

UNDERSTANDING CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse
Abuse
Victim
Perpetrator
Domestic violence
Gender

- ✓ 1. To help learners understand **child abuse** and how it plays out in everyday situations.
- ✓ 2. For learners to develop techniques for preventing and coping with abuse.

⌚ 45 min - 1 hour

- ★ **Child Abuse worksheet** (provided)
- ★ **Child Abuse Wheel hand-out** (provided)
- ★ **Teacher answer key** (provided)
- ★ **Teacher notes** (provided)

PROCEDURE

- 1 Ask learners to come up with a definition of **child abuse** (either individually or in small groups). Get the learners to write definitions on sheets of paper, and stick these up on the board. You will return to these definitions later in the lesson.
- 2 Provide each learner with the **Child Abuse** worksheet.
- 3 Instruct learners to fill out Part A of the table on their own. To do so, they should read each scenario and decide if it is an example of child abuse (tick the boxes for 'yes' or 'no'). They should give reasons for their decisions.
- 4 Once learners have completed the task, either put the Child Abuse Wheel handout up on the board, or hand out a copy to each learner. Ask learners to reflect on their own answers and to note down in Part B of the table, how their answers compare with the behaviours described on the Child Abuse Wheel. At this point some may change their answers.
- 5 Debrief the class by asking if anyone would like to share their reflections. Do not insist that anyone do this. Other useful ways to stimulate discussion include:
 - a. Ask for a show of hands, and count the number of 'Yes' and 'No' for each example.
 - b. Ask learners which examples were the trickiest to decide, and why.
 - c. Ask learners whether there are any scenarios about which they remain undecided.
 - d. Ask learners to discuss the scenarios where they changed their mind after having seen The Wheel.
 - e. Ask learners whether there is confusion or disagreement with any definition provided on the Wheel. Encourage debate where there are different views. Refer to the Teacher Answer Key.
- 6 Finish up the session by returning to the definitions of child abuse that are listed on the board. Ask learners whether there is any one definition that best captures what has been discussed.
- 7 Provide the definition of child abuse as set out in the Children's Act (2005), and discuss the kinds of abuse that it covers (see Teacher Notes). As part of this discussion make sure to also cover:

- a. Methods for helping to prevent or cope with child abuse.
- b. Reasons that a child may not tell anyone about their abuse.
- c. What to do if a child tells you about abuse or neglect.

- 8 Emphasise that it is critically important to tell someone if they have been the victim of abuse. Remind them that if the first person that they tell does not listen or care about what they have said, they should keep trying until they find a responsible adult who does. Sharing their experience is the only way to stop the abuse.

TEACHER TIPS

General

Be sensitive to the fact that there might be **victims** and **perpetrators** of abuse in the classroom.

Be careful to explain the causes of abuse without minimising the victim's experiences of abuse, and without over-identifying with the perpetrator and 'excusing' their behaviour (for example, by blaming child abuse on a baby's constant crying).

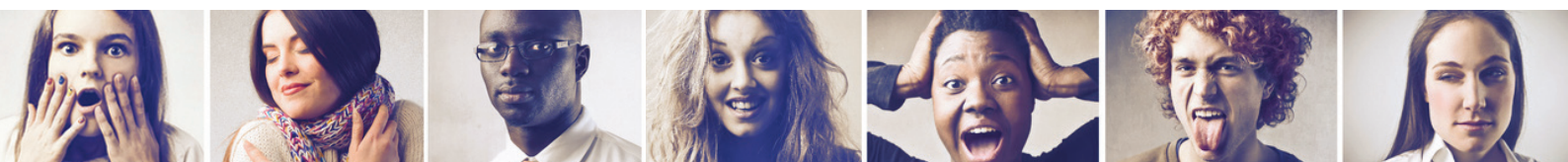
Keep a list of local resources on child abuse to share with the class.

Making the Link with Gender & Violence

This exercise informs children about the different kinds of **abuse** that happen to children, and shows how **child abuse** is often similar to **domestic violence**. It also shows how **gender** shapes child abuse, and the risks of victimisation that boys and girls face.

