<table>
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<tr>
<th>Current Americas and Caribbean members - 40 members in 26 countries</th>
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<td>• Teléfono ANAR Perú</td>
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<td>• Positive Connection St. Martin</td>
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<tr>
<td>• KJT Sint Maarten</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Childline Trinidad and Tobago</td>
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<td>• Línea Azul Uruguay</td>
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<td>• Boys Town USA</td>
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<td>• California Youth Crisis Line USA</td>
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<td>• Child Abuse Hotline USA</td>
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<td>• Covenant House USA</td>
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<td>• National Runaway Switchboard USA</td>
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<td>• Trevor Project USA</td>
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<th>Associate members</th>
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<td>• Friends Hotline Antigua and Barbuda</td>
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<td>• Línea 123 Costa Rica</td>
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<td>• INDESUI Dominican Republic</td>
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<td>• CNRM Ecuador</td>
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<td>• Teléfono Amigo El Salvador</td>
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<td>• Procuraduría de Derechos Humanos Guatemala</td>
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<td>• Jurimedia Haiti</td>
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<td>• Children’s Coalition of Jamaica Jamaica</td>
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<td>• Tu línea 147 Panama</td>
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<td>• Fono Ayuda Paraguay</td>
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<td>• MAYS USA</td>
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<td>• Polaris Project USA</td>
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Global Network of Child Helplines: Americas and Caribbean Membership as of April 2013

126 million contacts

2003 - 2013

GIVING A VOICE TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WORLDWIDE
Global Network of Child Helplines: Americas and Caribbean Membership as of April 2013

Current Americas and Carribean members - 40 members in 26 countries

- Teléfono ANARI Perú
- Positive Connection St. Martin
- KJT Sint Maarten
- California Youth Crisis Line USA
- Child Abuse Hotline USA
- National Runaway Switchboard USA
- Stop It Now USA
- Trevor Project USA
- 2nd Floor USA

Associate members

- Friends Hotline Antigua and Barbuda
- Educational Brazil
- Línea 123 Costa Rica
- INDESUI Dominican Republic
- CNRA Ecuador
- Teléfono Amigo El Salvador
- Procuraduria de Derechos Humanos Guatemala
- Jurimedia Haiti
- Children's Coalition of Jamaica Jamaica
- Tu línea 147 Panama
- Fono Ayuda Paraguay
- MAPS USA
- Polaris Project USA

27 members in 15 countries
- Línea 102 CABA Argentina
- Línea 102 Provincia Echa Argentina
- Teléfono Pa Rubensul Aruba
- Ali 1237 Brazil
- Safeguard Brazil
- HelpHelp Canada
- Teljunes Canada
- Fono Infancia Chile
- Corporación Colombia
- Línea 106 Colombia
- Poderes de Cariñoso Curaçao Curaçao
- Casa Alianza México
- Teléfono ANARI México
- Línea 133 Nicaragua
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13 associate member child helplines in 12 countries
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- Educacional Brazil
- Línea 123 Costa Rica
- INDESUI Dominican Republic
- CNRA Ecuador
- Teléfono Amigo El Salvador
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The Americas and Caribbean

1971
The Convention on the Rights of the Child goes into effect.

1971
A dedicated Child helpline in the region, Hotline Surinam, becomes operational.

1989
The Convention on the Rights of the Child is adopted.

1991
The American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is signed.

2003
Child Helpline International is founded in Amsterdam with 46 child helpline member countries in 40 countries.

2004
The Americas and Caribbean Regional Consultation meeting was held in Panama City, Panama, December 2003.

2006
The Americas and Caribbean Regional Consultation was held under the Mexican Presidency of the Americas in May.

2009
The Americas and Caribbean Regional Consultation was held in Lima, Peru from the 7-9th November.

2010
The Americas and Caribbean Regional Consultation was held in the Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina in May.

2011
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2012
The Fifth International Consultation of Child Helplines is held in Durban, South Africa.

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**THE AMERICAS AND CARIBBEAN**

1994 **Child Helpline International (CHI)** is founded in Amsterdam with 46 child helpline members in 46 countries.

1996 The first international (CHI) meeting of child helplines is held in Rome, Italy.

2001 International meeting of child helplines in Pune, India gives the idea of the Child Helpline International (CHI).

2003 Child Helpline International (CHI) is founded in Amsterdam with 96 child helpline members in 66 countries.

2006 CHI has grown to 74 full member associates and 10 full member countries by the end of the year. 27 child helplines from 35 developing countries.

