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Dear colleagues,

2016 was an effervescent year: we refined our strategy, our advocacy messages and we successfully launched the Child Protection Index. Supported by our partners and donors we continued the implementation of three projects: United Voices for Children, Young with a Voice and Stronger Networks for Children. These projects helped us further strengthen our capacities, enhance regional cooperation and advocate for child protection reforms.

We also created significant transformations within our executive team: at the end of 2016 we started the process for recruiting a new Secretary General. We are grateful to our first Secretary General for her dedication to build ChildPact as a team, an advocacy engine, an innovation hub, and a regional actor that promotes the work of child-focused NGO networks and NGOs.

In 2016 we begun to see the results of a beautiful and daring idea that we started to discuss in 2012: the Child Protection Index. We came a long way since 2012, piloting the Index in nine countries: Albania, Armenia, Georgia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Serbia. The results from each country illustrate the government's actions towards child protection through the lens of policy, service delivery, capacity, accountability and coordination. Together with World Vision International and ChildPact's members we presented the results of the Index in Brussels during an event attended by EU officials, CSO representatives and child rights experts.

Thank you for being with us in our journey. Our endeavours require people who want to cooperate together to ensure better lives for children.

Sincerely,

Mariana Ianachevici
ChildPact President
OUR 2016 AT A GLANCE

3 PROJECTS
United Voices for Children
Young with a Voice
Stronger Networks for Children

60 website articles and news from our members, more than 10,000 visits on www.childpact.org, more than 120,000 views on our Facebook page

3 WORKSHOPS
workshops with our members

14 dialogues between our network coordinators and EU stakeholders facilitated

10 RESEARCH
research and analysis papers based on the CPI findings

1 CPI LAUNCH
high-level conference in Brussels to launch the Child Protection Index

3 BRIEFS
advocacy papers created for EU consultations and meetings

100 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
more than 100 policy recommendations based on the CPI findings
On the 28th of September, at the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels) in the presence of EU stakeholders, CSO representatives and child rights experts, we launched the Child Protection Index (CPI) together with our reliable partners throughout this journey: World Vision International and the ChildPact members.

The Child Protection Index is the instrument that World Vision International and ChildPact created together to measure a country’s child protection system against a common set of indicators. The Index is based on 13 UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) articles and the principles of the systems approach to child protection. The results scored by each country illustrate the government’s actions towards child protection through the lens of policy, service delivery, capacity, accountability and coordination. The Child Protection Index has been piloted in 9 countries through the work of more than 70 experts involved in data collection and analysis, the use of 626 indicators, and the creation of more than 100 policy recommendations.

Mariana Ianachevici (ChildPact President and President of APSCF - the Moldavian member of ChildPact) highlighted the need for enhanced accountability: "Accountability mechanisms allow citizens and beneficiaries to address complaints to their governments about public sector services, decisions and systems. Accountability is often an afterthought in building services. However, outlets to seek citizen and beneficiary feedback and complaints will not only make services more responsive in the long run, but also help to avoid possible abuse and corruption within government systems. Children need to voice their complaints and be involved in a system meant to secure their care and protection. Mechanisms should be created specifically to identify and report abuses against children. Countries should develop mechanisms that allow children to self-report and peer-report situations of violence and exploitation."

HIGHLIGHT OF THE YEAR

THE CHILD PROTECTION INDEX LAUNCH IN BRUSSELS
Conny Lennenberg (Regional Leader, Middle East/Eastern Europe Regional Office, World Vision International) highlighted the work of social workers: "Even when countries have carefully defined caseloads, hours of operation, resources and needed social work expertise, few countries meet these quality standards in practice. In countries that lack defined quality standards for case management and other social work tasks, child protection efforts are often hampered by inconsistent resources and insufficient assigned staffing."

Boris Iarochevitch (Head of Division for Eastern Partnership, Regional cooperation and OSCE – European External Action Service) said that: "It's important that the CPI encourages regional cooperation and exchanges among countries. The robust implementation of the UNCRC is essential in this context. It's a way to put pressure on the authorities and to warn them when they depart from the trajectory on child protection. For us it's a challenge to demonstrate to the citizens that what we do matters to people, and brings tangible results. The CPI is a concrete example, that in a specific area, we can have results. We need to communicate this in the countries and in the EU."

