

# **Children at Risk**

Written by  
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## About the author

**Dr. Antonieta A. Silva**

### Education

- **Post Doctorate in Psychopathology and Mental Health** (Argentina)
- **Doctorate in Science of Education** (Caracas)
- **Master's Educational Quality** (México)
- **Prof. of Special Education. Specialized in Mental Retardation** (Caracas)
- **Teacher, specialist in Mentally Retarded** (Caracas)

### Work

- **27 years of teaching experience**(17 years as a college professor)
- **At present, chair of the Department of Special and Applied Psychology** at the "Universidad Pedagógica Experimental Libertador, Caracas, Venezuela

### Publications

#### BOOKS:

- **Strategic learning of the Piano**
- **The Textbook as a source to generate strategic learning**
- **Relevant theories on human development**
- **Living without barriers**
- **Handbook on Effective time management**
- **Handbook on creating support groups for abused women.**

#### ARTICLES

- **Eliminate children boredom at home**
- **Communication competence as a prerequisite for research**
- **The textbook from a socio cultural point of view**
- **Active ethics VS Inactive protest**
- **The little secret of the most intelligent.**

### Other

- **Recognition for educational excellence** (Organizacion de las Americas)
- **Seventh-Day Adventist Facilitator in Workshops for:** Children Ministry, Personal Ministry, Youth Ministry, Women Ministry, Pastors, Elders, SEDA and SIEMA
- **Hymn composer for children, church clubs and others.**

## RECOMMENDED PROGRAM FOR SABBATH SCHOOL DRAMA: “VACCINATION DRIVE AGAINST CHILD ABUSE”

### **Song Service:**

It is recommended that hymns that talk about God’s love for children be included.

The platform should be decorated as an outpatient ward in a hospital. Toward the back a sign should be hung with the words “ Vaccination drive against child abuse”. There should be boys or girls dressed as nurses; alongside there should be a table with several large syringes. There could be as many nurses as interventions in the program or the dialogue could be repeated with two children or however it fits the needs of the church or children available. The patients will be adults and only one will be involved in each intervention. It could be men or women according to the availability of each church.

**Nurse:** Good Morning! You are all invited to the Vaccination drive against child abuse. Do you know that 275 million boys and girls around the world suffer from this sickness? It is a worldwide epidemic! Let us all go! Let us all get vaccinated. It is free!

**Adult # 1:** (rises from among the congregation) I want to be vaccinated. Even though I believe that I do not need it. I have children and I never spank them. In reality, because of my work schedule, I never get to spend time with them. Therefore I never abuse them.

**Nurse:** Sir. Did you know that to neglect your children is a form of abuse? For children the word love is spelled T-I-M-E, time! Step right up; we will vaccinate you against neglect.

**Nurse:** Step over here. The vaccination against neglect will help you to dedicate sometime during the day to your children. (He is then vaccinated and is given a hymnal and the Sabbath School quarterly for one of the children’s divisions)

**Adult # 1:** It works! Come let us praise God together with Hymn # \_\_\_\_ *(the theme song chosen for the day could be used)*

**Nurse:** (Speaking to the congregation) we are still here! We invite you to this vaccination drive against child abuse. Come one, come all. Let us vaccinate now.

**Adult # 2:** *(rises from the congregation)* I need to get vaccinated! My parents abused me when I was a child and sadly I have discovered that I am repeating the same story with my children! Please help me! Is there any hope for me?

**Nurse:** Of course there is hope!!!! Step over here. *(The adult shows fear of the needle)* Do not be afraid. Look, the Bible says in Job 14:7-9 *(She/he reads it)*. Do you see? There is always hope. The vaccine against violence will help you *(the vaccination is administered)*. It should be accompanied with a good dose of prayer so that God can transform your life.

**Adult # 2:** Thanks very much!!! (She/he kneels and say): Accompany me as I pray for the first time after my vaccination. (The person prays on their knees for all the children who suffer child abuse)

**Nurse:** *(to the congregation)* Friends, come and get vaccinated. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 40 million minors under 5 years of age are victims of violence, abuse, abandoned by their families, schools, the community and left to the mercy of the streets. Come get vaccinated. It is free!

**Child dressed as Pharmaceutical Representative:** (Walks in with a sign that says Welcome, accompanied by a group of children) Friends!, It occurred to me that if we hang this sign, some people may be encouraged to come and get vaccinated (child speaks to the congregation) Please welcome the person that is at your side and invite them to be vaccinated by God against child abuse. (Hangs the sign on the Wall). We must all share the Word. Let us sing together (They sing the suggested song on this web page <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-3cwO4BbGA> along with the congregation or another hymn that refers to the prevention of child abuse or loving our children.

**Adult # 3:** I want to be vaccinated. I did not have children but I would like to contribute to the children of the world who are being abused. How can I help?

**Nurse:** Step over here. I will vaccinate you then you will have an idea how to do it. (As he is being vaccinated, a **video can be introduced that deals with child abuse**)  
**Here are some suggestions:**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kNNhqqeOzJ0>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SovhUTeesVY>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLxKfrcMzbQ&feature=related>

**Adult # 4:** I want to be vaccinated also. I have read the research done by UNICEF which reveals that in Latin America and the Caribbean more than 50% of adults, both men and women believe that it is normal to abuse children as a form of punishment and education. I want to prevent this and gain the skills so that I can help to eradicate this evil. I want to follow the divine counsel and use redemptive education for my children. (The person steps up to be vaccinated, then speaks to the congregation: let us pray in groups of two, asking God to vaccinate us all, with the help of the Holy Spirit. Then he/she prays for the lesson study.)

