

Voices on Violence

What should be done about violence against children?

“Did you see what happened yesterday?” John said to his friend as they were walking to school. “That Salim’s father was beating him again with a thick stick and he was screaming so loud.”

“What’s new about that? That man tortures him like he is an animal.” his friend replied.

“But this time it was different,” John said. “The muzee who lives next to them asked him to stop it! Other neighbours also talked to him and tried to make him understand that what he was doing was not a good way of guiding children and showing them their mistake.”

“That happened here in our street?” his friend asked with surprise.

“Not only that,” John said to his friend. “Later the Local Council Chairperson and another woman who said she was Secretary for Children’s affairs came by and counselled Salim’s father. They talked for a while and then he agreed to try a different way. He even promised to send Salim to school. Can you believe that?” John asked his friend.

“The Secretary for Children’s Affairs said”, he continued without waiting for an answer to his question, “that she was getting together a committee of people who volunteer to help children and counsel adults who are violent towards children. Even the priest and the Imam said they are going to say something at the church and the mosque.”

“Maybe,” his friend said, “we could also start a group at school that helps our friends who are suffering from violence from teachers or other adults.”

“Yes and we could help other children learn about their rights,” John added in excitement.

They both looked at each other. “Things are beginning to change for children, John said to his friend.”

In a study completed recently, almost 80% of the children said that other adults should talk to violent adults about their behaviour towards children. More than 70% said that communities needed places that responded to children’s needs and assisted them when they reported violence. Only 57% said that the police should intervene.

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