Dear readers,

The world’s nations came together in 1989 to reaffirm the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which called for the continuous improvement in the situation of children all over the world. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most ratified of all the United Nations Human Rights treaties.

Since then many actions, such as the ‘World Fit for Children’ and the ‘Millennium Development Goals’, have been initiated to operationalise the intentions enshrined in the Convention. Child Helpline International applauds the United Nations for taking up these many different initiatives and actions to protect 2 billion children worldwide who remain unprotected.

Children and young people in many parts of the world are still in critical situations as a result of inadequate social conditions, natural disasters, armed conflicts, exploitation, illiteracy, hunger and disability. This urgently requires more effective national and international action.

In the absence of social protection it is likely that many young people may never be able to achieve their full potential and contribute to a society or a nation to which they belong. Great global social and economic inequalities have a huge impact on children.

It seems as if we are drifting further away from our intentions. We cannot afford to let go now. We have to invest in social protection and help the young strengthen their resilience to life’s challenges. We have to protect each nation’s human capital.

Protection and resilience building starts with listening. Listening to the voices of children and young people. Many of the world’s children are still struggling to be heard. Their voices tell us heart-breaking stories, stories that are often not heard or listened to by those who should.

Child helplines worldwide are at the forefront of child protection allowing children and young people to receive counselling and assistance when in need. Data from Child Helpline International shows that in the last ten years over 126 million contacts were made with child helplines worldwide.

Over the past decade, children and young people have consistently contacted child helplines on issues of abuse and violence, troubled family relationships, problems at school and bullying. Child helplines are operating in very different and sometimes difficult circumstances in a world that is developing fast, but also faces many challenges and various dominant social and cultural practices. As we look at the trends in the data collected and analysed by Child Helpline International, we can see an increasing number of children and young people who are denied access to services or who are in conflict areas. A UNICEF study on children affected by armed conflict mentions that nearly two thirds of the world’s population of children, or about 1.5 billion children living in 42 countries, were affected by violent, high intensity conflict between 2002 and 2006.

I strongly believe that child helplines empower children to take their lives into their own hands and resolve their problems as much as they can. They also serve as an early warning system for politicians and policymakers. They represent a social barometer that cannot be ignored and which indicates what is going on in the lives of children and young people - one of society’s most vulnerable groups. Whilst this publication offers further insights into the many serious problems faced by children in the world, I can see a great deal of hope for the future, especially when child helplines work in close collaboration with key decision makers.

This publication adds volume to the voices of our children and young people - growing up in our societies, encountering joy and youthful optimism on the one hand, but also hardship and experiences in their childhood and adolescence that will shape the rest of their lives. They are our future leaders, doctors, craftsmen, entertainers and teachers and they all have the right to be protected and to be heard. They all have, without exception, the right to live a life with dignity, free from fear and violence.

That is why I personally urge politicians, policy and decision makers and partners to read this publication: The Voices of Children and Young People. It contains a wealth of information, stories and trends. Please take it to heart and listen to their voices in all your work. Only by collective action, commitment and will can we ensure a bright future for the next generation of children and young people across the globe.

Introduction

Nenita La Rose
Executive Director
Child Helpline International
Global <<rewind>>

Executive Summary

Child helplines have been providing counselling, care and protection to children and young people for several decades. In 2003 child helplines from around the world came together as a network to amplify their voice and increase the impact of their collective work through greater collaboration and co-ordination. Child Helpline International (CHI) was tasked with the responsibility of establishing child helplines in countries where none existed, strengthening existing child helplines, and collecting data on the contacts made with child helplines to influence policy at the national and international level. The network began with 49 members in 2003 and has now grown to 173 child helpline members operating in 141 countries.

All child helpline members of CHI collect data and document the reasons for every contact that is made with them by a child or young person. CHI data shows that 126 million contacts were made with child helplines worldwide in the past ten years, however only 41 million contacts were responded to. Of these 41 million contacts, many of them were not segregated according to the standard reasons recorded by child helplines and were marked as unknown or unspecified. The remaining 85 million were contacts including text calls, prank calls or silent calls made to child helplines, mostly by young people before they actually began a conversation with the counsellors. It is also important to note that a large portion of these 85 million contacts remained unanswered because of the lack of human and financial resources faced by child helplines.

The most number of contacts were received in Europe (66%), followed by Asia Pacific (14%), Americas and Caribbean (7%), and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) (2%). The majority of children and young people who contacted child helplines around the world in the past ten years were between 10 -18 years of age. The majority of contacts were made over the telephone; however children and young people are increasingly adopting other means of communications such as online chat, email and text messaging, in order to seek support and advice.

