into his mother's eyes
And she tells him he is an inconvenience
His laughter fills the house
And someone complains of the noise
He hugs mommy and daddy's necks
And they worry about getting their clothes all messed
He cries
He leaves
He's off into the streets
Not wanting to be of any burden
And all cry for his return

He suffers so much
He is so tired, he can't even cry
His arms and bones ache and his only wish is to die
When every success is blurred
And all of life seems so absurd
There is no joy even in his fondest dreams
And the sunniest of  days seem so dull
That he can't find any meaning in it all

There're those who stand and watch
And act like they do not see
And yet, I know they can help if they weren't afraid to enter
This tempestuous sea
But I pray someday someone will come to his rescue

And maybe next time
Parents will understand, how precious a child is
If they receive another gift.


Ferzanna Mohammed

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Maltreatment of children has been with mankind always, from the beginning of recorded history there is evidence that children were subjected to severe physical punishment. There have also been periods in history when society has agitated against the abuse. The modern interest began with the observation of children's X-rays. Drs. Wosley and Evans brought out the fact that the particular patterns of trauma seen on X-rays had been willfully inflected in many cases. The news media published the observations and the public interest was aroused, in the United States of America, Europe and around the world. The movement to protect children has grown.[1]

There is considerable overlap between the types of abuse to which children are subjected, therefore in the investigation of abused and neglected children and their families, enquiry into all possible maltreatment should be initiated.

This study is being undertaken through the collaborative efforts of EveryChild Guyana and Help and Shelter to establish Relevant Baseline Information on the prevention of and response to child abuse including the Child Protection System in the community setting.

The study is intended to provide critical information to guide the decision making process for the implementation of the "Pickney Project". The findings are expected to inform the development of a Project Plan and training materials that will address the needs and issues relating to child abuse in the Sophia Community. It will assist in explaining the behaviour of some key target groups regarding the phenomenon of child abuse.

At the end of the assessment the agencies concerned would be able to determine the Knowledge, Attitude and Practices of caregivers, service providers, community advocates and the general public (including men) towards children, as well as their knowledge of child abuse and its effects. EveryChild Guyana and Help and Shelter would also have an indication of what systems are in place to prevent child abuse in the community. Further, the mechanisms used to ensure the systematic and effective reporting of abuse against children would be established. Additionally, the level of documentation of reported cases against children, the follow up on reported cases, and the level of support offered to survivors of Abuse would be clarified.

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[1] Training Seminar/Workshop for Police Officers on the Management of Child Abuse and Neglect for the National Commission on the Rights of the Child. Conducted by Jacqueline Sharpe. 2002

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Violence meted out to children is not a new phenomenon and is not confined to Guyana and the Caribbean. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), violence is deliberate interpersonal behaviour liable to cause physical or psychological harm. This study focused on four types/ forms of violence – (1) Neglect (2) verbal abuse (3) physical abuse and (4) sexual abuse.

The main objective of the study is to gather and establish Relevant Baseline Information on the prevention of and responses to child abuse including the child protection system in a community setting. The Knowledge, Attitude and Practices on the prevention of child abuse and the support to children who have been abused were examined. The information is expected to be used as a guide to inform the planning process for the Pickney Project, a joint initiative being undertaken by EveryChild Guyana and Help and Shelter. The key goal of the project is to improve the lives of children experiencing violence and abuse, as well as other vulnerable children at risk in selected communities. The project strategically aims to promote the safety and protection of children.

The study's findings indicate that there is a disturbing pattern of violence against children in Sophia. There is evidence of neglect, verbal, physical and sexual abuse. Instances of abandonment were also drawn to the researcher's attention. **(See Case Study in Appendix).** This evidence of pediatric abandonment indicates that the issue of separation does arise.

It is significant to note that the violent acts took place in the confines of the children's homes and were perpetuated mainly by family members/a stepfather/mother or friends and acquaintances, which supports the findings of the  Voices of Children: Experiences of Children with Violence Study (2005). That study found that "children are most at risk of violence in their own environments and with persons who they consider to be friends or family".[2]

The study's findings showed that some children spend prolonged periods, unsupervised by their caregivers. One reason advanced for this phenomenon was working parents who managed homes singly. This situation created an enabling environment for children to absent themselves from school which appeared to be a trend in the area. School aged boys spend the day engaged in activities such as swimming and fishing as well as performing menial tasks for which they were paid e.g. fetching pails of water and filling yards with dirt . On the other hand, school aged girls were observed completing chores around the home and doing errands, e.g. – going to neighborhood shops. These activities were observed while the Study was being undertaken during school hours.

An examination of data from the Ministry of Health, Maternal and Child Care Clinic in the area showed alarming rates for teen pregnancies. Of 225 recorded pregnancies from January 2006- December 1, 2007, 58/26% were teen mothers. Further, for the period

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[2]Report.  Voices of Children: Experiences of Children with Violence.  Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security, Red Thread Women's Development Programme, UNICEF. 2005

January to March 2008, of the 36 recorded pregnancies, 13/36% were teenagers. This increase is raises numerous questions. Some of these include what are the Knowledge, Attitude and Practices regarding sexual activity at an early age as well as the use of Birth Control Methods. It also raises questions about the future of the young mother and that of her infant. The high levels of teen pregnancy evident in the community increases the risk of abandonment, neglect and hence separation. Teen mothers are more likely to become single parents, are more predisposed to experiencing higher levels of poverty and consequently are at higher risk of neglecting or abandoning their off spring.

There was a clear understanding of the issue of abuse on the part of caregivers – what constitutes it and the different types of abuse. The findings established that the knowledge base existed.

In terms of the attitudes, care givers were sympathetic towards the abused child, but this did not always translate to the practice of intervention – whether by making a report to an agency concerned with Child Protection or confronting the abuser. Invariably, persons were concerned about their own safety, uncertain whether the report would be treated with strictest confidence.

The institutions in the community – Schools, Health Centre and Religious bodies were a lot more methodological in treating issues of abuse. Once they received knowledge/ became aware of abuse they were inclined to intervene. Their practice was to refer the matter to the police or another institution/agency, concerned with the protection of children.

Notwithstanding the presence and approaches of the institutions mentioned in the foregoing paragraph, there was no agency with a mandate for child protection in the community. Survivors of Child abuse had no organized support system within their immediate environs. Intervention was ad hoc and followed no established set of procedures.

The study establishes that some of the abuse suffered by children is a result of caregivers' beliefs and value systems. Some believed it was acceptable to flog children, and even the children felt that they should be punished (by being beaten) for infractions in the home/school.

This research found that the most prevalent form of abuse meted out to children in Sophia was neglect. One hundred and thirty one (80%) of the sample frame opined that child neglect does exist in the community (see figure 4). This figure should not be treated lightly especially being cognizant of the fact that child abuse is one leading causes of Separation (Patterson. 2005). This was followed by verbal abuse. Physical abuse was rated third, followed by sexual abuse. Of all the forms of abuse, the latter (sexual abuse) incurred the greatest level of intolerance.

The findings indicate that there is urgency for stronger collaborative efforts on the part of EveryChild Guyana, Help and Shelter, and other agencies concerned with Child Protection. This is especially so considering the high levels of neglect, physical and

sexual abuse. Teen pregnancy and the existence of pediatric abandonment cannot be ignored in the Sophia community as all these suggest that separation of a significant number of children from their families may be imminent.

# BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

**National Context**

Community-based violence, violent crime and poor socio-economic conditions interact to produce a downward spiral of increasing violence and social depravations. Social fragmentation and erosion of social capital are amongst the clearest impacts of violence.

There have been several reports on violence in Guyana, some of which have dealt with or even focused on children. However, many of these rely heavily on anecdotal evidence, or deal with a localised population, and it is therefore difficult to generalize their findings to the national population. Even when nation wide statistics are available (e.g. police statistics on child abuse cases reported), the actual incidence of abuse against children in Guyana is hard to determine since there is still substantial under reporting. A Survey in 1998 found that of those who had suffered abuse as children, 91% had never reported it to anyone.

In a 1997 survey of adolescents, physical abuse was reported by 1^% of boys and 14% of girls. A survey in 1998 found that 92% of working and middle class women had experienced beatings as children. As observed elsewhere in the world, physical abuse in the home is most often perpetrated by mothers. The 1998 survey indicates that use of physical punishments for disciplining children is widely supported.

It has been estimated that 8% - 10%of girls and 25% of boys in Guyana have been sexually abused. However, sexual abuse is highly under reported worldwide, and Guyana is no exception. The most common perpetrators of sexual violence are fathers and stepfathers. In some areas teenaged girls are being trafficked to work under exploitative conditions, often as prostitutes. Girls are sometimes pushed by social or economic pressures into sexually exploitative relationships or prostitution.

As a result of domestic violence children are exposed to emotional violence in the home. The primary causes of domestic violence in some communities were reported to be alcohol abuse, financial pressures and infidelity.

Children are subjected to exploitation, neglect and abandonment. Child labour in the agricultural industries is ubiquitous and impacts negatively on their education and health. An increasing number of children are living on the streets and in fact, it was estimated that a number of boys living on the street had risen by 50% between 1998 and 2000.

Children and adolescents have also been reported to be perpetrators of violence. In a 1997 survey, 10% of adolescents (10-18 year olds) reported being knocked unconscious from fighting and 13% carried weapons to defend themselves. During the 1990s the police recorded a growing number of incidents of violent crime perpetrated by young people.

In 2005, the study entitled "Voices of Children: Experiences of Children with Violence", found that children are most at risk of violence in their own environments and with persons who they consider to be friends or family. Children are more likely to experience violence such as sexual, physical or mental abuse and neglect in their homes and schools from people they know, rather than to experience violence from criminals and strangers.

That study's findings also indicated that children who do not regularly attend school and may be working at home doing domestic chores or in a family agricultural business, were exposed to more violence than children who attended school regularly. In particular, out of school girls seem to be much more vulnerable to sexual exploitation and violence than those in school. The findings also indicated that losing a parent through death or abandonment makes children more likely to drop out of school and to experience higher levels of violence.[3]

Another important finding is that juvenile offenders have by and large experienced much greater physical and emotional abuse and neglect in their home environment than those in the general population of the sample.

**Knowledge, Attitude and Practices**
Child protection in Guyana is based on an archaic legal and cultural system which sees children as bodies without rights and as individuals whose protection by the State was determined by the ability of the parents and family to authorize such protection. Guyana's laws and regulations do not prohibit the physical punishment of children at school and in the home. There is no mandatory reporting required from health care workers, education providers or other child care providers. Further more, referral mechanisms are only implemented on an ad hoc basis. While sexual violence against children is often noted there is often a reluctance to be involved in cases of abuse which do not involve sexual violence since there are few alternatives which the state provides for child care.

Many health workers would respond to cases of sexual violence, but are not trained to respond to or make interventions to identify other forms of abuse. Additionally, there is a lack of awareness of Child Protection issues among Health professionals and teachers as well as the general public. Community advocates are not always sure of the role they can play in ensuring that children are protected from violence and abuse.

Guyana is signatory to the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, and the Government has undertaken several related projects to improve the education and social services available to children. However, the draft Children's Bill and the proposed new Education Act do not deal with the issue of beating children as a form of punishment at school. Further, there is a lack of training in the education curriculum to sensitize teachers on child protection and reporting abuse.

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[3] Report. Voices of Children: Experiences with Violence. Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security, Red Thread Women's Development Programme, UNICEF – Guyana.

Within Guyana, children have little or no recourse if their human rights are violated. With the advent of the Child Protection and Minimum Standards implemented by the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security (MHSSS) to prevent violence and protect children, there needs to be greater collaboration among agencies to support the MHSSS in filling the gaps in providing protection and representation for abused children, particularly when dealing with the court system. Access to court support services for child victims is limited as very few agencies treat and respond to violence and abuse as a health issue. These children are often left to cope with the abuse on their own without emotional support/counseling coupled with the trauma of the court experience.

There is a lack of data collection and analysis of child abuse and its impact on children. Many children abused are at greater risks of falling into other vulnerable groupings as caregivers are not always able to care for children in a way that maintains their best interests. Further, the network among families, communities, school, health care agencies and the police that serve to protect children is not always well developed and coordinated to safe guard against abuse. Inadequate care and support for children who are abused usually results in children becoming juvenile offenders, institutionalized, school drop-outs, street-living or street working children known to be at an increased risk of further or abuse.

**Response**

**Every Child Guyana**
EveryChild Guyana is recognized as the only International NGO using and promoting a "Child Rights" approach to working with excluded and vulnerable children in Guyana. This agency has been working in Guyana since 1996 developing parenting skills as a way of empowering parents to enhance and demand their child's right to good quality primary education. EveryChild has been actively involved in national consultations on the development of national policies for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC). It has also participated in a National coalition for the removal of Corporal Punishment (CP) from the Education Act. EveryChild's collaborative efforts is currently one with the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security aimed at Improving services for abused children and to support the Ministry in the implementation of the minimum standards to ensure the safety and protection of children living in institutions/orphanages.

**Help and Shelter**
Help and Shelter was established in 1996 with the aim of bringing about a society where attitudes to the use of violence and practices of violence including sexual, physical and psychological abuse have been transformed. Its objectives are:
1. To actively foster a high level of awareness among all sectors about the prevalence, causes and costs of violence and about alternatives to the use of violence.
2. To provide counseling for women, children, youth and men who are survivors or perpetrators of violence.

3. To provide a safe and secure temporary shelter for abused women, their children and Trafficking in Persons (TIPS) survivors while at the same time providing training and practical skills needed for increases self sufficiency.
4. To contribute to improved legal recourse for survivors of Domestic Violence.

Help and Shelter has also supported training programmes for Guyana Police Force and also has worked with different groups of frontline workers to raise awareness of Domestic Violence and some child abuse interventions.

More recently, the agency has been involved in advocacy to remove corporal punishment from schools and address public perceptions of beating children as a form of discipline. Help and Shelter has also been involved in projects to deal with TIPS and to link HIV/AIDS with Domestic Violence and Child Abuse.

In recognition of the fact  that in order to achieve lasting behaviour change the agencies (Help and Shelter and EveryChild Guyana) must identify the current behaviours of the target groups (caregivers, service providers, community advocates, health care workers, general public).  It was against this background that this study was initiated to determine the Knowledge, Attitude and Practices on abuse against children.

**Guyana Police Force**
The response of the police to report on child abuse is limited by the legal system.  The police have varying responses to reports of physical abuse of children since beating is an acceptable form of discipline.  Responding to reports of sexual abuse is more prevalent.  However, more work needs to be done to improve the taking of statements, and the collection of evidence in all cases of abuse to improve conviction rates.

# OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

Results of the Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) on the prevention of Child Abuse and the support given to children, who have been abused, would be used for development of a Project Plan and training materials that will address the needs and issues relating to child abuse in the Sophia Community. It would explain the behavior of some key target groups regarding the phenomenon of child abuse.   It is designed to compliment the secondary data and analysis on issues.  Especially since there is a paucity of data collection and  analysis of child abuse and its impact on children, the study is intended to provide critical information to guide the decision making process for the implementation of the "Pickney Project".


The Primary objective of the study is to establish Relevant Baseline Information on the prevention of and response to child abuse including the Child Protection System in a community setting.

At the end of the Study, the following questions are expected to be answered:
1. What do caregivers know about abuse and its effects?
2. What are the knowledge, attitudes and practices of service providers towards children who are abused?
3. What programmes or systems are in place to prevent the abuse of children?
4. What kind of mechanisms e.g. reporting procedures or policies are used to ensure the systematic and effective reporting of abuse against children?
5. What is the level of documentation of reported cases against children?
6. How is the follow up on reported cases of abuse against Children
7. What is the level of support offered to survivors of Abuse
8. What are the general knowledge, attitudes and practices of the public including men, women/ community advocates on abuse against children

## SCOPE OF STUDY
In order to achieve the above objectives, the research was divided into in three components.
1. ***Population: Knowledge  Attitudes and Practices Survey***: focus groups discussion/key informant interviews with males and females , including children
2. ***Key community representatives***: interviews to determine Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices
3. ***Service Providers:*** A review of the existing service providers and services available in the target location to assess service needs/unmet needs in the area and for referral networks to be established.

## TARGET AREA

The research was conducted in the communities of Liliendaal, Carplas Pattenson, and Cummings Lodge. This area is commonly referred to as South Sophia and spans the land mass occupying from Dennis Street heading south to the Lamaha Conservancy and from the Eastern Highway to Section E, Cummings Park.

## OUTPUTS

As a result of the study the following are expected to be produced:

- A comprehensive piece of research outlining the Knowledge, Attitude and Practices of stakeholders on the prevention of Child abuse and the Support given to children who have been abused within the target communities, with possible extrapolations which could reflect Knowledge, Attitude and Practices in Georgetown and immediate environs.
- Recommendations for key interventions for the Pickney Project based on emerging trends and patterns.

# **METHODOLOGY**

The data gathering process was done during the month of April 2008. Demarcations of "Sophia" initially were unclear. Eventually, however, history showed that the name Sophia is really that of an abandoned sugar plantation. The overseer was surnamed Campbell and had two daughters, Kitty and Sophia, hence the names Campbellville, Kitty and Sophia. The latter is therefore, a generic name. The geographic names of the settlements such as Farmers' Field, Block E, Farmer's Homestead, Plum Park, Block X Liliendaal, Section B Pattenson, Sections C & D Turkeyen, and Block E Cummings Park are hardly ever used, but all these areas are referred to as Sophia.

According to statistics provided by the Bureau of Statistics Population and Housing Census (2002) the total population of the entire plantations Cummings Lodge, Liliendaal, Pattenson Sophia an Turkeyen is 36,420. Statistics for the target South Sophia specifically were not available. However, it is estimated that South Sophia accounts for 45% (16,412) of the entire combined population of North and South Sophia.

Applying an average house hold size of 5 the estimated number of households in South Sophia totaled 3,282. Representations from just over 10% (335) of the households in the target area were garnered. The interview schedule was administered to 164 residents and focus discussions were held with 20 organizations/groups, a total of 171 persons.

Samples were drawn from each Section; each Field/Street using a two stage stratified sampling method.

