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Report

Protecting children from violence: next steps for effective strategies

Wednesday 9 – Friday 11 November 2016 | WP1472

In association with:

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Introduction

The Council of Europe (CoE), through its consecutive strategies on the rights of the child, has acted as the regional driver in the implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children prepared by Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro in 2006, and has supported the mandates of the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Violence against Children and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. The actions of the CoE and of its member States have triggered a change of mindsets and can be accounted for through the adoption of numerous legal standards, the findings of its monitoring mechanisms, as well as the outcomes of its awareness-raising campaigns and initiatives.

The CoE Strategy for the Rights of the Child (the Sofia Strategy), launched in April 2016, guides the 47 CoE member States over the next six years on five priority areas, one of which being the need to promote a life free from violence for children. Additionally, the Strategy underlines that, 10 years on from the Pinheiro study, target 16.2 of the post-2015 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for the elimination of all forms of violence against children by 2030.

General outcomes

1. Building on this momentum, the meeting enabled senior stakeholders at local, regional, national and international levels, to:

   - jointly identify outstanding challenges, opportunities and the strategic focus of further actions to promote and support legal and institutional reforms in the implementation of relevant international and European standards in this area, while making a meaningful contribution to the follow-up to the UN Sustainable Development Goals in the area of violence against children and towards reaching Target 16.2;

   - engage and exchange experiences and good practices, as well as to develop new policy orientations to accelerate the implementation of commitments at state level;

   - Identify options and areas to strengthen monitoring mechanisms to ensure that children's rights to protection are effectively upheld.

Specific outcomes

2. In addition to taking stock of advances made in combating violence against children in the last 10 years and considering challenges ahead, thematic discussions revolved around: corporal punishment, sexual violence, alternative care, over-sexualisation of

children, female genital mutilation, forced and child marriage, the digital environment, as well as radicalisation and violent extremism. Proposals for better policy-making included ways in which to improve youth participation, to enhance use of data and integrate risk assessments as well as means through which more effective monitoring could be achieved.

3. Key points emerging from discussions included: improve/strengthen national laws, the importance of maintaining prevention of violence against children at the top of the policy agenda while ensuring sufficient funding of such policies; the existence of opportunities and need for accountability in service provision, clarification of the role of the private sector in the absence of state engagement; ensuring that voices of children are properly heard with respect to their needs and responded to; addressing the responsibility of internet service providers and the media; greater accountability as well as more effective monitoring within the context where violence against children has taken place.

"Services should be child-centric and accessible"

4. Efficient and effective service-provision is key to ending violence against children. Services should be child-centric and accessible, needs should be properly identified, planned and implemented, and such implementation should always be monitored and evaluated through relevant mechanisms. Provision should be extended beyond children and families, to include the police, schools, youth work and justice systems, health (mental, physical, sexual) systems, religious and faith groups, alternative care and foster care, and broadly engage with NGOs, community services and workers. The need to stretch boundaries and work outside existing silos was clearly identified. The development of minimum standards and requirements for working with children is essential, as well as the provision of specific training incorporating violence against children as a component of professional qualifications and in subsequent refresher courses.

"action needs to involve families and carers at the frontline"

5. Action undertaken by civil society is essential to effect change. Champions, including politicians and personalities, need to be identified who could be ready to engage and raise visibility on this crime, and to promote support for the agenda to end violence against children. Other advocates can include motivated volunteers and individuals campaigning to develop and implement self-help groups within communities particularly for hard-to-reach victims, to set up informal networks (online and offline) and work with media to expand support and prevent the increase in the number of ways children experience violence. Ultimately, action needs to involve families and carers at the frontline of dealing with this issue.

This graphic presents a schematic way of identified children's needs and rights combined with international, national and local efforts to support children.
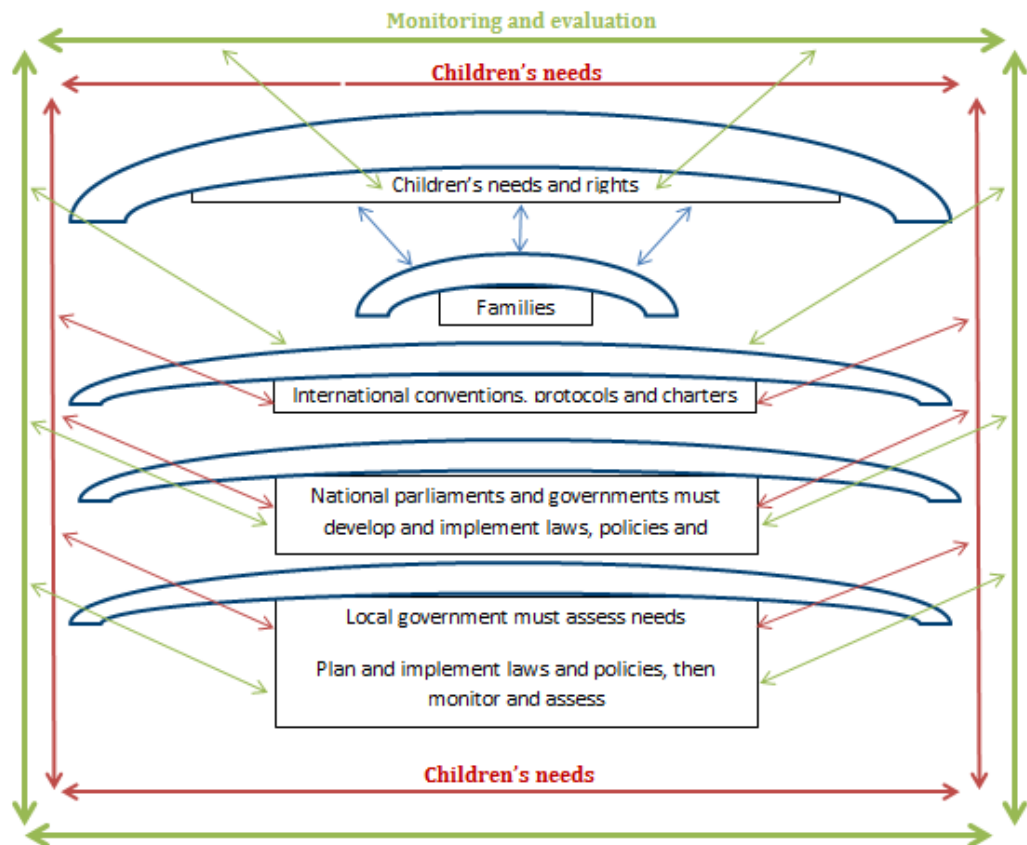
Context: progress and challenges