The data collected over a period of ten years indicates that children are willing to share their concerns and fears once they have trust in a system or mechanism. The increase in the number of child helplines, free of charge, easy to remember telephone numbers, and the adoption of new communications technology has enabled more children to access child helplines services than ever before.

The extensive data collected by CHI over the last ten years has provided an insight into the depth and range of issues faced by the young population in a country or region. The steady increase in contacts over the ten year period indicates that children and young people are feeling more empowered than before and are reaching out to child helplines to get information, support and care. On average, the number of contacts increased 5% per child helpline annually. This rise in contacts indicates that more children are contacting child helplines due to increased accessibility and awareness, or indeed that there are new emerging issues that need to be addressed by decision makers.

The most common issues that children and young people wanted to talk about were peer relationships (17%), abuse and violence (17%), psycho-social mental health (10%), and family-relationships (15%).

The purpose of “The Voices of Children and Young People”, is to present issues that have always existed (presented in “RWD”) in children and young people’s lives and to highlight emerging issues (presented in “FWD”) that reflect the changing social paradigms and the challenges children and young people across the world experience every day.

Abuse and violence remains a constant issue causing serious problems in all regions. Over 6 million children and young people reported a form of abuse and violence (physical, emotional, sexual). The majority of abuse and violence cases were committed by an immediate family member.

One of the main reasons why children and young people contact child helplines has always been and remains to be the struggles at home and within the family. Hardships, such as interpersonal relationships or practical matters including maintenance and child support, custody and access, divorce and separation represent 15% of all contacts received by child helplines.

Child helplines received 1 million contacts regarding problems in schools. Besides general school related issues such as academic problems, performance anxiety, problems with teachers or dropping out of school, many adolescents experience different forms of violence and abuse that are committed by their teachers and peers. Bullying is a significant problem that plagues many children’s lives.

Data from child helplines indicates serious gaps in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The on-going Financial crisis, increasing poverty and social inequalities have hit children and young people hard. Such inequities escalate humanitarian crises and increase the risks that vulnerable children and young people experience. Many children and young people are contacting child helplines on development-related issues including lack of birth registration, abandonment, the fulfilment of basic needs, inability to access basic services and discrimination. These factors greatly undermine the chances and wellbeing of the child, and highlight the disparities in progress towards the MDGs.

Hundreds of thousands of innocent children and young people have been killed in the increasing number and intensity of armed conflicts around the world over the last ten years. Those who have survived the bloodshed are living in extreme vulnerability, presenting a huge challenge to child protection agencies such as child helplines. It is in these unstable environments that we see child helplines redefining resourcefulness and creativity – in spite of limited resources. The innovative spirit of highly committed child helpline staff and the strong connections they build with referral systems, strengthens child protection mechanisms and acts as crucial access point for children and young people who would otherwise have nowhere to turn. It is therefore imperative that child helpline services are available to children and young people who are living in countries that are experiencing conflict or are in a state of emergency.
Contacts from “Generation Z” (those born in and after 1995) on psycho-social mental health issues in rich and developed countries with high or very high Human Development Index (HDI) levels are spiralling, especially during the more recent years and since the onset of the global economic crisis. Data trends demonstrate that compared to all the contacts from adolescents, this issue rose from 15% in 2006 to 21% in 2012.

Generation Z is growing up in a world that has the advantage of rapidly advancing communication technology, however it also leaves children and young people susceptible to threats such as online bullying, commonly known as “cyber-bullying”. In the past two years more than 30,000 contacts on cyber-bullying were made with child helplines globally, of which the majority of contacts were from girls (71%).

Child helplines play an invaluable role in protecting children and young people. Annually, child helplines provide millions of children and young people with crucial services that safeguard their wellbeing. Child helplines should be recognised by governments and international organisations as an essential mechanism for guarding children, especially in countries where such services are currently lacking.

In some countries, child helplines constitute the universal access of children and young people to child protection services, therefore governments and civil society should provide resources into such structures, so that their potential can be increased and strengthened.

The data in this publication represents the voices of children and young people. It is imperative that governments and civil society listen to this call for action and ensure the strengthening of child protection systems by supporting existing child helplines and establishing child helplines in countries where they do not currently exist.

