

North Cyprus

**Child Rights Situation Analysis (CRSA)
2015**

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Prologue Consulting Ltd

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this report are those of the consultant's based on the findings of the study carried out and do not necessarily reflect those of the SOS North Cyprus and/or its staff.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

North Cyprus can be defined as a country where social problems are at an alarming stage. Although meaningful studies that would reflect the significance of the overall picture, are yet to be completed, different statistics reflect the alarming levels many problems have reached.

In North Cyprus, the legislation that refers to 'children in need of protection' is called the Children Legislation (Fasil 352) and defines children in need of protection as:

Children under 16 years of age,

- a. Who lack a parent or official custodian or are abandoned by his/her parents or official custodian or are in a situation where his/her parents or custodian are missing
- b. Whose mother or father or custodian are incapacitated due to a physical or mental illness or any other condition that prevent them from functioning; and thus lack access to suitable accommodation, care and growing opportunities; and no other person or people who are competent, suitable or willing to give protective care are found

It should be noted that there is no distinction in the North Cyprus' Children Legislation between children who are at risk of losing parental care and children who have lost parental care. Additionally, according to the local definition, children are defined as people under the age of 18 (according to Children's Legislation Fasil 352 page 4). However, there are many references in the law to ages 16 or 13 (in terms of definition of a child) in various children related articles, which prevent individuals below the age of 18 from benefiting from their rights as children.

Legislation on child criminals and other legislations on children refer to children 'that are exploited,' 'forced into crime' and are 'neglected'. Thus, although the official definition of child that needs protection does not differentiate between those, who lost parental care and who are at risk of losing parental care, other legislations as well as the practices of officials under the social welfare system indicate that there is a distinction. The distinction is made clearer with the practices of the Social Welfare Department (SWD).

Children, who are at risk, are 'monitored' by the SWD, which initially 'works with the family' trying to improve the conditions for the child and the family taking preventative measures, where possible, to avoid child's removal from family.

If this process does not work, the child is removed from the parents and placed in the temporary state facility and/or with a foster family while the family is granted a period of time to 'improve' their situation. The last means is to remove the child from the parents and his/her home.

The factors that affect the situation of children in the country may be summarized as follows: (supported by phone survey results, 2015)

- General attitude towards children and parenting skills
- Lack of a coordinated strategy for child protection
- Lack of a children rehabilitation center for child criminals
- Drug abuse
- Low levels of awareness on children's rights amongst public and/or authorities responsible for protection of children's rights
- Economic conditions

There are many economic, social and traditional reasons that put children at risk of losing parental care. Since the children, who are at these risks, are generally part of the 'unregistered' populations, and/or there is a country wide deficiency in the availability of reliable statistical data for public, it is not possible for the research team to provide the numbers of children in each risk group.

During the study, the following risk groups were identified:

- The children of migrants under tourist or student visas, working illegally

- The children of seasonal workers
- The children of Roma population
- The children of migrants, who predominantly came to the island in the 1980s.
- The children of broken families
- The children of disabled parents
- Disabled children
- Children of refugees
- Street children
- Children, whose parents returned permanently to their country of origin and children now live in northern Cyprus
- Children, who committed crimes and been imprisoned
- Children of families with low socio-economic status
- Children of parents with low education levels
- Children of parents with low parenting skills
- Children of parents with alcohol or substance abuse
- Children from households with domestic violence

In accordance with the survey and focus group discussions results carried out as part of this study, the immediate needs of North Cyprus, in tackling its children related social risks and problems, can be listed as follows:

1. A national family and social risk reduction strategy,
2. Adapting the structure of SWD to the needs of the country,
3. Establishment of an operational State Institute of Statistics,
4. Amendment (and EU harmonization) of laws relevant to child welfare (providing child friendly services to all children),
5. Compulsory couple therapies before the initiation of legal divorce processes,
6. Establishment of local Family Resources Centers, across the country,
7. Improving day care system for preschool aged children,
8. Improving regional and local Family Strengthening Programmes in collaboration with SWD, municipalities and village leaders,
9. Improving support mechanisms for parents with children with different developmental problems and needs,
10. Improving alternatives of family type care for children without parental care,
11. Capacity Building and Monitoring and Evaluation system for caregivers in alternative care system.