2007 CHI launches its fifth anniversary.

2008 CHI celebrates its fifth anniversary in Cairo, Egypt.

2009 CHI signs a Memorandum of Understanding with United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and UN International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and UNICEF.

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Dear Readers,

In the opening remarks of the Inter-American Children’s Institute Directing Council Meeting of the Organization of American States, which I attended in September 2012, the issue of violence and inequality in the Americas and Caribbean was highlighted. This publication with data collected and analysed by Child Helpline International, confirms that over the past decade children and young people have consistently contacted child helplines on issues such as abuse and violence, peer relationships and family relationships. As I look at the trends in the data from this region, it shows an increase in the number of calls for support on social issues faced by children, young people and their families. Issues that have been ongoing for many years but which can also be attributed to the recent financial and economic crises.

Recently the economic and financial crises has placed a significant additional strain on children and young people. Calls about problems in the family home due to unemployment, about poverty, domestic violence, substance addiction, child trafficking and denial of access to services, healthcare and education ring loud alarm bells. The frequency of contacts on every form of abuse, especially inflicted on girls, has also increased since 2009.

Child helplines from the Americas and Caribbean have always been at the forefront of child protection, providing children and young people with access to counselling and assistance when they are in need. This publication Voices of children and youth in the Americas and Caribbean, shows that more than 126 million contacts were made to child helplines worldwide in the past ten years, of these over 8.5 million were in the Americas and Caribbean.

I strongly believe that child helplines empower children to take control of their lives and resolve problems as much as possible. They also function as an early warning system to politicians and policymakers, a social barometer that cannot be ignored and which shines a light on one of society’s most vulnerable groups. We have a duty to the next generation of our societies to listen and act on these messages.

This publication highlights the voices of children and young people growing up in our communities, encountering joy and problems, but also hardship and experiences in their childhood and adolescence that will shape them for the rest of their lives. They are the region’s 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 dignified life.

That is why I personally urge you, politicians, policy and decision makers and partners to read Voices of children and youth in the Americas and Caribbean. It contains a wealth of information, stories and trends. Please urgently take it to heart and listen to the voices of children and young people in all your work.

Nenita La Rose
Executive Director
Child Helpline International
In the past ten years **more than 126 million contacts** were made with child helplines around the world using telephone, drop-in services and other forms of technology such as online chat, text messages and email. Of these, **over 8.5 million contacts** were made with child helplines in the Americas and Caribbean.

In recent years, a number of child helplines in the region have experienced extreme financial hardship and have had to close down or reduce their working hours. While child helplines have made tremendous efforts to raise funding for their purpose, with governments and other parties, this does not always yield results. Essentially, this has had an effect on the lives of children and their access to vital child protection services.

Analysis of the collated data shows that some of the issues, problems and fears of children and young people have remained consistent over the past decade. In the Americas and Caribbean the highest numbers of contacts were about abuse and violence (13%), peer relationships (20%), family relations (15%), and psycho-social and mental issues (27%).

Information collected from child helplines over the last ten years highlights the harsh realities faced by many children and young people in the Americas and Caribbean. Data reveals that some issues have remained prevalent such as abuse, violence, neglect, and psycho-social and mental health issues.

The data demonstrates that other emerging issues are influencing the lives of children and young people, especially because of the financial crisis. Since then, contacts made by children and young people with child helplines have risen, especially on topics related to social services, child sexual exploitation and trafficking, cyber-bullying and discrimination.

Children and young people face abuse and violence at home and also in schools. **Contacts related to abuse and violence have steadily increased over the last decade.** Over 100,000 children and young people contacted child helplines in the
Warning Signs

- Abuse and violence represent almost one in five contacts made with child helplines.
- Teachers and peers perpetrate a large proportion of abuse and violence.
- Large numbers of children and young people in the region suffer from psycho-social and mental health problems such as self-harm, suicidal tendencies and depression.
- Children are increasingly contacting child helplines because their social needs are not being met.
- Discrimination is becoming more frequent.
- Child trafficking and child exploitation is an alarming problem in the region.
- Cyber-bullying is more rampant in the region.
the Americas and Caribbean << rewind >>

CHILD HELPLINES PROVIDING SUPPORT IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

