



# REVIEW ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SOUTH AFRICA 2020



science & innovation

Department:  
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**HSRC**  
Human Sciences  
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**unicef**   
for every child

# **REVIEW ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SOUTH AFRICA 2020**

THE CHILDREN'S FRIENDLY REPORT FOR CHILDREN'S CONSULTATIONS

REPORT SUBMITTED TO UNICEF SOUTH AFRICA

HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL

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Illustrations: Lindiwe Mashologu

# INTRODUCTION

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The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) South Africa commissioned the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) to hold participatory consultations with children of different age groups to document their voices on issues related to their safety and protection, wellbeing and health based on the findings of the status of violence against children review report - 2020. Guided by the rights perspective, consultations explored children's responses to the findings of the report as children growing up in South Africa. The children's voices are used to communicate children's understanding of the status of violence against children in 2020 and what has changed in the last twenty years in relation to this topic. The consultations with school children in selected South African provinces focused on violence reported by various studies which occurs at home, in school, in the community and online.

# BACKGROUND

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It is widely recognised that in South Africa, children experience violence and neglect. These experiences have far-reaching consequences for all children affected, including those who witness such violence. Violence against children, also referred to as VAC, affects the mental health, physical health, sexual and reproductive health, learning, social relationships of affected children, and future functioning in society. Media is constantly reporting on these issues from time-to-time and authorities express concern about them. It is unclear though how children themselves are affected by reports of violence committed against other children even when they are not directly involved or even know the victims.



This is a summary of a more detailed report on the Review of Violence against Children in South Africa, 2020 that is available online from the HSRC's and UNICEF's websites. It is written especially for children aged 10 years and older. UNICEF is partnering with government to expand the Peer Mentorship Project which is for young community care workers who provide support for pregnant and breastfeeding adolescent girls and young women in clinics and communities. UNICEF also supports Government to enhance children's participation in decision making through programmes such as the Children's Parliament and Junior Councillors. This report will be a resource for UNICEF to help them to fulfil their responsibility of protecting children's responsibilities and rights, including ensuring special right to protection for the most disadvantaged children. This summary will underline some of the important things we found when the report was written and what we think will be useful for young people to know. It will also include what children told us as responses to what is written in the report.



# **SOUTH AFRICA AND THE WORLD PROTECT CHILDREN FROM ABUSE, NEGLECT, EXPLOITATION, AND HARM**

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The report on the Review of Violence against Children in South Africa, 2020 was compiled by the HSRC for UNICEF South Africa in 2022. It looks at various types of violence against children, abuse, neglect, exploitation and child maltreatment that children experience in different places such as their homes, schools, communities, and through the internet when they search for information and when they communicate with others through social media.

# WORDS AND MEANINGS

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The following are definitions of some of the terms used when researchers, government departments, civil society organisations, teachers and funders speak or write about violence against children. They are used in this summary report and previous UNICEF reports:

**Assault with grievous bodily harm:**

A violent physical attack with the intention to hurt or cause serious injury to another person's body.

**Bullying:**

Includes teasing, spreading rumours, leaving children out of games, etc. on purpose, attacking someone by hitting or pinching them, or yelling at them.

**Child:**

Anyone who is younger than 18 years. In other words, if you have not turned 18 yet, you are still a child.

**Child abuse:**

Any kind of harm done to children, including neglect, physical, sexual or mental violence, by someone who is responsible for them, or has power or control over them, who they should be able to trust.

**Child abandonment:**

A crime whereby a parent legal guardian or caregiver deserts a child for no reason without any contact for 3 months. Most children are killed in the first 28 days of life.

**Child neglect:**

Failure by the parent or caregiver of a child to provide for their basic physical, intellectual, emotional or social needs despite having the means to do so.

**Common assault:**

A violent physical or verbal attack.

**Offence:**

The act of breaking a law or rule or doing something wrong. Also known as a crime.

**Child homicide:**

Child murder is the unnatural death of a child

under the age of 18 years for which another person is responsible.

**Corporal punishment:**

Any deliberate act that causes pain or physical discomfort to punish someone. It can take many forms such as hitting with a hand or an object such as a cane, belt, ruler or whip; or slapping, pinching or pulling hair.

**Children's Act:**

A special law that has specific provisions for the care and protection of children, especially the protection of children from abuse, harm and violence, as well as provision of the support that children need.

