

CHAPTER THREE:

Understanding Child Risks/Types of Risks/.

3.1 Risk

The probability of harmful consequences, or expected loss (of lives, people injured, property, livelihoods, economic activity disrupted or environment damaged) resulting from interactions between natural or human induced hazards and vulnerable/capable conditions.

3.2: Child abuse – attitudes and values

we must understand that children who are victims of neglect or abuse may acquire disabilities not caused by genetic or birth disorders. We all have a responsibility to stop this type of violence against children.

2.2: What is child abuse?

The family is where a child is supposed to receive love and care, to build up a basic trust of the world and of other people. However, the cruel reality is that millions of children throughout the world each year have been abused by the people they love and trust the most - their own parents. This is the ultimate betrayal of trust.

There are many kinds of child abuse. There are physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and verbal abuse. Physical abuse may produce the 'battered-child syndrome'. In this case, a child's growth and development is seriously traumatized by harsh and cruel physical treatment. Emotional abuse and sexual abuse can be even more destructive than physical abuse in the long run. Often, they go undetected and unrecognized for many years, partly because the family tries to keep it a secret, or partly because some people simply do not believe that sexual abuse of a child can happen in the family. Victims of emotional or sexual abuse often have interpersonal problems as adults. They may go into fits of depression and have outbursts of hostility and anger that they cannot control or understand.

Incest is a form of child abuse where the parent or parent-like figure has sexual contact with the child. In many cases, a girl is the victim. The shame and guilt associated with this form of sexual abuse are so severe that they inevitably leave everlasting scars on the child's psychological adjustment.

Child neglect is also a common form of maltreatment, and the most destructive. Many deaths, injuries and long-term problems have been due to child neglect. In some cases, for example,

infants are starved to death or undernourished. Some are undernourished emotionally - their parents rarely touch, talk or play with them. Finally, many childhood accidents, which are the leading causes of childhood death and serious injury, can be traced to neglect.

Abuse is looked at in three areas:

Physical Abuse: this is defined as any physical injury to the child, which is not caused by an accident

Sexual Abuse: this is defined as any sexual involvement/activity forced upon a child by an adult.

NB : No child can be said to “consent” to a sexual act, all are forced

Emotional Abuse: this is more difficult to define but consists of any words or actions that demean a child and make them lose their sense of worth, acts which lower their self-esteem. Stress, traumatic experiences or poor parenting of the parents or family members may be some reasons why a child may be subjected to neglect or abuse.

However, the key is to seek help for the child and the family. Some of the signs (indicators) may include:

Neglect: This is defined as failure by parents/guardians/caregivers to provide adequate supervision, nutrition, hygiene, medical care and nurturing to the child in their care. Children need all these things in order to grow and develop physically and emotionally.

Physical Abuse Indicators:

- bruises, burns, cuts , broken bones
- child delays going home and is fearful of caregivers
- child is passive and withdrawn
- child draws back / flinches if an adult approaches too close or too quickly
- child is overtly aggressive

Sexual Abuse Indicators:

- there is a sudden change in the child’s behaviour
- there may be a deterioration in the child’s performance in academic work
- the child complains of head and stomach aches
- the child may display sexual behaviour and knowledge not appropriate for their age
- the child is reluctant to go home.

NB : Sexual Abuse happens to both girls and boys.

- **Emotional Abuse Indicators:**

- the child is passive, withdrawn and hangs his/her head
- the child's academic work shows deterioration
- the child becomes an isolate and makes little effort to mix with other children
- there may be a deterioration in the child's physical appearance.

- **Indicators of Neglect:**

- malnutrition/failure to thrive
- poor body hygiene
- dirty and inadequate clothing
- child left unsupervised
- medical needs not attended to
- child may become either aggressive, abusive or withdrawn
- may steal food
- often absent from school
- child is often very tired.

Remember, we all have a responsibility to stop any form of abuse against children and especially those who may be even more vulnerable because of their disability.

