

ISS Ottawa Principles

Principles for protecting children and parents subject to family violence in cross-border situations



THE GLOBAL SOCIAL WORK ORGANISATION

Definition

The term 'family violence' is used both to refer to 'domestic violence' and to emphasise that children can be impacted not only when they are directly subjected to violence by a family member but also when they are exposed to violence occurring between their parents. The principles seek to strengthen the capacity of stakeholders in addressing cross-border family violence by providing multidisciplinary guidance that promotes coordinated, child-centred, and culturally sensitive responses to protect the rights and well-being of all family members.

Principles on Cross-border Family Violence: Why Now?

While the complex and multifaceted phenomenon of family violence is at the center of public and policy discourse, its cross-border dimension remains largely overlooked. Yet the unique challenges - differing legal, cultural, and social systems - demand specialised responses.

Building on existing structures and expertise, and recognising that professionals already address family violence cases daily, it remains difficult to navigate the implementation of protection measures and other decisions across borders — particularly in the absence of clear and coordinated operational guidance.

The principles address all dimensions of family violence: its **prevention** at a whole-of-society level through early intervention mechanisms via targeted countermeasures, accessible support services, and public awareness campaigns; its **detection and screening** through fair, evidence-based procedures that protect victims while ensuring balanced, thorough, and respectful handling of all allegations; and the **protection of victims** through the early identification of warning signs and the provision of appropriate and timely support, including temporary protection measures that take into account the cross-border specificities.

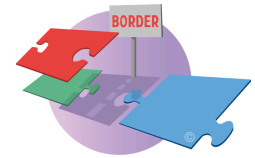
Guiding international standards:

- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- HCCH 1980 Child Abduction Convention
- UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women
- HCCH 1996 Child Protection Convention
- CoE Recommendation on the protection of women against violence
- The CoE Istanbul Convention

ISS in essence:

- Is a professional and specialised **global network** founded in 1924 with 130+ members in 120+ States;
- Has been serving the needs of children and families **for more than 100 years**;
- Contributes to **law and policy development and advocacy efforts**;
- Maintains a **long-standing and close co-operation with** the Hague Conference on Private International Law (**HCCH**) and its Central Authorities (**CAs**);
- Hosts the [International Reference Centre for the Rights of Children deprived of their family \(ISS/IRC\)](#), a program of the ISS General Secretariat based in Geneva, with a mission **for more than 30 years** to equip child protection, alternative care, and adoption professionals across the world with up-to-date research, publications, training, and technical assistance projects;
- Is always at the forefront of **implementing international standards and raising awareness about children's rights** through its direct cross-border case management and advocacy efforts.

Principles and Recommended Practices



Principle 1

Human Dignity and Human Rights

Principle 2

The Child as an Independent Rights Holder

Principle 3

Intersectionality

Principle 4

The Best Interests of the Child

Principle 5

Prevention

Principle 6

Detection and Screening

Principle 7

Protection

Principle 8

Contact Rights

Principle 9

Non-refoulement

Principle 10

Legal Equity

Principle 11

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

Principle 12

Durable Solutions

Principle 13

Family Violence Safety Plans

Principle 14

Co-operation

Principle 15

Data Collection, Research and Advocacy

ISS Casework services may include:

- Trauma-informed counselling;
- Screening, risk assessment, and monitoring;
- Assistance during judicial proceedings;
- Development of safety plans;
- Providing necessary referrals to competent authorities;
- Preparation of background checks and social reports;
- Mediation.



Advocacy efforts:

- Dissemination of information to professionals;
- Training of professionals on cross-border administrative and judicial procedures;
- Supporting national law and policy reform;
- Active participation in expert consultation groups;
- Work with the UN and regional treaty bodies.