



**RESEARCH ON FACTORS
CONTRIBUTING TO CHILD
DEFILEMENT IN BUGESERA,
GATSIBO, NYARUGURU, AND KIGALI
CITY**

Final Report

Kigali, March 2022

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
AGR	Association de Guides du Rwanda
ARCT	Rwanda Organisation of Trauma Counsellors
AVP	Association des Volontaires de la Paix
BLAO	Better Life Achievement Organisation
CFI	Child First Initiative
CHRD	Center for Human Rights Development
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSA	Child Sexual Abuse
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
CSIs	Case study Interviews
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CUI	Coalition Umwana ku Isonga
CVT	Children’s Voice Today
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
FATE	From Access to Equality
GBV	Gender Based Violence
	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune
HIV/AIDS	Deficiency Syndrome
ICRP	Integrated Child Rights Policy
IZU	Inshuti z’ Umuryango (Friends of the Family)
KABP	Knowledge, Attitudes, Behaviors and Practices
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
LOH	Lawyers of Hope
MAJ	Maison d’Accès à la Justice
MIGEPROF	Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion
MINIJUST	Ministry of Justice
MINISANTE	Ministry of Health
NCDA	National Child Development Agency

NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NISR	National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda
RCS	Rwanda Correctional Services
RNEC	Rwanda National Ethics Committee
RNP	Rwanda National Police
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SLO	Safi Life Organisation
SRHR	Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
VACYS	National Survey on Violence Against Children and Youth
WVA	Watoto Vision on Africa

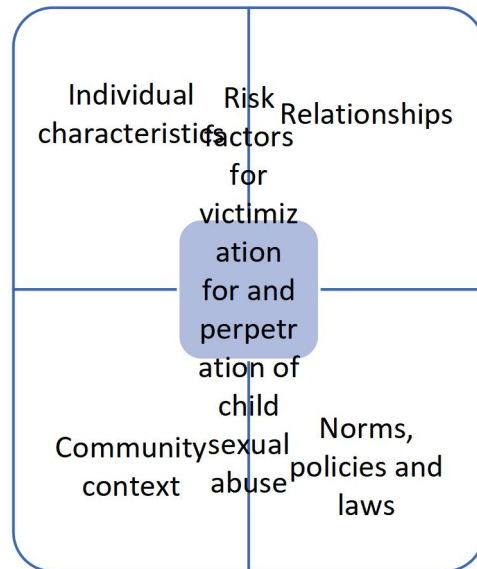
Executive Summary

The research on factors contributing to child defilement in Rwanda was initiated by the Coalition Umwana ku Isonga (CUI) in the framework of the “Strengthening Child Protection and SRHR in Rwanda”, a project funded through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) implemented in partnership with Plan International Rwanda (PIR) and local implementing partners including Coalition Umwana ku Isonga (CUI).

Considering the conducive environment for child protection, underpinned by the adherence of the country to the relevant international normative instruments which are domesticated through the national policies and laws and with a clear institutional framework, CUI sought to understand the factors contributing to the constant rise of child defilement cases.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework encompassing the variables to be researched and illustrating their relationship, was built from the review of existing theories about child sexual abuse. The key documents which have informed the development of this conceptual framework include UNICEF publications such as “Preventing and responding to child sexual abuse and exploitation: Evidence review”.



The conceptual framework categorizes the characteristics of a child singled out for defilement, also referred to as “risk factors for victimization” and the characteristics for committing the offense, the “risk factors for perpetration” into four categories: the individual level characteristics, the relationships, the community context as well as the norms, policies and laws.

At the individual level, the research explored the knowledge, attitude, behavior, and practices (KABP) on comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), the definition of a child and child defilement as well as the quality and quantity of supervision the individual child has access to.

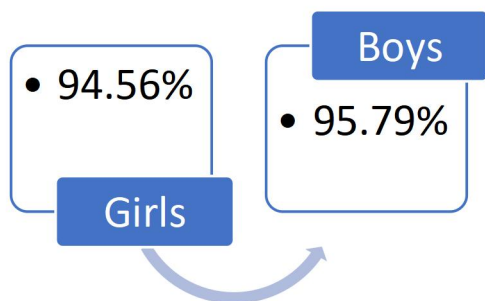
Interactions of the child with their surrounding and which can influence the child's vulnerability to defilement are explored as Relationships. These include the interactions of the child with family, friends, peers, intimate partners, and neighbour.

The research interacted with female and male children aged 10 to 17, through a quantitative survey, and with victims of child defilement, their parents, neighbour and community leaders, adult and juvenile convicted offenders of child defilement as well as duty bearers through qualitative interactions. A summary of the findings of the research are framed around the themes of the conceptual framework.

Individual level characteristics

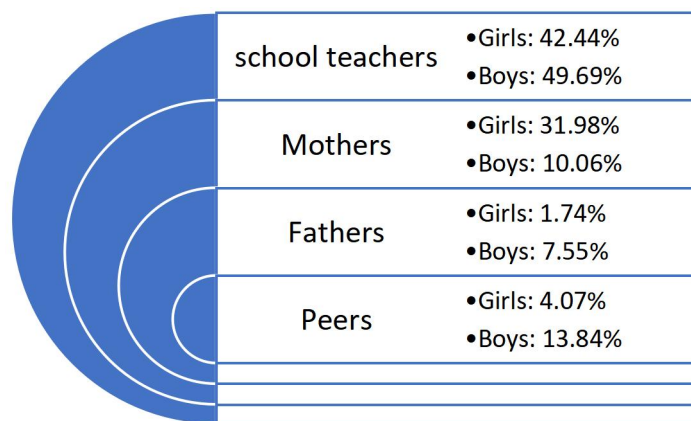
Limited knowledge on sexual and reproductive health (SRH): Children with limited SRH knowledge may be easier preys to the offenders. Mitigating this risk, SRH was introduced as a topic of different class subjects in the Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) adopted after the integration of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) for the Rwandan education (Ministry of Education, 2021). The CBC introduces aspects of SRH from Primary 4, children are expected to reach this level by the time they are 10 years old. The research found the following from interviewed children, aged 10 to 17.

Figure 1: Share of respondents currently enrolled in school



- 57.82% of the female and 55.79% of the male children are aware of the body changes
- Majority of children aged 14 and above are able to provide an accurate example of such changes
- More boys (17.61%) than girls (5.88%) were not able to provide an accurate example of such changes

Figure 2: Main source of SRH information



Limited or inaccurate SRH knowledge

- A girl cannot get pregnant at her first sexual intercourse: reported across rural and urban areas
- If it is the first sexual intercourse, the condom will slip and stay in the womb of the girl, leading to swelling and surgery.¹
- Growing breasts is a sign that a girl is no longer a child: reported by several adult convicted offenders

“I know that a girl from a wealthy family starts menstruation aged 13 and a girl from a poor family starts menstruation when she is 15 or above. I know this from my personal experience as I got my first periods when I was 15 because we are poor while my friend had hers when she was 13 years because she is from a rich family”²

“Before being convicted, I had no knowledge on the body changes, nor on sexuality because I had never discussed that topic with anyone”.³

Prior sexual victimization: discussions with victims of child defilement, adolescent mothers and convicted offenders revealed that most of them had previously been victims or offenders of child defilement.

1 Case Study No 38: female participant defiled at age 16, Bugesera District
 2 Case study No 3: female participant defiled at age 16, Nyaruguru District
 3 Case study with Convict no 1: sentenced for 4 years at age 15, Nyagatare Juvenile Center

Alcohol: Bar tenants serve alcoholic beverages to children, whether girls or boys.⁴

Limited knowledge about child age range

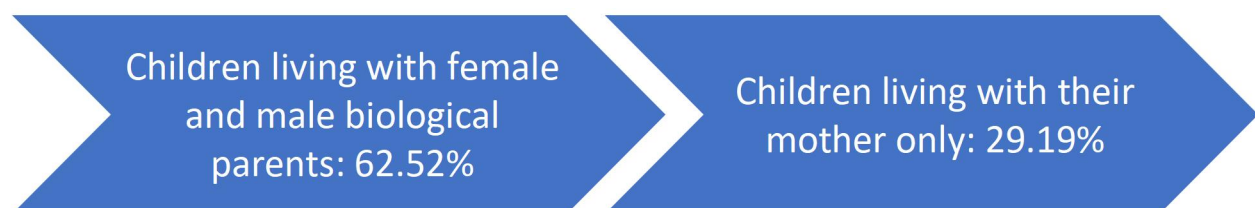
- Anyone who is under the age of obtaining a national identity card (16 years old).⁵
- If a girl can give birth, she is not a child anymore.⁶
- Anyone who is under 21 years old⁷
- In urban areas, participants are more aware about the legal age of childhood

Limited awareness of child defilement

- When an adult forces a child to have sexual intercourses.⁸
- When sexual intercourses are transactional and the adult has offered the child things the child couldn't afford.⁹
- When the man is married, thus, cheating on his wife.¹⁰
- Consensual sexual intercourses between an adult and a child, such as when they are in a romantic relationship, is not defilement.¹¹

"I got pregnant with my boyfriend who was 30 years old while I was 14 years old, and I don't take it as an abuse because we loved each other."¹²

Quantity and quality of adult supervision: The limited adult supervision is exploited by the sexual offenders to gain access and manipulate children to engage in sexual activities (David, 1997). On the other hand, when parents are not emotionally supportive, their children are emotionally vulnerable (Radford and Allnock, 2015). In this regard, the research explored the quantity and quality of supervision that children have as well as the related conditions were exploited by offenders, from the perspective of convicted offenders and victims.



4 Key Informant Interview with Female Community Volunteer, Nyaruguru District

5 Interview with female parent of Case study No: 33, Bugesera District

6 Case study No 44: female participant defiled at age 15, Gatsibo District

7 Case study No 35: female participant defiled at age 15, Bugesera District

8 Case study No 25: female participant defiled at age 15, Nyarugenge District

9 Case study No 5: female participant defiled at age 16, Nyaruguru District

10 Key Informant Interview with a female parent, Kicukiro District

11 Case study No 4: female participant defiled at age 17, Nyaruguru District

12 Case study No 31: female participant defiled at age 14, Nyarugenge District

- Busy parents leave their children unattended or with abusive domestic workers^{13,14}
- Female head of a poor households lack time for parenting and educating their children as they are constantly busy with wage farming during the day and household chores in the evening.¹⁵

Relationships

In this context, “Relationships” refer to the interactions of the child with family, friends, peers, intimate partners, and neighbour and which can influence the child’s vulnerability to defilement.

Family: conflicts between or with parents, household poverty and paid domestic works are factors putting the children at risk of victimization for and perpetration of child defilement.

Culture holds parents from educating their children on topics around sexuality.¹⁶

- Girls (91.23%) and boys (88.53%) reported to dialogue with their mothers.
- 35.77% of the girls and 10.9% of boys have never had a parent-child dialogue with their father

Parents in conflict fail to educate and supervise their children.¹⁷Parental conflicts and household poverty lead to school dropout, which, in return lead to the child’s relocation to live with another family.¹⁸

- Some victims were defiled by an adult member of the employer’s household -both statutory and forcible rape.¹⁹
- Some convicted offenders linked their exposure to pornographic content during their time as domestic worker to their urge to apply what they had watched with defilement.²⁰

13 Key Informant Interview with a male parent, Nyarugenge District

14 Key Informant Interview with Female Parent, Gasabo District

15 Key Informant Interview with Male Community Volunteer, Nyaruguru District

16 Key Informant Interview with a Male Community Volunteer (2), Nyaruguru District

17 Key Informant Interview with staff of MIGEPROF

18 Case study No 8: female participant defiled at age 17, Nyaruguru District

19 Case study No 3: female participant defiled at age 16, Nyaruguru District

20 Case study with Convict no 2: sentenced for 5 years at age 15, Nyagatare Juvenile Center

Poverty hinders the access to justice for the victims and their families who settle amicably if the offender is willing to support

Parents are not aware of the risks facing their children: eg. neglectful punishment.²¹

Romantic relationships: 91.16% of girls and 90.18% of boys reported no involvement in any romantic relationship. Through qualitative interactions, victims and offenders considered themselves to be in romantic relationships, regardless of the age of their partner. The community doesn't consider this an issue until the child is pregnant and the offender is unwilling to support.

Peer pressure: Male children pressured by their peers to start sexual intercourses at an early age and children are exposed to pornographic content by peers (8.42% of the boys and 2.72% of the girls).

Community and school environment

Boys and girls feel safe (96.6% of the girls and 98.6% of the boys) in their community. However, the research found that community members tolerate child defilement as demonstrated by the attitude of blaming the victim for being defiled and supporting amicable settlements. In the instance the victim is willing to pursue justice, the community members warn or hide the offenders.

As for the school level factors, the research investigated the school environment to explore how the schools are safe for children and the gaps that exist in the structure. The research found that children feel safe at schools and school authorities ensure the schools are safe. In addition to being important sources of SRH, the schools have Girls' Rooms with menstrual management facilities.

²¹ Case study with Convict no 18 (female): sentenced for 10 years at age 21, Nyarugenge Correctional Center

In this consideration, the research found that the risks to victimization and perpetration arise on the way to and from school. This gap is exploited by offenders inducing children to lie about their whereabouts and lead parents to believe that the children are still under school supervision.

Implications and recommendations

To uphold the achievements towards the eradication of factors contributing to child defilement and fill subsequent gaps, the findings of this research have policy and programming implications in terms of understanding the problem of child defilement in the broader Rwandan context as well as implications on existing measures to prevent child defilement, framed around the seven strategies for ending violence against children developed by the World Health Organization. The recommendations around the strategies include the following:

- **Implementation and enforcement of laws:** Considering the existence of the normative and punitive measures to prevent child defilement, the research recommends that CUI and their partners advocate for the enforcement of the existing legal and policy instruments. These include the Labour Law (2018) prohibiting engagement in paid work before the age of 16 to reduce the risk to child defilement associated with child paid domestic work. Similarly, an improved enforcement is required for the regulations around children's access to alcoholic beverages. The recommendations also include raising awareness of the community about these laws, sending the message about behaviour which are unacceptable and thus, contributing to a shift in norms.
- **Norms and values:** to influence the shift of negative gender and societal norms contributing to child defilement such as the attitude of blaming the victim of child defilement, tolerating defilement and supporting the offenders to escape justice.
- **Safe environments:** recommendations to address the physical and social environments putting the children at risk of defilement when they are in their communities. Recommendations include the encouragement for local actors to identify and take measures to address the physical spaces where children are at

increased risk of child defilement such as the spots in uninhabited and forestry dense roads to school, water point or health facilities.

- **Parent and caregiver support:** proposed to be delivered through home visits by the community volunteers, the parent and caregiver support includes the knowledge and skills about positive spousal relationships, positive parenting, child rights, prevention of child defilement, sexual and reproductive health and rights among others.
- **Income and economic strengthening:** relating to the broad social protection schemes for vulnerable and poor households as delivered by government and civil society organizations as well as specific women's economic empowerment interventions.
- **Response and support services:** to strengthen the comprehensive services offered by Isange One Stop Centre as well as extending the psychological counselling to the juvenile offenders to break the cycle of possible future perpetration of child defilement. The research also recommends that community awareness tackles the reporting mechanism, so that the community have a positive perception about these and, thus, use them.
- **Education and life skills:** recommendations to uphold, coordinate and create synergies of stakeholders' efforts invested in keeping children in school and supporting their performance while ensuring the schools remain safe spaces.

Continued research, monitoring and evaluation focused on child defilement and other forms of child violence is recommended. This is with the consideration that the statistics released by different institutions on the numbers of convicted offenders and the prevalence of underage pregnancies are insufficient to understand the problem in its entirety.

1. Introduction and background

1.1. Overview

The Coalition “Umwana ku Isonga” (CUI) is a Non-Governmental Organization founded in November 2010 and registered under n° 219/RGB/NGO/LP/04/2018 (Coalition Umwana ku Isonga, 2021). CUI was founded with the purposes of networking and building alliances. CUI holds the mandate to assess and report on the implementation of the United Nations Child Rights Convention (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) on one hand, and to coordinate all activities carried out by individual member organizations within the parameters of advocacy, implementing and reporting on mentioned treaty bodies on the other hand.

The vision statement of CUI is that of *“all the children, male and female, living in full enjoyment of their rights and fulfill all their duties without any hindrance, and exempted from any form of discrimination”*, with a mission statement to *“coordinate and increase capacity among member organizations to defend and protect the rights of the child”*.

Currently, CUI is composed of 19 member organizations, namely: (1) Association de Guides du Rwanda (AGR), (2) Association des Volontaires de la Paix (AVP), (3) AJPRODHO-JIJUKIRWA, (4) Rwanda Organisation of Trauma Counsellors (ARCT)-RUHUKA, (5) Better Life Achievement Organisation (BLAO), (6) Association BAMPOREZE, (7) CLADHO, (8) Center for Human Rights Development (CHRD), (9) Children’s Voice Today (CVT), (10) COPORWA NGO, (11) Haguruka NGO, (12) Association KANYARWANDA, (13) Lawyers of Hope (LOH), (14) Umuhuza Organization, (15) Umuseke Organisation, (17) Safi Life Organisation (SLO), (18) Collectif Tubakunde, Child First Initiative (CFI) and (19) Watoto Vision on Africa (WVA).

With funding from Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and in partnership with Plan International Rwanda (Plan), CUI was awarded a grant to implement a 5-years project entitled “Strengthening Child Protection and SRHR in Rwanda” (implemented since the 01st July 2019 and expecting completion on the 30th June 2024). This project is implemented in Bugesera, Gatsibo and Nyaruguru Districts by Plan International Rwanda and 4 local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) including CUI.

With guidance by a theory of change (ToC) asserting the key barriers to be removed to promote the active participation of boys and girls in their own protection and the role of CSOs, this project intends to reach the most vulnerable children, adolescents, and youth (Rights holders), representatives of government institutions and law enforcement officials (Primary duty bears) as well as the caregivers, teachers and gatekeepers (Secondary duty bearers). The goal that the project seeks to achieve is to provide a conducive environment for vulnerable children and youth with an emphasis on girls so that they are cared for, protected from all forms of violence and supported to make decisions on their sexuality and reproduction.

One of the areas of child protection that CUI seeks to actively promote is the right to protection including freedom from violence such as child defilement. Realizing that child defilement is one of the least documented areas of child protection and SRHR issues, CUI commissioned a “Research on the factors contributing to child defilement in Gatsibo, Bugesera, Nyaruguru and City of Kigali”.

1.2. Background of the research

The background of the research on factors contributing to child defilement in Rwanda encompasses the definition of child defilement in the Rwandan legal framework, a description of the key policies and laws underpinning the protection from child defilement and the institutions mandated to implement those commitments as well as an overview of the current situation and knowledge about child defilement.

