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MODULE 10: BROTHERS PROTECTING CHILDREN

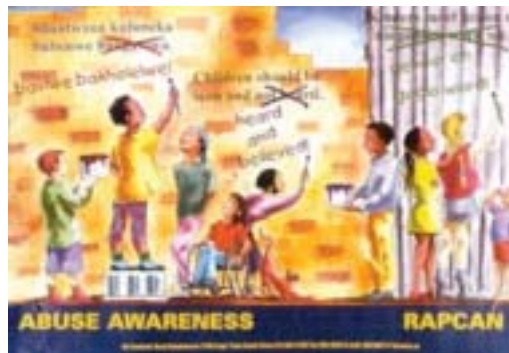
Welcome! Children in South Africa are vulnerable for a wide range of reasons. We have seen this in module 7 (Brothers taking a stand against violence) and module 8 (Brothers as parents). In this module we are going to look at the reasons why children are at risk in South Africa, and what Brothers can do to protect children against violence and sexual abuse.

This chapter will cover the following:

- Types of child abuse
- The consequences of child abuse
- Myths about child abuse
- Recognising child abuse
- What makes children vulnerable to abuse?
- Can boys be raped?
- What the law says
- What we can do to protect children

Key messages

- South Africa has high levels of child abuse – we know it is widespread but the exact number is difficult to estimate.
- Child abuse is clearly defined in South African law and is illegal.



- Child abuse has long-term consequences.
- Both boys and girls are sexually abused.
- We are all responsible for stopping child abuse.

Learning Objectives

- Understand what abuse is.
- Understand why abuse happens.
- Understand how to respond to child abuse.
- Understand our legal obligations.
- Begin to understand what we can do to stop it.

Why brothers need to know about child abuse

Child abuse has very serious consequences for the child who experiences it, but it also has very serious consequences for society at large – that means for all of us.

People often do not know what to do when someone is raped. Also, children are seldom able to protect themselves – it is up to us as adults to do so.

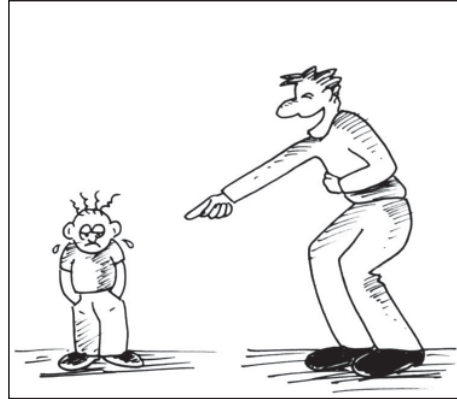
Often child sexual abuse (CSA) is identified long after it took place. This has important consequences – it makes it difficult to collect physical evidence for a court case and means that actions to prevent HIV or care for other health problems are not taken in time. In addition, sometimes children develop ways of trying to cope with the problem that are harmful for their long-term development.

When CSA is not reported, it makes children vulnerable to continued abuse, as they continue to be exposed to the perpetrator. It can also worsen physical and psychological problems when children are not able to access support services.

South Africa has particularly high rates of sexual abuse of young children and of violence in families.

What is child abuse?

There are different kinds of child abuse, and often children who are being abused in one way are also abused in other ways.



Emotional (psychological) abuse includes:

- Ignoring.
- Shouting/swearing.
- Favouring one child over others.
- Breaking down self-esteem.
- Manipulating (making a child 'take sides').

Physical abuse includes:

- Violent shaking.
- Hitting.
- Biting.
- Burning.
- Pulling hair.
- Pinching.
- Excessive, unwanted tickling.

Neglect includes:

- Not providing for the child's physical and emotional needs.
- Denying medical care.
- Keeping children away from school.
- Denying access to information.
- Denying opportunities to play and socialise.
- Abandonment.



Sexual abuse includes:

- Having sex with a child.
- Exposing a child to pornography.
- Deliberately having sex in front of a child.
- Using a child for sexual or pornographic activities or photos.
- Touching a child to stimulate the child or the adult sexually.
- Seductive behaviour with children.
- Flashing.
- Masturbating in front of a child.
- Sexual innuendo in how you talk to a child.