**WARNING SIGNS**

- Over 4 million children and young people reported a form of abuse and violence (physical, emotional, sexual).
- Children and young people are struggling at home and within the family.
- Teachers and peers commit a large number of abuse and violence cases.
- The voices of children and young people tell us that many of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG’s) are not being attained.
- Child helplines in conflict environments provide support and protection to children and young people. Without their existence, these citizens would not be able to receive the right assistance and have their safety ensured.
- Generation Z is more susceptible to threats such as cyber-bullying.
Abuse and Violence

Abuse, violence and neglect collectively represent one of the most common reasons (17%) for children and young people to contact child helplines around the world. In total, 4.3 million contacts were received in the 10 year period from 2003 to 2012 from children and young people affected by abuse and violence.

Children and young people have contacted helplines to seek help regarding issues of physical abuse (32%), bullying (28%), sexual abuse (19%), emotional abuse (11%) and neglect (10%).

Almost one million cases of physical abuse were reported by children and young people to child helplines. A member of the child or young person’s immediate or extended family committed 58% of the physical abuse cases. Girls (57%) report more cases of physical abuse occurring at home than boys.

Sexual abuse has emerged as one of the most prevalent forms of reported abuse globally. Almost one in five (19%) reported cases of abuse and violence are sexual abuse cases. In 60% of the sexual abuse cases, the perpetrator is identified as a person from the child’s immediate or extended family. In 81% of the sexual abuse cases, a male is reported by the child or young person as the person who committed the offence. More girls report sexual abuse (73%) cases to child helplines than boys.

More than one in ten abuse and violence cases involves emotional abuse. Data shows that immediate, extended and mixed family members of were responsible for 66% of all the emotional abuse cases. More girls (61%) than boys reported such cases.

One in ten cases of abuse and violence is because a child is neglected. More girls (54%) than boys contact child helplines regarding this issue. In 75% of the cases, immediate, extended and mixed family members neglect the child or young person.

**Case:** Jessus (12) called the child helpline from a neighbour’s house. He had been locked up by his aunt, who forced him to do all of her domestic chores. If he did not perform to her standards, he would not get food or water. A neighbor spotted Jessus when he was carrying heavy trash down the road. Jessus almost fainted and struggled with his heavy load. With his neighbors help. Jessus called the child helpline. The counsellor listened to his story and also talked with the neighbor. The child helpline’s social workers rescued Jessus from his aunt and found temporary care for him in a shelter. » Americas and Caribbean

**Case:** Leila (14) contacted the child helpline hysterically crying, whilst she was hiding in her bedroom closet. She was scared that her dad would find her and beat her. She said that her dad was drunk and on drugs and that she had previously been to the hospital due to his abuse. The counsellor immediately alerted the police whilst speaking to Leila, within 20 minutes the police rescued her, and informed the child helpline that they would follow up on the case. » The Americas and Caribbean

**Case:** Naledi (8) contacted a child helpline to report that her father’s cousin who was living with them had been sexually abusing her. The girl told the counsellor that she was afraid and had not spoken to anyone about her abuser. Naledi also informed the child helpline that she was too afraid to tell her parents in case they beat her. The child helpline contacted the parents and talked to them about the on-going situation. The child helpline provided emotional support to the girl, and explained to the parents how to denounced the abuse, including the legal process that should be followed. During a follow-up call, the child helpline was pleased to discover that the abuse had been condemned by the parents and has since been processed by the police. » Africa

>> A significant proportion of parents want the right to hit their children if they deem it necessary as part of their parenting strategy. <<

**ASIA PACIFIC**

>> In 2012, a child helpline in the CHI network received 14 contacts on abuse and violence per day. <<
Troubled Family Relationships

The lives of children and young people are surrounded by many interplaying dynamics such as home, school and social interactions. When parents separate or families split up, children bear the brunt of such family crises. Contacts regarding such matters represent 15% of all contacts made to child helplines over the past ten years. More girls (65%) than boys contacted child helplines on family related issues.

Over the past ten years almost 4 million contacts were made by children and young people with child helplines because they were struggling with family matters, involving parent-child relationships (42%), parents in conflict (23%), maintenance and child support (16%), child custody and access (5%) or new and blended families (3%). Other issues that children and young people sought advice on included sibling relationships (8%), parents with addiction or mental health problems (6%), bereavement (5%) or adoption issues (2%).

Children seeking counsel on interrelated issues such as divorce, separation and new and blended families account for almost one in three contacts (26%) made regarding family related issues.

Over one in ten contacts (11%) on family matters concern issues involving child maintenance and support as well as child custody and access.

Contacts relating to child custody and access tripled during 2008-2012 from 5,055 to 15,256 contacts respectively. A similar increase also occurred with contacts relating to child support and maintenance, which rose from 5% in 2008 to 8% in 2012 (24,164 contacts).

