



SOS Phone Line for Children and Youth 0800 1 2222 (free of charge line)

First Children's Embassy in the World MEGJASHI January-December 2009

1. The claims for abuse and violence against children (physical, psychical and sexual) in 2009 are increased to 48,28%, which is 9% more compared with 2008.
2. The children are unprotected and constantly exposed to violence and exploitation, mostly by adults.
3. The biggest number of claims are referred to family problems (24,14%) where the family relations are disturbed.
4. The data shows that the claim for sexual abuse of children is getting more frequent. It is concerning that half (50%) of the reported cases were cases of family incest.
5. The children are quiet and endure violence. They rarely report the violence because they are scared. The ones that call to report the violence are adults close to the family, witnesses of the aggression to which the children are exposed. Only 24 children, victims of violence had the courage to report the misbehavior themselves.

The SOS phone line for children and youth 0800 1 2222 by the First Children's Embassy in the World Megjashi made 16 years of its existence in 2009. During those 16 years, **17 784 reports** were registered on different types of problems that the children are facing daily.

During 2009 we registered a total of 377 claims. The calls were in much bigger number, probably over 1000 (we did not count them this year). As the most used way to get in contact with us was shown to be the SOS phone line for children and youth 0800 1 2222 (free of charge line), which had **223 claims**, and the second place hold the direct visits by the citizens in the facilities of the SOS service for direct help by the First Children's Embassy in the World Megjashi, i.e. **118 direct visits**. For each of these claims, three to four contacts were made in average (telephone and visits) which means that around **700 phone calls** and **400 direct visits** were made.

The free legal service that constantly works in the SOS office this year sent over 140 written addresses written to various state institutions, depending on the type of the problem. Legal services often collaborated with the Ombudsman, the Centers for social work, police stations, ministries, public prosecution and other state and social institutions. This year, on behalf of the citizens who addressed us for assistance, 54 complaints were sent to the Ombudsman, of which the largest number (20) for reported cases of violence in educational institutions (schools and kindergartens). 46 complaints were sent to the centers for social work, of which most (19) for reported cases of family violence.

The claims of the problems that the children are facing, this year too was mostly reported by adults, 353 (93,6%) were by the adults and only 24 (6,4%) were claims received by children, 61,3% were females and 34% were men.

Type of problem	Exploitation and violence (physical, psychical and sexual)	Family relations (guardianship, adoption, communication)	School problems	Social help

2007	13,43%	24,62%	7,08%	7,46%
2008	39,19%	34,17%	5,53%	2,01%
2009	48,28%	18,3%	4,24%	6,63%
difference 2008/09	increased 9,09%	reduced 15,87%	reduced 1,29%	increased. 4,62%

Table 1: Percentage representation of claims in the last three years

FAMILY

Most claims relate exactly to the problems in the family where the family relations are disturbed. Children are witnesses of disturbed communication between parents, mutual intolerance, witnessing the many conflict situations and are exposed to aggression, right there in the family. Of 377 reported cases in 2009, it is alarming that 91 charges were related to family violence, out of which more than half related to violence by use of physical force. It could be noted that **these charges were not incurred by the victims, but the adults close to the family**, witnesses of the aggression to which children were exposed. The SOS operators were repeatedly trying to encourage the victims to talk about the violence to which they were exposed. The father was most often referred to as an aggressor when the mother was the direct victim and the children were witnesses, but in cases where children are direct victims of domestic violence, the aggressor is the mother. As a reason why these cases remain undocumented is the fear not to escalate the situation and mistrust in institutions that are competent to provide care and psychosocial support to the victims.

SEXUAL EXPLOATATION

The data show that more prevalent is the application of sexual abuse against children. It is alarming that half of the reported cases were cases of family incest.

DIVORCES

The second place with 52 claims is the problems associated with divorce, custody and providing solutions for determining child visitations. Here again comes to term the existence of the family dysfunction and lack of communication in families where relationships are hindered.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The concerned citizens also contacted us for problems with the non-pedagogical relation to children by teachers / educationalists in educational institutions.

The psychical violence on the relation teacher-pupil was often reported.

CLAIMS FROM CHILDREN

It should be noted that the children often contacted us for problems in communication with peers and parents. Seven of these applications were from teenagers who in this developmental period did not feel understood by parents and often encounter situations of conflict with them. Driven by the desire to be accepted and understood by adults and to feel safe, often (especially girls) are entering into "love" relationships with adults. 10 cases were reported of "love relationship" between juvenile and adult. The remaining addresses of the children were to obtain information on their rights.