Assessment Ideas

- 1 For older learners, an assessment exercise could include a debate on the issue of corporal punishment at school, and the way this does or does not fit within the ambit of child abuse. Learners should be encouraged to discuss how the law on corporal punishment has changed, and the rationale behind this change.
- 2 Design a public service poster which gives information on how to recognise abuse and where to get help. A variation of this exercise would be for learners to select a local NGO that provides services for **victims of child abuse**, and for them to profile that organisation.



WORKSHEET: CHILD ABUSE

Copy this worksheet for each learner.

SCENARIO	PART A		PART B	
	Is this child abuse?	Why did you decide that?	Did you change your mind?	Why?
	Y N		Y N	
Thembi's mother often slaps her face when she is angry. The slap stings, but leaves no lasting red mark or bruise. It is only painful for a short while.				
Ashraf's father punished him by hitting him over the head with a stick that he had in his hand at the time. The blow caused a cut that needed stitches.				
Jennifer's father puts out a lighted cigarette in her palm when he finds her smoking. It causes a minor burn.				
Lulu's mother accidentally spills scalding water on her daughter, who is seriously burned.				
Leroy's arm is broken after arm wrestling with his father for fun.				
Leila (age 3) was grabbed by the arm and shaken so that she's badly bruised. Her father says he didn't mean to hurt her, he only wanted to stop her hitting her little brother.				
Shane is grounded for a week for failing a mathematics test.				

WORKSHEET: CHILD ABUSE

SCENARIO	PART A		PART B	
	Is this child abuse?	Why did you decide that?	Did you change your mind?	Why?
	Y	N	Y	N
Thomas (age 15) is often spanked by his grandfather for hanging out with friends who his grandfather thinks are gangsters.				
William's teacher pushed him when they were arguing, and by accident he fell down the stairs and broke his arm.				
Megan's father confiscates her bicycle because she didn't lock it up when she parked it at school.				
Yanga's adult neighbour asks her to watch some pornography with him. She is 13 years old.				
Eka must work every afternoon in the family barbershop, which means that she only gets to start her homework very late at night. She is always tired at school.				
Talia is always late for school because she has to open the family laundry before she can leave for school.				
Sihle (age 14) catches the taxi to school each day, and the driver gives her a free ride if he is allowed to touch her breasts.				

CHILD ABUSE WHEEL

Paste on the board or copy this handout for each learner.



Reference:

Adapted from:

Domestic Abuse Intervention Project
by the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence

ANSWER KEY

PART A		
SCENARIO	Is this child abuse?	Why did you decide that?
	Y N	
Thembi's mother often slaps her face when she is angry. The slap stings, but leaves no lasting red mark or bruise. It is only painful for a short while.	✓	This is an example of deliberate assault of a child.
Ashraf's father punished him by hitting him over the head with a stick that he had in his hand at the time. The blow caused a cut that needed stitches.	✓	This is an example of a deliberate assault of a child that inflicts serious injury.
Jennifer's father puts out a lighted cigarette in her palm when he finds her smoking. It causes a minor burn.	✓	This is an example of deliberate assault on a child that inflicts injury. Jennifer's father is not guiding her behaviour in a way that is humane.
Lulu's mother accidentally spills scalding water on her daughter, who is seriously burned.	✓	Lulu's injury was accidental. Although her mother may have been careless in leaving her child unattended, she was not deliberate in causing injury.
Leroy's arm is broken after arm wrestling with his father for fun.	✓	Leroy's injury was accidental. Although the father should perhaps have used better judgment in engaging in physical activity that could cause harm, he was not deliberate in causing injury.
Leila (age 3) was grabbed by the arm and shaken so that she's badly bruised. Her father says he didn't mean to hurt her, he only wanted to stop her hitting her little brother.	✓	This is an example of deliberate assault on a child that inflicts injury. Although her father did not mean to hurt Leila, and he had good intentions in preventing harm to the brother, he has a duty of care to BOTH children, and was not guiding Leila's behaviour in a way that is humane.
Shane is grounded for a week for failing a mathematics test.	✓	Although Shane may feel frustrated at being grounded, the punishment does not cause him undue harm (either physically or emotionally). The punishment uses limited, non-invasive means to change Shane's behaviour.

