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Right policies can halve global violence rates - experts

Stopping child abuse is a major key, says UCT researcher

Leading researchers from around the world believe that levels of violent crime – in South Africa and elsewhere – such as child abuse, domestic violence, murder, and gang violence could be reduced by as much as 50% in just 30 years if governments implement the right policies. Preventing child maltreatment plays a key role in this plan.

Since 2000 about 8 million people have been killed globally in interpersonal violence, making murder a more important cause of death than all wars put together. In South Africa, recent work from the Medical Research Council and the University of Cape Town's Division of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology showed that more than 450 children died in 2009 as a result of fatal child abuse.

Professor Catherine Ward of UCT's Department of Psychology and Safety and Violence Initiative points out that many more children suffer abuse than those who die from it. She says: "Abuse has serious consequences: abused children are far more likely to develop serious health problems, to do poorly at school, to struggle to hold a good job when they leave school, and far more likely to be abusive to their own children and to become involved in violence and crime. Interrupting the cycle of child abuse is key both to protecting children and to preventing future violence."

Professor Ward will participate in the First Global Violence Reduction Conference, hosted by the World Health Organization (WHO) and Cambridge University at Cambridge's Institute of Criminology in the UK on 17-19 September 2014. The conference will bring together 150 world-leading scientists to set out a roadmap for reducing violence across the world.

Details about the conference are at:

<http://www.vrc.crim.cam.ac.uk/conference/cprogramme>

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