**Child Justice Act:**

A special law for children under the age of 18 years who are suspected of having committed a crime which describes to the police and courts how they should treat these children.

**Cyberbullying:**

Cyberbullying is when someone or a group uses the Internet, cellphones, online games, Facebook or anything similar to threaten, tease, humiliate or upset someone else.

**Pathfinder country:**

A country whose government after July 2016 has made a formal, public commitment to develop and implement a comprehensive action to end all forms of violence against children and has requested membership to the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children.

**Perpetrator:**

A person who has committed a crime.

**Sexual offence:**

Crimes such as rape, sexual abuse, forced sex on another person, or adults having sex with children.

# WHO IS A CHILD?

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on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), a child is any person under the age of 18. In South Africa, the laws recognise that children are not parents' or state's properties, they have equal status and the same rights as adults. In addition, they have specific rights that are based on their special needs. All children have the same rights and responsibilities. The UN's CRC, the Constitution and the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 recognise that children have specific rights that must be realised **for children to develop to their full potential**. These rights include **the right to be protected from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation everywhere**. All children in South Africa have the right to be protected from abuse, violence and things that could harm them.

## NUMBER OF CHILDREN LIVING IN SOUTH AFRICA FROM 2010 TO 2020

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As of 2020, South African population is 60 million people and 20 million are children aged 0 to 17 years. From 2010 to 2020 the number of children living in South changed. Most of the children live in Gauteng and Kwa-Zulu Natal, with numbers reaching over 4 million in each of the two provinces. These two provinces are different from Free State and the Northern Cape which have smaller percentages of children living in them. Northern Cape has only about 400 thousand children meaning that this is the province with the lowest number of children. It is also interesting to know that while the number of children has been decreasing in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo,



in all other provinces the number of children increased between 2010 and 2020. The reasons for the changes are many but some children migrate with their families in or out of these provinces. In addition, there may be new births leading to the number of children increasing.



## **LAWS, CODES OF CONDUCT AND PROCEDURES FOR PROTECTING CHILDREN**

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Following democracy in 1994, the South African government changed the country's laws and policies to ensure that all children had equal rights with everyone. The laws and policies were also developed to demonstrate that the country was committed to the international and African values of respecting children and protecting them from factors that may cause them

harm. The South African Constitution makes these values and norms clear. The Constitution is clear about the rights, dignity and protection of children in South Africa. Section 28 of the Bill of Rights, specifically states, “**every child has the right to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse and degradation**”. The Children’s Act No. 38 of 2005 is a crucial law protecting children from all forms of violence. The Act was also developed to ensure that the government will continue to provide services for families and children that prevent child abuse and neglect.

Other laws protect the welfare of children by ensuring that they receive economic support from the state and their parents that their health needs are met, and they are protected from harsh discipline in the home, at school and other institutions. Corporal punishment is banned, and no child should be punished physically.

These laws also ensure that children who experience violence, something which unfortunately is very common in South Africa, have their cases reported to adults who they trust, police, teachers, social workers, nurses and doctors. Reporting these events ensures that they can be prevented before they happen when those who are responsible for the care of children understand how children become abused. Reporting the events also ensures that affected children receive care and that those who harmed them are dealt with by police and courts. Hopefully, their severe punishment can discourage others from committing similar actions in the future.

Today children still experience different forms of violence even though South Africa has good laws to protect them from child physical abuse, child sexual abuse, child emotional abuse, neglect, and exploitation. These happen in children’s homes, schools, communities, as well as online when they use some platforms on the internet to learn, look for information or socialise.

# WHO TO CALL WHEN YOU EXPERIENCE VIOLENCE?

The following offices will help children that experience violence be it at home, school or in the community. There are professionals who are trained to handle reported cases and how to care and support children that report cases of violence.