1.2.1. Defining child defilement in the Rwandan context

Child defilement, as defined in the Rwandan Law N°68/2018 of 30/08/2018 determining offences and penalties in general, is the act of inserting a sexual organ or any organ of the human body into the sexual organ, anus, or mouth of a child, or performing any other act on the body of a child for the purpose of bodily pleasure” (Government of Rwanda, 2018).

For adult offenders, the Law provides for a sentence of 20 to 25 years of imprisonment if the victimized child is older than 14 years of age. Should the child victim be under 14 years old, then the penalty is life imprisonment that cannot be mitigated by any circumstances. More so, if child defilement results in disability, chronic disease or cohabitation as husband and wife, then the penalty is life imprisonment.

The same law stipulates that, for juvenile offenders between the age of 14 and 17 who commit child defilement with children under 14 years old, the sentence is between 10 and 15 years imprisonment if the convict would be subjected to a life imprisonment. If the convict would be punished with a fixed-term imprisonment or fine, the penalty for a juvenile offender cannot exceed half of the penalty.

The Law stipulates that there is no penalty for sexual activities committed without violence or threats among children of the age of 14 to 17.

1.2.2. Frameworks underpinning the protection from child defilement

The international, regional, and national legal frameworks around child protection, that Rwanda has subscribed to, illustrate the high-level environment underpinning the protection from child defilement in Rwanda. These are presented below.

1.2.2.1. International and regional treaties

The international and regional treaties that are specific to the protection of children from defilement include the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989), ratified by Rwanda in 1991, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography ratified in 2002, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC 1990) ratified in 2001. Rwanda also subscribed to the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015).

The CRC Article 19 and 34 oblige States Parties to protect children from any form of sexual abuse – unlawful sexual activity, prostitution and pornographic activities – and to adopt measures such as social programs and systems of identification, reporting, investigation of child abuses (UNCRC 1989). The Optional Protocol to the CRC provides extended measures that States Parties should adopt to ensure the protection of children from child prostitution and pornography. For instance, Article 3 highlights that States Parties should criminalise sexual exploitation – abusing or attempt of abusing someone’s position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes such as monetarily, socially or politically – of children under their penal law.

Similar to the CRC, ACRWC’s Article 16 and 27 establish duties of States parties to protect children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse such as rape, sexual assault or sex with a minor (Human Rights Law in Africa, 2012). The Government of Rwanda in line of domesticating the above instruments, enacted several legislations, policies, and strategies to fulfil its duties. These will be presented in the section below.

1.2.2.2. Policy, legal and institutional framework

Rwanda has committed to the protection of children from sexual abuse through the establishment of institutions and adoption of policies and laws. The elaboration of laws and policies to prevent and punish violence against children, followed by an effective implementation and enforcement, sends a strong message to the society that the behaviour is wrong, holds offenders accountable and reduces the exposure to risk factors (World Health Organization, 2016). This is aligned with SDG Targets 5.c and 16.3 activities (Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels; and 16.3 Promote the rule of law at national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all (United Nations, 2015).

In this framework, Rwanda has established a child protection system (Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, 2019b), to prevent and respond to any violence against children, including sexual violence. The main institution that develops and coordinates the implementation of national policies, strategies, and programs in relation to child protection is the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF). Its implementing agency - the National Child Development Agency (NCDA), implements and monitors the child protection system. The Government of Rwanda has also established professional social workers and clinical psychologists, community-based child protection volunteers known as Inshuti z'Umuryango (IZU) (literally "Friends of the Family"), Isange One Stop Centers, and the Child Helpline.

The IZU mechanism, a community-based child and family protection volunteers consisting of one female and one male in each village across the country, was established to prevent all forms of violence against children from happening (Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, 2016).

In the same relation, Isange One Stop Centres, a multi-sectoral and interdisciplinary program that provides comprehensive services to victims of sexual- and gender-based violence were established (Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, 2019b). The program is collaboratively managed by 3 ministries including MIGEPROF, Ministry of Health

(MINISANTE) and the Ministry of Justice (MINIJUST) together with Rwanda National Police (RNP). The program provides adults and children, victims of GBV and child abuse with services related to psycho-social, medical, police and legal.

In relation to supporting children and their families to report, there has been an establishment of a toll-free Child Helpline. The line has been operational since 2016 and it supports both children and their parents to have immediate and urgent contact (Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, 2019b). Children and parents call 116 line which used to operate in the Rwanda National Police (RNP) and, shifted to the Rwanda Bureau of Investigation (RIB) (Rwanda National Police, 2015; Rwanda Investigation Bureau, 2021) Further on available lines, the NCDA has a USSD system used by IZU as well as a toll free number 711.

In terms of policies, the Integrated Child Rights Policy (ICRP), adopted in 2011, aims at ensuring the creation of an environment that allows children in Rwanda to have access to their rights. Among these rights, is the right to protection, which provides for the Government of Rwanda should establish a national child protection system and a monitoring system.

In terms of Justice for Children , the Government of Rwanda has established the Justice for Children Policy in 2014 to make the Rwandan justice system more child-friendly and responsive to the needs of children to contribute to child's rights to survival, development, protection, and participation in the society. The Justice for Children Policy recognizes that sexual abuse against children is a crime that is penalized by law. In addition to this, the Maison d'Accès à la Justice (MAJ) was established in each District with the aim to provide child friendly legal services (Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, 2019b). More to that Rwanda Bar Association support in providing free legal assistance to children in conflict with the law (MIGEPROF, 2019).

In terms of legal framework, the Government of Rwanda enacted different laws to protect children such as the Law N°71/2018 of 31/08/2018 relating to the protection of the child, which provide for child protection in general, including prevention of sexual and gender based violence,etc; the law preventing child labor (Law N° 66/2018 of 30/08/2018 regulating labor in Rwanda which prohibits employment for children under the age of 16).

1.3. Factors contributing to child defilement: current situation and knowledge

As part of their annual reports, the Gender Monitoring Office keeps flagging child defilement and teenage pregnancies as key Gender-Based Violence issues which need to be tackled (GMO, 2017; Gender Monitoring Office, 2019). The statistics realised by the Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB), on the International Day of the Girl Child (11th October 2021), indicate an increase of 55% in numbers of cases of child defilement reported annually from 2018 (RPPC, 2021). These statistics further indicate that from 2018, RIB has received 12,840 cases were 13,485 offenders defiled 13,646 children, including individuals who defiled many children and children defiled by more than one offenders. The Eastern Province ranks highest in numbers of cases reported (36.3%), followed by the City of Kigali (18.2%) and the Southern Province (17.8%).

1.3.1. Individual level factors

Gender and age of the victim is a considerable factor for victimization. The most recent prevalence of child defilement cases, as stated in the UNFPA news, has increased from 3,215 in 2019 to 4,265 in 2020 (UNFPA Rwanda, 2020). Among these cases, 98% are girls, and 29.1% are children under the of age of 10 years. Consistently with these figures, aggregated statistics released by RIB for the period 2018 to 2021 indicate that 97.1% of the victims are female, mostly aged 14 to 17, with 32% of the victims aged 9 and below (RPPC, 2021).

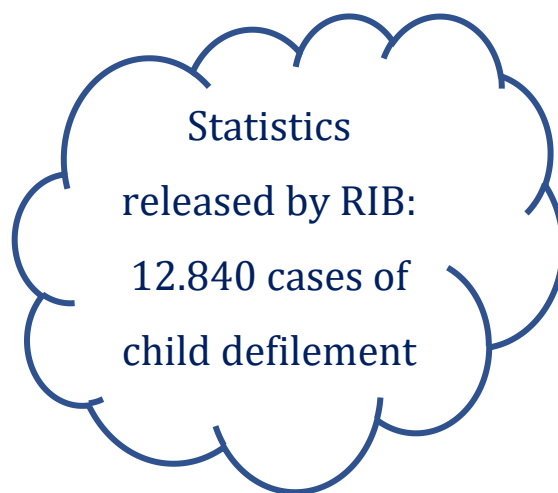
Considering this uneven prevalence of child defilement among girls and boys, it is evident that female children are at higher risks of sexual abuse. The likelihood of female children being at greater risk of child defilement than male children is also highlighted in the 2015-2016 National Survey on violence against children and youth (VACYS). 12% of the surveyed female children aged 13-17 years had experienced sexual violence compared to 5% of male children (Ministry of Health, 2018). These data may support and explain teens pregnancy as result of child defilement among under 18 years old girls.

According to the 2020 Rwanda Health and Demographic findings, 0.1% of teens of the age of 15, had already begun childbearing. This percentage increases with age, where 1% and 3.9% of 16- and 17-years old girls have already begun childbearing, respectively. One of the explanations that emerge from these data is with the consideration that, in Rwanda, the age of majority is 18 while the age of marriage is 21, these teens girls who have begun childbearing have been involved in sexual activity that is considered as defilement provided they have been impregnated by adults. One could also assume that some of the sexual partners of these teens who have begun childbearing were older than 18. As it has been demonstrated in the VACYS report, 60 percent of females aged 13-17 have been abused by offenders who are five years older than them .

Second, the Rwanda Strategic Plan for Gender and Family Promotion 2018-2024 mentions that children with disability, those from a child-head household or those who are homeless are more susceptible to sexual abuse.

RIB statistics about the individual characteristics of offenders indicate that 97.9% of the offenders are men and 60% of them are close neighbour of the family of the victim. On

the other hand, the same source states that the offenders are family members such as the parents, the uncles or the cousins of the victim (8.5%) while 19.2% of the reported cases were a result of romantic relationships between a child and an adult. RIB indicated that these cases are hardest to investigate as the victims refuse to disclose the identities of the offenders. Further on the categories of offenders, RIB highlighted that domestic workers, people helping children to revise their lessons, family friends and teachers are other categories of offenders .



1.3.2. Factors associated with the family of the victim

First, as reported in the DHS 2020, early childbearing mostly occurred among teenagers from the lowest wealth quintile (7.7%) compared to other quintile. An explanation to this, is that often girls from lower wealth quintile who have limited access to basic needs and education (secondary school) tend to be engaged in transactional sex (P.Williams, Binagwaho and S.Betancourt, 2012). In relation to this, it appears that poverty facilitate men or women known as “*sugar daddy and sugar mommy*” to persuade children, in particular girls, into transactional sex by offering them gifts or school fees (P.Williams, Binagwaho and S.Betancourt, 2012; Gerver, 2013; Isimbi, Umutoni and Coast, 2017). According to these findings, it is possible to suggest that lack of financial means highly contribute to child defilement, as children are an easy target to bribe into sex in exchange of basic needs, school fees or gifts.

RIB statistics about child defilement for the period 2018/2021 indicate that, of the total cases reported, there were factors associated with the family and which put the child at the risk of being defiled. These include poverty, luring children into sexual activities by offering them gifts as well as child unpaid domestic work such as fetching fire wood (RPPC, 2021). This source further states that the cultural norm that the younger sister of a newly married bride must stay with her, was also reported as putting the young girl at the risk of being defiled by her brother in law.

Also, the desk review considered other different changes in the Rwandan families that may contribute to child defilement. These challenges include lack of parental care where parents or guardians don't provide lessons to their children around positive culture values and practices (Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, 2019b). The Strategic Plan for Integrated Child Rights Policy 2019-2024 further recognized that parents are too busy to provide little time to discussions with their children. In addition, there increase in domestic violence and spousal conflicts were regarded to affect children (Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, 2019b).

1.3.3. Community level factors

It is worth mentioning that the culture of silencing child defilement facilitate offenders to engage in sexual activities with children. This has been reported in a few studies, where often there would be an arrangement between the offenders and the victims or their families, to not report child defilement (Gerver, 2013; Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, 2019a). The above sources indicate that, in such situation, the victims are financially depending on the offenders for their silence. The rationale behind not reporting is often a result of stigma and shame around sexual abuse and the fear that a child may not find a husband in the future (Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, 2019a).

The literature review found limited findings on the drivers and motives of child defilement from the perspective of offenders. To the RIB, 54.7% of the offenders reported not knowing what pushed them to engage in that crime while 28.1% indicated believing that defiling a child was going to bring them wealth or cure pimples (RPPC, 2021). RIB indicated that some offenders were also under the influence of alcohol.

Moreover, the review found that some Rwandan community members perceive child defilement as a result of offenders' revenge on families who have done wrong to them or simply inflicting harm as a way of 'getting even' (e.g., infecting a child with HIV) (Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, 2019a). More so, the community members have stated that mental instability among offenders could be a cause of child defilement and there may be beliefs in the communities that consider children as a cure of personal problems or diseases such as HIV/AIDS (Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, 2019a).

1.4. Objectives of the research and research questions

Overall, the findings from literature review indicate, to some extent, the factors contributing to child defilement in Rwanda. The statistics about cases reported to RIB are available to indicate the magnitude of the problem of child defilement and disaggregation is provided for geographical locations, age and gender of the victim, gender of the offender as well as their relationship to the child. On the other hand, information is available about the prevalence of teen pregnancies, risk factors associated with the lack of proper SRH knowledge among children and young people as well as the community perceptions and beliefs indicating an attitude of tolerance towards child defilement.

The research on factors contributing to child defilement in Bugesera, Gatsibo, Nyaruguru and Kigali City occupies the above stated gaps by providing a conceptual framework to the issue of child defilement and identifying these factors at the individual, relationships, community and society level. Furthermore, this research explores in more depth the already known factors contributing to child defilement by identifying intersectionality between different factors, including perspectives from the victims and offenders. Moreover, the Eastern Province, City of Kigali and the Southern Province, the three geographical locations ranking highest in numbers of reported cases of child abuse, the research covers six districts (all three districts of City of Kigali, two out of the seven districts of the Eastern Province and one district of the Southern Province). In addition, Nyarugenge Correctional Center and Nyagatare Juvenile Center were visited to factor in the perspectives of female and male adult and juvenile convicted offenders of child defilement.

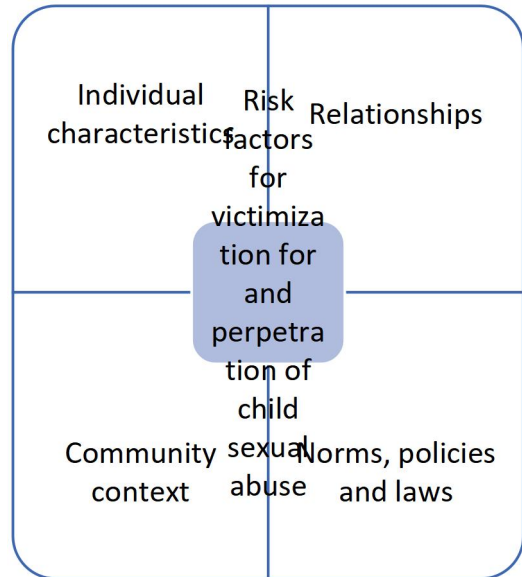
The questions that the research was set to answer, as illustrated in the Terms of Reference (ToR) guiding the research, are the following:

- What are the factors contributing to victimization for and perpetration of child defilement associated with the family?
- What are the factors contributing to child defilement associated with the school role and structures?
- What are the factors contributing to victimization for and perpetration of child defilement associated with the culture and community attitudes and mechanisms?

The findings of the research are presented in this report, structured into four main sections. After this introduction, the second section describes the methodological approach adopted for the research, highlighting the conceptual framework as well as the methods used for data collection, analysis and reporting. The findings are elaborated under the third section around the thematic areas of the factors contributing to the victimization for and perpetration of child defilement at the individual level, the level of relationships the children has with their direct surrounding, the community level as well as the school environment. The report is concluded with recommendations as part of the fifth section and relevant additional information such as the profiles of respondents, the tools for data collection, research introductory and request letters as well as consent and assent forms are attached to this report.

2. Methodological approach

The research has adopted a conceptual framework that builds on the risk factors for child defilement (Radford and Allnock, 2015; Together For Girls, 2019). These frameworks were adapted to this research to focus on understanding the factors contributing to the victimization and perpetration of child defilement associated with the individual, family, community, and school levels.



2.1. Conceptual framework

In this context, the characteristics of children singled out for defilement are called “victimization” while the characteristics for committing the offense are called “perpetration”.

At the individual level, the research explored the knowledge, attitude, behavior, and practices (KABP) on comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), the definition of a child and child defilement as well as the quality and quantity of supervision the individual child has access to.

Interactions of the child with their surrounding are explored as Relationships, Community and School. Under this aspect, the research explored the interactions with parents, peers, romantic partners, and neighbors to understand the aspects of victimization to and perpetration of child defilement. The framework is summarized below:

Table 1: Risk factors for victimization to child defilement

Individual	Relationships	Community	Society
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of education or awareness on sexuality and child defilement • Age and gender of the child • Children with limited quantity and quality of adult supervision (orphan, children in step families) • Social deprivation • Disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional deprivation: • Unsupportive family • Dysfunctional family (families in conflicts, parents violent to each other, to the child or their siblings) • Weak parent-child attachment • Parents who lack awareness of risks and vulnerabilities of children to child defilement • Aggressive peers • Peer pressure • Romantic relationship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High violence prevalence • Community tolerance of sexual violence and weak sanctions against offenders • Poverty (economic deprivation) • Community attitudes regarding age, development, and sexual behaviour • Low levels of reporting child defilement to authorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor economic development • Negative social norms • Supporting violence • Granting adults total control over children • Weak legal sanctions and poor child protection systems • Acceptance of child labor • Lack of safeguarding culture and inherent societal trust in adults who serve children

Adapted from What works to prevent sexual violence against children: Executive Summary.

When it comes to perpetration of child defilement, the research sought to categorize child defilement offenders (David, 1997). Offenders in the family, non-family caretakers, youthful offenders as well as female offenders. To understand the perspectives of offenders and the underlying factors for perpetration, the following framework was adopted by the research.

Table 2: Risk factors for perpetration of child defilement

Individual	Relationships	Community	Society
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcohol and drug use/abuse • General acceptance of violence • Hostility towards women • Adherence to negative traditional gender role norms and toxic masculinity • Prior sexual victimization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violent and emotionally unsupportive family environment • Association with aggressive peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low socio-economic status • Social tolerance of sexual violence in community • Weak community sanctions against sexual violence offenders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative societal norms promoting gender inequalities, blame victims, promote silence, exonerate offenders, support male superiority and sexual entitlement and maintain women's inferiority and sexual submissiveness. • Weakness in law enforcement Inadequate provision of services to victims

Adapted from What works to prevent sexual violence against children: Executive Summary.

Aspects related to the school were also captured across the factors contributing to the victimization for and perpetration of child defilement.

2.2. Methodology

The research used mixed methods for data collection and analysis; a quantitative survey, and qualitative interactions. This section describes the scope of the research, the research population, primary data collection protocols, data analysis and reporting process as well as research limitations.

2.2.1. Geographical scope and population of the research

The research was conducted in three rural districts where the *Strengthening Child Protection and SRHR in Rwanda Project* is being implemented. These are Bugesera and Gatsibo District in the Eastern Province and Nyaruguru District in the Southern Province. The three districts of Kigali City were added to ensure that urban realities were also captured. In addition, the research reached two correctional facilities including Nyarugenge Correctional Center in Nyarugenge District and Nyagatare Juvenile Prison in Nyagatare District.