Across all regions, children and young people make contact to the same degree regarding issues of divorce and separated parents or parent-child relationship issues, except in Africa where more contacts were received regarding child maintenance and custody. In Europe, there has been a significant increase (almost 300%) on contacts regarding such issues (maintenance/custody) during the financial crisis years (2008-2012).

Children and young people also seek help in coping with domestic violence at home. In ten years, over 200,000 contacts were made with child helplines on this issue.

**Case:** Shu Lin (8) called a child helpline and shared that her parents were getting divorced. She explained that they often fight, and that she is at home to witness it. Sometimes they hit each other. She feels sad about what is happening at home and asked the child helpline why can’t they just talk about their problems instead of fighting? The counsellor at the child helpline empathised with how she was feeling and explained that it is not her fault that her parents are fighting and getting divorced. The child helpline counsellor also explained that the problems experienced by her parents were between them and that they needed to work on finding a solution. Shu Lin and the counsellor spoke for a while, until she felt better about the situation and realised that her parents still love her no matter what happens in their relationship. The counsellor also advised Shu Lin that if she ever feels the same that she can always contact the child helpline because they are there to help and listen to her.

**Case:** Anna’s (16) parents divorced 8 years ago, and for the past 2 years she has lived with her father and his new partner. She does not understand why she has to live with her father, and she feels unwelcomed and unwanted. Anna explained that her relationship with her mother is good, but she would like to live with her again. The counsellor supported Anna in finding ways to express her emotions and feelings, and practised simple communication techniques to help with the relationship with her father. Through the counselling she was able to understand different points of view on her situation. The counsellor also directed Anna to relevant services that would help her understand why it may be appropriate for her to live with her father. Anna appreciated the help given, and later called the child helpline to update them on her progress.

**WARNING SIGNS**

- Children and young people all around the world are experiencing problems in their families.
- Contacts regarding child custody and access have risen dramatically in the past five years.
- Contacts relating to child support and maintenance have steadily increased.

**Children need more attention from their parents. Since their parents are too busy with their jobs, they often contact the child helpline because they crave attention that they do not get at home.**
Problems at School

School should be a safe environment where children can learn and develop without being burdened with problems. Children and young people struggle with issues relating to their studies, their teachers and with bullying. Child helplines receive many contacts from children and young people all over the world who express such problems.

Over a million and a half contacts (1.6 million) were made by children and young people with child helplines on school related problems, of which 57% were made by girls. Children and young people usually contact child helplines on issues relating to school when they are experiencing academic problems (39%), teacher problems (21%) and performance anxiety (14%). Other problems that they talk to child helpline counsellors include homework related problems (8%), dropping out of school (12%), or other adult related issues (7%).

Teachers have been reported to be perpetrators of abuse and violence (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect and bullying). Over 21,000 abuse cases were reported to child helplines in the ten year period. The majority of these cases were reported in Africa (51%) followed by Asia Pacific (35%), Europe (10%), MENA (4%) and the Americas and Caribbean (1%). Generally, more male teachers (64%) were identified as perpetrators of abuse and violence, especially in sexual abuse cases (81%).

Peers also commit a significant proportion of abuse and violence cases (31%), of which 12% were sexual abuse cases, 26% physical abuse cases, 50% bullying cases, and 18% emotional abuse cases. Girls (59%) make more contact regarding abuse and violence committed by peers, than boys.

Bullying is a growing problem which children and young people face on a daily basis. Over one in four cases (28%) of abuse and violence is because of bullying, most of which takes place on school premises (80%). Bullying can be divided into four major categories – emotional, physical, exposure and theft. Data shows that 52% of the contacts on bullying are categorised under emotional bullying, 31% are physical bullying, 10% are incidents of bullying perpetrated through theft and 7% of the contacts were from children or young people who were exposed to some form of bullying.

