

## **German Contribution: SG Report “Follow-up to the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and beyond”**

### **1. Investments in parenting education as a tool to enhance children’s well-being:**

Investing in early childhood has proven to have a lasting effect. As a result Germany has broadened its focus on early childhood education and processes that begin before a child starts school. The main emphasis is placed on improving cooperation between staff and parents in matters concerning institutional early learning, daycare and education, and forging links between family-based early childhood development and education services. At an early phase, educational programmes for parents and families which take place in the broader social environment can reach families to improve life chances and educational opportunities, not least for people from disadvantaged backgrounds – such as socio-economically disadvantaged children.

Suitable and successful support is now offered by some 12,000 parental advisors under the federal programmes Elternchance I and II. As persons of trust, they give sound, easy-to-understand advice on child development and early education, provide information on the transitional phases of a child’s educational path and refer parents to educational offerings in their local area. Be it a daycare centre, a family education centre, a multi-generation centre or an adult education centre – parental advice is available in many places where families seek guidance and make use of early education programmes. Parental advice simplifies access to education across the board and boosts parents’ skills in deciding on and promoting their child’s educational future. Education and childrearing partnerships are also formed between families and educational institutions such as family education centres, daycare centres and primary schools.

Parental advice plays a key role in the country-wide, prevention-focused programmes on education and family support, and also in working with parents. With the Elternchance I and II programmes, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs adds a new family policy approach and expands its activities in providing targeted support for low-income families by providing early education programmes and education-related advice. The findings of longitudinal studies show that socially disadvantaged families benefit in particular from parental guidance programmes.

The growing number of parental advisors and the high quality of the training they receive are helping to develop the family education landscape further in the direction of early childhood education. It is becoming easier to reach more families with a special need for guidance in their everyday lives. More than half of parental advisors are also early education specialists who work in daycare

### **2. Measures taken to prevent all forms of violence against children:**

Germany is committed to the protection of children from violence, exploitation and abuse worldwide. Through the **action plan “Agents of Change – children and youth rights in German development cooperation”** (2017-2019), which includes the protection from violence as one field of action, Germany has contributed to integrating the rights of young people systematically into German Development Cooperation. It has done so through nearly 300 programmes of bilateral cooperation, about 60 projects of church central offices and over 200 projects of private structures, which have been implemented over the duration of the action plan.

Some concrete examples of current bilateral programmes to prevent violence against children include the **programme “Human rights/Protecting children and promoting their rights” in Burkina Faso** to better protect girls and boys against the worst forms of child labour, child trafficking and gender-based violence through the set-up of child protection systems at decentralized level and the provision of scholarships for children at risk, among others. The programme **“Exchange, education and conflict transformation through sport for development” in Jordan and Iraq** promotes the equal participation of children and youth in sport lessons and leisure activities. It is helping to create a safe space for children and protect them from violence. **In Rwanda, Germany works with youth on non-violent conflict resolution.** It supports the creation of a radio theatre programme and a joint youth newspaper to create understanding for the views and characteristics of young people within refugee camps (Burundi, DRC) as well as outside of them (Rwanda).

As for **projects implemented through private structures**, Germany funds for example NGOs which support partner organizations with projects against sexual exploitation of children in several countries.

On a multilateral level, the **financial support to UNICEF** has been scaled up significantly over the last years by Germany focusing on the area of transitional development assistance in the context of crises and displacement. One example is a collaborative project to provide learning centers for children affected by the Rohingya crisis.

**With the aim to increase the evidence-base** to end abuse and exploitation of children worldwide, BMZ commissioned a **study on the worst forms of child labour** in 2019, which tackles exploitative child labour, sexual exploitation of children in prostitution and pornography and the use of children in armed conflicts.

An important best-practice example for the protection of children from sexualised violence is the Office of the Independent Commissioner for Child Sexual Abuse Issues (<https://beauftragter-missbrauch.de/en/the-commissioner/the-office>), which was set up in 2010. In December 2018, the Federal Government adopted the concept for the sustainable strengthening of the structures for the protection, prevention and intervention against sexualised violence in childhood and adolescence and thereby permanently installed the office of the Independent Commissioner including the valuable work of the Council of Victims and Survivors (<https://beauftragter-missbrauch.de/en/council-of-victims-and-survivors/the-council-of-victims-and-survivors>) that is hosted there. In addition, the work of the Independent Commission for the Inquiry into Child Sex Abuse (<https://beauftragter-missbrauch.de/en/inquiry>), which is located at the Commissioner’s office, was extended until the end of 2023. The Commission is supposed to continue to provide information on the extent, the reasons and the consequences of sexualised violence against minors, to hear those affected, to indicate pathways towards acknowledging of the harm done, to identify research deficits, and to make recommendations on child protection, including on the investigation of sexualised violence in institutions. Children, whose mothers experience violence, are themselves affected to a big extent. Therefore, measures aimed at protecting

women and preventing them from violence also protect their children. Germany ratified and implemented the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) in 2018. One of the current measures to prevent violence against women is the initiative #StrongerThanViolence. The website combines existing support offers for women, who are affected by violence, and offers practical solutions and ways to help and support. Additionally, the German government supports the building of women's refuges and other support organisations with the government funding programme "Together against violence towards women".

**Disabilities:** As agreed in the coalition agreement of the current governing coalition, the German Government aims to promote awareness-raising and the empowerment of persons with disabilities as well as violence-prevention policies in institutions. Germany is reviewing further steps to **protect persons with disabilities living in institutions, especially women and girls with disabilities**, and intends to commission a study on existing violence-prevention structures for persons with disabilities, including the implementation of Articles 6 and 16 of the UNCPRD.

### **3. Efforts at promoting non-violent forms of disciplining children;**

When it comes to the prevention of violence against children and the promotion of non-violent ways of disciplining children, Germany has established the Federal Foundation for Early Childhood Intervention on the basis of section 3 subsection (4) of the 2017 Act on Cooperation and Information in Child Protection (Gesetz zur Kooperation und Information im Kinderschutz). It builds on the findings of the Federal Early Childhood Intervention Initiative, which was implemented between 2012 and 2017. This will create support structures throughout Germany for (expectant) parents and families with small children up to the age of three, especially in stressful life situations. Strengthening parents' capacity to raise their children without using violence is one central aim of these support structures. Early Childhood Intervention thus makes a significant contribution towards the healthy growth of children, and safeguards their rights to protection, support and participation. Early Childhood Intervention also furthers networking between different players from the relevant benefit systems (child and youth welfare, healthcare, early support, pregnancy counselling, etc.).

### **4. Ways and means to observe the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family**

- Link the International Year of the Family with the upcoming International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour (2021), with the message that strong families are needed to effectively protect children affected by -or at risk of- child labour from violence, abuse and exploitation.
- The EU Child Rights Forum maybe a further opportunity to link to the Year of the Family
- Exchange on the European Child Guarantee with a special focus on topics such as fighting poverty and partnership-based reconciliation of family and working life.