3.1.1 Hazard

- Phenomena, event, occurrence or human activity which has the potential for causing injury to life or damage to property and the environment. There are three types of hazard:

1. Natural: typhoon, earthquake, volcanic eruption, tsunami
2. Human-made: fire, pollution, oil spill, industrial accidents (such as leakage of toxic waste)
3. Combination or socio-natural hazards: flooding and drought can fall under this category if it is due to deforestation

Hazard Classification (UNISDR, 2002)

1. Natural Hazards - Natural process or phenomena occurring in the biosphere that may constitute a damaging event. Natural hazards can be classified by origin: geological, hydro-meteorological or biological.

Geological Hazards - Earthquake, tsunamis;

- Volcanic activity and emissions
- Mass movement i.e. landslides, rock fall, liquefaction, submarine slides
- Subsidence, surface collapse, geologic fault activity

Hydro-meteorological Hazards - Floods, debris and mudflows;

- Tropical cyclones, storm surges, thunder/
- Drought, desertification, wild land fires, heat waves, sand dust storms
- Permafrost, snow avalanche

Biological Hazards: processes of organic origin or those conveyed by biological vectors, including exposure to pathogenic micro-organisms, toxins, and bioactive substances

- Outbreaks of epidemic diseases, plant or animal contagion, and extensive infestations

2. **Technological Hazards** - danger originating from technological or industrial accidents, dangerous procedures, infrastructure failures or certain human activities, which may cause the loss of life or injury, property damage, social and economic, disruption or environmental degradation. Sometimes referred to as anthropogenic hazards. Some examples: industrial pollution, nuclear activities and radioactivity, toxic wastes, dam failures; transport, industrial or technological accidents (explosion, fires, spills)

3. **Environmental Degradation** - Processes induced by human behavior and activities (sometimes combined with natural hazards), that damage the natural resource base or adversely alter natural processes or ecosystems. Potential effects are varied and may contribute to an increase in vulnerability and the frequency and intensity of natural hazards.

Some examples: land degradation, deforestation, desertification, wild land fires, loss of biodiversity; land, water and air pollution; climate change; sea level rise; ozone depletion

Disaster

- Occurs when a hazard strikes a vulnerable community with low capacity resulting in damages, loss and serious disruption of community life.
- The widespread human, material and environmental losses exceed the community's ability to cope using its own resources.

Disaster risk

- Likelihood of a hazard striking a vulnerable community, causing injury, damage and loss.
- The bigger the vulnerability, the bigger the disaster risk. The bigger the capacity, the smaller the disaster risk.
- Disaster Risk = $\frac{\text{Hazard} \times \text{Vulnerability}}{\text{Capacity}}$

Capacities are the resources, means and strengths possessed by persons, communities, societies or countries which enable them to prevent, mitigate, prepare for, withstand, or quickly recover from a disaster. Skills, knowledge, practice, organizations, institutions, attitudes and values are important capacities when material resources are limited.

Coping refers to managing resources or survival strategies in adverse or crisis situations.

Resilience

The capacity of a system, community or society to resist or to change in order that it may obtain an acceptable level in functioning and structure. This is determined by the degree to which the social system is capable of organizing itself, and the ability to increase its capacity for learning and adaptation, including the capacity to recover from a disaster.

Elements-at-risk

Who and what can be damaged:

- People (their lives and health)
- Household and community structures (houses, community centres, schools)
- Community facilities and services (access roads, bridges, hospital, electricity, water supply, etc.)
- Livelihood and economic activities (jobs, crops, livestock, equipment, etc.)
- Environment (natural resource base)

Child trafficking

Child trafficking is one of the most horrifying crimes imaginable. Children are bought and traded; sold into a life of servitude and abuse. Ethiopia is a child trafficking hotspot.

A recent 'Trafficking in Persons' report from the United States Department of State highlights the problem in Ethiopia:

“Ethiopia is a source country for men, women, and children subjected to trafficking in persons, specifically conditions of forced labor and forced prostitution. Girls from Ethiopia’s rural areas are forced into domestic servitude and, less frequently, commercial sexual exploitation, while boys are subjected to forced labor in traditional weaving, agriculture, herding, and street vending.”