Case: A mother contacted a child helpline because she was experiencing problems with her child Abraham. Since her separation from her husband she noticed that Abraham’s academic performance was poor. After speaking to a counsellor, she brought him to the child helpline’s walk-in centre. The Counsellor explained the importance of how his future depended on education. As a result, the boy changed his attitude and became more diligent in school. He still walks into the child helpline when he feels like he needs to talk to someone. »Africa

Case: The child helpline was called by a distressed father. His daughter had been beaten by a teacher at school. The beatings resulted in a broken arm. The child was taken to the hospital and later filed a complaint against the teacher. The teacher was suspended without pay. The verdict is currently pending. »MENA

Case: Cam (9) contacted a child helpline because she was being bullied at school. Cam felt isolated and could not focus on her up and coming exams. She had reported it to the teachers and the headmaster, who ignored her and did not take any action. Cam felt stuck and isolated. The child helpline empowered her with certain techniques that would help her cope with the bullying. The helpline also counselled her in taking certain steps to help end the bullying. »Asia Pacific

Corporal punishment remains a huge problem in schools. We often find that teachers use physical abuse as a form of discipline. Worst of all, many parents encourage it. »Africa
Shankar, a young boy in India, was severely injured with worm-infested sores on his forehead and covering his leg and was in need of urgent medical attention. Despite his vulnerable state, Shankar was refused by the hospital as he did not have enough money to pay for treatment. At this point, Childline India intervened.

What started as a project for street children by street children themselves, grew into a national organisation spanning over 291 cities and districts in 30 provinces working with 540 partner organisations across India.

This concept took root and attracted other existing child helplines around the world, gained global momentum, and led to the birth of Child Helpline International. In the past 10 years, child helplines in 141 countries have received over 126 million contacts from children and young people.

Child helplines are at the centre of the child protection systems. By being at the centre, child helplines are responsible for responding to all needs of children and young people. It is the vision of child helpline to listen to children and to provide them with the comfort and care that they are struggling for. From Shankar, who was in desperate need of medical attention in India, to Caroline whose 8 year old daughter was being sexually abused by her husband in Kenya, to Shoeb who had lost contact with his parents during bombardments in Palestine, to Anouk who felt incredibly lonely as a young cancer patient in the Netherlands... all children want and need to be heard.

It is up to us, as adults, to create a sturdy protection system to ensure that no child is alone. It is up to child helplines to ensure that every single child around the globe knows that there is someone out there who cares for them, and that children know that comfort is only a phone call... email... text... or chat away.

This publication looks at the various cases and contacts made over the past 10 years. Based on the analysis of the gathered data we call for:

- Child helplines are the centre of the child protection system. Increased budgetary allocations must be made at the national and global level to ensure quality access to child helplines and to protect children and young people from abuse, violence and exploitation.

- The United Nations and its member states are encouraged to set up child helplines in all conflict zones and declare them as neutral, non-partisan organisations protecting children and young people, who are victims of a war or internal conflict.

- The United Nations, multilateral organisations and governments should develop a comprehensive child protection policy to ensure the overall well-being of children and young people, minimising the impact of the economic crisis and social inequality, and ending the emerging menace of cyber-bullying.

As you read through this publication, please think of Shankar, Caroline, Shoeb and Anouk, and the millions of vulnerable children just like them throughout the world. Let us ensure that a 24/7 helpline and protection system is available globally so every child knows that they are not alone.

>> Child helplines ensure that every single child around the globe knows that there is someone there for them who cares, and that children know that help is only a phone call...email...text...or chat away. <<
MDG’s in Child Protection Are Not Being Achieved

It is widely accepted that the Millennium Development Goals may not be achieved by 2015. CHI data on contacts made with child helplines illustrates the gaps that remain in achieving some of the MDGs.

Global child helpline data shows that the on-going financial crisis, increasing poverty and social inequalities have hit children and young people hard. Deprived of their basic rights, they are becoming increasingly marginalised, especially in the less developed regions of the world. Contacts made with child helplines in countries at the lower end of the Human Development Index (HDI), show not only the increased incidence of abuse and violence, but also bring to light the dangerous impact of widening economic disparity and disenfranchisement of children and young people.

Even in European countries where governments are tightening their belts and implementing austerity measures, children and young people are feeling the brunt of these changes. In many countries child welfare measures have been curtailed and in others many children’s services have been withdrawn due to a lack of funding. But the worst impact is being felt in developing and fragile states where young people are struggling to claim their rights. Social and economic poverty in these countries make children and young people extremely vulnerable.

Analysis of CHI data shows that many children and young people are contacting child helplines regarding lack of birth registration, abandonment, lack of basic needs, inability to access basic services and increased discrimination. These factors greatly undermine the life chances and wellbeing of the child, and highlight the gaps in progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Birth registration is vital to any child’s identity and future. It is therefore essential that all children, especially from marginalised, disadvantaged social groups are provided with birth certificates that establish their identity as a person and as a citizen. Almost 38,000 contacts on birth registration were received by child helplines during the ten year period under review, of which 60% were made in the African region, followed by 30% in the Asia Pacific region. Over the past five years, an average of 16 children each day contact child helplines around the world in order to seek advice on how to obtain a birth registration.

