



## **Crime Prevention for Children: Developments and Good Practices**

**April 2009**

*Report of a side-event of the Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice organised in parallel to the 18<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ), 21 April 2009, Vienna, Austria*

The Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice (IPJJ) is a group mandated to coordinate technical advice and assistance in juvenile justice in accordance with United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolutions 1997/30 and 2007/23.<sup>1</sup> The Panel aims to facilitate and enhance country and global level coordination in juvenile justice in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant international norms and standards.<sup>2</sup>

This is a report of a side-event on “Crime Prevention for Children: Developments and Good Practices” organised by the Panel Secretariat in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Defence for Children International (DCI) – International Secretariat and Penal Reform International (PRI) in parallel to the 18th session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) which took place from 16-24 April 2009 in Vienna, Austria.

The objective of the side-event was to encourage collaboration amongst governments, civil society and criminal justice agencies in order to develop strategies that assist in preventing children in becoming the perpetrators of crime. The Panel members chose to focus on crime prevention for children in response to the fact that the Committee on the Rights of the Child’s in its General Comment No.10 (2007) on “Children’s rights in juvenile justice” encourages “States parties to develop and implement a comprehensive juvenile justice policy to prevent and address juvenile delinquency based on and in compliance with CRC, and to seek in this regard advice and support from the Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Since July 2008, the Panel is composed of fourteen United Nations bodies and non-governmental organisations: the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Institute (UNICRI), Defence for Children International (DCI), the International Association of Youth and Family Judges and Magistrates (IAYFJM), the International Juvenile Justice Observatory (IJJO), Penal Reform International (PRI), Save the Children UK, Terre des hommes – child relief and the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT). For further information on the Panel, please see our website: <http://www.juvenilejusticepanel.org/>

<sup>2</sup> Including, amongst others: the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules); the United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty (JDLs); the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (the Riyadh Guidelines); the Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No.10, “Children’s rights in juvenile justice”, 2007; the Vienna Guidelines for Action on Children in the Criminal Justice System (Vienna Guidelines); and the UN Guidelines on Justice in Matters Involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime.

<sup>3</sup> See CRC General Comment No.10, section II, paragraph 4.



The discussion was chaired by Mr. Matti Joutsen, Director, International Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Finland. The event attracted over thirty representatives of governments, United Nations agencies, research institutes and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

This report provides a summary of the presentations given by the panellists and is followed by a brief outline of the questions from the floor and answers provided by the speakers.

## **1. Developments and Good Practices in Crime Prevention for Children from Members of the Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice**

- *Ms. Anna Giudice Saget, Division of Operations, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)*

Ms. Giudice Saget spoke about the reasons for focusing on children for effective crime prevention and the work of UNODC in this area. She began by reminding participants that one third of the world's population of 6.5 billion people are children, which is defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child as every human being below the age of eighteen years.<sup>4</sup> She explained that children are often seen as being a "problem" in terms of crime and violence, even if evidence shows that they are more often victims of crime than perpetrators. She explained that it has been demonstrated that investing in crime prevention is more cost-effective than criminal justice reform.

She explained that although crime prevention efforts should address all social groups, they are often targeted at children considered "at-risk". These include children that are considered vulnerable for reasons such as: poverty; violence; deprivation; abuse and neglect in the family; being without parental care; lack of educational or social support; general marginalization; coming from indigenous groups, ethnic minorities or migrant backgrounds; being in situations of war or conflict; being dependent on drugs or alcohol.

She stressed that crime prevention for children should comply with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international norms and standards, including the United Nations Guidelines for Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (Riyadh Guidelines) (1990), the Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment No.10 (2007) on "Children's rights in juvenile justice" and the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime. She also explained that the seventh guiding principle of the United Nations Secretary-General's guidance note on the "United Nations Approach to Justice for Children" (September 2008) is to prevent children coming into conflict with the law. Furthermore, ECOSOC resolution 2007/23 on "Supporting national efforts for child justice reform, in particular through technical assistance and improved United Nations system-wide coordination" requests that State parties develop comprehensive action plans on juvenile justice, including prevention programmes.