## RECOMMENDED ORDER FOR THE DIVINE SERVICE

✚ **Doxology**

✚ **Invocation**

✚ **Worship hymn: “Guided to you”** (see annex #1)

✚ **Scripture Reading:** “**God** heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there.” Génesis 21:17

✚ **Tithes and Offerings**

✚ **Prayer:** *(In favor of those in the community who suffer because of domestic violence, or loss because of abuse, and for those who are helping and supporting them.)*

✚ **Children’s Story** (see annex # 2)

✚ **Special Music**

✚ **Sermon “ THE DEMAND OF A POWERFUL GENERATION”** (see annex # 4)

**Closing Hymn: The People who know their God** (see annex # 5)

✚ **Final Prayer**

**ANNEX # 1****Guided by you**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vaVG4KMrnNg>

Guía a ti, Himnario Adventista #511 (Hold Thy my hand #410)

I

Guía a ti Señor, Guía a ti  
Los hijos tiernos que me has dado a mí  
Oh por tu grande amor, Guíalos Dios a ti  
Guíalos Dios a ti, guíalos si

II

Cuando del mundo vean el esplendor  
Entonces guárdalos del tentador  
De sus engaños oh! Guíalos Dios a ti  
Guíalos Dios a ti, guíalos si

III

Los niños a salvar vino Jesús  
Y anduvo sin pecar hasta la cruz  
Suplico por tu amor  
Guíalos Dios a ti  
Guíalos Dios a ti, guíalos si

IV

Aunque me falte fe quiero creer  
Que este precioso don quieres tener  
Tiernos de corazón hoy los devuelvo a ti  
Guíalos Dios a ti, guíalos si

## ANNEX # 2

### *Children's story:*

The following materials will be needed for the children's story during the divine hour:

- 4 empty bottles (250 cc, those used for mineral water)
- 4 balloons with the word JESUS written on them.
- Sodium Bicarbonate
- Vinegar

Before the story hour place into each balloon a spec of Sodium Bicarbonate (the amount equivalent to what fits into the bottle cap that you will be using). Place the four bottles on a table in front of the children. Place beside each bottle one of the balloons with the bicarbonate, but not inflated. Be very careful as the balloons are handled that there is no spilling.

As the experiment is performed, the following story will be told to the children:

**Are you aware that Jesus has chosen you so that every child can see Him? I will explain how you can help Jesus to be visible to other children.**

#### **Bottle N° 1**

**Let us name this bottle Charles.** (Use names that are common in your community)

**Charles would like to introduce others to Jesus.** (Lift up the first bottle).

**For Charles to introduce Jesus to his friends, he goes to church to learn about Jesus.** (Empty a capful of vinegar into the bottle)

**Jesus is very glad because Charles came to church.** (Place the balloon over the mouth of the bottle without spilling the bicarbonate)

**When Charles returns home from church,** (raise up the balloon that covered the bottle so that the bicarbonate spills into the bottle and mixes with the vinegar. The balloon will inflate a little; show it to the children)

**Some children will notice that Charles spent a little time with Jesus.**

#### **Bottle N° 2**

**We will name this bottle Mary.** Mary also wants to introduce others to Jesus. (Lift up the second bottle).

**Mary goes to church to learn about Jesus so she can introduce her friends to Him.** (Empty a capful of vinegar into the bottle)

**She also worships and sing praises to Jesus in her home during worship time.** (Empty another capful of vinegar in the bottle)

**Jesus is very happy with Mary because she went to church and also has worship at home** (place the balloon over the mouth of the bottle without spilling the bicarbonate)



**When Mary speaks to her friends** (raise up the balloon so that the Bicarbonate spills into the bottle and mixes with the vinegar. The balloon will inflate a little just as the previous one. Show it to the children.)

**Her friends will notice that she spends some time with Jesus everyday.**

### **Bottle N° 3**

**We will name this bottle Peter. Peter also wants to introduce Jesus to others.** (Lift up the third bottle).

**Peter goes to church so that he can learn more about Jesus and teach his friends.** (Empty a capful of vinegar into the bottle)

**He also praises Jesus at home during worship time.** (Empty another capful of vinegar into the bottle)

**Peter also distributes literature on Sabbath afternoons.** (Empty another capful of vinegar into the bottle)

**He also participates in a small group with his friends at church** (Empty another capful of vinegar into the bottle)

**Jesus is very happy with Peter because he went to church; he has worship at home, distributes literature and participates in a small group.** (Place the balloon over the mouth of the bottle without spilling the bicarbonate.)

**When Peter plays with his friend** (lift up the balloon so that the bicarbonate spills over into the bottle and mixes with the vinegar the balloon will inflate a little more than the previous ones. Show it to the children.)

**Surely his friends will notice that he spends some time with Jesus daily and does something for Him.**

### **Bottle N°4**

**We will name this bottle Joe. Joe also wants to introduce Jesus to others.** (Lift up the fourth bottle). **Joe goes to church to learn about Jesus so he can introduce Him to his friends.** (Empty a capful of vinegar into the bottle)

**He also praises the name of Jesus at home during worship time** (Empty another capful of vinegar into the bottle)

**Joe also distributes literature on Sabbath afternoons** (Empty another capful of vinegar into the bottle)

**He also participates in a small group with his friends at church.** (Empty another capful of vinegar into the bottle)

**But there are more things that Joe does: He distributes food to poor children, he visits sick children in hospitals and take coloring books for them, he also gives away clothing not in use to children in need** (continue to mention acts of kindness and other things that children can do for abused children, orphans, or severely in need as you continue to add 6 capful's of vinegar into the bottle for a total of ten caps).