1. INTRODUCTION

Country Facts and EU

Cyprus is at the crossroads of Europe, Middle East, Asia and Africa. It is the third largest island in the Mediterranean Sea. It has a central position over the Suez Canal that connects the maritime lines of the Gulf, Middle East and Europe. The population in the northern part of Cyprus is 286,257 and the surface area is 3,355 km².

Cyprus was partitioned with the northern third inhabited by Turkish Cypriots and the southern two-thirds by Greek Cypriots in 1974. A "Green Line" - dividing the two parts from Morphou through Nicosia to Famagusta - is today patrolled by United Nations troops. In 1983, the northern part of the island declared itself the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The status of Northern Cyprus as a separate entity is recognised only by Turkey. The possibility of European Union (EU) enlargement concentrated minds in the search for a settlement. The hopes that the island could join the EU united fell through when Greek Cypriot (predominantly living in the southern part of the island) and Turkish Cypriot (predominantly living in the northern part of the island) communities could not reach an agreement by the March 2003 deadline. Instead, travel restrictions were made easier, allowing people to cross the border for the first time in 29 years since 1974, raising hopes that a settlement is still underway for a united island.

The Greek Cypriot community joined the EU in May 2004. However, the *acquis communautaire* is still suspended in the Turkish Cypriot Community (in the northern part of Cyprus) to date, thus limiting the role of the EU in northern Cyprus to capacity building for harmonization and Civil Society and Private Sector strengthening on a project basis. Talks between Cypriot community leaders were resumed twice since the Greek Cypriot Community joined the EU in 2004, but to date a consensus for a sustainable settlement on the island is not reached.

In June 2012, the Greek Cypriot Community requested a \$17 billion bailout from the EU to bolster its failing banks. After protests in Cyprus and outrage in Russia (due to large number of Russian investors in Cyprus), the EU and Cyprus agreed to an alternative bail-out package to restructure the country's weakest banks. On 17 February 2013 the leader of the right-wing Democratic Rally party won the Presidential elections, receiving 57.5% of the votes. Later in 2014, the Greek Cypriot Leader announced that the Greek Cypriot side is withdrawing from the negotiations table.

Economic and Social Situation:

North Cyprus achieved high rates of growth between the years 2002 and 2007, mainly due to the positive effect of expectations on the solution of the Cyprus problem and the EU perspective framework. During this period the real growth rate of GNP oscillated between 11.4 % and 15.4% due to high expectations of a settlement on the island, and a consequent increase in foreign demand, resulted in a boom in the construction sector during 2005 and 2007. Since 2007, there has been a significant growth reduction in the northern Cyprus' economy, in comparison with the previous rates. In 2007, the growth rate plummeted to 2.8%. After 2007, northern Cyprus' growth rates were negative due to the decline in construction and other service sectors.

In the northern part of Cyprus based on 2013 statistics, per capita income is \$15,622. GDP is \$4,107.4 million with a growth rate of 2% per annum. The inflation rate in 2013 was 10.2 per cent, and the unemployment rate 9.7 % with a labor force of 101,181. According to the State Planning Organization's statistics the unemployment rate was 9.7% in 2011 and the unemployed youth rate is around 25%.

Similar to small island economies, the economic structure in the northern part of Cyprus is less diverse and is heavily dependent on the service sector. Services sector account for more than 70% of the GDP, as the main generators of income for northern Cyprus. Among the services sector, tourism and higher education are the leading sectors. Currently there are 8 universities operating in the northern part of Cyprus with more than 60,000 students from more than 100 countries.

Outdated legislations, high costs due to expensive materials, power, water, labour, lack of organizational structuring, lack of infrastructure as well as lack of recognition as a state are the main challenges of the economy, which initially seems to adversely affect economic growth, then other elements of the society.

Political Uncertainties:

The ongoing political uncertainty and lack of a vision for a unified island affects the northern part of the island adversely not only economically but socially as well. The Turkish Cypriot Community has been grappling with effects of high influx of people coming to the island as tourists and job seekers as result of the global economic crisis and less than ideal control mechanisms in place. The reformation pace of local governance and social systems structures are not in sync with the rate of population increase in the country. The number of people, who live below poverty level, increases day by day. Inflation rate, especially with the devaluation of the Turkish Lira, is crippling the economy, which is heavily dependent on imports.

