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**VIOLENCE AGAINST  
CHILDREN –  
THEIR RIGHTS TO  
PARTICIPATION AND  
PROTECTION**



...and how they  
sometimes are  
betrayed by the  
system...





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# + VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

- Every year - more than 40 million children in the world are exposed for severe assault.
- The government believes that up to 100 000 Norwegian children are exposed to violence annually.
- Because of domestic violence - between 1500 and 2000 children flee to one of the Norwegian shelters every year.
- Violence between parents inflicts children serious injuries : stress disorders , cognitive problems, weakened immune system, behavioral disturbances +++
- American studies show that children who experience violence are in 30-50 times greater risk of cardiovascular complications , substance abuse , depression and suicide.



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


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# CONDITIONS IN NORWAY (Thoresen & Hjemdal 2014)

- Almost 1 of 3 children suffer a less severe physical violence from their parents
- 5 % have been subjected to serious physical violence from their parents
- 1 in 10 have experienced violence between the parents
- 13% have experienced psychological violence from parents



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### + The victim's parental-role?

- Trauma reactions after violence can disrupt the care-person for a period, but can also create a reduced care-ability in the long term.
- Research on parenting behaviours in challenging life situations  
(for example, related to violence, divorce, parental mental health)  
has shown that parental function is affected by stress in the environment.

(Beisky & Vondra, 1989).




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**VIOLENCE AND ABUSE  
OR JUST EQUAL CONFLICT  
BETWEEN THE PARENTS?**

**FOCUS ON THE ADULTS RATHER  
THAN ON THE CHILD...**

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### **WHEN THE SYSTEM FAILS TO PROTECT**

- The concern of the perpetrators' behaviour becomes subordinate - and the support system focuses on the victims functioning.
- The support system is therefore in some cases maintaining and continuing the violence and the repression against the victim.
- **THE CHILD IS SET IN DANGER....AGAIN!**

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## + THE ABUSER WINS!

- Manipulation
- Power
- Strength
- Economy
- Charm



.....and sometimes even the child's support.....

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## + NO SUPPORT

Society expects and demands that the victimized parent removes the child from the abuser and that she takes responsibility to protect the child.

If not, there may be sanctions. The system, though, is not always willing to assist her – neither practical nor legal, so she can be able to meet these requirements.




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## + THE CHILD NEED :

- The **CHILD** needs that both the child itself and the caretaker is **SAFE**.
- The **CHILD** needs that the caretaker has the support and understanding of the professionals.
- The **CHILD** needs that the caretaker feels confident that her decisions do not lead to sanctions from those who shall provide help.




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## ESSENTIAL CHALLENGES

- Children's legal protection is challenged in the tension between legal work and child-centered work.
- Children are described and treated as **objects** rather than **subjects**.
- Children's rights are not given equal status as adult's rights.
- Failing to support the caring parent expose the child for new danger.

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## CONCLUSION

- Children must be viewed as **subjects**. This means that their rights as stated in the UN convention, must be practiced at every level in professional and legal work.
- Taking care of the children's rights will also imply that traumatized parents are given sufficient and proper help so they can protect and care for their children. The alternative is unfortunately that many violated children are placed with the abuser.
- We need a court system that is specially adjusted for children and their rights.
- **THE CLAIMS OF THE DESTRUCTIVE ADULT MUST NOT TRUMP THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD; NEITHER SHOULD THE INCOMPETENCE OF THE PROFESSIONALS.**

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## CHILDREN'S CO-DETERMINATION

- Every child is an independent actor with rights to both **protection and care, and participation and co-determination** in his/her life.
- *When* children are involved and **heard** in matters that concerns their lives, adults will obtain knowledge we would not have got without the child's contribution.
- Children are also entitled **not** to express their view if that is their wish.

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## + THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

### ARTICLE 12:

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

### ARTICLE 19:

States Parties, and these must be understood all those who work directly with children, are obliged to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence.

ARTICLE 39 says that States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to encourage physical and psychological rehabilitation of children exposed for any kind of violence and abuse.

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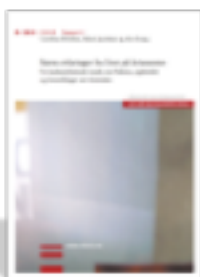
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The first nationwide study conducted in Norway on children living in shelters for battered women. The study was initiated by the Ministry of Children and Equality.

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## THE AIM OF THE STUDY

- Collecting systematic knowledge about the children in the shelters in regard to their situation, challenges, and the need for information and support after their stay
- A further aim is to obtain a better understanding about their experience, both before and during their stay at the shelter, as well as their thoughts and wishes for the future.

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## + FINDINGS

- The status of the children in shelters is unclear. Are they "service users" or "accompanying persons"?
- Many children in this study showed a lack of information, and understanding of the situation.
- Children in shelters often experience broken relationships.
- All the secrecy about these children's situation leads to the children becoming inactive and isolated from the world outside the shelter.
- Cooperation between the shelter and other children's agencies is of vital importance.
- Younger children express more confusion and uncertainty concerning their stay at the shelter than the older children do.
- It seems as if the follow-up often focuses more on the mother's needs, than to the needs of the child.

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+ Children who have grown up with violence in the family gives this advice to adults who want to help:

- ✓ The violence must end!
- ✓ Children need someone to talk to!
- ✓ Children need to be safe!
- ✓ Tell the children that it's okay to talk about what happens at home!
- ✓ Tell the children that violence is not their fault!

(From "Sokk" written to children" - "Sokk" one kind of - RV og Børn for integrasjon)

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## + Krisesenteret in Salten listen – and act!

In cooperation with Save The Children and a film company called Mikrofilm we got money to the film project from:

- The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs
- The Department of Justice
- The EXTRA foundation



**Redd Barna**




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## TWO FILMS FOR CHILDREN



- The first film gives the children concrete information.
- The second film is a message from children to children – focuses on feeling, thoughts and experiences.

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## THANK YOU!



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