**Jesus is very happy with Joe because he has become a friend of Jesus and helps children in need. Jesus is sure** (place the balloon over the mouth of the bottle without spilling the bicarbonate) **that wherever Joe goes, people will see Jesus in him.** (Lift up the balloon so that the bicarbonate will spill into the bottle and mix with the vinegar. The balloon will inflate much more. Show it to the children). **All who knows Joe will want to know Jesus because they know that Joe and Jesus are friends. That is why Joe is kind to other children.**

**Show all of the bottles and say:**

**It is good to be like Charles, Mary and Peter; however who would not want to be like Joe and be a friend of Jesus in such a way so that wherever he goes, others will see Jesus in him?**

**Let us pray and ask Jesus to teach us how to be children who can show His love wherever we go.**

## Annex # 3

### Sermon: The Demand of a Powerful Generation

#### ***Bible Text:***

“God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Genesis 21:17

#### ***Introduction***

The story is told of a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher who gave the following assignment to the students: She handed out a blank sheet of paper to every student and asks them to write the word “LOVE”. When she collected the papers she saw that there was a blank paper from one of the girls. The teacher then inquired: Why did you leave your page blank? The girl then stood up and gave the teacher a hug. The teacher smiled but insisted that the hug was not the assignment. To this, the girl responded: This is how we write love in my home!

The teacher congratulated the girl for her response but also took advantage of the situation to probe further in her now improvised lesson that obviously was not on hand writing. She then turned to the others and said: In what other ways do you think that we can write the Word LOVE? Two students stood up, a girl and a boy and started to arrange the desks, they organized the bookshelf and collected some papers that were in a corner and took them to the trashcan. Another chipped in and said: Love can also be written by doing something for someone else.

How is love written in your home, in your church, or in your community? The Bible has many stories about love and in them we learn how important we are to God. However, this morning we are going to examine a very interesting story that will prove what we are saying today, the day that we are emphasizing the prevention of child abuse.

It is quite possible that we all have heard or read many times the story of Abraham and how God promised that he would give Sarah a child in her old age. Genesis 16:2-3 explains that as Sarah acknowledged that time was flying, and that she was getting old and would not be able to conceive a child, she suggested that Abraham have a child with her servant Hagar and she would then take the child as her own. With this she thought that she was “helping God” to fulfill the promise that He had made to her husband Abraham many years before. The reality is that things did not go well. From what happened there God can teach us a lesson about child abuse and how we should act as we face this phenomenon in these last days. Let us open our Bibles in the book of Genesis, chapter 21, starting from verse 9 as we follow how this story evolves.

**ABUSED AS A CONSEQUENCE OF A HASTY DECISION. GENESIS 21:9**

“But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking”.

Sarah’s decision to have a child by “renting a womb“ did not turn out favorable for her since she felt inferior to her slave because the child was not really hers. The situation generated violence between both women. Looks of contempt, mortification, power abuse and excessive labor, all of this, was witnessed by a child who was growing up and had no idea of the conflict between his “supposed two mothers”. Time went by and Ishmael grew to adolescence in an environment where hostility was not foreign. When he was 13 years of age and in his youth he was well accustomed to explicit or hidden violence between the two principal women of his home and of his life. For him to mock his little brother was only a way of having some fun. This however, generated an unbelievable reaction from Sarah.

*“And she said to Abraham, “Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac.”(Vs. 10)*

She sent to the desert a child that she one day said would be as “her own”. A hasty decision brought a child into the world that had no fault, and was subject to interfamily violence and one day was cast out to the streets.

There are many children today who live under the same circumstances: beaten, mocked, brought into the world by an irresponsible act of passion or convenience, only to be neglected, rejected and tossed to the streets as garbage.

For Abraham this was not easy because after all it was his son (Vs. 11) even so after talking to God, he complied with his wife’s wish: he drove his son out to the desert. The Bible says: *Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy”. (Vs. 14)*

Abraham, a very rich man, drove his son into the desert of Beersheba with only some bread and a leather canteen on his mother’s shoulder. Not even with a camel to cross the desert, or anything that would secure his well being as a son. With a skin with water! These skins were the size of a sheep, a goat or a calf. How much did it weigh on Hagar’s shoulders? And how much could it last as they crossed approximately 74 square miles of desert? Just how much time can a child be exposed to the streets without the adverse circumstances converting him into a little animal that would do anything to survive?

Certainly Sarah had committed an act of violence against Ishmael and now Abraham, his father was being an accomplice in this act of violence in spite of the fact that he always relied on his faith in God.

***ABUSED BY THE DESERT OF LIFE Genesis 21:14***

*“She went on her way and wandered in the Desert of Beersheba”. (Vs. 14 last part)*

Now Hagar is in the desert. She has lost her ability to dream! Her son Ishmael is under the inclement heat of the sun and the desert sand that drains his strength after every step. Just like many children today, who come from dysfunctional families, Ishmael suffers as his mother crosses the desert of her life; without money, enough food, without water and no visible opportunities for her.

In today’s world, many parents only work and work and have no time to dedicate to their children. Some have to send their children out to work to help support the family. Children, who are tired and weary, sometimes have to assume the responsibilities of adults even if they are not prepared to do so. There are children whose childhood escapes them, without ever knowing what the word well being means.

The World Health Organization affirms that between 25-50% of children of both sexes are victims of some sort of physical abuse. Are we aware of what this means? 1 out of every 2 children! They also affirm that every year there are 31,000 homicides of children less than 15 years of age. This figure underestimates the real magnitude of the problem, because a significant number of deaths by abuse are wrongly attributed to accidents, falls, burns, drowning and other causes. Just like Ishmael, the desert of life that their parents are crossing today abuses many children. What do we do to help? What did Hagar do?