**Data Collection**

|  | Section A | Section B | Section C | Section D | Section E |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of Fields |  |  |  |  |  |
| Sample Size | 30 | 39 | 37 | 34 | 25 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |

Table showing number of household interviews conducted per field.

**Administration of Questionnaires**
Upon arrival at homes, members of the household were informed of the study and its objectives. An adult was required to respond, but in a few select cases (9) the instrument was administered to children, between the ages, 10-18.

**Focus Group Discussions**
A Total of 20 Focus Group Discussions were held. The groups included Faith Based organizations, Educational/Vocational Institutions and Community Based Organizations. Additionally Focus group discussions were held with institutions not located in any of the Sections, but they offer services from which stakeholders in the target area are

beneficiaries. These included the Islamic Group at Prashad Nagar and Love and Faith World Outreach Ministries.

**Faith Based Organizations**
Synopsis of FBOs with which Focus Group discussions were held:

| Organization | # of Persons | Sex | | Age Range | Section |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Male | Female | | |
| Love and Faith World Outreach Ministries | 3 | 0 | 3 | 31 - 39 | A |
| Church of Christ | 8 | 2 | 6 | 19-48 | C |
| It's The Way Out Club | 9 | 6 | 3 | 8-13 | C |
| Prashad Nagar Masjid | 9 | 2 | 7 | 10-17 | --- |
| **Total** | **29** | **10** | **19** | | |

**Educational/Vocational Training Institutions**
Synopsis of Educational Institutions with which Focus Group discussions were held:
*Section A*

| Organization | # of Persons | Sex | | Age Range | | Section |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Male | Female | | | |
| Carol's Day Care Centre | 12 | 1 | 11 | 15 – 51 | Parents | A |
| Mercy Wings | 10 | 8 | 2 | 15-19 | Students | A |
| Mercy Wings | 10 | 7 | 3 | 15-19 | Students | A |
| Mercy Wings | 8 | 2 | 6 | 28-48 | Parents | A |
| Mercy Wings | 9 | 2 | 7 | 26-58 | Teachers | A |
| Sophia Training Centre | 8 | 3 | 5 | 16 – 24 | | A |
| Sophia Primary School | 10 | 1 | 9 | 22-52 | Teachers | A |
| Sophia Nursery School | 7 | | 7 | 22-48 | Teachers | A |
| **TOTAL** | **74** | **24** | **50** | | | |

**Community Based Organizations**

Synopsis of CBOs with which Focus Group discussions were held: It must be noted that the members of the Mothers' Committee on Social Issues are drawn from the entire target area as well as areas outside of the community.

| Organization | # of Persons | Sex | | Age Range | Sections |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Male | Female | | |
| Mother's Committee on Social Issues | 20 (Group was subdivided in 2) | | 20 | 18-57 | B |
| South Turkeyen Development Group | 10 | 2 | 8 | 21-75 | D |
| Pattenson Youth in Action Group | 7 | 4 | 3 | 18-26 | B |
| Pattenson Development Committee | 6 | 2 | 4 | 31-64 | B |
| Youth Friendly Space – Section A Sophia | 15 | 10 | 5 | 12-24 | A |
| Cummings Park Community Development Committee | 10 | | 10 | 23-65 | E |
| TOTAL | 68 | 18 | 50 | | |

In addition to Focus Group Discussions and the administration a Structured interview schedule, the data gathering process also included a review of documentary studies, and quantitative information provided by EveryChild Guyana, Help and Shelter, The Guyana Police Force, Ministry Labour of Human Services and Social Security, the Ministry of Health, Maternal and Child Care Clinic – Sophia, and Bureau of Statistics. Interviews/discussions were also held with key community leaders. A total of six Case Studies were also completed, highlighting the various forms of abuse found in the Community.

# CHAPTER 2

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The United States Convention of the Rights of the Child addresses quite directly and comprehensively the issues of violence against children and child abuse.

Child abuse is not a new phenomenon, it exists everywhere and Guyana is no exception. However, while the full extent of the problem is not yet known there has, in recent times, been an alarming increase in incidents reported in the press[4].

Sustained effort is now required to reduce and eventually eradicate child abuse from our society and action must be taken to prevent children who are not abused from suffering and to find help for those who are.[5]

The Convention on the Rights of the Child ratified by the Government of Guyana in 1991, gives us the authority to make the urgent reduction/eradication of child abuse a new national priority.

This objective must be expressed not only in words, but in policy, in the design of strategies and in law, not the least of which must be speedier court hearings and harsher penalties for perpetrators. "'Stamp It Out'" is there for a step in the right direction.

**Definitions of Child Abuse**
For the purposes of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) "a child means every human being below the age of 18 years".

Child Abuse has serious physical and psychosocial consequences which adversely affect health. It refers to any act or failure to act that violates the rights of the child; that endangers his or her optimum health, survival and development.[6] Child Abuse, though primarily seen as a social issue, has deep rooted health related issues and must of necessity be seen from a health care perspective as well.

It must be noted however, that awareness of cultural factors must remain high as they influence all aspects from the occurrence and definition through its treatment and successful prevention. For any intervention, to be successful, whether for data gathering,

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[4] Child abuse: A Report of the National Forum on Child Abuse. National Commission on the Rights of the Child. 2002

[5] Child abuse: A Report of the National Forum on Child Abuse. National Commission on the Rights of the Child. 2002 pg. *(i*

[6] Report of the Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention, Geneva, 29-31 March 1999, World Health Organization, Social Change and Mental Health, Violence and Injury Prevention

prevention or even increasing public awareness, it must take into consideration the cultural environment in which it is to occur. Background or baseline conditions beyond the control of families or caregivers, such as poverty, inaccessible healthcare, inadequate nutrition, unavailability of education can be contributing factors to child abuse. Social upheaval and instability, conflict and war may also contribute to increases in child abuse and neglect.

Child abuse has been defined as deliberate violence to a child, additionally it is sexual assault or exploitation of a child or the intentional withholding of care.

There are different categories of Child Abuse and it is critical at this juncture to underscore them.

**Physical Abuse/Violence**
According to the World Health Organization physical abuse of a child is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction or lack of an interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents.[7]

The National Commission on the Rights of the Child stated in their 2002 National Forum on Child abuse, that physical abuse relates to effects of violence inflicted on the child, on that child's physical development and well being.  Any action which causes a marked injury, disfigurement or death would without question be considered abuse.[8]

Acts that are considered physical violence include:
- Spitting on a child
- Burning or scalding the child
- Poking, pulling or prodding the child
- Grabbing and Shaking the child
- Slapping, hitting or spanking the child
- Pulling the child's hair, biting, pinching or squeezing the child
- Kicking or kneeing the child
- Sitting or standing upon the child
- Twisting a Child's arm or leg, or any part of his/her body
- Choking or strangling a child
- Holding a child under water
- Smothering the Child's month
- Cutting or slashing the child with a knife or sharp object.
- Raping a child
- Throwing objects at a child

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[7] Report of the Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention, Geneva, 29-31 March 1999, World Health Organization, Social Change and Mental Health, Violence and Injury Prevention

[8] Child abuse: A Report of the National Forum on Child Abuse.  National Commission on the Rights of the Child.  2002

- Throwing the child around
- Tying or locking up the child

Throughout human history, adults and older children have exercised their power over those younger and weaker through intimidation, beatings and more extreme forms of violence using such implements as heavy leather belts, canes etc. to make the whipping more painful. The line between legitimate chastisement and physical abuse is moving in virtually every society. What was once accepted as normal and necessary ("spare the rod, and spoil the child") is being recognized as causing permanent harm and is less and less acceptable.

**Mental/Emotional/Psychological Abuse**
The WHO contends that emotional abuse includes the failure to provide a developmentally appropriate, supportive environment, including the availability of a primary attachment figure, so that the child can develop a stable and full range of emotional and social competencies commensurate with her or his personal potentials and in the context of the society in which the child dwells. There may also be acts towards the child that cause or have a high probability of causing harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. These acts must be reasonably within the control of the parent or person in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

Mental and emotional abuse of children can include making disparaging comments intended to diminish the child's sense of worth[9]. Children who suffer emotional and mental abuse, are often less able to develop and maintain the emotional and social relationships that are an essential part of the life of a normally well adjusted adult.

Acts considered to be emotionally/psychologically abusive include:
- Calling the Child belittling names
- Making the child take sides against a sibling or parent
- Making fun of the child
- Refusing to listen to the child
- Refusing to let the child express himself/herself
- Depriving the child or food or sleep
- Threatening the child
- Cursing, screaming and shouting at the child
- Destroying the child's toys or possessions
- Using aggressive looks or gestures
- Making the child do degrading things
- Preventing the child from going to school
- Restricting the child's movement
- Generally, non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment

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[9] Child abuse: A Report of the National Forum on Child Abuse. National Commission on the Rights of the Child. 2002

**Sexual Abuse**
One of the most appalling forms of abuse in any culture is sexual abuse of children. The damage done by sexual abuse to children covers all aspects of child development highlighted in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Child sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared, or that violate the laws or social taboos of society. Child sexual abuse is evidenced by this activity between a child and an adult or another child who by age or development is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person.[10]

Sexual abuse includes
- Touching a child sexually
- Penetrating a child with a sexual organ
- Saying inappropriate things about sex to a child
- Exposing one's sexual organs to a child
- Forcing a child to listen to sexually explicit music, conversation or programmes
- Engaging a child in pornography
- Making fun of a child sexually
- Forcing two or more children to have sex
- Encouraging a child to engage in sexual acts for gifts or money

## 2.1.4  Exploitation
Commercial or other exploitation of a child refers to use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labour and child prostitution. These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, or spiritual, moral or social-emotional development.[11]

## 2.1.5  Neglect
Neglect is the failure to provide for the development of the child in all spheres: health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter, and safe living conditions, in the context of resources reasonably available to the family or caregivers and causes or has a high probability of causing harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. This includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm as much as is feasible.

According to the National Commission of the Rights of the Child, Neglect constitutes the mirror image of abuse. Whereas abuse takes the form of active interference with the child's development through the use of physical or mental violence, neglect is a passive

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[10]Report on the Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention Geneva, March 29-31, 1999, World Health Organization, Social Change and Mental Health, Violence and Injury Prevention

[11] Report of the Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention, Geneva, 29-31 March 1999, World Health Organization, Social Change and Mental Health, Violence and Injury Prevention

refusal to facilitate or support the child's development.  It may be expressed in a denial of adequate nutrition, privation of emotional support and nurture to total abandonment.

It must be noted that because the abuse or neglect of children carries consequences that affect the entire community, the entire community has a legitimate right to take an interest in how children are treated by parents or as Article 19 says "any other person who has the care of the child. This includes baby sitters, teachers, social workers and the staff of children's detention facilities.

The protection against abuse and neglect that is supposed to be provided under Article 19 is wide-ranging and far-reaching.  State parties or Governments are required to take all appropriate legislative, administrative and social and educational measures to protect the child.  But the Article does not stop there.  Article 19 also requires the establishment of procedures to cover all stages in the identification and treatment of both abused children and their abusers.  This would include legal requirements that those in positions of authority (medical workers, social workers, teachers etc) should report to the appropriate authorities all suspected cases of child abuse.  The Police, the judiciary and child care staff need to know how to deal with allegations of child abuse and the legal process relating to such allegations and follow up with both victims and their families.

The requirement in Article 19 for the establishment of a referral system to care for victims of child  abuse is therefore critical.

### 2.1.6   Perpetrators of Child Abuse
It can be said that internationally the most common perpetrators of abuse against children are immediate relatives and close friends.

According to an article in the Jamaica Gleaner published on September 11, 2007  parents are the main perpetrators of rampant child abuse.  The article stated that the Government officials are troubled by a survey which has revealed that parents are the main perpetrators of physical and sexual violence in Guyanese homes.[12]

The Government/United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) survey found that fathers and stepfathers were the most common perpetrators of sexual violence in local homes while mothers and other females were largely behind the physical abuse cases. The survey said girls were twice as likely to be raped at home than boys, with 10 per cent girls and five per cent boys being sexually abused .A senior Human Services and Social Security Ministry official said the revelations were troubling.

"We are very concerned about the apparent child abuse and we seriously want to tackle it," Ann Green, Chief Probation Officer, said.

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[12] Jamaica Gleaner. September 11, 2007.

### 2.1.7 Incidence and Effects of Child Abuse in Guyana

Green called for national backing to help root out the scourge afflicting the nation's vulnerable population. "We want to get the public at large aware that they have a responsibility to protect a child," Green noted.

In addition to sexual exploitation suffered by children, the survey also revealed that physical abuse was another major problem in the country as 33 per cent of Guyanese children were mistreated by adults who should be their guardians and protectors.

The study concluded that the majority of physical abuse perpetuated against children in homes actually occurred as a result of beatings or other physical punishments administered as discipline, especially by their mothers. It blamed the violence on alcoholism, financial pressure, and infidelity by a parent.

Of the children who reported being physically hurt, 16 per cent had been hurt by their mothers; seven per cent by their fathers; two per cent by both parents; five per cent by related caregivers (aunts, uncles, grand-parents); and three per cent by step-parents.

Officials said with sexual and physical violence increasingly characterizing Guyanese homes, more children were seeking refuge on the streets, with the number of male street urchins rising by 50 per cent, according to the most recent figures.

Another article, this time by Miranda La Rose in the Stabroek News Dated Sunday 8th October, 2000 posited that child abuse in schools is significant. A survey on child abuse in the secondary schools in Guyana has revealed significant abuse by teachers, including sexual abuse, in ways that violate the rights of the child, the policies of the Ministry of Education and the laws of the state.[13]

In a presentation on `A Study of Teacher Abuse of Children in Secondary Schools in Guyana' at a one-day seminar at the Hotel Tower a week ago, Social Science graduate of the University of Guyana (UG) Brenda Gill-Marshall stated that child abuse in secondary schools was a serious social problem. The seminar, dealing with 'New Research in the Social Sciences in Guyana 2000' was held under the auspices of the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Guyana.

Gill-Marshall recommended that teachers guilty of abusive behavior to children not be transferred from one school to another. "It is time", she said, "that legal recourse be sought. Time that abusive teachers are dismissed and their names made public."

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[13] Stabroek News. Sunday 8th October, 2000.

That study found that of the 1,200 children interviewed in 24 secondary schools in seven administrative regions all had experienced some form of abuse at the hands of their teachers. The students interviewed were from forms one to six.

According to Gill-Marshall, the study found that Guyanese children, in pursuing a secondary education must "put up with either physical, emotional and sexual abuse or neglect inflicted by many teachers." She said there was also evidence that children at the primary and nursery levels were abused by teachers.

Corporal punishment was enshrined in the official policy of the country's education system, she noted, adding that teachers acted in contravention of the guidelines for administering corporal punishment; teachers who were not authorised to flog children did so. Moreover, many schools failed to maintain, as required, a record of whipping. School drop-out, poor performance, and truancy often were the answer for some students who sought a way to end abuse at school. Other children reacted violently by fighting teachers

or taking their parents to do so.

The tendency of schools, Gill-Marshall said, "Was to cover up or discourage reports of abuse by children or their parents. Despite the many negative and at times deadly effects of child abuse the phenomenon pervades the school system." Parents also often gave teachers the go-ahead to physically abuse their children and other parents covered up or just ignore complaints of sexual and other abuse from their children.

Teachers by their own admission clearly stated that abuse at schools continued because of lapsed policies, accommodating head teachers, no clear guidelines on punishment measures and the frequent non-intervention by the Ministry of Education in reports of abuse made by head teachers about teachers towards children. Gill-Marshall said that child abuse in schools was a real phenomenon that affected children daily and one was left to speculate as to what extent these actions of teachers were a consequence of the school being made into a poor environment for the nation's children.

Of 1,200 children interviewed, it was reported that:

**Table # 1: Types of abuse Experienced by Secondary School Students at the hands of their Teachers**

| Made to kneel | Shaken | Slapped | Whipped | Made the Stand on Bench | Cursed | Called Derogatory names | Insulted | Put out of Class during instruction time | Neglected | Kissed | Fondled | teachers used obscene words at them | Had sexual intercourse with teachers |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 226 | 242 | 315 | 697 | 261 | 172 | 135 | 488 | 410 | 592 | 69 | 21 | 160 | 30 |

226 children were made to kneel; 242 were shaken; 315 were slapped; 697 were whipped; 261 were made to stand on the bench; 172 were cursed; 135 were called derogatory names; 488 were insulted; 410 were put out of the class during instruction time; 592 were neglected; 69 were kissed; 21 were fondled; 160 had teachers who used obscene words to them and 30 had sexual intercourse with teachers.

Of the students who reported having had sex with teachers, Gill-Marshall said, 12 or 40% (mostly females) reported having had sex several times with their teachers. The other 60% (mostly males) reported having sex just once with their teachers.

Of the 30 students who reported having had sex with their teachers, Gill-Marshall said, the majority were from the community high schools. Seventeen from the general secondary schools and 13 from the community high schools said they had sex at school with their teachers. While some children coped with child abuse, this nevertheless made for the cultural transmission of dysfunctional behaviour across generations, she noted.

Gill-Marshall suggested that more attention had to be paid to administration, classroom discipline, training of teachers and types of persons being employed as teachers.

Noting that a poor secondary education induced by teacher abuse in the secondary education system limited the capacity of youths to take their place in the society as well-adjusted adults, she said that such abuse was also counter-productive to the goals of the Guyana education System and the rights of children.

The study by Gill-Marshall addressed the issue of betrayal of trust within the school system. Research into incidence, causes and frequency of abuse at schools has been non-existent in the Guyanese society.

Another study, the Voices of Children Report: Experiences of Children with Violence was conducted in 2005 through the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security, Red Thread Women's Development Programme and UNICEF-Guyana. Voices of Children: Experiences with Violence is a component of the Children and Violence Project which aims to ensure that all children grow up without violence. This was a child participatory study which reported on children's experiences with different forms of violence in the home, school, community and institutions. It is the first step towards understanding the magnitude, causes and impact of violence on children in Guyana.

According to the study children are most at risk to violence in their own environments and with persons who they consider to be friends or family. Children are more likely to experience violence such as sexual, physical or mental abuse and neglect in their homes and schools from people they know, rather than to experience violence from criminals and strangers.

