

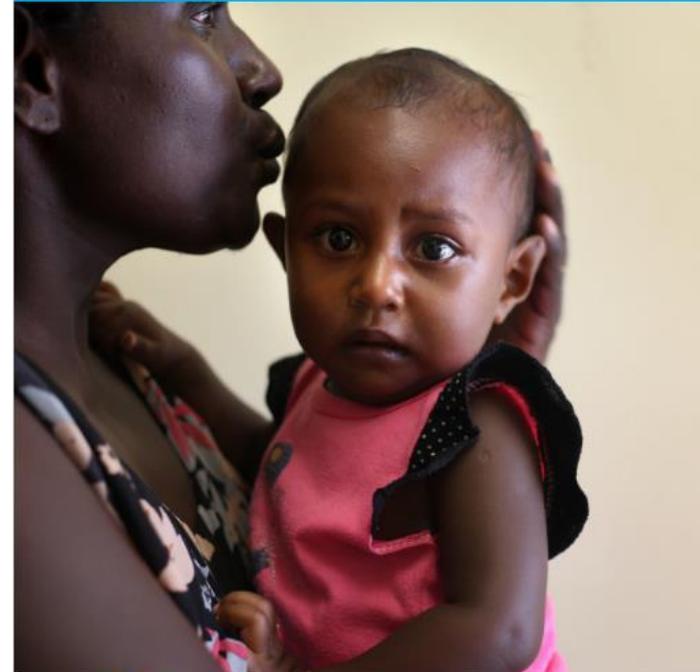
# Child Protection & Violence against Women in the Pacific

# Introduction

Globally and in the Pacific there is a growing body of evidence on:

- ❑ Impact of family violence on children
- ❑ Intersection between gender-based violence and violence against children.

Harmful Connections: Examining the relationship between **violence against women and violence against children** in the South Pacific



# Data show that:

- ❑ Women and children growing up in PICS experience some of the highest rates of family violence in the world.
- ❑ Violence against Pacific children is most often perpetrated by those entrusted with their care - parents, family members, and teachers.
- ❑ Women who experienced IPV were more likely to have reported their children having nightmares, displaying aggressive behaviour, and repeating a year of school or dropping out of school.



# **Intersection between VAC & VAW**

# Shared Risk Factors

- ❑ Marital conflict
- ❑ Family breakdown
- ❑ Male dominance in the household
- ❑ Economic stress
- ❑ Breakdown of extended family networks
- ❑ Drug or alcohol abuse



# Driven by similar social norms

- ❑ Normalisation of violence
- ❑ Justification of physical violence as an acceptable means of discipline
- ❑ Low status of women and girls
- ❑ Male sexual entitlement
- ❑ Taboos on talking openly about sexual abuse
- ❑ Perception that violence is a “family” matter, which discourages help-seeking

# Co-occurrence is common



- ❑ Child maltreatment and intimate partner violence often co-occur within a single household.
- ❑ Children in households where women experience intimate partner violence are more likely to experience neglect and maltreatment.

# Inter-generational impact of abuse

- ❑ Women who report physical or sexual abuse in childhood are more likely to experience intimate partner violence as an adult.
- ❑ Men who experienced childhood abuse are more likely to be violent in their personal relationships as adults.
- ❑ Tackling child maltreatment is therefore an important long-term strategy to reduce family violence.

# Intersection between VAC & VAW

- ❓ Given these intersections, close collaboration between VAW interventions and child protection systems building is essential.
- ❓ But child protection cannot simply be subsumed within or “tacked onto” VAW initiatives.
- ❓ Ensuring the well-being and protection of children requires continued investment in strengthening national child protection systems.



