



S.O.S helpline for children and youth 0800 1 2222

(Free helpline)

January-July 2011

1. Children are unprotected and constantly exposed to violence and abused mostly from adults
2. The biggest number of charges concern problems in family (18,18%) where the family relations are disturbed
3. Children remain silent and endure violence. They rarely charge violence, because they are afraid, but those who do are usually close with the family, witnesses of the aggression children are exposed to
4. Only 8 children-victims of family violence were brave enough and report violence themselves.

1. Short description of the current work of the S.O.S helpline for children and youth

The S.O.S helpline for children and youth functions almost 19 years (since October 1993) and has registered more than 18 000 calls. The S.O.S phone line represents a service for direct help and support of children, youth and their families. With only one call, children may receive help and information, expert advice, psycho-social support or simply talk about the problems they face with.

The principle of working of the line is consisted of conversations with the caller about their problems, so that our operators do not immediately give complete solutions of the problem. It is talked about alternatives for solving the problem they have and the caller is helped to find their own solution of it.

On the free S.O.S helpline for children and youth, there are experts that work on: (Pedagogue, psychologist, social worker and lawyer). In the activities there are also volunteers introduced, who are usually students at the Faculties of Pedagogy, Psychology, Law studies, Social Work. Those persons primarily conduct the conversations with

contacts and are always in coordination and mentorship with the S.O.S helpline coordinator and the other services for direct help in the First Children Embassy in the World-Megjashi.

S.O.S helpline through numbers in its 19 years of functioning

year	No. of calls	Gender of caller		Age of caller		
		male	female	to 12 years	13-18 years	над 18 years
1993-1994	3769	537	2496	471	2192	370
1994-1995	4609	136	2474	339	2088	183
1995-1996	990	88	328	22	279	115
1996-1997	1294	108	598	46	469	191
1997-1998	1200	107	399	59	279	168
1998-1999	1250	62	259	14	202	105
1999-2000	1000	92	184	11	113	152
total	14112					

Table 1a. S.O.S helpline through numbers in period 1993-2000

2000-2001	143	29	114	43	46	54
2001-2001	77	19	58	0	18	59
2002-2003	324	77	247	12	103	209
2003-2004	414	98	316	43	117	254
2004-2005	912	320	592	198	225	489
2005-2006	704	190	154	/	/	/
2006-2007	361	/	/	/	/	/
2007-2008	360	/	/	/	/	/
2008-2009	377	128	231	6	18	353
2009-2010	239	163	205	5	16	208
01.01. –	106	36	53	3	5	85

31.07.2011						
total	4017					

Table 1b. S.O.S helpline through numbers in period 2001 -2011

2. Caller's data

Table 2. Age of callers

	To 12 years	12 -18 years	adult	Legal entity	media	unknown	total
January	0	0	9	0	0	3	12
February	0	4	15	0	0	2	21
March	1	0	17	0	0	0	18
April	1	1	13	0	1	2	18
May	1	0	9	0	0	1	11
June	0	0	12	0	0	3	15
July	0	0	10	0	0	1	11
total	3	5	85	0	1	12	106
%	2,83%	4,72%	80,19%	0	0,94%	11,32%	100%

In the first 7 months of year 2011, the trend of reporting cases of children rights violation from adults continues. Children still remain silent and afraid to talk about violence. Children feel unsafe to report violence when it happens at home and is being done by one or both parents. It happens very often that children report violence and then their mind is changed as recommended by the other parent.

2.1 Leaks by children

From a total of 8 reports by children, 3 are related to domestic violence, 3 to institutional abuse, 2 for problems in communication.

2.2 Leaks by ethnicity of callers

The majority ethnicity of 72 call points are Macedonian, Roma 8, 7 are Albanian and 5 of them are from other ethnic communities in Macedonia, while 14 are still unknown ethnicity.

2.3 Leaks by the environment callers live in

Most leaks or 72% of callers are from an urban area, 15 of the callers live in rural area and 19 have unknown environment. This data may indicate that children and adults living in rural areas are present in small percentage and thus are less informed about their rights and ways of reporting any violation on them.

3. Ways of making leaks

Majority of the contacts and charges in the period January-July 2011, as up to now were conducted through the free S.O.S helpline for children and youth 0800 1 2222 with 73 charges, 68,87% from the total number of received charges.

In 18 cases or 16,98% citizens asked help, support and information with direct visits in the S.O.S service at FCE-Megjashi, 13 cases were reported through e-mail (12,26%) and 2 cases were sent by mail (1,89%).