In 2014, Turkish Cypriots rejected the constitutional amendments' package, with 62 percent voting against new rules on issues including children's rights, immunity of mayors and freedom of communication. The rejection of the constitutional change, despite approval by the parliament and the President, was disappointing. Political parties, which approved the amendments did not carry out advocacy campaigns to raise public awareness about the proposed reforms, thus people were confused and this had a negative effect on the referendum results. If the reform was approved, this would have been the first change to the constitution. Also, the revision of the legislation in regards to youth employment has been in progress.

CRSA Study:

In North Cyprus in 1993, almost two decades after the division of the island and the unfortunate war between the two communities in 1974, the state run institutions, providing care to children who lost their parental care started to close down as part of the De-I process led by the state. The changing demographic and economic situation after the division of the island in 1974, led to social problems resulting in the increase in the number of children, who lost parental care and who are at risk of losing parental care.

This study, commissioned by the SOS North Cyprus, presents an overview of the situation of children's rights and the risks associated in the northern part of Cyprus, along with a proposed list of recommendations for the future to remediate and to improve the situation in the country. It includes a complete analysis of the inventory of what is present on the ground relating to the situation along with proposed actions to be taken. The phone surveys and in-depth focus group interviews with relevant stakeholders and duty bearers were carried out by Prologue Consulting Ltd, in different cities including Nicosia, Kyrenia, Famagusta, Guzelyurt, Iskele, Karpaz regions during January 2015.

Analysis and Methodology:

This report was commissioned at the end of December 2014, with an initial deadline of 13 February 2015, which was subsequently extended till 2 March 2015. In order to ensure the preparation of a quality CRSA in a timely manner, SOS North Cyprus provided the following to the consultancy firm:

- CRSA Guidelines, other country examples (Albania, Croatia, Russia, Brazil)
- 2009 CRSA North Cyprus documents, forms
- Statistics on children, who lost parental care and at risk of losing parental care
- Family self-evaluation criteria, risk criteria
- List and contact details of all relevant stakeholders (State, NGOs, Donors, Local Authorities)

This study followed a **3 phase data** collection strategy.

The first phase involved desk research, where available statistical information and relevant literature and legislation were collected. After the analysis of the literature and legislation, a planning meeting was held with the SOS North Cyprus team to design relevant questionnaires and discussion guidelines.

The **second phase** was the data collection stage.

Primary data was collected through telephone surveys with households with children. The purpose of the survey was to collect information first hand from households with children about how children are viewed in the society and how they are treated. A survey sample of 600 was selected through a stratified sampling method. The sample was stratified in order to reflect the geographical distribution of the population. Following the stratification of the sample, telephone numbers were selected randomly and using screening questions, households with children were selected.

Simultaneously, in depth interviews with experts in the field and relevant stakeholders were carried out. This was done in order to collect information relevant to the risk groups from direct sources of information that work directly with the risk groups. This included site visits to households with social risks for the target group. House visits were carried out in 3 regions: Morphou, Famagusta and Akdogan. Site visits to ghetto areas were also carried out. Additionally, a focus group was carried out with foster parents to better understand how the foster care system works, what the shortcomings are and how it could be improved.

The **third phase** included the analysis of the results and reporting.

A telephone survey with 600 households with children as well as site visits to risky neighbourhoods and households in addition to the focus group with foster parents ensured the involvement of children and parents in the study. It was by choice that direct interviews with children were kept minimal not to traumatize the children.

Stakeholders involved in the consultation process were:

Numerous stakeholders from the government, civil society, teachers' union, local authorities, religious workers, police officers, social work experts, psychologists, other relevant NGOs. In-depth interviews were carried out with main stakeholders and duty bearers in this field. SOS North Cyprus provided insightful information relating to the research topic, especially in areas of FBC, FS and other alternative care types.

Study restrictions: Lack of official statistical information in North Cyprus and limited timeframe to complete the study.

Stakeholders	Name/Type of organisation	Relevance of the stakeholder for the topic	Contacts for further consultations
Social Welfare Department	Local state child welfare authority	Apply the national child care legislation at local level; allocate resources and monitor implementation	Department Head (One workshop was carried out with representatives from the headquarters in Nicosia as well as all district offices. Site visits were carried out to all district offices in Famagusta, Kyrenia, Morphou, Iskele, Yeni Erenkoy and Akdogan, where interviews with a total of 14 officers/experts were carried out. With the help of these experts/officers, site visits were arranged in Morphou, Famagusta and Akdogan regions.
Social Risks Prevention Foundation	NGO	Active work in social risk management and prevention	President