The study's findings indicated that children who do not regularly attend school and may be working at home doing domestic chores or in a family agricultural business, were exposed to more violence than children who attended school regularly. In particular, out of school girls seem to be much more vulnerable to sexual exploitation and violence than those in school. The findings also indicate that losing a parent through death or abandonment makes children more likely to drop out of school and to experience higher levels of violence.[14]

Another important finding is that juvenile offenders have by and large experienced much greater physical and emotional abuse and neglect in their home environment than those in the general population of the sample. Many of these children ran away from home to escape physical and emotional abuse and exploitative relationships. These children are in turn more likely to drop-out of school and adopt risky like styles including joining gangs of older youth, or being recruited by adults to take part in criminal activities.

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[14] Report. Voices of Children: Experiences with Violence. Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security, Red Thread Women's Development Programme, UNICEF – Guyana.

The study shows that some of the violence endured by children can be associated with common practices and beliefs. For example, many children, both boys and girls, indicated that it is the girl or woman's responsibility to avoid or allow sex and that sexual violence may occur as the result of a girl's or woman's behavior. However, the majority of rapes of children are perpetrated by trusted caregivers, family members or by family friends. Prevailing attitudes towards sexual violence can lead a child to believe they are partly responsible for the sexual violence perpetrated against them, which makes them less likely to protest or report it, and consequently makes them more vulnerable.

**2.1.8 Legislation**

In order to ensure compliance with international human rights instruments in relation to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Riyadh Guidelines as well as the Millennium Development Goals, a package of legislation is now in varying stages of development. The legislation that is being developed includes the Children's Bill and, a revised legislation to address the administration of juvenile justice.

The Children's Bill is a comprehensive package of legislation with five bills: Adoption of Children; Child Care and Development Services; Custody, Access, Guardianship and Maintenance Bill; Status of Children, Protection of Children Bill.

A recent review on Juvenile Justice in Guyana has raised questions as to whether the current legislation on Juvenile Justice in Guyana, the Juvenile Offenders Act and Training School's Act need to be revised. (See Guyana Juvenile Justice Report) A national consultation hosted in early 2006 to address the report on Juvenile Justice made several recommendations which point to revision of the existing legislation and institutional strengthening so that the judiciary, social workers and all who engage children in conflict with the law use the detention facilities for children as last resort.

Improved access to legal aid for adolescents in conflict with the law, community based mediation and alternative dispute resolution are all components of this process. Additionally the capacity of caregivers and support to community for the reintegration of adolescents in conflict with the law into their families and communities is also being addressed.

Regarding sexual offences, the Sexual Offence Laws of Guyana states:

- **Age of consent for sexual activity** - Any female age sixteen (16) and above can give consent to sex.
- **Age of consent for marriage** -The age of consent for civil marriage is the same as the age for simple majority. However if a person (under the age of eighteen) wants to get married, an adult has to sign his/her name on behalf of that person.
- **Rape** -Offence of rape under national legislation (Offences Act, chapter 8:01)

- RAPE – Contrary to Section 76 of the Criminal Law Offences Act, Chapter 8:01

- ATTEMPT TO COMMITT RAPE – Contrary to Section75 of the Criminal Law Offences Act, chapter 8:01

Rape is the unlawful carnal knowledge of a female either by force, fear or fraud against her will.

## *Other forms of Child Sexual Abuse*

The legislation that governs these offences is the Criminal Law, Offences Act, and Chapter 8:01

a. INCEST

1. By male – Section 66 of the Criminal Law Offences Act 8:01
2. By female of or over 16 years – Section 67 of the Criminal Law Offences Act, Chapter 8:01

b.
1. CARNALLY KNOWING A GIRL UNDER 15 &16 YEARS – Criminal Law Offences Chapter 18:05 (Amendment Criminal Law Offences)
2. CARNALLY KNOWING A GIRL UNDER 15 YEARS – Section 70 of the Criminal Law Offences Act, Chapter 8:01 (Amendment Criminal Law Offences)
3. CARNALLY KNOWING A GIRL/FEMALE IDIONR OR IMBECILE – Section 71 Criminal Law Offences

c. INDECENT ASSAULT ON FEMALE – Contrary to section 24 of the Summary Jurisdiction Offences, Chapter 8:02

**'Incest by a male/female'**

**Section 65-68 C.L.O. Act defines incest as following :**

Incest by a male person : *'Sexual intercourse by a man with a woman whom he knows to be his grand-daughter, daughter, sister and mother, even if there is consent.'*

Incest by a female person : *'Sexual intercourse by a woman who is sixteen (16) years old or above, with a man whom she knows to be her grand-father, brother, father or son, even if there is consent.'*

Indecent assault only applies to female persons of any age, according to section 24/8.02 or section 45/8.00. It is an assault accompanied by circumstances of indecency by the defendant to the victim. A person charged with rape or carnal knowledge can be found guilty of the lesser count of carnal knowledge if penetration is not proven.

**'Abduction of unmarried girls'**

**Section 83-86 C.L.O. Act states :**

*'Taking a girl out of the possession of her parent or other persons, having lawful care or charge of her, against the will of such persons or that she left her parents or guardian in consequence of some persuasion, inducement or blandishment held out to her by her prisoner.'*

*In casu*, consent is not an issue.

### Child Prostitution

a. BUGGERY – Contrary to Section 353 of the Criminal Law Act, Chapter 8:01
b. CHILD PROSTITUTION – There is no specific legislation to Child Prostitution but with the offence Trafficking In Persons (TIP). The Act No. 2/2005 "Combating of Trafficking In Persons" covers the same.

- **Child Pornography -** There is no particular offence of child pornography in the Laws of Guyana. Nevertheless, Section 350 of the C.L.O. Act regulates selling, publishing or exhibiting an obscene matter. The obscenity is when the matter is such as to deprive and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences and into whose hands publication of this sort may fall.

One of the most worrying aspects of sexual violence in Guyana is the rising level of offending against children, both adolescents and increasingly very young children. Some prosecutors have estimated that almost half of their current sexual offence cases concern child victims.[15]  As mentioned above, the vast majority of offences are committed by family members or persons well known to the victim

Prevention of child sex abuse and conviction of offenders is a very high priority for the Government of Guyana all stakeholders. The measures in the 'Stamp It Out' consultation form part of the wider strategy under the Nation Plan of Action to protect Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) from all forms of abuse, and more protections are included in the forthcoming Children's Bills.

According to the Ministry of Labour Human Services and Social Security, the key to remedying the problem of sexual violence against children is better coordination between services (particularly social services, health services, education services and the police), not least, to prevent children being abused within the system, for example in care homes or training institutions as well as in the home.

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[15]'Stamp It Out': Strengthening protection against sexual violence and reforming the law on sexual violence.  Consultation Paper. Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security.  2007.

All of the reforms in this paper will benefit child victims as well as adults, but some listed in the table opposite tackle the particular problems for child victims and child witnesses.

Reforms proposed in the 'Stamp It Out' Consultation Paper include:
- New offences: an expanded child sex abuse offence, abuse of position of trust, preventing a minor from testifying, to protect boys, new gender neutral definitions of rape and child sex offences and an age of consent for boys
- Obligation for police to coordinate with social workers and, where possible, conduct a joint investigative interview
- Forensic evidence to help build cases
- Child friendly environment to report offences at court
- Paper committals or reduce number of appearances in court, new definition of competence to give evidence, measures to assist the child witness to give evidence, reform of corroboration and recent complaint rules
- Training for police, prosecutors, magistrates, and judges in working with child witnesses
- Education for children and parents on how to recognize abusive behavior and where to get help.[16]

Reforms contained in other bills include
- Protection of Children Bill:
    1. Powers for Social Workers to take action to protect children at risk in their homes
    2. Obligation to report suspected child abuse
    3. Obligation to investigate allegations of child abuse
    4. Register of people unfit to work with children

- Child care and development services Bill:
    1. Stronger regulation of residential Child Care

- Juvenile Offenders Bill:
    1. Protection in training Institutions

Enhanced use of existing regulations
- Ongoing work to increase use of the Domestic Violence Act to protect Children[17]

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[16] 'Stamp It Out': Strengthening protection against sexual violence and reforming the law on sexual violence. Consultation Paper. Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security. 2007.

[17] 'Stamp It Out': Strengthening protection against sexual violence and reforming the law on sexual violence. Consultation Paper. Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security. 2007.

**2.1.9Convention on the Rights of the Child Standards on Child abuse**


Eliminating child abuse has no simple solutions.  The response to such a complex social phenomenon must necessarily be multi-pronged.

The need for preventative measures is paramount if long lasting results are to be obtained.  Therefore, preventing children who are not abused from being abused is a major goal.  At the same time child abuse must also be tackled by other measures that specifically address the current situation where many of our children suffer abuse.

The Protection of children must be a priority, this is evidenced by the near universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Guyana's Commitment to its children as a signatory to the Convention.

The basic obligation of a ratifying State/Government is to take immediate and effective measures to prohibit and eliminate child abuse as a matter of urgency. The Convention on the Rights of the Child obliges ratifying States/Governments to ensure effective implementation and enforcement.

*Article 19:*

*State parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical of mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parents (s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.*

*Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore and as appropriate for judicial involvement.*

**2.20    Police Intervention**
Reporting matters of child abuse can never be straight forward.  Rather there are some inherent challenges. However, the intervention Strategy on the part of the Police came out clearly at a Training Seminar/Workshop for Police Officers on the Management of Child Abuse and Neglect for the National Commission on the Rights of the Child.   This workshop was conducted by Jacqueline Sharpe in September 2002.  According to her investigating child Sexual abuse will often be the most difficult, as they present a unique set of circumstances and problems.

There are barriers to the investigation that must be recognized and taken into account in the investigation procedure.

The Workshop highlighted the fact that barriers presented by the Victim include:

- Children generally do not know that a crime has been committed (particularly young children)
- They usually don't report abuse to the police or social services directly they usually tell a parent, a teacher or a trusted friend.
- In cases of interfamilial abuse children generally care for the offender and do not wish to see harm come to him or her.
- The child is usually encouraged to keep the abuse a secret.
- Children are afraid to report the abuse.
- Children don't want to testify in Court

Another set of Barriers were presented by the Investigator. Among these are:

- Some investigators cannot talk to children or interview them effectively
- Some investigators will find it difficult to believe a child report when it comes with an adult statement.
- An investigator may have difficult in making an arrest on the word of a child or the law of the land may not allow the uncorroborated statement of a minor to stand.
- Some investigators may have difficulty in getting past the barriers and are to be expected a skilled investigator will be less susceptible to dropping in investigation when these barriers are met.

The Workshop established that the investigator has some responsibilities. These include:

- To validate the complaint
- To determine whether probable cause for an arrest exists
- To gather evidence
- To protect the child

**Procedures**

The Guyana Police Force has some procedures that investigating ranks are expected to follow in treating reports of child abuse. Interviews may be conducted with:

- The Victim
- The non-offending parent
- Siblings, other relatives and friend of the victim
- The offender

In addition to the interviews the procedure includes:

- Gathering other Evidence
- Acquiring medical evidence
- Search and seizure

### 2.21 Reported Cases of Child Abuse

The following tables represent reported cases of child abuse for the periods specified. It should be noted, however, that the categories of abuse was not highlighted in the literature.

**Table 2: Number of child abuse cases reported 1999- 2006**

| Year | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No of Reported Cases | 129 | 87 | 123 | 193 | 159 | 310 | 304 | 174 |

*Source: Social Services Statistical Bulletin 2006. Table 7 Kindred Social and Matrimonial Matters.*

**Table 2: Total # of Child abuse Cases reported in Georgetown 1999 – 2006** *(with the exception of 2000 as figures were not available for this year for Georgetown)*

| 1999 | | 2001 | | 2002 | | 2003 | | 2004 | | 2005 | | 2006 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | G/town | Total | G/town | Total | G/town | Total | G/town | Total | G/town | Total | G/town | Total | G/town |
| 293 | 100 | 123 | 48 | 193 | 92 | 159 | 116 | 310 | 207 | 304 | 155 | 174 | 53 |

*Source: Social Services Statistical Bulletin 2006. Table 8 Kindred Social and Matrimonial Matters by District.*

Over the period shown, Georgetown recorded the highest amount of child abuse cases reported per district with the exception of 2006 where Linden had a record 72 cases (the highest recorded per district) and Georgetown was next with 53 cases.

**Table 3: Child abuse Cases that were scheduled to go to Court in Georgetown 1999 to 2006**

| Year | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No of Cases to reach the Court | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

*Source: Social Services Statistical Bulletin 2006. Table 16 Kindred Social and Matrimonial Matters by District.*

**Table 4: Child Abuse/Neglect cases reported in Georgetown by Quarter: 2007**

| Quarter | No. of Reported Cases |
| --- | --- |
| January – March | 18 |
| April – June | 0 |
| July – September | 16 |
| October - December | 28 |
| Total reported cases 2007 | 62 |

# CHAPTER 3

## 3.1  PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

### 3.1.1  Social Background of Respondents

**Sex and Ethnicity**

The sample consisted of a proportionately higher percentage of females compared to males.  Of the sampled, 7 of every 10 persons were females, compared to males.  There were 117 or 71.3% females in the entire sampled frame and 47 or 28.7% males.

**Table 5: Ethnic Origin of Respondents**

| Ethnic Status | No. | % |
|---|---|---|
| Afro Guyanese | 98 | 59.7 |
| Indo Guyanese | 22 | 13.6 |
| Amerindian | 10 | 6 |
| Mixed | 34 | 20.7 |
| Portuguese/white | 0 | 0 |
| Chinese | 0 | 0 |
| Other | 0 | 0 |
| **Total** | **164** | **100** |

The sample consisted of a majority of Afro-Guyanese (See Table 5).  Ninety eight (57.7%) of all respondents were of Afro Guyanese origin.   The mixed race also comprised a sizable percentage of the sample frame with thirty four of 20.7% Indo Guyanese were present, consisting of 13.6% of the population followed by Amerindians, comprising 6%.

**Age Group**

Children were deliberately targeted to be included in the sample frame.  As such, the youngest respondent was a 9 year old male.   Table 6 shows the age distribution of the respondents.

**Table 6:  Age Group/range of respondents**

| Age group | No. | % |
|---|---|---|
| Under 10 | 1 | 0.61 |
| 10-17 | 9 | 5.5 |
| 18-25 | 24 | 15 |
| 26-35 | 38 | 23.5 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 36-45 | 43 | 26.2 |
| 46-55 | 30 | 18.2 |
| Over 55 | 19 | 11 |
| **total** | **164** | **100** |

The largest proportion of the sample frame comprised persons in the 36-45 age groups – being 43.01 or 26.2%. That was followed by the 35-35 years old category, with 38 persons, accounting for 23-5%. Twenty four respondents (15%) were between 18-25 years old and 19 or 11%, over 55 years old. The children 10 or 6% accounted for the other category.

**Religion**

The vast majority of the sample frame, indicated that they had Christian orientation (see table7). One hundred and thirty five (82.3%) said they were Christian. Ten or 6% Muslims, and 5 or 3.05% Hindus. Rastafarians were thirteen in number comprising 8% of the sample frame, while there was one responded who had no religious persuasion.

*Table 7: Religious Persuasion of respondents*

| Religious Persuasion | No. | % |
|---|---|---|
| Christian | 135 | 82.3 |
| Hindu | 5 | 3.05 |
| Muslim | 10 | 6 |
| Other (Rastafarian) | 13 | 8 |
| No Religion | 1 | 0.61 |
| **Total** | **164** | **100%** |

**Martial Status**

Regarding the marital status of respondents, married persons were the largest group in the sample frame. There were 56 or 34% married persons, 47 or 29% single respondents and 32 or 19% in common law unions. Sixteen respondents or 10% were involved in visiting unions, while 6 or 4% were widowed. Three respondents or 2% were divorced.

*Table 8: Marital status of respondents*

| Marital Status | No. | % |
|---|---|---|
| Single | 47 | 29 |
| Married | 56 | 32 |
| Common Law/ living home | 32 | 19 |
| Visiting relationship | 16 | 10 |
| Separated | 4 | 2 |
| Widowed | 6 | 4 |
| Divorced | 3 | 2 |
| **TOTAL** | **164** | **100** |

**Family Type**

The nuclear family type (see table 9) dominated the sample frame. Sixty six households, (40.2%) had this family form. Fifty one (31%) were extended, thirty six, (22%) were single parent units, ten (6.09%) lived alone. One (0.60%) family, was considered to be blended.

*Table 9: Family type of respondents*

| Family Type | No. | % |
|---|---|---|
| Nuclear | 66 | 40.2 |
| Extended | 51 | 31 |
| Single Parent | 36 | 22 |
| Blended | 1 | 0.60 |
| Living Alone | 10 | 6.09 |
| | 64 | |

**Socio Economic Status**

*Occupation*

With respect to occupation, home maker/housewives comprised the majority of the same frame (see table 10)

*Table 10:Occupation of respondents*

| Occupation | No. | % |
|---|---|---|
| Full Time Student | 6 | 4 |
| Homemaker/Housewife | 49 | 30 |
| Retired | 4 | 2.4 |
| Business Owner/Proprietor | 25 | 15.2 |
| Health Care Personnel | 1 | 0.6 |
| Marketing Sales | 2 | 1.2 |
| Teacher/Educator | 1 | 0.60 |
| Para Military personnel/police/army/security | 19 | 11.6 |
| Agricultural Worker | 0 | 0 |
| Tradesperson (Carpenter/plumber) | 9 | 5.5 |
| Admin/clerical support | 1 | 0.60 |
| Professional | 1 | 0.60 |
| Skilled Technician | 4 | 2.4 |
| Labourer/Cleaner | 22 | 13.4 |
| Other Professional | 1 | 0.60 |
| Unemployed | 8 | 4.9 |
| Other | 11 | 7 |
| **TOTAL** | **164** | **100** |

### Household Size

The majority of households, 102 or 62% had a family size of five persons or less. Those families with between 6 -10 persons in the household, amounted to 53 or 32% - nine (6%) of the households had more than 11 persons.