The 10th anniversary of the UN Global Study on violence against children in Europe: progress, setbacks and challenges.

6. Over the last 10 years, the issue of violence against children has been placed at the centre of the global policy agenda, which is undoubtedly a major step forward. The UN Study on Violence against Children provided a comprehensive overview; through its findings, the study has been an essential tool for policy drivers and triggered a better understanding of the prevalence and extent of violence against children.

7. Progress at global, regional and national levels has been made, which constitutes significant achievements in the arena of combating violence against children. Such efforts include the adoption of several conventions and the ratification of treaties; strategy development; national agendas and plans established; changes in legislation; and data collection at national level. Furthermore, through these developments, a greater understanding of the phenomenon has been achieved and the involvement of children has increased throughout the processes. There has been major progress in the understanding of violence against children and more open acceptance of its existence in multiple forms. These have culminated with the adoption of the Sustainable Development Agenda, which calls for the elimination of all forms of violence against children by 2030.

8. There remain significant challenges notably in 4 areas:

   • a change in attitudes is needed in societies where perpetrating acts of violence against children remains largely accepted, and is sometimes considered as a form of education. Such violence is often not visible, whether due to inadequate legislation to address this issue and/or the lack of reporting by professionals. At

the same time, children need to be empowered to speak out and be fully-fledged actors of change in attitudes as opposed to only subjects of violence;

- despite the existence of integrated strategies against violence or of comprehensive instruments, actions tend to remain reactive rather than preventive and adequate collaboration between key actors is lacking;

- efforts and actions undertaken are not adequately or sufficiently monitored in order to determine their effectiveness or impact. Actions that have failed or resulted in minimal progress need to be examined openly and systematically so as to avoid creating precedents and building on failures;

- as is often the case with a number of actions and policies, there are also a number of emerging concerns and threats which are developing faster than the ability of governments to respond to them (e.g. cross-border movements and deprivation of liberty of children for their alleged protection, violence facilitated by new technologies).

Next steps and proposals for further action:

9. While there remain important challenges, there are also real opportunities to be seized in order to develop a holistic approach for the protection of children against violence. These include:

- the development and adoption of comprehensive national agendas, and the set-up and participation to partnerships, alliances (ie. a global alliance for reporting progress on Target 16.2, Global Partnership to End Violence against Children), and collaborations at national, regional and global level;

- engagement at grassroots level of all actors, and not only state leaders, is essential in order to further build on the momentum and trigger the changes required. The "High Time" initiative promoted by the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Violence against Children is a good example of such engagement;

- there is also a clear need to continue the development of empirical and structured studies on different forms of violence against children in all settings (including state institutions) as well as focus on child perpetrators of violence (including sexual violence).

Corporal punishment: bridging the gap between policy makers, legislators and the public

10. Corporal punishment is a violation of children's right to respect for their human dignity and physical integrity. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international and regional human rights treaties have set out a number of positive obligations for States to protect children against violence, including by prohibiting corporal punishment in all settings. Yet it remains the most common form of violence against children. As a result of the Study, the UN set a deadline for legal reform by 2009. The acceleration and momentum in banishing it as a form of disciplining children needs to be sustained. There is currently a state record available for view, which logs changes over time.

11. The number of states prohibiting corporal punishment of children has tripled since 2006. There is an increasing body of research and data evidencing the negative impact of corporal punishment on children. The Global Initiative to end all corporal punishment of children has led to research comparing countries that have a ban (mostly in Europe) with others that do not. 51 states have prohibited all corporal punishment of children, including in the family home. At least 55 more states have expressed a commitment to full prohibition. While the baseline for comparison may not always be exact, the research shows that in countries where there is a legal ban,

the use of corporal punishment has seriously decreased. The "No Child Dies" research project undertaken in 1999 showed that states with a ban in place had lower rates of death in the home. In countries where it is permitted, corporal punishment is still a common form of discipline used by parents, educators, police and/or other institutional bodies. And while there is progress towards institutional abuse no longer being tolerated, policy-makers still struggle to cross the threshold of the family home.