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<sup>4</sup> See Article 1, Convention on the Rights of the Child "a child means every human being under eighteen years of age unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier."

She then went on to explain that UNODC provides technical support to UN Member States in implementing international standards, including in relation to crime prevention. However, there has been limited technical support provided in relation to crime prevention for children. Nevertheless, some programmes in Latin America have drug and crime prevention components relating to children, including in Bolivia and Honduras.

She also underlined the fact that UNODC has developed a number of relevant technical tools and manuals, including the Criminal Justice Assessment Toolkit and the Criminal Justice Handbook Series. Forthcoming tools include: a crime prevention assessment tool; a handbook for the implementation of the UN Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime; a handbook on the role of the police in urban spaces; a handbook on the role of sports in crime prevention; and a handbook on promising practices for the social reintegration of offenders. In the future, she explained that UNODC is planning to scale-up this work by identifying good practices in collaboration with other members of the Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice.

She concluded by saying that at the 12<sup>th</sup> Crime Congress 2010, there will be an opportunity to address crime prevention issues for children under item 1 on “Children, youth and crime.” Other relevant issues also to be considered at the Crime Congress are the rights of child victims and witnesses of crimes and participation of children and youth in justice processes.

- ***Ms. Katri Tala, Association Drug Prevention Expert, UNODC***

Ms. Tala presented the UNODC “Guide to Implementing Family Skills Training Programmes for Drug Abuse Prevention” (2009).<sup>5</sup> She began her presentation by explaining why it was necessary to work with families to ensure prevention of drug abuse by children and children coming into conflict with the law. She explained that evidence shows that working with families improves: parenting skills, including monitoring and setting standards; family bonding and attachment; children’s social competences and behaviour; children’s skills to resist peer pressure; the child’s attachment to school and academic performance; and the child’s problem-solving skills. These training programmes have also been shown to help reduce children coming into conflict with the law, delay substance abuse, avoid affiliation with antisocial peers, decrease depression and aggression in children and decrease family conflict.

She then went on to explain that family skills training programmes go beyond life-skills training, in that they focus on bringing caregivers and children together, instead

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<sup>5</sup> See UNODC, “Guide to Implementing Family Skills Training Programmes for Drug Abuse Prevention”, United Nations, New York, 2009, available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish: [www.unodc.org/youthnet](http://www.unodc.org/youthnet)  
It is also available on the Panel website:  
[http://www.juvenilejusticepanel.com/resources/?act=res&cat=&nod=\\_root\\_&id=UNODCGuideFamilySkillsDrugPreventionMar09EN&start=11%20](http://www.juvenilejusticepanel.com/resources/?act=res&cat=&nod=_root_&id=UNODCGuideFamilySkillsDrugPreventionMar09EN&start=11%20)

of only focusing on children. They have been shown to be the second most effective approach to drug abuse prevention, after in-home family support (Tobler & Kumpfer, 2000; Foxcroft et al. 2003). Another study has shown that FSTPs are almost three times more effective than life-skills training programmes (Tobler & Kumpfer, 2000; Faggiano, 2005).

The UNODC “Guide to Implementing Family Skills Training Programmes for Drug Abuse Prevention” aims to provide basic information and guidance to policymakers and relevant persons interested in launching a family skills training programme for a selected group or at the universal level. The Guide was developed following a review of programmes and evidence of their effectiveness worldwide, a technical meeting with key stakeholders in October 2007 and a literature review. The Guide includes twelve key principles for good family skills training programmes and advice on recruitment, retaining families, training, monitoring and evaluation.

UNODC is planning to follow-up this work by publishing family skills training programme descriptions to help policy-makers, NGOs and other actors to choose the most relevant programmes. It is also planning a large-scale programme to adapt, implement and evaluate family skills training programmes in low and middle income countries.

