



Република Србија
Republic of Serbia
Министарство унутрашњих послова
Ministry of Interior



STREET INVOLVED CHILDREN IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE

7-8 June 2011

Introduction:

Over the past twenty years, the Western Balkan region has experienced profound institutional, economic and social change. Some of the most significant consequences of these successive upheavals have been the rise in poverty levels and the emergence of new forms of social exclusion.

One of the most vulnerable and invisible groups of children in the region are street involved children. According to UNICEF's definition, these are children who *"have not reached adulthood, for whom the street in the widest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, and so on, has become his or her habitual abode and/or source of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, directed, and supervised by responsible adults"*. Specifically, these are homeless children, children who work on the streets during the day and return to their families at night; but also children who live with their families on the street. These children usually generate some income by selling various things or providing certain services (shoe shining, windshield cleaning, playing musical instruments, etc) or begging. They are self-organized or are under some supervision by their families or other persons. The main characteristic is that the street plays an important role and that these children spend most of the time there, thus exposed to risks, such as exploitation, trafficking or other similar criminal activities. They are often sold and traded among human traffickers and become victims of or are involved in illegal activities (Children Speak Out, Serbia Report under phase two of the Child Trafficking Response Program (CTRP) 2007.)

Save the Children and its partners in seven SEE countries, under the auspices of the Regional Child Trafficking Response Program, (CTRP)¹ carried out extensive quantitative research on risk and resilience during the second phase of the Program (2006-08). Some of the key findings from this research showed that children who live and work on the streets are especially vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse, including internal and cross-border trafficking. The research findings further provided acknowledgment of the acute need to recognize street children as children first and foremost. Although efforts have been made in addressing their everyday realities across the region, there is still an inadequate regional approach to the issue; coordinated responses to safeguard these children remain dismal.

¹ The Regional Child Trafficking Response Program (CTRP) initially began its first phase in 2002 and over a three-year period addressed the issue of child trafficking pertaining to prevention, identification and support to victims. Based on this initial experience, extensive qualitative research on "Risk and Resilience" was carried out during the second phase (2006-2008). The third and final phase (2009-2011) includes seven countries from the region. Its current aims are to apply knowledge gained from the previous research and establish effective models of support and protection services to at risk and trafficked children and adolescents. The CTRP is managed by Save the Children in Albania and is co-funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Oak Foundation.



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The CTRP has contributed to fill some of the existing gaps when it comes to protecting children on the street, through provision of services (Drop in Centers and outreach programs). In Belgrade, Serbia, a Drop-in-Center is managed by a local NGO and partially supported by the local Government, while in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, a Daily Centre for street children is active within the Center for Social Services of Canton Sarajevo. In addition to providing tailor-made services to children, efforts have also been placed on advocating with policy makers of making street children more visible on the political landscape.

To boost regional cooperation, the CTRP supported the creation and establishment of an informal network of actors working with and for street children in 2010. The overall objective of this network is to promote and advocate for the fulfillment of the rights of street children and to improve their quality of life. The network called for a wider regional forum, which would gather relevant actors to develop a solid platform for awareness raising and networking. The necessity for cooperation and regional coordination in addressing cases of street involved children who are on the move within the SEE region was recognized during the regular regional meeting of the network of National Coordinators in Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (Budva, Montenegro, 2009.) The issue of street involved children came up on the agenda and as one of the recommendations for further action of National Coordinators. Since the two initiatives came from different actors, CTRP members agreed to merge the two initiatives and organize a joint regional event where relevant regional government and civil sector would be invited.

Regional cooperation will provide for an ideal platform for coordinating efforts between existing initiatives, as well as for furthering multiplier effects at all levels. It is expected that the various joint actions and exchanges of experience on measures undertaken will significantly contribute to improved future planning and management of the problems targeting all relevant professionals and policy makers in the region.

The foreseen conference will build upon a global approach to addressing street children who are regarded as a mobile group or “on the move”. Voluntarily or forced, they are children who often migrate internally or across borders, transiting within SEE countries. Having in mind one of the key recommendations from the 2010 "Children on the Move" conference organized by the Global Movement for Children (GMFC) in Barcelona, Spain, it is necessary to encourage cross border coordination and learning between geographical areas and within countries.²

The informal regional network for street children will be further strengthened and encouraged to take a leading role in creating and advocating for children’s best interest in their own countries and beyond.

Purpose and Structure of the Conference:

The conference will encourage cross-border coordination and learning between SEE countries, but also strengthen vertical coordination and collaboration within and across different levels (regional,

² Global ‘Children on the Move’ Conference, Barcelona, Spain 5-7 October 2010 - Save the Children’s messages and recommendations



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national and local), as well as horizontally between key ministerial departments and sectors (welfare, health, education, labour, justice and migration) in order to address the protection needs of street children and identify durable solutions.

During the first day of the conference, all participants will be gathered to discuss the position of street involved children in SEE, while the conference will be followed by operational meetings of both the informal Regional Network for street children and the Annual National Coordinators' meeting. On the second day, the two groups of participants, based on the recommendation from the day 1, will set-out and agree on specific priorities and general recommendations for action to all Governments in the region.

The conference will be followed up through two different mechanisms:

- 1) Recommendations will be adopted by the National Coordinators in Combating Trafficking in Human Beings who are in charge of implementation, and
- 2) The Regional Network for street children will become fully functional with strengthened coordination capacity and clearly defined goals, priorities and recommendations for further action.

Expected outcomes:

- Reinforced and comprehensive understanding of the issue of street involved children, developed among relevant stakeholders.
- Effective models of support and protection services to street involved children identified.
- Improved dialogue between CSOs and Government representatives, with a regional network of agencies mandated to deliver effective interventions based on exchange of experience and lessons learned
- Recognized need for protection of street involved children identified by committed agencies to deliver effective interventions based on exchange of experience and lessons learned.
- Agreed coordinated regional and national platforms aimed at designing and implementing policies to improve protection of street involved children in national legislations.

Venue and participants:

The conference will be held, from 7-8 June 2011 at Palata Serbia, Hall Yugoslavia (Mihaila Pupina Blvd.2), in Belgrade, Serbia and will include 2 segments: the programmatic conference and specific meetings of professionals





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Partnerships:

The conference is part of the Regional Child Trafficking Response Program (CTRP), funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Oak Foundation. The conference will be organized by Save the Children Norway in cooperation with the OSCE Mission to Serbia, the Serbian Ministry for Interior Affairs and the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI).