Refugee Rights Association	NGO	Active work in social risk management and prevention, advocacy	Project Officer
Turkish Cypriot Teachers Union	Union	Country-wide teacher membership	President
Social Welfare Centers	Project implemented by local state child welfare authority	Active work in social risk management and prevention	Project Coordinator
Social Work Experts	Local state child welfare authority	Apply the national child care legislation at local level; allocate resources and monitor implementation	2 experts
Municipalities	Local authority	Regional risks and needs assessment ability	Yeni Erenkoy, Tatlisu, Dipkarpaz, Iskele, Morphou, Mehmetcik, Kyrenia
Mukhtars	Local authority	Regional risks and needs assessment ability	15 mukhtars in Karpaz peninsula
Religious Workers	State	Regional risks and needs assessment ability	2 imams in Tatlisu
Police	Military	Regional risks and needs assessment ability	Tatlisu police office (4 officers)
Psychologist	State	Expertise in risk factors and relevant profiles relating to child crimes and criminals	(related to prison work)
Other alternative civil society initiatives		Work in areas of family support centers and Roma families	Akdogan Nicosia Yeni Erenkoy

2. GENERAL OVERALL SITUATION

Northern Cyprus can be defined as a country where social problems are at an alarming stage. Although meaningful studies are yet to be completed that would reflect the importance of the overall picture, different statistics reflect the alarming levels many problems have reached.

Main conditions putting children under risk:

One of the main reasons for the lack of an overall picture that reflects the serious levels of problems is the **'Lack of available statistical data.'**

Northern Cyprus, due to its unrecognized status, generally does not appear in any international statistic or indices. Due to the lack of an official Bureau/Department of Statistics in the country (and/or in any of the Ministries, local authorities or any other official departments) there is very little access to reliable official statistics by the public. *It is also not part of the working culture to collect statistical data.* This makes it very hard to analyze problems and plan for comprehensive solutions.

The last Census was carried out in 2011; nevertheless the official data that covers the full census study has not yet been released. Only some tables were shared and according to this data, the overall population of North Cyprus is 286,257¹. According to the same census data the number of children in the country is 67,660. Around 67% of the population live in urban areas and 33% live in rural areas. The State Planning Agency (SPA) defines 'poverty' as being income levels below 50% of the average annual net income per head in the country. The most recent data available on this is found in a report produced by the SPA in 2008. According to this report, 14.8% of the national population is under risk of 'poverty'. The social welfare system that financially supports people living under the poverty line, by providing cash benefits up to 780 TL per month (approximately €278, current minimum wage is around €596).

Nevertheless, everyone living under the poverty line is not eligible for social benefits. In order to be eligible, individuals have to prove that they are unable to work and are indeed unemployed, in addition to having some 'disability' that would prevent them from working. The social benefits system is laid out in detail in the Social Welfare Legislation (72/1989). Social welfare is defined as economic, social and psychological benefits provided to individuals in order to rehabilitate them and provide for their daily subsistence needs. It is specifically mentioned in the legislation that the economic benefits provided to the individuals in need are not meant to eliminate their poverty.

North Cyprus is a place that **survived a conflict and has yet to overcome its traumatic effects**. This is one of the main underlying causes of many social problems. Facing the traumas of the past and coming to terms with mistakes is a must for any society wishing to take a step forward in solving its social problems.

Additionally, one of the main problems in the country is **high economic problems**.

Opinion polls carried out during the last five years in North Cyprus highlight economic problems and unemployment as the most important problems laid out by participants. Although there is no official data showing the percentage of people living under the poverty line, 10% of the survey participants said their monthly total household income is below minimum wage.

High levels of migration and undocumented labor

North Cyprus receives a high number of migrants. There are 4 or 5 main migrant groups in the country:

1. Those, who came from Turkey in the 1970s and have been living in the country since. These migrants are generally citizens of North Cyprus and although the first generation of these migrants might remain isolated from the local population, their children tend to be well integrated into the local population.
2. Those, who came from Turkey after mid-1980s as economic migrants. Some of these migrants still remain undocumented. The children of these unregistered migrants are by definition not registered in North Cyprus and, therefore, lack access to education and other social benefits provided by the state. Another problem often seen among the children of this group of migrants is the confusion they face with the traditions of their parents and that of the local population. It has been reported in interviews that this group has a high risk factor since they have to try very hard to fit into the local population. Some youth (and children), who cannot fit in, have reportedly formed gangs and such criminal groups or became vulnerable for exploitation and so forth.
3. Migration for seasonal employment. There is also a vulnerable group of migrants that come to the country under tourist or work visas and work as seasonal workers. These individuals are usually brought into the country and live in very poor conditions. The children of these unregistered migrants are by definition not registered in North Cyprus and therefore lack access to education and other social benefits provided by the state. It has been documented during field visits that there are babies as old as 1 month who come with their parents and live under the same conditions, while they are taken to orange fields for work during the day.