Child helplines extend their services in times of conflict or in situations of natural disasters. In the past ten years a number of countries in the Americas and Caribbean region suffered hardships; economic crisis, conflict, disease and natural disasters. Throughout all of these difficult times child helpline staff and volunteers have found the resilience to stay operational – in order to meet the needs of children and young people in humanitarian situations. Some examples include:

- In Brazil heavy rains hit Rio de Janeiro resulting in mudslides and floods. Many children contacted the Brazilian child helpline 123Alô to express how the disaster affected them.
- In 2010, the US helpline Covenant House Nine line responded immediately to the hurricane crisis by increasing helpline capacity and support and catering to the needs of the public in the aftermath.
- In Colombia, Helpline Corpolatin 106 extended its service to awareness raising on prevention of recruitment of child soldiers for the armed conflict.

Barbara de Prado, Regional Representative for The Americas and Caribbean Fundación ANAR - Peru

Americas and Caribbean region about physical abuse. Contacts on sexual abuse increased from 15% in 2007 to 16% in 2012. It is shocking that in over 60% of abuse cases reported by children and young people, a family member or a member of the extended family was named as the perpetrator.

In schools, children are subjected to abuse and violence from their peers and teachers. Specifically, cases of sexual abuse are reportedly committed by male teachers, whereas female teachers are often responsible for emotional and physical abuse. Peers are also named as the perpetrators of violent and abusive acts. One in five cases of abuse and violence is perpetrated by a peer. Over 89,000 contacts were received from child helplines in the Americas and Caribbean region on the issue of bullying, a majority of which takes place in the school environment.

Many children and young people in the Americas and Caribbean struggle with and suffer from psycho-social problems. Almost 90,000 children and young people have contacted child helplines in the Americas and Caribbean region regarding suicidal tendencies. Depression and contacts on self-harm are increasing rapidly. Contacts on depression rose from 12% in 2003 to 20% in 2012. In 2003 there were no contacts regarding self-mutilation, however in 2012, self-harm represented 13% of the total contacts made on psycho-social issues. Girls are also more prone to self-harm when compared to boys.
The economic crisis has meant that children and young people are faced with new challenges in their personal and social lives. During 2007-2011, some 45,000 children in the Americas and Caribbean contacted child helplines seeking shelter. In 2003 there were hardly any contacts about access to health services, but in 2012 child helplines in the region received 1162 contacts on this issue. The number of children contacting child helplines for support in obtaining birth certificates tripled during 2003 to 2012 and currently represents one in twenty contacts on legal matters.

Contacts from children and young people about discrimination related issues such as access to education and employment or racism are becoming more frequent. During 2003-2012 enquiries about access to education rose from 0 to 153, and during the same period children or young people who reported being discriminated against, due to physical or mental health problems, rose to 70%. Girls contacted child helplines on these issues more than boys.

One of the most worrying trends in the Americas and Caribbean region is an increase in contacts concerning the trafficking and sexual exploitation of children. During 2003 – 2008 there were hardly any contacts on child trafficking however in 2009 child trafficking represented 29% of all contacts made on commercial exploitation in the Americas and Caribbean. Linked to that are contacts on child sexual exploitation, which have also risen significantly from 5% in 2003 to 40% in 2012. These alarming trends need immediate attention.

Cyber-bullying has become rampant in young people’s lives. Rapid growth in technology, especially internet access is empowering children and young people, but it is also becoming a threat. In the past, bullying was limited to the streets or schools, and now it has invaded their private space. Child helplines in the region have started collecting data on cyber-bullying for the past three years. In 2010 there were no contacts on this subject however in 2011 and 2012, over 700 cases were reported by children and young people.
The financial crisis affects child helpline operations

» The issues identified by callers are increasing in severity. Callers are receiving less response from their local Child Protection Services and investigations are not occurring as often as they would have done in the past. There has been a significantly higher level of system failure, due to state budget costs. « A CHILD HELPLINE

Since 2009, in the aftermath of the financial crisis, child helplines are facing challenges in keeping their services running. The crisis has induced large cutbacks in project and operational support, affecting child helpline operations. Child helplines in all corners of the region have reduced their opening hours and rely more on volunteers as a consequence of large staff reductions. Child helplines also note a reduction in quantity and quality of allied child protection services, making it more difficult to refer children and to follow up on cases properly. This is a worrisome trend in child protection.

