Pikinini Stap Sef, Filem Sef

FEELING SAFE: CHILDREN'S EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE IN VANUATU

STUDY SUMMARY REPORT

Australian Aid

alinea

Save the Children

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2. Convene a final Steering Committee meeting

3. Discuss findings with the network of young people that Save the Children supports

Actions for Save the Children programming:

1. Elevate attention to violence and protection responses

2. Address the connection between violence and punishment

3. Imperative for children to inform programming

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2. Create awareness and channels for reporting cyberbullying

3. Step up support to children with disabilities

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4. Undertake joint advocacy and collaboration with other children-focused agencies

INTRODUCTION

About the study

Save the Children Vanuatu is currently implementing the 'Bildemap Bren blong Pikinini' program, which works to address factors impacting early childhood development, including children's exposure to violence. As part of this program, Save the Children commissioned the *'Pikinini Stap Sef, Filem Sef'* study to listen to children to better understand the extent and impacts of children's exposure to violence in Vanuatu. This study puts children at the centre, to raise up their voices to advocate for action that addresses the social norms and attitudes that maintain the acceptability of violence in Vanuatu.

The purpose of this project was to undertake child-centred research to learn from ni-Vanuatu children's thoughts, ideas, and experiences about exposure to violence in their lives, and how this impacts their health and wellbeing. The objectives of the study are to:

- Document evidence of the impact of children's exposure to violence on their development.

- Elevate children's lived experiences and voices to inform advocacy, policy, and behaviour change strategies.

- Inform and underpin communications and advocacy to be implemented by Save the Children Vanuatu.

- Contribute to the evidence pool on children's violence exposure and violence against women and children.

The study answers four research questions:

Research question 1: To what extent are children in Vanuatu exposed to violence in their homes, schools, and communities? In what ways?

Research question 2: Do children who have multiple layers of discrimination face different exposures to violence?

Research question 3: What do children think are the consequences of violence on their development, particularly the impacts that violence has on children's physical and emotional wellness, as well as their ability to learn?

Research question 4: What might trigger and motivate behaviour change within communities regarding social norms around the acceptability of violence?

Why the study is important

The lack of current, context-specific data on children's exposure to violence and its impacts makes this an important piece of research for bolstering ni-Vanuatu children's safety and wellbeing. The findings and recommendations emerging from this study, which is the first of its kind for Vanuatu, will contribute to activities and messages that may support changes in behaviours and mindsets that maintain the acceptability of violence in homes, schools, and communities.

The study is also important to the work of Save the Children in Vanuatu. It directly supports Save the Children's ambitions to ensure children are heard by decision makers with the power to create safe, violence-free childhoods for all ni-Vanuatu children. It also supports achievement of the goal under the Save the Children 2022-2024 Vanuatu Country Strategy to protect children from the detrimental effects of exposure to violence.

METHODS

Who was involved in the study

At the centre of this study is the life experiences and perspectives of children from two provinces in Vanuatu. Forty-four children aged between 12 -17 participated in the study from November 2022 – April 2023. These children offered observations, reflections, feelings, and glimpses into daily life that form the foundation stone of this report and the recommendations.

The study team was led by Alinea International and included members from Vanuatu and Australia. Alinea International worked closely with staff from Save the Children in Vanuatu and Australia at every stage throughout the project. The study also established a Steering Committee, which included representatives from government agencies, non-government organisations and civil society, as well as service providers who work on issues relating to gender-based violence and children's rights and protection. The Steering Committee provided guidance on the study design and recommendations and was important for making sure the outcomes of the study are relevant for Vanuatu.


How the study was done

Pikinini Stap Sef, Filem Sef was designed as a qualitative study, using participatory data collection methods that are appropriate for the ages and contexts of children in Vanuatu. Children participated in a range of activities, including using drawing, craft, and storytelling, to share their views on the acts and words that they are exposed to that they consider to be examples of violence, and how, where, and when these different forms manifest in their lives and communities. Children also shared their understandings of the reasons why violence occurs, how it affects them, and what they think needs to change in the future for all children to feel safe.

The study prioritised making sure all children, regardless of background, were included. This involved finding opportunities to support children of all genders, children with disabilities, and children in urban and rural areas to have their voices heard, and having conversations with participants to understand if different children are exposed to violence in different ways.