12. One of the main challenges is the need to change attitudes. This cannot be achieved solely by promoting positive parenting or by penalising parents/carers, or through a legal ban. Legal reform needs to be accompanied by public education and targeted campaigns. Several examples of good practice were discussed illustrating different ways of raising awareness on the unacceptability of subjecting children to corporal punishment (e.g. Sweden, Germany, Austria).

Next steps and proposals for further action:

- further action appears necessary to disseminate identified good practices to the appropriate levels in countries where progress is still limited on this issue;

- there is a need for strong research data on corporal punishment, particularly in countries where there is still no ban in place. Existing research and expertise can be drawn on to support the need for change, to avoid reinventing the wheel and re-focus the debate from judgements on parents and long-standing practices to evidence-based findings and need for further action;

- policy-makers should not wait for public opinion to shift before acting, especially when corporal punishment is not considered a priority in comparison with other forms of violence against children. The need for change should be relayed clearly and through appropriate channels, as the ratification of a convention and/or legislative changes alone will not suffice to effect real change;

- officials and stakeholders need and should be provided with evidence and compelling arguments. This may be in the format of case studies, anecdotal or personal stories, and also by considering the involvement of other experienced stakeholders (e.g. grandparents);

- efforts towards ending violence against children require courage and ambition, particularly as it involves shining a light on violence against children in their own homes.

Sexual violence against children: overcoming the challenges

13. Excellent work has been done to break the taboo surrounding sexual violence against children in numerous countries. Impunity results from a vicious circle of weak law enforcement actions to a reduction in reporting of such acts. Moreover, the social taboo surrounding sexual violence against children often results in lack of training, resources or concern of relevant professionals; deficient legislation where specific forms of violence are still considered legal (e.g. child marriage); lack of appropriate reporting measures or procedures; inappropriate and inadequate management of offenders (i.e. focus simply on imprisonment, and not subsequent supervision); lack of inter-state and inter-agency collaboration, etc.

14. The terminology used is often misleading. For instance, referring to "child prostitution" or "child pornography" includes an inherent and indirect presupposition of choice being given to the child to engage in these activities, when in fact there is none. In January 2016, the Luxembourg "Terminology Guidelines for the protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse" were adopted with the aim of building consensus on key concepts, and to support data collection based on common terminology and co-operation across agencies, sectors and countries.

"policy-makers still struggle to cross the threshold of the family home"

"Legal reform needs to be accompanied by public education and targeted campaigns"

"efforts towards ending violence against children require courage and ambition, particularly as it involves shining a light on violence against children in their own homes"

"referring to "child prostitution" or "child pornography" includes an inherent and indirect presupposition of choice"

15. The five-year CoE ONE in FIVE Campaign enabled improvements in national legislation, exchanges of knowledge, the development of expertise at national and regional levels, and increased opportunities for collaboration. Raising awareness is only the first step in overcoming challenges. The second step is to put in place effective mechanisms for the implementation of the five "P"s outlined in the campaign and included in the CoE Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (hereinafter Lanzarote Convention): Prevention of sexual violence, Protection of victims, Prosecution of perpetrators, child Participation and Promotion of integrated policies.

16. Discussions on ways to overcome sexual violence against children identified a number of proposals for action: address gaps in the legislative framework through parliamentary work/questions; strengthen structures to protect victims and educate the school community; establish key partnerships with institutional and state bodies thus building invaluable alliances to push the agenda forward; engage in targeted, nation-wide campaign activities (e.g. participation in fairs, exhibitions, or performances, distributing available material); develop a European-wide network of collaborators; develop local networks with mass and social media; develop local tools to improve dissemination and use (e.g. cross-disciplinary training), and widen the spectrum of children reached (e.g. children with disabilities); and address jurisdiction issues to ensure accountability of the offender.

17. The key to address this taboo and the accompanying silence about the crime, is a multi-level and multi-audience approach involving children, parents, service providers, and society at large. It is important to ensure that educational activities are in place for children (e.g. via sex and relationship education, human rights' education) in the context of the formal system, in order to combat cultural and social norms, but also to increase children's involvement rather than be adult-focused. Tools are available, for example the initiative for the global alliance or preventative efforts such as the Preventell prevention programme of the Karolinska Institute, Sweden. However, additional tools are necessary to support harmonisation of practices and these efforts have yet to produce sustainable results.

Sharing good practice on combating the over-sexualisation of children, ending female genital mutilation (FGM), and protecting children in the digital environment

Combating the over-sexualisation of children

<div style="float:left">"The increasing trend of over-sexualisation of children is of serious concern"</div>

18. The increasing trend of over-sexualisation of children is of serious concern, as sexualised images of children (notably girls) may be closely connected to various forms of sexual violence or in some cases be a factor leading to sexual abuse. Concerns were expressed on the impact that over-sexualisation has on children, whether with respect to their perception of themselves and self-esteem, or in relation to others, as well as their well-being, including their physical and mental health. The active role of the media and advertising sectors in safeguarding the dignity and rights of children in this context was considered to be highly important, while at the same time the omnipresence of the internet creates new challenges and threats. Younger children are increasingly obtaining access to the internet and there appears to be a double standard of adult behaviour, for example, acceptance or tolerance of sexualised images of women and in extreme cases of children. While it is recognised that freedom of expression online is crucial in today's societies this freedom should not be misused.