### ***ABUSE BECAUSE OF NEGLIGENCE Genesis 21:15***

*“When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes”  
(Vs. 15)*

This is how a desperate mother reacts when faced with the sure death of her child. We have no idea how many miles they had walked without drinking water or ate bread. She had no doubt that what followed was the death of her child. It is interesting however that the story does not say that she held him close to her bosom and cried as she thought about his death, neither does it say that she cried out to God for help for her son and herself; even though we believe that she did. It only says that she placed him under some bushes and departed so she would not see him die. Even though she had no food for him she tried to protect him from the sun, conscious that she could not bear to see him die. It is as if not looking would make his death less real.

Just like Hagar, when we face a depressing situation such as child abuse our first reaction is to close our eyes. We believe that if “the eye does not see, the heart will not feel.” It seems as if there is no way to do something to halt child abuse; or worst yet, we sometimes justify our lack of action with unjustifiable reasoning.

In a certain locality in India there was a fanatic Hindu who had a box in his shop with some words written in his local dialect. Translated it meant “funds to feed the cows” The money collected was used to feed those cows that were too weak to work or those that had been bought from the Muslim butchers. Someone asked this individual how were the orphan children of his town treated? His reply was: Why do we have to feed them? They must have done something very bad in their previous life. How sad to hear this concept regarding the needs of children!! My dear friends many people are in need of the gospel!! Even in our own homes where there is child abuse, we try to find modern bushes where to leave our children. The bushes can provide shade but not food.

Millions of children are left under the shade of the bushes of the school, but are not fed at home on the formation of values, under the shade of the bushes of the church, but their Christian lives are not fed sufficiently at home, under the bushes of the TV, video games or the commodities that we can provide them, meanwhile we distance ourselves, full of stress, as if under the bushes their physical, social emotional and spiritual death will be less real. Finally they become unknown to us, they become part of the statistics of the thousands of abused children because of negligence, depressed, obese, lacking of affection with suicidal ideas, loneliness and pain, meanwhile we close our eyes and say: We have left them under the shade we will not see them die.

The bushes are a substitute for a poor relationship with God. It provides shade but does not satisfy their thirst. The church activities planned for the children are good but that should be only a compliment to a solid conscience of every brother or sister who contributes in the physical and spiritual nourishment of the child. Otherwise those activities will just be bushes that provide shade.

Hagar said: “I cannot bear to see the child die”. This should not be our situation: **WE HAVE TO LOOK:** Mothers and fathers, nothing or no one should take away the responsibilities you have with your children. You have to look! You have to be responsible with your children! You cannot close your eyes to technology. You should know their world, and their language. You have to look! You cannot ignore the time that your children spend alone. You have to look! You have to know who are your children’s friends, how they are treated in school by their peers and by their teachers, the Sabbath school quarterly that they study, what are their opinions on the bands of grace that the curriculum presents and what are their thoughts about other children in the world. You have to look! You cannot close your eyes to the life of your children. Because, if this is your blood and is very dear to you and you do not want to see them as they perish, how will others be important to you as they die day by day as we close our eyes, those of us who are called instruments of God? Those who we pretend to save from sin and guide them as they serve?”

You have to look! There are innumerable number of children who suffer violent tragedies, neglect and pain. You just cannot go away and close your eyes from a

distance as they die of need. Thank God that the story of Hagar did not stop here. God is also sure that your story doesn't end here.

## ***GOD LISTENS TO ABUSED CHILDREN (Vs. 17)***

“God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there.” *Genesis 21:17*

Praise God because he hears the voices of the children! There is a powerful generation that is under the bushes at this moment; and from there they cry for divine assistance. Their voices are heard as they cry out for food, affection, limits, authority, spiritual nurture and faith!

There are children who have no idea what their mothers are thinking, need food, reconciliation and love. Children who understand their own needs and knows that God can hear them. And certainly, God listens to this generation, a generation that is authentic, sincere but also physically, emotional and spiritually abused. God listens' to those children who are abandoned who are crying out, just like in the case of Hagar, he is asking us: What is happening? In other words, what are you doing for those children? Just as he did with Hagar, God is giving three definite orders to his people:

### **1. Rise! Genesis 21:18**

We cannot continue “from an arms length” waiting for them to die with our hands crossed. Just as He did with Adam, God as our father takes the initiative of reconciliation. Because we are Christians, mothers and fathers are the ones responsible to reconcile the abused children with the society and God. It is time to rise! God requires that His people rise up from the distant location where they have isolated themselves to escape from the reality of a society that abused their little ones. A people that rises up and look! A people that rises up and do something. A people that can detect the needs and risks that can affect the generations of children that are living at home, that goes to church and live in the community. A people that opens their eyes and affirm their feet to act.

Rise up church! There are children crying under the bushes and God has listened to their cry!

### **2. Lift up the boy**

The girls and boys of today need adults that will lift them up. There are too many children that have fallen victims to physical abuse, affected by psychological abuse, neglected by those who should be around to love them. They need an adult generation that will raise them up from where they are, that will remind them who

they are, where they come from and where they are headed. The Psalmist said: "Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from him". (*Psalms 127.3*) We have to minister to the youth and the children; we need to raise their self-esteem so that they can fulfill what God expects from them. It is important that their existence has a divine purpose and that they can see that the promise will be fulfilled that is written in Isaiah 54:13 "All your sons will be taught by the Lord, and great will be your children's peace".

