



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
21 February 2022

English only

---

## Human Rights Council

Forty-ninth session

28 February–1 April 2022

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

### **Written statement\* submitted by Associazione Comunita Papa Giovanni XXIII, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[6 February 2022]

---

\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.



## **On the sale and sexual exploitation of children**

APG23 welcomes the report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and any other child sexual abuse material – A practical approach to addressing the sale and sexual exploitation of children. Hereby APG23 wishes to bring forward some points of reflection.

As suggested by the Global Report On Trafficking In Persons in 2020 children are an easy target of trafficking (1). It is reported that globally one in every three victims is a child. Regions such as West Africa, South Asia and Central America and the Caribbean report to have the higher share of children victims. This is due to a variety of factors particularly including a weak criminal justice system and socio-economic conditions of the countries.

When specifically referring to sexual exploitation, we must explicitly identify forms of such including child prostitution, child pornography and any other child sexual abuse material. High-income countries are absolutely not exempted from these violations. Communities' well-being and access to a dignified life and sense of well-being are central to this phenomenon (2). Difficult dysfunctional families, poverty and a lack of sense of belonging are often factors of vulnerability to trafficking exposure and literature confirms the often-round involvement of parents and siblings within these terrifying scenarios. As reported last October at the General Assembly, one must not forget that the systems of intervention are mainly directed at girls' victims omitting the alarming number of boys as subjects of trafficking and invisible to the support services (3). Numbers show that globally, 72% of victims of sexual exploitation are girls and 66% of victims of forced labour are boys (2020). These victims are often involved in related exploitations such as begging, criminal activities, drug trafficking and other crimes.

As widely reported, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the pattern of sexual exploitation and trafficking. Not only has the production of children-abusive online material increased, but it has also made orphans and migrating children prey to illegal adoptions and sale.

Migrant children and especially unaccompanied ones, face high risk of violence and related forms of abuse. Their fragility increases due to the limited access to safe migration services and the justice system. At the destination countries they are often victims to discrimination and sale. The harsh reality is characterised by multiple and overlapping causes. The consequences of this scenario on children's emotional, mental and physical health are severe and everlasting. On this matter, prevention mechanisms are crucial and fundamental to the mitigation of these risks and must include their protection from abuse and exploitation also in contexts of displacement (4). For this reason, a need for scaled-up social protection services and financial and human resources to protect them are a persistent need.

Alongside, there has been a wide increase of the phenomenon of exploitation of children from parents' victims of trafficking. Girls survivors of sexual exploitation and trafficking often become subject of manipulation and blackmailing. For this reason, they live in fear that their exploiters can take control and abuse their children and family of origin. "Some women tell us that their 'Madams' (5) use their children, both in Italy and in their country of origin, as a form of coercion to send them to the streets. They say: - 'I'll take care of him and when you come back you'll find him again' - ". These children are not only victims and witnesses of violence, but are also easy prey for traffickers particularly when their mothers attempt to leave the care circuit. Alongside, young girls are often falling into solicitation by loverboys (6). The latter, in fact, produces a psychological bond with the victim-mother and uses her, and related children, to force illegal adoption and exploitation. This particularly is seen in Northern Europe. Examples come from Germany and Austria, where the 'lover boy' coerces and threatens the mothers in order to misappropriate their government economic contributions for maternity. It is imperative to increase awareness campaigns tackling methods of solicitation to avoid the further growth of this phenomenon.

APG23 is highly concerned and active to tackle the issue of children's sexual exploitation focusing its work on the implementation of programs on prevention and protection from such violence. Early identification of minors' risks must be taken into growing consideration and actions focusing on prevention of these situations of vulnerability should be put in place. APG23 works through a multilevel approach to trauma and exploitation being convinced that

an intervention is required that starts by rethinking oneself and fostering the victims' full reintegration into society. As a matter of fact, interesting lessons can be taken from such experiences and projects particularly coming from the Italian and Chilean context.

Diving into the Italian experience of APG23 there have been successful results from programs using such a multilevel approach. These included education of both youth and adults as well as awareness raising campaigns. Attention has been put on children's protection through the development and strengthening of policy and legal frameworks, particularly including specialised training of operators. Positive outcomes have come from the implementation of care, recovery, and rehabilitation services including psychological and emotional support with shelter rehabilitation and counselling programs. Examples are projects called "Right Way" and "Miriam Migrant women free from gender-based violence". The first focuses on survivors of trafficking of Nigerian nationality, from recovery to autonomy by promoting integration pathways based on victim-centred and gender-specific approaches. As a result a booklet for operators was created in order to provide guidelines to the victims' social integration across some European countries. The second one involved seven Italian provinces through an awareness raising campaign on the matter involving drop-in first-reception services and counselling desks.

When moving onto the Chilean experience, APG23 has focused resources on prevention programs such as "The Programa de Prevencion Focalizada Acuarela". The objective of this program is to detect and diagnose the violation suffered by the child to then act upon it using the network of territorial community actors (social services, psychologists, courts, etc.) through damage reparation on children and related adults. With the use of art therapy the project focuses on various artistic media and creative processes for educational purposes, prevention, rehabilitation and personal development.

Eventually, it becomes increasingly clear how cooperation, synergy and liaison with the institutions are crucial to the fight against violence and abuse. A perspective of preventive solidarity is of utmost imperative in order to eliminate the root causes of children's sale and sexual exploitation, prostitution, and violations. Prevention, education and social inclusion are necessary to keep these children away from danger and violence. As Pope Francis reminds us: "The abuse of minors is a "psychological murder", it takes their childhood away. Therefore, the protection of children against sexual exploitation is a duty of every State. Also needed are reporting, prevention and efficacious help for the victims."

APG23 calls all actors, governments and civil society organisations to join efforts to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse as enshrined by art 19 of the CRC. International solidarity and the implementation of the Right to Development should set the hallmark of the next strategies in order to realise the full enjoyment of children's rights and act accordingly against all child's abuses. This can pave the way for a better future for every child.

---

(1) UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME Vienna. (2021, January). Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020 (No. E.20.IV.3). UNITED NATIONS New York, 2020. [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tip/2021/GLOTiP\\_2020\\_15jan\\_web.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tip/2021/GLOTiP_2020_15jan_web.pdf)

(2) UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME Vienna. (2021, January). Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020 (No. E.20.IV.3). UNITED NATIONS New York, 2020. [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tip/2021/GLOTiP\\_2020\\_15jan\\_web.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tip/2021/GLOTiP_2020_15jan_web.pdf)

(3) Grave Violations against Children 'Alarming High' During Pandemic, Experts Warn, as Third Committee Delegates Appeal for Greater Prevention Measures | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases. (2021, October). <https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/gashc4320.doc.htm>

(4) (2020). The Sale and Sexual Exploitation of Children: Migration, Miscellanea

(5) A woman who manages a brothel, escort service or other prostitution establishment. She may work alone or in collaboration with other traffickers. See: <https://sharedhope.org/the-problem/trafficking-terms/>

(6) ‘Loveboys’ (or romeo pimps) are human traffickers who usually operate by trying to make young girls or boys fall in love with them. Sometimes they manipulate young people in other ways. Once they have victims under their influence they exploit them, for instance in the sex industry - Dutch government