**South African Police Services (SAPS)**  
Emergency line: 10111  
Child abuse reports: [childprotect@saps.gov.za](mailto:childprotect@saps.gov.za)  
Facebook: South African Police Service

**LifeLine South Africa**  
Tel: 0861 322 322  
Website: [www.lifelinesa.co.za](http://www.lifelinesa.co.za)  
Facebook: LifeLine South Africa

**The Teddy Bear Clinic:**  
**Johannesburg – head office)**  
Tel: 011 484 4554  
Email: [shahedao@ttbc.org.za](mailto:shahedao@ttbc.org.za)  
[natashar@ttbc.org.za](mailto:natashar@ttbc.org.za)

**The Child Emergency Line**  
Toll-free: 0800 123 321

**The Teddy Bear Clinic:**  
**Charlotte Maxeke Academic Hospital**  
Tel: 011 481 5118/ 061 917 9139  
Email: [shahedao@ttbc.org.za](mailto:shahedao@ttbc.org.za)

**The Teddy Bear Clinic:**  
**Ikhaya Lethemba Braamfontein**  
Tel: 011 242 3000  
Email: [shahedao@ttbc.org.za](mailto:shahedao@ttbc.org.za)

**Women and Men Against Child Abuse****Tel:** 011 789 8815**Website:** [www.wmaca.org](http://www.wmaca.org)**Facebook:** Women and Men Against Child Abuse**Twitter:** @WMAcAKidz**Tel:** 011 789 8815**Website:** [www.wmaca.org](http://www.wmaca.org)**Childline South Africa****Helpline:** 116 (free from all networks)**E-mail:** [admin@childlinesa.org.za](mailto:admin@childlinesa.org.za)**Website:** [www.childlinesa.org.za](http://www.childlinesa.org.za)**Facebook:** Childline South Africa**Twitter:** @ChildlineSA**YouTube:** Childline South Africa**Instagram:** @childlinesa**The Teddy Bear Clinic: Krugersdorp****Tel:** 011 660 3077**Email:** [shahedao@ttbc.org.za](mailto:shahedao@ttbc.org.za)**The Teddy Bear Clinic:****Diepsloot****Tel:** 079 374 4401**Email:** [shahedao@ttbc.org.za](mailto:shahedao@ttbc.org.za)**The Teddy Bear Clinic:****SOWETO Branch****Tel:** 011 980 8160**Email:** [shahedao@ttbc.org.za](mailto:shahedao@ttbc.org.za)**The Teddy Bear Clinic:****Johannesburg Magistrates Court****Tel:** 011 491 5288/ 084 094 3297**Email:** [shahedao@ttbc.org.za](mailto:shahedao@ttbc.org.za)**Child Welfare South Africa****Tel:** 074 080 8315**E-mail:** [info@childwelfare.org.za](mailto:info@childwelfare.org.za)**Website:** [www.childwelfare.org.za](http://www.childwelfare.org.za)**Facebook:** Child Welfare South Africa**Twitter:** @childwelfare\_sa**YouTube:** Child Welfare South Africa**Instagram:** @childwelfare

**MANY CHILDREN ARE AFFECTED  
BY VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA,  
EVIDENCE NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED**

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The statistics that report violence against children are not perfect. This is because the possible sources of information that would contribute to our fuller understanding of how often violence occurs to children, by who and where it occurred, are not well combined. Fortunately, we find that research efforts and initiatives that seek to find solutions to the problem of violence against children are growing, especially after 2010. These efforts are important, and they include research that focuses on measuring the seriousness of the problem. Also, some researchers in and outside South

Africa work together to develop ways of preventing violence against children. This work is important because it has proven to government that this is a very serious problem affecting many children.

In the same way, the government, and its development partners such as UNICEF, WHO and governments of other countries that are friends with South Africa, support children's non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The NGOs work with government to provide important services for children who are vulnerable or affected by physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation. These are health and social welfare services such as counselling support, treatment for injuries, and preventing infections that help children to heal physically and emotionally if it is found that they were affected by violence.

The services are needed to strengthen the laws and policies that the government continues to develop. It is important that the government provides services for children who are victims of violence because it is a commitment to address the plight of children in the country. This is because the government has signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Constitution requires the government to protect all children.

If all the government services used by children were checked to see which children are in danger of violence and where they experience violence, the quality of the data would improve. This improvement would greatly contribute to the global evidence needed towards realising some of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030. Sustainable Development Goals were developed in 2014 to help guide countries to ensure that people live better. Many states including South Africa committed to achieving these goals from 2016 to 2030. There are 17 SDGs and the ones that are specific for violence against children are

**SDG 5** – “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” and **SDG 16, target 16.2** – “End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children”.