### **3. Sustain him with your hand**

Many of us can act like Sarah with those who are less privileged, with those who are different, with the orphans, and in spite the fact that we are the instruments that God wants to use to bless His people, we can also take sides with those who abuse when least expected. God is calling us to stand up and bless the children of our communities, break the silence, stop the abuse, rescue the orphans and the abandoned. God sends to our lives Ishmaels of our time, so that we may show divine mercy with our actions, and sustain them with our hands.

We must leave here today understanding that to sustain someone implies a commitment, strength, will, disposition and love. We cannot support children if we have not understood what God requires from us. Let us remember that He wants us to act. How is LOVE written in your home, in your church and in your community? Every child that crosses our path should be able to depend on our hands to feel sustained, through ministry, through community activities, educating their parents and with love. We must find them where they are and stretch out our arms to sooth their pain, to educate them, teach them values, and plant in them the good news of salvation.

### ***GOD PROVIDES HELP FOR ABUSED CHILDREN (Vs. 19)***

Then something marvelous occurred! The Bible says: " *Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.*" *Gen 21:19*

Observe that it DOES NOT say that God placed a well. The well WAS ALREADY THERE! What God did was OPEN HAGAR'S EYES! She then obeyed the divine orders. She rose, picked up the boy, held him in her arms, filled the leather canteen and gave the boy a drink. God's divine provision has always been within reach of those who are in need. However, we are often distracted by our daily activities and we do not see that provision, as we should. To be aware of the fact that God is always interested in his little ones and has provided a way to sustain them is a marvelous motive for thankfulness to our heavenly father!

On a certain occasion when an elderly lady was leaving the church a friend met her and asked: is the sermon over? No, responded the elderly woman, they just preached it, but it has not finished. Now I am going to do my part. I am going to live it!



## **CONCLUSION**

At this time, there is a powerful generation that is raising its voice in a desperate cry for this provision. This generation represents a treasure in God's sight. According to the prophet Jeremiah: How the precious sons of Zion, once worth their weight in gold " However, this precious treasure of our God is facing difficult times and some are at risk of losing their lives. That is why the verse ends saying: are now considered as pots of clay... (Lamentations 4:2)

An anthropologist once proposed a game to a group of children from a tribe in Africa. He placed a basket full of fruits close to a tree and told them that the first on to get to the tree would have all of the delicious fruit that was in the basket. When he gave the sign to run, they all grasped hands and ran together. Then they sat in a circle and enjoyed the prize.

When the anthropologist asked why had they chose to run as a group instead of having more fruit individually, one of them responded UBUNTU. How can one be happy when all the others are sad?

In the culture of these children, UBUNTU means, "I am because we are" It is a beautiful expression of what life is all about. We can only be really happy when we share with others what we would want for ourselves. That wish was part of what Jesus prayed for as is registered in John 17:11" that they be one as we are".

We are the means through which divine provision can reach those who are crying out for affection, food, protection, authority, hope and faith. To fulfill this purpose, we need to rise up and open our eyes.

We are called to rise and address the need of these children that are at risk and take them by the hand with God's blessings. We cannot consider those children as simple clay pottery; they are really gold and a heritage from the Lord" (Psalms 127:3)

### **Appeal:**

The Lord is inviting us this morning to have an open mind so that the Holy Spirit can open our eyes so that we may understand that we are the divine provision against child abuse. We are the instruments who can understand His word, and as we practice it in our lives, we will provide living water to those who are dying in the desert of their lives or the lives of their parents.

Therefore, I invite you this morning to permit God to open your eyes, to remember that that others need you and that just as the African children did, your best response to The calling by our Father in heaven be UBUNTU!!! Amen Father!!! I am because you are and we all are while we are united in you.

Let us run toward the basket of fruit that is close to the tree of life. Let us sit and eat at the feet of the tree. Let us however be sure that we have joined hands with those who need the strength to get there. Let us all arrive together to the promised prize. God Bless you!


***Prayer***

## Children's Activities

### Infants (0-2 years)

1. Present a large poster with a house that has a door that can be "opened"; let the children come forward with a picture of a child to be placed on the poster while the teachers and parents repeat:


Let us help (repeat the name of a child) get to the house so he can feel good.  
Jesus will be happy!!!

 Everyone will clap when the child makes a gesture of placing the picture on the board.

2. Give each child a piece of bread and cut it into two pieces so that they can share with another child. While mothers and teachers repeat:

We share our bread with \_\_\_\_\_(mention the name of the other child).

