

The monster at home

The family is supposed to be a safe haven where children and young people seek comfort and support when in doubt. However, sometimes home is where a kid could get not only emotionally scarred but also face brutal physical assaults. She might even die of such injuries.

The two child fatality reports also reveal an astonishing number of child deaths caused by assaults. The second report shows that 12 children died of injuries after being assaulted, including seven less than 1-year-olds. Half of these crimes were committed by parents. In the other report, among the 18 kids who died of injuries after being assaulted, half

were 2 years old or younger. Over 70 percent of the perpetrators were parents.

Queenie Tao, executive director of Harmony House, commented that some parents were not up to the job of responsible parenting. They vented their anger on children, who were vulnerable and powerless to protect themselves.

“Some families had been under chronic stress, arising from the parents’ unsatisfactory marital relationship and recurrent conflicts, resulting in the children dying of suicide or assault. Thus couples having marital problems should seek professional assistance early, to prevent

family malfunctioning”, the second report points out.

The reports underscore that education on parenting is vital, from the day of conception through different stages of pregnancy. Harmony House collaborates with United Christian Hospital, to help parents-to-be prepare for the role.

“Parents should know that children have the right to live. Parental responsibility is to let the children grow happily and healthily,” Tao said.

Harmony House’s figures show that about half of child abuse cases are physical, followed by sexual abuse and psychological abuse.

“Physical abuses are easily identi-

fied, whereas psychological abuse inflicts invisible wounds, the impact of which is far-reaching” Tao stressed.

“We have seen more sexual abuse cases — from 28 percent in 2006 to 37 percent in 2013. But I believe the reported cases are only the tip of the iceberg.”

Harmony House, an NGO that provides emergency housing to those who fled their homes to avoid domestic violence, puts emphasis on prevention and early identification of children in distress through school workshops and surveys. It is hoped that by listening to children in need, a few potential suicides might be pre-empted.