- ***Ms. Laetitia van Haren, Executive Director, Defence for Children International (DCI) – International Secretariat***

Ms. van Haren spoke about Defence for Children International’s (DCI) experience of crime prevention and juvenile justice in Latin America. DCI has a regional juvenile justice programme that began in 2004 and will continue until 2011, covering Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Uruguay and Mexico. She explained that a regional approach to the issue - with a common approach, common understanding of the issues, sharing of lessons learned and good practices - leads to more effective evidence-based advocacy.

She explained that in Latin America there is a discrepancy between legislation in compliance with the rights of the child and security concerns that dominate implementation. In particular, children from poor families and neighbourhoods are targeted by public and private security forces that act in a climate of impunity. She stressed that there is ample proof that a repressive approach to juvenile justice and excessive use of deprivation of liberty does not put an end to children coming into conflict with the law. Such an approach does not tackle the root causes of violence, including poverty, social exclusion and inequality. She stressed the need for greater child participation in democratic processes, in the home, in the community and in wider society, to ensure a long-term approach to crime prevention for children.

She then went on to give examples of DCI crime prevention programmes in the region. In Mexico, REINTEGRA (associate member of DCI) provides crime prevention programmes in Mexico City focusing on causal factors, including family violence, adolescent school drop-out rates and drug abuse. The crime prevention programmes aim to strengthen the community, school and family networks by

offering protective measures and reducing risk situations. This work is coupled with social reintegration programmes for children that have come into conflict with the law, focusing on education and life-skills training. In addition to direct assistance to children, REINTEGRA advocates for crime prevention policies that are inclusive and have an educational approach.

She then went on to explain that DCI-Costa Rica (DCI National Section) focuses on the prevention of violence against children in conflict with the law. As part of this work, DCI-Costa Rica has worked for over seven years to prevent gang violence through community-based programmes. Projects included, amongst others, child rights training relating to the right to education, recreation and identity. Community programmes were coupled with advocacy work on juvenile justice and security issues, including the publication of a documentary on the social and economic conditions that lead children to enter into gangs.

She concluded by paying homage to judges, probation officers and social workers that have adopted a child rights based approach to their work. She reminded governments to mainstream diversion, alternatives and restorative justice approaches and put an end to violence against children.

- ***Ms. Mary Murphy, Policy Director, Penal Reform International (PRI)***

Ms. Murphy spoke about a specific experience of Penal Reform International (PRI) in developing crime prevention and juvenile justice in Georgia, South Caucasus. She explained that the issue at stake was that children were defaulting and re-offending after non-custodial sentences. This was undermining the credibility of alternative sanctions and leading to unnecessary imprisonment of children.

PRI undertook a community consultation in all Georgian court districts, and later on behalf of UNICEF explored possible locations for pilot juvenile justice support services, based on the level of local political and practical support (the community consultation later developed into establishment of Local Coordination Councils in the project sites). Through work in support of international standards for the treatment of children in conflict with the law, and in support of developing a modern Probation Service, PRI had already identified that this service had insufficient capacity to support children sentenced to non-custodial measures and that it had very few links with potential collaborators in the local community. In response, PRI and the Children's Legal Centre (UK), funded by the Dutch government via UNICEF, developed a pilot programme to bolster the Probation teams and demonstrate new approaches to working with child probationers.

The pilot programme is a community rehabilitation programme for girls and boys serving probation sentences. It includes individually tailored programmes of psychosocial, educational, vocational and recreational activities. A crucial aspect of the programme is that it seeks to identify and tackle root causes of or contributory factors to offending, and thereby reduce the risk of re-offending. The programme is built into the network of community services and uses existing local government,

NGO and private sector resources. A crucial aspect of the programme was recruiting staff with experience and interest in working with children and providing them with the necessary skills and tools, including tools to facilitate work with the family. A large emphasis was placed on training in social work skills, assessment tools and alternative educational approaches. This included how to challenge values linked to the commission of crime, techniques such as role-reversal (where the offender is placed in the role of the victim), how to assess and bolster self-esteem, risk-assessment and “keep-safe” techniques, motivation, anger management and substance abuse.