Jesus will be happy

 All will clap when the child gestures to share the bread

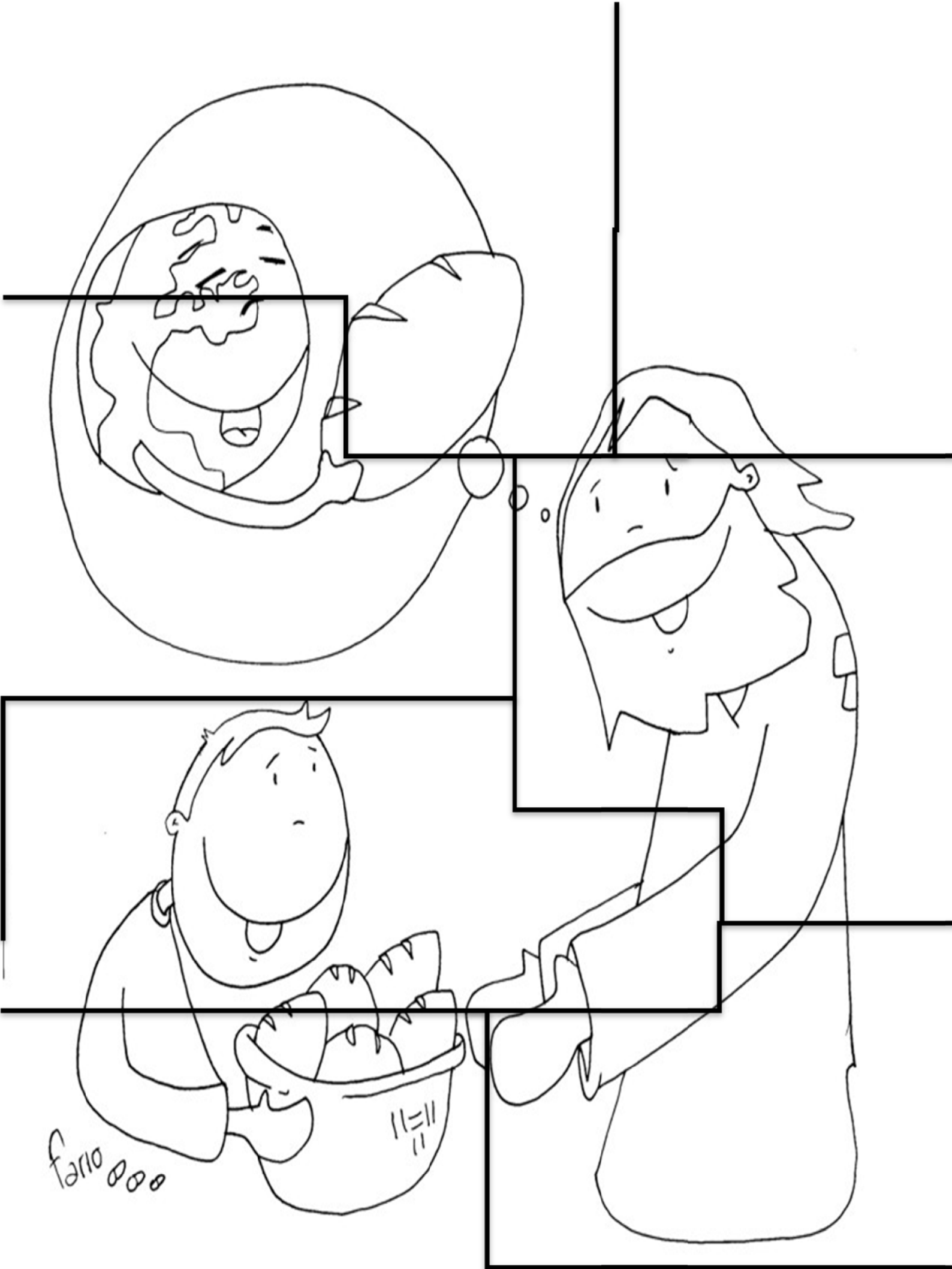


3. Sing hymns or songs that talks about sharing and the love of God
4. Color the following figures



**Toddlers (3-6 years)**

1. Elaborate drawings about the prevention of child abuse, and how to help children that cry a lot, or any other related topic.
2. Color, paste on a paste board, cut out the lines and assemble the puzzle;



### Primary (6-8 years)

- Make a drawing about how to help abused children
- Write a poem about God's love for the children
- Make a poster about the prevention of child abuse

### Juniors (9 -12 years)

- Listen to the following story and talk about other ways to show God's love for abused children.

### *A story to share with the children: The Tarahumara and love*

(Prepare a poster or slides with the text John 3:16 in different languages for the children to see)

Do you know that people who speak different languages can read the Bible?

Different people in different times have translated the Bible from one language to another so that we can all read it.

What does our Bible say in the book of John chapter 3, verse 16?

*"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believe in him will not perish but have everlasting life"*

A missionary was translating the New Testament for the TARAHUMARA tribe. These are Indians who live in the north of Mexico and they are known for their ability to run for great distances. Some people call them super athletes, because they can run a lot and very fast up and down the mountainsides.

They speak a language with the same name: TARAHUMARA; however, in their language there is no word for love.

Can you imagine a language in which the word LOVE does not exist?

The missionary did not know how to translate John 3:16 because it says: For God so loved and he could not say LOVED in the Tarahumara language because they never say LOVED. While he was meditating on how to say it, a man came running with his son wrapped in a blanket. The child was screaming with pain. He had fallen into a pot that was cooking meat and he had severe burns!

The missionary stripped off the child's clothes very carefully and applied antibiotic creams to help the healing process. Suddenly the child's father began to cry.

So the missionary asked the father: why are you crying?

With tears in his eyes the man responded: because it hurts me a lot to see my son like that!

The missionary understood, but at the same time he found a way to translate the verse into the Tarahumara language. Do you want to know how it reads?

Because the condition of the world "HURT GOD", he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believe in him may not perish but have everlasting life.

It hurts God when children cry, when they are sad, or when they need help.

Do you know a child that has no food, toys or clothes? Do you know a child that lives on the streets? Remember that it hurts God, and that is why he chose you to help him.

### **Earliteens: (12 -15)**

- Discuss the causes and consequences of child abuse.
- Prepare presentations about abuse and how to avoid it.
- Write a letter to an abused young man sharing with him what God would tell him.
- Share the content of the letter and pray together for those young people who are victims of abuse.
- Propose activities in the community to develop awareness about the topic.



## A Program for Sabbath afternoon, or Friday evening.

### A seminar with illustrations in PowerPoint.

## Child Abuse: Children at Risk

by Dr. Antonieta A. Silva

### Child abuse. Definition

According to the World Health Organization, child abuse is defined as “those under the age of 18 who are victims of abuse and neglect, and includes all types of abuse, physical, psychological, sexual, negligence, lack of attention and commercial exploitation or other types that could cause damage to health, development, the child’s dignity or put at risk his survival in the context of a responsible relationship, confidence or power”

According to data from UNICEF, in Latin America and the Caribbean 40 million minors under the age of 15 are victims of violence, abuse, abandoned by their families, the school, communities and the streets.