The study also spoke to some adults, including parents, teachers, and representatives of government and non-government organisations to understand their perspectives through their roles in working with children.
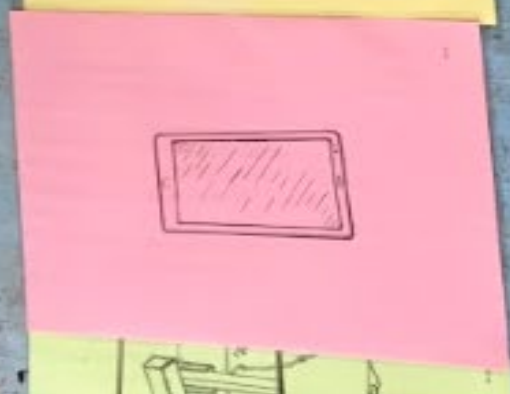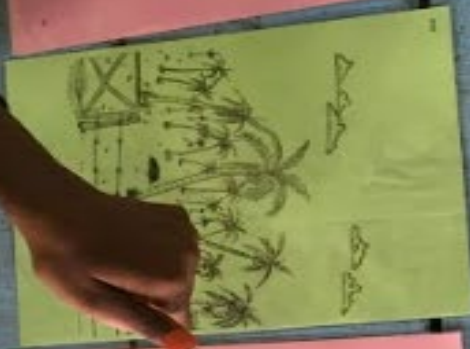
WHAT VIOLENCE DO CHILDREN IN VANUATU SEE AND HEAR IN THEIR LIVES?

All forty-four children who participated in this study could identify and describe multiple forms of violence they see in their communities, homes, and schools, and offered reasons why they think violence happens. This highlights how widespread exposure to violence is within ni-Vanuatu children's lives, and how it is present in the main places where they spend their time.

Children's stories indicated that exposure to violence is rarely a one-off event, but something they repeatedly, and even frequently, witness. When asked if they had been exposed to some form of violence the three months before their participation in the study, more than two thirds of children who responded to the question (22 out of 30) said yes. Out of 37 children who drew a community map identifying places they saw violence happening, three-quarters of them noted they had been exposed to violence in two or more settings over the past three months. This sends a strong message of how big the issue of exposure to violence is.

What children told us

Types of violence children see and hear

Children shared they see and hear many different types of violence. These include:

- **Physical violence** outside of the home: This was the most common type of violence children said they are exposed to. Children described physical violence to include things like fighting and hitting between adults as well as between their peers. Fighting stood out more strongly among male participants and included physical attacks and threats of attack with weapons such as knives.

- **Domestic violence** was raised by both girls and boys in urban and rural areas as one of the main forms of violence they are exposed to. Most often, children described domestic violence as something done by male family members against female family members, typically fathers against mothers. Children also talked about violence by parents towards children **as a form of punishment**, in retaliation for not behaving how parents want, or as a result of parents' uncontrolled anger about something unrelated to the child.

- Participants also mentioned **sexual violence** is a significant concern within their communities particularly affecting girls. Participants identified acts including harassment, inappropriate touching or grabbing, and rape, and recognised that young people, mainly boys, can start carrying out these behaviours from a young age. In girls' opinions, the risk factors for sexual violence were strongly connected with places where men and boys tend to hang out, for example kava bars and *nakamals*, 'boys' clubhouses', and other community settings.

- A range of examples of **bullying** came up in the discussions with children, ranging from 'mucking around' and teasing to more targeted and serious bullying against certain children. Participants considered **swearing** as a serious and hurtful act, with the potential for significant consequences for oneself and others.

- Children raised several **other forms of abuse or neglect** that they feel are common occurrences for many children. This included parental absence, including because of parental separation or parents' participation in overseas seasonal work schemes.

Some of the actions children identified as forms of violence they are exposed to:

friend says you loser

mum angry and hits boy   dangerous thing we hear

say stupid to somebody

dangerous thing we see   he says loser i am crying

kill hit

violence on woman   fight   faetem ol man   violence on children

girl tells me i'm crazy   man i kilem narafala man

women crying

girl like another girl   mi harem about ol murders   men swearing

friend says stupid   punching face   mum hit special needs boy

bullying others

dad gets angry - slap her

punch or kick an old man

you so nice and beautiful

faet blo woman

papa faetem mama - kava

yangala boy kilem man

yu sexs - rape   rao - fight   faet

jik - make fun of   fight

swe

sex - rape   rape case   swear

papa raw from kam leit

pikinini faet from pen

faet from money

Places where these things happen

Children shared they are exposed to violence in a wide range of settings where they spend time. This includes their **homes, their schools, as well as in community and public spaces**. Across both rural and urban study sites children spoke about there being a presence of multiple and often overlapping forms of violence occurring in any one location. Children also described how violence taking place in one setting can easily spill over and affect violence taking place elsewhere. For example, children witnessing verbal abuse and swearing at home by parents may be influenced to use swearing when interacting with their classmates and friends in the school yard.