Other kinds of abuse include:

- Child labour: work that is not appropriate for the child's age and is detrimental to their developmental needs.
- Structural abuse, where the state is a perpetrator of abuses against children (e.g. putting children in prison, not providing schools or recreational facilities).
- Exposing children to violence – especially domestic violence: research tells us that the brain development and function of children exposed to domestic violence can be seriously impaired.

Myths about child sexual abuse¹

- Children are usually molested by strangers – *in fact, most children are abused by people they know and trust.*

- Men who abuse children are psychotic or retarded – *actually, men convicted of child abuse often perform normally on psychological tests.*
- Men are always the abusers – *actually, although it is rare, women are also sometimes the abuser.*
- Sexual abuse only happens to girls – *actually, it happens to both boys and girls.*
- Boys cannot be raped – *actually boys are also raped.*
- The child always feels negative towards the offender – *actually, the abused child can often have strong loving feelings towards the abuser (especially if the abuser is someone they are close to).*
- Mothers know of incest and condone it – *actually, while sometimes this is true, it is not always the case and sometimes mothers are too scared to report it if they are also being abused.*
- It does not happen in my family or community – *actually, it happens in all communities, mostly within families.*
- There is no love and affection in families in which abuse occurs – *actually, these families often seem loving and caring to the outside world.*
- Children should say no and stop the abuse – *actually, children are not able to challenge adults/older children due to cultural norms of respect.*

Recognising child sexual abuse

These signs and symptoms of abuse are not exhaustive, nor is their presence absolute confirmation of abuse – they are just some ideas of what to be aware of. They should always be considered in terms of the 'whole child' and not in isolation.

In infancy:

- Excessive masturbation.
- Inserting objects into body orifices.
- Difficulty sleeping and relaxing, having nightmares.
- Regression in milestones already achieved

(e.g. a child who has begun crawling stops doing so) and/or difficulties eating.

In childhood:

- Regression in milestones already achieved (e.g. bed-wetting by a child who had already stopped wetting their bed).
- Eating problems.
- Avoiding sport or games.
- Seeking out or avoiding adults.
- Mentioning a 'secret' in the family.
- Sexual behaviour with other children.
- Overtly knowledgeable about specific sexual acts.

In adolescence:

- Obsessive behaviour.
- Self-destructive behaviour.
- Isolation, fearfulness, excessive anxiety.
- Risky sexual behaviour.
- Running away.
- Blood on the child's underwear.
- Blood, itching or discharge in the genital area.
- An abnormal way of walking.
- In the case of girls, missed periods or pregnancy.
- STIs.



Consequences of child abuse

Children who have been physically or sexually abused can show many short- and long-term consequences.

For individual children, these include:

- An inability to form or maintain meaningful relationships.
- Being prone to end up in violent situations.
- Becoming extremely angry or fearful, and excessively anxious.
- Low self-esteem.
- Drug/alcohol/substance abuse.
- A lack of interest in self or others.

- Becoming isolated.
- Aggression in childhood and adulthood.
- Sexual difficulties.
- Eating disorders.
- Risky sexual behaviour.
- Impaired brain development and function – even when there is no direct injury to the head.

Although all forms of child abuse have serious consequences for the abused child, sexual abuse is particularly difficult to recover from.

There are many potential physical consequences of child sexual abuse:

- Severe internal injuries.
- Transmission of STIs and HIV from perpetrator to victim.
- Vaginal pain, incontinence (unable to control bladder or bowels), nosebleeds.
- Pregnancy.
- Physical injuries, especially to infants and very young children, can have severe and lasting consequences on their growth and development.
- Suicide.



Some consequences for society at large include:

- Perpetuating a society with high levels of violence.
- More people with physical, emotional and psychological problems which impact on the ability to learn, get and keep a job, and become a productive member of society.
- High costs to the medical and justice systems.

What makes children vulnerable?

Many children in South Africa are vulnerable, but some are especially vulnerable because of their living circumstances. These include children living on the street or in alternative

care and children living without adults. Children from single-parent households, those with physical or learning disabilities, street children, HIV positive children, children of HIV positive parents, and juvenile offenders may be particularly at risk of being sexually abused.