» We would not be operating if it was not for our volunteers, who stepped up in a major way during our recent lay-offs. « A CHILD HELPLINE
2012 DURBAN RESOLUTIONS ON THE ROLE OF CHILD HELPLINES IN CHILD PROTECTION

Gathered in Durban, South Africa on 20 November, child helplines operating in 136 countries adopted the Durban Resolutions. Child helplines call upon all stakeholders in governments, agencies and the private sector to:

- Recognise child helplines’ unique capacity to bring the voices of children to bear on strengthening child protection;
- Partner with child helplines to ensure that they are sustainable and accessible for all children free of charge; and,
- Ensure that the post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include the protection and empowerment of children and young people.

It is evident from the trends observed that child helplines are an important mechanism for monitoring the issues that children face. In the Americas and Caribbean, child helplines are, and will continue to be, an access point for children and young people to be heard, empowered and to receive the protection that they need. Data collected in the region over the past ten years shows that children and young people need care and protection in various spheres of their lives.

Governments and civil society need to step up, consider the data gathered by child helplines and align their policies and programmes to respond to the needs of children and young people. Failure to protect children and young people from the threats of abuse and violence, exploitation, and poverty will have lasting effects that would potentially hamper them from developing into productive citizens and contributing to society.

>> Coordination amongst Member States, the private sector and other interested stakeholders is essential in order to avoid the duplication of efforts in child protection. To this end, CITEL has been working with Child Helpline International since 2011 to promote and increase the use of child protection strategies which will assist children and adolescents in all Member States of the Americas. << CLOVIS BAPTISTA, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF CITEL
Increasing Abuse and Violence

Abuse, violence and neglect have consistently been the most common reasons for children and young people in the Americas and Caribbean to contact child helplines. One in seven of all contacts made with child helplines, or 13% of all contacts in the region, were about abuse and violence. The economic crisis appears to have exacerbated the problem as contacts on these issues have spiralled since 2007.

Physical abuse is the most commonly reported form of violence, with over 100,000 contacts in the region since 2003. Over 50,000 contacts were regarding sexual abuse, neglect and emotional abuse respectively. Predominantly, girls reported more sexual and emotional abuse, while boys complained of suffering physical abuse and bullying. The economic crisis in the region has had a definite impact on the lives of children and young people. The number of contacts about physical abuse has more than doubled since 2009 (from 7,193 in 2009 to 16,667 in 2012), indicating an increase in incidents of violence against children.

CHI data shows that in the majority of cases family members are reported to be responsible for violence against children and young people. In more than half the cases of abuse, members of the immediate family, a parent or a sibling were mentioned as the perpetrator. Nearly three-quarters of physical abuse cases (71%) and almost two thirds of sexual abuse cases (62%) involved a parent or a sibling.

Data also demonstrates that family members were reported to be responsible for 88% of all the emotional abuse cases. In almost all the cases of neglect, immediate and extended members of the family were reported to be responsible.

Most cases of abuse involved male perpetrators, particularly in 97% of sexual abuse cases. Women were responsible for 59% of the cases of neglect and over 50% of the reports of emotional abuse. Alarming, one in five girls and similarly one in ten boys reported that they were abused by their fathers. According to the data, girls report more cases of sexual abuse (77%) to child helplines than boys.
**Case:** Isabelle (11), called a child helpline to talk about the sexual abuse that she had been experiencing. “Please help me. I don’t know what to do... I want it to stop. I feel so upset at times. It really bothers me. I don’t want this anymore. He touches me and it feels wrong.” Her uncle had been touching her inappropriately for the last two years. Isabelle had talked to the school counsellor but nothing had happened. The child helpline counsellor explored options together with her. Luckily, Isabelle said that she trusted her mother with whom she was living. Together, on the phone, Isabelle and the counsellor talked to her mother about the situation. The mother was shocked to hear what had happened. The three of them agreed that the police should be informed. The counsellor connected them with a police officer to investigate the matter further.

**WARNING SIGNS**

- Abuse and violence against children and young people has spiralled since the onset of the economic crisis.
- Family members are responsible for a substantial number of abuse and violence cases.
- Girls and boys report sexual, emotional, and physical abuse. Boys suffer from physical abuse, while girls report more on sexual abuse.
Challenges at school

Schools should be an environment for learning, free from abuse and violence. For many children and young people in the Americas and Caribbean region this is not the case. Children and young people struggle with issues such as homework, the attitude of the teachers and increasingly bullying. Child helplines have received many contacts on violence and abuse perpetrated by teachers and bullying by peers.