There are many opportunities to improve the collection of data on violence against children using services that are already being used by families and children. For example, school enrolment, social workers’ family services reports, maternal and child health care, police services for domestic violence, and community health worker services. Children, parents and caregivers can contribute towards this improvement by **reporting** when children or other members of their families (for example, parent or sibling) are treated badly or if children find themselves in situations that make them feel afraid or uncomfortable.



# FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Improvements in availability of scientific data collected through research have helped us understand that violence is affecting many children living in South Africa. It is not good news that South African children may be experiencing levels of violence that are way higher than those experienced by children of the world in general. Both boys and girls are affected by different forms of violence, but some violence is affecting one sex more than the other. It is also the case with age groups, rural or urban children, and children living in certain provinces of South Africa. While parents, especially mothers are most likely to harm their infants, older children are harmed by various people who have a relationship based on trust and responsibility for children. They also experience violence from their peers and strangers.

The kinds of violence that children who live in South Africa experience at a high level, when compared to other children in the world together included murder of children – child homicide. Children were intentionally or unintentionally killed. The worldwide average of child homicide rate is about 2.4 in every 100 000 children, and in South Africa it is estimated that child homicide rate is about 5.5 in every 100 000 children. This is very high and the circumstances under which children die include child abuse and neglect as well as deliberate killing of children by parents, called filicide (which is different from infanticide discussed below).

Child sexual abuse 35%  
- one in every three  
children is sexually  
abused in SA

3500 SA babies  
were abandoned in  
2010



Physical abuse by  
primary guardian is  
56% in SA

878 SA children  
killed in 2020



A recent research study done on many children living in South Africa helped us understand which children are more likely to experience violence than others. The proportion of children who experienced sexual abuse before they reached age 18 years is even higher. Research has found that in every five children, one child experiences child sexual abuse (19.8% of children).



Again, this statistic is higher than the global estimate whereby 18% of girls versus 8% of boys have experienced child sexual abuse. Physical abuse is affecting even more children as research found that one in three children or 34.4% experienced child physical abuse compared with 23% of the global average. Physical abuse was more likely to be reported by girls, and by Coloured and Black children, than by boys, Whites, or Indian children. Emotional abuse is reported by 16% compared with the global average of 36% while child neglect was found to be experienced by 12.2% of children in South Africa compared to 16% global average. A high proportion of children reported that they witnessed violence (16%). Such violence is witnessed in the home, at school or in communities. Another research among learners shows that one in five (20%) learners had experienced some form of cyber bullying or violence in the past year.

Research shows that the conditions that make many children vulnerable to violence include exposure to drugs, alcohol, crime and conflict including domestic violence; absent parents, family difficulties such as parent long-lasting illness and disability, financial scarcity in the family, and caregiver's mental ill-health. Also, children who live in families that members experience HIV and AIDS-related stigma are likely to experience severe physical and emotional abuse. UNICEF knows that disability, race and gender of children usually influence which children will experience violence during their life time.

Experiencing violence during childhood has far-reaching consequences for children's immediate and future health and social situations. It affects their physical, mental and sexual and reproductive health. Their behaviour may also be affected whereby they become used to choosing aggression whenever they respond to stressful situations. Their learning abilities may also be affected thereby leading to poor educational progress and school dropout.

# WHO ARE THE CHILDREN MOST LIKELY TO SUFFER FROM VIOLENCE?

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South Africa's statistics on children who suffer because of violence are not perfect, but they are improving. Now we know that there are many infants that are abandoned by their parents in the first week and first month after birth. It is called abandonment of infants and it is common in South Africa. More often, abandoned children die due to abandonment leading to high rates of children who are killed in the first week or first month of life. Abandoned infants are found in places such as open fields, dustbins, and pit latrines, which often lead to their deaths. Although it seems to be a common problem, there is a lack of data that focus on child abandonment. But research shows that South Africa has seen an increase in infant abandonment in the last 10 years.

But the existing laws used to protect infants from murder have gaps. Research shows that three laws that classify killing of new-born babies known as neonaticide, and infanticide as crime are unfortunately not effective because they fail to prevent and respond to child abandonment. These laws also fail to recommend or mandate screening for maternal mental illness such as depression during pregnancy and after giving birth. Instead, the laws emphasise punishment for those who commit this crime (mostly mothers) and these laws do not provide early and confidential alternative services for vulnerable pregnant women. Community health workers and clinic nurses can work with social workers to prevent some of the child abandonment cases.