**Why a Special  
Approach  
is Needed to  
Child Protection**

# State responsibility towards children

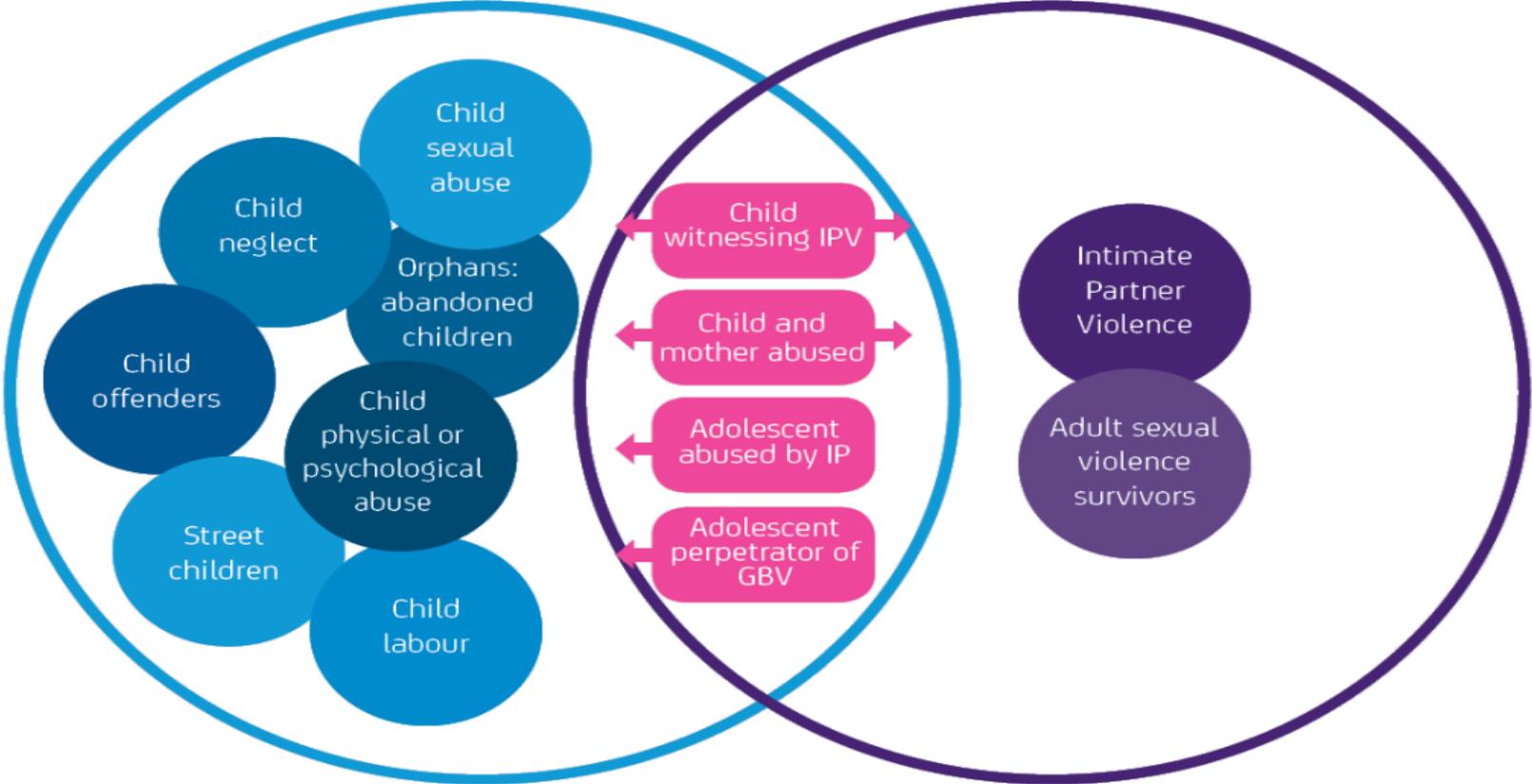
- ❑ CRC: Governments have added responsibility to protect children and provide alternative care.
- ❑ VAW services for adult survivors are based on women's agency.
- ❑ Where children are concerned, the State must be empowered to step in and protect those who cannot protect themselves.
- ❑ This includes stepping in where necessary in the child's best interest, even if the parents / child do not want help.

# Scope of child protection systems extends beyond family violence

Intersection between Child Protection and VAW / IPV

**Child protection system**

**VAW/IPV Response**



# Procedures for children are different

## Child Protection Pathway



## GBV/ VAW Referral Pathway



# Children often need more long-term solutions

- ❑ VAW referral pathways are designed to provide short-term support to adult survivors with the aim of supporting them towards independence.
- ❑ Child protection interventions must ensure the best interest of the child until s/he turns 18.
- ❑ Children who are removed from their homes may require long-term alternative care, not simply temporary shelter.

# Dealing with children requires unique skill-set



- ❑ Often same service providers for both categories of survivors.
- ❑ Some skills and sensitivities apply equally to both, but children's cases require different procedures and approaches, and specialist skills.