Children regularly associated the key spaces in their lives as places both where they may feel unsafe and be exposed to violence, while at the same time representing spaces where they like to spend time or where there may be a source of safety or support, such as a parent or teacher. This highlights the complexity of the issue of violence in childhood and how difficult it is for many children to be free from seeing or hearing violence around them.

Reasons why violence happens

- Children see a strong connection between **substance use** and violence. Alcohol and smoking were listed as dominant triggers for multiple forms of violence, including domestic violence, fighting outside the home, and sexual violence perpetrated against girls and women.

- Children reported fighting over **household resources,** including money and other items such as food. They shared that violence can happen when parents disagree over how income should be spent, and who holds authority for making these decisions.

- **Infidelity or spousal affairs** were cited by both girls and boys as a motivator of intimate partner violence. There was a common opinion among girls and boys that infidelity was a reasonable justification for the use of violence against a partner.

- Violence **as a form of punishment** or in reaction to someone doing something that is unwelcomed. Many children suggested that being shouted at or hit is a common form of discipline used by parents, teachers, other community members and leaders such as chiefs or police officers.

- **Disputes over land ownership** and rights to land use also arose particularly among male participants in rural study settings.

What adults told us

Adult stakeholders interviewed shared the view that children, regardless of background, are exposed to some form of violence as an almost daily occurrence. Domestic violence was reported as the most common form of violence while increasing online presence and access to abusive content on the internet was raised as an emerging risk to children's safety. Adult participants echoed children's concerns on the presence of violence perpetrated by young people. Fighting and bullying among young people arose as a significant issue, yet stakeholders considered sexual violence as the most prominent and worrying form of violence especially for girls.
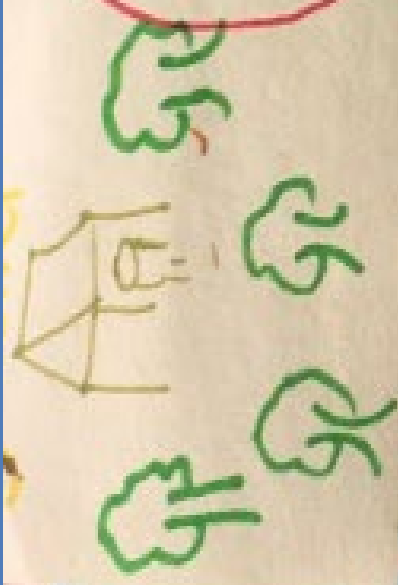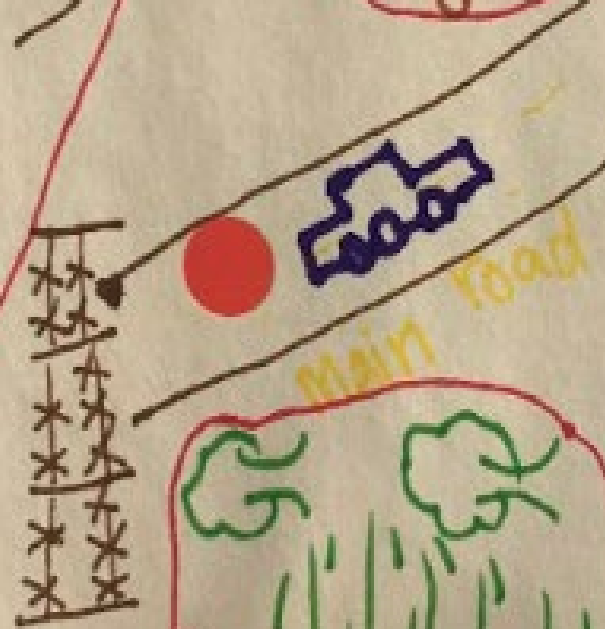
DO DIFFERENT CHILDREN SEE AND HEAR DIFFERENT TYPES OF VIOLENCE?