*Table 11:  House hold size of sample frame*

| Household Size | No. | % |
|---|---|---|
| 1-5 persons | 102 | 62 |
| 6 - 10 | 53 | 32 |
| More than 11 persons | 9 | 6 |
| **TOTAL** | **164** | **100%** |

### Household Headship

The data gathered revealed that the households were mainly headed by the respondents themselves or a spouse/partner.  Seventy two (44%) of the households were headed by the respondents themselves, while 61 or 37% were headed by a spouse/partner.  Thirteen or 8% of the respondents said the household was headed by their mothers, eight (5%) indicated it was headed by relatives.  Five households (3%) were headed by fathers and the final five (3%) represented in the sample frame were headed by other persons who were mothers-in-law.

### Household income

Table 12 is a statement of respondents' reports on the monthly household income.

*Table 12: Monthly Household Income of Respondents*

| Valid | No. | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Under $20,000 | 31 | 19 |
| $30,000-$40,000 | 35 | 21.3 |
| $40,000 - $50,000 | 23 | 23 |
| $50,000 - $60,000 | 14 | 8.5 |
| $60,000 - $70,000 | 6 | 4 |
| $70,000- $80,000 | 4 | 2.4 |
| $80,000-100,000 | 3 | 0 |
| $100,000 - $150,000 | 0 | 0 |
| $150,000 - $200,000 | 1 | 0.60 |
| Can't Say | 9 | 5.5 |
| **Total** | **164** | **100%** |

### Education

According to the responses, a sizeable proportion of the population had moved beyond primary level education to secondary level (see table 13). Others had attended technical/commercial/vocational institutions, while a small number, 4(2%) had

commenced (3 of whom completed) University level training. There was one (0.60%) who had never attended school.

*Table 13: showing educational attainment of respondents*

| Level of Education Completed | No. | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Nursery | 1 | 1 |
| Primary | 70 | 43 |
| Secondary | 69 | 42 |
| Technical/Vocational | 19 | 11 |
| University | 4 | 2 |
| None | 1 | 0.60 |
| **Total** | **164** | **100** |

## 3.1.2  Knowledge of Respondents regarding Child Abuse

### 3.1.2a  Defining Abuse

Respondents were asked to describe their own understanding of child Abuse (see fig 1). Of the target population 47 or 29% said it was the maltreatment of a child by an adult. Others saw it as flogging or injuring children or a combination of maltreatment factors.

*Figure 1 showing respondents' understanding of Child Abuse*
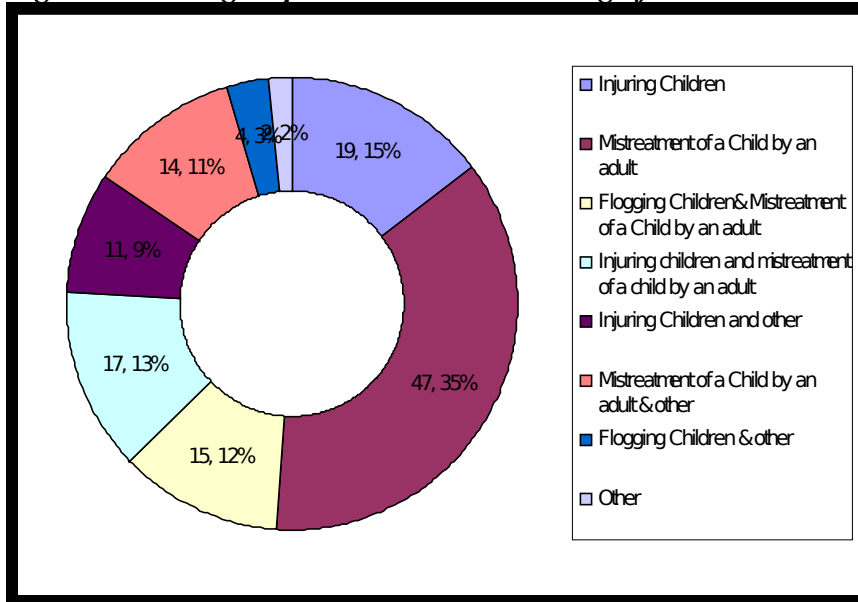


Additionally, respondents made comments in the "other" category such as:
- Parents having no time for children
- Harassment of Children
- Any Act of cruelty
- Denying children their rights
- Humiliating children in the presence of others
- Not sending children to school
- Punishing/neglecting children
- Stepfather "mashing up" stepdaughter\
- Child Labour

*We are socialized to respond only to hostility and bad words or indecent language; and this is so sad*

### 3.1.2b  Verbal Abuse Against Children

**Existence of verbal abuse**
As it relates to the existence verbal abuse, an overwhelming majority, one hundred and thirty, 79% (see fig. 2) felt that the phenomenon does exist in their community.  Thirty-one or 19% said it does not exist while 3, 2% said they did not know whether or not it does exist.

*Figure 2   showing respondents' knowledge of the existence of Verbal Abuse in the Community*
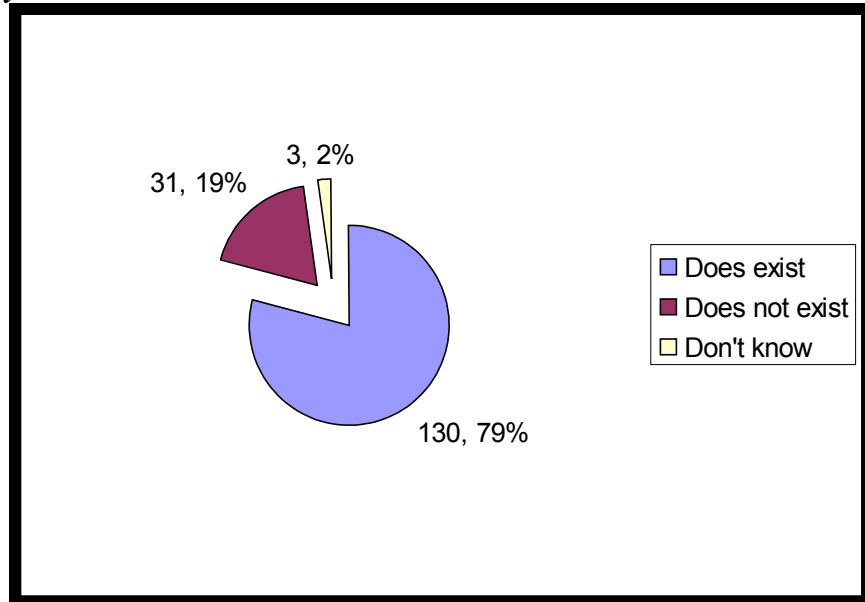


**Frequency of Verbal Abuse**
Respondents were asked how frequently verbal abuse occurred in the neighborhood.  The data gathered revealed that of the one hundred and thirty (130) respondents who expressed the view that the phenomenon existed, 32 (25%) felt it occurred daily with the same and various families, while 14 (11%) said it occurred daily with the same family (only) in the neighborhood (see fig. 3).  Another 56 respondents (43%) said it occurred daily with various families (only), nine (7%) indicated 3-5 times each week with the same family and three (2%) mentioned the phenomenon existed 3-5 times a week with various families.  That it occurred once a week with the same family was the view of 4 respondents or 3% of the sample frame. Seven respondents (5%) stated that it occurred once per week with various families.  The final five (9%)  opined that verbal abuse in the community occurred less than once per week.

*Table 14 showing Frequency of verbal Abuse meted Out to children in Sophia*

| Verbal | No. | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Daily with the same & various families | 32 | 25 |
| Daily with the same family | 14 | 11 |
| Daily with various families | 56 | 43 |
| 3-5 times a week with same family | 9 | 7 |
| 3-5 times a with various families | 3 | 2 |
| Once a week with same family | 4 | 3 |
| Once a week with various families | 7 | 5 |
| Other (state) more than once a week | 5 | 9 |
| Total | 130 | 100 |

*Child abuse is high in the area. I live near a lawyer and his wife. He wife would curse the children everyday from early morning and the lawyer stands right there. I report it to the welfare but they never come.*

Resident

### 3.1.2c  Child Neglect

With respect to child neglect, One hundred and thirty one (80%) of the sample frame opined that child neglect does exist in the community (see figure 4). Thirty (18%) of the respondents said it did not exist while three (2%) said they did not know, whether or not child neglect exists in the community.

*Figure 4 showing Respondents Knowledge of the Existence of  Neglect*
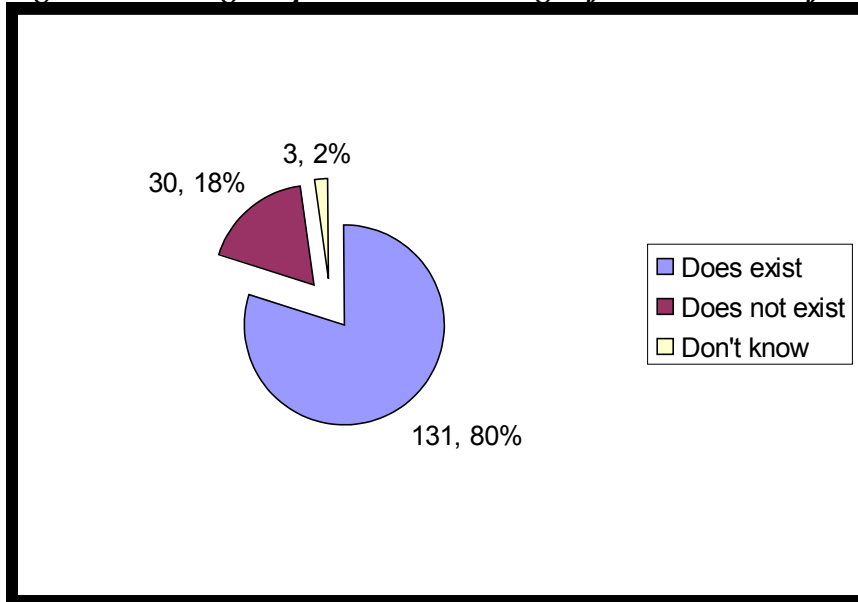


In looking at the level of child neglect  forty four (44%) of the 131 persons who felt there was neglect said the rate was higher compared to other communities.   Another 61 (46.5%) said the rate was just about the same compared to the other communities.  Ten (8%) of the respondents said child neglect did exist, but the rate was lower compared to other communities.  Two respondents (1.5%) did not know how to rate child neglect in the community.

*Figure 5 showing the rate of child neglect compared to other communities*
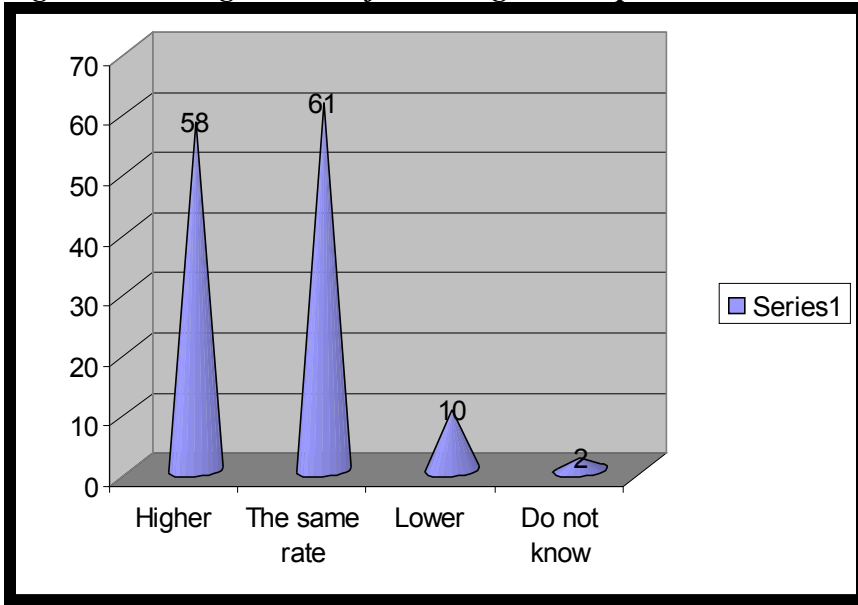


## Age group of child most likely to be neglected

On the question of the age of the children most at risk of being neglected, the 4 to 7 and 8 to 11 age groups were the most vulnerable accounting for 45/34.3% and 57/ 43.5% respectively. Next in rank was the 12 – 15 age group which 11/8.3% of respondents felt were most neglected followed by the 0-3 age group which accounted for 9/6.8% of the responses. Two(1.5%) felt the 16-18 group is highly likely to be neglected. Seven (5.4%) could not say which age group was most likely to be neglected

**Table 14 showing age group of children most vulnerable to neglect**

| Valid | No. | % |
|---|---|---|
| 0-3 years old | 9 | 6.8 |
| 4-7 | 45 | 34.3 |
| 8-11 | 57 | 43.5 |
| 12-15 | 11 | 8.3 |
| 16-18 | 2 | 1.5 |
| Don't know | 7 | 5.4 |
| **TOTAL** | **131** | **100** |

## Respondents' knowledge of reported/unreported cases of child neglect

Respondents were asked about their knowledge of cases reported pertaining to child neglect in the neighborhood, annually. Of the 131 persons who indicated that child neglect existed, one hundred and one (62%) said they had no knowledge of any reported cases/s (See figure 6). Nine (5%) knew of one but not more than three reported cases.

*Figure 6 showing respondents' knowledge of reported/unreported cases of child neglect*
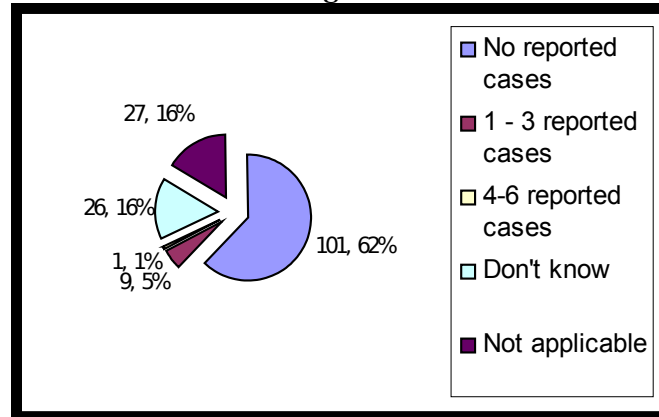


**Respondents' knowledge of the outcome of reported cases of neglect**
Respondents were questioned on their knowledge of the outcome of reported cases of child neglect. The responses for the outcome of reported cases mirrored their knowledge of reported cases.

**Respondents' knowledge of why child neglect exists in the area**
The question was raised regarding why there were incidents of child neglect in Sophia. A total of twenty persons (12%) stated that uncaring parents was the reason why children are neglected (see table 15). Twenty three (14%) said it was because of parents' inability to afford child care services, 17 (10%) said it had to do with absence of family support and another 9 (5%) mentioned a combination of inability to afford child care services and absence of family support. Ten (8%) said neglect of children in Sophia was because of a combination of inability to afford child care services and uncaring parents. Thirty three (20%) of the responses to this question was not applicable, as they did not think child neglect existed, but 2 (1%) respondents said it was because of uncaring parents and the inability to afford child care services; another 2 (1%) said it was because of uncaring parents and the absence of family support. Five (3%) indicated it was because of the inability to afford child care services and other. In addition to that which was proffered on the questionnaire, 43 (26%) gave 'other' as the reason and made the following statements:

- o Single parents are gone for long hours and cannot oversee children
- o It has to do with single parents not being able to cope
- o Parents are caught up with many things, they cannot give time and attention to children
- o Single parent families, when women are left alone to raise children – many don't work and send the children out to beg
- o Parents cannot afford to stay home – they have to work sometimes it means leaving the children to fend for themselves
- o It has to do with single parenting and the pressures. Many have too may children and they have no control over their situation.

*Table 16 Showing respondents' views on reasons for existence of Child Neglect in Sophia*

| Valid | No. | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Uncaring Parent/Parents/Guardian | 20 | 12% |
| Inability to afford child care services | 23 | 14 |
| Absence of family support | 17 | 10 |
| Other | 43 | 26 |
| Uncaring parent(s)/guardian & Inability to afford child case services | 2 | |
| Inability to afford child support services and absence of family support | 9 | 5 |
| Uncaring parent(s)/guardian & Absence of family support | 2 | 1 |
| Inability to afford child care services & other | 5 | 3 |
| Not applicable | 33 | |

### 3.1.2d  Child Sexual Abuse

**Respondents' knowledge of the existence of Child Sexual Abuse in the community**
Of the total sample size, one hundred and fourteen (69%) of the respondents felt that child sexual abuse exists in the area, while thirty nine  (24%) opined that the phenomenon did not exist and ten (6%) indicated that they did not know whether or not child sexual abuse existed in the area.  One person did not respond.

*Figure 7 showing respondents' knowledge of the existence of child sexual Abuse in Sophia*
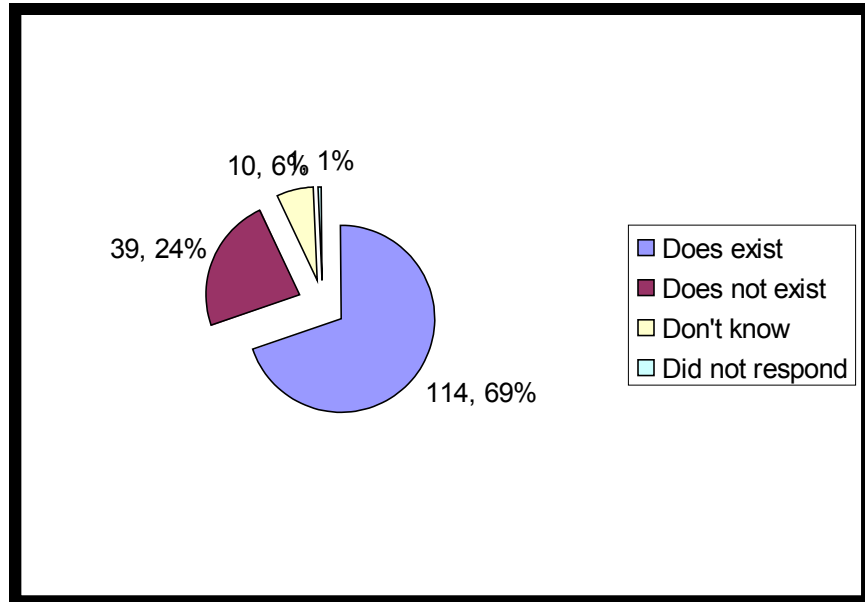


**Respondents' knowledge of the level of Child Sexual Abuse in Sophia compared with other communities**
With respect to the level of child sexual abuse in the community, 33 or (20%) of the respondents expressed the view that the rate of child sexual abuse is higher compared to other communities.  Fifty nine (36%) respondents said it was the same rate compared to other communities, while seventeen (10%) opined that the rate was lower than that of other communities.  Eight (5%) indicated that they did not know whether it not the rate was higher or lower.

