Drivers of violence affecting children in Italy
Preliminary findings

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Multicountry study on the Drivers of Violence affecting children

- Coordinated by Unicef Innocenti Office of Research with the support of the University of Edinburgh
- It involves 4 countries: Peru, Vietnam, Zimbabwe and Italy
- In Italy the research is carried out by the Istituto degli Innocenti with the contribution of different stakeholders including the Department of Equal Opportunity, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the National Observatory for the Fight against Pedophilia, and key organizations and experts in the field
Methodology

Stage 1 Grounding the Programme: Identify Country Trends and Research Priorities

- **Systematic literature review**: 237 studies collected out of which 74 met the inclusion criteria about quality and reliability of the research
- **Secondary analysis of data sets** of a retrospective national survey (Bianchi and Moretti, 2006) which investigates previous cases of child abuse among Italian women between 19 and 60 years of age
- Analysis of 90 projects aimed at preventing violence against children
The phenomenon at a glance

Most reported violence against children occurs in families and is committed by parents.

- **Sexual abuse**
  - High prevalence of sexual abuse mainly within the family in two different national surveys: from 10% (Istat, 2015) to 33% (Bianchi and Moretti, 2006) women in Italy experienced sexual violence when they were minors. The closer the relationship between perpetrator and victim, the longer the duration of the abuse.
  - Adolescent girls are significantly more likely to report sexual abuse than boys overall according to social services and police records

- **Physical abuse**
  - In schools, bullying affects over 1/3 of students (11, 13 and 15 years) who have participated in acts of violence (WHO, Hbsc survey, 2010)
  - Italian fathers more than mothers say they believe in the educational value of corporal punishment especially for boys (Arace et al., 2013)

- **Emotional abuse**
  - Among children assisted by social services (2015), 20% have witnessed domestic violence and 50% is victim of physical and/or psychological neglect.
Protective and risk factors of violence in the family

Risk factors

- **Family isolation**, weak social networks, conflict, family norms around silence and blame (secondary analysis of national survey)
- **Witnessing domestic violence**
- **Previous experience of abuse**
- Deprived socio-economic conditions
- Lack of extended family support (especially for migrant families)

Protective factors

- positive **attachment bonds** between children and parents
- quality of couple relationship
- **women’s economic independence**
Emerging issues: 1) trafficking and child prostitution

a) Trafficking involving foreign born children

- For its geographical position Italy is one of the top European countries for trafficking of human beings, including children for sexual exploitation
- 21,975 (of which 1,171 child victims) of trafficking received services from social reintegration projects between 2000 and 2012 (Department of Equal Opportunities)
- **Emerging risk factors:**
  - poverty; entrapment;
  - fear and attachment to traffickers;
  - invisibility of trafficking victims and presence of criminal organisations
  - demand for sexual services

b) Child prostitution involving Italian-born children

Emerging risk factors

- material poverty of the families
- consequence of on-line grooming or sexting
- induced by the consumerist desire for consumption goods also for adolescents coming from wealthy families.
Emerging issues: 2) On-line violence

• Growing importance of violence through Internet and social media (e.g. grooming and sexting)

Emerging risk factors:
• Children and young people are often unaware of the risks of online sexual abuse
• Their vulnerability seems to be linked to experimentation or desire for adventure and to an exploration of sexuality
• Lack of parents supervision and skills
Emerging issues: 3) Bullying

• Bullying appears to decrease with age (WHO, Hbsc survey, 2010).

• Gender differences: boy bullies tend to be more physically aggressive, while girl bullies tend to resort to gossip, cyber bullying and exclusion (Menesini and Nocentini, 2007).

• Lack of confidence on how to handle violence: adults (both parents and teachers) appear uncertain about how to cope with bullying: 43% of parents didn’t know how to handle bullying (Telefono Azzurro, 2012) and the majority of teachers surveyed felt they were unprepared to deal with bullying (Di Vita et al, 2009).

• Not all children want help from their parents in dealing with bullying. Only 32.3% of children would like more guidance from their parents. (Telefono Azzurro and Eurispes, 2011)
Conclusions

• Most relevant forms of violence emerged in the literature review: violence in the family, trafficking for sexual exploitation, on-line violence, bullying.
• Strong engagement of the Italian public administration and civil society.
• Notwithstanding the comprehensive child protection system in place in Italy, violence against children remains a problem.
• Italian government recognises the relevance of carrying out an evaluation of interventions in order to better understand ‘what works’ and determine priority services vis-à-vis the current economic crisis.

• Final report will be completed in 2016 and available on http://www.unicef-irc.org/

Thank you for your attention!