Children's stories uncovered how different children are exposed to different kinds of violence compared to other children. Children shared how some forms of violence are related to their gender, where they live, and if children have a disability.

What children told us

Children observe that **girls and boys are often exposed to, or affected by, different forms of violence**. For boys, swearing and fighting are considered more common forms of violence they are exposed to. Whereas for girls, sexual violence and harassment was reported as a much greater issue, with many girls sharing they feel scared or threatened when in certain places or around boys and men who are behaving in inappropriate ways. Both girls and boys shared they are similarly affected by domestic violence, particularly fighting between parents, and peer bullying.

There are signs of boys taking on behaviours like fighting and swearing from a young age, including using violence to handle problems or conflict with others. **Boys may also perceive violence they are exposed to differently than girls.** For many girls, seeing or hearing violence brought up feelings of fear and anxiety. Whereas some boys described witnessing fighting in a way similar to watching a sporting match, with a tone of entertainment or excitement.

Children noticed a possible higher risk of bullying or teasing at school targeting **children with disabilities,** motivated by attitudes and views about disability that lead to discrimination and exclusion.

Location did not stand out as a factor influencing exposure to violence as much as the study team expected. However, for rural children, violence was more often associated with roads, and stores where alcohol is sold, as well as with boys' clubhouses. Children in urban areas expressed greater worry of strangers and town settings, linked to fears of violence.

What adults told us

Sexual violence, including harassment, rape, and sexual abuse of young girls is one of the greatest concerns among stakeholders working in the gender-based violence and child welfare space in Vanuatu. Adult stakeholders also reported that pressure on boys to appear 'strong' and 'tough' may be driving their use of violence.

Stakeholders working with children with disabilities reported distressing levels of violence, abuse, neglect, and exclusion this group of children experience, including sexual abuse and discriminatory verbal abuse. Care givers of children with disabilities are frequently those who use violence against them. The high levels of violence against children with disabilities comes from mindsets that see people with disabilities as not having value or capability within their communities, and sees many children locked away without opportunity to go to school or participate in life outside their homes.

Stakeholders working on child welfare and violence response in Vanuatu were unable to discuss in depth how issues of violence may affect people with diverse sexual orientations, gender expressions and gender identities (SOGIE). This suggests low sector-wide awareness of the realities and barriers facing these groups. Some stakeholders shared that children with diverse SOGIE face discrimination and threats to safety because of their identities, including concerns of sexual abuse by family members of the same gender as these children are seen as "easy targets".

Stakeholders also reported that many people in Vanuatu live in areas unreachable by services to respond to violence, which adds to threats to protection and safety. Violence also becomes greater during emergencies, especially following natural disasters like cyclones.

Boy: Taem mifala stap lo haos, dadi mami stap rao. (When we are at home, dad and mum fight)

Girl: It is happening to nearly every woman… women and girls.

Girl: At school, there's a lot of fighting between students… It happened many times as students swear at each other and tease each other a lot.

Boy (rural): At the clinic, there I see violence. People who've been injured with knives. We see many people who have knife injuries.

Girl: Long skul, i gat wan gel i stap jikim wan smol boi, smol boi ia emi special needs. (At school, there is a girl that always teases a small boy. The small boy has special needs)

Boy: Man smokem maruana, hed blem save lus bae i save katem man lo knife o kilim man i des. (People smoke marijuana, they loose their head and they can cut men with knives or kill them)

Boy: (In the 'clubhouse') There's violence in it. Fights, swearing… This is a place where boys go to smoke.

Girl: Lo ples ia tu ol bois oli stap kat rabis tinktink mo rep i save happen. (Here too the boys have rubbish thoughts and rape can happen)

Girl: I don't feel safe there (near kava bars)… Boys can grab at times.

Girl (rural): Papa i stap faetem mama o samtaem i stap swea lo mi o faetem me wetem wood. (Papa is fighting mama and sometimes he swears and hits me with wood)

WHAT HAPPENS TO CHILDREN WHEN THEY SEE OR HEAR VIOLENCE?

Children narrated a breadth of impacts they see resulting from their exposure to the multiple forms of violence present in their lives. These impacts encompass health and wellbeing, social, emotional, neurological, and developmental aspects. Exposure to violence produces both short-term impacts immediately following an exposure, as well as long-term and even lifelong consequences.