Another alarming issue is the abandonment of children across the globe. In ten years over 60,000 children and young people have contacted child helplines because they have been abandoned by their parents or caregivers. CHI data shows that abandonment is not differentiated by HDI level, as it is prevalent in both developed and developing states. Regionally, 36% of contacts on abandonment were received in Asia Pacific, followed by Africa (33%), Europe (20%), the Americas and Caribbean (8%) and MENA (3%).

Improving the health of children and their access to healthcare are key steps necessary to attaining the MDGs that targeted combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. Analysis of CHI data shows that children and young people experience problems in accessing healthcare in both developing countries with low HDI and developed countries with high HDI. Almost 130,000 contacts were made with child helplines on this issue, of which a majority were received during 2010-2012. Regional disaggregation shows that most contacts were made with child helplines in Asia (60% - mostly from India, Nepal and the Philippines), followed by MENA (13% - mostly from Sudan and Egypt), Africa (12% - mostly from Guinea-Conakry), Europe (12% - mostly from Greece, Netherlands and Portugal) and the Americas and Caribbean (4% - mostly from Canada, Chile and the United States of America).

CALL FOR ACTION
Child helplines are the centre of the child protection system. Increased budgetary allocations must be made at the national and global level to ensure quality access to child helplines to protect children and young people from abuse, violence and exploitation.

Case: Rafael’s (18) parents died when he was young and he was raised by his relatives. When Rafael turned 18 his guardian’s attitude towards him changed. Rafael wanted to get an identity card, so that he could access services on his own. However he discovered that there was no legal documentation of his existence. The case was thoroughly investigated by a child helpline officer and was referred to an organisation for direct legal assistance. This organisation made an official appeal to several institutions and as a result Rafael obtained his birth certificate and later his identity card. > Europe

Case: Lucy (14) contacted a child helpline because she was orphaned and needed medical assistance, psycho-social support, shelter, adequate food and social and educational reintegration. The helpline facilitated the rescue of the girl and placed her in a safe home where her well-being was monitored and her case followed up on. > Africa

The proportion of contacts that child helplines receive on basic needs, requests for food and financial assistance has increased by two-thirds over the last ten years. <<
While one of the MDGs is the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, data from child helplines shows these issues remain significantly prevalent. Children and young people living in the poorest households reach out to child helplines in times of despair when they are lacking basic necessities such as food or social welfare. In the past ten years, over 220,000 children and young people have contacted child helplines calling for food, resources or financial aid.

According to HDI levels, the majority of these contacts were received in low HDI (32%), medium HDI (32%), very high HDI (26%), followed by an additional 10% of contacts that were made in high HDI countries. More girls (54%) reported such concerns to child helplines and a majority of these contacts were made in Africa (38%), followed by Asia Pacific (23%), Europe (3%), MENA (2%) and the Americas and Caribbean (8%). Specifically, since 2007 the highest percentages of contacts were received in low HDI (32%), medium HDI (32%), very high HDI (26%), which took place in countries with low to medium HDI levels. Regionally, 71% of the contacts were received in Africa, followed by Asia Pacific (23%), Europe (3%), MENA (2%) and the Americas and Caribbean (8%). The majority of children and young people unable to access education were girls (52%). Children face discrimination on a daily basis in access to other services too, either due to their ethnicity, physical and mental health, gender, language, sexual orientation, or disability. Over 183,000 contacts were made with child helplines on issues related to discrimination. The key reasons for children and young people contacting child helplines on discrimination related issues were due to access to education (31%), mental and physical health (22%), immigration issues (19%), racism (19%) and employment related (9%). Regionally, contacts on discrimination were received in Africa (38%), Asia Pacific (34%), Europe (19%), the Americas and Caribbean (3%) and MENA (6%).

Discrimination exacerbates exclusion, particularly when it denies access to education for children struggling to break out of the poverty trap. Almost 40,000 contacts were made by children and young people expressing their inability to access education. Not surprisingly 95% of the contacts were recorded in countries with low to medium HDI levels. Regionally, 71% of the contacts were received in Africa, followed by Asia Pacific (23%), Europe (3%), MENA (2%) and the Americas and Caribbean (8%). The majority of children and young people unable to access education were girls (52%). Children face discrimination on a daily basis in access to other services too, either due to their ethnicity, physical and mental health, gender, language, sexual orientation, or disability. Over 183,000 contacts were made with child helplines on issues related to discrimination. The key reasons for children and young people contacting child helplines on discrimination related issues were due to access to education (31%), mental and physical health (22%), immigration issues (19%), racism (19%) and employment related (9%). Regionally, contacts on discrimination were received in Africa (38%), Asia Pacific (34%), Europe (19%), the Americas and Caribbean (3%) and MENA (6%).