### Types of Abuse

#### A.-Abuse because of neglect

That is the name we give to negligence in providing the basic needs of a child by his parents or guardian. This type of abuse is the most difficult to detect because usually the parents or guardian can justify their actions in many ways.

There are many forms of negligence:

Physical: Lack of food, shelter or appropriate supervision.

Medical: Lack of medical attention, immunization and mental health.

Educational: Lack of formality and frequent absences.

Psychological: Lack of affection and poor supervision in the use of alcohol and drugs.

It is not considered negligence when poverty, cultural values and family needs are the cause of the lack of attention. In those cases, the family should receive counseling and assistance because, in any case, the children are at risk.

This type of abuse can be detected when the adults leave their responsibilities to their children. As an example when children under the age of 10 have to take care of themselves and are left alone for more than 24 hours. In addition they have to provide and prepare their own food.

## **B. Psychological Abuse**

This occurs when children are permitted to witness violence or severe abuse between parents or other adults. Children are ignored, insulted or threatened with violence.

Children are not provided with a secure environment and emotional support by their parents. There is a reckless neglect of the child's well being.

There are no expressions of affection and the child is despised.

Use and abuse in all forms of communication that is based on sarcasm, irony and mockery.

Symptoms of psychological abuse can include:

- Difficulties in school
- Eating disorders that leads to weight loss or pernicious weight gain
- Low self-esteem, depression and anxiety
- Rebellious behavior
- Sleep disorders

## **C. Physical abuse**

It is known as non-accidental infant trauma. It refers to fractures and other signs of lesions that occur when a child is spanked with anger.

Sometimes multiple fractures are found in infants that have happened in different occasions and are of the nature that would not be accidental in children of that age.

Physical abuse usually occurs in times of great stress. Many abusers were abused as children and as such they are not aware that abuse is not the best form of discipline.

People who physically abuse others have very little ability to control their impulses and this does not permit them to evaluate the results of their actions.

The major risk factors that give way to child abuse include:

Alcoholism. Domestic violence. Chemical dependency. Single parenthood and lack of educational opportunities.

When an adult takes an injured child to the emergency room with strange explanations about the injuries, even if it is not recent, there must be suspicion of child abuse.

Those symptoms could include:

- Blackened eyes or blood in the rear of the eyes, this occurs when an infant is shaken or beaten over the head.
- Unexplained bone fractures, or any type of fractures that shows up in children who are too small to crawl or walk. Particularly head fractures.
- Rib fractures, especially in the back.
- Damage or bleeding in internal organs that are the product of hard blows.
- Scars or bruises in the form of hands, fingers or other items such as belts.
- Bruises and contusions in areas where these would not occur by normal childhood activities.
- Bulging fontanel (soft areas), separated stitches in a baby's head or blood clots in the brain (subdural hematoma) without the adequate explanation by the parents or guardian.
- Burns usually on the hands, arms or buttocks of the child.
- Strangulation marks around the neck.
- Cigarette burns on exposed areas or genitals.
- Circular marks around the wrist or ankles (signs of twisting tying up) evidence of fractures on the endings of large bands as a result of twisting.
- Signs of human biting.
- Unusual marks on the skin produced by whipping.
- Unexplainable reasons why a child loses consciousness.

#### **D. - Sexual Abuse:**

This is a very traumatic experience and affects both the physical and psychological integrity of the child; if this is not addressed, it can prolong until adulthood. In the majority of cases (between 80-95% of the cases) the abusers are heterosexual males who take advantage of the confidence placed in them, and maneuver the victim into submission.

Children who are at higher risk for sexual abuse are:

- Children who shows signs of weak resistance or incapable of identifying what they are suffering.
- Children with special needs or handicaps.
- Children in foster care who are deprived of affection.
- Children who are victims of other types of abuses.

Sexual abuse has five (5) phases that are discussed as follows:

1. **Seduction:** The abuser manipulates the confidence and dependence of the child in preparation for the place and time for the abuse to take place. This is done by providing gifts and playing games.
2. **Interaction in Sexual Abuse:** This is a gradual and progressive process that can include exhibitionist behaviors, affection with erotic intentions, masturbation, among other lascivious acts. During this phase it is considered sexual abuse.
3. **Establishing the secret:** This is when the child is threatened to keep silent.
4. **Release:** Quite often this phase never occurs. However, in some instances when the child reaches puberty, the pain is such that they will speak up. In other cases the child will accidentally say what is happening. In many instances, it is the family that covers up the situation because of social pressures.
5. **Repression:** After the incident occurs, the family will generally try to establish some equilibrium and will deny or pay little attention to the incident or even justify it, and try to continue life as usual.

### **Consequences of Child Abuse**

Child abuse is a cause of suffering for both children and families and can have long term consequences. Child abuse can create stress and can be associated with mental disorders at an early age and affect the nervous and immune systems.

That is the reason why an adult who was a victim of abuse in childhood can suffer from behavioral, to physical and mental problems. The person can perform acts of violence, repeat the schemes of his/her abuser or gets mixed up in relationships where they become the victim. They can become depressed, consume alcohol or drugs, show signs of eating disorders or participate in high risk sexual behaviors. The person then becomes a threat to themselves as they can develop cardiac problems, cancer or become suicidal.

### **Risk Factors**

It is important to understand that the risk for child abuse is present in every social and cultural context. That is why it is important to observe all factors involved in the situation.