Children's discussion of the impacts of exposure to violence weighted significantly towards emotional and psychological effects, highlighting the seriousness of how violence makes children feel. Many of the consequences identified by children are connected and can exacerbate each other. For example, impacts on sleep and eating habits due to high stress and anxiety levels can affect children's performance at school, and have serious implications for children's physical and mental health and development if prolonged.
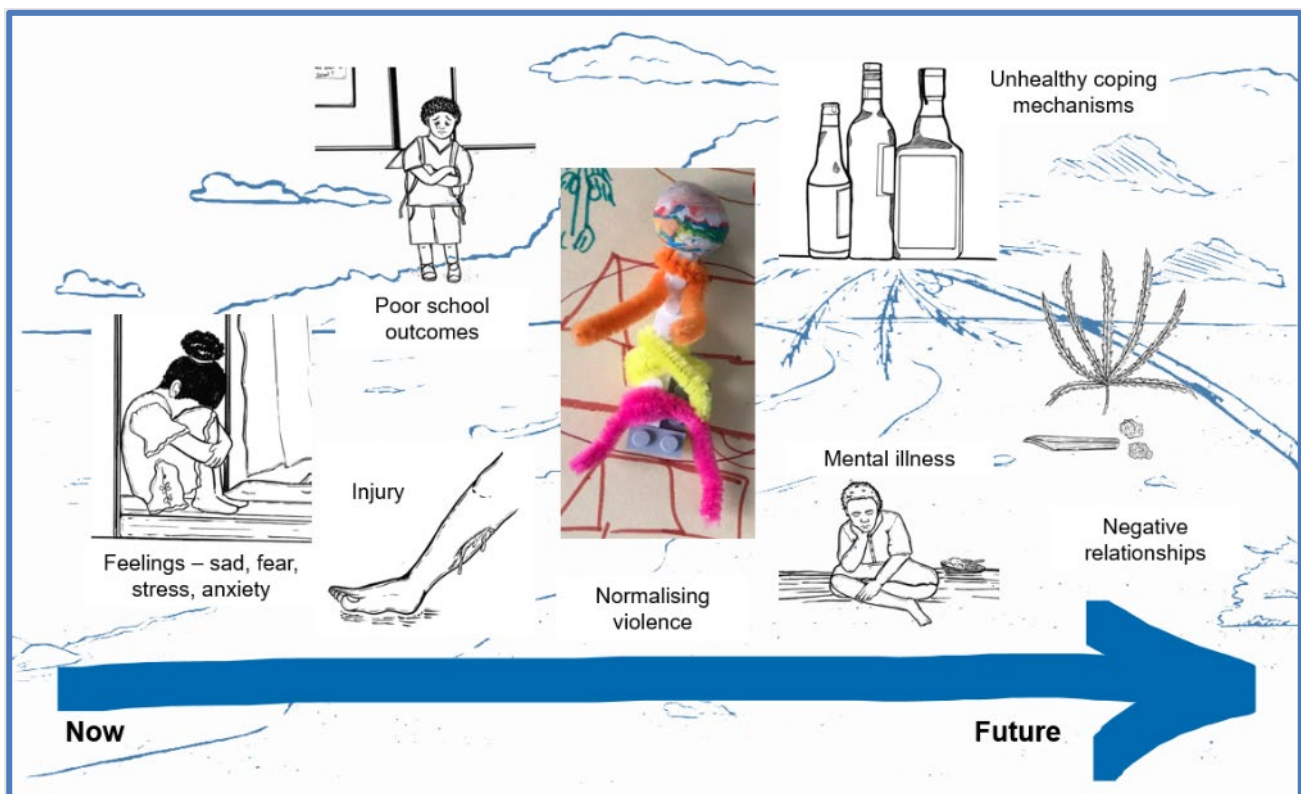
What children told us

Children openly shared immediate as well as long lasting **emotional impacts** arising from exposure to violence. They identified a range of feelings that emerge in response to violence including sadness, fear, shame, stress, and anger, along with a sense of powerlessness to change the circumstances that expose them to violence in the first place.

Shame emerged among both girls and boys as a common emotional state experienced in relation to violence or other forms of mistreatment children are exposed to or themselves take part in. The word 'shame', as a direct English translation from Bislama, may encompass a range of emotions including embarrassment, shyness, guilt, or a constrained ability to speak about, or address, issues or problems.

