

FACTS ON CHILDREN

CHILD PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE, EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

Introduction

Protecting children from violence, exploitation and abuse is an integral component of protecting their rights to survival, growth and development. Worldwide an estimated 300 million children are subjected to violence, exploitation and abuse, including the worst forms of child labour in communities, schools and institutions, during armed conflict, and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation/cutting and child marriage.

Child Protection key data:

Birth Registration

- Around 51 million children born in 2006 have not had their births registered. 44 per cent of these children live in South Asia.
- One in three developing countries has birth registration rates of less than 50 per cent.
- Two out of three African children under age five are not registered.
- In some countries of sub-Saharan Africa, registration levels have actually declined during the past five years.
- Children under five who have been denied the right to identity tend to be poor, live in rural areas, have limited access to health care, are not attending early childhood education, have higher levels of malnutrition and have higher mortality rates.
- Most countries show that birth registration is highest among the richest 20 per cent of the population, confirming that poverty is associated with low levels of birth registration.
- Cost and distance to the registration centre are the reasons most frequently cited by parents for not registering their children.

Child Labour

- As of 2006 an estimated 158 million children aged 5-14 years are engaged in child labour are involved in child labour in developing countries.
- In the least developed countries, 30 per cent of all children are engaged in child labour.
- Around 1 in 3 children aged 5-14 in sub-Saharan Africa labours, compared to only 1 in 20 in the Central and Eastern European/Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) region. In absolute numbers: 69 million children in Sub-Saharan Africa or 35 per cent of its child population are engaged in child labour, making it the region most prevalent to the practice.
- Boys are more likely to be engaged in child labour than girls because they are more likely to be engaged in economic activity. Those engaged in household chores are overwhelmingly girls.

Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting

- UNICEF estimates that 70 million girls and women aged 15-49 in 27 countries of Africa and the Middle East have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). The prevalence of FGM/C has declined slowly but steadily during the past 15 years. Older girls and younger women are less likely to have experienced any form of FGM/C than older women.

- The study provides clear evidence that complications in deliveries are significantly more likely among women with FGM/C. It also found that FGM/C is harmful to babies and leads to an extra one to two perinatal deaths per 100 deliveries.
- FGM/C is generally carried out on girls between the ages of four and 14; it is also done to infants, women who are about to be married and, sometimes, to women who are pregnant with their first child or who have just given birth. It is often performed by traditional practitioners, including midwives and barbers, without anesthesia and using scissors, razor blades or broken glass.

Child Marriage

- As of 2006 worldwide, more than 60 million women aged 20–24 were married before they reached the age of 18. The extent of child marriage varies substantially between countries, but about half of the girls who are affected live in South Asia.
- In the developing world excluding China, the latest international estimates indicate that 36 per cent of women aged 20–24 were married or in union before the age of 18. In some regions, the incidence of child marriage is particularly high, at 49 per cent in South Asia, and 44 per cent in West and Central Africa, according to the latest estimates.
- Child marriage is becoming less common overall, but the pace of change is slow. In 34 of the 55 countries with comparable data from two recent surveys, there has been no significant change in the percentage of women aged 20–24 married by 18 – and only 5 countries experienced a decrease of more than 10 per cent according to survey conducted in 2006.
- If a mother is under the age of 18, her infant’s risk of dying in its first year of life is 60 per cent greater than that of an infant born to a mother older than 19.

Children Associated with Armed Forces and Groups

- An estimated 250,000 children are involved in conflicts around the world. They are used as combatants, messengers, spies, porters, cooks, and girls in particular are forced to perform sexual services, depriving them of their rights and their childhood.
- Some 1.5 billion children – two thirds of the world’s child population – live in the 42 countries affected by violent, high-intensity conflict between 2002 and 2006. But the impact of armed conflict on children is difficult to estimate because of the lack of reliable and up-to-date statistics.
- There are no reliable figures on the number of children associated with armed forces, but more than 100,000 children have been demobilized and reintegrated since 1998.
- In 2006, an estimated 18.1 million children were among populations living with the effects of displacement. Within that group 5.8 million were refugees and 8.8 internally displaced.
- A 2004 report found that in at least 65 countries around the world, boys and girls are recruited into Government military forces, either legally as volunteers, or illegally through force or deception.

Child Trafficking

- According to the latest estimates (2000, some 1.2 million children are trafficked worldwide every year.
- The most common form of human trafficking (79 per cent) is sexual exploitation. The victims of sexual exploitation are predominantly women and girls. Surprisingly, in 30 per cent of the countries which provided information on the gender of traffickers, women make up the largest proportion of traffickers. In some parts of the world, women’s trafficking is the norm.
- Sexual exploitation is by far the most commonly identified form of human trafficking (79 per cent), followed by forced labour (18 per cent). (Global Report on Trafficking (2008) p. 6)
- Trafficking in human beings is one of the most lucrative and fastest growing transnational crimes – generating approximately \$9.5 billion per year.

Children without Parental Care

- According to data released in 2003 as many as eight million boys and girls around the world live in institutional care. Some studies have found that violence in residential institutions is six times higher than violence in foster care, and that children in group care are almost four times more likely to experience sexual abuse than children in family based care.
- As of 2002 in Europe and Central Asia, over one million children lived in residential institutions.
- More than 15 million children have lost one or both parents to AIDS, over 11.6 million of whom live in sub-Saharan Africa.
- In 2007 67.5 million Children in South Asia and East Asia had lost one or both parents due to all causes.

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

- There are few accurate statistics regarding sexual exploitation of children as these crimes are often covert, secret and associated with intense feelings of shame that prevent children and adults from seeking help.
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- According to a recent global estimate by the International Labour Organization, of the 12.3 million people who are victims of forced labour, 1.39 million are involved in forced commercial sexual exploitation and 40–50 per cent are children.
- .An estimated 1.8 million children (mainly girls but also a significant number of boys) enter the multi-billion dollar commercial sex trade every year.

Children with Disabilities

- It is estimated that, overall, between 500 and 650 million people worldwide live with a significant impairment.
- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), around 10 per cent of the world's children and young people, some 200 million, have sensory, intellectual or mental health impairment. Around 80 per cent of them live in developing countries.
- The reported incidence and prevalence of impairment in the population vary significantly from one country to another. Specialists, however, agree on a working approximation giving a minimum benchmark of 2.5 per cent of children aged 0-14 with self-evident moderate to severe levels of sensory, physical and intellectual impairments.
- An additional 8 per cent can be expected to have learning or behavioural difficulties, or both.
- Mortality for children with disabilities under five can be as high as 80 per cent in some income poor countries.

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