*Figure   8  showing level of child abuse in Sophia in comparison to other communities*
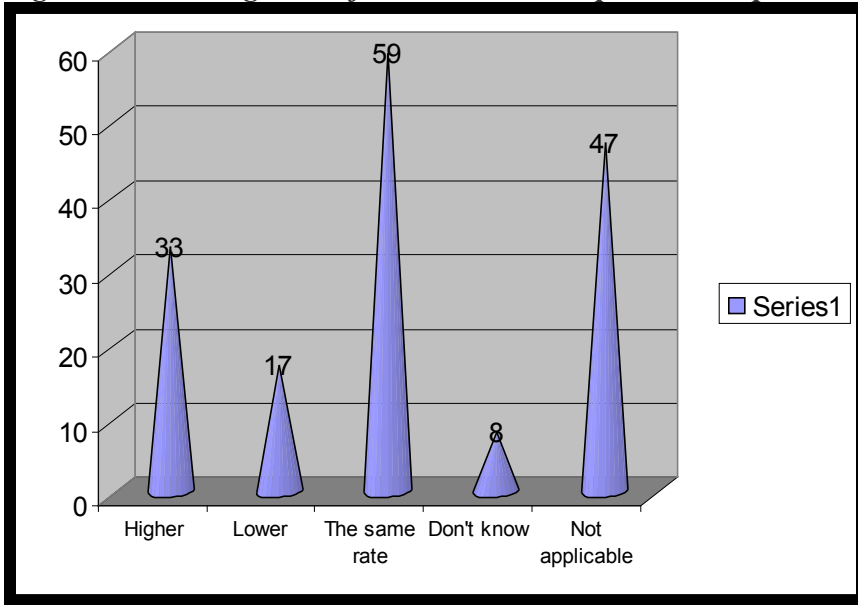


**Respondents' knowledge of the age groups most likely to be sexually abused in Sophia**

In attempting to determine the age group most likely to be sexually abused, of the one hundred and fourteen respondents who expressed the view that there was the existence of child sexual abuse forty eight (42%) stated that it was the 12-15 age group (see table17). Three (2%) stated that it was the 0-3 age group. Six (5.3%) said the 4-7 year old age group, another six (5.3%) said the 8-11 age group while 2 (2%) said it was the 16-18 year old age group.  Some respondents held the view that some of the combined age groups were high risk.     Fifteen (13%) felt that the age groups 0-3, 4-7, 8-11 and 12-15 were most likely to be sexually abused, while sixteen (14%) opined that the 4-7 and 8-11 were high risk.   Eleven (10%) respondents expressed the view that the 8-11 and 12-15 age groups were predisposed. Seven or 6% of the respondents did not know which age groups were most vulnerable to sexual abuse.

*Table No. 17    showing respondents' views on age group most vulnerable to Sexual Abuse*

| Valid | No. | % |
|---|---|---|
| 0-3 years old | 3 | 2 |
| 4-7 | 6 | 5.3 |
| 8-11 | 6 | 5.3 |
| 12-15 | 48 | 42 |
| 16-18 | 2 | 2 |
| 0-3, 4-7, 8-11, 12-15 | 15 | 13 |
| 4-7, 8-11 | 16 | 14 |
| 8-11, 12-15 | 11 | 10 |
| Don't Know | 7 | 6 |
| **TOTAL** | **114** | **100** |

**Respondents' knowledge of reported/unreported cases of Child Sexual abuse in Sophia**

On the issue of reported/un reported cases, eighty seven (55%) of the respondents said, as far as they were aware, there were no reported cases of child sexual abuse, Eight  (5%) respondents knew of at least one, but no more than three reported cases, while one (1%) claimed to have knowledge of 4-7 reported cases.  Eighteen (12%) respondents did not know whether or not cases were reported, there was no response from one (1%) respondent and for forty (26%) respondents the question was not applicable.

*Figure 8  showing respondents' knowledge of reported/unreported cases*
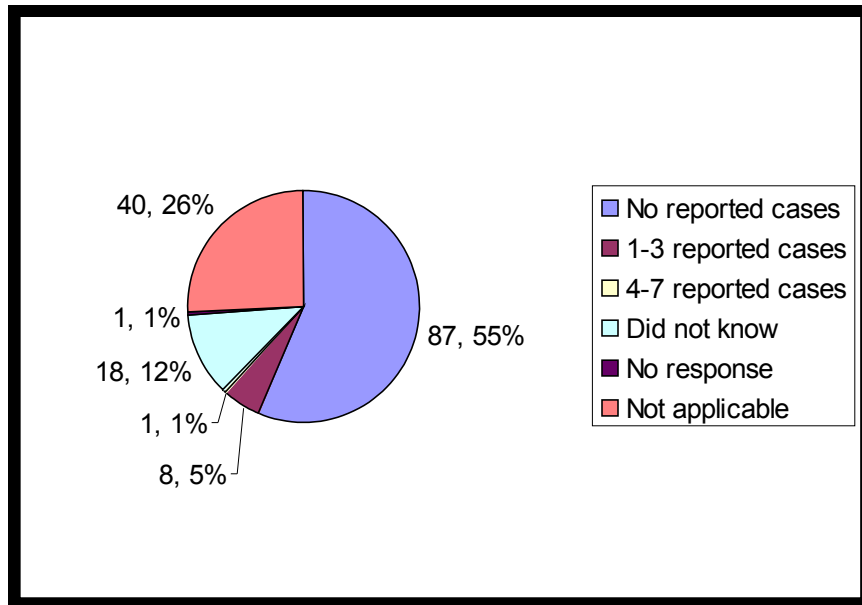
**Respondent's knowledge of outcome of reports cases of child sexual abuse in Sophia**
In attempting to ascertain the outcome of reported cases of child sexual abuse, three (5%) were said to have led to prosecution, while largely, respondents indicated "don't know" for the outcome of cases.

**Respondents' knowledge of why child sexual abuse existed in the community**
With regard to why child sexual abuse existed in the area, twenty seven (16%) of the respondents said it was because of uncaring parents. Fourteen (9%) attributed the situation to Parents' inability to afford child care services, while eleven (8%) said the absence of family support contributed to the existence of child sexual abuse. Uncaring parents combined with the inability to afford child care services was seen by one (0.6%) as the reason for child sexual abuse, uncaring parents along with the absence of family support was identified by 2 (1.2%) respondents while another two (1.2%) respondents said it was because of uncaring parents and "other" reasons. The inability to afford child care services and "other" accounted for two (1.2%) more responses. Fifty five (33%): respondents felt that "other" reasons were responsible for the phenomenon. These are listed below:
- o Parents are caught up providing for their children's needs
- o Begging adults can lead to this
- o Parents are not alert enough
- o Improper supervision of children
- o Children are left unprotected for long periods/too many children are left alone
- o Offers are made to hungry children and this is where it can start
- o Mothers remain silent because they fear loss of economic support
- o Easy access to the victim (sometimes neighbors/others are asked to "look over children)
- o People take the opportunity to exploit children who are left alone
- o Some parents are not sensitive
- o Children are put in compromising, positions because they have nothing to eat

- Up keeping school attendance is stressful – no transportation money, no lunch money, so the children stay at home from school and are available to be preyed on.

*Table 18 showing reasons for the existence of sexual abuse in Sophia*

| Valid | No. | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Uncaring Parent/Parents/Guardian | 27 | 18 |
| Inability to afford child care services | 14 | 9 |
| Absence of family support | 11 | 7 |
| Other | 55 | 38 |
| Uncaring parent(s)/guardian & Inability to afford child case services | 1 | 1 |
| Uncaring parent(s)/guardian & other | 2 | 1 |
| Uncaring parent(s)/guardian & Absence of family support | 2 | 1 |
| Inability to afford child care services & other | 2 | 1 |
| Not applicable | 35 | 24 |
| TOTAL | 164 | |

**Effects of Child Sexual Abuse**

On the question of the respondents' opinion of sexually abused children sixty eight (41.5%) of the sample frame felt that they led troubled lives; eighteen (11%) opined that they themselves could become sexual abusers; fourteen (8.5%) believed that they encounter school related problems; while five (3%) had "other" opinions of the sexually abused children.  Four (2.4%) indicated that they lead troubled lives and are likely to become abusers while six (3.6%) indicated that they may eventually be caring persons who could empathize with others with similar experiences.  The question did not apply to forty nine (30%) of the respondents as they did believe that sexual abuse existed in the community.

*Figure 9: Respondents views on the effects of Child Abuse*
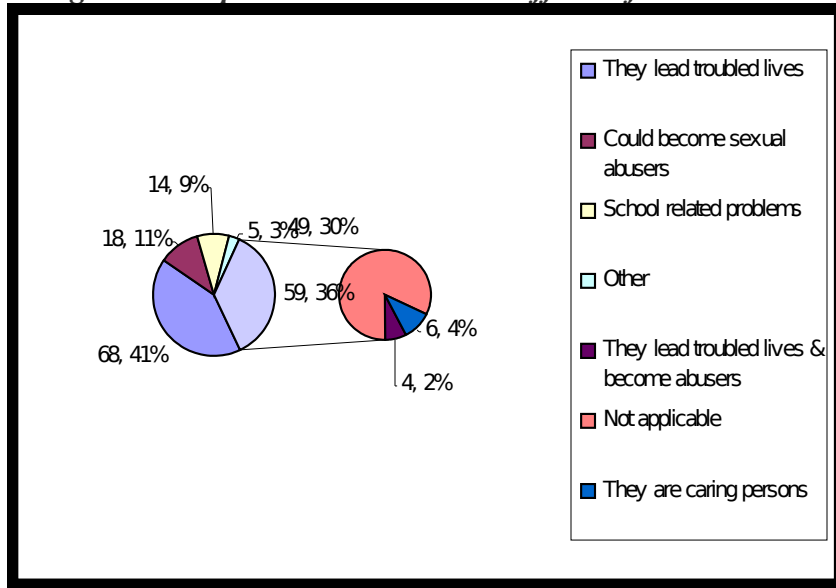


**Most likely perpetrators of Child sexual abuse**

A list of persons was provided and respondents were asked to indicate who is likely to sexually abuse a child. A combination of Family members, stepfathers and friends/acquaintances was regarded by 34 (21%) respondents as most likely sexual abusers. Twenty five (15%) respondents said family members, nineteen (12%) identified family members and stepfathers, seventeen (10%) stated that step fathers were most likely to sexually abuse children, another sixteen (10%)said a combination of stepfather, step relations, friend/acquaintances are likely abusers. Two (1%) said strangers and the final two said family members and strangers. The question was not put to the 49 (30%) respondents who felt that there was no sexual abuse in the community.

**Figure 10 showing respondent's views of likely Perpetrators of Child Sexual Abuse**
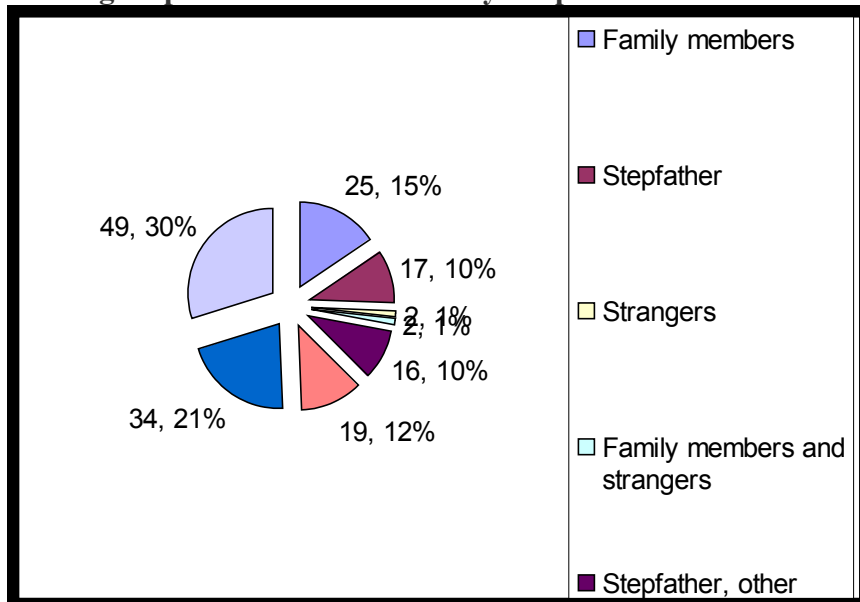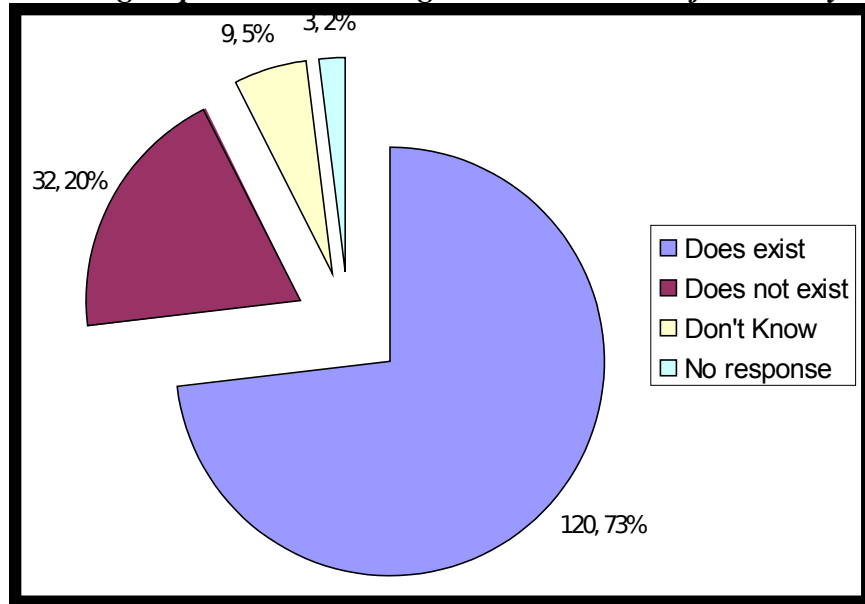
### 3.1.2e  Child Physical Abuse

**Respondents knowledge on the existence of child physical abuse in the Community**
As to whether or not physical abuse exists in the community one hundred and twenty (73%) respondents said it did, thirty two (20%) said it did not and nine (5%) respondents indicated that they did not know whether or not child physical abuse existed.  There was no response from three (2%).

*Figure 11 showing respondents knowledge on the existence of Child Physical Abuse*



**Respondents views of the rate of physical abuse in Sophia compared with other communities**
Regarding the extent to which child physical abuse exists, fifty one (32%) respondents said it was at a higher level compared to other communities.  Fifty nine (37%) respondents indicated that the level was just the same as other communities, while eight (5%) said it was lower than other communities; seven (4%) respondents said they did not know while the question was not applicable for thirty five (22%)respondents.

*Figure 12 showing respondents views on the rate of child physical abuse in Sophia in comparison to other communities*
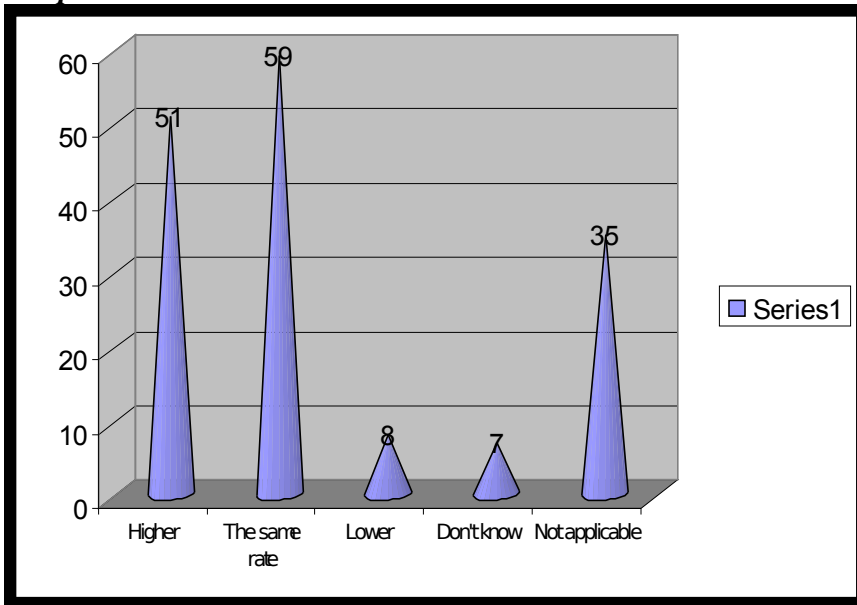


**Respondents' views on age group most vulnerable to physical abuse**
As it relates to the age group most likely to be physically abused, twenty four (15%) respondents opined it was the 4-7 age group. Another thirty eight (24%) respondents expressed the view that the 8-11 age group was most likely to be physically abused; thirty six (22%) said it was the 12-15, and three (2%) said the 16-18 age group was most vulnerable to physical abuse. One (1%) respondent stated the 0-3 & 4-7 groups were most likely to be physically abused while eighteen (11%) said it was a combination of the 4-7 & 8-11 age groups. A response was not required from the persons who did not respond to the question (3), those who said there was no abuse in the community (32) and the nine who said they did not know whether or not there was physical abuse in Sophia; these accounted for 25% of the sample frame.