Hellen Gonnord (Human Rights Strategy and Policy Implementation, European External Action Service) also welcomed the results of the Child Protection Index and the importance of the tool stating that "I want to point out today that there are many opportunities where we can use the CPI in our work". Verena Knaus (Senior Policy Advisor, UNICEF), Samantha Chaitkin (Representative for EU External Affairs, SOS Children’s Villages) and Jana Hainsworth (Secretary General, Eurochild) also brought their contribution to the panel discussions, discussing how the Child Protection Index could help ending violence against children.
UNITED VOICES FOR CHILDREN

The project is financed by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), through World Vision Germany and AgroInvest Foundation Serbia. The project partners are 7 ChildPact members from Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, and Serbia. The aim of the project is to contribute to maximizing child well-being, protection and rights by strengthening civil society. Child-focused coalitions have the expertise and the mission to solve the complexities that inhibit progress. Strengthened and united under ChildPact, these national actors will make use of their knowledge and joint power to monitor and influence government action on behalf of vulnerable children.

In 2016, some of the highlights of the project have been the efforts for creating strategies and opportunities for fundraising and celebrity and business engagement. At the same time, the project allowed the creation of our first Governance Manual, as a collection of standards for the good functioning of ChildPact and its members. In addition, a 4 year action plan has been developed for ChildPact.

YOUNG WITH A VOICE

The project is financed by the European Commission, through the Civil Society Facility (Operating Grants to IPA CSO Associations. Support to regional thematic associations). The main applicant is Open Club Serbia and the partners are: BKTF Albania, Association Zenica Bosnia and Herzegovina, KOMF Kosovo and Children First Montenegro.

The project aims to increase the capacity and commitment of ChildPact and its members to give a voice to young people that risk social and economic marginalization and influence social reforms through analysis, monitoring and advocacy.

Under the project in 2016, we have refined the Child Protection Index data collection methodology and its indicators' framework by organising a technical and stakeholder workshop, regional meetings of ChildPact and its members from Western Balkans and 5 national trainings on Child Protection Index. We have created and implement an index-based advocacy strategy and a dissemination plan to reach both expert and non-expert audiences.
The project was financed by the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through the Romanian Official Development Assistance, and implemented by UNDP - BRC, and by the partners World Vision Romania Foundation, the Armenian Child Protection Network, NGO Alliance for Children’s Rights Azerbaijan, the Georgian Coalition for Child and Youth Welfare, the Moldavian Alliance of Active NGOs in the field of social protection of family and child and the Women’s Consortium of Ukraine.

Coalition management trainings have been organised in the project partner countries, focusing on coalition leadership, mission and strategy, internal administration, program development and implementation, fund-raising and income generation, diversity management, partnerships and collaboration, evaluation, marketing, positioning, and planning. Furthermore, a capacity assessment instrument has been developed and tested and several field visits and exchanges of good practices have been facilitated.
ChildPact has contributed to the Human Rights Dialogue between the EU and the partner countries Armenia, Georgia and Moldova. The submitted written contributions have been mandated by the ChildPact members, the Armenian Network for Child Protection, the Georgian Coalition for Children and Youth and the Alliance of Active NGOs in the Field of Social Protection of family and Child in Moldova.

ChildPact’s inputs to the Human Rights Dialogue were supported by the every-day reality from the ground as experienced by the child protection experts from the national networks and by the results of the Child Protection Index.

**Concerns and recommendations for Armenia**

- (i) Further cross-sector coordination and cooperation mechanisms are needed between the bodies within the child protection system. (ii) Performance mechanisms, roles and responsibilities need to be clearly defined at all the relevant levels of administration.
- (i) The performance mechanisms, roles and responsibilities of the child protection units and of the professionals working with children need to be revised. (ii) Social workers should be included in the child protection units both at regional and community level.
- Child protection services need to be further developed, together with quality standards and licensing mechanisms for the child protection actors.
- (i) Armenia should continue the process of deinstitutionalisation while developing alternative care services. (ii) Armenia should include a specific number of foster care families in each year's annual state budget.
- Violence against children is a systemic concern in Armenia and the measures meant to fight it are poor and insufficient.
- The Armenian juvenile justice system needs to be reformed and become more child-friendly.
Concerns and recommendations for Georgia

- The quality of social services for children needs to be considerably improved through: (1) Increased social expenditure dedicated to social services for children; (2) Equal access to social services for all vulnerable children (3) Qualitative delivery of child protection services; (4) Proper monitoring of the implementation of child protection services; (5) The establishment of professional and quality standards for social workers.

- Integration and support programs should be developed for youth leaving the child protection system.

- The juvenile justice system needs to be reformed and become more child-friendly

Concerns and recommendations for Moldova

- Special attention should be given to the closing process of institutions and to the development of alternative care services and to the prevention services to be developed or improved at local level, providing adequate financial resources for them.

- Social assistance and child protection ought to be a responsibility of the State, just like education and health. A standard package of community social services should be supported by the state from the national budget and that the local communities should contribute to those standard services according to their budgetary possibilities.

