

JOINT STATEMENT

OF THE CHILD RIGHTS WORKING GROUP

(Re: Prevention of violence against children in Vietnam)

The recent death of an 8-year-old child due to suspected violence from her direct caregiver and relatives in Ho Chi Minh City has aroused strong indignation in the public nationwide. This, however, was not the first case recorded in 2021. In fact, a myriad of similar severe child abuse cases have been detected. While the latest statistics on child violence and abuse at the end of 2021 have not been reported yet, according to the surveillance results of “*Enforcement of policies and laws on child abuse prevention and protection*” released on 19 May 2020 by the Supervisory Delegation of the National Assembly at its 14th Session, with information quoted from the Government's report from 1 January 2015 to 30 June 2019, there had been 857 child violence cases nationwide (191 child murder cases and 666 intentional injury infliction cases), accounting for 9.84% of total abused children¹. Importantly, the cases were only detected when it was too late, often resulting in irrecoverable consequences.

The Child Rights Working Group (CRWG)² is deeply concerned about aforesaid cases and expects to see much clearer improvements on child protection in Vietnam.

We acknowledge that: The Child Protection work has been significantly improved by great efforts from the Communist Party and the Government of Vietnam, social organizations, individuals and businesses. Unfortunately, violence against children is still an urgent issue in the society due to following reasons:

- Child Protection mechanism and system have been established but have not yet operated effectively: inadequate resources in most levels; joint-ministerial coordination and engagement in prevention, detection and response to child violence cases have not been focused and efficient; many gaps are still present in early case detection, reporting and management;
- Local people and public officials/employees in relevant sectors still have limited knowledge and skills in identifying child violence risks, reporting and responding to child abuse;
- Community engagement and responsibility in child protection, prevention and early detection of child abuse and violence are also limited: when child abuse and violence cases occur or is suspected, they hesitate, fail to promptly report or do not know where to report;
- Parents and caregivers still have limited knowledge and skills in applying positive disciplines, non-use of child violence, and early detecting and reporting acts of child violence;
- Children have not been equipped with sufficient knowledge about their rights, knowledge, and skills in identifying violence and abuse risks, self-protection and reporting to protect themselves and/or their friends from violence and abuse.

We propose:

- The mass media and educational institutions continue to strengthen communications so that the people, including children, will have knowledge of children's rights. Accordingly, the entire society will pay attention to child protection, proactively propose initiatives, forms of coordination, implementation methods and deploy child violence prevention and protection activities.

¹ Report No. 69 released on 19 May 2020 by the National Assembly's Supervision Delegation

² CRWG is composed of international NGOs and Vietnamese organizations sharing the same objectives to promote, cooperate and share information between the group members and the State management authorities and sponsors to advance children's rights in Vietnam. CRWG's official operation has been registered at “International NGOs Data Center” since 2006.

- The Government continues strengthening the child protection system at all levels, especially grass-root level; clarifying the priority of child protection to successfully prevent, early detect and respond to child abuse cases, especially in the context impacted by COVID-19; supplementing/clarifying the roles and accountability of local authority, responsibility and engagement of the community; supplementing the relevant regulations on child violence prevention and protection, prohibiting physical and mental punishments against children as specified in the revised Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control;
- The working groups on child protection at wards, communes and residential areas should be screened to ensure the local communities know where to contact and report cases of child violence and abuse. The mechanisms should be continually promoted so that the communal/ward-level child protection workers are assigned with clear functions and missions and supported by grass-root collaborator base;
- The coordination mechanism among relevant sectors should be clarified; public officials and employees from relevant sectors (healthcare, education and public security) should be provided with knowledge and skills for early detection, reporting and coordination to handle child abuse and violence cases;
- Promote the role of National Child Helpline (111) in providing prompt and qualified response to child protection related calls, supplement the workforce or establish regional network to facilitate timely support service for children, while improving the quality of local service system on child violence and abuse prevention and protection. Information receiving channels should be modernized and expanded online, coordination of child protection services should utilize new technology under Government 4.0 model from the Central to Local level;
- Investigation and prosecution agencies strictly enforce the laws according to the State's legal documents and treaties on human rights, especially children's rights, that Vietnam has signed in cases of child violence to ensure accurate prosecution, transparency, equality and humanism;
- Local people and children themselves are encouraged to actively report and timely denounce suspected child abuse and violence cases to the authorities;
- Promote the legitimization of programs on parenting skills, positive disciplines and non-use of child violence in child education for parents and caregivers.

We commit:

- To continue accompanying the Vietnamese Government, particularly the Department of Child Affairs - Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, and relevant sectors in technical support and resource mobilization to launch synchronous and long-term measures in improving the effectiveness of child protection system to prevent, early detect acts of child abuse and violence and support children so that they can develop in a safe and friendly environment;
- To promote implementation of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, especially ensuring the public surveillance on the enforcement of child rights in the society, including emergencies through programs and projects launched by the organizations;
- To coordinate and share resources in policy advocacy, encourage engagement from all segments of the society, provide support in capacity building for local authorities especially in human resources, techniques, experience and lessons learned from project models, TOT training programs and replication of positive education models, etc. to effectively coordinate and improve the quality of childcare and protection services in Vietnam.

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