There are some factors which play a role in making these (and other) children even more vulnerable. These include:

Poverty and unemployment

There are a lot of people in South Africa living in poverty, and many children are born into, raised in and remain in poverty all their lives.

In 2007, 67.7% of children in South Africa (about 12.4 million children aged 0-18 years) were living in households with a total income of less than R350 per month.²

Research shows that poverty often means that children live in bad conditions.

Their homes are over-crowded and they may not have running water or electricity.

There is often not enough food to eat and

the food that is available does not give them enough nutrition.

Often children cannot go to school – even though there are ‘no-fee’ schools – because of the cost of school uniforms, school books and transport.

Caring for orphaned children (because of AIDS or other reasons) can put additional pressure on poor households and can eventually lead to these children being trafficked, exploited, sexually abused or drawn by adults into crime.

Poverty can lead to children being vulnerable to sexual exploitation and to ‘transactional sex’ – having sex in return for money, food or other things. Sometimes adults in the household ‘turn a blind eye’ to what is going on because the person abusing the child is providing food for the household.

When children are abused in situations like these, it is often impossible for the abuse to be reported to the police.

Patriarchal attitudes

South Africa is a society with very high levels of gender-based violence. Research tells us our society dictates rigid roles for women, men and children.

Patriarchal attitudes influence the development of gender roles. Gender roles shape people's behaviours and attitudes and define what is culturally and socially acceptable. Though gender roles shift over time, there still remain remnants of older beliefs. For example, that men in our society are supposed to be aggressive, strong and in control and never show weakness or fear; or that women are supposed to be weak, fearful and emotional, and need men to protect them.

Gender roles and stereotypes affect what people think about male and female sexuality. So for example, in some contexts, men are seen as having a greater need for sex and the right to have sex whenever and with whomever they like; it is not uncommon to hear people refer to a man who has many sexual partners as a 'real man'.

However, there are also double standards in our society. Often when a woman has many sexual

partners, she is seen as 'loose' or promiscuous.

There is evidence that in some societies more value is attached to roles of men than to the roles of women, and often women's value is determined in relation to the men in their lives – their fathers when they are young, their husbands when they are adults, and their sons when their husbands are no longer there.³

Violence

South Africa is a violent society with amongst the highest rates in the world of murder, rape, domestic violence, family murders and community violence. We have already seen this in module 7, which also looked at the reasons why we have such high rates of violence in our society.

It is important to remember that violence is so widespread in South Africa that it almost seems normal and that violence breeds violence – the 'cycle of violence' – where growing up surrounded by violence does not help us to learn other ways of coping with differences and dissent.

There is one kind of violence that is legally sanctioned within families and that is hitting children. It is illegal to hit your partner, or other adults. It is illegal to hit children in school and for the courts to sentence someone to corporal punishment. But it is perfectly legal to hit your own children.

The trouble with this is what it teaches children about how to deal with conflict – which we should think about, living as we do in an already violent society.

Research shows us clearly that there is a strong association between corporal punishment and children's aggression, their mental health, and their antisocial behaviour as children and as adults.

Research is clear that corporal punishment has the following negative outcomes:

- Decreased moral internalisation.
- Increased child aggression.
- Increased child delinquent and antisocial behaviour.
- Decreased quality of relationship between parent and child.
- Decreased child mental health.

- Increased risk of being a victim of physical abuse.
- Increased adult aggression.
- Increased adult criminality and antisocial behaviour.
- Decreased adult mental health.
- Increased risk of abusing own child or spouse.

HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS has had a profound effect on South African society, particularly on its children, and affects children in many ways.

Sexual abuse can cause a child to become infected with HIV. There are some factors that make HIV infection more likely:

- General HIV prevalence in the community.
- If the abuse is ongoing, there are more opportunities for transmission.
- If there is bleeding or injury as a result of forced intercourse. Anal intercourse is especially high risk. Children are especially prone to injury even where the abuser is 'gentle', because of their small size.
- Myths that suggest HIV can be cured by having sex with a virgin; this especially affects very young children.
- Lack of available post-exposure prophylaxis

(PEP) services.