2.2.2. Sample size and sampling technique

The quantitative survey was administered to female and male children individuals under the age of 18 as per the definition of a child in the Rwandan legal framework. The study considered two sub-age groups: the younger children ranging from 10 to 13 years old and older children age 14 to 17 years. This grouping considers the legal implications depend on the age of the victim as well as that of the offender.

To determine the sample size, the formula below was used:

$$n = \frac{\frac{z^2 P(1 - P)}{d^2}}{1 + \frac{1}{N} \left(\frac{z^2 P(1 - P)}{d^2} - 1 \right)}$$

At the confidence level of 90%, precision of 5.9%, the sample size for each gender was set at a minimum of **276 respondents**. A sample, representative for age and gender, was distributed across the three districts of Kigali and Bugesera, Gatsibo and Nyaruguru Districts. A sample of 294 girls and 285 boys was reached, increasing the precision of the study and reducing the margin of error from 5.9% to 5.8%.

Table 3: Desired and reached sample sizes

Age group	Female		Male	
	Desired sample	Reached sample	Desired sample	Reached sample
10 to 13	138	150	138	156
14 to 17	138	144	138	129
Total	276	294	276	285

The systematic sampling is the sampling technique used for the research. The technique ensures the individuals included in the sample are selected randomly by giving equal chances to all the female and male children of the visited communities. Once in the community, the field supervisor randomly assigned itineraries to the enumerators. Using pieces of paper numbered from one to nine, each enumerator randomly picked a piece of paper number, and the number of the paper was the number of the house to start from. Enumerators were asked to start with that household and determine if the household is eligible –has a member who is aged between 10 and 19 years. After each eligible household, enumerators were instructed to skip two households and enter the third; however, if the randomly selected household is not eligible, the enumerator were instructed to proceed with the next household.

To ensure a paperless data collection, the survey questionnaire was pre-programmed into android-enabled devices and administered to the respondents offline. The data was uploaded into a cloud database for the Quantitative Analysis to proceed with data analysis and interpretation.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents by District of Residence

District	Female		Male		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Bugesera	49	16.67%	47	16.49%	96	16.58%
Gasabo	50	17.01%	43	15.09%	93	16.06%
Gatsibo	47	15.99%	51	17.89%	98	16.93%
Kicukiro	48	16.33%	47	16.49%	95	16.41%
Nyarugenge	50	17.01%	46	16.14%	96	16.58%
Nyaruguru	50	17.01%	51	17.89%	101	17.44%
Total	294	100.00%	285	100.00%	579	100.00%

To gain in-depth insights around factors contributing to child defilement, different in-depth qualitative interactions were conducted. Case study Interviews (CSIs) were conducted with 45 victims of child defilement and 3 adolescent mothers impregnated by boys under the age of 17. In addition, 21 CSIs were conducted with convicted offenders of child defilement (3 female and 18 male offenders) currently in correctional facilities. In the same regard, 24 CSIs were conducted with parents of the victims of child defilement. Furthermore, 12 KIIs with community members who are parents were conducted to capture their perspectives on child defilement in the community.

For the stakeholders consultations, 22 KIIs were conducted with different key actors who hold key information on child defilement in the community as well as perspectives from the national level, provided by staff of MIGEPROF.²² Furthermore, a validation workshop was held with key institutions and insights provided were used for finalizing this report.²³

²² Detailed lists of the profiles of participants reached is provided as an annex

²³ A complete list of stakeholder institutions participating in the validation workshop is added as Annex 4

2.2.3. Research authorizations and ethical considerations

Prior to primary data collection activities, approvals were sought from the following institutions.

Rwanda National Ethic Committee (RNEC): a research ethical approval was provided by the RNEC upon successful preparation, timely submission and presentation of a research protocol to the panel of RNEC reviewers. The research protocol was submitted on May 24th, 2021 and presented on June 12th, 2021. The RNEC granted the ethical approval on August 19th, 2021, valid for a period of one year.

National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR): a research visa was sought from the NISR. A visa request was submitted to NISR on May 25th, 2021 and a research visa was issued on August 13th, 2021 for a period of 1.5 months starting on the 15th August 2021 and ending on the 25th September 2021.

Rwanda Correctional Services (RCS): To reach adult and juvenile convicted offenders of child defilement, an authorization to access both Nyarugenge Correctional Center and Nyagatare Juvenile Correctional Centre was granted on September 21st, 2021 for a period of 7 days.

All children who participated in the research provided informed assent and their parents provided informed consent to participate in the research. Furthermore, the entire data collection team signed a safeguarding code of conduct prepared by Plan International Rwanda.

2.2.4. Data analysis and reporting process

Quantitative data was accessed from the clouded database. The data was cleaned and analyzed using statistical packages as relevant. The clean dataset will be submitted to CUI along with the final report. For the analysis of qualitative data, the team of facilitators hold daily debrief sessions to map emerging findings and points to be probed about in the interactions to follow. The findings were mapped into matrices and these were used for the in-depth analysis and reporting of findings.

Data was analyzed into two main aspects:

1. **Demographics:** This includes information about the sex, Ubudehe category, level of education, household size and composition, parent's age and source of income. This information is important for understanding the risk factors to victimization and perpetration in a broader context.

Obtained research authorization and approvals

- Rwanda National Ethics Committee
- National Institute of Statistics
- Rwanda Correctional Services

2. **Findings:** findings are presented into the factors at the individual level, the relationships, the community as well as the society levels.

In the same relation, the references are provided following the Chicago Reference Style. For the research participants, the case studies were given numbers in addition to their profiles to distinguish the respondents. Other interactions are referenced as profiles of the respondents. The references ensure anonymity of respondents.

2.2.5. Research Limitations

The research encountered a number of limitations. These, along with the adopted mitigation measures are elaborated below.

Time constraints: Covid-19 restrictions delayed research approvals and field work activities. Due to the measures taken by the Government of Rwanda (GoR) to curb the alarming spread of Covid-19 during a period initially planned for field work, obtaining approvals from different institutions was delayed. Furthermore, obtaining interviews from all the relevant actors took longer than anticipated. For this reason, the timeline of the research shifted from the initial end date of June 30th, 2021 to December 15th, 2021. As the timeline could not be stretched any further, for the relevant actors who could not be reached, the research has recommended that CUI shares with them this report in its draft form and invites them to the validation meeting so that they have an opportunity to add their inputs.

Parental consents in Kigali City: Considering the research was interacting with children under 18 years old, parental consent was mandatory. However, in some instances especially in the City of Kigali, it was difficult to get hold of parents for consenting to the participation of their children in the research. To mitigate this challenge, the team skipped the household where the parents were absent to come back at a later time when parents are home.

Limited number of boys available in the community during the day: The research was conducted in the holidays and boys were mainly engaged in different activities that made them unavailable during the day. For the City of Kigali, the boys were not found in their households due to going to play with others. In rural areas, boys were involved in different activities such as fetching water, looking for cooking firewood and grazing for animals. The enumerators decided to revisit their homes when they are back or search for them in the community and ask to go back home for interviews.

3. Findings and discussions

Child defilement and other forms of child violence are rooted into social, economic and cultural factors impacting children's lives, their communities, their families and their relationships (World Health Organization, 2016). Following the guidance from the conceptual framework to capture the interplay of individual, relationship and community factors, the findings of the research are framed around those levels of risks for victimization and perpetration of child defilement. The findings include perspectives of victims and offenders of child defilement, the parents of victims and other parents in their communities as well as the views of relevant informants.

3.1. Individual level risk factors

This section explores the individual factors for victimization and perpetration. The individual level risk factors include the characteristics of the child which can influence the susceptibility to child defilement as a victim or an offender (Together For Girls, 2019). Topics covered under this section include the education and awareness about Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) and legal age for childhood, the understanding about child defilement and adult supervision.

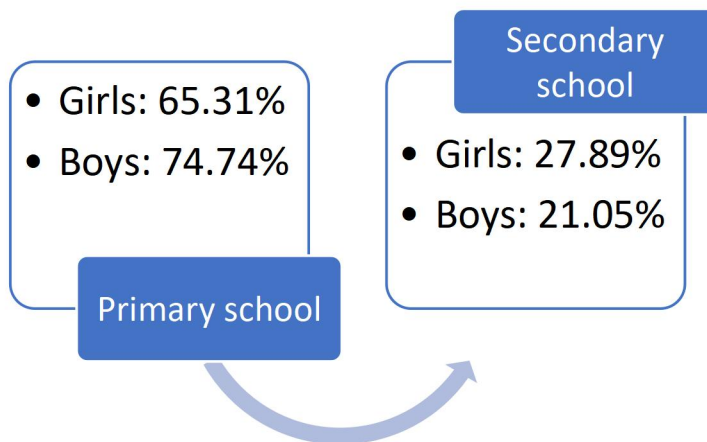
3.1.1. Education and awareness on sexuality and child defilement

To explore the education and awareness on sexuality and child defilement, the research interacted with female and male children aged 10 to 17 through a quantitative survey and with the victims and offenders of child defilement and their surroundings through qualitative interactions. The interactions explored the knowledge, attitude, sources of information as well as challenges hindering the acquisition of the knowledge.

3.1.1.1. Knowledge

Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) is a topic of different class subjects in the Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) adopted after the integration of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) for the Rwandan education (Ministry of Education, 2021). The CBC introduces aspects of SRH from Primary 4, children are expected to reach this level by the time they are 10 years old. The table below illustrates that 95.16% of the interviewed children aged 10 to 17 are effectively in school.

Figure 4: Respondents enrolled in school by gender and level of education



In relation to the knowledge about body changes known by female and male children, one out of two children aged 10 to 17 is aware of the body changes (57.82% of the female and 55.79% of the male children). These children reporting knowledge of the changes that happen to a child's body during puberty, majority are aged 14 and above. The same age range was able to provide an accurate example of such changes. However, more boys than girls who had previously reported possessing knowledge about body changes were not able to provide an accurate example of such changes (17.61% of the boys and 5.88% of the girls who had mentioned holding information about body changes).

Table 5: Knowledge of respondents about body changes

	Female		Male		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Information about body changes						
Yes, I know	170	57.82%	159	55.79%	329	56.82%
No, I don't know	122	41.49%	126	44.21%	248	42.84%
Refused to answer	2	0.68%		0.00%	2	0.35%
Total	294	100.00%	285	100.00%	579	100.00%
Example of body changes						
Correct answer	158	92.94%	127	79.87%	285	86.63%
Incorrect answer	10	5.88%	28	17.61%	38	11.55%
Some correct answers	2	1.18%	4	2.52%	6	1.82%
Total	170	100.00%	159	100.00%	329	100.00%

Consistent with the quantitative findings about SRH knowledge among children aged 10 to 17, the victims of child defilement are aware of the basic aspects of SRH. In this line, majority of interviewed female victims of child defilement were able to name changes which happen to boys' and girls' bodies during puberty such as menstruation, and growing breasts for girls as well as change with voices and experiencing wet dreams for boys.^{24,25,26} However, the detailed understanding of some SRH topics was found limited among the victims of child defilement including a limited knowledge about boys' puberty as well as inaccurate knowledge about SRH topics they had mentioned. For instance, when asked about the age at which menstruation starts, majority of interviewed participants responded basing on the age they were when they got their first menstruation, or their standards of living.^{27,28}

24 Case study No 1: female participant defiled at age 17, Nyaruguru District.

25 Case study No 19: female participant defiled at age 15, Kicukiro District

26 Case study No 28: female participant defiled at age 14, Nyarugenge District

27 Case study No 24: female participant defiled at age 17, Kicukiro District

28 Case study No 42: female participant defiled at age 17, Gatsibo District

“I know that a girl from a wealthy family starts menstruation aged 13 and a girl from a poor family starts menstruation when she is 15 or above. I know this from my personal experience as I got my first periods when I was 15 because we are poor while my friend had hers when she was 13 years because she is from a rich family”²⁹

Another one of the inaccuracies in knowledge reported in association with menstruation is the common belief that a girl cannot get pregnant at her first sexual intercourse. This is a common misconception found both in rural areas such as Nyaruguru District and urban areas of City of Kigali. Further misconceptions are related to menstruation. Aware of the limited probability of pregnancy to occur during menstruation, the girls do not consider the menstruation cycle, but the presence of blood. This had led many victims of child defilement to believe that since most virgins bleed during their first sexual intercourse, they cannot get pregnant.³⁰

Limited knowledge about condom use was also reported. This is the case of a 16-years-old victim of child defilement from Bugesera District. When she was going to engage in sexual intercourse with her 25-years-old boyfriend, he offered to use a condom but she refused. She had been told by her friend that when it is your first sexual intercourse, the condom slips and stays in the womb of the girl, leading to swelling and surgery.³¹

On the other hand, majority of both juvenile and adult convicted offenders of child defilement did not have SRH knowledge before they were sentenced. Reflecting on the time they committed the crime of child defilement and in light with the education received while in the correctional centre about the crime of child defilement, adult convicted offenders reported that they had very limited and inaccurate SRH knowledge. Adult convicted offenders reported their consideration that a girl with breasts is an adult. Similarly, the research found that the newly convicted juvenile offenders did not have any SRH knowledge while those who have been in the juvenile correctional center longer are receiving that education.

29 Case study No 3: female participant defiled at age 16, Nyaruguru District

30 Case Study No 15: female participant defiled at age 17, Gasabo District

31 Case Study No 38: female participant defiled at age 16, Bugesera District

“Before being convicted, I had no knowledge on the body changes, nor on sexuality because I had never discussed that topic with anyone”.³²

3.1.1.2. Sources of SRH information

Female and male children aged 10 to 17 are accessing SRH information through different channels. The school teachers are the primary channel as reported by 42.44% of girls and 49.69% of the boys with SRH information.

Table 6: Main source of information on SRH

Source of SRH information	Female		Male		Total	
	#	%	#	%		
School teacher	73	42.44%	79	49.69%	152	45.92%
Mother	55	31.98%	16	10.06%	71	21.45%
Friends	7	4.07%	22	13.84%	29	8.76%
Other household members	8	4.65%		0.00%	8	2.42%
Internet/social media	7	4.07%	7	4.40%	14	4.23%
Healthcare personnel	6	3.49%	2	1.26%	8	2.42%
Books	3	1.74%	1	0.63%	4	1.21%
Male sibling	3	1.74%	12	7.55%	15	4.53%
Father	3	1.74%	12	7.55%	15	4.53%
Refused to answer	7	4.07%	8	5.03%	15	4.53%
Total	172	100.00%	159	100.00%	331	100.00%

A considerable disparity is observed between girls and boys when it comes to getting SRH information from their mothers; 31.98% of the girls and 10.06% of the boys reported their mothers as the main source of SRH information. In relation to this parental education on SRH, the limited knowledge of parents was also flagged as a considerable limitation to the quality of SRH information that children may get from their parents.³³

³² Case study with Convict no 1: sentenced for 4 years at age 15, Nyagatare Juvenile Center

³³ Key Informant Interview with staff of MIGEPROF

Further on the differences about sources of SRH information, 13.84% of boys reported obtaining SRH information from their peers with only 4.07% of the girls reporting the use of the same source.

3.1.2. Awareness on child and child defilement

The research found contrasted views about who a child is. In urban areas, participants are more aware about the legal age of child (individual aged below 18). However, in rural areas, the participants have inaccurate knowledge about who a child is.

3.1.2.1. Defining a child and child defilement

Explaining who they consider a child, some participants considered the age for obtaining a national identity card (16 years old) as the official age when one is no longer a child. This was reported by some parents who did not consider that their children were defiled because they were above 16.³⁴ Similarly, some of interviewed adult convicted offenders reported that they were considering someone to be a child when they were under 16 years of age, and that to have sexual intercourse with someone older than 16 could not be considered as child defilement.³⁵

A child's physical growth was also considered by some participants as an indication of their transition into adulthood. For these participants, one is still a child if they have not yet started puberty and, for them, if a girl can give birth (has started menstruating), she is no longer a child. This perception was also widely reported by victims of child defilement across all the research sites.³⁶³⁷³⁸³⁹⁴⁰⁴¹ Explaining who they considered to be a child before they were convicted, most of the adult convicted offenders reported that they were considering the physical appearance of the victims to judge whether they were old enough to engage in sexual activities. For instance, Convict number 12 assumed, from the physical

34 Interview with female parent of Case study No: 33, Bugesera District

35 Case Study with Convict no 17: sentenced for 10 years at age 28, Nyarugenge Correctional Center

36 Case study No 12: female participant defiled at age 17, Gasabo District

37 Case study No 42: female participant defiled at age 17, Gatsibo District

38 Case study No 29: female participant defiled at age 16, Nyarugenge District

39 Case study No 1: female participant defiled at age 17, Nyaruguru District

40 Case study No 44: female participant defiled at age 15, Gatsibo District

41 Case study No 17: female participant defiled at age 17, Kicukiro District

appearance, that the girl he defiled was 20 years old only to later find out that she had just turned 13.⁴²

Living with parents, regardless of your age, was also considered as an indication of being a child. Female parent reported that as long as the child is still depending on her/his parents, and as long as she/he is not owning her/his family they are still children.^{43,44} This is consistent with the perception that one is no longer a child after they reach the legal marriage age (21 years old) as widely reported by participants of qualitative interactions.

Misconceptions about who a child is

Damian [names have been changed] is a 51 years old married man serving a life sentence for defiling Clarisse, a 13 years old girl, when he was 37 years old. Damian was a neighbor and friend of the victim's family.

One day, when Damian's wife and the victim's mother had left their neighborhood for attending a wedding ceremony, Clarisse came to buy some items in Damian's boutique. Clarisse asked Damian about his day and whether he wasn't too lonely. Damian perceived that Clarisse was seducing him and he tried to guess her actual age and, judging from her physical appearance, he thought she was in her early twenties. He built on that assumption and asked Clarisse to have sexual intercourses, which Clarisse accepted.

A neighbor who wondered about the time Clarisse spent in the boutique warned Clarisse's mother upon her return. Clarisse was beaten and forced to reveal what had happened and the family reported Damian. Damian was sentenced for life imprisonment. Clarisse's mother keeps visiting him in the correctional facility, expressing remorse for reporting him and asking for his forgiveness. Clarisse's mother tells Damian that if she knew the sentence was going to be that severe, she would not have reported him.