4. In addition to regular economic migration from Turkey, North Cyprus is a hub in the migration routes of irregular migrants and thus remains vulnerable to receiving some unaccompanied refugee children. Irregular migrants, are detained in the central prison are subsequently sent to Turkey as relevant laws are not in place locally. The children of these migrants as well as unaccompanied children in these groups are taken away by the SWD for protection until the refugee group is deported from the country. During their stay in the country, the children stay at the Child Center in Nicosia.
5. Recently, there has been an increasing influx of economic migrants from 3rd countries (Pakistan, India, Nigeria, Uzbekistan, Philippines etc). Many of these migrants enter the country under student or tourist visas and work illegally without obtaining necessary permits, which puts them at certain risks.

Roma Population

There are about 50 Roma families in North Cyprus. They mainly live in Famagusta, Morphou, Akdoğan. About 25 of these families are located in Famagusta, which is the main Roma population center. The second largest location for the Roma population is Morphou with about 10-15 families and third largest in Akdoğan with 7 families. The rest of the Roma population is scattered throughout the country and more integrated with the society.

The living conditions of Roma families are very poor and their children are mostly unregistered. Those that may be documented sometimes do not attend school. Those that attend school generally complain that their teachers push them away from school since they cause problems at school. According to interviews with these children, even children who have 'officially graduated' from elementary schools cannot read or write, since they reportedly do not receive proper education.

High rates of domestic violence

A study carried out in 2012 by The Center for Migration, Identity and Rights Studies highlights that the rate of domestic violence in the country is 33%, while 46% of mothers admit to using physical violence over their children. Although this may take many different forms (physical, psychological, sexual, verbal and so forth) it is so widely used that victims subject to it do not realize they are being subjected to it.

High divorce rates

North Cyprus has a divorce rate of more than 50% of recent marriages. Official data from the Family Courts (mahkemeler.net) show that in 2013, 1,175 marriages were recorded while there were 818 finalized divorce cases. The children of failed marriages form a risk group.

Alarming rates of drug use- among youth and children

Alcohol and drug abuse of parents have been laid out in statistics as well as interviews by experts as factors that lead to violence against children or risky behaviour that cause alarm for the social welfare system. 67.7% of the participants of the survey carried out for this study reported that substance abuse is a problem that requires immediate attention in the country. **(Table 3)**

High Unemployment Rates- especially among the youth and in rural areas

Unemployment and poor economic conditions are listed as one of the most important problems facing North Cyprus.¹ Official statistics also confirm this. Unemployment rates among youth can go as high as 33% in rural areas according to official statistics (devplan.org)

Lack of social activities for youth and children in rural areas

In depth interviews in the field with youth and experts, who work with youth, report that there is a lack of activities for the youth and children, especially in rural areas, which makes them vulnerable to crime and/or other risky behaviour.

¹ CMIRS 2014 Report

High birth rates among populations living in rural areas

Interviews in rural areas show a birth rate of about 4 children per household. In depth interviews with experts in the field also confirm this. According to these interviews, women in rural areas lack general information about birth control and/or are not able, in some cases, to overcome pressure for not using protection. A total of 385 births were reported in 2013 in the 3 state hospitals in Kyrenia, Morphou and Famagusta. (Ministry of Health data)

Gambling

Gambling is seen by 65.9% of the participants of the survey as a problem that demands immediate action. **(Table 3)**

Women Trafficking

According to an earlier study carried out by Prologue Consulting Ltd, due to the existence of woman trafficking in North Cyprus, there exists another risk group consisting of the children of the trafficked women.

Small society- societal pressures and lack of privacy and anonymity

North Cyprus is a small society, where it is difficult to protect the privacy and anonymity of individuals. Due to the fact that 'everyone knows each other' in the small community, it is easy that people are 'stigmatized'. This becomes a risk factor in terms of child rights for many reasons. Children who are 'forced into crime' are usually stigmatized and may be discriminated against all throughout their lives because of the 'criminal label' they are given by the society. Similarly a child who loses parental care and becomes a part of the social welfare system in the country might also be stigmatized according to interviews with experts. This means automatically the society sees this individual as 'different', making it harder for her/him to be fully integrated into the society.