Good practices and lessons learned:

19. It was recognised that emerging scientific research particularly on development and neuroscience provides new information and knowledge, and that adults need to be taught how to talk to children. It was considered important to strengthen the development of critical thinking and embed it in school curricula at an early age (as for instance in Germany). There is scope for more thinking 'out of the box' to find solutions and develop projects that would attract funding for specific ground-breaking initiatives, building on the positive experiences that many people have in successfully challenging issues such as everyday sexism.

The following actions should be pursued:

- making it a legal requirement to include an obligatory age verification online;

- increasing and developing parental understanding and professional training;

- promoting the development of critical thinking in children using learning from brain research and neuroscience;

- fostering industry engagement, i.e. involving companies that operate online (e.g. social media) in all aspects of procedures (i.e. education, prevention, reporting);

- taking a public health approach and looking at interventions on a continuum;

- studying the influence of bloggers and vloggers and identifying ways of mediating effects of their posts;

- developing and implementing pan-European initiatives for prevention;

- developing quality relationship and sex education in school and families, adapted to cultural contexts;

- adopting a child-centred approach to keep children's views in mind in all implemented efforts: empowering children to resist peer pressure and develop a critical attitude;

- placing a greater focus on pre-school child assessment.

Ending female genital mutilation (FGM)

20. In the last five years, evidence shows that the problem of FGM is not isolated to Africa, but also affects Asia and Latin America. This is particularly important as FGM is one of the 'best kept secret' forms of violence against children, supported by social norms and religion in some cases. While the numbers are high, research indicates that children aged 15 to 19 are less likely to undergo FGM. Numbers in Europe tend to be 'guestimates' based on country of origin, with new data being gathered via hospital settings. A strategic shift occurred following the adoption of the CoE Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence: it is apparent that additional action is urgently needed beyond campaigning.

Issues and challenges identified:

- the need to protect victims through successful prosecution;

- there is still a perception that FGM is legitimised by religion and a veil of taboo around this crime prevails;

- FGM needs to be recognised as a form of child abuse;

- there is an increase in designer vagina procedures in young women;

- there is still a lack of legislation and strategic planning in many countries

> towards a ban on FGM;

- there is still a need for further community prevention efforts and engagement on the part of society;

- general awareness-raising campaigns should be developed with a wider audience and impact.

Good practices/lessons learned:

- in Kenya, as well as other African countries, there are national, government-led plans which could serve as inspiration for other regions and countries;

- a web-based platform located in Cyprus, created through a European-funded project;

- survivors are becoming campaigners against this form of child abuse;

- in Belgium and the Netherlands there is a chain approach in creating agents of change and there is an "End FGM" Network;

- in Germany, resources have been developed particularly focusing on work with men which is innovative and should serve as inspiration to others;

- in the UK, women's health leadership training has been developed and disseminated, outreach efforts in schools targeting parents and teachers, and specialist services provided for youth;

- Norway has developed and is implementing a national plan involving multi-agency collaboration;

- the CoE has developed and has made available a best practice guide and guidelines;

- the media are more widely used to highlight the problem.

The following actions should be pursued:

- the Istanbul Convention should be widely promoted, signed and ratified by CoE member States and non-member States should be encouraged to accede;

- the SDG 5.4 and 16.2 should be used by governments to develop action plans;

- legislation should be strengthened (including increasing parental responsibility and provision of protection orders);

- health professionals need to be made more responsible and be engaged more strategically;

- to increase reporting, support mechanisms need to be developed and/or strengthened and the impact of measures taken needs to be reviewed or evaluated; young people need to be educated and engaged in prevention and reporting; collaboration with and between religious, political, and local leaders needs to be strengthened;

- research, programmes and interventions need to be further strengthened and funded;

- at a European level, there needs to be a focus on people arriving from countries identified as engaging in FGM and special preventive and victim support strategies put in place;

- data collection on FGM and trends is lacking and needs to be strengthened;

- the exchange of good practices between governments needs to be placed at the

forefront of policy agendas;

- develop human rights training to fight the medicalisation of FGM.

Protecting children in the digital environment

21. The digital world has allowed for a dramatic increase of child abuse materials being circulated on the internet. Protecting children from this type of crime requires coordinated efforts. It was noted, however, that 15% of all new images found in UK (and in USA) have been self-produced without any external adult involvement; 80% of these images subsequently turn up in the files of people who possess child sexual abuse images. Currently, there are 40-50 countries in the world where it is not illegal to possess child sexual abuse images and it is feared that people will re-locate to these areas to avoid punishment.

Issues and challenges identified:

- addressing the volume of demand on a societal level is required (school, parents, etc.);

- it is necessary to determine the action expected of industry, addressing the scale and speed of the problem, and cross-jurisdiction complexities to crime-fighting online;

- over-sexualisation of children - the currently massive access to "legal pornography" (e.g. parents posting photographs of their children with or without clothing) presents a profound challenge, introducing people to more extreme forms of pornography and promoting more concerning images;

- the need to harmonise and properly define language used to describe the crime. The use of the term "pornography", can serve to make it seem acceptable as a concept and similar to adult pornography. It is not, it is a crime scene;

- poverty- there have been cases in the Philippines where families facilitate online abuse of their children for money;

- the encryption of documentation makes it problematic for technological companies to view the content.

