

## **Child protection scenarios for professionals from different agencies in The Gambia**

This document includes a series of case reports on hypothetical patients where child protection is clearly required to address very serious abuse.

After reading each scenario we would like professionals from the agencies that might be involved in child protection, namely social services, the police, the legal profession (magistrates and Judges), doctors and senior nurses involved in examining children in health facilities, and teachers, to complete the forms that follow. The first group of forms addresses what would happen now in 2010 in The Gambia with such a scenario. The second set of forms seeks information from each individual professional on what he/she thinks should happen in an ideal system to help the child and family concerned.

The information in these forms is highly confidential and will not be shared in any way that could identify the individuals completing the forms.

The following are the contact details of the experts who will be analysing the results. Please feel free to contact any of us by email or telephone at any time.

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## **SCENARIO 1 SERIOUS PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL ABUSE**

### **History**

Fatima is an 11 year old girl who has fainted during the first class of the day at her school.

Her teacher gives her assistance and finds that blood is running down her legs.

The teacher telephones her mother and then in her own car, takes Fatima to the hospital in Brikama-6 miles away.

On arrival she is seen by the doctor on call. On initial superficial examination she is very pale and shocked with a high heart rate and low blood pressure. This doctor takes blood to prepare for a blood transfusion and gives intravenous fluids to resuscitate her. She is now fully conscious and the doctor notices blood on her legs. He undertakes a full examination after gaining Fatima's consent.

### **Initial examination**

Just before examining Fatima, her mother arrives and comforts her daughter. The examination is undertaken with her mother present.

The shock has now resolved, she is fully conscious and there are no obvious medical illnesses. She is pre-pubertal.

However, there are bruises on her chest that look like adult bite marks. She has multiple fresh and old linear bruises on her back and buttocks. On superficial examination of her genitalia, there are old and new tears to the hymen at 12, 4 and 9 o'clock and an open tear of the perineal body that is actively bleeding. The anus appears normal.

The doctor takes two swabs from the vestibule and places them in a labelled package. He then repairs the bleeding tear under local anaesthetic, using three dissolvable stitches.

### **Subsequent history**

The mother is extremely upset by the obvious injuries and is crying and comforting her daughter. She tells the doctor about her family history.

There are two other children, a boy aged 14 (Ibrahim) and a girl aged 10 (Fatou). Her husband died 5 years ago after peritonitis due to an acute appendicitis that could not be surgically treated because no surgeon was locally available. For the last 2 years the mother, aged 32 years, has been living with a man (aged 36 years) who is the only provider for the family. He works as a taxi driver. There are no other immediate family members who live in the same 2 roomed house in a village of approximately 120 people. The mother's parents are both alive and live in the same village, as does her sister and her family.

At this point, the doctor asks Fatima how these injuries had occurred. She appeared immediately very frightened but then told her mother and the doctor that her step-father had been attacking her for the last few months, threatening her with a knife and gagging her before raping her on several occasions-she cannot remember the exact number. She said that her step-father had attacked her very badly the night before. She had been bleeding all night but was too frightened to say anything as her step-father had threatened to kill her if she told anyone about what was happening.

### **Subsequent actions**

The doctor calls both the local police station and the social services department. The child is transferred from the emergency room and admitted to the children's ward accompanied by her mother.

Before either the police or the social worker arrive on the ward the step-father turns up. He insists on taking the mother and her daughter home. The doctor tries to prevent this and is pushed aside by the step-father. The family leave the ward and are seen getting into the step-father's taxi.

## SCENARIO 1

### PART 1. WHAT USUALLY HAPPENS NOW IN THE GAMBIA?

*According to your knowledge and experience of the existing set-up, can you outline below what happens when a male police officer arrives on the children's ward. The police officer finds the family have gone. What are the first actions that he would undertake?*

The police officer

*Again and according to your knowledge and experience of the existing set-up, can you outline below what happens just after the police officer has left the hospital and a female social worker arrives on the ward. The child and mother have been taken away by the step-father. What are the first actions that the social worker would undertake?*

The social worker

A short time later the police officer attends the house of the family. He is refused admission by the step-father.

*According to your knowledge and experience of the existing set-up, can you outline below what happens next to address the issues outlined above.*

**Actions of the police officer and his department**

*According to your knowledge and experience of the existing set-up, can you outline below what happens next to address the issues outlined above.*

**Actions of the social worker and her department**



4. Would the other children in the family undergo a medical examination?

**YES / NO/DON'T KNOW**

5. Would the mother undergo a medical examination? **YES / NO/DON'T KNOW**

6. Would forensic specimens be taken and analysed? **YES / NO/DON'T KNOW**

7. Would the step-father be prosecuted in a court of law? **YES / NO/DON'T KNOW**

8. Would the child and siblings be protected from further abuse? **YES / NO/DON'T**

**KNOW**

9. If the step-father was convicted and sent to prison for abusing his step-daughter, would the family receive financial support from the State? **YES / NO/DON'T KNOW**

10. Would the child who has been abused receive any professional help with regard to her mental health? **YES / NO/DON'T KNOW**

11. If the step-father receives a prison sentence or is given a punishment that does not include imprisonment, would the family be protected from him if he decided to return to the family home? **YES / NO/DON'T KNOW**

**SCENARIO 1**

**PART 2** *Starting from the beginning, what do you think should have happened here to protect this child?*

*If there was an ideal child protection system established in your country, can you summarise below what happens when the male police officer arrives on the children's ward. The police officer finds the family have gone. What are the first actions that he should undertake?*

The police officer

*If there was an ideal child protection system established in your country, can you summarise below what happens just after the police officer has left the hospital and a female social worker arrives on the ward. The child and mother have been taken away by the step-father. What are the first actions that the social worker would undertake?*

The social worker

A short time later the police officer attends the house of the family. He is refused admission by the step-father.