When it comes to people who harm children, they are many and have different relationships with their child victims. Some are family members,

for example parents, siblings, uncles; while others may be trusted by the children who are victimised.

## **PERPETRATORS OF NON-FATAL CHILD ABUSE, NEGLECT AND EXPLOITATION**

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A recent research study done on many children living in South Africa helped us understand who the main perpetrators of the various forms of abuse were. They were primary caregivers such as parents and other family members and peers. Primary caregivers were main perpetrators of physical and emotional abuse. Sexual abuse was perpetrated mostly by sexual partners or other peers. Teachers were the main perpetrators of physical abuse in school settings.

## **PLACES WHERE CHILDREN ARE EXPOSED TO HARM INCLUDING UNSAFE INTERNET**

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Research indicates that violence against children happens in many settings ranging from the home, schools, work places, communities, and via the internet. The use of internet by children facilitates cyber-bullying and online sexual abuse. Violence in schools has attracted huge media attention in South Africa and it is a concerning issue to education authorities. Violence in schools creates an atmosphere of fear and worry, which interferes with learning for those directly and indirectly involved in violence. It has

also been linked to tragedies such as child suicide and murder. But cyber violence is not confined to school environments.

With the increased access to information and communication technology (ICT) and use of internet-based communication have exposed children to people who use these technologies to harm children. Many people in the world agree that online technologies have brought many benefits for societies and children, however, young people and children may also be introduced to new forms of violence by peers and adults. These are online cyber violence and bullying which are of great concern for child protection authorities. Everyone regardless of gender and age can experience cyber bullying such as upsetting messages, hurtful rumours, and gossip. Children can also be groomed online by people who use the same online social media sites used by young people or even messaging apps (WhatsApp, Facebook).



# HOW DOES VIOLENCE HARM CHILDREN?

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Research informs us that violence against children has many negative consequences for children's wellbeing and health including affecting children's survival. It also causes psychological and social harms. Children who experience violence may experience difficulties with learning, they may have many psychological challenges (flashbacks), speak out against (gainsay) human dignity and face difficulties with interpersonal relationships. Different forms of violence against children affect them in different ways as shown below.

**Sexual violence** may cause serious illness in the form of emotional and mental distress. Children may experience post-traumatic-stress-disorder, depression, even self-harm, or death from suicide and homicide. Sexual abuse and rape can lead to unwanted pregnancies particularly for adolescent girls, unsafe abortion, sexually transmitted infections including HIV. Likewise, health impacts linked to ukuthwala, and girl-child marriages are increased vulnerability to HIV infections, sexually transmitted infections, and severe injuries to girls' reproductive system.

Those who are responsible for harming children must be reported to social workers and police. In the long term, sexual violence may lead to the government facing serious challenges when it comes to developing citizens. Even more, sexual abuse in childhood may increase the risk of immediate sexual victimisation or even later in childhood or adulthood. Children need ongoing support.

**As soon as it is discovered that a child might have been abused or when a child reports such occurrence, they must be supported with appropriate psychosocial and health services.**

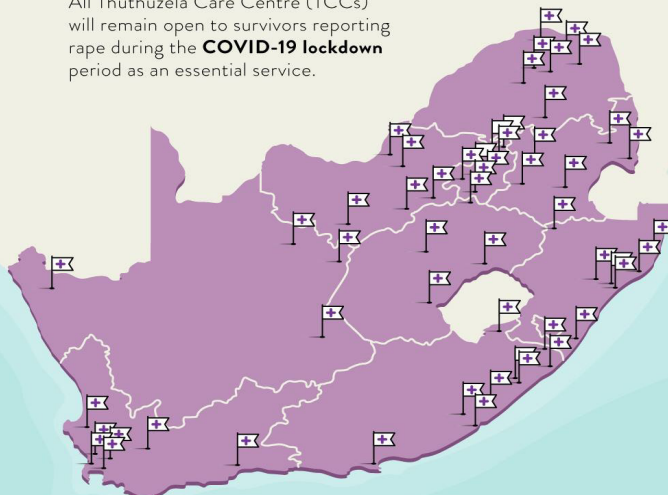
Children and their caregivers can be assisted at the Thuthuzela Care Centres. They are based at 54 hospitals across South Africa (**See the map of available Thuthuzela centres below**). South Africa is praised by many countries for developing these centres. The centres are where the investigators of crimes against children will examine a child and collect evidence used to hold the perpetrator accountable for his or her wrongdoing according to the law.