ANSWER KEY

PART A		
SCENARIO	Is this child abuse?	Why did you decide that?
	Y N	
Thomas (age 15) is often spanked by his grandfather for hanging out with friends who his grandfather thinks are gangsters.	✓	An example of a deliberate assault of a child that inflicts injury. The grandfather is not guiding Thomas's behaviour in a way that is humane.
William's teacher pushed him when they were arguing, and by accident he fell down the stairs and broke his arm.	✓	This is an example of a deliberate assault of a child that inflicts injury. There is a power imbalance between the teacher and learner, and the teacher used undue physical force. The teacher should know better, and be able to use alternative mechanisms to change William's behaviour (e.g. detention).
Megan's father confiscates her bicycle because she didn't lock it up when she parked it at school.	✓	The confiscation of Megan's bicycle does not cause her undue harm (either physically or emotionally). The punishment uses limited, non-invasive means to change her behaviour.
Yanga's adult neighbour asks her to watch some pornography with him. She is 13 years old.	✓	Yanga is a minor. Showing pornography to her is sexual abuse under the Sexual Offences Act. It exposes her to behaviour that may harm her emotionally and/or psychologically.
Eka must work every afternoon in the family barbershop, which means that she only gets to start her homework very late at night. She is always tired at school.	✓	This is an example of a labour practice that is harmful to a child.
Talia is always late for school because she has to open the family laundry before she can leave for school.	✓	This is an example of a labour practice that is harmful to a child.
Sihle (age 14) catches the taxi to school each day, and the driver gives her a free ride if he is allowed to touch her breasts.	✓	Sihle is a minor and the taxi driver is a much older man. Even though Sihle may be 'allowing' him to touch her breasts, she cannot consent to sexual activity under the Sexual Offences Act. In addition, the taxi driver is abusing his position to induce her to act in ways she might otherwise not (duress). This is abuse of power and behavioural practice that is emotionally or psychologically harmful to her.

TEACHER NOTES

THE CHILDREN'S ACT

(2005, Section 1(1)) defines child abuse as follows:

'Abuse' in relation to a child, means any form of harm or ill-treatment deliberately inflicted on a child, and includes –

- a.** Assaulting a child or inflicting any other form of deliberate injury to a child;
- b.** Sexually abusing a child or allowing a child to be sexually abused;
- c.** Bullying by another child;
- d.** A labour practice that exploits a child; or
- e.** Exposing or subjecting a child to behaviour that may harm the child psychologically or emotionally.

The Act further defines 'sexual abuse' as follows:

- a.** Sexually assaulting or molesting a child, or allowing a child to be sexually assaulted or molested;
- b.** Encouraging, inducing or forcing a child to be used for the sexual gratification of another person;
- c.** Using a child in, or deliberately exposing a child to, sexual activities or pornography; or
- d.** Procuring or allowing a child to be procured for commercial sexual exploitation or in any way participating or assisting in the commercial sexual exploitation of a child.

'Neglect' is an important component of child abuse, and the law defines neglect as *"a failure in the exercise of parental responsibilities to provide for the child's basic physical, intellectual, emotional or social needs"*.

The following table can help you identify child abuse:

TYPE	BEHAVIOURS/ACTS	SYMPTOMS	BEHAVIOURAL SIGNS OF ABUSE
PHYSICAL ABUSE	BEATING STRANGLING BURNING SUFFOCATING SCOLDING TYING UP KICKING BITING HITTING (WITH OBJECTS) LOCKING IN SMALL SPACES STICKING WITH PINS/ SHARP OBJECTS BURNING WITH CIGARETTES	UNEXPLAINED BRUISES, WELTS UNEXPLAINED BURNS BITE MARKS BALD SPOTS AND SCALP BRUISES LACERATIONS/CUTS FRACTURES	WARY OF ADULTS APPREHENSIVE ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL LAGS IN DEVELOPMENT BEHAVIOURAL EXTREMES AFRAID OF PARENTS AFRAID TO GO HOME PROVIDES INCREDIBLE EXPLANATIONS FOR INJURIES REPORTS THAT PARENT HAS HURT THEM
EMOTIONAL ABUSE	WITHHOLDING AFFECTION VERBAL ABUSE DENIGRATION FRIGHTENING A CHILD THREATENING A CHILD HUMILIATING A CHILD MANIPULATION LYING TO A CHILD PARENTAL INDIFFERENCE	WITHDRAWAL FAILURE TO THRIVE HABIT DISORDERS DEVELOPMENTAL LAGS NEUROTIC TRAITS SPEECH DISORDERS POOR SELF-CONCEPT INABILITY TO RELATE TO OTHERS	WITHDRAWAL LOW SELF-ESTEEM ANXIETY DEPRESSION NEGLECTED APPEARANCE UNABLE TO RELATE TO OTHERS ATTENTION-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR

TEACHER NOTES

TYPE	BEHAVIOURS/ACTS	SYMPTOMS	BEHAVIOURAL SIGNS OF ABUSE
SEXUAL ABUSE	SHOWING A CHILD HIS/HER GENITALS TOUCHING THE CHILD'S GENITALS HAVING A CHILD TOUCH HIS/HER GENITALS ORAL GENITAL CONTACT HAVING A CHILD SHOW HIS/HER GENITALS INSERTION OF AN OBJECT INTO THE CHILD'S GENITALS FORCED MASTURBATION PENETRATION BY FINGER INTERCOURSE THE USE OF A CHILD IN THE PRODUCTION OF PORNOGRAPHIC MATERIAL FORCING A CHILD TO WATCH PORNOGRAPHIC MATERIAL SEXUAL TALK TO CHILDREN EXPOSING A CHILD TO THE SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR OF OTHERS.	DIFFICULTY IN WALKING/SITTING BRUISES, BLEEDING IN GENITAL/ANAL AREA PAIN WHEN PASSING URINE SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES PREGNANCY PSYCHOSOMATIC PROBLEMS BED WETTING OR SOILING	WITHDRAWAL, FANTASY, INFANTILE BEHAVIOUR INAPPROPRIATE SEXUAL KNOWLEDGE AND SEDUCTIVE BEHAVIOUR POOR PEER RELATIONS LEARNING DIFFICULTIES/ DETERIORATION IN SCHOOL DELINQUENCY, RUNAWAY, TRUANCY ATTEMPTED SUICIDE SHY, RESERVED, FEARFUL, ABRUPT CHANGE IN PERSONALITY OR BEHAVIOUR SELF-MUTILATION EXCESSIVE MASTURBATORY BEHAVIOUR DRASTIC CHANGE IN APPETITE REGRESSION & COMPULSIVE BEHAVIOURS
NEGLECT	LACK OF PROPER SUPERVISION LACK OF PROPER HYGIENE LACK OF PROTECTION SLEEP DEPRIVATION LACK OF PROPER CLOTHING FAILURE TO NURTURE ABUSE OF ALCOHOL/ DRUGS WHILE CARING FOR CHILD LACK OF MEDICAL CARE DEPRIVATION OF EDUCATION	CONSTANT HUNGER POOR HYGIENE FALLING ASLEEP IN CLASS FATIGUE/ LISTLESSNESS UNATTENDED PHYSICAL PROBLEMS DELINQUENT ACTS SAYING THAT THERE IS NO-ONE TO TAKE CARE OF HIM/HER	WITHDRAWAL FAILURE TO THRIVE ANXIETY DEPRESSION CONDUCT DISORDERS STEALING FOOD/BEGGING ATTENTION-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR

TEACHER NOTES

There are many myths about child abuse that contribute to children not being believed when they disclose abuse, and which discourage children from reporting. These include:

MYTH	REALITY
CHILD ABUSE IS MOSTLY PHYSICAL.	Physical violence is only one kind of child abuse. Children can be subjected to multiple kinds of abuse, although the other kinds of abuse are more easily hidden from sight.
CHILDREN ARE MOSTLY MOLESTED BY STRANGERS.	In fact, we know that most children (about 80%) are victimised by someone that they know – often family members or caregivers.
ONLY BAD PEOPLE ABUSE CHILDREN.	A common misperception is that people who look or act normal cannot be abusers. In fact, many children are abused by people who seem kind/good on the outside, but instead are skilled at hiding their behaviour from others (such as friends, neighbours, colleagues and even other family members).
MEN WHO ABUSE CHILDREN ARE PSYCHOTIC OR HAVE MENTAL PROBLEMS.	In fact, many children are abused by people who come across as normal in every respect. Also, children are abused and neglected by females as well as by males (although sexual abuse is mostly perpetrated by males).
A CHILD IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ABUSE HE/SHE HAS SUFFERED.	A child is never responsible for the abuse. The responsibility lies with the offender.
CHILDREN LIE ABOUT BEING SEXUALLY ABUSED.	Children very rarely lie about being sexually abused. In reality, it is very hard for children to disclose what has happened to them because they are ashamed, embarrassed and often care deeply for their abuser.
INCEST AND SEXUAL ABUSE ONLY HAPPENS TO GIRLS.	Boys may well be victims of sexual abuse. In reality, sexual abuse among boys is under-reported because of social and cultural attitudes that believe that boys are strong and should not let others see that they are vulnerable. Boys are aware from an early age about the stigma attached to being sexually assaulted (frequently at the hands of another male), and don't want to seem weak. All of these attitudes make it harder for male child victims to disclose that they have been abused.
THE CHILD WOULD FEEL NEGATIVE TOWARD THE OFFENDER IF HE/SHE WAS REALLY ABUSING THEM.	Children are frequently abused by people who are in a position of trust – for example, members of the child's family. Perpetrators are skilled at making the child fearful of disclosing the abuse by warning the child that doing so would have dire consequences for the child and his/her family. Perpetrators are skilled at using various techniques that ensure that the child keeps the abuse secret, for example, playing on the child's feelings of insecurity, embarrassment or shame. They also use threats against others to ensure the child's compliance.

TEACHER NOTES

MYTH	REALITY
CHILDREN KNOW THAT THEY MUST DISCLOSE ABUSE.	Children often don't disclose that they are being abused. There are a number of factors that impact a child's ability to tell someone about the abuse. These include the age of the child, the relationship to the perpetrator, and whether the abuse is ongoing. Perpetrators often convince the child that he/she is to blame, and that others will not believe them if they disclose. They threaten to harm people close to the child if he/she discloses, and tell children that other people's knowledge of the abuse will ruin their families.
MOTHERS ALWAYS KNOW ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE.	Children often do not disclose the abuse to anyone, and even in sexual abuse of children, physical evidence of the act is often absent. In fact, the truth is that genital findings are rare because injuries from sexual abuse in children tend to heal quickly, and examinations seldom happen on the same day that the assault occurred.
THIS KIND OF THING DOESN'T HAPPEN IN MY FAMILY OR COMMUNITY.	It is often believed that abuse only happens in certain kinds of families, or in certain cultures or socio-economic groups. The truth is that child abuse happens in all kinds of families and settings.
THERE IS NO LOVE IN FAMILIES WHERE ABUSE HAPPENS.	Most families love their children, but this does not prevent abusive behaviours from happening within the walls of a loving home.
CHILD ABUSE DOESN'T HAPPEN IN GOOD FAMILIES/WEALTHY FAMILIES.	Child abuse happens in all kinds of households, regardless of race, culture, religion or economic standing. Often the wealthier or more respected households simply have better ways of 'hiding' the abuse.



WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE DISCLOSES ABUSE:

- REMIND THE PERSON THAT IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT THEY FIND A RESPONSIBLE ADULT WHOM THEY TRUST TO TALK TO.
- REMIND THEM IT'S IMPORTANT THAT THEY TELL SOMEONE SO THAT THE ABUSE CAN STOP, THEY CAN START TO GET OVER WHAT HAPPENED, AND THEY CAN STOP THE SAME THING HAPPENING TO SOMEONE ELSE.
- REMIND THEM THAT IF THE FIRST PERSON THAT THEY TELL DOES NOT LISTEN OR CARE ABOUT WHAT THEY HAVE SAID, THEY SHOULD KEEP TRYING UNTIL THEY FIND SOMEONE WHO DOES.
- REFER THEM TO AN APPROPRIATE SERVICE FOR COUNSELLING OR HELP. THESE MAY INCLUDE NGO'S, CHILDLINE, SAPS, SOCIAL WORKERS AND COUNSELLORS.