#### ***Factors related to the child***

- Younger than 4 years of age or before adolescence.
- Product of an unwanted pregnancy.
- Children who do not fulfill the expectations of their parents.
- Have special needs, cry a lot or have abnormal physical features.

### ***Factors related to parents or guardians***

- Parents who have difficulties in establishing affective connection with a newborn.
- Parents who do not take care of their children, or spend too little time with them.
- Personal history of child abuse.
- Limited knowledge about child development.
- Unhealthy consumption of alcohol or drugs, particularly during pregnancy.
- Participation in criminal activities
- Financial difficulties.

### ***Factors associated with family dynamics***

- Physical, mental or developmental problems of a family member.
- Difficult divorces.
- Violence among other family members.
- Isolation from the community.
- Lack of support from extended family in raising the child.
- Social and community factors.

### ***Factors associated with the community***

- Lack of adequate living facilities or support services for families and institutions.
- Social and gender inequalities.
- Easy access to alcohol and drugs.
- Unemployment and severe poverty.
- Absence or insufficient programs on prevention of child abuse.
- Proliferation of pornography, prostitution and child labor.
- Loose principles at home, disregard to violence, physical abuse and inflexible roles of each gender.
- Social, economic, health and educational policies that generate terrible life conditions or promote socioeconomic disadvantages.

### **How to prevent child abuse**

To prevent child abuse requires an interdisciplinary and multi-sectional attention. It has to encompass all of the risk factors afore mentioned. Therefore we can identify two types of prevention: primary and secondary.

#### ***Primary prevention***

This is what drives the population and its main purpose is to avoid the presence of risk factors that would promote abuse and enhance the factors that would protect the child. The following lists of measures are those considered as primary prevention.

Train and create awareness in the community on how to detect and prevent child abuse.

- Intervention in the psycho-prophylactic delivery sessions to enhance the affective connection that must exist between parents and the new born.

- Organize schools for parents that promote the understanding of child development, values formation and a healthy perspective toward women and parenthood.
- Prevent unwanted pregnancies by creating awareness among the youth of the community.
- Do systematic searches in the community for risk factors, then contact the appropriate agencies that can provide the adequate assistance to families in need.
- Discuss alternative disciplinary measures and share this information with all pediatric centers, the community, and if possible in homes.
- Identify positive strengths in parents. Boost their self-esteem and uplift their abilities.
- Teach the children to take care of their bodies and understand the difference between licit and illicit acts.
- Tell parents about the dangers of shaking or jolting their children.
- Teach children to say NO.
- Teach children to recognize abusive situations and how to share information with adults in whom they confide.

### ***Secondary Prevention***

This is for communities at risk so that they can reduce the damage and enhance the protective factors. In this type of prevention the activities have the following intention:

- Recognize situations that promote abuse by neglect.
- Develop strategies to avoid negligence.
- Discover the reasons behind the neglect or abandonment.
- Recognize situations that promote domestic violence.
- Recognize inappropriate disciplinary measures such as threats, blows, jolting among others.
- Educate parents on alternative disciplinary measures.
- Refer parents to anger control groups.
- Refer alcoholic parents to a mental health center.
- Provide psychological, social, labor and economic assistance as needed.
- Coordinate home visits lasting about 40 minutes to model strategies to help the family.
- Teach parents to modify attitudes.

The WHO recommend that interventions in high risk families be done in three phases:

- a. - Defining the problem
- b. - Identifying the causes and risk factors.
- c. - Intervention to minimize risk factors
- d. - Sharing information regarding the effectiveness of the interventions.

## Preparation for the day of emphasis on the prevention of child abuse

### Children at risk

It would be very good if every church makes a poster board that reads:” CHILDREN AT RISK; The Adventist Church says NO to child abuse”. This poster should be in every church or location where the afternoon seminar will be held.

The morning program is designed for the church. This is to develop awareness among the church members; but the afternoon program is open to the public and invitations should be extended to as many community members as possible as an initial activity on preventing child abuse.

On this page you will find ideas that may be helpful as you prepare for the day of emphasis on the prevention of child abuse. It is recommended that several departments of the church unite to cooperate and promote the program on Children **at Risk** in the church and in the community.

### *What a person can do*

- **Pray:** Pray for the children who are victims of abuse, interfamily violence, neglect and exploitation. Pray for a change of heart of the abuser.
- **Learn:** Learn how to perform in the presence of, and prevent child abuse.
- **Educate:** Share information on how to behave in order to protect the children. Teach the church how to help.
- **Disseminate:** “Speak for those who cannot do it for themselves”.
- (Proverbs 31:8).
- **Give:** Contribute your time, resources and talent
- **Invite:** Invite friends so that they may be educated during the seminar wherever the church decides to hold the meeting.

### *What the church can do*

- The day of emphasis on the Prevention of Child abuse should be part of the church calendar.
- Visit the homes of the children who attend church to determine if there are any needs or risk; especially of those whose parents are not Christians.
- Promote the education of the members so they can help the children who are being abused.
- Develop awareness in the community with the available educational materials and also invite extensively to the Sabbath afternoon seminar.
- Use all the available resources to distribute literature that will educate the community.
- Organize small groups to evaluate the local needs and notify the church and the pertinent organizations.
- Create shelters for abandoned children where their hands, heart and mind can be educated.
- Promote a ministry in favor of the children at risk in the community.

- Organize an event about **CHILDREN AT RISK**.
- Use the radio to disseminate information.
- Design a plan of action to respond to the victims and abusers.
- Identify the organizations that work in favor of the children within the locality and develop alliances with the support groups that they have organized.
- Provide primary and secondary prevention to the community and to abused children