- The State should facilitate the balancing of the family and professional life of parents by encouraging the development of new social and educational services for families

- The Code of Education should be modified in order to give mothers the possibility to resume their work before their child reached the age of 3.

CHILDPACT PROVIDED WRITTEN CONTRIBUTION FOR THE 2016 EU ENLARGEMENT PACKAGE

Emphasising several child protection concerns in countries like Serbia, Albania, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, ChildPact provided inputs for the 2016 EU Enlargement Package recommending the following regional solutions: (1) The EU should apply the lessons learned during the previous EU accession process and support its Member States to share their transition experience - the protection of children's rights is one of the most powerful EU Enlargement success stories (ex: the case of Romania); (2) Child rights and protection are likely to be some of the most uncontroversial issues in the region - child protection should be high on the EU candidate country agenda not only as a moral concern, but because child protection opens the door to the fight against corruption at local level, encourages transparency of public spending and builds democracy; (3) Strengthening the capacity of the CSO networks is essential - the EU should prioritize supporting and funding CSOs networks as they encourage innovation and grassroots democracy building.

In all the enlargement countries, data collection efforts and reporting mechanisms for child protection cases need to be improved; the funding allocated to the child protection services should be more clearly defined, standardized and monitored in a transparent way; quality standards for specialized services should be developed; and the cross-sector coordination and cooperation mechanisms in the child protection system need to be improved.
ChildPact had the opportunity to introduce the Child Protection Index during three regional level events, in Geneva, Tallinn and Varna, presenting the results of the Index.

The first event, an International Exploratory Seminar entitled “Governance related to child protection and development from an interdisciplinary perspective” (9-11 March 2016, Geneva) was hosted by the University of Geneva and gathered academia representatives specialised in child protection from around the world. The second event was the 8th Regional Meeting of the Children’s Rights Coalition Forum in Europe (19-21 April 2016, Tallinn) gathering numerous child-focused networks from all over Europe and debated current issues related to child rights and the work of child-focused coalitions. The third event, the 9th Edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum (31 October -2 November 2016, Varna) focussed on the implementation of the „Strategic Framework of the Civil Society Cooperation in the Black Sea Region” to foster regional cooperation and to promote an enabling environment for the civil society organisations in the region. We are particularly grateful to this platform that provided space for the creation and growth of ChildPact.

During these events, ChildPact and World Vision representatives introduced the methodology of the Child Protection Index, the reasoning behind the creation of the measuring indicators, the experience of implementing the Index in 9 countries and the preliminary results.

On 25-26 August, a high-level Armenian delegation led by the Armenian Minister of Labour and Social Affairs visited Bucharest, for an exchange of views and experiences in the field of child protection reform. The topic of child de-institutionalization and creation of alternative care services was one of the highlights of the visit. This mission has been enabled through the collaboration of the following partners: ChildPact, World Vision Romania, FONPC (The Romanian Federation for NGOs for the Child), APSCF (the Moldavian national coalition for child protection) and the Romanian Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly. The initiative was financed through the projects Stronger Networks for Children and United Voices for Children and the Mobility Fund of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
a delegation of experts visiting Ukraine with the mandate to share their knowledge on child protection reform in the region. In September 2016, thanks to this round of successful exchange of best practices in child protection, the Ukrainian Ombudsperson decided to make a study visit in Romania in order to learn about the way the deinstitutionalisation process has been handled and implemented in the country. Inspired by the Romanian example, Mr. Kuleba gathered information about the means of implementation and challenges entailed by such a complex child protection system reform as the deinstitutionalisation of children. This regional cooperation missions were made possible through the support of RoAid, and the projects “United Voices for Children” and “Stronger Networks for Children”. From an advocacy perspective, given the initial stages of the child protection reform in Ukraine, ChildPact continued to advocate for EU support towards deinstitutionalisation emphasising that children should remain a priority of the EU-Ukrainian cooperation.

LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE’S AGENDA FOR CHILDREN

Between the 15th and 16th of December, ChildPact and Eurochild, in cooperation with the Council of Europe, organised a workshop in Strasbourg dedicated to representatives of child-focused networks. The aim of the workshop was to inform child protection experts with regard to the Council of Europe’s working methods and instruments relevant for promoting children’s rights and ending violence against children. The workshop brought together child protection experts representing national networks from Europe and beyond.

The ChildPact President, Mariana Ianachevici, presented the main findings of the Child Protection Index. The expert presentations and the discussion covered issues related to CoE’s new Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2016-2021, to the European Social Charter, to the European Convention on Human Rights and to the Lanzarote and Istanbul Conventions and how all these instruments could enhance the work conducted by CSOs in order to advance child rights in their countries.
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