- If CSA happens within a family, it is less likely to be reported, and less likely for the child to access PEP or to get counselling – and the abuse is more likely to continue over time.
- CSA can result in risky sexual behaviours later in life that increase risk of HIV infection.
- And children whose parents are sick or have died because of HIV are vulnerable to being abused and exploited.

Attitudes towards children

Somehow, we tend to think that we own our children, and should be able to do whatever we like to them. It is our job to bring them up and we tend to think that we have the right to do that any way that we want to.

Our society sometimes seems not to place a very high value on children. We say that we love our children and that children are our future – but we seldom make decisions in terms of what is in the best interests of children.

So we beat and assault them. Nearly 2,000 children are murdered in South Africa every

year by members of their own families. We neglect them and do not look after them properly or take responsibility for protecting them.

So, in many cases it is not such a big jump to thinking that it is ok to have sex with our children.

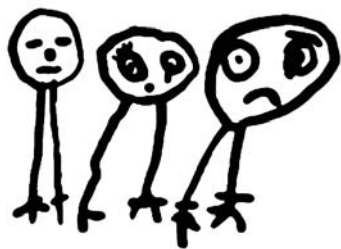
The people who most commonly sexually abuse children are their fathers, step-fathers, mothers' boyfriends, grandfathers, uncles and older cousins. Women can also sexually abuse children, though less often than men.

And, far too often, even when they know that a child is being abused, adults turn a blind eye, because they do not want to interfere, and because they do not think they have the right to meddle in someone else's private life. In fact it is a crime not to report suspected sexual abuse of a child.

Does rape happen to boys?

A lot of people think that men and boys cannot be raped. This is not true.

We learn more and more that men and boys



It shouldn't hurt to be a child.

are also raped. In some places, it is even true that girls and boys are equally at risk, although, in general, it is still women and girls who are most vulnerable to being raped.

In South Africa, the Medical Research Council has found, for example, that 1 in 30 men had been sexually abused in childhood.⁴

Men and boys seem to be even less likely than women and girls to report rape. An important reason for this is that men and boys who have been raped somehow experience this as calling their masculinity into question – because they

have been raped, they are somehow less manly. But the rape of a male person is just as much about power and control of the rapist over the victim as is the rape of a female person.

Community perspectives on child sexual abuse

How the community and the people around the child who has been sexually abused think and feel about child sexual abuse plays a big role in what happens when a child is sexually abused.

There is a lot of stigma surrounding abuse that happens within the family. In these situations, families often try to silence the child, wanting to 'shut them up', to prevent them from speaking out about the abuse. This means that the abuse is likely to continue, and the child will endure repeated traumatisations.

People living in South African communities may have different understandings of what constitutes sexual abuse. For instance, historically in the rural Eastern Cape, sexual activity that does not include penetration is an acceptable practice that can involve children.⁵ The idea that women can choose

when and how to have sex is new, and many people may struggle to understand that all forms of forced sex are unacceptable.

Dominant understandings of male and female sexuality can legitimise sexual abuse against children. For example, the idea that a man cannot control himself if he sees a girl-child without clothes, or if she is attractive and beautiful. In a study conducted into child sexual abuse in the rural Eastern Cape,⁶ sexual activity between children and adults was understood as being due to earlier onset of puberty in girls. This makes it seem that the sexual abuse is the child's fault, rather than the perpetrator's. Sexual abuse is never the child's fault.

The practice of 'ukuthwala', which is marriage enforced through abduction, used to be a common occurrence especially in rural South African communities. It still occurs in some communities nowadays, particularly in the Eastern Cape in spite of it being an illegal practice, with the tradition seemingly exploited to give credence and acceptability to forced marriages of younger and older girls.

'Paying for damages', whereby a perpetrator will pay off the victim's family as a way of resolving a case of child sexual abuse, is common in South African communities. This process is often preferred to reporting to the criminal justice system, particularly in poor communities, as families can benefit materially. Paying for damages can legitimise and perpetuate child sexual abuse directly and indirectly. The perpetrator who has paid damages is likely to reoffend, often with the same victim, and knowing they can escape the legal/penal system, there is little to deter new offenders.

What does the law say?

The Children's Act, in force since April 2010, says that 'a child' is a person under the age of 18 and that every child has the right to the basic necessities for survival (shelter and nutritious food) and to be raised in a loving family.