*Table 19 showing respondents' views on age group most vulnerable to physical abuse*

| Valid | No. | % |
|---|---|---|
| 4-7 | 24 | 15 |
| 8-11 | 38 | 24 |
| 12-15 | 36 | 22 |
| 16-18 | 3 | 2 |
| 0-3, 4-7 | 1 | 1 |
| 4-7, 8-11 | 18 | 11 |
| Not applicable | 44 | 25 |
| **TOTAL** | **164** | **100** |

*Respondents' knowledge of reported/unreported cases of physical abuse in the area*
On the question of reported cases of physical abuse, one hundred and twelve respondents (68%) said, as far as they are aware, no case was reported, five (3%) respondents said they know of reports made in 1-3 cases, but no more. The other three (2%) respondents in the sample frame said they did not know of reported cases, while the question was not applicable to forty four (27%) of the respondents.

*Figure 13 showing respondents' knowledge of reported/unreported cases of Child Abuse*
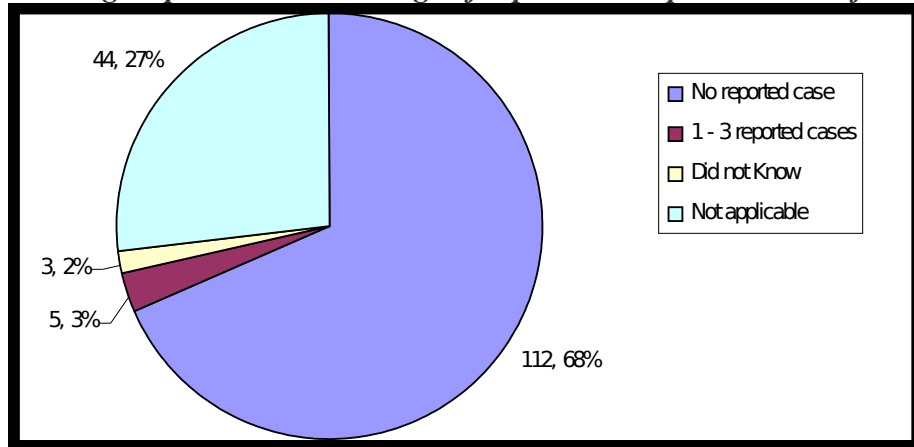


*Respondents' knowledge of outcome of reported cases of physical abuse*
With regards to the outcome of the five reported cases three are said to have led to prosecution and two had the intervention of the Probation and Welfare Department. Most respondents, however, had no information on the outcome of cases.

**Respondents' views on why physical abuse exists in the area**

*Beating is part of the legacy from the slavery mentality which we have inherited...Slaves were whipped to do every thing.*
34 year old Rastafarian male respondent

In addressing the question of why physical abuse existed sixty six respondents (40%) said it had to do with a lack of parenting skills, six (4%) respondents attributed uncaring parents/guardians, for the existence of physical abuse, four (1.3%)respondents said it was a combination of uncaring parents and lack of family support, three mentioned failure to complete chores (2.7%) was responsible for physical abuse being meted out, and forty one (25%) respondents said there are other reasons. Some 'other' factors were stated as:
- Some children are disobedient
- People feel it works
- Parents beat out of anger
- Single parents do so out of frustration
- It gives a feeling of power
- Parents have a lot to deal with and the least thing 'set them off'
- Economic situation force them to be short tempered

- Some don't know better

*Table 20 showing the respondents' views on reasons for physical abuse*

| Valid | No. | % |
|---|---|---|
| Uncaring Parent/Parents/Guardian | 6 | 4 |
| Lack of Parenting skills | 66 | 40 |
| Uncaring parent(s)/guardian & lack of family support | 4 | 1.3 |
| Failure to compete chores | 3 | 2.7 |
| Other | 41 | 25 |
| Not applicable | 44 | 27 |
| **TOTAL** | **164** | **100** |

**Respondents' knowledge on the effects of physical abuse on children**

With reference to respondents' opinion of children who are physically abused, the entire sample frame was asked to indicate their views (even those who did not think physical abuse existed in the community). Fifty nine (36%) respondents said the physically abused child leads a troubled life; twenty eight (17%) said they are likely to become abusers, twenty one (13%) opined that they encounter school related problems, twenty four (15%) suggested that the impact is two-fold – a combination of troubled lives and likely abusers. Seventeen (10%) said they become physical abusers and encounter school related problems and the final category of fifteen (9%) respondents said thy lead troubled lives and encounter school related problems.

*Figure 14: Respondents views on the effects of Child Physical Abuse*
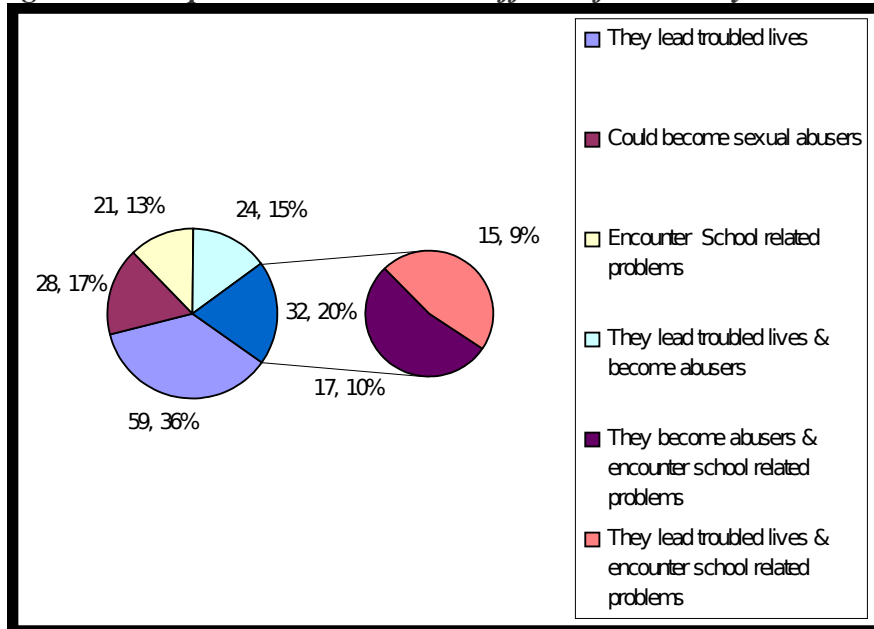


**Respondents' views on the most likely perpetrators of physical abuse**

When the question of who is most likely to physically abuse a child was raised, sixty five (53%) of the one hundred and twenty who felt there was physical abuse in the neighborhood said it was perpetuated by family members. Twenty seven (23%) said the abusers were stepfathers/mothers, nineteen (16%) indicated that those responsible was a combination of family members, stepfathers/mothers, and nine said family members and all categories of step relations were the perpetrators of physical abuse of children.

*Figure 15  showing respondents' views on most likely perpetrators of physical abuse*



9, 8%

19, 16%

65, 53%

27, 23%

☐ Family members

■ Stepfather/mother

☐ Family members & stepfather/mother

☐ family members and all categories of step relations
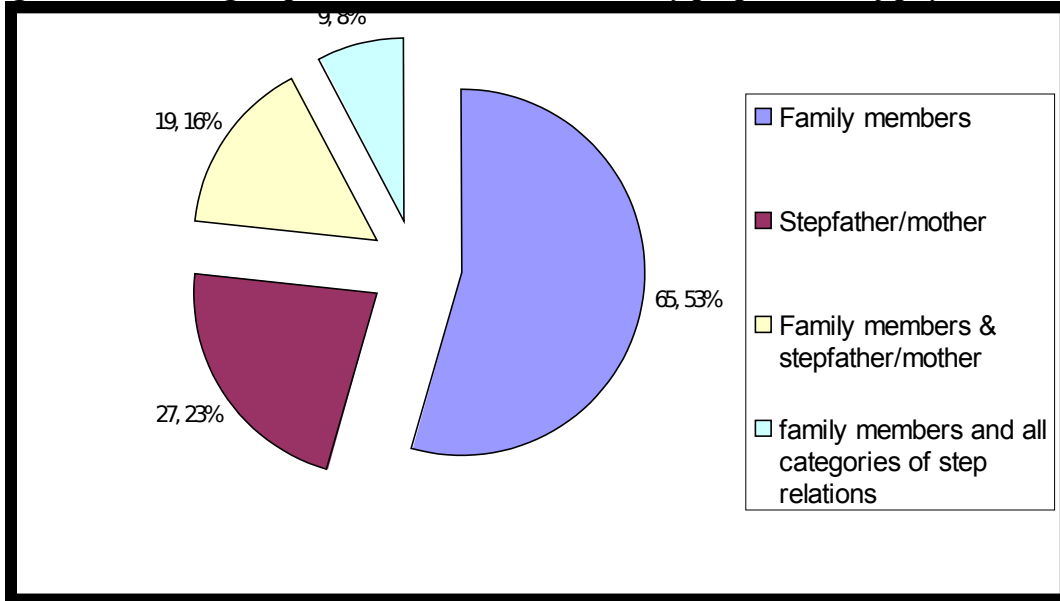
## 3.1.2f Respondents' knowledge on signs and symptoms of child abuse

On the question of what to look for (signs/symptoms), to determine if a child was in an abusive situation, thirty three (20%) respondents said they would look for physical marks of violence; twenty two (13%) said physical and emotional withdrawal are signs that would determine an abusive situation; twenty seven said a combination of marks of violence and inappropriate sexual behavior are signs that would indicate the existence of abuse.   Twenty (12%)  respondents said the display of abusive behavior by the child is a sign of their exposure to abuse, while sixty (38%) respondents said all of the above conditions are indicative of an abusive situation.  Two (1%) respondents said 'other'. Those others were:
- Based on the questions asked by the child
- They may tell stories that indicate what happened
- They become rebellious
- In the case of sexual abuse, their bodies change, they look differently, more grown up, and there is a difference in the way they walk.

*Figure 16 showing Respondents' answers on signs and symptoms of Child Abuse*
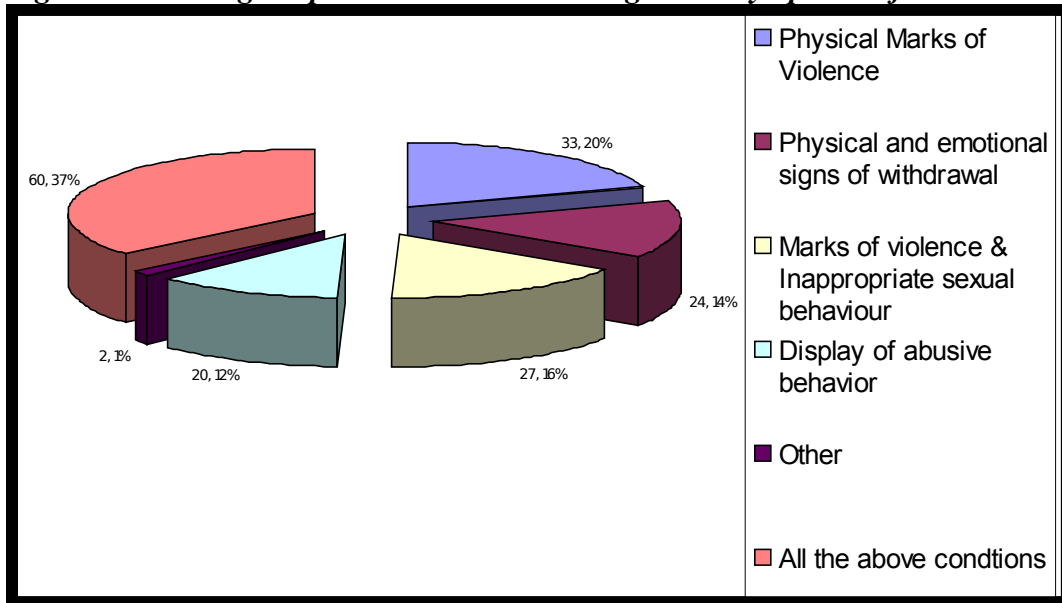
## 3.2 Attitude and Practices of respondents regarding Child Abuse

**Respondents' attitude towards abused children**

In relation to respondents' own attitude towards the abused child, 99 (61%) said they would feel sympathetic towards such a child; 8 (5%) said they would confront the abuser; 38 (23%) indicated they would be tempted to report the matter, while fifteen (9%) had a combined attitude of sympathy and the temptation to report the matter. Four (2%) stated "other" and these were stated as:

- Would contact parents/guardians to see if they are aware
- Tell some one to report the matter
- Try to counsel the child
- Give the child clothes and food (in cases of neglect)

**Figure 17 Respondents' attitude towards abused children**
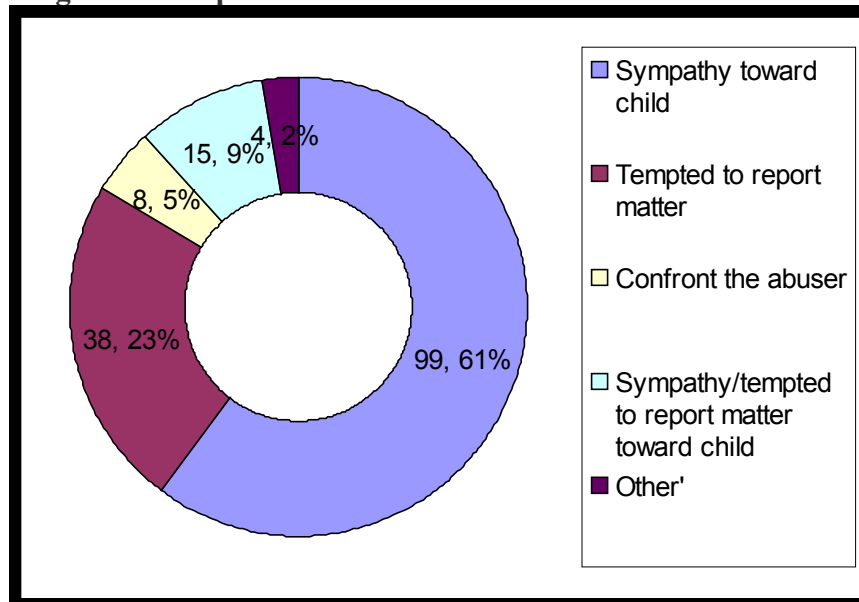


**Respondents' practices regarding child abuse**

To determine the actual practice of the respondents where there is knowledge of abuse, they were asked how they would respond (if they are aware that a child is in an abusive situation). Sixty nine (43%) respondents said they would make a police report, forty five (27%) indicated they would confront the abuser, thirty nine (24%) said they would go either to Help and Shelter or the Probation Department, and two (1%) stated 'other'. Nine (5%) respondents stated they would confront the abuser as well as make a police report. The 'other' responses included:

- Making an anonymous phone call to Help and Shelter
- Writing a letter to the Probation Department with all the details.

It must noted however, that although persons were willing to report to the Police if they were aware that a child is an abusive situation, sexual abuse would evoke this response more than any other form of abuse. Further, respondents expressed concern over their identity being disclosed by the Police if they made a report.

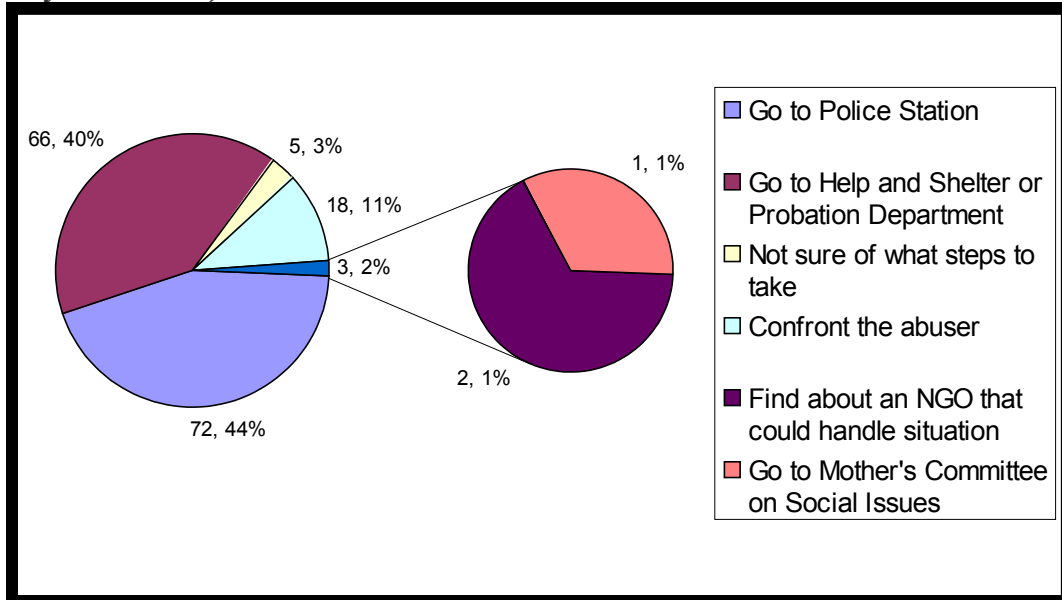*Figure 18 showing practice of respondents where there is knowledge that a child is in an abusive situation*
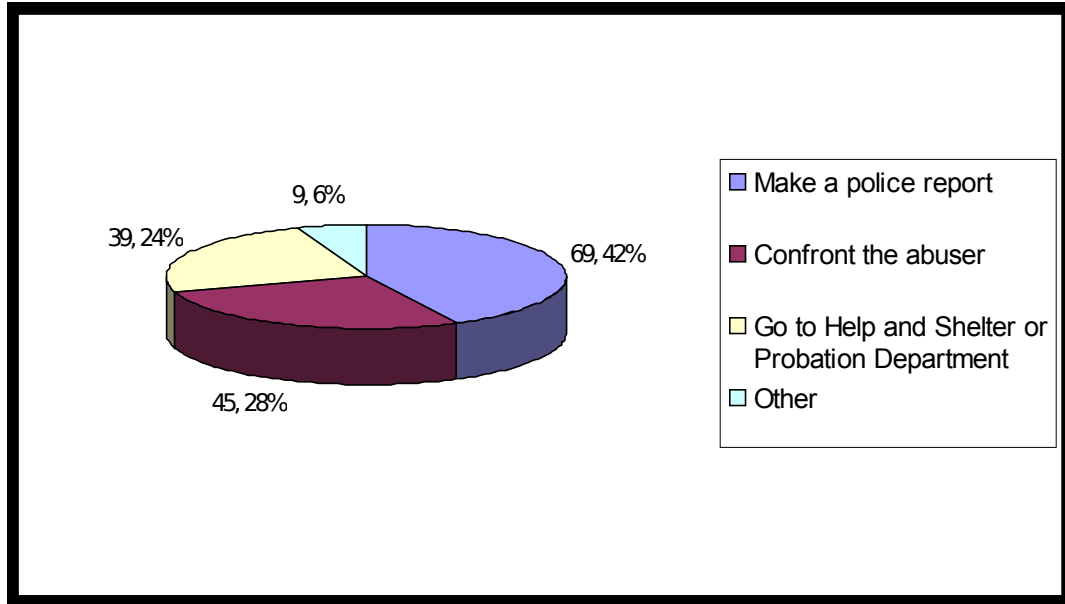


To further determine the practice of respondents who have knowledge of abuse they were asked what steps they would take if they were aware of the situation of child abuse. Seventy two (44%) respondents said they would go the Police Station; sixty six (40%) would go to one of two agencies - Help and Shelter and the Probation Department; eighteen (11%) said they would confront the abuser; five (3%) did not know for sure what steps they would take; two (1%) would find out of a Non-Governmental Organization that could assist and one (1%) would make a report to the Sophia based group, Mother's Committee on Social Issues.