In the first half of 2011, calls received through S.O.S helpline and visits in the S.O.S service were far more, because the expert advisory that followed the cases, needed more contacting with the concerned person, so the number of meetings and conversation is bigger.

Table 3. Ways of making leaks January-July 2011

	S.O.S helpline	e-mail	mail	Visit in Megjashi	Total number of cases in Megjashi
January	6	3	0	3	12
February	18	1	1	1	21
March	11	2	0	5	18
April	15	1	0	2	18
May	7	0	0	4	11
June	9	2	1	3	15
July	7	4	0	0	11
Total	73	13	2	18	106
%	68,87%	12,26%	1,89%	16,98%	100%

4.Category of problems

	Male	Female	Unknown	Total	%
Family violence	4	11	5	20	18,88%
Divorce procedures	10	5	2	17	16,04%
Material and financial support	4	5	0	9	8,49%
Violence in educational institutions	1	4	2	7	6,60%
Adult violence	2	2	1	5	4,72%
Institutional violence	0	2	1	3	4,82%
Information regarding children rights	0	0	0	4	0,94%
Media abuse	0	1	0	1	0,94%
Adoption problems	0	0	0	1	0,94%
Sexual abuse	0	2	0	3	2,83%
Health problems	0	2	0	3	2,83%
Love relation	0	2	0	3	2,83%
Legal advices	1	1	0	2	1,89%
Minor-adult	1	1	0	2	1,89%
Expert psychological advices	0	2	0	3	2,83%
Communicational	2	2	0	4	3,77%
Others	4	6	2	12	11,32%
Total	36	53	17	106	100%
Social risk families	36	53	17	106	100%
%	33,96%	50%	16,04%	100%	100%

Table 4. Category of problems at callers

In the first 7 months of 2011, 18,88% or 20 cases of the total number of charges concern family violence. Out of them 60% or 12 cases concern physical violence, 25% or 5 cases concern psychical violence and 15% or 3 cases concern child neglecting.

For problems concerning violation on children's rights during divorce procedures we have 17 charges or 16,04% out of which 8 concern problems with custody awarding or 47,06%, problems with parents and child visiting. 5 reports or 29,41% alimentation problem case is 3 or 17,65% and 1 case of problems where the paternity was proved or 5,88%. Requiring financial and material help cases are 9 or 8,49%.

When it comes to violence in educational institutions, there are 7 cases reported or 6,60% out of which 3 cases concern physical violence on relation student-student or 50%, 2 cases concern complaint for neglecting students or 33,34% and 2 cases for psychical violence on relation teacher-student or 33,34%.

Children-victims of adults violence are 5 that are reported or 4,72% out of 4 or 80% concern physical violence and 1 case or 20% concern psychical violence from unknown adults. Regarding institutional violence there are 5 cases registered or 4,72%. Information regarding children rights and protection were required 4 times or 3,77%. Sexual abuse has 3 reported cases or 2,83%. Love relation between minor and adult was present in 3 cases or 2,83%. Leaks for children beggars are 3 or 2,83%. Communicational problems concern 2 cases or 1,87%. Children whose families are in social risk are 2 or 1,87%. Media abuse was present at 1 case or 0,94%. Health problems in 1 case or 0,94% and 12 cases that are registered but are not in the scope of those categories and problems and are present in 11,32%.

5. Category of problem for which citizens most often contact the helpline

5.1 Family violence

Regarding the cases for which we were most contacted, majority of charges (total of 20) concern family violence. Although Macedonia brought Family law changes where the violence is prohibited strictly in any form, still the family violence has been the main problem of the citizens. Children are the main victims of the home. Violence at home is most frequently connected to alcohol consumption. We received leaks where both parents are alcohol addicts and torture their children every day.

5.2 Divorce procedures

In total, 17 leaks concern problems connected to violation on children's rights during divorce procedures. Those often concern problems with custody awarding without taking the children's opinion with which parents it wants to live. We react also when there are problems connected with releasing their right to see their children and rights of alimentation. There are even such calls when we receive calls related to changes of psychological nature at children in periods of divorce and broken communication with their parents.

Those situations show that the divorce procedures in the country raise and children in majority of the situation are direct witness of the broken communication of their parents but also victims of their acting. In majority of the reported cases, there is abuse on children's personality noticed as well as breaking on children rights from one or both parents, who not always take into account children's opinions, needs and interests.