It also says that the state must help families as far as possible to provide these conditions for children – and where families cannot do so because of poverty or other reasons, the state must take steps to correct the situation.

The Children's Act says that anyone who is concerned that a child is being physically abused, exploited or neglected can report this to the police, and that some categories of people (such as a doctor, minister, social worker, teacher or traditional leader amongst others) have to do so.

It makes provision for a Child Protection Register of persons unfit to work with children. Anyone who has ever been convicted of a crime against a child is entered into this register and cannot be employed in any capacity where they would work with children.

Children under the age of 12 who understand the risks and benefits of HCT (HIV Counselling and Testing) are also legally able to choose for themselves whether to test.

It is important that organisations working with sexually abused children educate them about the benefits and the potential consequences of HIV testing so that they are able to choose for themselves.

The Sexual Offences Act, in force since the end of 2007, says that it is illegal to have sex with

a boy or girl under the age of 16, regardless of whether or not such a child has "given consent".

One of the most important changes in the new Sexual Offences Act is the recognition that girls and boys can be raped – it defines rape as any sexual penetration of the mouth, anus or vagina with a penis, body part or object or sexual penetration by an animal (in other words, not just penetration of the vagina by the penis as was the case before the law was changed).

The Sexual Offences Act says that any of the following with a child is illegal and a crime:

- Sexual exploitation of children (e.g. child prostitution).
- Sexual grooming of children (i.e. 'preparing' children for future sexual activity with them).
- Exposing a child to pornography of any kind.
- Using children for or benefiting from child pornography.
- Compelling or causing children to witness sexual offences, sexual acts or masturbation.
- Exposing the genital organs, anus or female breasts ('flashing') to a child.

The Sexual Offences Act also makes provision for a Register of Persons who have been convicted of sexual offences, who cannot be employed in any situation where they might encounter children.

Rape and HIV

If child sexual abuse is reported (either to the police or a clinic or hospital) within 72 hours after the rape, children who are HIV negative can get 'post-exposure prophylaxis' (PEP), which helps reduce the risk of HIV infection.

- If a child tests HIV positive, then they can access care and support.
- Even if the child or caregiver chooses not to report the incident to the police, it is very important to get medical care from a clinic or hospital.
- Health care providers need to clearly explain how to take the 28-day course of ARV medicines and what the purpose is – NGOs and community health care workers have an important role to play in helping children take PEP treatment consistently.
- It is very important to go back to the health care facility to be re-tested.

- It is important to believe children who report rape to make sure they can get PEP in time.

All children who have been sexually abused should undergo an HIV test, with their consent.

There does not have to be a health problem to be tested.

Children under the age of 12 who understand the risks and benefits of HIV Counselling and Testing (HCT) are also legally able to choose for themselves whether to test.

It does not matter how much time has passed since the abuse, it is still important for survivors to have an HIV test.

However, if the 72-hour period has passed, ARVs are no longer effective and then will not be given.

Children who are already living with HIV will not be put on ARVs unless they are already on ART.

Finally, the Sexual Offences Act says that



anyone who knows of a child being sexually abused or exploited in any way who does not report this to the police is themselves guilty of an offence and can be criminally prosecuted.

POINTS OF ACTION

So what can a Brother do?

Well, there are lots of things we can do. Remember that child sexual abuse is a kind of gender-based violence – so look again at the section on how to take a stand against gender-based violence in module 7.

In your own home and when parenting:

- Remember that children learn what they live – set a good example of the kind of adults you would like them to be.
- Allow your children and other children in your environment to learn to trust their own judgement – for example, it is never ok to insist that a child kisses an adult hello unless the child wants to.
- Challenge others who sexualise children, view child pornography or behave in inappropriate ways with children.
- Remember your legal responsibility to report to the police if you know of a child who is being sexually abused.

If a child even hints in a vague way that sexual abuse has occurred, encourage him or her to talk freely.