Children also described the severity of **physical injury** that could result from violence including serious injury requiring medical treatment or resulting in death. Some children were concerned and aware of the threat violence presents to people's health.

A small number of children shared how exposure to violence spoils **children's self-care and healthy habit**s, including sleeping and healthy eating. For example, the distress and fear that arises for children when they witness domestic violence at home can cause children to feel unable to eat or sleep, and may lead them to feeling unable to feel safe or fully relax at home. Children also considered that exposure to violence may lead to children turning to alcohol or drugs to cope with their trauma.

Violence alters **where children go** and how they interact with other people. Violence causes children to want to avoid going to places where they have seen or heard about violence happening, especially for girls. Similarly, some children shared they lose trust and become afraid of people they have seen acting in violent ways. This is difficult when children are unable to avoid places or people involved in violence – such as their homes, schools, and their parents.

Children reported **school attendance** can be affected by violence that occurs both within school settings as well as elsewhere. Skipping school was linked with school-based bullying and fighting between students in addition to shouting or hitting by teachers.

Children raised **concern that seeing violence 'teaches' children to use violence themselves** and reported that their own participation in things like swearing or bullying their friends is because of what they have seen others do while growing up. This includes chiefs and community leaders, police, teachers, older siblings and family members, as well as strangers, although parents play the biggest role in modelling the sorts of behaviours children carry out.

Both girls and boys perceived violence to pose significant **harm to their mental health and wellbeing**, worsened through repeated exposure or especially serious forms of violence. Children shared impacts of seeing violence could include experiencing depression, anxiety, poor self-esteem, as well as suicidal ideation. Sexual violence and other forms of gender-based abuse were predicted to lead to survivors experiencing extreme psychological distress.

The long-lasting consequences these impacts present for children's capacities for emotional regulation, healthy coping strategies, and identity development as they grow up can be extreme, as well as how this may alter choices and opportunities taken throughout their lives.

What adults told us

Adult participants echoed many of the consequences identified by children. Adults spoke of a range of impacts for children's physical and mental health and development, including weakened immune systems and greater susceptibility to health conditions arising from heightened stress levels. Various stakeholders also cited risk-taking behaviours — such as risky sexual behaviour and substance use — among young people as further impacts of violence.

The theme of transgenerational domestic violence was prominent among many adult stakeholders, echoing what children have said. Stakeholders emphasised how domestic violence perpetrated in front of children models violence as an appropriate, and even expected behaviour for managing relationships. This will continue cycles of violence in the future.

Adults also discussed instances where neglect and abuse has resulted in disability and observe that kastom reconciliation practices may worsen the impacts of violence. Stakeholders are concerned by the worrying increase in youth mental illness and suicide observed in recent years, with violence considered a contributing factor of this.

To Primminister Mo Chief

This is the letter that is for vilonce
vilonce need to stop now these days
example, like Slapping, killing also
Beating up People.
it needs to Stop it is especiually
for womens.
Vilounce needs to stop immidiantly
and it spoils womens too.

Vilonce Stop!

Vilonce Stop!

Vilonce Stop!

Vilonce stop!

To: Green

WHAT MUST CHANGE SO CHILDREN FEEL SAFE?

Children are urging leaders and decision makers to take action against violence by working to prevent fighting and swearing, sexual assault and rape, arguing and bullying, violent punishment and substance use. Children's pleading to see an end to these behaviours indicates they do not approve of the violence they are seeing in their lives and believe change is possible.

What children told us

Children want to see a **positive change in the way parents interact** with each other and with their children. They want parents to stop using aggressive approaches in how they respond to challenges within the family and to stop using violent forms of discipline, like smacking.

Children believe **stronger consequences** are needed for people who use violence or behave in ways that make children feel scared or unsafe. They also identified a need for stronger government involvement in protecting children and preventing violence.

Children are calling out for **examples of positive behaviour** and role models they can learn from in how they manage relationships and life stressors. Children are appealing to parents and other influential figures, including teachers, chiefs, and church leaders, to step up to set a positive example for children to follow.

There was an overwhelming focus among both girls and boys that adults as well as young people need to **stop drinking and other substance abuse,** like marijuana, as children strongly associate substances with violence.

Children are looking to those who hold positions of authority within their communities to take responsibility for driving the kinds of changes needed to end to violence. They are **requesting the government and community leaders**, including members of parliament, the Prime Minister, chiefs, and police officers, to use their position and power to enforce an end to behaviours that make children feel unsafe.