Over half a million contacts in the whole region were about school related issues and most of these were made by girls. Analysis of the data on school related issues shows that 43% of these contacts were about academic problems, 18% about issues with teachers, and 10% regarding performance anxiety. Alarmingly, in 2007 there was an increase in contacts from children and young people who wanted to drop out of school altogether.

Teachers were indicated as perpetrators in 3% of violence and abuse cases. Of those cases, 29% concerned emotional abuse, 40% physical abuse, 21% sexual abuse, and 12% bullying. Data also shows that male teachers commit sexual violence, whereas female teachers are responsible for emotional and physical abuse.

Peers were involved in 9% of the cases of physical and sexual abuse and in more than 9% of the cases of emotional abuse. Bullying is a menace at schools, demonstrated by the fact that child helplines in the region received over 90,000 contacts on this issue. Nearly all bullying in the region is perpetrated by peers (93%). More than half of the bullying takes place at school (90%). In two thirds of cases, girls reported that it was emotional bullying (68%), while boys most commonly said it was physical (50%).

As part of our data collection and recording about reasons why children and young people contact a child helpline, we are considering adding a category on: ‘institutional violence’, this is because we have seen a large increase in bad practices from educational, judicial and health care institutions.
**Case:** Lucia (14), calls the child helpline. She is in tears. “I thought it would stop when I changed schools, but it just continued because they are on the same school bus. It happens every day. They never leave me alone! They call me names and push me around. One time they cut off my hair! They also take my school bag and throw it out of the bus.” The child helpline counsellor listens to Lucia and makes sure she is free to express her emotions and feels understood. Together Lucia and the child helpline counsellor explore ways in which she can gain confidence and make the bullying stop. “I think I can talk to the school counsellor. I will also talk to my mother to see if I can take a different bus to school.”

**WARNING SIGNS**

- **Children and young people do not feel safe in schools.**
- **Teachers commit acts of violence and abuse.**
- **Peers are responsible for one in five cases of violence and abuse.**
- **Bullying in schools is increasing in the region.**
Psycho-social and mental distress

Many children and young people contact child helplines in moments of despair, at times when they are contemplating suicide or are indulging in self-harm. Over the past ten years child helplines in the Americas and Caribbean have received almost 300,000 contacts from children and young people reaching out in a time of psycho-social and mental distress.

In the past decade close to 90,000 contacts have been made about suicide alone and this appears to be a rising trend. Suicide is frequently attributed to depression and the number of contacts from children and young people expressing desperation, hopelessness and anguish have risen considerably. In 2003 depression accounted for 12% of the contacts categorised under psycho-social mental health issues, this increased to 20% in 2012. Issues such as lack of confidence are related and have also become more common in recent years, growing from 0% of all the contacts on psycho-social mental health in 2007 to 11% in 2012.

Self-harm is an addictive coping mechanism and a way of expressing deep distress by intentionally self-injuring one’s body. Contacts on self-harm have steadily increased over the past ten years and are now more common than before. In 2003 there were no contacts on self-harm. In 2012 a child helpline in the region on average received 1 contact a day on this issue (in 2012 alone 4,975 contacts). The data shows girls are seven times more likely to contact child helplines on this issue compared to boys.

» In 2011 we had an increase in contacts concerning suicide. As suicide cases are not widely publicised in our country this is an interesting trend. It is definitely a new category for our child helpline. «

A CHILD HELPLINE
Case: Teddy (14), says that he feels very depressed at times and that he is contemplating suicide. “Since my father and uncle died, I feel so sad. Everything feels so hard. I don’t care about anything anymore. I don’t want to go on” The child helpline counsellor listens carefully to Teddy’s story. He says that his mother had taken him to a psychologist, but this had not made a difference. He still feels the same. Together with the counsellor Teddy identifies that he is suffering from severe depression and discusses opportunities to visit a psychiatrist.

WARNING SIGNS

- Children and young people are becoming increasingly distressed and are contemplating suicide.
- Contacts on depression are growing rapidly.
- Self-harm has registered an increase as children and young people are trying to cope with distress and depression.
- Girls in the region are taking part in self-harm more than boys.
Voices of Children and Youth in the Americas and Caribbean

Children face violence in different forms, and in many cases, without witnesses, or if they do exist, they are not always willing to protect children or to report incidents. Children are suffering from violence mostly at the hands of adults, who should be protecting their rights.