- Listen to the child and tell the child that you believe them.
- Make it clear that whatever has happened is not the child's fault.
- Reassure the child that they did the right thing in telling you. Many abusers threaten the child to prevent disclosure.
- Tell the child that some adults do wrong things and that the abuser is responsible for the abuse.
- Do everything possible to comfort and reassure the child. Explain what action you will take next. Do not make promises that you will not be able to keep, nor promise the child confidentiality. The child needs someone to act on their behalf to stop the abuse.
- Consult with your local Department of Social Development or Childline – their toll-free number is 0800 055 555.
- Be clear about your role. If you have a reasonable suspicion of sexual abuse, report your concerns to the appropriate authorities. It is not your responsibility to prove the case.

Reporting rape to the police

Either a child or a parent, or any person with an interest in the child, can report child sexual abuse at any police station.

Things to remember:

- The police are required to register a criminal complaint.
- The child does not have to make a statement immediately. The child may feel embarrassed to talk about the abuse, and should not be unnecessarily pressurised – this may cause problems later, when the matter goes to court. A statement can be added to as the child remembers further details, until the case is heard.

Prepare the child for reporting the abuse by telling him or her that:

- He or she is not a bad person for reporting the abuse.
- The police will ask many questions.
- He or she can ask for clarification if they do not understand the question.

At the police station:

- The statement must be written in the child's words.
- A child aged 12 or older may sign a SAPS 308 consent form, detailing the incident and consenting to a medical examination.
- A parent or guardian must sign the form for younger children.
- If a parent is the alleged offender or withholds consent unreasonably, their consent is not needed.
- The child's rights to being interviewed in private and by a female police officer, knowing the case number and being given a copy of their statement should be protected.

The Investigating Officer (IO) is responsible for:

- Investigating and building the case against and arresting the abuser, and opposing bail.
- Keeping the family informed of any developments.
- Considering any concerns around the child's safety.

The medical examination

A child who has been sexually abused must be examined by a doctor to determine any injuries, and gather evidence against the offender.

- A SAPS 308 consent form must be signed before the examination – see the section on reporting above.
- The head-to-toe examination must be done in private, but the child may ask for a support person to be present. Remember that a lack of physical injuries does not mean that the child was not abused.
- Prepare the child for the medical examination, as they may be uncomfortable while it is being done.
- The child may also require HIV testing and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) – a free course of antiretroviral drugs to reduce the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.
- PEP must be given within three days of the abuse incident.

An abused child will sometimes require trauma counselling for several months.

- This is critical in assisting the child to deal with the abuse, and preventing long-term emotional consequences.
- If a trained counsellor is unavailable, the child should be referred elsewhere for counselling.
- You may also be traumatised by your child's abuse, and require counselling to avoid adding to your child's distress.

Going to court

When a child abuse case comes to trial, it can be difficult for you and the child – but it is important to remember that neither of you is on trial.

Ask the prosecutor if the court has a child-friendly courtroom, where the child does not have to face the perpetrator in open court. Instead, the child testifies via closed-circuit television or through a one-way mirror from a separate room.

An intermediary will also put the questions to the child in an easy-to-understand and non-threatening way, to prevent the child from being further traumatised by this experience.

POINTS OF ACTION

Here are some tips for testifying:

- You are entitled to testify in the language of your choice, using an interpreter.
- Take your time answering questions. Answer as slowly and truthfully as possible.
- Speak as clearly as possible, so that everyone can hear you.
- Stay calm and take deep breaths.
- Try to look at the magistrate while answering questions.
- You may ask for a question to be repeated or explained, if you do not understand.
- You may ask for a support person to sit with you when testifying if this helps you.
- Remember, you have no control over how the magistrate will decide on the case or fate of the accused. What is important is that you and your child do the best you can, in order for justice to be served.

Practical tips for caregivers

Certain situations increase the risk of child sexual abuse. Parents and caregivers can play an active role in reducing some of these risks:

- Protecting children is everyone's responsibility

and men have an important role to play.

- Closely supervise children – know where they are at all times.
- Ensure children are accompanied when they walk to and from school.
- Do not leave children at home on their own or with people you do not know well.
- Realise sometimes even people you trust might abuse children.
- If your children live away from you, speak to them regularly and encourage them to talk to you if they have a problem.
- Encourage children to play in groups rather than alone.
- If your toilets are far from your home, do not let children go alone.
- Do not send children to taverns or shebeens to buy liquor.
- Encourage children to travel in groups on public transport and not to accept lifts from strangers.
- Tell your children not to go anywhere with someone they do not know.
- Speak openly with children about their rights and assure them if they feel uncomfortable with someone, or if anyone tries to touch them, that they should talk to you about it.