Good practices/lesson learned:

- technological tools are being made available. For example, Microsoft is developing and providing free for use photo DNA technology;

- digital fingerprinting whereby a photograph can be tracked, identified and deleted or reported. With this type of data, police are not obliged to view the photo and thereby revictimise the child;

- Google has developed a similar system for videos;

- all internet service providers should recognise that services, storage and networks will be used for child sexual abuse images. They should develop technology to mitigate this risk.

The following actions should be pursued:

- there is a need to strengthen laws to criminalise the production and circulation of child sexual abuse images;

- there is a need to raise awareness among children of the risks related to sexting and self-generated sexual images;

- • •further research is needed to determine how to stop offenders and identify tactics to dissuade sexual abuse of children when images are circulated online.

Safeguarding children against radicalisation and violent extremism

22. Radicalisation of children is a form of violence, not least in that it deprives the victim of their childhood and jeopardises their mental and physical health and well-being. The active recruitment of an increasing number of children, at younger ages, for the purpose of engaging in radical actions and violent extremism, whether in conflict zones or elsewhere is a worrying trend.

23. Radicalisation and violent extremism have received significant attention globally in recent years, with numerous initiatives developed to counter these phenomena. However, they seldom identify or address the issues impacting children from a child rights perspective. Furthermore, when a child's extreme views evolve to the point that they may result in harmful actions, it is important for this to be recognised as a child protection issue. In 2016, there was a notable shift towards recognising these children as victims. However, the change in language - whilst welcome - should not imply impunity or exemption from responsibility which should be addressed through the juvenile justice system. It is anticipated that this will impact the legal framework, particularly as the purpose of the juvenile justice system is not to be punitive, but restorative.

24. Education and dialogue impact on radicalisation, but additional measures are needed to address this complex problem. Research indicates that children who are vulnerable to recruitment are subject to a range of concerns and grievances, including a sense of profound injustice, feelings of social exclusion, discrimination, isolation and uncertainty about their identity and loyalty.

25. The specific situation of migrant and refugee children - particularly those who are unaccompanied - has been considered in this context, given their specific vulnerabilities. They have very specific needs and concerns, directly linked with the factors motivating their decision to leave their own country (one often made by parents or other carers). For example, the importance of achieving 'success' in a new country which may be defined by integration in school and social acceptability, in many cases learning a new language and experiencing a downturn in their economic or social status. Their specific vulnerability requires dedicated support mechanisms in the form of statutory 'guardianship' to assist them in accessing their rights, to provide for a point of reference and act as an adult interlocutor to advise on navigating in their new environment, so as to prevent them from falling into the hands of radical recruiters.

Next steps for further action:

26. At a European level, there is a clear need to redefine and re-establish social inclusion, with due regard to the situation of children.

27. Additional actions to address radicalisation leading to violent extremism which were identified include: specific awareness-raising activities; disruption and interruption to reduce access to websites promoting radicalised messages; further implementation of good practice such as school-based programmes which address grooming; ensuring discourse and education on the importance and uniqueness of identity and equality of opportunity, acknowledging differences and diversity, but also providing support and stability; using language to 'de-normalise' radicalisation to the point of violence, especially as it pertains to the digital environment; ensuring that children, when deprived of liberty, are not subject to radicalisation in detention centres; and publicly promoting the idea of children as victims rather than offenders; promoting dialogue between religious, political and social groups, with the aim of developing a mutual

understanding between religions and reducing the stigma attached to specific groups and religions; ensuring that government programmes to tackle violent extremism are developed in collaboration with faith, community and youth leaders to ensure they are impactful and effective.

28. In particular, services for migrant and refugee families should be accessible and appropriately resourced in order to avoid further marginalisation and isolation.

29. There is a strong body of literature on de-radicalisation. However, it may be more impactful to shift the focus and legal frameworks to ensure that the radicalisation of children is seen as part of the violence discourse.

30. Efforts to address the conditions in detention facilities and camps should be a priority. Children who are compelled to live in inhumane conditions are particularly vulnerable and more likely to be susceptible to recruitment.

31. The use of the term "radical" needs further reflection: young people are by nature radical and should be allowed to be so. The terms association with terrorism is therefore inaccurate.

32. Taking the agenda forward in the form of policy-making based on reliable data and impact assessment, youth participation in policy-making, forced and child marriage, and re-thinking how to effective address violence against children in alternative care.

Policy-making based on reliable data and impact assessment

33. Several standards and legislative frameworks, both international and European via the CoE, have been developed as a background for legal instruments, available for use by national parliaments and governments. It is important to note the difference between "duty bearers" whose role is to respect, protect and fulfil rights, as opposed to "rights holder" who experience fulfilment of their rights or lack thereof. There are notable data gaps which have been identified in researching these two distinct groups, involving multi-national data sources on child well-being and surveys collecting information directly from children (in the EU). While these gaps exist, there are several complete data sets which can provide a clearer picture of the problem. Going forward, it would be useful to create links to survey activities of other actors and the development of new surveys which collect children's views and experiences.

Issues and challenges identified:

- the need to synchronise international, national, and local data;

- reaching vulnerable groups;

- donor-driven research;

- political willingness to address issues such as violence against children;

- lack of governmental awareness of the scale of the problem;

- public views on violence against children (e.g. taboo, stigma, hidden);

- funding for research;

- difficulty in prioritising actions and measuring effect and impact;

- access to all of the above.