Children also receive needed medical services after being sexually abused.

**These are emergency services provided in the 72 hours immediately after a rape.**

## THUTHUZELA CARE CENTRES

All Thuthuzela Care Centre (TCCs) will remain open to survivors reporting rape during the **COVID-19 lockdown** period as an essential service.



The TCCs will remain open as a 24 hour service

**WESTERN CAPE TTCs**

- Heideveld Day Hospital 021 699 3246
- Karl Bremer Hospital 021 918 1321
- Khoyelisha District Hospital 021 360 4570
- Victoria Hospital Forensic Unit 021 799 1111/1235
- George Hospital 044 873 4858
- Westleur Hospital, Atlantis 021 010 0421
- Worcester Hospital 023 348 1294

**EASTERN CAPE TTCs**

- St Patrick's Hospital, Bizana 039 251 0236
- Butterworth Hospital 047 491 2506
- Dora Ngqisa Hospital 041 406 4112
- Grey Hospital 043 643 3300
- St Barnabas Hospital, Mthatha 047 555 1010/11
- St Elizabeth Hospital, Lusikisiki 039 253 5000
- Cecilia Makiwane Hospital, East London 043 761 2023
- Mthatha General Hospital 047 502 4000
- Taylor Bequest Hospital, Matatiele 039 737 3107
- Matatiele 039 737 3186

**FREE STATE TTCs**

- Bongani TCC Health Complex Welkom 057 355 4106
- Metimaholo District Hospital, Sasolburg 016 973 3997
- Phekolong Hospital, Bethlehem 058 304 3023
- Tshepo TCC National District Hospital, Bloemfontein 051 448 6023

**GAUTENG TTCs**

- Chris Hani Bara Hospital, Diepkloof 011 933 1140
- Kopanong Hospital, Vereeniging 016 428 5959/7105
- Laudium Hospital, Pretoria 012 374 3710
- Lenasia Hospital 011 211 0632
- Mamelodi Day Hospital 012 841 8413
- Tembisa Hospital 011 923 2180
- Thelie Moggerane Hospital, Vosloorus 011 590 0086

**KWAZULU NATAL TTCs**

- Edendale Hospital 033 395 4325
- Madadeni Hospital 034 328 8508
- Ngqelanzana Hospital 035 794 1471
- Port Shepstone, Regional Hospital 039 688 6021
- Umlazi TCC 031 907 8496
- Phoenix TCC, Unit 2 031 502 2338
- RK Khan TCC, Westcliffe 031 401 0394
- Stanger Regional Hospital 032 551 6632

**NORTH WEST TTCs**

- Job Shimankane, Tabane Hospital 014 590 5474
- Klerksdorp Hospital 018 465 2828
- Mafikeng TCC, Provincial Hospital 018 383 7000
- Potchefstroom Hospital 018 293 4659
- Taung TCC, District Hospital 053 994 8228

**LIMPOPO TTCs**


- Groblersdal Hospital 013 262 3024
- Mankweng Hospital, Polokwane 015 286 1000
- Mokopane Hospital, Mokopane 015 483 4000
- Mosina Hospital 015 534 0446
- Nkhenani Hospital, Giyani 015 812 0227/0233
- Seshego Hospital 015 223 0483
- Tshildzini Hospital, Thohoyadou 015 964 3257

**MPUMALANGA TTCs**

- Ermelo Hospital 017 811 2031
- Evander Hospital 017 632 2211
- Themba Hospital 013 796 9412
- Tonga Hospital, Nkomanzi 013 780 9231/9232
- Witbank Hospital 013 653 2000

**NORTHERN CAPE TTCs**

- Central Karoo Hospital 053 631 7093
- Galeshewe Day Hospital 053 830 8900
- Kuruman Hospital 053 712 8100/33
- Springbok Hospital 027 712 1511



## Thuthuzela Care Centres, Rape Crisis

<https://rapecrisis.org.za/what-is-a-thuthuzela-care-centre>

Exposure of children to frequent or **long-lasting physical or emotional abuse, domestic violence, neglect, caregiver substance abuse and mental illness** may affect learning. Similar consequences have been reported for **sexual abuse** victims. But in addition, victims may be likely to engage in unsafe

sexual behaviour and substance misuse. Some victims may experience conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder, and anxiety or depression.