*Figure 16 Respondents' practice regarding knowledge of child abuse (Actual steps they would take)*



Legend:
- Go to Police Station
- Go to Help and Shelter or Probation Department
- Not sure of what steps to take
- Confront the abuser
- Find about an NGO that could handle situation
- Go to Mother's Committee on Social Issues

Values shown: 66, 40%; 5, 3%; 18, 11%; 3, 2%; 72, 44%; 1, 1%; 2, 1%

**Respondents' knowledge of Agencies concerned with Child Protection**

In examining respondents' knowledge of agencies concerned with child protection in Sophia and at a National Level, the following agencies were mentioned, (in the words of the respondents):

- Help and Shelter
- Probation Department
- Ministry of Human Services
- Youth Friendly Space, Sophia
- Guyana Police Force
- Ministry of Health Clinic (Sophia)
- National Commission on the Rights of the Child
- Ministry of Education

Four persons stated that they did not know of any Agency concerned with Child Protection.

Respondents were asked about whether or not, in their view, there was any relationship between alcohol/drug use and child abuse. Ninety five (60%) respondents said there was, while thirty nine (24%) said there was no relationship. Twenty six (16%) did not know but four gave "other" reasons. These included comments such as"

- Some people are just cruel
- It is because children are defenseless
- Drugs or no drugs some children are abused
- "Maybe"

**Respondents' awareness of Programs/Systems in place to prevent Child Abuse in Sophia**

On the question of the awareness of Systems/Programs in place to prevent child abuse, one hundred and forty seven (90%) of the respondents said there were no measures in place in the community to prevent child abuse. Twelve (7%), however, referred to Mercy Wings Vocational Centre, one (1%) to the Drop in Centre for street children. Four (2%) said they did not know if there were any facilities in place to prevent child abuse in the Community.

*Figure 17  showing respondents' awareness of programs in place to prevent child abuse Sophia*
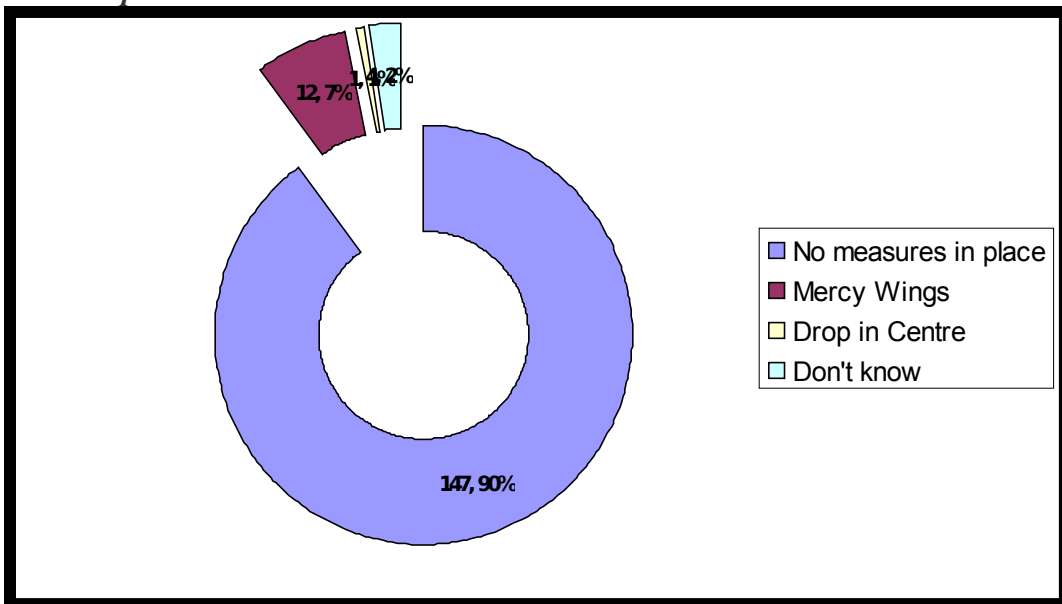
**Respondents' own disciplinary practices**

Respondents' own disciplinary practices were questioned when they were asked under what circumstances they would hit their own children. Ninety three (56%) respondents said theft and lying would be considered infractions for which children should be beaten; twenty nine (18%) said for being rude/stubborn, thirty one (20%) claimed they did not flog their children; six respondents said it depended on what the situation was, three (2%) said failure to complete homework and two (1%), for poor school grades.

**Figure 18 showing respondents' own disciplinary practices**
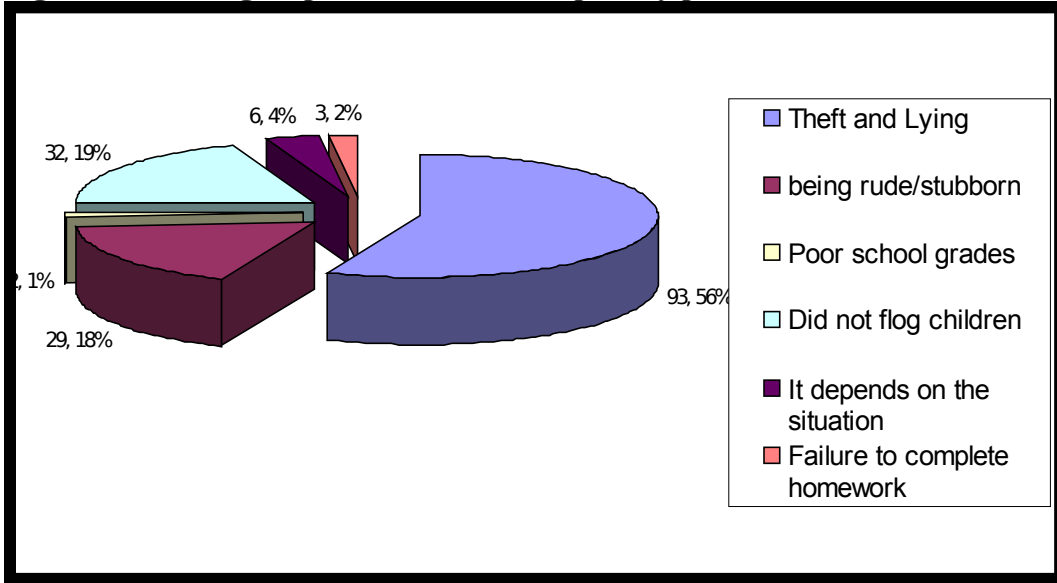
## 3.3 Focus Group Discussions

The information gathered in the Focus Group discussions did not deviate in any significant way from that which was gathered when the Interview Schedule was administered. Generally, respondents demonstrated knowledge on the issue of child abuse and its effects. Like the interviewees, the participants in the Focus Group discussions identified neglect, child labour, emotional deprivation, sexual molestation of a child and verbal ridicule such as name calling, "down talking" as forms of Child abuse. Flogging a child, extreme forms of punishment (e.g. kneeling on a grater) and injuring a child were also stated as constituting child abuse.

The organized groups indicated that the four main forms of child abuse did exist in the community, with neglect and verbal abuse being the most prevalent followed by physical and sexual abuse. Sexual abuse was most abhorred by this category of respondents as well as the interviewees.

Emotional or physical withdrawal, sadness, marks of violence, constant crying, poor school grades, unkempt appearance, aggression, acts of violence, inappropriate sexual behaviour and conversations, constantly clinging and seeking attention were identified as signs that a child is in an abusive situation.

Focus Group discussion participants' reaction to abuse included confronting the abuser, (many participants indicated that they would confront the abuser if they had a relationship with them: either friend or relative), make a police report or report to other agencies concerned with child abuse. These include Help and Shelter, Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Labour Human Services and Social Security. Participants cited instances where they intervened in situations where children were being abused. Worthy of note is the fact that the respondents in the Focus Group discussions demonstrated a stronger resolve to get involved if they were aware of a child being in an abusive situation. However, participants did indicate that they had reservations about reporting cases since they were concerned for their own safety and protection.

The respondents in the organizations felt that children who have been abused bear the scars for life and may become abusers themselves, may runaway (mainly boys in cases of physical abuse), may become promiscuous (in cases of sexual abuse), or may become criminals. Lowered self-esteem was also seen as one adverse effect of child abuse.

As to whether there are programs or systems in place to prevent child abuse the majority of participants stated that there was no system in place in the community to prevent abuse or to support victims of child abuse. For the few that said there were systems in place, they mentioned training programmes or courses currently being implemented at Church of Christ, Mercy Wings, Youth Friendly Space and Pattenson Youth in Action Group.

Regarding their own methods of disciplining children (for those who were parents/caregivers) participants claimed that they were more likely to use non-physical

methods of discipline such as reducing privileges, giving additional chores, talking to the children, and sending them to bed.

> *I used to beat my niece (9 years old) and nephew (13 years) previously, whenever they behave bad. But now my sister no longer beats her children; I showed her what to do. I did the Child Care Management Course at IDCE and now there is no more licks in my family… I apologized to my niece and nephew for hitting them.*
>
> 23 year old female

# CHAPTER 4

## 4.1 <u>INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA</u>

### 4.1.1 Social Background of Respondents

➢ The data gathered indicated that there was two times the number of female respondents compared to the males.

➢ Afro-Guyanese made up the largest percentage of the respondents, followed by mixed race, Indo-Guyanese and Amerindians.

➢ One hundred and five (64%)of the one hundred and sixty four respondents were between eighteen and forty five years old.

➢ Respondents claiming to subscribe to the Christian persuasion accounted for 135/82.3%, followed by the "other" category (mainly Rastafarians, Hindus and Muslims were the most common religious grouping found in this category).

➢ When the data was analyzed regarding marital status of respondents, it showed that married persons outnumbered all other categories, followed by single, common law/living home, visiting relations, widowed, separated and divorced.

➢ The nuclear family type (66/40.2%) dominated the family forms, followed by extended families (51/31%) single parents (22%) and persons living alone (10/6%). There was one blended family (0.6).

➢ Family sizes were an average of five (102/62%), fifty three (32%) had between 6 -10 persons and nine (6%) had more than 10 persons.

➢ The vast majority of the respondents regarded themselves as the household head, while others said that person was their spouse/partner, followed by mother, other relatives and father. This finding suggests that the homes are predominantly female headed. This may appear to contradict the finding that the nuclear family form is most prevalent among the respondents. However, it should be noted that invariably though married, the male was not around on a regular as many were in the interior or based in one of the Caribbean islands, working.

➢ The occupation of (49/30%) of the respondents was that of a housewife. Business owners/operators (25/15.2%) or persons who operated canteens, sold on the pavement made up the next category, followed by labourers and cleaners. Paramilitary personnel, police, army and security service workers were next (19.11.6%). There were 9 (5.5%), carpenters and plumbers, 8 (4.9%) unemployed, while the retired, full time student, skilled technician and administrative support staff took up very small numbers of the sample

- The data revealed that 127/77% of the respondents claimed that their household income was less than fifty thousand dollars per month. This placed the majority of the sample frame below the poverty line.

- Respondents had largely benefited from an almost even split of primary level education (70/43%) and secondary level education (69/42%). Nineteen (11.5%) had moved on the technical/commercial/vocational level of training. This is an indication that the educational base exists among members of the community. This can be built on, through basic training to improve the social fabric of Sophia.

**4.1.2   Knowledge, Attitude and Practices Regarding Child Abuse**

- Undoubtedly, respondents had an understanding of Child abuse and what it is citing flogging and mistreatment of children by an adult, denying them access to health, education and freedom of expression. Respondents displayed a general knowledge of what constitutes child abuse.

- There was an appreciation also that there are different types of abuse. Respondents had knowledge that there was physical, verbal and sexual abuse. Though some spoke of "children being left on their own, and did not actually refer to this as neglect, they understood the act of leaving a child alone for prolonged periods with their needs unmet, constitutes a form of abuse.

- There was no doubt that child abuse existed in Sophia. All four forms of abuse – neglect, verbal, physical and sexual abuse, according to the data, prevailed. According to the data gathered, 131/80% of the respondents felt that child neglect was the most prevalent form of abuse meted out. This was followed by verbal abuse 130/79%, physical abuse 120/73% and sexual abuse 114/69%.

- All forms of child abuse seems to have emerged as patterns in the community; their occurrence was regarded by some respondents as higher when compared to other communities but by and large, the level of abuse was seen as the same as that of other communities. Abuse was also seen as daily with the same families, but not confined to, rather including various other families.

- The age group of the abused child was considered typically between 4-5 years. Boys were likely to be physically abused while girls were for most part, to be verbally abused. The older the child got, the greater was the fear that they would 'run from licks' particularly boys.

- A minimum number of cases were known to have been reported. Respondents knew of very few cases reported and to a smaller extent, those that led to prosecution. Those that led to prosecution were related to physical and sexual

abuse, the two forms that respondents felt existed, but of which neglect and verbal existed in greater proportions. It seemed like there was some degree of tolerance for neglect and verbal abuse but a disdain for sexual abuse and hitting a child that led to marks of violence.

➢ In looking at why there were incidents of child abuse, the inability to afford child care services and the absence of family support were given as the two main reasons for the existence of neglect. Verbal abuse was regarded as parents/guardians way of dealing with frustrations while physical abuse was seen as transpiring because of lack of parenting skills. Sexual abuse, on the other hand, occurred quite often because the environment enabled the situation – children are left alone while parents work/are not present to care and protect them; they are easily available to stepfathers/male family members/friends and acquaintances.

➢ There is concern over the number of children unsupervised in the community during the course of the day – even on school days. This is a clear indication that truancy is one of the social ills plaguing the community. Boys between the ages of 6 to 17 years old, were engaged in swimming and fishing activities. Many girls were also observed performing chores – errands to the shop and water fetching activities. Children spoke of not having school outfits – shoes and uniforms, nothing for their lunch boxes, no money for transportation cost, nothing to do at school, as reasons for them being away from school during school hours. This is particularly worrisome as the Voices of Children Study's (2005) findings indicated that children who do not regularly attend school and may be working at home doing domestic chores or in a family agricultural business, were exposed to more violence than children who attended school regularly. It added that, out of school girls seem to be much more vulnerable to sexual exploitation and violence than those in school.

➢ Scores of households were visited during the study, where children answered from windows stating "no body big ent deh". Not only are children predisposed to being sexually abused given the fact that they are unsupervised, but this kind of environment fosters sexual experiments among children. Respondents alluded to children being 'caught' in sexual activity – in school as well as at home.

➢ There was no question in the minds of respondents regarding the effects of abuse on children. That they were likely to lead troubled lives, became physical abusers themselves and prime candidates for school related problems, were some effects of abuse advanced. Those sexually abused could have difficulties trusting others and may have difficulty in being able to establish and maintain lasting relations. Additionally, respondents suggested that victims of child sexual abuse can become pregnant and contract HIV as well as other sexually transmitted infections

➢ There was a general understanding on the part of respondents as to what to look for in order to make a determination whether or not a child is in an abusive situation – physical marks of violence, signs of emotional withdrawal, the display of abusive behaviour and inappropriate sexual behaviour were cited. Additionally, there was

an understanding that children may relate a story or give an indication by something they say, particularly given the amount of details, which could reveal that it was a personal experience.

➢ The general attitude towards the abused child is one of sympathy. There was some temptation to report the matter but there was a concern for personal safety. There was an overwhelming fear that the police would not treat the report confidentially and eventually, the person who made the report would become the target for abuse. It is against this background that more persons preferred to visit other agencies or confront the abuser, as opposed to going to the police. There was also the feeling that the matter would be treated more expeditiously when the report is made to agencies such as the Probation Department and Help and Shelter.

### 4.1.3   Child Neglect
➢ Neglect was the most prevalent form of abuse meted out to children in Sophia according to one hundred and thirty one (80%) of the respondents. Based on the data gathered, however, it could be argued that while some saw children being left alone as a form of neglect, others did not. Especially in instances were parents did so in order to go to work, their job was regarded as justification, for leaving children alone  and often unattended.

### 4.1.4   Verbal Abuse against children
➢ Verbal abuse was rated as the form of abuse that is almost as prevalent as neglect. Respondents felt it persisted in the form of the use of expletives and name calling. Some respondents felt 'if you don't cuss them, they don't hear when you 'talk'. In the words of one respondent "I does put some good cuss pun them – other wise to dah   nothing doin". Not just the use of expletives and name calling, but the tone in which children were spoken to, was regarded as abusive.

### 4.1.5   Child Physical Abuse
➢ The persistence of physical abuse seems rooted in cultural trends.  Some respondents felt that if children were not beaten, they did not comply with instructions. Ninety three respondents admitted to beating their children for lying and for theft.  Children were beaten with whips, belts, electric wire, wood, and 'anything ah could ketch'.  Using rocks to 'brick them down' was not unusual for the child who attempted to escape according to one respondent.  There seemed to be consensus that flogging was acceptable, as long as the child did not suffer broken bones, fractures and physical scars as a result.   This differed from the responses gleaned in the Focus Group discussions where participants claimed that they were more likely to use non-physical methods of discipline such as reducing privileges, giving additional chores, talking to the children, and sending them to bed.