Most children do not understand how it is possible that their opinion is not respected and often pose questions on how is it possible that the parent who caused them pain is able to pursue contact with them. The whole situation makes them angry, furious, they lose belief and start blaming that they are not protected by the other parent.

Expert services in institutions must recognize the current situation, to work with the parents in order to improve communication with children, self acceptance, in order to feel safe and protected. To know that violence is not silent and there is nobody to protect. It is very probable that these children have been witnesses or victims of any form of violence and take it silent or become violent themselves

Children during divorce proceedings are very probable to be manipulated by their parents. The reason for this is the wish of parents to dominate the other partner they are not with anymore. They do not communicate with their children, because they find the material and financial background good enough. They forget that love and tenderness shall be given because they can not be bought.

5.3 Material and financial aid

As third ranged are the problems connected with providing the basic material and financial aids. In 9 cases, during the period of 7 months of 2011, citizens requested help in the provision of the basic aids of existence. Some of those citizens do not have the right to receive social aid. They are forced to neglect their children in order to fight against poverty. Regarding that, children think they must help their family, earn money for support and they do that by selling different things, gathering plastics, paper etc. In some cases, they beg and that raises the opportunity that they become victims of the most difficult forms of abuse. Those children may have a desire to educate and have a childhood as their mates, the poverty makes them feel inferior and different from other children. Most often they think that they have no choice and that their destiny is a bare fight for existence

5.4 Violence in educational institutions and neglecting students.

The violence takes place in education institutions as well. The neglection and inappropriate behavior in schools and kindergartens is present with 6,60% of the total number of registered cases. Most often we get informed from citizens about the inappropriate behavior in schools and kindergartens by employees there as well as the non-pedagogical relation they have with children there. Out of 6 leaks, 3 concern neglecting students, inappropriate behavior by experts in schools. Two of the leaks concern physical violence on relation student-student, while 1 concerns physical violence teacher-student.

This data is an indicator that measures must be taken into account and that a supervision must be done in schools.

6. Treatment of the free legal service

Depending on the problem of the callers, the free legal service is functioning parallel with the S.O.S service. This service handles written addressing to different state and social institutions, follows the procedure those institutions take and reacts if they do not consider children's best interests.

In the period January-July 2011, the free legal service handled 75 written addressing to the appropriate institutions and in all those cases we required protection on the children, their rights and interests. The biggest part of those addressing, total of 27 were sent to the Ombudsman, 21 to the Social work centers, to the secretariat of the Ministry of Inner affairs there were 16 cases reported, while the concerned ministries got reports regarding 8 cases and the local governments got 3.

From the appropriate institutions we always request information about the measures and activities that will be taken over from them, so that we can actively follow the case and react if necessary.

On this way, Megjashi does monitoring over institutions for bigger engaging and quicker reaction in solving the problems in order to offer the best protection for the child.

In all of those addressing, the legal service consults international documents and national laws in which children's rights are indicated, as well as their releasing and the mechanisms for their protection. Primarily we call and follow implementation of the CRC (UN) and the two facultative protocols of that convention, then the Convention of the European Council for children's protection of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, Convention of the International Labor Organization regarding the worst forms of children labor and a cycle of other international and national standards for children rights.

Our practice shows that the competent institutions during their working do not consult completely the CRC and they explain that they can not directly apply it, although in a case of collision the international conventions are in superior position regarding the national laws.

Табела 5. Писмени обраќања по однос на дојавени случаи

	Ombudsman	SWC	SIW	Ministeries	Local government	Total
Family violence	16	6	8	1	0	31
Divorce procedures	0	8	1	1	0	10
Violence in education institutions	6	0	0	4	3	13
Violence by adults	1	0	1	0	0	2
Institutional abuse	3	1	0	1	0	4
Sexual abuse	0	0	1	0	0	1
Love relation (minor-adult)	0	0	2	0	0	2
Beggars	0	3	1	0	0	4
Children in families of social risk	0	1	0	0	0	1
Minor delivency	1	0	0	0	0	1
Street violence	0	0	1	0	0	1
Media abuse	0	0	0	1	0	1
Others	0	2	1	0	0	3
Total	27	21	16	8	3	75
%	36%	28%	21,33 %	10,67%	4%	100%

7. Specific samples

Sample 1.