Children's rights:

All people have basic rights, regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, opinions, origins, wealth, birth status or ability. Children are people too – so they also have rights.

In 1989, world leaders approved a treaty that sets out the basic human rights of every child. This treaty, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, has been ratified by almost all of the countries of the world, including South Africa. Thus, as a country, we are committed to ensuring children's rights are protected and respected. These include:

- The right to survival and development.
- The right to protection from violence, neglect, exploitation and cruelty.
- The right to participate in decision-making by expressing their opinions and having them respected; having a say in matters affecting them; having access to information; and freely associating with other people.

Positive parenting is based on children's rights to healthy development, protection from violence and participation in their learning.

Positive parenting and child sexual abuse

Parenting is a tough job – have another look at module 8 for information on parenting in general.

An important part of parenting is protecting your child or children from all kinds of harm, including violence and sexual abuse.

Children who are most vulnerable to sexual abuse are often children who are unsure if they are loved, children who do not get enough positive attention, children who are afraid of their parents, and children who cannot talk easily with their parents about 'difficult subjects' such as sex.

It is important that children know their parents love them unconditionally (whether they have misbehaved or not). Parents should let their children know they love them, for example, by telling them what they like about them (positive affirmation). Spending time each day with children, talking and listening to them, also helps them know they are loved.

Self-esteem is important. Children should be praised which makes them feel proud and confident. It is important to remember that

behaviours are separate to a child. For example, if a child is naughty, parents should name the behaviour as naughty, not the child.

Children learn to communicate from their parents and will model what their parents do. For this reason parents should talk with and explain things to children; encourage children to talk openly and, for example, to share their daily activities with parents. Children should not be fearful of talking to their parents about anything. Open communication between parents and children emphasises that it is never acceptable for another adult (including parents) to tell them to keep secrets from their parents and/or significant others in their lives.

Parents need to make a point of letting their children know they love them regardless of what happens, including if a child experiences sexual abuse. This is important because the tendency is for children who have been sexually abused to believe the blame lies with them. Children who are allowed to express their opinions and say what they think are more likely to be able to recognise when something does not 'feel right', and are more likely to be able to say 'no'.

Children should be taught the names of their body parts, and parents should answer questions honestly. Children should be taught that it is not ok for anyone to touch them on the parts of their bodies (private parts and breasts). It is also important that children know they can say 'no' when anything makes them uncomfortable.

If a child has been sexually abused, parents should remember:

- Children need to learn the difference between love and sex – many children who have been sexually abused cannot make this distinction. Be loving and affectionate with the child – but respect their choices if they do not want to be hugged and cuddled.
- Be aware that even if our children can say 'no' and have been taught about appropriate and inappropriate touches, there are very few children that can stand up to adults.

Childline	0800 055 555
Lifeline	086 132 2322
Trafficking hotline	08000 RESCUE
SAPS	10111

CONVERSATION GUIDE: MODULE 10

Exercise 1

Break into small groups. Ask each group to think about and discuss the circumstances and attitudes in their communities that make children vulnerable to sexual abuse. For each element that they identify, ask them to identify strategies and actions they can take for changing it.

Ask each group to write up their suggested strategies and actions on flip-chart paper and put these up around the room.

Exercise 2

In the large group, ask all the participants to identify the two strategies/actions, among all those suggested, that each thinks is the most important.

Give each participant two coloured stickers. Ask each participant to place their stickers next to the strategies/actions that they have identified.

Exercise 3

Identify the strategies and actions with the most stickers. There should be a different one for each small group (so, if there are 4 small groups, select the 4 strategies/actions with the most stickers next to them).

Break into small groups. Randomly allocate one of the identified strategies/actions to each group.

Each small group should prepare a role-play of how they would try to implement the strategy/action they have been allocated.

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Poster page 1 and graphics pages 2 & 3:

Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (RAPCAN) – used with permission

Poster page 4: Childline S.A. – used with permission

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(Endnotes)

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