➢ One respondent spoke of her neighbor, who was in the habit of physically abusing his wife and children.  She had reported the matter and he was prosecuted.  He served a four month prison sentence. Upon his return the abuse continued forcing the wife to escape with her two daughters.  Two sons remain in the situation.

- Although there is a general understanding that Corporal Punishment in schools should only be administered by the head teacher or with her/his knowledge and consent it was brought to the researcher's attention that there are deviations from this practice.


### 4.1.6   Child Sexual Abuse

- Sexual abuse was also regarded as being in existence.  Children's accessibility to perpetrators, children being left unprotected for long periods, mother's fear of losing financial/economic  support were all opined as reasons for the existence and persistence of sexual abuse.   Family members, step fathers and friends and acquaintances were regarded as the main perpetrators. Stepfathers were feared and reference to known cases in the area were made repeatedly.  There were instances where mothers were raising grandchildren, fathered by their spouses (in other words, daughters had borne children by their mother's spouse; and in one instance a father was before the court for inserting his finger into his five year old daughter's vagina to the extent that her hymen was ruptured.  (Also see Stabroek News article in Appendix).

# CHAPTER 5

## 5.1 CONCLUSION

Sophia is an excellent choice of community for the implementation of the Pilot for the Pickney Project. The Project has as its primary goal 'To improve the lives of children experiencing violence and abuse and other vulnerable children at risk in key communities by promoting safety and protection'. The children of Sophia, Georgetown need this intervention as a matter of urgency.

### 5.1.1 Caregivers, Community Representatives and Service Providers Knowledge of Child abuse
The study found that all categories of caregivers – key Community Representatives – Health, Education, Religious, Social Groups as well as the Children's Primary Caregivers, had an understanding of what constitutes child abuse. Not only was there an understanding of what it is, but also its effects. Some respondents had gathered this information from sessions conducted at school for instance at Mercy Wings through the ABS classes). Others were part of activities at the Youth Friendly Space where such information is readily available and some had attended training programmes – one was at the time of the study being conducted by Help and Shelter in collaboration with the Sophia Church of Christ.

### 5.1.2 Attitudes and practices of Services providers towards children who were abused
There were varying degrees of reaction to the knowledge of abuse to children in Sophia. While the general attitude was one of sympathy and a recognition that it was morally inappropriate, the practice of Service Providers – Health Centre, School and religious bodies was to intervene. The School contacted the Police and Probation Departments and the Health Centre made referrals to the Georgetown Public Hospital. The approach of the church was to initiate training to sensitize care givers, with the aim of having a core group to work with survivors. The church was also found to be instrumental in providing spiritual counseling.

The attitude of the general community was mixed where some persons had honored their civic responsibility by making police reports or engaging the Probation Department. It should be noted that one of the recommendations contained in 'Stamp It Out' as far as the Protection of Children Bill is concerned "an obligation to report suspected child abuse". Guyana needs this as part of our Child Protection Policy.

### 5.1.3 Programmes/Systems in place to prevent Child Abuse
There is a paucity of Programs or Systems in place to prevent the abuse of children in Sophia. No organized system of protection for them exists, hence the prevalence and persistence of neglect, verbal, physical and sexual abuse in the community. Ninety Percent of the respondents interviewed stated that there were no programmes in place to prevent child abuse.

### 5.1.4 Mechanisms used to ensure the systematic and effective reporting of abuse against children

According to information received during an interview for the purpose of the study with a Senior official of the Guyana Police Force, the reporting procedures are said to be in keeping with the Standard Operational Procedures of the Guyana Police Force. Matters are recorded in the "Occurrence Book" of the Force.  When entered they are given a serial number. The Date of Offence, Date of report, and Nature of offence, Suspect's Name, Age, Sex, Race, Address and Action Taken are recorded.  According to information gleaned from the Guyana Police Force, every station has a Criminal Investigation Department (CID) rank trained to deal with investigations pertaining to abuse.  This study was unable to make an assessment of the reported cases, those that led to prosecution, those discontinued because of lack of evidence or those for which settlements were arrived at.  Up to the time of writing, the response from the Guyana Police Force to a request for this kind of information had not been received.

### 5.1.5 Level of documentation and follow up of reported cases of abuse against children

With reference to the victim the procedures as far as documentation is concerned is as follows:
1. She/he is taken to the Police Station and in the presence of a parent/guardian, the investigating rank takes a statement.
2. The parent/guardian is asked to submit the birth certificate.
3. The victim is taken to the hospital for an examination.
4. If there is a sexually transmitted disease, or a major injury (burn, fracture) the victim is treated.
5. Some cases are referred to the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security for counseling.

However, it has been established that strict compliance to these procedures in many cases is entirely up to the investigating officer. Invariably, there are gaps in information gathering for the investigation. In many instances, officers are not as detailed as they should be resulting in instances of poorly presented cases, and as a consequence many cases are thrown out due insufficient evidence.

### 5.1.6 Level of support offered to survivors of Child Abuse

There is no organized support offered to survivors and where ever support is offered it is on an ad hoc basis – based on someone's judgment of the situation.  Reports went to churches, and Pastors intervened providing spiritual counsel.  Love and Faith World Outreach Ministries, which is a Faith Based Organization, serves HIV infected and affected OVC and families in the area. This is in addition to its fundamental mandate, which is to promote Christianity. Whenever cases of child abuse are discovered OVC are counseled by the organization's Social Worker and referrals are made, where necessary, to the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security for intervention.

The study validated the findings of the Voices of Children Study (2005).  That study stated "*access to court support services for child victims is limited as very few agencies*

*treat and respond to violence and abuse as a health issue.  These children are often left to cope with the abuse on their own without emotional support/counseling coupled with the trauma of the court experience"*.[18]   This research found, in Sophia, cases where victims of sexual abuse, whose cases had been reported and were at the level of the court, were faced with similar situations. Very little or no counseling or emotional support was offered to the children.

### 5.1.7   Knowledge, attitude and practices of the general public (including men/women/community advocates) on abuse against children

With respect to the Knowledge, Attitude and Practices of the general public including men and women, the study did not locate a single respondent who opined that the existence of child abuse did not concern them.  Persons were aware of the existence of the phenomenon of child abuse and the different forms.  There was a general attitude of concern and sympathy.  Some respondents had actually intervened in cases involving families in the community, particularly physical and sexual abuse, and the practice was to make reports to the Ministry of Labour Human  Services and Social Security (Probation Department), as well as to the Police.  One resident had incurred the wrath of the community for physically abusing his 12 year old son… (community members pounced on him, physically assaulting him in retaliation).

Fear of reported information not being treated confidentially seemed to be the main deterrent to reporting matters.  Persons felt their safety would be compromised if perpetrators were aware that they reported matters.

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[18] Voices of Children: Experiences of Violence, Ministry of Labour Human Services and Social Security, Red Thread and UNICEF. 2005

# CHAPTER 6

## 6.1  RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That there be stronger networking, between the Ministries of Education and Labour, Human Services and Social Security in collaboration with EveryChild Guyana and Help and Shelter to address the issue of non attendance at school by a large number of school aged children in the community.

2. That other youth Friendly Spaces (similar to the one established in Section A) be established throughout the community.  It is recommended the EveryChild Guyana and Help and Shelter advocate for the establishment of Youth Friendly Spaces utilizing facilities at the Community Centre in Section B, the Health Centre in Section C, and possibly the Turkeyen Police Station located in Section D (this space could serve sections D and E).

3. There certainly is wisdom in pursuing the establishment of low cost Day Care/After Care/Drop In facilities in the area with the expressed purpose of ensuring the safety of children while parents are away from home. The Love and Faith World Outreach Ministries indicated that it is willing to undertake such a venture, providing the support and necessary funding is provided.  This organization already has a Social Worker and Nurse on staff and is currently implementing a program that serves HIV infected/affected persons (OVC and their parents).  Love and Faith already has the space, which the organization is willing to make available.  It has a base to work with and has the experience in working with parents and children in the community. Further, the organization has implemented projects with the Health Sector Development Unit and Guyana HIV/AIDS Reduction and Prevention Program.

4. Some work is needed on the part of the Guyana Police Force to build citizen's confidence in the Police's discretion in handling of reports of child abuse ensuring confidentiality of the person(s) making the report. EveryChild Guyana in collaboration with Help and Shelter are strategically positioned to advocate for training in this regard for officers.

5. There is need for more sensitization on where and how to intervene in instances of child abuse.  Again, EveryChild and Help and Shelter could intensify public awareness programs in this regard.  Sophia should be seen as a key target area to benefit from such a program

6. The agencies (Help and Shelter and EveryChild Guyana) could network with the organizations in the community (those mentioned in the study – see list below) to implement parenting workshops.  One approach could be to train members from each organization in issues relating to Child abuse/Gender Based Violence and

Parenting Skills with the intention that these individuals/organizations would cascade the training.  Some possible organizations are:

- Mercy Wings Vocational Training Centre (*already has a Social worker on Staff and has parenting sessions.  This could be strengthened*).
- Sophia Training Centre
- Youth Friendly Space in Section A (through Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports).
- The Parent/Teacher's Associations of Carol's Day Care, Sophia Primary School  and Sophia Nursery School.
- Pattenson Community Development Committee
- South Turkeyen Development Committee
- Cummings Park Development Committee
- Pattenson Youth in Action Group
- Mother's Committee on Social Issues
- Church of Christ
- It's the Way Out Club
- Prashad Nagar Masjid
- Love and Faith World Outreach Ministries

7.    Finally, but not exhausting the list of recommendations, it must be noted that the management of child abuse and neglect needs a multidisciplinary approach.  The complete evaluation of a child who has been abused needs the application of the skills of several professionals including social workers, medical personnel, police officers, probation personnel, child psychiatrists and child psychologists.  It is recommended EveryChild Guyana and Help and Shelter forge for the establishment/strengthening of interdisciplinary cooperation and communication as evaluation and treatment of abused children proceed.  Particularly in cases of child sexual abuse, the need for multidisciplinary cooperation is crucial.  Ideally a multidisciplinary team, constituted of members who work together regularly and who are trained, as child sexual abuse officials should have the responsibility for investigating child sexual abuse cases.

In order to address the issue of child abuse a strong resolve must be developed to have zero tolerance for any form of abuse whatsoever.  All stakeholders within the community must be drafted into the response (residents, CBOs, FBOs, NGOs, National Agencies and Institutions).  Each of these entities must work together establishing strong networks for the benefit of the community at large and the safety of every child.   This supports the old adage "It takes a village to raise a child".

# CHAPTER 7

## 7.1 <u>CASE STUDIES</u>

### 7.1.1  Case of Physical Abuse  (a)
Name: Clive
Age:    7 years old
**Scenario:       Physically abused by sister and brother-in-law**

Clive seems to literally be "carrying the world on his shoulders".  His handsome little face seemed to be pondering why an adult actually wants to talk with him. He resides with his sister, brother-in-law and their two children.

He appeared to be a very smart child and has some faded marks on his hands and legs, clear indications of beatings he had suffered over a period of time. He was unkempt at the time of our discussion.  At seven years old Clive still wears pampers. His teacher indicated that he has problems retaining his fasces, which she speculated could be a result of abuse.

When asked questions about sharing any bad thing that he has ever experienced he readily responds "my big sister does beat me nearly every day.  Day before yesterday I get licks on my belly and me foot.  She does beat me with shoes, slippers, belt, whip anything.  A time she pelt me with a big brick and burst me head then she put antibiotic on it. I does got to wash my clothes, clean de concrete, fetch water and sweep de yard."

"Everybody does beat me even me lil nephew, he is two.  My mother does beat too when she come.  She burst me mouth already, and a time she black and blue me face.  Me brother-in-law does beat me for everything. He does beat me with rope, wire and big wood.  I ent like no body in my house; only my lil niece, she is five she don't beat me, she does play with me and she does cry when anybody knock me".

### 7.1.2  Case of Physical Abuse (b)
Name: Ezra
Age:    5 years old
**Scenario:       Physically abused by stepfather "for not picking up his book".**

Ezra is usually (very) untidy for school.  When there is an activity at school notices are pinned to his clothing by teachers, with the aim of informing his parents.  He returns to school with the notices in the same place.  His unkempt condition prompted teachers to question him regarding his familial circumstances  and among other things were told that he washes his clothes himself.

One day Ezra arrived at school so bloated in the face, eyes barely visible that his teachers hardly recognized him.  The Head Teacher's attention was drawn to the matter. He had received a severe beating at the hand of his step father for "not picking up his book".

**Intervention**
Ezra was taken to the Ministry of Labour Human Services and Social Security by a teacher.   The child was removed from his home and placed in the care of his grandmother.   His stepfather is said to have evaded prosecution by leaving the area. Information is that several visits from the Probation Department to the address had turned up empty handed, as the stepfather cannot be located.

### 7.1.3   Case of Child Sexual Abuse
Name: Jada
Age:   5 years old
**Scenario:      Sexually abused by father (Inserted finger and ruptured hymen)**

Jada lives with her mother, father and two brothers.  Mom, Nikita, a housewife and dad, James, is a mason.

Jada's life seemed to be happy on the outside.  One day one of Nikita's sister indicated to her that her (Nikita's) husband attempted to molest her younger brother,   who was staying with the family on holiday and as a result he no longer visits their home.  He  also stated that James had put his hand under Jada's dress and 'rub her up' the very night he attempted to molest him (her brother).

Nikita doubted that  her husband  was capable of such heinous acts against children, let alone her nephew and his only daughter.  Despite her apparent disbelief Nikita was uneasy. One day when James was at work she called her three children and asked whether they had been touched by him inappropriately.   They each stated no.   She thoroughly questioned Jada on the matter and she said no, much to Nikita's relief.

Life seemed fine, the couple worked on rebuilding their home to be more comfortable. One morning while preparing for school Jada indicated that she was experiencing pains in the abdomen and burning sensation in vaginal area.  Nikita became concerned. Upon examining the child  blood was discovered on her underwear.  Jada revealed that daddy had put his finger into her vagina the night before.

**Intervention**
Without hesitation Nikita took Jada to the doctor for an examination and learnt that the hymen had been ruptured.  After consulting with her uncle who lives close by Niketa contacted the Probation Department for advice.  She then had James take her to the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security.  After presenting the doctor's report to the Social worker, while they were still in her Office (as part of a sting operation) the police came and arrested James.  The matter is in court and James has been released on

$30,000 bail. He no longer resides with the family and the matter is still engaging the attention of the court.

### 7.1.4   Case of Abandonment
Name: Baby X
Age:  1 month old

**Scenario:  Abandoned by mother**

In January 2008, Zena was operating her roadside shop when she was approached by a female who said "Aunty hold this baby fo me, a commin back jus now". Zena consented. She says she has no recollection of the individual's features nor any information that could lead to her identity.  She has been caring for Baby X ever since.

**Intervention:**
Recognizing that there was no history on the child, Baby X was taken to a Maternal and Child Care Center on April 8th.  Upon examination at the Clinic, the doctor described him as severely malnourished.  There was speculation regarding his mother's HIV status.  His status has come into question.  A dry blood sample (DBS)) was taken form him and has gone for testing.  The results are due within a week.  Baby X is just about five months old.  His birth has since been registered and he has been able to maintain stated clinic dates. He now has a name.

 He has been bonding  with Zena and has been in receipt of formula and supplements from the clinic.

### 7.1.5   Case of Verbal Abuse

**Name: Naomi**

**Age:   9**

**Scenario: Verbally abused by father and other adults**

 Naomi resides with her father, siblings and step mother.  According to her she works around the home and enjoys attending school.  She claims that she gets into trouble for chores around the home, which are sometimes too much to do.  She fetches water from 'up the road' and has tasks assigned to her which must be completed before she leaves for school.

Naomi claims that using 'curse words' while speaking to her to complete her chores happens often.  She is called names by the adults in the home, including her father.

Since the installation of the telephone lines in the area, she has been calling her mother who is separated from her father.  She claims that when her father became aware that she

is in touch with her mother via the telephone, she was referred to as a 'bitch". With her head bowed, tears welling up in her eyes, Naomi said it was most hurtful to be called that name.

### 7.1.6 Case of Child Neglect

# CHAPTER 8

## 8.1    <u>APPENDICES</u>

**Appendix 1**

**Sample Card on which the dry blood sample (DBS)is taken**

**Appendix 2**

**Guyana Police Force Sample Form for Report of Registered Medical Practitioner**

**Appendix 3**

**My Parents Always Beat Me**

Sometimes I have to kneel
Without seeing a single meal
If I come home five minutes late
They lock me out of the gate
I wish and Pray that someday
I will come out of this ugly state

I have cuts and bruises all over my body
From lashes and slaps from my daddy
If my little brother cry
They beat me because I don't know why
If only they could show me just a little bit of love
I could fly like a dove

I can't remember being hug
Instead they have me fetching log
How frightened I am to make a joke
Because my neck will choke
Please help me to come out of this ugly state
Before its far too late


Devina Williams

**Appendix 4**

**He Raped Me**

My silent screams in the night
Were muffled by determined plight
I screamed, I yelled, at the top of lungs
But yet, but yet, no sound would come
I cradled my legs after he'd left

He took the only thing I had that was worth to be left
He stole it he stole my life
He took my dignity he took my pride
I feel like dirt, I feel like scum
I feel like the lowest thing on the ground

I want to yell I want to scream
He raped me, he raped me is what I'd scream
If only shock and silence weren't so keen
I'd call my best friend and I'd call Jean
I'd call the police just to scream

He raped me, he raped me
Now what does my life mean
Oh I'm feeling, I'm feeling so unclean

<div align="center">Shonette Jack</div>

Appendix 5

**Interview Schedule**

**Appendix 6**

**Kaiteur News Report**

**Appendix 7**

**List of Key Stake Holders**

# CHAPTER 9

## 9.1  REFERNCES