Good practices/lessons learned and other resources:

- the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) has collected and issues comparative data on human rights issues, and particularly on issues pertaining to violence against children;

- there are standardised measures available in multiple languages (e.g. MICS,

"Children who are compelled to live in inhumane conditions are particularly vulnerable and more likely to be susceptible to recruitment"

DHS, etc);

- successful media campaigns (e.g. European countries such as Greece);

- recent Pediatrics article noting an astonishing "1 billion" figure shining a spotlight on the global scale of violence against children.

Next steps for further action:

- include data on violence against refugee children;

- increase funding for data collection;

- create a central data-sharing platform;

- promote the use of existing good practices;

- research needs to focus on impact assessment, assess effectiveness and suitability, gather longitudinal data and perform follow-up studies;

- choose policy champions well.

Youth participation in policy-making

34. Youth participation is essential to overcome disenfranchisement from the political process and engage young people in a meaningful manner. It also leads to better policy making and public education, assisting policy makers and practitioners to understand the experience of identifying and reporting abuse. Children have identified the need for relational safety by safeguarding rights to education, housing and health. Efforts include international commitment through e.g. Children as Actors for Transforming Society (CATS), community profiling via effective outreach, connecting services, providing holistic education, and engaging peer groups through facilitating agencies.

Issues and challenges identified:

- listening to children and youth, and reflecting their input – are adults actively listening, particularly to those in greatest need? What is the agenda of children and young people? What are their concerns about violence against them? What are their expectations regarding the effect of their participation?

- concerns about blocked attempts to lower the voting age;

- there is still resistance from parents - what is their role?

- how to involve younger children?

- how to ensure equal access to participation (higher costs of involving refugee children, children with disabilities, etc)?

- recognising different age groups and children's evolving capacity – do we fully trust what children say?

- how to gain the trust of young people?

- having the courage to address big and real issues with children;

- the language used may be unnecessarily technical, thus incomprehensible to children;

- how to break down barriers between adults and children?

- how to use social media for engaging children?

- recognising the level of peer-to-peer violence and the boundaries in

relationships;

- the expanding gap between generations in light of new technologies;
- the lack of training of youth leaders;
- are youth councils representative of all communities and backgrounds?
- using research to give spokespeople news legitimacy;
- some children lack the necessary skills to engage - how to address this?
- how to avoid that consultations are a "tick-the-box" exercise;
- traditional role of young people in society continues.

Good practices/lessons learned:

- involving volunteers, including children and youth;
- children expressing a view they hold at one point in time often used as rigorous evidence;
- there are ethical issues in conducting rigorous research and there should be several checks in place;
- feedback of how the expressed views of youth are taken into account;
- use resources effectively;
- connect and reach out through digital technologies;
- low levels of literacy of some children and young people create a barrier to participation;
- young people putting themselves forward for participation/area engagement;
- increased engagement by creating a space for dialogue;
- honesty regarding the expectations placed on children and what they will get out of it;

"too often centres are adult-focused in terms of space, form and policies"

- too often centres are adult-focused in terms of space, form and policies;
- involving marginalised and vulnerable youth.

Future actions to explore:

- use of facilitating agencies;
- use of tools to assess progress, including the CoE child participation assessment tool;
- democratic citizenship and human rights education;
- children providing evaluation of efforts and sharing outputs with policy makers;
- consider reducing voting age to 16 years;
- creating a child-centred agenda for the participation of children;
- educating and creating "professional" youth spokespeople – future making.

Forced and child marriage

35. Child marriage is considered to be marriage before the age of 18. While some countries have set legal limits, these don't always correspond and there are many exceptions to the rule which have developed from the assessment of cases in the

justice systems. The level of education a girl receives is the strongest predictor of the age at which she will marry. There are several noted and severe health consequences to child marriage which may even lead to premature death.

Issues and challenges identified:

- the scale of the problem is extensive: 1 in 4 girls in the world marry below the age of 18. 15 million girls marry each year;

- the problem is not new but there is increased awareness, partly arising due to practices in migrant communities in some countries;

- concerning impacts of child marriage: domestic violence and sexual violence against children (repeated experience of rape), health issues including early pregnancies, obstacle to school attendance;

- child marriage is legal in a number of European countries: in Denmark, Estonia Lithuania, Slovenia and Ukraine marriage is legal at 15 with parental consent, in 20 other countries, the legal age is 16 with parental consent (including UK, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Netherlands and Norway). In Spain the age has recently been raised from 15 to 16, in Azerbaijan the minimum age is now 18;

- there is a need for a coherent and comprehensive response; many countries currently consider that child marriage is acceptable under certain conditions.

Good practices/lessons learned:

- in the UK, the FCO has trained embassy staff to identify and assist girls to return to the UK. The UK government has an online forced marriage protection order for those who have concerns or are directly affected. The forced marriage unit collates data including age and number of contacts to the agency;

- school-based prevention programmes;

- NSPCC has a helpline available for child victims;

- in Greece and Sweden, a quick procedure to annul the marriage has been established.