Case Study with Convict no 12: sentenced for life at age 37, Nyarugenge Correctional

42 Case Study with Convict no 12: sentenced for life at age 37, Nyarugenge Correctional Center

43 Interview with female parent of victim of child defilement, Nyaruguru District

44 Case study No 35: female participant defiled at age 15, Bugesera District

“A child is always a child in front of her/his parents, especially those who are not yet get married. However, for the Rwandan law a child is anyone who is under 18 years old.”⁴⁵

The definition of who a child is has great influence on the participants considerations about child defilement. Only a few female and male participants know that an adult is committing a crime whenever they engage in sexual activities with a child under 18 years' old, regardless of whether they are in agreement or not.⁴⁶ For most participants, child defilement is when an adult forces a child to have sexual intercourse.⁴⁷ With this belief, most participants understand that consensual sexual intercourse between an adult and a child, such as when they are in a romantic relationship, is not defilement.^{48:49:50:51:52}

Victims and convicted offenders of child defilement who were in romantic relationships do not consider their experiences, sexual intercourse between an adult and a child, as child defilement.⁵³

“I got pregnant with my boyfriend who was 30 years old while I was 14 years old, and I don't take it as an abuse because we loved each other.”⁵⁴

“She [the victim] came to spend the night with me, we had sex and she got pregnant. When she told me about the pregnancy, I took her as my wife and we lived together for a while. I thought I was doing the right thing, as I grew up hearing that it is a crime when you impregnant someone, and you do not take her as your wife.”⁵⁵

Further misconceptions about child defilement derive from this community understanding of child defilement. For instance, interviewed community members, including victims of

45 Interview with female parent of Case study No 11, Gasabo District

46 Case study No 9: female participant defiled at age 17, Gasabo District

47 Case study No 25: female participant defiled at age 15, Nyarugenge District

48 Case study No 4: female participant defiled at age 17, Nyaruguru District

49 Case study No 2: female participant defiled at age 17, Nyaruguru District

50 Case study No 3: female participant defiled at age 16, Nyaruguru District

51 Case study No 13: female participant impregnated at age 15, Gasabo District

52 Case study No 17: female participant defiled at age 17, Kicukiro District

53 Case study No 26: female participant defiled at age 16, Nyarugenge District

54 Case study No 31: female participant defiled at age 14, Nyarugenge District

55 Case study with Convict no 16: sentenced for 10 years at age 27, Nyarugenge Correctional Center

child defilement, perceive that child defilement is when sexual intercourse are transactional and the adult has offered the child things he/she couldn't afford.^{56/57} Furthermore, participants believe that consensual sexual intercourse between an adult and a child could be considered a problem when the man is married, thus, cheating on his wife.⁵⁸ From the perspective of some of the interviewed victims of child defilement, when an adult man uses a romantic relationship as a ruse to lure the girl into sexual intercourse, then it is child defilement.⁵⁹

Only a few participants, mostly from Gasabo and Nyarugenge Districts, have knowledge that male children are also at risk of child defilement. A victim of child defilement reported that, a teacher she knows is currently in a correctional center due to defiling a 13 years old boy.⁶⁰ In Bugesera District, a female parent of a victim of child defilement perceives that child defilement is like a curse, as both girls and boys get defiled.⁶¹

When you are an older girl and you lure a boy child into sexual activities whether, he consents or not, you are abusing him.⁶²

3.1.2.2. Sources of information on child age range

Interviewed participants with the correct knowledge about the legal age of child as well as child defilement reported different sources of that information. For instance, a victim of child defilement from Nyaruguru District reported that a child is an individual under 18 years old; an information she obtained from an agricultural project that used to only recruit people aged 18 and above and which dismissed others with the explanation that they are still children.⁶³

School, on the other hand, was also mentioned as a source of accurate information by victims of child defilement who had attended at least secondary school both in rural and

56 Case study No 5: female participant defiled at age 16, Nyaruguru District

57 Case study No 1: female participant defiled at age 17, Nyaruguru District

58 Key Informant Interview with a female parent, Kicukiro District

59 Case study No 33: female participant defiled at age 17, Bugesera District

60 Case study No 5: female participant defiled at age 16, Nyaruguru District

61 Interview with female parent of Case study No 33, Bugesera District

62 Key Informant Interview with a female parent, Gatsibo District

63 Case study No 1: female participant defiled at age 17, Nyaruguru District

urban areas. ^{64,65,66} Majority of victims of child defilement who were able to mention the correct age range for one to be considered a child got that information from the discussions with authorities when their parents were reporting their cases of defilement.^{67,68,69} It is observed that more victims from urban settings have correct information about the legal age range of a child and reported obtaining it from the radio.⁷⁰

3.1.3. Alcohol as a driver to perpetration

The use and abuse of alcohol and drugs was mentioned as one of the factors for victimization and perpetration. One aspect of this issue was heavily reported in relation to the easy access that children have to bars. It was reported that the bar tenants serve alcoholic beverages to children, whether girls or boys.^{71,72} Narrating the events that led to committing the crime of child defilement, a female convict reported that she was approached by a young man in a bar and the latter paid for the alcoholic beverages they shared and, later on engaged in sexual intercourse with him.⁷³ She did not know the young man was actually 15 years old and only found out when the boy was beaten by his parents to reveal who had infected him with gonorrhoea.

“I was working in a bar as a waiter but also as a sex worker. One day a young guy came, bought me beer and when we were both drunk he gave me money to have sex with him. I was caught after some days because the young guy was suffered from gonorrhoea that I transmitted to him”.⁷⁴

The research also found girls and boys in the age range of 15 to 17 in romantic relationships who engaged in unprotected sexual intercourse under the influence of alcohol.⁷⁵ One adolescent who became a mother at age 15 reported that she already was in a romantic relationship with her boyfriend, aged 16, but had abstained from sexual

64 Case study No 6: female participant defiled at age 16, Nyaruguru District

65 Case study No 11: female participant defiled at age 17, Gasabo District

66 Case study No 25: female participant defiled at age 15, Nyarugenge District

67 Case study No 14: female participant impregnated at age 15, Gasabo District

68 Case study No 38: female participant defiled at age 16, Bugesera District

69 Case study No 8: female participant defiled at age 17, Nyaruguru District

70 Case study No 25: female participant defiled at age 15, Nyarugenge District

71 Key Informant Interview with Female Community Volunteer, Nyaruguru District

72 Key Informant Interview with Male Community Volunteer, Nyaruguru District

73 Case study with Convict no 19 (female): sentenced for 7 years at age 22, Nyarugenge Correctional Center

74 Case study with Convict no 19: sentenced for 7 years at age 22, Nyarugenge Correctional Center

75 Case study No 47: female participant defiled at age 16, Gatsibo District

intercourse until they met at a house party with their friends and had sex under the influence of alcohol.⁷⁶The influence of alcohol on sexual activities among same age children and between adult and children was also confirmed by several community level informants both in rural and urban areas.⁷⁷

3.1.4. Prior sexual victimization

Prior sexual victimization is another contributing factor to child defilement. This is primarily due to the fact that, when victims of child defilement and other forms of violence against children are not treated, they become offenders (World Health Organization, 2016).

Discussions with victims of child defilement, adolescent mothers and convicted offenders revealed that most of them had previously been victims or offenders of child defilement. This is the case for a female convicted offender incarcerated in Nyarugenge Correctional Center. She was first defiled when she was 13 years old and at that time, she had not yet enrolled in school as she started school at age 14. As her mother passed away right after, she dropped out of school and went for domestic work and, later on, worked as a sex worker and bar waitress which is where she met the boy she defiled.

“I was defiled when I was 13 years old by a guy who was 18 years old. This guy proposed me to have a sex with him by showing me a banana that I really wanted to eat as we were poor and we could never afford to eat sweet bananas like that one.”⁷⁸

A similar experience also happened to many other victims of child defilement. For instance, Case Study no 3 is considered a victim of child defilement due to her known case of sexual intercourse forced by a boutique tenant when she was 16 years old as this resulted into a pregnancy. However, she had been constantly defiled from the time she was 5 years until she was 10 years old by the brother of her stepmother. She felt no one would believe her and did not report the defilement. Due to seeing her constantly sad, the stepmother sent her to be raised by her grandmother. Rejected, first, by her mother who abandoned her at 6 months old, second, by her grandmother who sent her away to be raised by her stepmother

⁷⁶ Case study No 14: female participant impregnated at age 15, Gasabo District

⁷⁷ Key Informant with a male parent, Gatsibo District

⁷⁸ Case study with Convict no 19 (female): sentenced for 7 years at age 22, Nyarugenge Correctional Center

when she was 5 years old and third by her stepmother when she was 10 years old, she could not pursue education and dropped out for domestic work where she was defiled.⁷⁹

Similarly, Case Study no 6 was impregnated at age 16 by her 25-year-old boyfriend. Considering herself in a romantic relationship with the offender, she did not consider herself abused and, thus, did not report the defilement. The defilement was only known when her father accompanied her to the Health Center when she was sick and the laboratory test results came out positive for pregnancy. The parents were in complete shock. However, the defilement she experienced when she was 12 years old, was not considered as, she did not report the offender, a construction aid who had found her alone at home, and because the defilement had not resulted into a pregnancy.⁸⁰

The same goes for Convict no 17. He was apprehended because local authorities noticed a pregnant girl who was asking to be registered for a national identification card -sought at 16 years old and followed up to find that this offender had already settled amicably with the victim's family. However, convict no 17 admitted that this girl was not his first victim. With a sexual debut at 13 with a 12-years-old girl, he continued to have sex with girl children even when he became an adult. He admitted impregnating many underage girls and considers himself unlucky that one of those cases was known.⁸¹

79 Case study No 3: female participant defiled at age 16, Nyaruguru District

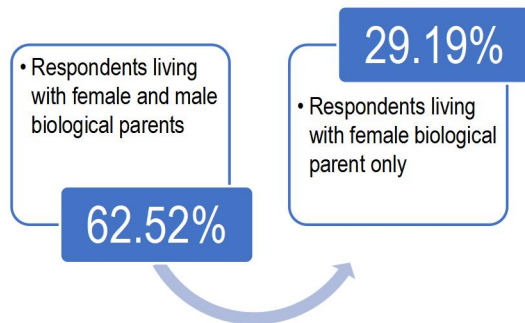
80 Study No 6: female participant defiled at age 16, Nyaruguru District

81 Case Study with Convict no 17: sentenced for 10 years at age 28, Nyarugenge Correctional Center

3.1.5. Quantity and quality of adult supervision

The research found that 62.52% children live with both biological parents. The next considerable share is that of children living with their mother only (29.19%).

Figure 5: Household headship of respondents



26.85% of the children (32.69% of the total sample of female respondents as well as 20.87% of their male counterparts) reported that their fathers are alive but they don't live together. The number is smaller for the children with mother living elsewhere (7.80%).

The household headship, along with other household context characteristics were associated with the risks for victimization and perpetration of child defilement. For instance, with the consideration that parents are busy making a living, especially in urban settings. For the children, left home unattended, the absence of parents and the lack of adult supervision were highlighted as risk factors for perpetration or victimization of child defilement. An interviewed research informant, a male parent living in the City of Kigali, reported that children have a lot of freedom as their parents are poor and spend many hours looking for and working on unskilled jobs in Nyabugogo. The informant added that these parents do not question it when their children are wearing or have new things that they did not buy for them while they have not been able to attend to their children's basic needs.⁸²

⁸² Key Informant Interview with a male parent, Nyarugenge District

Similarly, in rural areas, poverty of female headed household was identified as a factor contributing to the defilement of children in such households. A male community volunteer, who is also a village leader, reported observing that it is hard for a female head of a poor household to find time for parenting and educating her children as she is constantly busy with wage farming during the day and household chores in the evening.⁸³

However, children from well-off families are not spared. This was the case of a manager of a guest house (37 years old) who noticed a girl (15 years old) going out and drinking alcoholic beverages with adult men when her busy parents -civil servants, were not home. This man initiated a romantic relationship with the girl and the relationship went on for about a year. On several instances during this time, the man offered alcoholic beverages to the girl and engaged in sexual activities with her. At the time the girl was turning 17, she became pregnant and her family became aware of the abuse and reported the man (age 39) who was sentenced for 10 years.⁸⁴ Similar cases were anecdotally reported by informants from Gasabo and Nyarugenge Districts and for both high density low income neighborhoods as well as in high end residential communities.⁸⁵

Another angle to the risk factors associated with the family, was raised by a female government official, in charge of social affair at sector level. This informant reported the challenges related to the population density, the children who wander in economic zones begging and the absent parents who are not aware of what their children are up to.⁸⁶

The exploration of individual level characteristics has informed the research about several factors contributing to victimization for and perpetration of child defilement. The limited and inaccurate knowledge and awareness on the legal age range for one to be considered a child, the legal definition about child defilement and sexual and reproductive health are key common features prevailing in the population of children age 10 to 17, the victims of child defilement, the offenders as well as community members. Even though both boys and girls

83 Key Informant Interview with Male Community Volunteer, Nyaruguru District

84 Case study with Convict no 20: sentenced for 10 years at age 39, Nyarugenge Correctional Center

85 Key Informant Interview with Female Parent, Gasabo District

86 Key Informant Interview with a female government official, Nyarugenge District

are at risk of child defilement, being a girl by itself is a considerable risk factor for victimization. Moreover, excessive alcohol consumption and limited quality and quantity of adult supervision is also emerging as a key factor for both victimization and perpetration.

3.2. Relationships

Under this theme, the “Relationships” refer to the interactions of the child with family, friends, peers, intimate partners, and neighbour and which can influence the child’s vulnerability to defilement.

3.2.1. Family

At the family level, the research explored the household context in terms of economic status in relation to the size of the household, the composition as well as the linkages between poverty and victimization for and perpetration of child defilement.

3.2.1.1. Economic status of the household

An overwhelming majority of victims of child defilement, adult and juvenile offenders convicted for child defilement and other informants reported poverty-related issues as contributing factors for child defilement. The primary issue reported, in relation with poverty, is the forced school dropout, increasing the risks for victimization to as well as perpetration of child defilement. To understand the poverty context of the participants, the research used the Ubudehe Categorization, a system adopted by the Government of Rwanda (GoR) for understanding the vulnerability of the population and inform national planning.

As the Ubudehe Categorization system is under review, children were asked the category of their household, using the old and widely known system of four Ubudehe Categories (Ubudehe Category 1 is extreme poverty and Ubudehe Category 4 is wealthy)

Majority of children’s families 54.41% (n=315) belong into the first two categories of Ubudehe; categories for the most vulnerable households.

Table 7: Distribution of respondents by Ubudehe Category

Ubudehe Category	Female		Male		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
1	45	15.31%	61	21.40%	106	18.31%
2	113	38.44%	96	33.68%	209	36.10%
3	104	35.37%	85	29.82%	189	32.64%
Don't know	32	10.88%	43	15.09%	75	12.95%
Total	294	100.00%	285	100.00%	579	100.00%

The size of a poor household was found to be a contributing factor for victimization. It is important to note that, most of the households of the research respondents (69.61%) count between five and eight members.

Confronted to their parents' limited abilities to provide basic needs, victims of child defilement, from Nyaruguru District, left their home for finding paid domestic work in nearby town or City of Kigali. This was heavily associated with the size and the economic status of the household where affording meals, clothes, and other needs, for all the children, is a constant struggle for parents with limited financial means.⁸⁷

I have eight children and two grandchildren. Our household is in Ubudehe Category 1; I and my husband depend on wage farming, and this cannot sustain our family; this is the reason why we sent the older children to the city but two returned pregnant.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Case study No 1: female participant defiled at age 17, Nyaruguru District

⁸⁸ Interview with female parent of a victim of child defilement in Nyaruguru District

The size of a poor household was also pointed out as a factor to perpetration. This was reported as the lack of privacy for poor families as they cannot afford spacious houses. In these cases, the children are exposed to their parents' sexuality and experiment that with other children in the neighborhood or their siblings. "I heard my mother engaging in sexual intercourse with her clients and went to tell my female friend. We decided to do it too so that we can have that experience".⁸⁹

The lack of scholastic materials due to household poverty has led many victims of child defilement to drop out of school and engaging in income generating activities to support the household. Some of these activities require the child to leave their rural community and seek employment, predominantly domestic work, in the nearby town or City of Kigali.⁹⁰ During their time in domestic work, girls are promised a better life by adult male members of the employer's household, other domestic workers in the same household, or neighbours' or other adult men in the community.

Household poverty puts children at risk of defilement

Jane [names have been changed] is an adolescent mother, soon turning 18 years old. Jane lives in Gatsibo District with her mother and six younger stepsiblings. Jane's household is in extreme poverty and they are in Ubudehe Category 1.

Jane's mother separated from her father when Jane was still a toddler. After the separation, Jane stayed with her father until she turned 11 years old. She left her father, also in extreme poverty, to live with her mother and get a chance to go to school.

Most days, Jane and her siblings are not able to have any meal at all. One day on her way from school, Jane was feeling dizzy as she had spent three entire days without eating. Kalisa, a 27-year old man, noticed that Jane was hungry and he invited her to his home to have sweet bananas and donuts. Jane trusted Kalisa and went to his house and ate a few sweet bananas.

As Jane was getting ready to leave, Kalisa pushed her to the bed and defiled her. Kalisa turned the

⁸⁹ Case study with Convict no 3: sentenced for 3 years at age 14, Nyagatare Juvenile Center

⁹⁰ Case study No 8: female participant defiled at age 17, Nyaruguru District

I and the young brother of my boss, who lived in the same house, started a romantic relationship; we loved each other and we had sexual intercourses everyday as he had promised to marry me. He was older than me but I was happy to have found a rich man who would provide everything I needed. I thought that I was never going back to my poor family.⁹¹

Several informants in Nyaruguru District reported that it is common for girls to drop out of school, leave the community for paid domestic work in an urban area, and return pregnant, thus, adding to their family's poverty.⁹²

Besides being lured into relationships, female domestic workers are also exposed to forced sexual intercourse.⁹³

My family's neighbor asked my mother to let me go work as a domestic in his brother's home in Kigali. When I arrived, I found that there was only an adult man with a young baby. From that night and on, he forced me to have sexual intercourse for two weeks. He would lock me inside the house so that I don't leave. When he finally opened, I run away.⁹⁴

Domestic work was also found to be a factor to perpetration of child defilement. While in domestic work at age 15, a now juvenile convict discussed with a female domestic worker in the same compound who bragged about how she was enjoying sexual intercourse with her boyfriend. The young man wanted to have the same experience and defiled an 8 years old girl in the same compound.⁹⁵ Another juvenile convict, female, reported that she wanted to experiment what she had been watching in pornographic content, and defiled her employer's 10-years-old son.⁹⁶

On the other hand, adult men were reported as taking advantage of girls in poverty. This was the case of a victim of child defilement in Gatsibo District, whose household had spent three days without any meal. This hungry child was offered ripe sweet bananas by a man in her community in exchange for sexual intercourse; she accepted and the man defiled her

91 Case study No 4: female participant defiled at age 17, Nyaruguru District

92 Interview with female parent of Case study No: 4, Nyaruguru District

93 Case study No 3: female participant defiled at age 16, Nyaruguru District

94 Case study No 9: female participant defiled at age 17, Gasabo District

95 Case study with Convict no 2: sentenced for 5 years at age 15, Nyagatare Juvenile Center

96 Case study with Convict no 10 (female): sentenced for 10 years at age 14, Nyagatare Juvenile Center

for three days.⁹⁷ This ruse of offering gifts, food items or other things the family of the girl child is not able to afford was also reported by several informants including those at the national level. An informant from MIGEPROF mentioned that it has been brought to the attention of the ministry that offenders use gifts to lure the girl child into sexual relations.⁹⁸

Another factor contributing to child defilement and which is related to poverty is when victims are given the promise of a job. A household, located in Kicukiro District and in Ubudehe Category 1, was renting a room in their government-provided dwelling. Their 21-years-old tenant offered to find domestic work for their 15-years old daughter. The unsuspecting girl followed the young man who locked her in his newly rented place and defiled her for several days.⁹⁹ The following quote narrates the same scenario from the experience of a convicted offender.