**Physical abuse** of children results in injuries including fractures, burns, wounds, bruises and broken bones, even death. South Africa is facing high levels of communicable and non-communicable diseases and some of them are linked to early life experiences of violence.

**Consequences of cyber bullying are also serious. A child's learning ability can suddenly become poor and affected children can experience anxiety, low self-esteem whereas, in some cases, victims become suicidal.**

Initiatives to prevent and respond to violence that affects children in their homes, schools, communities and online require interventions that empower parents with new parenting skills and children with knowledge. For example, in South Africa, interventions that teach parents skills include the following:

- 1. PLH for babies and toddlers** (aged 0 to 23 months) which focus on pregnant women and new-borns, and on toddlers.
  - Infants and toddlers
- 2. PLH for young children aged 2 to 9 years old.**
  - Sinovuyo 2-9
- 3. PLH for adolescents aged 10 to 17/18 years old.**
  - Sinovuyo Teen

Research shows that these interventions help improve the relationships that parents have with their children and give them skills on how to discipline children without harming them. Parents and children who face distressing problems need support to prevent them from resorting to harsh discipline. Currently these interventions are not provided to parents who may need

them because the government has not yet adopted them on a large scale. Vulnerable children and youth have received care services in their homes by trained child and youth care workers through the **Isibindi project**.

**The services include education, health, and social welfare for caregivers and children. They also include legal responses dealing with those who commit violence against children.**

Because violence can be prevented, opportunities to prevent violence affecting children must always be identified, supported with funds and be used to provide children with safe environments.

## **WHAT WORKS TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN?**

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### **PATHFINDERS NETWORK**

**South Africa is a member of a network of countries (governments, development partners and NGOs) that have committed to ending violence against children by 2030.**

The members of the Pathfinders network use a tool called INSPIRE. INSPIRE stands for Implementation and enforcement laws; Norms and values; Safe environments; Parent and caregiver support; Income and economic strengthening; Response and support services; and Education and life skills (<https://www.who.int/teams/social-determinants-of-health/violence-prevention/inspire-technical-package>). This is an evidence-based resource used by everyone dedicated to preventing and responding to violence against children and adolescents, whether they are grassroots communities,



government departments, civil society organisations or the private sector such as business, academics, researchers, donors, and family foundations.

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Actions taken by countries in relation to each component of the INSPIRE strategy is what influences change in prevention, risk and protective factors, prevalence, response and consequences of violence against children. Children's safety will be improved if government can improve public funds for interventions that implement INSPIRE tools.

Today the South African government, development partners, researchers and NGOs in South Africa are pursuing the implementation of INSPIRE package. They support parents to understand the benefits of warm and nurturing interactions with their children; school children and young people in communities learn about changing social norms that promote gender equality. The Parliament is involved in amending laws to ensure that their implementation protects children from harsh discipline at home and in school, domestic violence, neglect, gender-based violence, and emotional abuse.



I feel like the cause of violence is linked with ideas about how boys and girls are expected to behave. Boys are expected to be strong and they dominate and punish girls for not doing what they tell them to do. This is a wrong attitude!

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1 The Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children promotes the concept of Pathfinding, which aims to raise awareness, stimulate leadership commitment, stimulate action, and establish a standard of national violence prevention throughout the world. <https://www.end-violence.org/pathfinding-countries>

Maintaining the Child Protection Register in line with the Children's Act ensures that people found guilty of crimes against children are documented and prohibited from doing future work in settings or services that involve children.

**South Africa still has a lot of work to do towards ending violence against children through prevention and response.**

It is the responsibility of government, families, business, NGOs, and international agencies such as UNICEF, UNESCO and WHO, as well as South Africa's development partner to continue ensuring that all children are protected from violence and its consequences. The efforts of various organisations and professionals have brought about some improvements in creating safer environments for children, but more still needs to be done. Government departments must improve availability of statistics so that all the forms of violence against children, causes and consequences can be well understood and targeted with appropriate services. If all parents and families that have children are supported with services and information early, children will be safe from violence. The government is reviewing laws so that perpetrators of violence against children can be arrested and sentenced by courts.

**Children need to be safe from violence to grow free, healthy, happy and to learn at school.**



# REVIEW ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SOUTH AFRICA 2020



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