She concluded by saying that even if the pilot programme has only been in existence for one year, preliminary results have shown: good involvement of children, families, the local community and local authorities; an increase in returns to school, vocational training and work placements; children’s problems are beginning to be recognized and addressed; there have been requests from the Ministry of Justice to replicate the pilot elsewhere; and recognition at a political level that policies, practices and resourcing with regard to children in conflict with the law need radical change.

- ***Davinia Ovet Bondi, Secretariat Coordinator, Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice (IPJJ)***

Ms. Ovet Bondi began by explaining that CRC General Comment No.10 (2007) expressly encourages to State parties to “develop and implement comprehensive juvenile justice polices to prevent and address juvenile delinquency, based on and in compliance with the CRC, and to seek in this regard advice and support from the Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice.”<sup>6</sup> The General Comment further recommends “State parties seek support and advice from the Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice in their efforts to develop effective prevention programmes.”<sup>7</sup> In view of these and other recommendations in the Riyadh Guidelines, Panel members advocate that comprehensive juvenile justice polices should include prevention programmes. Prevention is often coupled with programmes relating to diversion, alternative measures to deprivation of liberty, restorative justice and reintegration measures.

She then provided some examples of Panel member activities in relation to crime prevention for children, including lessons learned and possible good practices.

UNICEF supports prevention of conflict with the law through programmes with local governments and NGOs. The emphasis is put on community-based prevention strategies for vulnerable groups, including children in street situations, children from poor or violent areas and at-risk children. Examples of work include: support to family reunification and socio-economic reinsertion of former street children in Gitega and Ngozi provinces in Burundi; support to after-school programmes, day care and the provision of medical care for children living in high-crime areas in Belize; community-based prevention, including life-skills and vocational training, as well as education, health and nutrition services in Cambodia; a violence and crime prevention

<sup>6</sup> See CRC General Comment No.10, section II, paragraph 4.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, section IV, paragraph 21.

model was developed and replicated in six Human Development and Technology Centres to prevent children entering into gangs in Guatemala; Day Support Centres in Dushanbe in Tajikistan provided vocational training and support services to families and at-risk children.

Terre des hommes – aide l'enfance foundation (Tdh) is developing a case-management system to identify and address cases of children at-risk in Kosovo. This is coupled with prevention and reintegration programmes focusing on children at-risk, including psycho-social support, educational, sport, cultural and recreational activities.

Save the Children UK developed a community-based diversion and crime prevention pilot project in Panlong District, Yunnan Province, China. The project is coordinated in collaboration with local government and has significantly involved the media in raising awareness on crime prevention issues. The programme involves school-based prevention work, including child rights awareness raising, the building of self-esteem, mock courts and role-play. Community children's centres provide educational and recreational activities for children at-risk. Child participation was encouraged through a "child forum" and nomination of children to a Children Advisory Committee providing input in crime prevention activities. Save the Children UK has also finalised a regional project in the Caribbean and Central America (Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala) in 2007 and produced a report on lessons learned.<sup>8</sup> The report highlights a community governance model to prevent gang activity, child and youth participation, and the inclusion of former gang members in mentoring programmes and crime prevention activities.

She concluded by explaining that the Panel Secretariat has undergone a mapping exercise of Panel member juvenile justice activities, including crime prevention for children, to assist in identifying good practices. There are also plans to elaborate common criteria for the evaluation of good practices in juvenile justice, including crime prevention programmes. In order to support this process, she encouraged participants to send information to the Panel Secretariat, especially in relation regarding independent evaluations of crime prevention programmes for children.