During 2011, we received a leak from an adult who wanted to inform us about the situation of a 9 year old child. Its parents were divorced for a long time. The parent who was not awarded custody had never wished to have a contact with their own child. That was until 2010, when that parent had some wish to see the child and renew the contact with it. Therefore, with parental agreement needed to spend 1 week with the mother and 1 week with the father. After a while, the parent who was not awarded a custody decided to take the child to live with him.

Although that parent was not able to take care of a child, he also had a history of asocial, promiscuities behavior and is a long term user of drugs. The parent did not take care of the child, therefore the child was closed at home alone, hungry, thirsty and out of school for a year. During this year, the child lived in a fear and was neglected or abused. The parent and the relatives who got the custody, contacted the Social Work Center and to the Secretariat of Inner Affairs in order to return

their child back home and protect it, but their reaction were never taken into account. The school where the child was about to attend classes also reacted to the SWC, they wanted to go to the home of the child, but the other parent was either not at home or never opened the door. SCW, powerless to detect their competence and messing up in the administrative labyrinth left the child unprotected for a year, although they were informed that the child lived with a violator.

The First Children Embassy in the World-Megjashi sent written addressing to the SW centers in Gevgelija, Strumica and Skopje, the Ombudsman, the Social Inspection of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and the State education inspectorate.

We received an answer and had phone contact with SWC-Gevgelija who informed that they sent written addressing to SCW in Strumica, while they received no answer from the SWC in Skopje. They were informed about the situation in which the child was placed, but they were unable to react because the parent who had the child was violator.

From the SIW in Gevgelija we were informed that they can not react until they receive a paper notification from the SWC. We could not establish contact with SWC in Skopje and Strumica. In March 2011, the SWC in Gevgelija contacted us by phone to inform that the child was given back to the parent who got the custody.

The inefficiency of the state institutions, disability to state the competence of the SWC, endangered the optimal growth and development of the child. The elementary children rights were violated, regarding education, health, growth and development. The child was traumatized, afraid from the violence and neglecting it was exposed for 1 year.

Sample 2.

In 2011, an upset and crying child called the S.O.S helpline for children and youth. The child wanted to immediately report family violence from parents, because it could not stand it anymore.

The child told us that he and his brother and sister were physically and psychically tortured. He saw his parents when they made love and asked them not to do that in front of him. He begged us to call the parents and ask them not to beat them anymore.

The child was obviously too upset and told us that its teacher suggested our service to him. He threatened that he wants to make a suicide because he could not stand what was going on in his family and wanted to immediately move out to his grandparents that treated him good.

We first talked with the child and tried to calm him down and when that happened we requested contact information from people he can trust. We immediately contacted his grandparents who confirmed that the claims of the child were right. They said that their son and daughter in law got alcohol problems, act aggressively and due to lack of control they start to have sex around the house.

We explained them what they need to do and which institutions they need to inform and offered psychological help and support for their grandchild.

Due to the specific case we phoned the police station in their area and had conversation with the inspector of minors, we found the most appropriate accommodation and care for the children. We also informed the SWC. We had a talk with the teacher and the psychologist in order to offer an appropriate psychological help and support for the child.

From the Social Work Center on municipal level we were informed that the expert services did a check-visit in the family and on the basis of the factual situation, there was a solution brought so that supervision on parental right will be made.

8. Financial sustainability of the S.O.S helpline for children and youth 0800 1 22 22

The S.O.S helpline for children and youth, as a service for direct help and support on children and service of public interest is not financially supported from the state yet. The S.O.S help lines in most European countries are treated as services of public interest and are considered to be a need of the citizens, so the countries take care of its financial sustainability.

The First Children Embassy is trying to enable financial sustainability of the line with triggering the business sector for bigger social responsibility, selling New Year cards and citizens donations in money boxes on more locations in the country. However those aids are not enough and the financial help from the Government is more than necessary.

For that purpose we contacted the President of the Country-Mr. Gjorgje Ivanov and the Prime Minister-Nikola Gruevski, to the National Committee of Children Rights and to the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, in order to remind them about the recommendation of the Committee on Children's Rights in Geneva, where this is clearly stated:

The Committee on Children's rights in Geneva, on its 54 meeting, had a look at the reports from its member countries, concerning article 44 of the Children's rights Convention. The second periodical report of Republic of Macedonia was checked and few recommendations to the Government of Republic of Macedonia were adopted on the 1514-th meeting that took place on 11.06.2010. This has been recommended:

„The committee notes the 24 h free S.O.S helpline for children and youth provided by one NGO, but is worried that there is not any long term financial support and that it is only available through one specific phone operator, while unavailable through mobile operators”

The Committee recommends that the state-member shall ensure continuity, including awarding appropriate aids for 24 h. free helpline.