Helplines are valuable because they provide children and young people with the opportunity and means to report facts or concerns anonymously, when it is convenient for them and in the knowledge that they can speak freely and privately. When children choose to speak out about abuse, it is extremely important that we listen. Children who make these contacts to child helplines show that they are choosing to pursue a decent quality of life.

In order to ensure that children achieve this decent quality of life, the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides the opportunity to take action in order to guarantee the integral protection of children and young people in our continent. This commitment has been ratified, by countries through laws, public domestic policies and aid programs for children. This data publication from Child Helpline International (CHI) gives an accurate account of the existing gaps for child protection in our region, which deserve our attention.

Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, paragraph one, states that “States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures 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, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.” This reaffirms the special attention given to the issue of violence against children and young people by the main authorities of regional, national and international bodies such as the United Nations, in addition to the organisations who work directly to protect children’s rights.

In the same article, paragraph two, the establishment of protection measures is recommended that should, “as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programs to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement.”

In the Americas and Caribbean we are making progress, for example, many countries already have child helplines run by civil society organisations who require support from government bodies. Some governments have decided to directly assume the responsibility by offering child helplines as part of an integrated national child protection system.
This report from CHI reveals the progress made by the different protection systems, how many children and young people have been assisted, the issues that they face and what they demand from us, as adults, society and governments. Furthermore, this report provides a better idea of the type of protection children really need, how we can restitute their rights, and what actions should be taken in the future. Lastly, and most importantly, this publication allows us to praise those children that decided to speak out about the issues they face and who continue to chose to trust a friendly child helpline.

This is an important report that helps us understand how a helpline can contribute to integrated child protection systems. I strongly encourage governments and civil society to use the information to improve the services they provide, to expand public policies and to strengthen child protection systems in the continent.

Sara Oviedo, office of Vice President of the Committee on the Rights of the Child of the United Nations, for Latin America and the Caribbean region

» Child helplines enable children to anonymously seek help from well trained personnel and they can reach out to children and give them the advice and support they need and are entitled to. Moreover, through their numerous contacts with children child helplines generate valuable data and information about manifestations of violence and risk factors aggravating their occurrence. Governments and other stakeholders alike should benefit from these insights when shaping action to prevent and respond to violence against children.

MARTA SANTOS PAIS, SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN
Social problems on the rise

The Americas and Caribbean is a socially and economically diverse region. Irrespective of economic prosperity, children and young people in all countries of the region face hardships. Since 2007, when the economic crisis began to unfold, all countries have experienced its impact. Data collected since 2003 shows the impact of the crisis on children and young people.

During 2007-2011 the number of contacts regarding missing children more than doubled from 2,274 almost 5,000 contacts. Another 43,975 contacts were made by children and young people seeking shelter during this period. The number of children and young people asking for food has also increased from zero in 2007 to more to 100 a year in 2011. The majority of the contacts on this issue were in the USA and Canada. Substance addiction is also becoming a pressing issue. During the past ten years a total of 25,853 contacts were received by child helplines on the topic, a number which continues to increase.

Birth registration is the first legal acknowledgment of a child’s life that allows him or her to claim their civil, political and economic rights. More children and young people are asking child helplines about birth registration, during the period 2003-2007 these contacts more than doubled. An average of 155 contacts were received annually on birth registration in the region. In addition, access to health care is a problem for an increasing number of children and young people. Five in every hundred of the contacts to child helplines (5%) were related to physical health. Before 2009 there were less than 200 contacts on this issue per year, but since then these have been consistently over 400.

Case: “I’m calling from a pay phone right now. I really would like some help, but I’m not sure if you are the right person to talk to.” Olivia (15) called the child helpline at night. “I ran away from home two weeks ago. We had terrible, terrible fights and I just left. I couldn’t stay there anymore.” Olivia said she had been living on the streets since then. “I don’t feel safe. I want the situation to change, but I also don’t want to go back home.” Together Olivia and the child helpline counsellor discussed options. They decided to call a local shelter. A call was placed by the child helpline to the shelter, and transportation was arranged for Olivia.

WARNING SIGNS

- The number missing children is rising.
- More children and young people are asking for shelter.
- Substance abuse amongst young people has increased.
- Reports on denial of access to services, healthcare and education have increased.
**The most important category registered in the past years concerns a complexity of situations that stem from parents using drugs.**

* A CHILD HELPLINE
Discrimination

Children and young people in the Americas and Caribbean are facing increased discrimination while trying to access the services that they are entitled to. They are being denied education, basic healthcare, housing and medical services, reportedly due to their ethnicity, physical and mental health, gender, language, sexual orientation or disability.