Parents are the primary role models in children's lives. Children are **urging their parents to set a good example and take responsibility** for how their actions impact on and are teaching children to act.

While children generally considered adults to hold the power for driving widespread change, some children believe in their own power and ability to choose their own behaviours and make sure they do not continue patterns of violence. In this way, children see **themselves as change agents**.

What adults told us

Adult stakeholders echoed that ensuring children's safety and freedom from violence requires addressing a complex and evolving set of factors that entrench acceptability of violence in Vanuatu. Many stakeholders interviewed felt that a chronic lack of awareness and social sensitisation of the rights of women, children, and people with disabilities underpins discrimination and supports the acceptability of violence perpetrated against them.

There is a need to address emerging factors contributing to violence. This includes the adverse consequences of parents' participation in seasonal work overseas, as well as the threat of increasing use of the internet and social media. The absence of female political representation at all levels hinders progress towards a society free from violence as does victim blaming and lack of adult responsibility for ensuring children's safety.

Girl: Feeling blo yu i no gud, spose yu no stap fraet bae yu feel se yu shame. (You don't feel good, if you are not afraid then you feel ashamed)

Boy: Sometimes their fighting can result in death.

Girl: Taem tufala (student) kam stap faet lo playground tufala mekem ol pikinini oli stap fraet blo kam stap pleple. (When students fight on the playground it makes other children scared to come and play)

Girl: Ol pikinini oli luk mo bai oli save folem aksens blong olgeta violens ia taem se oli kam bigwan. (Children see (violence) and also might carry out violent actions when they grow up)

Girl: He will never have good education and will never… and when he grows up he will never become someone in the future.

Boy: Wan taem i gat wan smol boy i sta lo skul ol fren oli kilim hem afta hem kambak lo haos karem mane i pem dring afta dring, i ko pem weed afta smokem. (One time, there was a small boy at school, his friends would hit him. After, he would go home, get money and go buy alcohol and drink it, go buy weed and smoke it)

Girl: Mi fil, sapos hemi happen lo mi (rape), mi mi filim olsem se ded blo mi i stap kam klosap. (I feel like, if this happened to me (rape) I would feel like I was going to die)

Boy: Hemi nogud from hemi wan bad example ol nara pikinini save luk mo save mekem. (It isn't good because it is a bad example that children will see and also do)

Boy: Yumi mas klad taem pikinini i stap araon. (We must be happy when children are around)

Girl: Mi stap askem ol parents blo mi wantem wan gudfala laef mo hapi famili blo mi fil sef. (I am asking all parents, I want a good life and a happy family to feel safe).

Girl: Yumi mas need blong emi jenj. Bae olgeta bigfala man mo woman bai oli nomo stap swear long ol pikinini, bae oli nomo stap faet long fes blong pikinini. (We need for it to change. All men and women need to stop swearing at children, stop fighting in front of children)

TAKING ACTION

The most important belief from the start of this study was that attention must be given to listening to children. The forty-four individuals at the heart of this study did not need adults to speak for them, with protections on hand, they were strong in their opinions and insights.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are primarily for Save the Children, as the commissioner of this study, but also talk to the potential to partner with other stakeholders to take the recommendations forward.

Recommendations for the study

- **Socialise the report findings.** Acknowledging that some material in the report will be sensitive for particular audiences, it would be worthwhile to develop a plan to socialise the study findings.

- **Convene a final Steering Committee meeting.** The study Steering Committee played an important role in offering advice to ground the study to the Vanuatu context. It is recommended that Save the Children convene a final meeting with the members who are at the frontline of being able to act upon the findings.

- **Discuss findings with the network of young people that Save the Children supports.** It is recommended that Save the Children consider ways that the findings and implications of the study could be broached with networks it supports to guide the next stage of Save the Children's actions.

Recommendations for Save the Children programming

- **Elevate attention to violence and protection responses.** It became evident Save the Children was one of the core sources of qualified and skilled child protection support locally. It is recommended that the child protection team review Save the Children's country program and identify ways to mainstream attention to violence against children across the portfolio.

- **Address the connection between violence and punishment.** The study highlights the scope to increase support to positive parenting as a way for parents and guardians to better understand children's behaviour and emotions, to promote non-violent methods for discipline and boundary setting and to break the cycle of children copying the violence they observe adults perpetrate.