Families who struggle to maintain their families are often persuaded to sell their children, or even pay for them to be sent to a better life. There is a flow of rural children to Ethiopian cities and trafficking of children from cities to foreign countries.

“The parents are often deceived with promises of money or that the child will be educated [...] we are talking about thousands of children each year.”

The IOM warned that thousands of Ethiopian women were also trafficked abroad. At least 10,000 have been sent to the Gulf States to work as prostitutes, the agency said. *“There are increasing numbers of young women being recruited from here for sexual purposes”* .

In 2005 traffickers in Ethiopia were reported to earn around \$800 for each victim they send overseas, this value is likely to have nearly doubled. If caught, they are liable to 20 years imprisonment but few are ever prosecuted. In fact in 2009 only five convictions were made country-wide, with only one offender imprisoned.

With a limited threat of prosecution and high returns it is little surprise that child trafficking and forced labour are on the rise in Ethiopia.

It is beyond the capability of Yenege Tesfa to tackle the traffickers, however our response is through education. Our social education programmes aim to tackle this issue by educating children and young adults

2.3: How religious systems keep children safe

Parents who are connected with a religious community may experience higher levels of social support themselves and may afford their children greater opportunities for such support than do parents who do not participate.

A consistent empirical finding is that adults who are part of a religious community are less socially isolated than are other adults. Such support enhances coping mechanisms and provides parents with a different perspective which helps them deal with stress and difficulties. A growing body of research highlights the role of religion and spirituality in helping parents cope with sick or emotionally or behaviorally disturbed children.

Religiosity has been found in several studies to be positively correlated with family cohesiveness and less incidence of interparental conflict. Parental religiosity has been linked to greater involvement, warmth and positivity in parent-child relationships.

Religiousness is positively correlated with an authoritative parenting style, which is characterized by greater respect, warmth and affection, as well as clearly communicated and well-defined rules for children. Additionally, many religions have proscriptions against excessive drug and alcohol use...Each of these characteristics promotes a healthy family environment.

2.4: Keeping Children Safe in their communities –cultural practices, beliefs and faith

WHAT IS CULTURE?

Culture is learned behaviour. This includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. It is passed on from generation to generation. Culture gives people an identity. It affects the thought and behaviour of people. Because of culture, people can be identified by outward characteristics, such as dress or actions.

In some societies family lineage is passed on from the mother to the daughter, and women are the decision-makers, responsible for the upbringing of children, and major supporters of the family economy. This is called a matrilineal society. However, most contemporary societies are patrilineal, in the sense that the lineage is passed from father to son, and men have a higher status and power than women. In Africa, patrilineal society is common. Sons inherit their father's land

and possessions. Daughters marry to become their spouses' wives. Children carry the father's surname rather than the mother's.

Transmission of Culture

How do people acquire their culture? What institutions are involved in this process? People acquire culture by a process called socialization. Socialization is the process whereby individuals in a society learn values, standards of behaviour, and the beliefs current in a particular society. Some of these standards relate to particular roles for men and women, parents, the chief. People become socialized through agents of socialization, which include the family, the school system, the church, the mass media, and other institutions which have an effect on the individual from childhood to adulthood. These institutions do not necessarily work in isolation. After the child has come into contact with other members of the community, and learns independently, all these agents begin to influence him/her.

The family is the most important agent of socialization. It is the basic unit of society, and the place for reproduction, child-bearing and child-rearing. It is in the family that the young child first learns the rules of behaviour (i.e., norms), and to cherish similar objects and behaviour (i.e., values). The family is the basic social institution in a community or society, and is important for the transmission of culture.

Communities are an extension of families in the same way as societies are an extension of communities. A particular community and a particular society develop, and pass on, similar norms and values. Culture influences the family, community and societies, basically because all norms, values, beliefs, including language, are passed on during interactions between their members.

It is important to note that culture is not stagnant. As we have emphasized in the above section, culture is always changing. Cultural dynamism is the secret of the survival of society. Cultural change is the people's way of adapting to new situations created by nature, or often by people themselves.