“I had no relationship with her [the victim]. I saw her as she was wandering on the road, looking for a job. I proposed her to have sex with me so that I can connect her with someone who was looking for an employee. She accepted, we had sex and I found her a domestic work in my sister’s house, and later it was found that I had impregnated her.”¹⁰⁰

In addition to risk factors contributing to the risk factor for victimization for and perpetration of child defilement, poverty factors were also reported to hinder the victims’ access to justice. A victim of child defilement reported that, due to household poverty, her grandmother was not able to pursue the complaint against the offender as they failed to afford transportation fees from the Southern Province where they live to the Eastern Province where the offender lives.¹⁰¹

97 Case Study No 41: female participant defiled at age 15, Gatsibo District

98 Key Informant Interview with staff of MIGEPROF

99 Case Study No 19: female participant defiled at age 15, Kicukiro District

100 Case study with Convict no 17: sentenced for 10 years at age 28, Nyarugenge Correctional Center

101 Case study No 3: female participant defiled at age 16, Nyaruguru District

3.2.1.2. Parents' awareness of risks and vulnerabilities of children

It was reported by several victims of child defilement, their parents and adult convicted offenders that, in some instances, parents are not aware of or do not consider their children's vulnerability to defilement. This is illustrated by several cases where the parents welcomed male tenants or employees into their household, considered them like family members and these ended up defiling their children. On the other hand, there are parents who rent houses without considering the other tenants' or landlord's family composition and thus, putting their children at risk.

"I was working in the family of the victim where I was trusted and given the responsibility to supervise the household and the family business. I lived with the family, and one day, my boss' daughter came to my bedroom naked. We had sexual intercourse and started a romantic relationship. It is when she became pregnant that her mother got aware

*and took the case to the police."*¹⁰²

Parents' limited awareness of risks facing children

Belise [names have been changed] is a 16 years old girl living with her parents and four siblings in Nyarugenge District in the City of Kigali. As Belise's parents leave the house early in the morning, they had asked one of their tenants to wake Belise and her siblings up, so that they are not late for school. Bosco, the tenant, was a very well behaved tenant, and Belise's parents considered him as their own son. Bosco had started renting from Belise's family since the later was 12 years old.

One day, Bosco entered Belise's room to wake her up and found her alone in the room and he forced sexual intercourses on Belise. Bosco threatened to beat Belise if she screams or tells anyone

However, in some instances, parents of victims of child defilement are aware of the risks and vulnerability of their children but choose to ignore them. This is the case of parents, in Nyaruguru District, who noticed their daughter was spending a lot of time with their tenant. The parents did not discourage the relationship, instead, they told their daughter to never come back home if she ever gets pregnant.¹⁰³ The relationship went on for two years and when the daughter became pregnant (age 17), she started living with the offender.

¹⁰² Case study with Convict no 13: sentenced for 21 years at age 22, Nyarugenge Correctional Center

¹⁰³ Case study No 7: female participant defiled at age 17, Nyaruguru District

A similar scenario happened in urban settings. A single mother who is financially well-off introduced her 15-years-old daughter to a 27-years-old man, who later became the offender, so that they work-out together. When the mother became suspicious of their relationship getting closer, she asked the man to move out of the compound. However, she would always ask the daughter to use that man's cell phone to reach her whenever she was travelling abroad. One day, the daughter came home late and the mother suspected she had been to the man's place and she chased her away, asking her to return where she was. The daughter went to spend the night at the man's place and he defiled and impregnated her.¹⁰⁴

3.2.1.3. Parental and spousal relations

Research explores the extent to which children appreciate the company of their parents. An overwhelming majority (94.95%) of both female and male children reported being happy when their fathers are home. Both girls and boys like it when the father is home and talking to them (65.14% of the girls and 51.74% of the boys) and the nice things the fathers provide (16.57% of the girls and 13.93% of the boys). However, boys are most to like sharing domestic chores with their fathers (9.14% of girls and 23.88% of the boys)

Similarly, both girls and boys (97.69%) like it when their mothers are home. The main reason reported for liking the mothers' presence is doing chores together as reported by 64.73% of the girls and 51.91% of the boys. The second common reason for appreciating the mother's presence is the dialogue (reported by 25.97% girls and 35.88% boys).

¹⁰⁴ Case Study with Convict no 16: sentenced for 10 years at age 27, Nyarugenge Correctional Center

However, conflicts between spouses and/or with their children were found as factors for victimization and perpetration. The spousal conflicts arising due to different reasons including excessive consumption of alcohol and unfaithfulness were reported as negatively affecting the quality and quantity of supervision that children get from their parents, leaving them vulnerable to victimization for and perpetration of child defilement.¹⁰⁵ This, and other reasons for the parents' failure to educate and supervise their children, thus, exposing them to child defilement, was emphasized on by an informant from MIGEPROF as a factor that is consistently observed and reported to the ministry.¹⁰⁶

Similarly, both female and male children, reported leaving the family home for paid domestic work due to the constant quarrels and conflicts between their parents.¹⁰⁷ These conflicts were also reported as reasons to engage in romantic relationships with the offenders, considering the relationship as a way to escape the conflicts at home.

I went to Butare to look for domestic work because I was sick of my parents' fights. I met a young man who was also a domestic worker in the same house and we fell in love. He had promised me to marry me, and I felt lucky to meet him because I would never go back to my home where my parents are always fighting.¹⁰⁸

Leaving the family home due to the constant conflicts between the parents was also identified as a factor that contributed to the perpetration of child defilement. In one instance, a juvenile offender linked his family conflicts with

Spousal and parental conflicts

When Agnes was 16 years old, she left her family in Nyaruguru District for domestic work in the town of Huye District. Agnes decided to leave because her parents were not able to provide her and her 7 siblings with the basic needs and were constantly in conflicts, quarrelling and physically violent towards each other and towards their children.

The household employing Agnes also had a male domestic worker, Gaspard, who was 20 years old. When Gaspard promised to marry Agnes and asked her to engage in sexual activities, she accepted. Agnes considered

105 Key Informant with Local authority Official, Nyaruguru District

106 Key Informant Interview with staff of MIGEPROF

107 Case study No 8: female participant defiled at age 17, Nyaruguru District

108 Case study No 1: female participant defiled at age 17, Nyaruguru District

easy access to the child he defiled.

“I left my parents’ home due to their constant spousal conflicts and went to live with my aunt. The victim was my cousin whom we planned not to go to school and stay at home together as her parents were not home. The girl came in my room naked and we had sex. Since then the girl changed her behaviors towards me and her mother got suspicious, she beat her and she confessed that we had sex and I was sued to the court.”¹⁰⁹

While a lot of emphasis has been put on the negative effects that poor spousal relations have on the quality and quantity of supervision parents provide to their children, limited attention has been paid to the parental-child relations. This was highlighted by several community volunteers, linking the poor parental-child relations as a factor hindering the dialogue and education on relevant SRH aspects.¹¹⁰ In this regard, the cultural barrier was stated as one of the reasons holding parents from discussing sexuality with their children.¹¹¹

Parental neglect, whether resulting from spousal conflicts or the absence of parents due to other reasons, leave children vulnerable to intoxicated offenders and other offenders. This was the case of a boy who was chased by his parents for getting home late in the evening. As he was wandering in the neighborhood not knowing where he will spend the night, a woman offered shelter. The woman, aged 21, reported she had no intention to engage in sexual relations with the boy, aged 12; however, she defiled the boy in the middle of the night and attributes this to the influence of alcohol.¹¹² Similarly, Convict number 16 had sexual intercourse with the victim when she had been chased away by her mother for getting home late.¹¹³

109 Case study with Convict no 6: sentenced for 3 years at age 14, Nyagatare Juvenile Center

110 Key Informant Interview with Female Community Volunteer, Nyaruguru District

111 Key Informant Interview with a Male Community Volunteer (2), Nyaruguru District

112 Case study with Convict no 18 (female): sentenced for 10 years at age 21, Nyarugenge Correctional Center

113 Case Study with Convict no 16: sentenced for 10 years at age 27, Nyarugenge Correctional Center

On the other hand, parents who reject their pregnant daughters expose them to more risks of continued defilement. Reflecting on the case of a young woman chased by her parents because she was pregnant, a youth leader mobilized other youth to build a house for that girl so that she can have a dwelling. However, the leader was concerned that lacking means for subsistence and the family support was exposing the girl to more offenders.¹¹⁴

The same pattern of parental neglect, child defilement and alcohol use and abuse was also reported by a juvenile offender (age 14) whose mother, a sex worker, used to offer alcoholic beverages so that he leaves her alone with her clients. To acquire the alcohol, both for himself and his mother, the boy used to go to a bar where he met the victim, the daughter (age 8) of the bar tenant, always in the bar helping her parents to serve alcoholic beverages to their clients.¹¹⁵ Even though they were not under the influence of alcohol at the time of the defilement, alcohol played a considerable preconditioning role.

In the same line and especially in urban settings, unsuspecting parents get busy making a living and, unwillingly leave their children as prey to alcoholic beverages, and, subsequently to child defilement. This is elaborated under “quantity and quality of adult supervision”.

However, informants also recognized the role of the children especially those who lie to escape their parents’ supervision. A victim of child defilement admitted lying to her mother that she wanted to visit her aunt and went to sleep over to her boyfriend’s house.¹¹⁶

Most juvenile offenders defiled children left without adult supervision, either left alone at home or in the bushes far from their parents’ sight.

114 Key Informant Interview with Youth Leader, Gasabo District

115 Case study with Convict no 3: sentenced for 3 years at age 14, Nyagatare Juvenile Center

116 Case study No 5: female participant defiled at age 16, Nyaruguru District

“I had no relationship with the victim, but she was my neighbor. She once came to visit my sisters and found me home alone as my parents had gone to church. I asked her to have sex with me and she accepted.”¹¹⁷

In some instances, children in step families lack supervision. This is illustrated by the case of a girl, from Nyaruguru District, who was abandoned by her mother to be raised by her grandmother. By the time she turned 5 years old, the grandmother sent her to be raised by her father who had remarried. She stayed in the father’s house for 5 years and was continually defiled by the stepmother’s brother.¹¹⁸ She didn’t tell anyone but when the stepmother noticed that she was always sad, she assumed the girl was not happy to live with a stepmother and sent her back to her grandmother. A few years later, she left for domestic work.

3.2.1.4. Abuse by family members

Informants have reported cases of child defilement brought to their attention including those perpetrated by family members. In this line, an informant from Kicukiro District referred to a case of a child who confessed to her that her father had been abusing her for four years.

“It is very difficult to protect children from their own family members.”

Furthermore, a parent who is a member of the Friends of Family (Inshuti z’Umuryango) in her village reported a case of a child of eight years old who was abused by his stepfather. The mother of the child was aware kept quiet for not losing the economic support of her husband. The IZU reported the case to the RIB and offender was sentenced life imprisonment. Similarly, a mother of a victim of child defilement from Nyarugenge District reported the case of her child of eight years being abused by her husband’s family member aged 16 years old. The mother didn’t report the case to the police for not destroying the good relationships of two families; the case was reported by the healthcare providers when the mother was seeking treatment for the child but refusing to take her to the Isange One Stop Centre.

¹¹⁷ Case study with Convict no 1: sentenced for 4 years at age 15, Nyagatare Juvenile Center

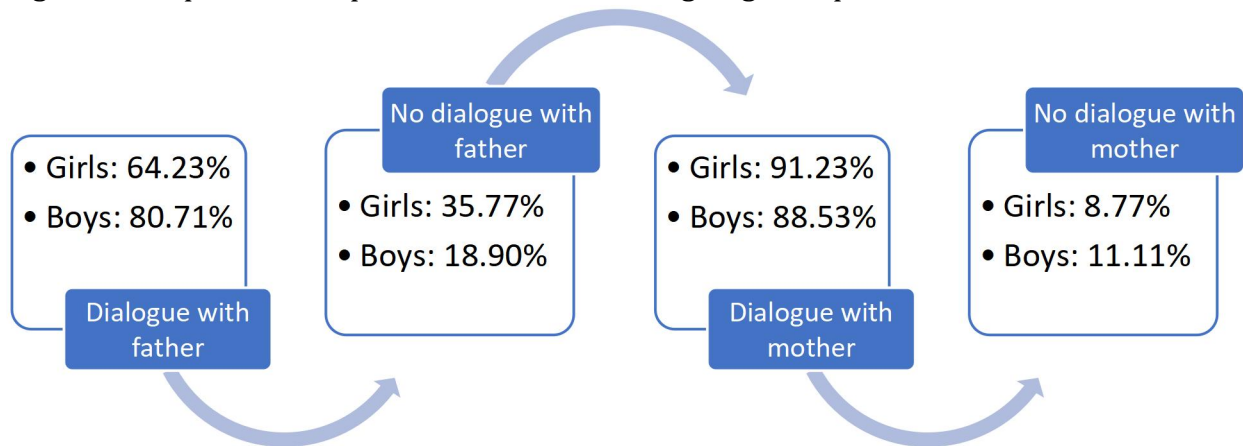
¹¹⁸ Case study No 3: female participant defiled at age 16, Nyaruguru District

3.2.1.5. Parents as sources of information

An overwhelming majority of female and male children consider that it is important to have dialogue with their parents, both the father (dialogue with the father was considered important by 97.86%) and the mother (as reported by 97.34%).

Despite the positive attitude towards parent-child dialogue, the practice is not there. The research found that 35.77% of the girls never have a parent-child dialogue with their father. The proportion of the boys reporting the same gap is smaller (10.9%) compared to that of the girls but still alarmingly considerable. The same gendered pattern about father-child dialogue is not observed for the mother as majority of girls (91.23%) and boys (88.53%) reported to dialogue with their mothers.

Figure 6: Respondents experience with ever dialoguing with parents



When it comes to parent-child dialogue about sexual and reproductive health, research found that more than 65% girls and boys never talk about SRH with their father. This proportion considerably drops for girls (36.49%) when it comes to mother-child dialogue about SRH but remains stable for the boys (63.44%).

Table 8: Parent-child dialogue about SRH

	Female		Male		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
SRH dialogue with father						
Never	191	73.46%	168	66.14%	359	69.84%
Sometimes	62	23.85%	77	30.31%	139	27.04%
Often	5	1.92%	8	3.15%	13	2.53%
Refused to answer	2	0.77%	1	0.39%	3	0.58%
Total	260	100.00%	254	100.00%	514	100.00%
SRH dialogue with mother						
Never	104	36.49%	177	63.44%	281	49.82%
Sometimes	158	55.44%	90	32.26%	248	43.97%
Often	20	7.02%	11	3.94%	31	5.50%
Refused to answer	3	1.05%	1	0.36%	4	0.71%
Total	285	100.00%	279	100.00%	564	100.00%

Abstinence and menstruation are the main type of SRH information provided by parents, as reported by victims, their parents, and other informants. Victims of child defilement reported that their mothers used to caution them about sexual intercourse after they have started menstruating as they would get pregnant.¹¹⁹¹²⁰¹²¹ This was also confirmed by the interviewed parents of victims of child defilement, explaining that they had taught their children about abstinence by showing them the consequences of having sex at the young age.¹²²¹²³

Table 9: SRH topics discussed with parents

Topics discussed with parents	Female	Male	Total

119 Case study No 2: female participant defiled at age 17, Nyaruguru District

120 Case study No 11: female participant defiled at age 17, Gasabo District

121 Case study No 38: female participant defiled at age 16, Bugesera District

122 Interview with female parent of Case study No 12, Gasabo District

123 Case study No 33: female participant defiled at age 17, Bugesera District

	#	%	#	%	#	%
Topic discussed with mother						
Abstinence from sexuality	144	80.90%	48	47.52%	192	68.82%
Body changes	4	2.25%	6	5.94%	10	3.58%
Hygiene	4	2.25%	15	14.85%	19	6.81%
Menstruation	14	7.87%		0.00%	14	5.02%
Options for safe sex	1	0.56%	7	6.93%	8	2.87%
Refused to answer	11	6.18%	23	22.77%	34	12.19%
Wet dreams		0.00%	2	1.98%	2	0.72%
Total	178	100.00%	101	100.00%	279	100.00%
SRH Topics discussed with father						
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Abstinence from sexuality	50	74.63%	43	50.59%	93	61.18%
Body changes	6	8.96%	3	3.53%	9	5.92%
Hygiene	3	4.48%	3	3.53%	6	3.95%
Menstruation	4	5.97%		0.00%	4	2.63%
Options for safe sex		0.00%	4	4.71%	4	2.63%
Others	1	1.49%	28	32.94%	29	19.08%
Refused to answer	3	4.48%	2	2.35%	5	3.29%
Wet dreams		0.00%	2	2.35%	2	1.32%
Total	67	100.00%	85	100.00%	152	100.00%

The parents who make efforts to educate their children on SRH and the victims of child defilement understand that the child has to play a role in their own protection. A victim of child defilement understands that parents may teach their children about SRH, but children also have to play their parts since there are children who do not obey their parents.¹²⁴

¹²⁴ Case study No 44: female participant defiled at age 15, Gatsibo District

Making a reference to the issue of children who disobey their parent, interviewed male and female parents, who taught their children about SRH, reported that children disobey their parents and refuse to abide by the instructions as provided by the parents.¹²⁵ Similarly, one parent who has been consistently educating her children about SRH understands that it is up to the children to apply that knowledge *“kami ka muntu ni umutima we.”*¹²⁶

The research identified the reasons why most parents do not educate their children on SRH. The identified reasons include the lacking time and knowledge to educate their children and the limited parent-child dialogue in general among others.

Lacking time: Across the urban sites of Gasabo and Nyarugenge Districts, parents have in common that they are busy working to provide for the family that they don't have any time left to discuss SRH subject in their families.¹²⁷¹²⁸ Moreover, in Kicukiro District, most of the interviewed victims of child defilement do not live with their parents as they left them in their rural home for making a living in town.