CATEGORIES OF PROBLEMS IN 2009	Total	%
Violence in the family	91	24,14
Physical violence	54	14,32
psychical	12	3,18
neglecting/lack of care	25	6,63
Violence in the educational institutions	38	10,08
Physical violence teacher/student	6	1,59
Physical violence student/student	6	1,59
Psychical violence teacher/student	16	4,24
Psychical violence student/student	6	1,59

<i>Violence in these institutions by parent/child</i>	4	1,06
Violence and exploitation of children outside (on streets)	14	3,71
Institutional exploitation and neglecting	13	3,45
Sexual exploitation/pedophilia	20	5,31
<i>By parent (relative)</i>	10	2,65
<i>By close person (a friend)</i>	1	0,27
<i>By unknown</i>	9	2,39
Problems with divorces, custody, child visitations...	52	13,79
Problems with going to school, grading and studying	12	3,18
Communication problems	17	4,51
<i>Among peers</i>	4	1,06
<i>In the family (parents-children and among parents)</i>	13	3,45
“Love“ relationships between juvenile-adult	10	2,65
Forcing to prostitution (of children)	3	0,80
Begging	3	0,80
Problems with use of narcotics	4	1,06
Health problems	12	3,18
Addressing to the social services for help	20	5,31
Help for families and children without home	5	1,33
Involvement in the process of documentation for children	5	1,33
Information for child adoption	5	1,33
Information about the children's rights	4	1,06
Information about the children's workshops in Megjashi	4	1,06
Other	45	11,94
TOTAL		

Table 2: Reported cases by problem category

The SOS telephone for children and youth 0800 1 2222, slowly over the years was gaining trust among citizens who recognize this service as a tool that is enabling psycho-social assistance and support for the problems they face. In the context of that, we need to mention that during 2009, such assistance and support was offered in 1100 achieved advisory phone calls of SOS phone line and those on the premises of the Embassy.

This year, the services offered by the SOS service had been provided by 15 volunteers and enthusiasts from different professions. Psychologists, social workers, teachers, family counsellors, lawyers unreservedly offered their knowledge and experience in the joint creation of a better world for children.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF THE SOS PHONE LINE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The SOS phone line for children and youth 0800 12222, as a service for direct help and support of the children and a service of public character, still is not financially supported by the state and the state funds that can be used for this service. The SOS phone lines in most European states are treated as public interest and are considered as a need of the citizens, for which the states take over the responsibility for its financial sustainability.

The First Children's Embassy in the World took over the responsibility to provide sustainability of this very important service by encouraging the citizens to donate in our donation boxes which are established on many locations in Macedonia and by selling New Year cards. Still, the funds are not sufficient to cover the expenses of the service.

Since 2005 the number 0800 1 2222 is a donation of Macedonian telecommunications, and the callers are released of any phone charges.

We thank to everybody that supports the work of the SOS phone line for children and youth and to the many volunteers who willingly work as SOS phone operators giving away part of their time to support the children.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the obtained results it can be seen that the children victims of violence and abuse very rarely report the act. Most often the reasons for this are the threats and intimidations they receive from the aggressor, but also the mistrust that they have towards the relevant institutions to provide protection and security. Very often the calls for help by the children are not seriously understood by the competent institutions in order to provide the necessary protection.

To achieve harmonious development of personality, the child should grow in a positive family environment filled with happiness, love and understanding. Family as the basic cell of society is one which should facilitate the child's basic care and safety. Unfortunately the results of the past work of the SOS service show that in fact children are unprotected and constantly exposed to violence and abuse by adults.

The child needs to be sure that he/she is trusted, it is necessary to feel that it is accepted and understood. It is necessary for the child to learn how to recognize its own feelings more easily and to encourage himself/herself to speak about them. To work towards increasing the children's confidence with which they can easily critically recognize the situations.

When violence occurs in the family it is necessary to act urgently and to put away the violator and besides the strict measures, re-socialization is also needed. Providing immediate and continuous psycho-social assistance and support to victims. With the returning of the trust in the institutional aid, the victims will be directly encouraged to report the violence.

Generally in our society there is a need for additional training in teaching, health, social and other staff who works with children, in order to raise awareness of the seriousness of the consequences for the children's development from inappropriate and unprofessional execution of the activity which they perform.

In order to reduce and prevent aggression and violence we need to sensitise parents (adults) and children for the ways of interpersonal communication, acquiring skills for nonviolent conflict resolution, development of skills for mutual tolerance, empathy and the introduction of peace education in schools.

Recommendations to the state to make changes to the Criminal Code to increase penalties for violators of children's rights and take all necessary measures to ensure protection of the child from all forms of abuse and neglect.

The entire report of the SOS Phone Line for Children and Youth can be found on the web page of the Children's Embassy Megjashi www.childrensembassy.org.mk