Culture Change

Culture, being a way of life, is dynamic and always changing. It changes because people are in contact with other cultural systems. It changes through the exchange of material things,

knowledge and beliefs. It also changes as society develops new behaviour, and adapts socially, economically and technologically. These changes in culture lead to changes in outlook, possessions, and general behaviour.

In different cultural contexts, factors other than age may be important in determining who is a child or an adolescent: factors such as social roles, gender, marital status and the capacity to contribute economically may be more important than chronological age in shaping expectations of children.

Rituals of religion or custom may also confer social status, clearly marking points of transition in rights and obligations in the eyes of the wider community. These may be indirectly linked to age, notably the onset of puberty. In many cultures, adolescents, both boys and girls, go through rites of passage which, once successfully completed, confer adult rights and responsibilities. The ability to maintain such customs is often difficult in the context of displacement, where lack of income and access to important resources may delay or dilute these practices.

An assessment of the way universal principles, national laws, local regulations and customs shape expectations of children at various ages should be the starting point for intervention. In the context of displacement and other circumstances of severe adversity, children may find themselves assuming roles that have not been traditionally prescribed. This can include becoming the head of a household.

Protective Factors

Protective factors serve to shield both parents and children from the worst effects of such risk factors and thereby contribute to resilience. Some of these protective factors relate to the characteristics, assets or resources of the individual such as the following:

- ❖ Cognitive competence - a reasonable level of intelligence, skills in communication, realistic planning etc.;
- ❖ A positive sense of self-esteem, self confidence and self-control;
- ❖ An active coping style rather than a passive approach - e.g. a tendency to look to the future rather than to the past;

- ❖ A sense of structure and meaning in the individual's life, often informed by religious or political beliefs, a sense of coherence etc.

In addition, protective factors are also a product of the **child's immediate social environment** such as the following:

- Good and consistent support and guidance from parents or other care-givers;
- Support from extended family and friendship/community networks, teachers etc., and the re-establishment of a normal pattern of daily life;
- An educational climate which is emotionally positive, open and supportive;
- Appropriate role models which encourage constructive coping.

In situations of conflict and forced migration, many of the child's personal resources may have been undermined, and many of his or her social support systems may have been destroyed or disrupted. For parents or other care-givers, various personal characteristics will serve to limit, or enhance resilience: within their immediate social environment, protective factors may include:

- ❖ A supportive marital relationship;
- ❖ Support from the extended family;
- ❖ Supportive community structures - e.g. informal support from community, neighbours, women's associations etc.;
- ❖ Access to appropriate health and support services;
- ❖ Opportunities to re-establish an acceptable economic base for the family.

The presence of such protective factors for parents will enhance their capacity for offering appropriate support to their children, but again many of these will have been adversely affected by conflict and forced displacement.

SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES

Many children live under conditions of poverty with inadequate housing, clothing, supervision and love. One contributing factor to this is the migration of families from rural to urban areas, where they face not only economic difficulties, but also a lack of the traditional support system offered by the extended family unit. Urban migration results in cultural diffusion, and a loss of the values and norms that used to govern society.

There is also a trend for the traditional family structure to break down. This has grave consequences, especially for the children and youth, who comprise more than 50 per cent of the population in most African countries. Some by-products of the lack of a family support system and guidance for youth are teenage pregnancy and AIDS-related cases. These are increasing, despite advanced health services and modern methods of family planning.

For the benefit of the children and young people, governments provide a variety of institutions, such as schools, colleges and universities, where young people can be socialized. But because these institutions are becoming increasingly expensive, many children are deprived of such opportunities. Except where education is free, some governments help brilliant, but disadvantaged children, and young people, through bursaries and scholarships, to continue and complete their education.

To help children and young people, some countries also offer foster care. Some have children's villages. Most of the institutions which offer help to young people belong to non-governmental organizations such as the church.

The need for social services to help children and young people cannot be overemphasized. They need all the help and guidance they can get, especially in the face of the challenges that life offers them. There is the lure of drugs, or pre-marital sex, both of which lead easily to sexually transmitted diseases including HIV (AIDS). The choices the young make may have grave consequences for their lives and their future. This is why support and counseling are important . It is important that the young receive adequate social services.