Future actions to explore:

- every country should ban child marriage by law;

- access to family planning and access to school is crucial to raise awareness;

- the methodology of gathering data and using it to influence political change needs to be improved;

- judicial expectation for age of marriage should be 18, unless in certain cases and circumstances where there are exceptional groups identified and there is evidence of maturity always with the support of social services. Proposed minimum age to be set at 16 (the PACE recommendation is to fix the minimum age of marriage at 18, without any exception, and the possible recognition of a child marriage concluded abroad in the host country only when it is in the best interest of the child);

- quality training for police, judges, social welfare and child protection services needs to be provided;

- support to victims of child marriage needs to be made available and strengthened;

- tackle FGM and forced marriage through different guidelines and deal with them

separately.

Re-thinking how to effectively address violence against children in alternative care

Issues and challenges identified:

- children in care have limited contact with families and communities;

- many staff involved in service provision for children in alternative care lack specialist skills;

- individual rights may not be sufficiently recognised or overlooked in in certain institutional settings managed by religious communities or the military;

- services provided in institutions are often inadequately monitored and even if monitored, follow up can be inconsistent, leading to a lack of transparency and accountability;

- lack of connections between institutions and families and the community.

Good practices/lessons learned:

- in the UK, health visitors, usually a trained nurse, make home visits to families with children under the age of 5, providing a certain level of prevention;

- the existence of at least one key attachment figure;

- the existence of inter-generational support;

- the use of alternative care as the second best solution (aim to reunite children with their families, regard alternative care as a temporary solution, and prevent family separation whenever possible);

- integration with the community (de-institutionalisation).

Future action to explore:

- earlier intervention to support families;

- collection of data to identify gaps in order to better address the underlying problem;

- development of effective complaint mechanisms;

- reduce the isolation of institutions from communities in order to reduce the risk of violence;

- guardians and mentoring programmes;

- instilling accountability on professionals and key stakeholders;

- transparency in procedures and services, as well as forming connections between providers and families.

Strengthening monitoring mechanisms to protect children against violence

36. Effective reporting and monitoring mechanisms are essential to ensuring protection of children from violence. Mandates of special procedures exist on several levels (e.g. CoE Lanzarote Committee, human rights institutions), contributing to overall monitoring efforts, many of which are mandatory.

37. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) General Comments and concluding observations recommendations, while important, are a useful resource. The

Sustainable Development Goals assist in data collection and reporting on processes requiring special attention from states.

38. Currently, there are 17 indicators relevant to the early years guiding the monitoring and evaluation process (e.g. early child development, access to health services, etc). All have a generic structure which outlines process and outcome evaluation. In addition to the indicators, there is specific software to map progress allowing for cross-data and across-country comparisons. An additional tool related to the indicators is the "GlobalChild," a comprehensive platform which can compile data, consolidate it, and put it in the CRC and SDG framework. The uniqueness of this platform is that it takes a life-course approach to child protection.

39. In addition, new tools are emerging. For example, the development of the Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, adopted by a number of child protection organisations including UN agencies such as the CRC, represent a useful reference point for observations and discussions between and within countries. A practical guide, developed by Defence for Children International - Belgium, based on European standards pertaining to monitoring places where children are deprived of liberty, can be used as a self-assessment tool to monitor all the principles.

40. The need to better understand the monitoring of results and recommendations remains problematic. There are strong examples of handbooks and guidelines at a European or national level which assist to operationalise standards, but monitoring the impact of these guidelines and interventions is still challenging. Funding for these efforts continues to be an issue: the absence of sustained funding and the reliance on volunteer work renders efforts to monitor uncertain with the risk that the outputs are not wholly evidence-based.

41. The CoE Lanzarote Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, is ratified by 42 out of the 47 member States. While this Convention covers Europe, it is not exclusively for Europe and non-member States may ask to accede to it, reflecting the fact that children have the same right to protection world-wide. The Lanzarote Committee, responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Convention, is a platform for State Parties, international organisations and civil society. The process of monitoring is multi-level as it involves country representatives as well as representatives of civil society who assess the implementation of the Convention on thematic grounds covering all elements of the Convention followed by a statement to provide feedback. The use of common language is crucial to the process as it enables comparison between states and data points.

"The use of common language is crucial to the process as it enables comparison between states and data points"

Advantages and disadvantages of the existing monitoring systems:

- monitoring time: involving several countries can be time-consuming, leading to a time lapse between the first and last country to report. Hence, there is difficulty in comparisons due to assessments being made at different moments in time;

- monitoring on thematic grounds: while the review is conducted in real time, it is not as in-depth as country-by-country analysis. Using thematic grounds encourages capacity-building to enhance comparative approaches. Thus, it can trigger positive learning effects;

- monitoring via peer pressure mechanisms through involvement of country representatives: outcomes may differ from those of an independent mechanism, however this can be counter-balanced through an appropriate involvement or contributions by NGOs and civil society;

- monitored country's view: the review puts representatives under pressure as

they will seek a positive evaluation. This can lead to a country placing greater importance on one topic as compared to others. This is a timely intervention where ministries are requested to write reports over a specified period. This can be to the detriment of new initiatives which may be eclipsed by attention to time-consuming procedures.

42. In 2014, the optional protocol to the UNCRC on communication procedures came into force. It constitutes an important document which a) opened complaint procedures for children and inquiry procedures, and b) stimulates States to develop their own national and domestic monitoring mechanisms.

43. The main issues are: a) mechanism availability; b) accessibility for children and adults; c) independence of national human rights institutions (e.g. Commissioners, ombudspersons); d) confidentiality of complaints; and e) assessment and monitoring of measures and procedures and the results of these for child victims.