*If there was an ideal child protection system established in your country, can you outline below what should happen next?*

**Actions of the police officer and his department**

*If there was an ideal child protection system established in your country, can you outline below what should happen next after you hear that the step-father has refused to allow the police officer to enter the family home?*

**Actions of the social worker and her department**

**SCENARIO 1**

**Please indicate your profession and date below**

**PROFESSION.....**

**DATE.....**

## **SCENARIO 2 SERIOUS PHYSICAL ABUSE IN AN INFANT**

### **History**

Jaka is an 8 month old baby girl who is brought into the hospital emergency room at Brikama by her mother because of shortness of breath.

On arrival she is seen by the doctor on call. On initial superficial examination she is short of breath and shocked with a respiratory rate of 80/minute and a high heart rate of 190 beats per minute. The baby's chest is recessing with each breath.

### **Initial examination**

On full examination, there are bruises around one eye and on the ear of the baby. There is also blood coming from both nostrils and small pin-point haemorrhages around the face and eyes. There is also a very tender ribcage on the left and the right leg is distorted as if there might be an underlying fracture.

The baby is very thin and weighs only 3.8 Kg.

After she has received additional oxygen for about 15 minutes, the baby's breathing improves but is still not normal in rate or pattern.

The baby is fully conscious and there are no obvious medical illnesses, in particular her heart sounds normal. There are some noises in the chest suggestive of possible fluid in the lungs.

Examination of her genitalia is normal.

### **Subsequent history**

The mother tells the doctor about her family history.

Jaka is the mother's first child. The mother is aged 16 years and is unmarried. The father is not involved and does not support the mother or baby.

The mother and baby live in a village in a shed next to the maternal grand-mother's hut. The mother revealed that she finds it very difficult to find food for her and the baby. However, the mother does not appear to be under-weight.

At this point, the doctor asks Jaka's mother how the bruises around the baby's eyes and ears had developed. The mother was unable to explain them.

Then the doctor suggests that X-rays of the baby's chest and leg are required and she both mother and baby will need to go by ambulance to the Royal Victoria Teaching Hospital where this can be done.

The mother becomes angry and states that she is taking her baby home. The doctor pleads with her to remain until the baby's breathing has become safe. The mother refuses, disconnects the oxygen supply and leaves the hospital with her sick baby.

### **Subsequent actions**

The doctor calls both the local police station and the social services department. He informs them that the baby is in great danger and that a probable cause of the baby's difficulty in breathing could be an episode of intentional suffocation.

## SCENARIO 2

### PART 1. WHAT USUALLY HAPPENS NOW IN THE GAMBIA?

*According to your knowledge and experience of the existing set-up, can you outline below what happens when the police officer hears what has happened from the doctor. What are the first actions that he/she would undertake?*

The police officer

*Again and according to your knowledge and experience of the existing set-up, can you outline below what happens when the social worker is informed by the doctor about what has happened. What are the first actions that the social worker would undertake?*

The social worker

A short time later two police officers go to the village and attend the home of the mother and baby. The mother refuses to let them into her home and will not let them see her baby.

*According to your knowledge and experience of the existing set-up, can you outline below what happens next to address the issues outlined above.*

Actions of the police officers and their department

*A social worker also attends the home of the mother and her baby. Again she is refused entry or access to the baby. According to your knowledge and experience of the existing set-up, can you outline below what happens next to address the issues outlined above.*

Actions of the social worker and her department

## SCENARIO 2

### SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ON HOW THIS SITUATION IS CURRENTLY MANAGED IN THE GAMBIA IN 2010

*Please write any comments you feel are appropriate after the end of each question*

1. Would force be used to obtain access to the baby despite the mother's unwillingness to allow this? **YES / NO /DON'T KNOW**
  
2. Would the mother be questioned under caution by the police? **YES / NO/DON'T KNOW**
  
3. Would the baby be taken back to the hospital to complete treatment?  
**YES / NO/DON'T KNOW**

4. Would the mother be prosecuted in a court of law? **YES / NO/DON'T KNOW**

5. Would the baby be taken into the care of the State **YES / NO/DON'T KNOW**

6. If the mother was convicted and sent to prison for abusing her daughter, would the State provide care for the baby in the longer-term? **YES / NO/DON'T KNOW**

7. Is it likely that the extended family of the mother will care for her daughter in the short-term? **YES / NO/DON'T KNOW**

8. Is it likely that the extended family of the mother will care for her daughter in the long-term? **YES / NO/DON'T KNOW**

9. If the mother receives a prison sentence or is given a punishment that does not include imprisonment, would the baby be protected from her if she decided to return to the village and take back her daughter from who-ever and wherever she is being cared for? **YES / NO/DON'T KNOW**

## SCENARIO 2

**PART 2** Starting from the beginning, what do you think should have happened here to protect this baby?

*If there was an ideal child protection system established in your country, can you summarise below what should happen when the police officers are informed by the doctor in the hospital about this baby's serious if not life-threatening abuse . What are the first actions that the police should undertake?*

The police

*If there was an ideal child protection system established in your country, can you summarise below what should happen when the social services department are informed by the doctor in the hospital about this baby's serious if not life-threatening abuse. What are the first actions that the social services department should undertake?*

The social workers

**A short time later two police officers attends the house of the mother and baby. They are refused admission and are not allowed to see the baby.**

***If there was an ideal child protection system established in your country, can you outline below what should happen next?***

Actions of the police officers and their department

***If there was an ideal child protection system established in your country, can you outline below what should happen next after you hear that the mother has refused to allow the police officer to enter the family home?***

Actions of the social workers

**SCENARIO 2**

**Please indicate your profession and date below**

**PROFESSION.....**

**DATE.....**