

# PRO MINORIBUS

PREVENT | INTERVENE | EDUCATE.

## Integrity

This dimension is constitutive of a person's character. It refers to the quality of being honest, incorruptible, a person whose conduct and actions are beyond reproach. In other words, a person whose behaviour is moral, both in public and in private.

## Transparency

Transparency refers to the ability of a person not to conceal, to hide important elements about the morality of his or her actions. Transparency is not a sign of exhibitionism, but a sign of moral integrity that accepts to be confirmed by the eyes of others.

## Responsibility

Moral responsibility is the moral quality of an individual that is also a sign of psychological maturity. It is the ability to accept the authorship and consequences of one's actions and behaviours, even when this may have difficult consequences.



## Where do we stand?

Since 2008, we have initiated a significant cultural change in our Society. We committed to building a culture of prevention of abuse to make our communities safe environments for all vulnerable people. Very quickly, we saw a number of challenges emerging. The transition from willingness to action was not without its trials and disturbances. Some issues that we wanted to forget came to light (Lk 12:2). We discovered that the victims of the criminal deviance of some of our confreres were still living with the psychological, emotional, sometimes physical and spiritual consequences of the trauma they had suffered. We also were confronted with the difficulty in finding appropriate responses and commitments to appease these victims; systemic resistance is sometimes strong.

To develop a culture of listening, welcoming and prevention, we have invested in the training of our Protection Delegates, but also of our candidates. In some provinces, sessions have been organised for confreres. We are moving in the right direction, but there is still a lot to do.



## Did Jesus invent the procedures audit?

An audit of internal procedures is a process that assesses the correct application of procedures at different levels of an institution. The audit assesses the risks associated with possible failures in the system and provides a basis for developing strategies for improvement.

What if the disciples of Jesus were the first audited in the Gospel?

Mark, 6:30: "The Apostles gathered to Jesus and told him everything they had done and taught."

Of course, Jesus did not invent the auditing of procedures, but this short passage from the Gospel shows us that it is important to be able to give an account of the mission that has been entrusted to us.

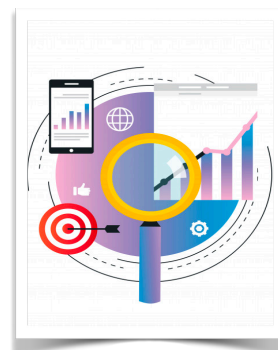
We are now entering another stage of this cultural transformation: we need to know whether our determination and tools have been concretely implemented on the ground. With one year to go before the next General Chapter, we are entering a three-stage audit phase.

### *First step: data collection*

For just over a year, a group of confreres have been working to develop an audit tool on our prevention and protection practices. The model chosen is the seven standards of the Catholic Church in Ireland. Initially, the data collection was to be done in the field, but the Covid-19 pandemic forced us to change our method. To this end, we have developed a questionnaire of 160 questions for those in the Society who have direct responsibility for our prevention policy through their role. The questionnaire is currently being collected and will be completed in early June. Our policy reminds us that prevention is everyone's business. To this end, another data collection will take place in October among all confreres who wish to participate, with a shorter audit tool (about 50 questions). Everyone will be able to choose anonymously whether or not to participate.

### *Second step: analysis*

The data will then be analysed and the results presented in a report. This will consist of several parts: an executive summary, a detailed report by province which will be given to each provincial, a complete version which will be given to the Superior General; a report for all the confreres could be published later on in the Petit Echo.



### *Third step, review and accountability.*

This work will also serve as a basis for the next revision of our policy. The quality and robustness of protocols and procedures is to be assessed in part by their dissemination and implementation. This audit work is therefore a work of review but also of transparency, accountability and integrity. It is through accountability that we can build the trust necessary for our common mission.

## Some news on the research side

In this issue, we focus on a Tanzanian study on the impact of early exposure to violence on the development of the individual and its influence on the propensity for violent behaviour in adulthood. The methodology employed by these researchers is qualitative, i.e. the subject matter is the participants' narratives, rather than the statistical manipulation of different variables. This method is particularly recommended for studies of hard-to-reach populations where it is virtually impossible to have large population samples. The authors of this article explain their research objective as follows:

« The goal of this paper is to qualitatively examine, among high-risk men in Dar es Salaam, how different adverse experiences in childhood affect use of interpersonal violence as an adult. We are particularly interested in protective experiences or environments for these participants » (p.4).