Conclusion

Next steps to elimination of all forms of violence against children by 2030

This is a historical point in time: a great deal has already been accomplished and there is momentum for continued social change. In 2014, there were several summits which increased international recognition of the importance of tackling violence against children. In turn, these aspirations have been transformed into the Sustainable Development Goals. There is greater awareness of the universality of the issue, unbound by geographical border, culture or income. Via the repository of the work available, there is a breadth of knowledge of what works and of prevention at all levels – international, national, local.

Children's needs and rights are at the core. They don't exist in a vacuum. Families are not always the safe haven which they are meant to be. Violence against children takes many forms and occurs in multiple places: inside and outside the home; online and offline; in public and in secret; in institutions (e.g. state, religious, work, camps, military, justice systems).

Prevention is a group effort. In addition to families, youths and children themselves, the education system (formal and informal) as well as the media are responsible for prevention. Prevention, in order to be pertinent, needs to focus on diversity in reaching community groups and addressing the role of men and boys.

Society in its entirety is responsible for dealing with and protecting children against violence. The child protection system (e.g. social services, court/justice) is only one piece of the puzzle. Responsibility also falls on private sector businesses and stakeholders and on each and every adult. The voices of children and their needs should be heard by all involved.

Prosecution is the responsibility of the legal system. Children need support: there should be legal capacity to take on cases, alongside the existence of timely and child-friendly justice procedures set into the legislative framework. The interests of the children should be primary and guide these processes. For example, new measures exist which allow for children to provide evidence as soon as possible (e.g. video-recorded evidence thus removing the child from attending the trial). The dramatic increase in the volume of crimes against children is an indicator that traditional methods are no longer enough.

There are numerous challenges and risks identified in this report. However, a primary concern is the way in which other political and societal challenges regularly emerge as being more 'pressing', with the result that violence against children fails to be mainstreamed in public and political consciousness.

Amongst the most pressing needs: to ensure authentic child empowerment; sustain efforts to raise public awareness, particularly on violence pertaining to gender; training of professionals including teaching staff; funding for more long-term efforts including

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longitudinal research on effectiveness of interventions; helping children develop skills; and having the courage and confidence to increase the urgency of affecting change. Preventing violence against children is underfinanced in many parts of the world. This can only be addressed through political will- not only to ratify conventions but to ensure there is sufficient funding to support meaningful implementation.

Constant and consistent monitoring and evaluation is necessary in order to ensure that children are protected and, within this, children should be enabled and empowered to provide feedback on assessment procedures. Political commitment often focuses on legal and policy frameworks, however implementation and effectiveness needs to be monitored and evaluated. At a national level, the stage is set, usually by national committees, but the real work often takes place at the sub-national level, developed from needs assessment and a genuine understanding of what works.

"Implementation needs to move beyond the rhetoric phase"

Service delivery underpins the broader context of child protection. Children's services, youth, community, religious/faith based, NGOs and other service providers all are part of a constellation of protection for children. This should be supported by cooperation between CPO/law enforcement, donors, practitioners, governments at all levels, as well as children and their peers as key to successful efforts.

Civic action is a crucial to push the agenda forward. Children's rights and ending violence against children calls for a multi-player approach. Political champions are needed to support development of national prevention strategies. Implementation needs to move beyond the rhetoric phase and progress needs to be monitored. Increased child participation should guide all of these efforts.

Case studies and examples of good practice include:

- "Making noise" – programme of children expressing their views about child sexual abuse;

- Icelandic Children's House (Barnahus);

- Cyprus ONE in FIVE CoE Campaign (2013-2016) – part of the results included ratification of the Lanzarote Convention; new law to support the Convention; development of a national strategy for child sexual abuse launched by ministerial decision; implementation, monitoring and training budgeted; Children's Home set up;

- Multi-agency collaboration (i.e. police, education system, social services, health professionals working together on cases);

- Training provided and referral routes indicated to hotel staff, taxi drivers, food delivery staff, bouncers, etc.

The 'End Violence' partnership is the first global partnership to end violence against children. It was formed and operates as a means of implementation of Agenda 2030, including for European institutions and governments.

Its foundation is the experience of children and actions focused on three distinct goals:

a) building and sustaining political will: All countries should be committed to end violence against children and measure by monitoring and reporting mechanisms of action plans on SDG goal 16.2. Moreover, there needs to be measurement of actions including numbers indicating an annual increase in: sessions held by national parliaments, public discourse, references in action to combat violence against children, financial support for both national and overseas activities;

b) accelerated action: by 2030, all countries adopting policies, programmes, legal reform and law enforcement, including online exploitation and measurement. For example, the number of countries implementing law against corporal punishment, online violence, statutory rape, use of firearms and weapons, legal age of marriage, through the development of a comprehensive legal framework. There is an associated fund to the

partnership in aid of the implementation efforts;

c) strengthening collaboration: 'End Violence' is a multi-stakeholder, prevention and solution-focused partnership. The stakeholders include government, civil society, the UN, the private sector, academics/researchers, and young people themselves. There needs to be inter- and cross-section collaboration to avoid isolated silos. The Solution Summit occurring every 2 years is supported by a live platform connecting countries.

Europe has a great deal to contribute to this important work: there are many effective, country-level initiatives that can be shared and developed. Violence against children is a problem affecting children in every country and the prevention of violence should be regarded as a global priority, with strong leadership and commitment.

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