The First Children Embassy in the World-Megjashi in its addressing asked the competent institutions to seriously consider the Committee's recommendations and to financially support the functioning of the S.O.S helpline for children and youth and the free legal service.

9. Harmonization of the S.O.S helpline for children and youth 0800 1 2222 with the European six digit unnumber for help and support 116 111

The First Children Embassy in the World-Megjashi uses the free S.O.S helpline for children and youth that was a donation from the Macedonian Telecom in 2005. This line however, accepts calls only from users of the landline of T-home.

The S.O.S helpline as a service of public interest needs to be essentially, accessible to all the children and youth, as well as their parents. Therefore the Committee on Children Rights in Geneva sent a recommendation to the Government of Macedonia for executing a harmonization of the number with the other European lines. In its recommendation, the Committee points out the following:

*„The Committee recommends that the country-member needs to ensure continuity, including the awarding of appropriate aids, for 24 h. free helpline, **in order to spread the capacities for calls receiving from all the present phone operators as well as awarding the six digit European number to the helpline.** Furthermore, the line needs to be affirmed as a source of information and data for the*

politics and law procedures regarding children's rights and as a tool for early intervention and prevention."

In order to give appropriate answer to the recommendations and in the same time enable an access to the S.O.S helpline for children and youth to all the children in Republic of Macedonia, we made written addressing to the Agency for Electronically Communication, where we asked for the right to use the national shortened number for services harmonized on European Level 116 111 (referring to: Article 15, Plan of numeration of the public communication networking and services in Macedonia from 2009). We still communicate with the Agency, regarding the procedure and the receiving of this number.

The First Children Embassy in the World-Megjashi will inform the Committee in Geneva (through the report on the situation of children's rights in Macedonia), about the procedure of the harmonization of the S.O.S number with the European six digit 116 111, as well as the way in which the recommendations of the committee are being adopted.

10. General recommendations and conclusions

Generally, there has been need of additional education of the teacher, the health, social staff and staff working with children in our society, in order to raise the awareness of the serious consequences left on the children development due to inappropriate and unprofessional execution of the action this staff is doing.

The First Children Embassy in the World-Megjashi realized disability of the Social Work Center in detecting positive or negative competence that challenges inefficiency in their work, immobility and long term solving of cases that require immediate reaction in order to protect the child and its best interests.

The First Children Embassy in the World-Megjashi recommends:

- State institutions and Centers for Social Work need to be quicker in detecting their competences. We think that this way the prolonging of administration will be avoided, as well as the responsibility of their inefficient working.
- The social inspection of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy needs to have a check in the work of the Social Work Centres as well as penalties for those who work inefficient.
- The Government of Republic of Macedonia needs to provide all the necessary technical aids as well as human resources for professional and timely execution of the work
- Making selections when employing and share of vacancies considering the expertise.
- Regular trainings and workshops for the employees, aiming at better education at the existing staff.
- The Ombudsman needs to detect the failures in protecting the children and their rights, as well as requiring more strict penalties for the executors and responsibility from the institutions.

From the statistical data, we can conclude that children rarely get courage to report the violence, they are afraid and feel powerless. Most often children- victims are afraid to report their parents, because of the unexpectancy with their future. They think it is better that they are victims of their own parents than of the institutions.

It is necessary for the children to feel protected, understood and accepted. It is essential that they learn how to be familiar with their feelings and brave enough to talk about them.

Parents must have ongoing communication with their children, because that is the only way they can know what is necessary for them, how they feel, in order to function better and avoid all the unpleasant situations.

When it comes to children victims of physical, psychical or sexual violence, it is necessary that they are protected and provided with psycho-social help and support. It is necessary that the violator is re-socialized and not only removed. That is one of the ways in which the cycle of violence will be stopped, because that is a chain process.

Aiming to reduce and prevent aggression and violence it is needed to make sensibilization of the parents/adults and children of ways in which inter-communication can be made, skills of non-violent

solution of conflicts will be reached and skills and empathy of tolerance will be made. Eventually the peace education will need to become part of school curricula.

We thank to all who support the work of the S.O.S helpline for children and youth, as well as to the volunteers who are in charge as operators on the line, devoting part of their leisure time to support children