CHI data demonstrates that the majority of contacts on issues relating to discrimination are received in United Kingdom, Iceland, Nepal, South Africa and Guinea-Conakry. Children and young people in the African region face more discrimination issues regarding access to education (57%) and racism (27%). Children and young people in MENA mostly made contact concerning mental and physical discrimination (88%).

An alarming trend has been identified in the numbers regarding racism related issues which have increased from 1% (3 contacts) in 2003 to 29% (6,729 contacts) in 2012. Regionally, the majority of contacts on racism were recorded in Africa (54%), followed by Asia Pacific (23%), Europe (19%), the Americas and Caribbean (3%) and MENA (1%). The child helplines that have had the most racism related contacts are in South Africa, Nepal and Guinea-Conakry.

**Case:** Nishad (15) contacted a child helpline because he was hungry. After speaking to him for some time, Nishad confessed that he was homeless and was not attending school. Immediately the counsellor asked him for his location and alerted a social worker about the situation. Nishad was rescued and placed in a shelter. He now attends school and has been placed with a family that want to adopt him. > Asia Pacific

**Case:** Dominic (7) called the helpline saying that he failed school because he didn’t have money to pay for the bus which takes him to school. The counsellor talked to him about how he was feeling about it, and then asked why he didn’t have a free pass from the government as it is free of cost. The boy said that his mother missed the deadline to apply for the pass. The counsellor told him that she was going to contact the municipality to ask for a free pass for him as every child has a right to it. When the counsellor called Dominic back he said: “I thought you had forgotten about me! I’m so happy that you didn’t”. Just as the counsellor was speaking to him, his mother arrived home and asked to talk to the helpline. She thanked the helpline for their service and said that her son wrote down the helpline’s number on a piece of paper with the following sentence: “If I get sad I must call this number...” > Americas and Caribbean

The proportion of contacts on access to education has more than doubled since 2005. ❯
Children and Conflict

As conflicts across the globe have increased and become bloodier than before, the lives of children and young people in these situations have become more perilous, exposing them to extreme dangers and impacting their emotional well-being. Conflicts have a long-term debilitating impact on the physical and mental health of children and young people.

Bloodshed, violence and deprivation during and after conflicts significantly influence the lives of children and young people. Millions of children have lost their lives, and many more millions around the world are currently living through conflicts, residing in camps and shelters, deprived of basic amenities, exploited, or rendered disabled for life.

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) said in a document on children affected by armed conflict that nearly two thirds of the world’s population of children or about 1.5 billion children living in 42 countries were affected by violent, high intensity conflict between 2002 and 2006. The Geneva based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, a multi-stakeholder body that collects data on internal displacement for the United Nations (UN) and humanitarian agencies estimates the figure of internally displaced children to be at 13.5 million. The numbers have increased significantly over the past couple of years as more conflicts have emerged in Africa, Asia-Pacific, and the MENA region.

Contacts with child helplines in the countries that are experiencing or are emerging from conflicts demonstrate a range of issues and problems that children and young people confront in their daily lives. To improve the understanding of the need for child helplines in all conflict zones, this section contains data from the child helpline in Palestine, a country in conflict, and Nepal, which is emerging out of an internal conflict.

Children and young people in conflict zones suffer from extreme forms of abuse and violence, psycho-social and mental health issues, deep trauma and often neglect and exploitation. Generation after generation in Palestine have grown up in a state of constant war which has lasted over 65 years. Data collected by the child helpline in Palestine “Sawa” gives an insight into the needs and problems of children and young people living in one of the most precarious regions in the world.

Since 2008, nearly 130,000 children and young people have contacted Sawa seeking care and protection. Of the known reasons why children and young people contacted the child helpline, more than 66% (61,000) contacts were from those who had suffered abuse and violence. Another 17% (15,000) contacts concerned psycho-social and mental health issues, most of them regarding the fear and anxiety that young people experience in a conflict zone.

In an environment beset by violence and conflict, children and young people are unable to maintain a stable life. They have trouble in their relationships with peers and also with their family members. Often, children and young people living in a conflict environment grow up to support violent behaviour as that is what they witness in their formative years.