*“In this area, both parents and children wake up early morning and go look for money. I don't mean that parents send their children to work for money; but the truth is that after parents leave the house, children also go to the street to collect thrown bottles or fetch water for the coins. Do you think that kind of the family will get time to talk about SRH? No!”*¹²⁹

Culture: A victim of child defilement in Nyarugenge District suspected that her mother was ashamed to discuss SRH with her and her siblings as their mother used to send them to their aunt for the purpose of learning SRH.¹³⁰ Similarly, a CHW in Gasabo District reported that parents in her village send their children to her for SRH education as they find discussing SRH shameful.¹³¹ It was also reported that parents are ashamed of naming the genital organs in Kinyarwanda which prevents them from educating their children about SRH properly.¹³²

125 Interview with female parent of Case study No: 47, Gatsibo District

126 Interview with female parent of Case study No: 33, Bugesera District

127 Case study No 14: female participant impregnated at age 15, Gasabo District

128 Case study No 25: female participant defiled at age 15, Nyarugenge District

129 Interview with female parent of victim of child defilement, Bugesera District

130 Case study No 25: female participant defiled at age 15, Nyarugenge District

131 Key Informant Interview with a female community volunteer, Gasabo District

132 Key Informant Interview with staff of MIGEPROF

Parenting styles: a victim of child defilement who lives with her mother, stated that she once asked her mother about the age girl can experience period but the mother mocked her by saying that her parents also did not tell her.¹³³ Another victim reported that she had never seen her parents interacting with children since she was born, and they never told her that she would one day experience periods.¹³⁴

SRH is a topic for girls and women: SRH is considered a topic to be learned by girls. When asked about who, between girls and boys, should learn about SRH, most of the interviewed victims of child defilement and their parents reported that girls are the one who need much SRH education. This was associated with unwanted pregnancies, illustrating that girls are the ones who experience the consequences of lacking SRH knowledge. ^{135,136} Similarly, the same perception was shared by the convicted offenders of child defilement, like the adult male believing that SRH knowledge is for women.¹³⁷ These views were shared by a male parent reporting that female parents are responsible for teaching their children about SRH since male are family providers.¹³⁸

The perception that SRH education is for girls is reinforced by the sex-segregation promoted by CSOs providing SRH education. Victims of child defilement who attended the training provided by the CSOs, reported that the CSOs interventions they are part of target girls only and teach them about girls related SRH topics only.^{139,140,141,142,143}

133 Case study No 23: female participant defiled at age 15, Kicukiro District

134 Case study No 2: female participant defiled at age 17, Nyaruguru District

135 Interview with female parent of Case study No: 4, Nyaruguru District

136 Interview with male parent of Case study No: 4, Nyaruguru District

137 Case study with Convict no 17: sentenced for 10 years at age 28, Nyarugenge Correctional Center

138 Interview with male parent of Case study No: 4, Nyaruguru District

139 Case study No 17: female participant defiled at age 17, Kicukiro District

140 Case study No 31: female participant defiled at age 16, Nyarugenge District

141 Case study No 16: female participant defiled at age 16, Gasabo District

142 Case study No 39: female participant defiled at age 17, Bugesera District

143 Case study No 46: female participant defiled at age 15, Gatsibo District

The views that SRH education is for girls only were not shared by a victim of child defilement from Nyaruguru District who believes that both boys and girls deserve to be informed about the changes that are going to happen to their bodies as well as the implications of sexual relations.¹⁴⁴ It is important to note that this respondent with different views is educated up to secondary level and has a mother who is a Community Health Worker (CHW).

Lack of parent-child dialogue: Interviewed participants reported also the limited conversation between them and their parents mostly on the SRH which prevented them from getting the needed information mostly on their body changes as they grow up. Interviewed participants, whose households are led by educated parents, reported that their family time is when they discuss issues related to SRH and social life.¹⁴⁵¹⁴⁶ Some of the interviewed respondents said that if they had have received full information on the SRH, they could maybe have not been get involved in the crime of child defilement. Some of the juvenile convicted offenders reported that they did not get the chance to spend enough and convenient time with their parents so that they can talk on some topics including SRH.

“I have both parents, but before I got convicted I have never had any SRH conversation with them. When they come to pay me a visit in the prison they apologize to me for not engaging the discussion earlier about SRH and laws”.¹⁴⁷

“ My mother does not care about us, for example, my young sister experienced her period and when she asked my mother the pads, she mocked my sister and tell her to go look for pieces of clothes. I think that was the good time of my mother talking to my sister about SRH, and how she has to behave during her menstrual period.”¹⁴⁸

Parent’s education: Educated parents and parents who are community volunteers such as Community Health Workers (CHW) were also found to be important sources of SRH information. Victims of child defilement with parents in the above categories were found with advanced SRH knowledge than their counterparts.

144 Case study No 5: female participant defiled at age 16, Nyaruguru District

145 Case study No 5: female participant defiled at age 16, Nyaruguru District

146 Case study No 6: female participant defiled at age 16, Nyaruguru District

147 Case study with Convict no 1: sentenced for 4 years at age 15, Nyagatare Juvenile Center

148 Case study No 41: female participant defiled at age 15, Gatsibo District

A female parent of a victim of child defilement reported that she used to think that SRH is for educated people and, as a result, did not teach her children about it.¹⁴⁹ However, after her daughters gave birth and she struggled to raise the grandchildren, she started teaching her younger children to use condoms instead of bringing more children. In same way, a male parent reported that children should be taught by their mothers since he never been at home where he always busy for providing for the family.¹⁵⁰

Spousal conflicts: In this line, the constant spousal conflicts resulting in alcohol abuse, separation and child neglect, were cited as the main reason parents do not discuss SRH topics with their children.¹⁵¹¹⁵²¹⁵³ Most of the interviewed participants reported that conflicts between family members, especially the spouses, and which are caused by drug consumption result in constant fights and quarrelling among the family members. As result, parents do not get time to talk to their children.¹⁵⁴

Household headship: Both in rural and urban settings, children in households headed by single mothers were flagged at increased risks. This was reported with the fact that being single providers of their families cost them much time which results in lack of the time to talk to their children about SRH.¹⁵⁵¹⁵⁶

3.2.2. Romantic relationships

An overwhelming majority of both female and male children reported that they are not involved in any romantic relationship (91.16% of girls and 90.18% of boys). Of those who are in romantic relationships (n=24 girls and n=28 boys), more girls than boys have adult romantic partners (n=8 for girls and n=2 for boys).

149 Interview with female parent of Case study No: 4, Nyaruguru District

150 Interview with male parent of Case study No: 4, Nyaruguru District

151 Case study No 1: female participant defiled at age 17, Nyaruguru District

152 Case study No 8: female participant defiled at age 17, Nyaruguru District

153 Interview with female parent of victim of child defilement, Nyaruguru District

154 Case study No 44: female participant defiled at age 15, Gatsibo District

155 Interview with female parent of victim of child defilement, Nyaruguru District

156 Interview with female parent of victim of child defilement, Kicukiro District

Table 10: Romantic relationship among respondents

	Female		Male		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
In a romantic relationship						
No	268	91.16%	257	90.18%	525	90.67%
Yes	24	8.16%	28	9.82%	52	8.98%
Refused to answer	2	0.68%		0.00%	2	0.35%
Total	294	100.00%	285	100.00%	579	100.00%
Age of romantic partner	#	%	#	%	#	%
8-13	1	4.17%	20	71.41%	21	75.58%
14-17	14	58.34%	4	14.28%	18	72.62%
Above 18	8	33.34%	2	7.14%	10	40.48%
Refused to answer	1	4.17%	2	7.14%	3	5.77%
Total	24	100.00%	28	100.00%	52	100.00%

Romantic relationships

Albina [names have been changed] is turning 18 years old; she lives in Nyarugenge District, in the City of Kigali, with her mother and her four years old child.

Albina recalls falling in love with Antoine when she was 14 years old and he was the 30 years old boyfriend of Albina's older sister. Antoine used to visit Albina's sister, always bringing packets of biscuits. After a while, Antoine told Albina that it is her that he loved, and Albina accepted the secretive relationship. They started engaging in sexual intercourses, everyday after school. Antoine promised Albina that he would never impregnate her and took pills for that effect. When Albina realized that she was pregnant, Antoine denied responsibility. Albina kept it a secret and by the time her mother noticed

Qualitative interactions with victims of child defilement, adolescent mothers as well as adult and juvenile offenders revealed that most believed they were in consensual romantic

relationships.¹⁵⁷ As far as one village leader is concerned, there has not been any cases of forced sexual intercourse in his village as victims are in romantic relationships with the offenders.¹⁵⁸

With the consideration of romantic relationships, it doesn't come as a surprise that most victims of child defilement refuse to disclose the identity of the offender. As an illustration, one female parent whose daughter was impregnated at age 15 reported that , to date, the child is 2 years old and the father's identity is still unknown. ¹⁶⁰ The fear that the angry parents will send the offender to jail was reported as the reason why one victim of child defilement refused to disclose the identity of the offender.¹⁶¹

3.2.3. Peer pressure

The research found peer pressure as a contributing factor for both victimization and perpetration. Bragging about romantic relationships, experience with sexual activities and watching pornographic content among peers was heavily associated with initiating sexual activities. The pressure for sexual debut, the influence of watching pornographic content as well as the influence of aggressive peers are explored hereunder.

Peer pressure

Mugabe is 18 years old, finishing a four-year sentence in Nyagatare Juvenile Correctional Center for defiling an eight years old girl. Mugabe has both parents and they are neighbors with the victim's family.

Mugabe's father always teased him about expecting a daughter-in-law and his peers mocked him saying he might be sexually impotent. One day, when the parents had gone to church and Mugabe was home alone with his friends, Chantal, the neighbor's daughter, came looking for Mugabe's sisters. Mugabe's friends told him that he had an opportunity to prove that he was not impotent. The pressure to prove his friends wrong gave him the courage to ask Chantal to have sexual intercourses and Chantal accepted.

When one of Mugabe's friends told Chantal's

¹⁵⁷ Case study No 4: female participant defiled at age 17, Nyaruguru District

¹⁵⁸ Key Informant Interview with a Male Community Volunteer, Nyaruguru District

¹⁶⁰ Interview with female parent of victim of child defilement, Nyaruguru District

¹⁶¹ Case study No 2: female participant defiled at age 17, Nyaruguru District

3.2.3.1. Pressure for sexual debut

This was the case of a victim of child defilement who was invited by her female friend to spend the night at her boyfriend’s house.¹⁶¹ On the other hand, young boys without sexual experiences are teased by their peers that they are impotent and peers who watch pornographic content encourage each other to seize opportunities for experimenting sexual activities.

“Other boys had been mocking me, saying that “Intama yaragukandagiye” literally translated “a sheep has stepped on you” [common Kinyarwanda saying to mean that someone is sexually impotent]. When one of the boys saw a girl coming to my house, he told me to have sex with her. I asked her and she accepted.”¹⁶²

In this line, the quantitative component of the research explored the children’s perceptions about the right time to start having sexual intercourse. For the boys, as long as one has turned 18, it is the right time to engage in sexual activities as reported by 81.27% of boys and 42.91% of the girls. A considerable proportion of the girls also perceived that one should wait until they are married before they start engaging in sexual activities (28.03% of girls and 11.31% of boys).

Table 11: Perceptions about the right time of debuting sexual activities by gender of respondent

	Female		Male		Total	
	#	%	#	%		
Age 18	125	42.91%	230	81.27%	355	61.89%
After marriage	85	28.03%	34	11.31%	119	19.76%
After menstruation	3	1.04%	1	0.35%	4	0.70%
After wet dreams	1	0.35%		0.00%	1	0.17%
Don't know	79	27.34%	20	7.07%	99	17.31%
Puberty	1	0.35%		0.00%	1	0.17%
Total	294	100.00%	285	100.00%	579	100.00%

¹⁶¹ Case study No 5: female participant defiled at age 16, Nyaruguru District

¹⁶² Case study with Convict no 4: sentenced for 1 year at age 14, Nyagatare Juvenile Center

However, 12.93% of the girls (n=38) and 32.98% of the boys (n=94) believe that the time for sexual debut should not be the same for both boys and girls. Majority of girls and boys were in favor of the boy debuting sexuality earlier than the perceive right time as reported by 32 out of 38 girls and 53 out of 94 boys who believe time for sexual debut should be different for boys and for girls.

The pressure for sexual debut was also found to be underpinned by parents’ jokes, pushing young boys to commit defilement.

“My father used to always joke making fun of me and asking me when I will bring him a daughter in law-which pushed me to think that I am getting older and wanted to test my masculinity and found myself committing a child defilement crime”.¹⁶³

8 girls and 15 boys of the total respondents of the quantitative survey, admitted to be sexually active. These reported to have engaged in sexual activities as early as four years old with people in or outside the household. Romantic partners are only reported as first sexual partners for sexual activities debuted at age 10. Whether the respondents believed they were in relationships or not, those who reported the age of their first sexual partner always reported someone significantly older than them.

3.2.3.2. Influence of pornographic content

Both girls and boys have reported access to some form of pornographic content (porn) with more boys (21.75%) than girls (10.54%).

Table 12: experience with watching pornographic content

	Female		Male		Total	
Status	#	%	#	%	#	%
Has never watched porn	261	88.78%	223	78.25%	484	83.59%
Has watched porn	31	10.54%	62	21.75%	93	16.06%
Refused to answer	2	0.68%		0.00%	2	0.35%
Total	294	100.00%	285	100.00%	579	100.00%

¹⁶³ Case study with Convict no 1: sentenced for 4 years at age 15, Nyagatare Juvenile Center

Those who had ever watched pornographic content (n=31 girls and n=62 boys), have accessed it in their communities, whether in their home (41.94% of the girls who had ever watched pornography and 27.42% of their male counterparts) or in the neighbors' homes (22.58% of the girls and 51.61% of the boys who had ever watched pornography). More girls (n=5) than boys (n=1) reported accessing pornographic content at school.

Table 13: location when watching pornographic content

Where were you while watching pornography?	Female		Male		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
At neighbors'	7	22.58%	32	51.61%	39	41.94%
At home	13	41.94%	17	27.42%	30	32.26%
At school	5	16.13%	1	1.61%	6	6.45%
At relatives' place	1	3.23%	2	3.23%	3	3.23%
Other place	5	16.13%	10	16.13%	15	16.13%
Total	31	100.00%	62	100.00%	93	100.00%

The access to pornographic content was identified as a factor which, later on, contributed to the victimization to or perpetration of child defilement.

I used to watch pornographic content when I was a domestic worker. When I found myself alone with the boy, I remembered what I had watched and wanted to experiment it with the boy.”¹⁶⁴

“I had been watching pornographic movies with the other boys who were older than me and who were telling me that it is good to watch it. One time I met the girl [victim] who provoked me, and when I remembered what I saw in the pornographic movies I failed to resist and we had sexual intercourse”.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ Case study with Convict no 10 (female): sentenced for 10 years at age 14, Nyagatare Juvenile Center

¹⁶⁵ Case study with Convict no 7: sentenced for 5 years at age 16, Nyagatare Juvenile Center

3.2.3.3. Peer pressure to fit in

In a few instances, the research found victims pressured by their peers to engage in sexual activities with offenders hoping to obtain money from them. This was reported by a victim of child defilement from Gatsibo District who was pressured by her lady friends to find a wealthy boyfriend, an adult man farm manager of unknown age who later became the offender.¹⁶⁶ Similarly, a victim in Bugesera District accepted the romantic relationship from a man who provided 1000RWF daily so that she can eat at the school canteen which gave her standing among her peers.¹⁶⁷

The other reported factor causing peers to engage in child defilement is the association with aggressive peers. Some of the interviewed participants reported that they witnessed their peers forcing sexual intercourse and were also motivated to do so.

“We were three boys in the tree plantation with our dogs and we saw 3 girls whom we intimidated using our dogs and we forced them to have sex with us.”¹⁶⁸

3.3. Community

Under this thematic area, the research explored the safety of children when they are in their communities as well as any community level factors for victimization and perpetration. The school environment is another key component of the community which is explored under this section.

3.3.1. Prevalence of child defilement in the community

A considerable proportion of children reported being safe from child defilement while they are in their communities. Asked about whether anyone forced them to engage in sexual intercourse during the 12 months prior to data collection, 96.6% of the girls and 98.6% of the boys reported that this did not happen to them.

¹⁶⁶ Case Study No 46: female participant defiled at age 15, Gatsibo District

¹⁶⁷ Case Study No 33: female participant defiled at age 17, Bugesera District

¹⁶⁸ Case study with Convict no 9: sentenced for 10 years at age 15, Nyagatare Juvenile Center

Table 14: experience with forced sexual intercourses in the community

	Female		Male		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Forced sexual intercourses						
No	284	96.60%	281	98.60%	565	97.58%
Yes	8	2.72%	4	1.40%	12	2.07%
Refused to answer	2	0.68%	2	0.00%	2	0.35%
Total	294	100.00%	285	100.00%	579	100.00%

An analysis of the 12 cases of child defilement indicates that only 4 out of 8 girls and 1 out of 3 boys reported the defilement to their parents. Two girls and one boy further reported that the offenders were prosecuted. The neighbour were the common offenders of the child defilement as it was the case for the below case.

The man who defiled my daughter was a neighbour. We trusted him so much and he used to call me his own daughter. On several occasions, I sent my two daughters to help him with the cleaning. I never suspected that he would defile my 17-years-old daughter.¹⁶⁹

When it comes to being shown pornographic content by an adult community member, another form of sexual abuse and risk factor for child defilement, the number increases for the boys where 8.42% of the boys and 2.72% of the girls reported that an adult in the community exposed them to pornographic content. A further understanding of who those people are indicated that for boys, the adult was another male while for girls, the adults are both male and female.

Table 15: Exposure to pornographic content by an adult in the community

	Female		Male		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Shown pornographic content by an adult						
No	284	96.60%	261	91.58%	545	94.13%
Yes	8	2.72%	24	8.42%	32	5.53%
Refused to answer	2	0.68%		0.00%	2	0.35%
Total	294	100.00%	285	100.00%	579	100.00%

¹⁶⁹ Interview with female parent of Case Study No 11, Gasabo District

On the perceptions about engaging in sexual activities with an adult, the boys are categorical; they would refuse (as reported by 100% of the boys). However, a considerable proportion of girls (15%) hesitated about what they would answer the adult man’s sexual advances.

Table 16: Answer to an adult community member making sexual advances

Answer	Female		Male		Total #	Total %
	#	%	#	%		
I would say no	250	85.03%	285	100.00%	535	92.40%
Refused to answer	44	14.97%		0.00%	44	7.60%
Total	294	100.00%	285	100.00%	579	100.00%

Consistently with the community perception that child defilement is when an adult forces sexual activity on a child as explored under the section about “Individual characteristics”, the consideration of who is a child, also explored under the same section as well as other factors, the research found associated challenges promoting the community attitude of tolerance of child defilement. The different aspects of the attitude of the community towards child defilement are explored hereunder.

3.3.2. Community tolerance of child defilement

3.3.2.1. Blaming the victim

As elaborated under “Individual characteristics”, the physical development of children is used, by some community members, as an indication that the child has grown up. It is with this consideration that, in some instances, the victims of child defilement are the ones blamed for what happened to them. Most offenders report being “provoked”, considering themselves as victims. This is what was reported by a convicted offender, aged 37 at the time of committing the offense of defiling a 13-years-old neighbor’s daughter.