What is sought is to understand a quality of experience, rather than a quantity. Therefore, it is not possible here to generalise the results found, but rather to make the participants' experience accessible for comparison with other research.

Zeitz, S., Kajula, L., Martin, S., Moracco, B., Shanahan, M., & Maman, S. (2021). "Mtoto Wa Nyoka Ni Nyoka," *The Child of a Snake is a Snake: A Narrative Analysis of Adverse Childhood Experiences and Perpetration of Interpersonal Violence Among Men in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania*. *Journal Of Interpersonal Violence*, 1-26.

### Their findings in the review of the scientific literature

1. Childhood exposure to violence is consistently cited as a predictor of violent behaviour in adolescence and adulthood.
2. There are often histories of poly-victimisation in childhood that severely increase the risk of re-victimisation in adulthood.
3. Parenting style has an important impact and, if it is not violent, it increases the protective factors.
4. According to Unicef in Dar es Salaam, 30% of women and 13% of men aged 13-24 have experienced sexual violence and 75% of these people have suffered physical violence before the age of 18.
5. A large proportion of the population of Dar es Salaam is made up of people who have migrated internally due to rural-urban migration.
6. Corporal punishment by legal guardians is considered normal in Tanzania and an essential tool in child-rearing.
7. In a preliminary study to this one, researchers found that men reported a high proportion of traumatic childhood experiences (68% physical abuse, 71% emotional abuse, 50% sexual abuse).

### The findings of this research

Three important themes emerged from their data:

- (1) Parental acceptance and early attachment are protective and stress management factors in intimate relationships in adulthood;
- (2) Certain core experiences can provide a protective framework against violent behaviour in adulthood;
- (3) Poverty in adulthood compromises the ability to manage stress and anger.

## Some risk factors have been identified

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67% of the participants (out of 24 in total) grew up with guardians who were not their biological parents. And "most participants felt that they were not fully accepted as members of this family". For those who were able to live with at least one parent to whom they could attach, it is possible to develop a protective stress and conflict management style. But it is **essential that this attachment has taken place**, as the authors summarise:

« Participants who described feeling loved by their parents or guardians coped with stress and anger in adulthood without using violence or other risk-taking behaviors such as using drugs or alcohol » (p. 10).

**Poverty is identified as a risk factor**, especially if it increases the sense of incompetence, if the adult person, for example, cannot feed his or her family. This, coupled with experiences of violence in childhood, further increases the risk of violent behaviour in adulthood.

If a child values an adult, he or she is willing to accept physical violence from the adult and may even rationalise this as necessary. But **most participants do not see any benefit in this so-called 'educational' violence**.

One participant summed it up as follows:

« Beating is not a teaching methodology. You can beat a child and yet he does not follow you and he can even become an extremist. Beating a child in that way is not good. You can just warn him/her verbally and he will develop good conducts and have a good life direction » (p.15).

Finally, this study confirms what others have already proposed:

« Childhood adversity is not only associated with adult poverty, but also with a reduced capacity to effectively manage behavior, emotions, and interpersonal relationships without reverting to violence » (p.19).

## Their conclusion

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« Our findings contextualize, among high-risk men in Dar es Salaam who have been exposed to adversity in childhood, how different factors may affect the behavior of perpetration of interpersonal violence. These findings provide important contextual information on the risk and protective factors for interpersonal violence spanning from childhood to adulthood. Particularly, we found that parental acceptance and attachment at a young age is key in protecting against violent behavior in adulthood. This highlights the importance of parenting and child development interventions in this context, both for the primary prevention of child adversity and for promoting resilience and mitigating the effects of childhood adversity that put men at risk for perpetration of interpersonal violence in adulthood » (p.21).

## Leads for future research for those who would like to undertake it.

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1. How to develop educational tools to help parents and guardians to educate without violence.
2. How can parishes and lay movements contribute to equipping parents for non-violent education?