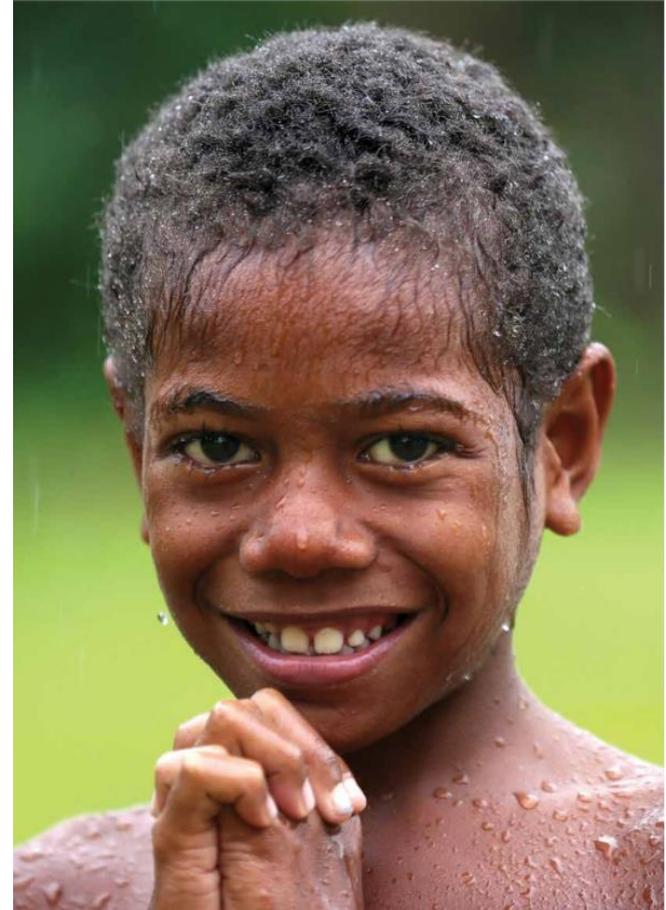
**DFAT / UNICEF Approach in the PICs**

# Strengthening Child Protection Systems

- ❑ UNICEF and DFAT working with PIC governments to design child protection systems that:
  - ▷ Feasible and appropriate to the national context and culture;
  - ▷ Build on community caring practices and informal support networks;
  - ▷ Reinforce central role of social welfare in coordinating services for children and families, and leading the case management and referral process.

# Strengthening Child Protection Systems

- ❑ Improving linkages between formal system and informal/community mechanisms;
- ❑ Working collaboratively with community leaders to address child welfare and protection concerns;
- ❑ Strong focus on prevention and early intervention



# Strengthening Child Protection Systems

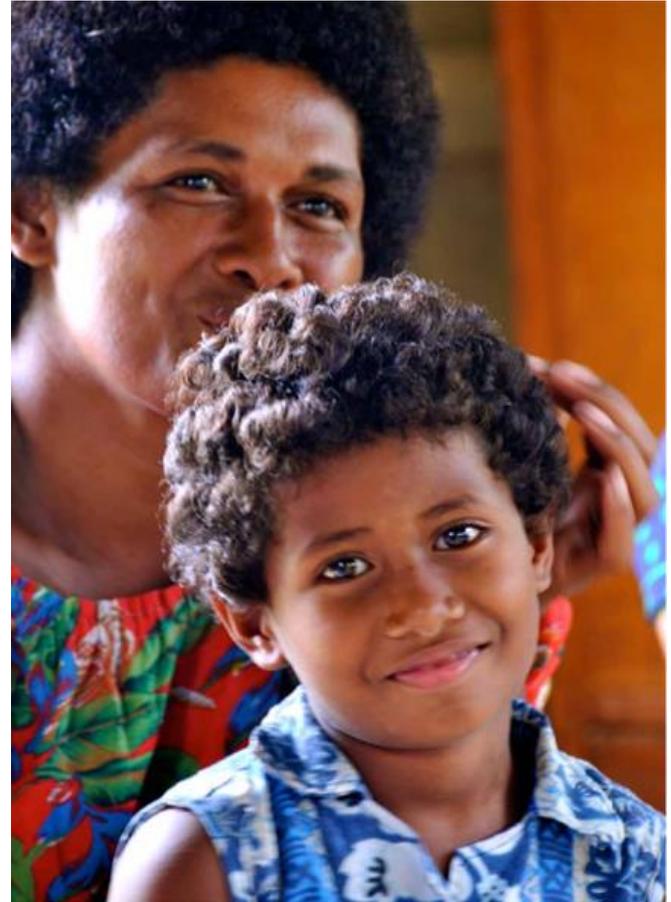
- ❑ Emphasis on family preservation and consensus-based decision-making with active involvement of parents, extended family and community leaders to address problems.
- ❑ Also improving coordination between welfare officers, teachers, health workers and justice sector professional to ensure timely and effective formal sector response, where necessary.
- ❑ Priority on family-based forms of alternative care.

# Child Protection/ VAW Collaboration

- ❑ Better integration of efforts to address common social norms:
  - ▷ Promote loving, respectful and violence-free families
  - ▷ Address alcohol or drug addiction
  - ▷ Target social norms relating to male dominance and sexual relationships

# Child Protection/ VAW Collaboration

- ❑ VAW services designed to take into account the needs of children in the family.
- ❑ Coordinated case management and integrated service delivery where both the child and mother experience family violence.



# Child Protection/ VAW Collaboration

- ❑ VAW shelters able to provide safe accommodation for mothers with their children (boys and girls)
- ❑ Capacity building for service providers and justice sector professionals:
  - ▷ Foundational knowledge, sensitivities and skills applicable to both adults and children;
  - ▷ Principles and approaches for survivor-centred support to adult survivors of VAW;
  - ▷ Specialise skills and approaches for dealing with child survivors.



**Thank You**