“I was not in a romantic relationship with her [the victim]; my family and hers were neighbors and friends. One day when her mother and my wife were attending a wedding far from our community, she [the victim] came to buy stuff in my boutique and started provoking me. She sat in front of me showing her thighs as she wore a miniskirt. With her physical appearance, I thought she was older and I proposed to have sex which she accepted right away.”¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ Case study with Convict no 12: sentenced for life at age 37, Nyarugenge Correctional Center

This blame assigned to the victim was also identified as hindering the reporting of child abuse. The research found many victims who did not scream or call for help out of the fear that they would be blamed. This is what happened to a victim of child defilement who had left her hometown for domestic work in Kigali and was defiled by the employer since the first night. The offender discouraged her from screaming with the pretext that everyone would first ask her how she ended up in that house and that she will be the one to be blamed. She found the point valid and did not scream.¹⁷¹

3.3.2.2. Settling due to poverty

Poverty was reported as the factor that limits victims from reporting and, thus, promoting community tolerance of child defilement. Across all the research sites, especially for victims from poor household, whenever the offender takes responsibility for the pregnancy and pledges to help the victim, the case of child defilement is not reported. This is what happened when a 17-years-old from Nyaruguru District was impregnated by a married man. No parent nor any member of the community complained when the man took the pregnant child from her parents' home and rented a house for her.¹⁷² Similarly, even though they were not happy with the fact that the offender had infected their daughter with HIV, the parents accepted the support from the father's family, registered the newborn under the name of the offender's father and did not report the case to the authority.¹⁷³ On the other hand, the female parent of the same victim reported that based on her experience she got married at 18 years old and she doesn't see any problem with seeing her daughter marry slightly under 18 years old.¹⁷⁴

I would have reported the case of my child being defiled and infected with HIV. But I would never win against that man [the offender's father] as he is wealthy. Besides, he [the offender's father] has taken responsibility for his son's child, he even registered as the official father of the baby. We appreciate that he is helping out; affording my daughter's and her baby's needs would have been impossible for us, we are in first [Ubudehe] category.¹⁷⁵

171 Case Study No 9: female participant defiled at age 17, Gasabo District

172 Case study No 2: female participant defiled at age 17, Nyaruguru District

173 Interview with male parent of Case study No: 4, Nyaruguru District

174 Interview with female parent of Case study No: 4, Nyaruguru District

175 Interview with male parent of Case study No: 4, Nyaruguru District

3.3.2.3. Amicable settlement

Settling cases of child defilement between the families of the victims and the offenders and their neighbour is common. This is the case of an adult man, aged 28, who was engaged in a romantic relationship with a 17-years-old girl and impregnated her. Once the pregnancy was known, the matter was settled amicably with the girl's parents. Four years during incarceration, he still doesn't know who reported him, but the victim and her family kept a good relationship with him, and even still pay him a visit in the prison."¹⁷⁶

Both the victim's and offender's families are willing to settle amicably to protect the offender from prosecution and preserve their reputation.

*"The mother of the victim came to apologize to me saying that she was only angry when she heard that I had sex with her daughter and reported me to the police, but that she thought that I could be punished easily and not be sentenced for life. She told me that she would not have reported me if she knew that the sentence was going to be that serious."*¹⁷⁷

*"My sister was disapproving that I impregnated the victim who was her domestic worker. Even if she knew the truth, she could not report me as she wanted to preserve my reputation."*¹⁷⁸

In addition, the community tolerance of child defilement is also underlined by the responses adopted by communities across the countries in the instances child defilement has resulted into a pregnancy. The research found that it is widely accepted that whenever the offender takes responsibility for the pregnancy, pledges to support the newborn or takes the pregnant child as a wife, the parents, and all community members turn a blind eye to the issue.

*"I worked with her [the victim] and had seen on her service card that she was 18. We fell in love and lived as husband and wife. One day, a friend told me that my wife's ID card was available and that's when I wondered about her real age. I could not stay with her after finding out that she is not an adult and sent her back to her family. However, by that time, she was already pregnant, and her mother was very angry about my decision and that's when she brought the case against me to the police while all along, she was ok with us living as husband and wife."*¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Case study with Convict no 21: sentenced for 11 years at age 28, Nyarugenge Correctional Center

¹⁷⁷ Case study with Convict no 12: sentenced for life at age 37, Nyarugenge Correctional Center

¹⁷⁸ Case study with Convict no 17: sentenced for 10 years at age 28, Nyarugenge Correctional Center

¹⁷⁹ Case Study with Convict no 16: sentenced for 10 years at age 27, Nyarugenge Correctional Center

However, the research also found a few offenders who are rejected due to the crime they committed.

“After being sentenced for the child defilement crime, I was rejected by some of my friends and relatives who refused to pick my calls from the prison once they hear that it is me. I think that they try avoid me because of the crime I committed.”¹⁸⁰

Besides the amicable settlements, respondents mentioned some punishments inflicted on the alleged child defilement offender when the latter is a juvenile. The punishment includes beating both children up and/or isolating the victim. This is what one father did when he found her daughter having sex with a boy and preferred to beat both and not report the offender.”¹⁸¹

Considering the high prevalence of child defilement happening in their communities and which are settled between the offender and the victim’s families, some of the convicted offenders perceived that they had the same right to amicable settlement as other offenders in their communities. In this consideration, the offender blames the victim’s family for not settling the matter amicable as normally done in the community. In this line, some juvenile and adult offenders believed that they were prosecuted as the victim’s family wanted to get back at them or their family.

“For my case, our two families already had some conflicts and when her [victim’s] father caught us having sex as any other children of our age, he wanted to beat us up but the mother refused and decided to take me to court instead. If I knew that there were conflicts between our families, I could have not played with the child from that family.”¹⁸²

180 Case study with Convict no 16: sentenced for 10 years at age 27, Nyarugenge Correctional Center

181 Case study with Convict no 1: sentenced for 4 years at age 15, Nyagatare Juvenile Center

182 Case study with Convict no 4: sentenced for 1 year at age 14, Nyagatare Juvenile Center

3.3.2.4. Complicity to conceal child defilement

Another practice identified by the research as supporting child defilement is the complicity of the parents of the victims when the offender is taking responsibility for the pregnancy. In several instances, the parents of the victim were reported to go to the local authorities claiming that there were some errors in the registration of their daughter and attempted to increase the age of the victim so that the offender is not convicted. This is what saved the offender who impregnated Case Study number 7.

In some instances, the local authorities encourage amicable settlements. Case Study number 8 informed the research that she approached the local authorities to get their help in securing support for her child. The local leader warned the offender that, if he doesn't provide child support, he will go to jail for child defilement.¹⁸³

Noticing this tolerance and also the way reporting mechanisms are hindered by the friendship that the local authorities have with the offenders, a representative of the National Women's Council, at the community level, has resolved to report directly to RIB and RNP. The NWC informant reported that they have realized that some local leaders tip the offenders when the RIB and the Rwanda National Police are on the way to apprehend them and the offenders flee the scene.¹⁸⁴

The perception that reported cases are, sometimes, mishandled is leading to the community loss of trust in the system and discouraging other victims from reporting. Case study number 2 reported the defilement to the police and was told they were going to call her back once the offender is apprehended.¹⁸⁵ A similar case happened in Gasabo District where the offender was apprehended, and the victim and her mother were told to go back home and wait until the time for testimonies would arrive. At the time of the research, a year had elapsed, and they had not yet been called for providing testimonies and yet, the rumors have reached them that the offender had been released and relocated to another

¹⁸³ Case study No 8: female participant defiled at age 17, Nyaruguru District

¹⁸⁴ Key Informant Interview with a female community leader, Gatsibo District

¹⁸⁵ Case Study No 22: female participant defiled at age 16, Kicukiro District

area.¹⁸⁶ Whether the victims are not aware of the procedures to follow while reporting defilement or the cases were truly mishandled, this is worth the attention of all relevant actors.

3.3.3. Community sources of SRH information

In addition to the parents considered as the main sources of SRH information, as elaborated under the theme of “Relationships”, the research found additional sources of information.

CSOs interventions: Additional sources of SRH information were mentioned by interviewed victims of child defilement. These include interventions of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) such as African Evangelistic Enterprise (AEE) in Gasabo District, Rwanda Women’s Network in Bugesera District, DREAM Project in Kicukiro and Nyarugenge District as well as Young Women Christian Associations and Empower Rwanda in Gatsibo District. It was reported that these CSOs’ interventions mostly target female adolescents and youth aged 10 to 24, especially the adolescent mothers, with information about menstruation, family planning and self-development.

Written materials constitute another source of SRH information to the community. This is the case of a booklet developed by a local non-governmental organization (NGO) called Imbutu Foundation in partnership with MIGEPROF and the Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC). This booklet, titled Tuganire Mwana Wange (literally: Let’s talk my child), is in Kinyarwanda and it comprises of adapted content with visual materials to help parents, including those with limited education, to discuss about SRH with their children (Imbutu Foundation, MIGEPROF and RBC, 2016). In the same regard of accessing SRH information through written materials, victims of child defilement also mentioned reading Ni Nyampinga, a magazine developed by Girl Effect on a quarterly basis.^{187,188}

¹⁸⁶ Interview with female parent of Case Study No 11, Gasabo District

¹⁸⁷ Case study No 25: female participant defiled at age 15, Nyarugenge District

¹⁸⁸ Case study No 10: female participant defiled at age 17, Gasabo District

The limited participation of boys in interventions meant to increase SRH knowledge was further confirmed by a male youth leader in the National Youth Council at Cell Level. Using the example of an intervention by Rwanda Women’s Network separately targeting female and male children and youth into two age groups, 7 to 14 and 15 to 18, the youth leader reported that boys are reluctant to attend those sessions with the pretext that their interest is on computer technology and not SRH.¹⁸⁹

Considering that abstinence is the common information provided to children, some parents reported negative attitude towards CSOs providing different kind of SRH information such as options for safe sex. This is the case of a female parent in Kicukiro who reported supporting her daughter’s decision to drop out of DREAM’s intervention as they were not promoting abstinence only which is not consistent with their beliefs.¹⁹⁰

Community initiatives: community volunteers are instrumental sources of SRH information in the community. These include CHWs, trained by Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC), leading SRH discussion with parents during community gatherings such as “Umugoroba w’Umuryango (Family Evening)”.¹⁹¹ A female Community Health Worker reported holding sufficient SRH information that she also shares with female and male youth aged 17 and above, teaching them about condom use and menstruation.¹⁹² Inshuti z’Umuryango (IZU, literally “friends of the family”), other community volunteers with a main mandate for child protection, are other sources of SRH information in the community. One male IZU reported discussing SRH whenever he gets the opportunity to do so.¹⁹³ Furthermore, volunteers elected as women’s representatives at community level through the National Women’s Council (NWC) play an important role to equip women with knowledge of SRH so that the latter are empowered to educate their children.¹⁹⁴

189 Key Informant Interview with a male youth leader, Bugesera District

190 Key Informant Interview with a female parent, Kicukiro District

191 Key Informant Interview with Female Community Volunteer, Nyaruguru District

192 Key Informant Interview with female Community Volunteer, Gasabo District

193 Key Informant Interview with a male community volunteer, Kicukiro District

194 Key Informant Interview with a female community leader, Gatsibo District

Government: Interviewed healthcare service providers are playing a considerable role in the transfer of SRH knowledge in the communities. A nurse, working in the Youth Corner of a visited Health Centre in Gasabo District, reported providing SRH information to children as young as 12 years old and SRH services such as contraceptives, to girls aged 16 and above. He also teaches about the consequences of sexual intercourse by promoting abstinence, provides condoms to those who want them, and most of the time they are boys.¹⁹⁵

Other sources of information included TV and Radio shows such as the Ni Nyampinga radio shows.¹⁹⁶

3.3.4. School environment

3.3.4.1. Safety from child defilement in the school premises

Exploring the extent to which students are safe from child defilement in school settings, the research investigated the prevalence of any intimate relationships between students and their teachers. The research asked whether any schoolteacher or school authority promised to give any of the respondents' money, a good grade or any other thing in exchange for being friends of for sexual intercourse. At a rate of more than 99% for both girls and boys and for all the scenarios presented through the quantitative survey, the female and male respondents did not report any risk factors to child defilement resulting from school structures.

¹⁹⁵ Key Informant Interview with Healthcare Provider, Gasabo District

¹⁹⁶ Case study No 38: female participant defiled at age 16, Bugesera District

Table 17: In the last 12 months, was there any school teacher or other authority who promised to give you money, gift, a good grade or any other thing in exchange of being their friend?

Answer	Female		Male		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
No	292	99.32%	284	99.65%	576	99.48%
Refused to answer	1	0.34%		0.00%	1	0.17%
Yes	1	0.34%	1	0.35%	2	0.35%
Total	294	100.00%	285	100.00%	579	100.00%

Table 18: In the last 12 months, was there any school teacher or other authority who promised to give you money, gift, a good grade or any other thing in exchange of sexual intercourse?

Answer	Female		Male		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
No	293	99.66%	285	100.00%	578	99.83%
Refused to answer	1	0.34%		0.00%	1	0.17%
Total	294	100.00%	285	100.00%	579	100.00%

Table 19: In the last 12 months, did you have sexual intercourses with school teacher or other authority hoping that they will give you money, gift, a good grade or any other thing?

Answer	Female		Male		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
No	293	99.66%	285	100.00%	578	99.83%
Refused to answer	1	0.34%		0.00%	1	0.17%
Total	294	100.00%	285	100.00%	579	100.00%

One isolated case of child defilement by a schoolteacher was reported by Case Study no 11. This 17-years-old student of Senior 2 was defiled by a neighbor; however, in the discussion, she informed the research that she is involved in a romantic relationship with a teacher at her school.¹⁹⁷ Students also reported being safe from other students.

Table 20: In the last 12 months, was there any student who promised to give you money, gift, or any other thing in exchange of being their friend?

	Female		Male		Total	
Answer	#	%	#	%	#	%
No	288	97.96%	280	98.25%	568	98.10%
Refused to answer	3	1.02%	1	0.35%	4	0.69%
Yes	3	1.02%	4	1.40%	7	1.21%
Total	294	100.00%	285	100.00%	579	100.00%

Table 21: In the last 12 months, was there any student who promised to give you money, a gift or any other thing in exchange of sexual intercourse?

	Female		Male		Total	
Answer	#	%	#	%	#	%
No	293	99.66%	284	99.65%	577	99.65%
Refused to answer	1	0.34%		0.00%	1	0.17%
Yes		0.00%	1	0.35%	1	0.17%
Total	294	100.00%	285	100.00%	579	100.00%

¹⁹⁷ Case Study No 11: female participant defiled at age 17, Gasabo District

On the other hand, considerable challenges were associated with the limited supervision that children have on their way to and from school. Interviewed parents reported that they have no supervision over their children in their way to and from home.¹⁹⁸¹⁹⁹ Such concerns were expressed by a female parent whose daughter used to come home late and lied to her mother that she was revising with classmates.²⁰⁰ The same was reported by a school informant who reported that the schools ensure the safety of children but that children are exposed to offenders on their way home.²⁰¹

One day, I was coming from school and on the same road was another student, a male, from upper secondary. I didn't know him, I just used to see him taking the same road. When I arrived in the forest on the way to my home, he jumped on me and forced me to have sexual intercourses with him.²⁰²

However, parents expressed their concern that children lie to them on their whereabouts. This is what reported by a male parent whose daughter got pregnant while in a boarding school, supposedly under school supervision.²⁰³

3.3.4.2. School structures supporting SRH knowledge

The research found different school arrangements supporting the transfer of SRH knowledge to the students. SRH was reported as one of the class subjects by victims of child defilement who had attended at least Primary 4. Furthermore, victims of child defilement reported discussing SRH-related topics with the teachers responsible of the schools' Girls' Rooms (rooms where girls go to access menstruation management materials and facilities). For instance, a school informant from Nyaruguru District reported that their school has three teachers dedicated for educating students on SRH.²⁰⁴ The first teacher, a female teacher that students refer to as the "Aunt", is responsible for keeping the School's Girls' Room.

198 Interview with female parent of victim of child defilement, Nyaruguru District

199 Interview with male parent of Case study No 6, Nyaruguru District

200 Interview with female parent of victim of child defilement, Nyaruguru District

201 Key Informant Interview with School informant, Nyaruguru District

202 Case Study No 21: female participant defiled at age 17, Kicukiro District

203 Case Study No 21: female participant defiled at age 17, Kicukiro District

204 Key Informant Interview with School informant, Nyaruguru District

The two other teachers, a male and a female, are responsible for facilitating SRH discussions, especially when the school's SRH-Club members are gathered. It is important to note that all the victims of child defilement who had dropped out of school before reaching Primary 4 did not have any knowledge about SRH.²⁰⁵²⁰⁶²⁰⁷²⁰⁸

Despite the school provisions for a dedicated teacher for the Girls' Room, this teacher also has full-time teaching responsibilities and, in most of the cases, lacks time to adequately cater for SRH needs of students.²⁰⁹

I am responsible for the Girls' Room, girls come to find me in my class whenever they need anything from that room. I interrupt the class and go provide the needed materials but I cannot stay for long and have a longer conversation with the girl, my full-time responsibility is for teaching.²¹⁰

205 Case study No 4: female participant defiled at age 17, Nyaruguru District

206 Case study No 14: female participant impregnated at age 15, Gasabo District

207 Case study No 31: female participant defiled at age 16, Nyarugenge District

208 Case study No 44: female participant defiled at age 15, Gatsibo District

209 Key Informant Interview with School informant, Kicukiro District

210 Key Informant Interview with a female teacher, Kicukiro District

4. Conclusions

This section highlights the key findings of the research and suggests strategies for addressing the risk-factors for victimization for and perpetration of child defilement. Guided by the “Seven strategies for ending violence against children”, an evidence-based resource developed by the World Health Organization (World Health Organization, 2016), recommendations are formulated and addressed to the Government of Rwanda (GoR) institutions responsible for education, health, justice and social protection as well as the CSOs, Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), academic institutions as well as the private sector.

The seven strategies are: (1) Implementation and enforcement of laws; (2) Norms and values; (3) Safe environments; (4) Parent and caregiver support; (5) Income and economic strengthening; (6) Response and support services; and (7) Education and life skills.

For each strategy area, a summary of findings is provided along with suggested actions to take to implement that strategy.

4.1. Implementation and enforcement of laws

Elaborating and implementing policies and laws to prevent and punish violence against children, including child defilement, sends the message that the behaviour is wrong and, thus, contributes to shifting towards more positive societal norms (World Health Organization, 2016).

The GoR’s commitment to the protection of children from defilement is demonstrated by the country’s subscription to international normative instruments, domesticated into national laws and policies with a clear institutional framework for implementation and enforcement of those commitments. These are elaborated under the Section 1.2, to set the background of this research.