Data from child helpline in Nepal, CWIN, highlights the state of children and young people in the conflict and post-conflict period. Between 2003 and 2009 more than 446,719 children and young people contacted the child helpline in Nepal about their direct involvement in the conflict. Since 2009 no such contacts were received, as the armed conflict came to an end and children ceased to be recruited as soldiers.

However, the impact of the conflict was severe on the lives of young people. Access to education and health care became highly impeded. Over 18,000 young people reported dropping out of school and another 18,000 contacted child helplines to seek healthcare.

Economic deprivation resulting from the protracted conflict in Nepal increased the vulnerability of children and young people to abuse and exploitation, and it continues unabated at an alarming rate. Child helpline Nepal received, in the ten year monitoring period, more than 15,000 contacts on trafficking of children, over 34,000 on sexual exploitation, more than 21,000 on domestic child labour, over 7,500 on children used for begging and another 7,200 on children used on criminal activities. Most of the cases of exploitation registered a sharp increase after 2009, when a political solution brought an end to the violence.

As child helplines maintained and stepped up their services during the conflict period more than 1.1 million children and young people were able to access advice, care and protection through Sawa and CWIN.

Both Sawa and CWIN provide an example of the services child helplines provide in conflict zones. There are numerous child helplines around the world operating in conflict areas and humanitarian situations, rising to the challenge of protecting children and young people’s lives and rights.

**CALL FOR ACTION**

The United Nations and its member states are encouraged to set up child helplines in all conflict zones and declare them as neutral, non-partisan organisations protecting children and young people, who are victims of a war or internal conflict.

**Case:** Sawa received a call from a five year old girl who was left alone with her three year old brother. The parents had apparently not returned from a short outing during the bombings three days prior. The Sawa Counsellor managed to locate the girl’s whereabouts, send an emergency vehicle to retrieve the siblings and to bring them to a safe environment. Their pictures were pinned to search boards across the city and their parents were able to locate them some days later.

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2. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre: http://www.internal-displacement.org/children
3. UNDIS http://www.undis.org/521621999.htm
Children Feel Less Happy in Developed Countries

Generation Z – namely those born from 1995 to the present day – are largely unhappy. The current global economic situation is aggravating psycho-social mental health issues amongst young people as they face new challenges within their families and altered socio-economic realities.

From the contacts made with child helplines, it emerges that the social and economic environment is a primary cause of mental health problems. Since 2007, with the onset of the economic crisis, there has been a sharp increase in contacts regarding issues related to psycho-social and mental health in developed countries that have very high Human Development Index (HDI). Data trends show that compared to all contacts received per year, contacts from adolescents on psycho-social mental health rose from 15% in 2006 to 21% in 2012. These contacts are more prevalent in regions where the impact of the economic crisis has been significant.

The correlation between the onset of the global economic crisis and reports of psycho-social mental health issues is striking. Disaggregated data on issues such as depression, fear and anxiety, suicidal tendencies and self-harm show an increase of occurrence at the time of the economic upheaval. During 2007 – 2012 contacts on depression, fear and anxiety, suicidal tendencies and self-harm show striking. Disaggregated data on issues such as depression, fear and anxiety, suicidal tendencies and self-harm show an increase of occurrence at the time of the economic crisis. Generation Z – namely those born from 1995 to the present day – are largely unhappy. The current global economic situation is aggravating psycho-social mental health issues amongst young people as they face new challenges within their families and altered socio-economic realities.

Generation Z is highly connected to communication and media technology, which has empowered young people with ease of access to knowledge but makes them vulnerable to bullying, stalking and trolling in the virtual world.

Bullying has become increasingly dominant, especially through social media channels. In ten years over a million contacts were made to child helplines on bullying and cyber-bullying. Generally, more girls (58%) reported bullying compared to boys. The gravity of bullying in the lives of children and young people can be gauged from the fact that 28% of contacts made with child helplines in the past ten years on abuse and violence were related to bullying.

Web and mobile-based messages reach children and young people in the privacy of their own home, twenty-four hours a day making bullying inescapable and more impactful than in the past. As a result, an increasing number of child helplines state that they receive contacts on cyber-bullying. CHI began collecting data on cyber-bullying in 2011 and since then more than 30,017 contacts have been received by child helplines about this growing phenomenon. Contacts on cyber-bullying also demonstrate a similar trend in terms of the gender of victims - 71% of cyber-bullying cases that are reported to child helplines, are made by girls.

CALL FOR ACTION

The United Nations, multilateral organisations and governments should develop a comprehensive child protection policy to ensure the overall well-being of children and young people, minimising the impact of the economic crisis and social inequality, and ending the emerging menace of cyber-bullying.