- **Imperative for children to inform programming.** While continuing to scrutinise the ethics, it is recommended that Save the Children continue the engagement of children in shaping the responses to this study, and in programming generally.

Recommendations for Save the Children partnership with government

- **Support the passage of the Child Protection Bill.** Passage of the Bill would legitimate that child protection is a priority for Vanuatu and it could set a standard for child protection and service provision.

- **Create awareness and channels for reporting cyberbullying**. Save the Children, with its *I Am Digital Campaign* in the Pacific region, could support increased channels for ni-Vanuatu children to be aware of, report and seek support for cyberbullying and harassment.

- **Step up support to children with disabilities.** The study findings that emerged urge a dedicated response to expand support to children with disabilities. It is recommended that Save the Children, in

partnership with government, consider expanding support to organization of persons with disabilities (OPD) in Vanuatu.

- **Create more safe, child-friendly spaces.** Examples of violence pervaded all settings in children's daily lives. Investment in more safe spaces would provide positive places for peace, play and recreation.

- **Link prevention of violence with public health responses.** Children offered a lot of examples of the link between substance abuse and violence for adults and for peers. Public health campaigns could incorporate messaging on the implications of substance abuse for the prevention and response to violence against children.

- **Embed children's right to protection from violence in curriculum.** It is suggested that children's right to safety from violence should be more strongly embedded in school curricula and in the training of teachers.

- **Support increased social work, child protection, well-being and mental health services.** Putting services and supports in place takes time, but, Save the Children could dialogue with government and NGOs to map the resources and services available and offer guidance on how agencies could respond better to child protection needs.

Recommendations for Save the Children partnership with community stakeholders

- **Awareness raising on the issue by Wan Smolbag.** As one Steering Committee member urged, "awareness raising must be done in a cultural context". Save the Children could consider collaborating with national community theatre group, Wan Smolbag, to develop a play about children's exposure to violence, its impacts, and violence mitigation.

- **Use local vocabulary for speaking about violence.** A pivotal moment in a country's addressing of violence is having the local language and terms to recognise and respond to it locally. The children engaged in the study were able to put local language to acts and impacts of violence, offering an important foundation for building a ni-Vanuatu vocabulary on children's exposure to violence to aid local comprehension and action.

- **Highlight climate change impacts on violence against children.** As climate change and related emergencies intensify, and greater funding and programming is dedicated to the response, it is vital that responders understand how climate change will be a driver of increased violence, including against and between children. Drawing out the circumstances of children in national plans and community resilience programming will take improved, disaggregated data and advocacy. The known stressors of climate change for communities – for household food security and income earning, for security of shelter, for displacement and loss through disaster events – will indisputably drive violence. It needs to be a non-negotiable part of the national response.

- **Partner with receptive church leaders and congregations.** With reverence for the reach of the Church in Vanuatu, it is worth Save the Children considering whether and where there may be scope for church community figures to be partners in messages of non-violence and the rights of children.

Recommendations for future research

When an issue such as children's exposure to violence is at stake, there is a desire to be as comprehensive and unrelenting as possible. However, there were many issues that this study could not extend to. The following are the team's priorities for follow up research:

- **Undertake action oriented research to better understand the situation of Ni-Vanuatu children with disabilities and their exposure to violence.** It is recommended that this proceeds with budgets and

long-range plans for engaging with VDPA, VSPD, the Ministry of Justice and Community Services and the Ministry of Education and Training, and for a commitment to a programming response to the findings.

- **Explore the extent and experiences of online violence.** Further research into cyber violence and how children may be targeted and impacted differently on account of their backgrounds should be a priority to be conducted in consultation with cyber safety experts.

- **Explore the potential link between labour mobility and child violence or neglect.** As Vanuatu's participation in overseas work schemes increases, studies should look to understand the impact of parent/s' out-migration on children's exposure to violence.

- **Undertake joint advocacy and collaboration with other children-focused agencies.** Save the Children had the courage to commission this study. At the time of this report, World Vision had commenced a quantitative survey on children's wellbeing across the country, which includes a violence module. Violence against children and child protection is a necessary priority for most child-focussed agencies, and it would be a good outcome for further action and research by others to follow. The final recommendation is for Save the Children to treat this report (or parts thereof, for the sake of the children's anonymity) as a public good to be shared, and for it to spur joint advocacy and collaboration on campaigns and programming.