## **2. Crime Prevention in Action: an example of a community-based organisation**

- ***Mr. Erwin Schletterer, Director, Brücke e.V.***

Mr. Schletterer spoke about the work of his organisation, Brücke e.V, a community-based organisation that runs thirteen crime prevention programmes for children in Augsburg, Germany. Most of the children involved in the programmes are referred to them by youth-courts. Some programmes are focused on children below fourteen<sup>9</sup> that

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<sup>8</sup> Save the Children UK, "Learning from the Caribbean and Central America Programme: Juvenile Justice in Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua & Guatemala", October 2007: [http://www.juvenilejusticepanel.org/resources/?act=res&cat=&nod=\\_root\\_&id=SaveTheChildrenUKJJinHondurasSalvadorGuatemala\\_Nicaragua07&start=11](http://www.juvenilejusticepanel.org/resources/?act=res&cat=&nod=_root_&id=SaveTheChildrenUKJJinHondurasSalvadorGuatemala_Nicaragua07&start=11)

<sup>9</sup> Fourteen is the age of criminal responsibility in Germany.

have been referred to the organisation for behavioural problems. Activities include group sessions, out-door pursuits, “wild-side” afternoons and parental work. The objective of these activities are to teach children to keep to the rules, give consideration to others, engage in meaningful leisure activities and develop self-esteem. Other activities are targeted at children over fourteen that have come into conflict with the law and are referred by the youth-courts. Activities include role-playing, self-reflection, biographical work and promoting cooperation. In addition to these activities, Brücke e.V runs a youth court programme called “Pupils Committee” where offences are considered by three students supervised by a social worker.

### 3. Questions and Answers (Q & A)

The presentations were followed by a brief question and answer session. A staff member of UNODC wished to know if the panellists had considered the impact of macro-economic policies on children coming into conflict with the law and ways to address this problem. The Panel Secretariat replied that the Committee on the Rights of the Child held a Day of Discussion in September 2007 on the allocation of resources to the implementation of children’s rights, with a particular focus on economic, social and cultural rights.<sup>10</sup> The issue of allocation of resources to health, education and nutrition services was addressed, although this was not necessarily linked to crime prevention for children.

A representative of the Mission of Peru wished to know if there were examples of specific applications of family skills training programmes. Ms. Tala replied that UNODC has identified examples from all over the world and that family skills training programmes can be adapted to local cultures. UNODC is currently involved in developing ways to adapt these programmes to the needs of low and middle-income countries.

The representative from the Mission of Peru also wished to know if the Panel was compiling information on national juvenile justice and crime prevention programmes. The Panel Secretariat replied that UNICEF was gathering information from its country offices to identify good practices in relation to diversion and alternatives to deprivation of liberty. UNODC has received information from governments regarding juvenile justice activities in preparation for the United Nations Secretary General’s Report on “Supporting of national efforts for child justice reform” submitted to the 18<sup>th</sup> session of the CCPCJ.<sup>11</sup> Terre des hommes – aide à l’enfance in collaboration with partners in Peru is gathering information on restorative justice programmes and is organising the First World Congress on Restorative Juvenile Justice to be held from 4-7 November 2009 in Peru.<sup>12</sup> The Panel Secretariat stressed that it welcomes reports and statistics on juvenile justice programmes that are public and can be shared on the Panel website ([www.juvenilejusticepanel.org](http://www.juvenilejusticepanel.org)).

<sup>10</sup> See the Recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child resulting from the Day of Discussion on “Resources for the Rights of the Child -Responsibilities of States”, 21 September 2007: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/discussion2008.htm>

<sup>11</sup> See the “Report of the Secretary General on support of national efforts for child justice reform, in particular through technical assistance and improved United Nations system-wide coordination” (E/CN.15/2009/12), March 2009.

<sup>12</sup> See the website of the congress: <http://www.congresomundialjirperu2009.org/>



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