Over the past ten years, more than 1,300 contacts were received on immigration related discrimination. Children and young people contacted child helplines to talk about instances where prejudice, inequality and intolerance had occurred due to the child’s citizenship, immigration status or national origin. The number of children and young people contacting child helplines to express problems relating to discrimination in access to education rose from eight contacts during 2003 – 2007 to 346 contacts in the following five years. During the same period, an average of 100 contacts was received per year on racism related issues, and the number of children discriminated against because of their mental and physical health problems increased by 60%.

Data shows that boys predominantly contacted child helplines regarding issues related to immigration, employment and racism. Girls were more likely to seek help in cases of discrimination related to mental and physical health and access to education.

WARNING SIGNS

- Immigration related discrimination poses real challenges for children and young people.
- Children and young people in the Americas and Caribbean region are denied access to education.
- More boys than girls contacted child helplines on issues related to discrimination.

In 2011 Teléfono ANAR Peru established a child helpline in Quechua. Teléfono ANAR expanded its services to reach a marginalised group and provide integral development of the Quechua speaking population. The organisation was recognised by the United Nations for its efforts. Similarly in Canada, Kids Help Phone provides special catered services with children and young people living in native American communities and makes sure that all children living in Canada can access the child helpline.
FWD 2. Contacts on Discrimination made to child helplines in the Americas and Caribbean region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Access to Education</th>
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<th>Immigration Related</th>
<th>Mental and Physical Health</th>
<th>Racism Related</th>
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<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<td>0%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Commercial Exploitation

One of the most worrying trends emerging from data collected in the Americas and Caribbean region is the increase in contacts concerning commercial exploitation, mostly on the child trafficking and sexual exploitation of children. Child helpline data confirms the findings of the United Nations that trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation is more frequent than trafficking for forced labour.

Since the outbreak of the economic crisis, the number of contacts that child helplines in the Americas and Caribbean received on different issues related to commercial exploitation have significantly increased. During the period 2003 – 2008 there were hardly any contacts on child trafficking. In 2009 the number of contacts on trafficking peaked to 29% of all contacts on commercial exploitation. Since then, there has been a steady increase in the number of contacts on this topic. Simultaneously the number of contacts on child sexual exploitation has risen dramatically from 5% in 2003 to 33% of the contacts on commercial exploitation in 2012. This child helpline data shows that both issues deserve immediate attention.

An increase in contacts regarding the issue of child trafficking and sexual exploitation of children not only highlights this as a growing phenomenon, it also showcases the importance of accessibility to child helplines for children and young people who are displaced or trafficked for exploitation. Over the ten year period child helplines have received more than 2400 contacts on these issues together. These numbers are even more alarming considering that there exists a general underreporting of this crime due to its cross-border nature and lack of access to services for trafficked children and young people.

Case: “Please help me, please help me. I need to get away from here. I don’t know who else to ask for help.” Tino (12), said he was calling from a neighbour’s house. He had been locked into his uncle’s house for several months and had been forced to work as a housekeeper. He had finally managed to escape. “My father gave me away to my uncle. He doesn’t care for me at all. My mother is dead and my grand-mother used to beat me. I don’t know who to turn to.” The child helpline counsellor listened to Tino and his story. The counsellor also spoke to the neighbour, and assured both of them that what had happened was illegal. As it was a severe case of exploitation the child helpline’s social workers went to fetch the boy, and placed him in a shelter.

WARNING SIGNS

- Child trafficking has significantly increased in the past 5 years.
- Commercial sexual exploitation is rising dramatically.
- Most contacts on sexual exploitation are made by girls.
FWD 3. Contacts on Commercial Exploitation issues made to child helplines in the Americas and Caribbean region.

Cyber-bullying

Traditionally, bullying of children and young people was limited to the school environment or street corners. Now bullying pervades their private spaces as they access the internet. Cyber-bullying occurs when one or many individuals use the internet or other related technologies to harm another person through threatening, humiliating, embarrassing, harassing, or tormenting means and ways.

Cyber-bullying is a growing concern as information and communication technologies are becoming pervasive in the lives of children and young people, especially in countries where cyber technology is easily accessible. In the past decade children and young people have quickly adapted to new means of communication. Now they frequently access the internet to gain knowledge, socialise and to make friends on social networking websites, but this has also made them vulnerable to cyber-bullying.