The research found a limited and often biased awareness and knowledge about laws protecting children from defilement. These include the confusion about the legal child age (individual below the age of 18), mistaken for the age of obtaining the national ID (16) or the minimum age for marriage (21). In relation to the misconception about who a child is, further misconceptions were also identified about what child defilement is. When defining defilement, the legal child age, age when an individual cannot provide their consent to sexual activities, is not considered as it is widely perceived that when the child (age below 18) is consenting, then it is not defilement. These biases and false information were reported across the randomly sampled female and male children aged 10 to 17, the victims of child defilement and their parents, the juvenile and adult offenders as well as other community members.

Moreover, other factors putting children at risk of defilement, and that are related to laws, have been identified to include the exposure to alcoholic beverages, paid domestic work and pornographic content.

4.2. Norms and values

The norms and values of a society are instrumental for supporting non-violent, positive and gender equitable relationships for children (World Health Organization, 2016).

The research explored the prevalence of child defilement in the community and identified contributing factors. While most children feel safe from child defilement when they are in the community, the considerable exposure to pornographic content was identified as a risk factor for both victimization and perpetration. Furthermore, the tolerance to child defilement is a prevailing attitude across communities. This is demonstrated by the blame placed on the victim of defilement as well as the support provided to the offenders to escape prosecution. Furthermore, poverty was identified as one of the reasons the victim and their family may opt for amicable settlement instead of pursuing justice and some interviewees perceived that some of the reported cases are mishandled. Due to the community acceptance and tolerance of child defilement, there are limited community sanctions on this offense and thus, contributing to more perpetration of child defilement.

4.3. Safe environment

Safe community environment, both social and physical environment, are key in the reduction of violence against children, including reduction of forcible child defilement (World Health Organization, 2016).

The research identified a number of community specific physical spaces where children are at increased risk of child defilement. These include the inhabited and forest-dense areas on the roads to and from school, health facility or water point.

Furthermore, the research found more factors contributing to child defilement associated with the social environment children live in including the romantic relationships that the children engage in with adults and with same age partners as well as the exposure to pornographic content in the community. In addition, the research found a clear need to educate female and male children, as well as the community at large, about child legal age and educate them to uproot the different erroneous indications used by community members to determine who is a child or not (including judging the physical appearance) and raising awareness on the subsequent implications.

4.4. Parent and caregiver support

Harsh parenting practices and conflicts between or with parents undermine parent-child relationships. Supporting parents and caregivers to foster more positive parenting and spousal harmony would contribute to the transformation of the home into safer spaces for children (World Health Organization, 2016).

Spousal conflicts and conflicts between children and their parents intersect with several other factors contributing to putting children at risk of defilement. These include the linkage between household conflicts with school drop out, separation of children from their families, engagement into paid domestic work, and limited parental supervision among others.

Furthermore, there are parents who fail to detect and identify potential risks for their children to be victims or offenders of child defilement. In this line, the research found parents who administered punishments and which put their children at risk of defilement. This is the case when the child gets home late in the evening and the parents chase the child away and, as the child looks for a place to spend the night, the offender offers shelter and later on defiles the child.

The research recommends putting efforts in teaching and guiding parents on how to care and protect both their female and male children. These will include ensuring that all children are taught SRH at the same time, and protection measures are taken for all children. In this consideration, there is a need to uproot the cultural barrier that block parents to discuss sexuality with their children.

4.5. Income and economic strengthening

Increasing households' economic status, along with women's access to economic resources, contributes to the reduction of child neglect and the associated risks of defilement (World Health Organization, 2016). In line with SDG Target 1.3 and 1.4, the economic empowerment of poor and vulnerable households relies on the social protection systems, national policies and laws as well as holistic interventions to ensure that poor and vulnerable women and men have access to economic resources and support services (United Nations, 2015).

Findings related to household income have highlighted the intersectionality between household poverty and factors contributing to the increased risk of child defilement such as school dropout and engagement in paid domestic work.

4.6. Response and support services

Victims of child defilement need access to counselling, medical and criminal justice support services. The access to basic services contributes to the reduction of the trauma associated with the experience of defilement, the prevention or timely treatment of sexually transmitted infections or any other negative reproductive health outcomes as well as the reduction of further victimization (World Health Organization, 2016). These services are also needed for the offenders, especially the juvenile offenders as they serve shorter sentences, to break the cycle of child defilement and more perpetration of child defilement (World Health Organization, 2016).

A comprehensive package of these basic services is provided to victims of child defilement at the Isange One Stop Center, a flagship model of holistic services offered to victims of GBV, including child defilement. Reports by the Gender Monitoring Office have commended the commitment and skills of the staff providing quality medical and psychosocial services at the IOSC, the readily available transportation facilities as well as the coordination framework (Gender Monitoring Office, 2019). However, the GMO have indicated the insufficient staffing, the limited legal assistance as Maison d'Access a la Justice (MAJ) Officers visit the IOSC only twice a month and the limited recording and tracking of cases from IOSC to courts (Gender Monitoring Office, 2019).

4.7. Education and life skills

Enrollment and attendance in school protect female and male children from victimization for and perpetration of defilement as well as other forms of violence and risk factors increasing the risk to defilement. School retention contributes to the avoidance of consequences of defilement such as underage pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. Moreover, schools are an important safe space for children where they also learn pro-social behaviour that can contribute to the prevention of violence at school and in the community (World Health Organization, 2016).

At the level of the school, the research investigated the school environment to explore how the schools are safe for children and the gaps that exist in the structure. The research found out that the schools are safe and that schools are sources of accurate SRH information as SRH is a topic integrated into the national curriculum since 2016. In addition, the schools have Girls' Rooms that support girls during menstruation with menstrual management facilities.

However, the research identified considerable challenges. Despite the fact that SRH is integrated into the national curriculum, children, especially boys both in the community and in the juvenile correctional facility, still have gaps in basis SRH knowledge and skills. Other challenges are associated to responsibilities of teachers in charge of girls' rooms which limit their time dedicated to SRH as well as the limited supervision for children when on the way going to school or back to their homes. In addition, parents reported being worried that their children lie about their whereabouts and parents believe that they are under school supervision. In addition to getting exposed to other risk factors increasing the susceptibility of defilement, children who dropout do not get the SRH knowledge.

4.8. Cross-cutting activity: research, monitoring and evaluation

Countries, Rwanda included, need accurate measures of child defilement as well as other forms of violence against children to be able to plan strategies and develop programs and interventions, measure their impact and continuously improve them to ensure success (World Health Organization, 2016).

In this framework, with a clear definition of child defilement in the Rwandan Laws, different institutions release statistics on the prevalence of the issue of child defilement including the numbers of convicted offenders (National Public Prosecution Authority, 2021), and the prevalence of underage pregnancies (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, 2021). However, more understanding is needed on the issue of child defilement across a range of other variables such as wealth quintile, household headship, rural and urban settings among others.

5. Recommendations

This section highlights the suggested strategies for addressing the risk-factors for victimization for and perpetration of child defilement. Similar to the conclusions, the recommendations are also framed around the “Seven strategies for ending violence against children” (World Health Organization, 2016). The development of programmes to implement these strategies must take into account that they require synergies between the Government of Rwanda (GoR), institutions responsible for education, health, justice and social protection as well as the CSOs, Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), academic institutions as well as the private sector.

This section builds on the key findings highlighted in the previous section and suggests actions to take to implement each strategy.

5.1. Implementation and enforcement of laws

Elaborating and implementing policies and laws to prevent and punish violence against children, including child defilement, sends the message that the behaviour is wrong and, thus, contributes to shifting towards more positive societal norms (World Health Organization, 2016). With regards to the strong Rwandan policy, legal and institutional

Laws and policies to raise awareness about include:

Laws defining the legal child age, child defilement and other child rights issues such as prohibiting violent corporal and psychological punishment of children by parents, teachers and other caregivers, criminalizing the sexual abuse of children and preventing the access to alcohol by children.

- *Rwandan Constitution of 2003 as amended to date which puts particular emphasis on children's protection*
- *Law N°71/2018 of 31/08/2018 Relating to the Protection of the Child*
- *Law N°32/2016 of 28/08/2016 Law governing persons and family*

Laws preventing child labor

- *Law n° 66/2018 of 30/08/2018 regulating labor in Rwanda which prohibits employment for children under the age of 16*
- *Ministerial order N°06 of 13/07/2010 determining the list of worst forms of child labor, and preventive mechanisms.*

Laws promoting children's education

- *Ministerial Order No 001/2016 of 08/01/2016 providing sanctions against parents who do not send their children to school and against other persons who employ children in work preventing them from going to or encouraging them to drop out of school*

frameworks for the protection of children, the recommendations in this section are geared towards raising awareness around existing laws and change in mindset.

- *To uphold efforts to raise awareness on laws protecting children from child defilement.*
- *Educating the community members on the procedures for reporting child defilement and raise campaigns encouraging community members to report the cases of child defilement, and the safe ways to ensure the safety of the ones who report.*
- *Advocacy for a campaign to raise awareness on the danger of a child's exposure to pornographic content and mobilizing children and parents to reduce exposure to pornographic content*
- *Awareness campaign for strengthening the law enforcement for detecting cases of child's exposure to pornographic content and enforcing the legal provisions criminalizing the exposure of a child to pornographic content*
- *Awareness on the legal sanctions for the complicity for child defilement and promoting the culture of zero-tolerance about intimate relationships between adults and children in the community.*

Campaigns to raise the awareness on rights and improve the implementation of laws require the involvement of multi-sectoral stakeholders including the Government institutions, development partners, CSOs, private sector, academia and the media houses. With this consideration, the following recommendations are formulated:

- *Support the coordination of and collaboration between child protection actors to create synergies and increase impact*
- *Promote initiatives of different actors to conduct joint awareness raising campaigns*
- *Advocate for reinforcing the activities for public legal awareness through existing formal and informal learning systems and community organizations.*
- *Collaborate with correctional centers and allow convicted offenders of child defilement to provide testimonials.*

5.2. Norms and values

The following are suggested for addressing the norms and values so that they promote non-violent and positive environments for children. Stakeholders directly relevant for shifting norms and values include the central level ministries and their implementing agencies for the development of appropriate messaging (Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion and their agencies) as well as the dissemination of the message through decentralized levels (Ministry of Local Government and Ministry of Education and their agencies). The CSOs, including those operating in the areas of justice and social development, play a considerable role for the design and delivery of targeted and mainstreamed programmes for the protection of children from defilement and other areas of child protection. Other relevant actors include the media houses for the diversification of channels for conveying the messaging.

In concert, the stakeholders would implement the following recommendations:

- *Designing and implementing targeted programmes for shifting the community attitude and social norms and breaking the tolerance of child defilement as well as mainstreaming this aspect into other social development programmes*
- *Conduct mobile legal clinic to identify, investigate and address cases that the community perceive as mishandled*
- *Transfer to children the knowledge and skills needed to promote human rights, gender equality, peace and non-violence*
- *Conduct evaluations of programmes and policies aimed at modifying the harmful parenting practices, negative gender norms*
- *Advocate/avail technical and financial capacities for the institutions influencing community norms to develop and disseminate a unified message for overcoming cultural barriers (institutions like Itorero, religious organizations, educationalists, community volunteers and others)*
- *Empower children with SRHR skills needed to make healthy choices*

5.3. Safe environment

To ensure safe community environment for children, the social and physical environment putting children at risk of violence must be identified and addressed. In relation to the social and physical environment found by the research, the instrumental players for promoting safe environment include the Local Government and CSOs operating at the community level. With synergies between the stakeholders, the following are recommended for addressing children's safety in the social and physical environment.

- *Encourage local authorities to identify and address the physical areas where children are at increased risk of defilement*
- *Advocate for the modification community environment for increased safety when children are moving around the community*
- *mobilize the community for zero-tolerance of a romantic partnership between a child and an adult*
- *Encourage CSOs and other child protection actors to target boys in their interventions educating the community on SRH*
- *Target girls and boys with messaging and skills building interventions on safe relationships*
- *Mobilize the community for prohibiting the exposure of children to pornographic content*
- *Support, coordinate and advocate for the strengthening of the education and awareness raising initiatives for all aspects of Sexual and Reproductive Health and child legal age*

5.4. Parent and caregiver support

To promote positive parenting practices and spousal relations, the recommendations recognize the need for concerted efforts between the Central and Local Government institutions, the CSOs and the media houses as elaborated under the recommendations geared towards shifting Norms and Values. The suggested actions to support parents and caregivers include:

- *Increase knowledge, attitudes and practices of parents on positive and non-violent discipline of their children*
- *Equip parents with the skills for an effective parent-child communication to increase bonding between parents and children*
- *Train parents to detect and identify potential risks of child defilement facing their children as victims or offenders*
- *Increase the SRH knowledge of parents and target them with attitude and behaviour change messaging to overcome barriers hindering the parents from educating their children on SRH*
- *Address the causes leading to the separation of children from their families*
- *Target vulnerable parents such as parents with low income, adolescent mothers and single mothers with comprehensive programmes including family support, childcare, child education and healthcare.*
- *Identify the organizations who have developed materials or successful models and link them with organizations with similar mandates to increase the geographical coverage and avoid duplication of efforts*
- *Support the dissemination and use of existing materials to equip parents with the right SRH knowledge so that they educate their children.*
- *Encourage CUI members and other child protection actors to distribute the existing materials on positive parenting such as the Tuganire Mwana Wanjye booklet and other resources*
- *Continued capacity strengthening of community volunteers to transfer all the SRHR knowledge and skills to both female and male children and adult members of their communities*
- *Increase the capacity of community volunteers to deliver parent support through home visits*
- *Uphold efforts to train and support parents through community settings such as Umugoroba w'Umuryango*

5.5. Income and economic strengthening

This set of recommendations require the contribution of all stakeholders working in the areas of economic empowerment of poor and vulnerable households:

- *Advocate that targeting for social protection schemes, both by the GoR or CSOs, ensure the consideration of households with school age children.*
- *Encourage and advocate for the scale-up of effective models for group savings and loans associations and ensure these are combined with initiatives to shift negative gender and societal norms putting children at risk of defilement*
- *Advocate for the elaboration of new and implementation of existing sectoral strategies for women's economic empowerment (WEE) to increase the access to economic resources for vulnerable women across different economic sectors.*
- *Advocate for the documentation and scale up of successful models used by renowned child protection actors and CUI partners and stimulate uptake by government and other actors*

5.6. Response and support services

The key providers of response and support services include the Isange One Stop Centres, recognizing all the institutions represented in the IOSC, the Rwanda Correctional Services as well as CSOs delivering project/intervention-based support. The recommendations are formulated with the above considerations.

- *Development Partners and CSOs collaborate with IOSC National Steering Committee to identify and address IOSC capacity needs*
- *Development Partners and CSOs work with RCS to provide mandatory psychological counselling to juvenile offenders to break the cycle of perpetration*
- *Coordinate the establishment of messaging about the referral pathway for child maltreatment and violence, including defilement*
- *Train teachers, and other primary caregivers, to identify risk of exposure to child maltreatment and violence -including defilement, and to refer cases to the adequate GoR and/or CSO service provider*
- *Raise the awareness of the community about the referral pathway for child violence*

5.7. Education and life skills

for the stakeholders in the Education Sector, the following are recommended for promoting school retention and performance while ensuring safety at school.

- *Uphold efforts to promote enrolment in ECD centres*
- *Sustain enrolment in primary schools and improve retention and performance in primary and secondary schools*
- *Establish/strengthen a safe and enabling school environment*
- *coordinate and create synergies of stakeholders' efforts to keep children in schools*
- *Improve children's knowledge about how to protect themselves from sexual abuse and defilement*
- *Provide extra-curricular life and social skills training to enhance social, emotional, cognitive and behavioral skills; develop self-esteem; and foster good social behaviour and norms.*
- *Support schools to identify and address the risk factors which may contribute to the defilement of students on their way to and from school*
- *Uphold efforts to ensure children's safety from child defilement while in the school premises*
- *Encourage schools to ensure that teachers dedicated for SRH extra-curricular activities have enough time and facilities to do so*
- *Encourage CSO to develop programming for out of school children*
- *Advocate for the harmonization of CSO messaging about SRH*

5.8. Cross-cutting activity: research, monitoring and evaluation

To generate more understanding on the issue of child defilement across a range of other variables such as wealth quintile, household headship, rural and urban settings among others, a national level scale study is recommended for identifying the factors contribution to child defilement and strengthen the evidence based on child protection.

Such a study would inform the development of a context-sensitive conceptual framework and theory of change on the issue of child defilement and, thus, guide policy makers and providers and child-centered programming. Conveners in the space of Child Protection, including the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, the National Child Development Agency, CSO umbrella organizations such as Coalition Umwana ku Isonga, the development partners, and international NGOs and media are instrumental for:

- *The mobilization of funds for a national-level research on factors contributing to child defilement*
- *The mobilization of funds to document existing initiatives by different actors, document what works to prevent child defilement in Rwanda and develop a context-relevant theory of change to guide the efforts of child protection actors*
- *The advocacy for the integration of child defilement measurements into national periodic surveys such as the Rwanda Demographic and Health Survey*
- *Sensitization and awareness raising on fighting child defilement using media channels*

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Annex 2: Distribution of participants of qualitative interactions

Table 22: Case Study Interviews with victims of child defilement and adolescent mothers

District	Victims/adolescent mothers	Female parents of victims	Male parents of victims
Bugesera	8	2	2
Gasabo	8	2	2
Gatsibo	8	2	2
Kicukiro	8	2	2
Nyarugenge	8	2	2
Nyaruguru	8	2	2
Totals	48	12	12

Table 23: Table: Case study Interviews with convicted offenders

Prison	# of male offenders	# of female offenders
Nyarugenge Correctional Center	8	2
Nyagatare Juvenile Prison	10	1
Totals	18	3

Table 24: Table: Distribution of Key Informants

District	Profile/Institution of the Key Informant	Number of interactions
Bugesera	Neutral parents	2
	Community Health Worker	1
	Cell Youth Representative	1
	District Gender and Family Promotion Office	1
	Isange One Stop Center	4
Gasabo	Neutral Parents	2
	Retired Elderlies	1
	Community Health Workers	1

	Cell youth representatives	1
	Youth Corners' Representatives	1
Gatsibo	Neutral Parents	2
	Cell youth representatives	1
	Faith Based Organizations	1
Kicukiro	Neutral parents	2
	Inshuti z'Umuryango (IZU)	1
	Teachers	1
Nyarugenge	Neutral Parents	2
	Sector Social Affairs	1
Nyaruguru	Neutral parents	2
	Village Leaders	1
	Parents' evening gathering leaders	1
	Teachers/Head teachers	1
	Inshuti z'Umuryango (IZU)	1
	Sector Social Affairs	1
National level	Technical assistance Coordinator and advisor of child protection (MIGEPROF)	1
	Total	36