



1 June 2017 Children's Day in Eastern Europe, Caucasias and Central Asia

No Child Behind Because of Violence

1. On the occasion of the celebration of the Children's Day, 1 June 2017, the International Catholic Child Bureau (BICE) and its member and partner organizations in Eastern Europe, Caucasias and Central Asia (*Arevamanuk (Armenia); Caritas, Saint-Petersburg (Russian Federation); Center for Curative Pedagogics (Russian Federation); Center Kenes (Kazakhstan); Center Sestry (Russian Federation); Child Rights Information Center (Moldova); Children Support Center (Lithuania); Human Rights Movement: Bir Duino (Kirghizstan) ; Initiative Civique, Zlatoust (Russian Federation); Perspektivy (Russian Federation); Protecting Children from Abuse (Russian Federation); Public Health Foundation of Georgia (Georgia); Reliable Future Youth NGO (Azerbaijan); and Women's Consortium of Ukraine (Ukraine)*) would like to restate their commitment and dedication to steer endeavors in keeping children safe from violence.

2. The United Nations 2030 Agenda called on Governments, UN Funds and programs, civil society organizations as well as individuals to take concrete steps towards the elimination of physical, sexual, psychological and institutional violence against children in all settings, including family, schools, care and training institutions, and communities.

Prevalence of Violence

3. In Eastern Europe, Caucasias and Central Asia, violence against children remains a dire situation despite the adoption of new laws by a number of States. UNICEF statistics show that in Southeast Europe, "more than 50% of boys and girls aged 2-14 (and in some countries, more than 70%) were exposed to at least one form of physical or psychological severe punishment by family members" (EU and UNICEF, August 2016).

Harm on Children with Disabilities

4. Even if many countries undergo a deinstitutionalization process, many children with physical, intellectual and psychosocial disabilities still live in States-run residential orphanages or in private institutions, sometimes without official license, and therefore without effective governmental control. Such situations may lead to violence. Indeed, a number of children with disabilities are suffering from various forms of violence due *inter alia* to the incapacity of non specialized professionals to handle their needs and assist them. Some suffer from neglect, abuse and hideous violence without any possibility to report their woes and seek for redress. Furthermore, violence against children with disabilities increases due to the discrimination and stigma associated with disabilities.

Violence Occurring Through Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)

5. A pernicious form of violence against children is alarmingly increasing through ICTs. Whilst ICTs provide for genuine learning and empowerment opportunities for children, they also fuel cyberbullying, sexting, grooming and other digital forms of violence. The production and distribution of child sexually abusive images and materials amplify sex tourism, sexual abuse and exploitation.

Lack of Effective Assistance Mechanisms and Services

6. In many cases, legislations are not duly followed by concrete policies and programs appropriately funded. The lack of care, support, counseling, assistance services and mechanisms endanger children victim of violence, increase prejudices and expose them to re-victimization. At the end, they are excluded from the full enjoyment of their fundamental rights, including access to justice and remedy.

7. To ensure that no child is left behind and that all children, including those living with disabilities, are duly counted in national and local policies and programs, concrete actions are needed to achieve the following specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Targets:

- Goal 16.2 “Ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children by 2030”.
- Goal 5.2 “Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation”.

8. Therefore, BICE and its member and partner organizations in Eastern Europe, Caucasia and Central Asia urge:

Concerned States to:

- (a) strengthen information, advice, assistance and support services for parents to enable them to better understand online sexual violence abuse, the impact of violence on children and their physical and psychological development;**
- (b) provide alternatives to institutionalization and the resulting ill-treatment, abuse and neglect on institutionalized children, ensure family-based care options with adequate support services and sufficient social benefits for families to afford care at home for their children;**
- (c) develop and reinforce child protection systems such as, referral and rehabilitation mechanisms, protective and preventive orders, access to justice services, and access to remedy opportunities;**
- (d) provide specific information on disaggregated data and services related to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children in families, schools, institutions and communities to international and regional monitoring mechanisms, including the United Nations Universal Periodic Review mechanism and the treaty bodies, including the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and the Council of Europe Lanzarote Committee, when relevant.**