Many child helplines in the Americas and Caribbean region have started collecting data on this bullying phenomenon in the past few years. CHI began collating data on cyber-bullying during the past three years. Although data is limited, it still demonstrates a disturbing trend. In the past three years a total of 733 contacts were received on the issue of cyber-bullying, averaging at 190 contacts per year. Of all the requests for assistance received on cyber-bullying, 80% were made by girls.

Our service focuses on supporting children using the internet. We have seen too many cases of extreme cyber-bullying, the inappropriate use of personal images, discrimination and sexual harassment.
Case: "Someone is posting horrible things online about me and it’s always there. I can never escape. I don’t know what to do about it." Luke (15) was desperate to change things. "I don’t know who is doing this, it is all being done anonymously. I get messages every time a posts appears online. It follows me around. I am worried because I do not know where the bullying comes from. It could be someone very close to me, or it could be a stranger who can now track me down. It makes me very insecure." The child helpline counsellor listened to Luke’s story and reassured his feelings. The child helpline counsellor advised Luke not to react to any of the content and to save all the harmful content so together they could write a letter to report what had been going on.

**WARNING SIGNS**

- Increasing reports on cyber-bullying are emerging.
- Cyber-bullying extends the harm of bullying into children and young people’s private space.
- More girls than boys report this online violation.
Child Helpline International (CHI) is the global network of 173 child helplines in 141 countries (April 2013). In ten years together child helplines in the network received more than 126 million contacts from children and young people in need of care and protection. CHI supports the creation and strengthening of national toll free child helplines worldwide and uses child helpline data and knowledge to highlight gaps in child protection systems and advocate for the rights of children.

Disclaimer:
CHI’s work is firmly grounded in the principles and values enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC), including children’s right to privacy and protection from harm. To this end, and to preserve the trust and confidence children place in child helplines worldwide every day, all identifying details and information about individual children cited in this report have been removed or altered. Although names and quotes are real, the names of children and young people are not.

This publication is based on the analysis of information received from child helplines in the CHI network in the Americas and Caribbean. The conclusions and statements are based on this information and they do not capture the full scope of practices and policies of all countries and cases handled by child helplines and other child protection organisations at the national level.

Data has been collected for 11 consecutive years. This publication is based on data from 30 helplines from the Americas and Caribbean. Some graphs and tables are based on a subset of data, as some information was not collected for all years. The totals of different data categories, which is used internationally.

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CHI would like to thank its partners for their continued support.

The importance of child helpline data

Since its foundation, child helplines in the Child Helpline International network have received over 126 million contacts. These numbers clearly demonstrate the need of children and youth to discuss their needs, their need for social support and help.

Child helplines play a unique role in supporting children and young people due to the combination of several characteristics:
1. caller anonymity produces an emotionally secure environment and enhances self-disclosure;
2. mediated communication increases the caller’s perceived control and
3. the elimination of time and distance barriers significantly increases the accessibility of support. Child helplines offer confidentiality and serve vulnerable individuals in crisis, at times when free of costs access to other services is unavailable.

Scientific study of child helplines has shown that child helplines succeed in having confidential conversations with children and young people that empower them (Butler, Potter, Danby, Emmison, & Hepburn, 2003). STaff of child helplines generally succeed in creating a supportive environment that affords the caller emotional safety. Staff is able to establish rapport with the child, focusing the conversation on their problems and statements are based on this information and they do not capture the full scope of practices and policies of all countries and cases handled by child helplines and other child protection organisations at the national level.

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The extensive collaboration between different child helplines in the CHI network for the past ten years has stimulated the constructive debate and exchange of findings between different members. Seen from this perspective, the CHI database has summarized the stories of children in need of answers, social support and help worldwide for the past ten years.

The CHI database has, as any database and empirical study, its strengths and weaknesses. The use of data in international comparative research is not without pitfalls (see Hantrais, 2009, for example). The database, with its limitations, represents a unique collection of international, longitudinal data. The registration of child helpline contacts, which show a wide variety of topics, is structured by a concise set of problem categories, which is used internationally.

Statistical analysis of data from child helplines in the Americas and Caribbean region shows that impressive numbers of children were seeking support in the last decade. The number of contacts is, averaging over ten years, stable. The data does not show evidence for decreases for either answered or responded to calls. The overall picture that emerges from the data is that child helplines continue to fulfill a need for the child population.

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