Factors affecting the situation of children in North Cyprus

Based on the results of the phone surveys carried out in January 2015, there are many factors that affect the welfare of children living in North Cyprus.

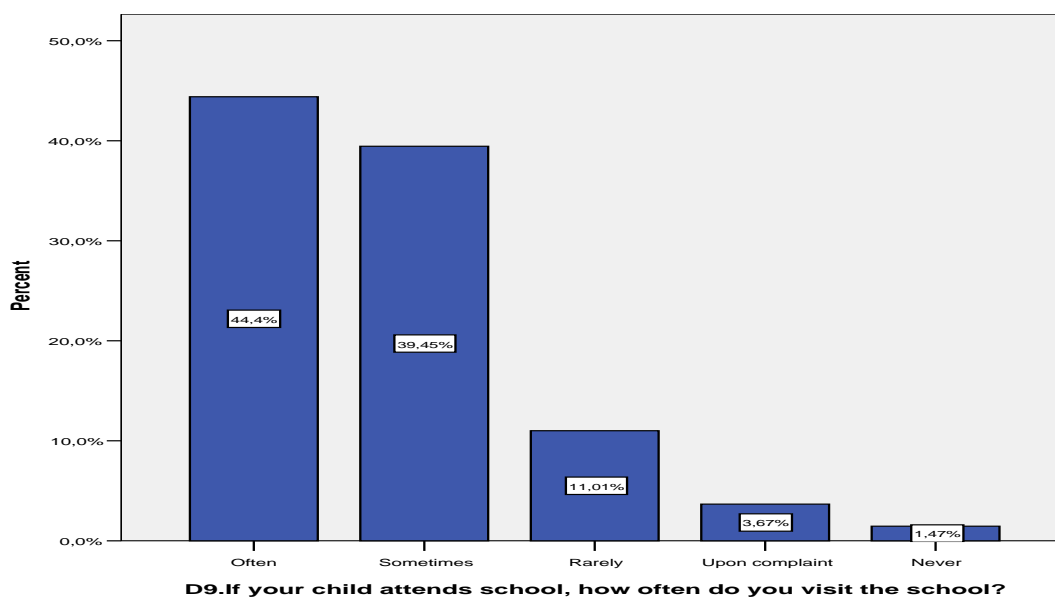
Factor 1: GENERAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS CHILDREN AND PARENTING SKILLS

As it can be seen from the survey results, parents believe they should firstly provide for the material needs of their children. Having survived war conditions, people in North Cyprus give first priority in child care, to 'providing for their children' and 'educating their children'. This can be seen in the survey results laid out in Table 1 as well. It is very rare that children are punished by being deprived of their daily allowances, whereas light beating is practiced by all participants.

Over-providing for children is also a common problem among parents within high socio-economic classes. In depth interviews carried out with experts laid out that traffic accidents and drug problems among the children in high socio-economic groups may be a result of this practice.

Although parents believe in providing for their children materially and 'educating their children' when it comes to taking part or responsibility in their education, only 44.45% said they often visit their child's school.

Graph 1: How often do you visit your children's school?



When it comes to the emotional needs of children and/or other behaviour that may be interpreted as abuse or violence towards children, there is very little awareness on what these practices are and how commonly these are practiced in the country or in their own household.

Nevertheless, not many parents realize, they may be among those who do not respect children’s rights. Table 1 shows behaviour of parents with children and how acceptable they find different forms of violence against children.

Beating of Children

It is a very striking finding of the survey that no participant said they do not find the beating of children unacceptable.

Yelling at children

About 45% said they find yelling at their children to be acceptable. Only about 30% said they never think yelling is appropriate.

Table 1: How acceptable do you think each of the following behavior are?

	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Yelling at child	1.2	43.8	25.1	29.9
Beating lightly	5	7.8	87.1	-
Punishing the child by depriving the child of allowance	0.3	7.7	12.1	79.9
Punishing the child with heavy physical assault	0.2	0.8	1.3	97
Prohibiting the child from leaving the house for a while	0.8	12.2	29	57.9
Child working to contribute to household’s income	0.3	2.7	5	92

Table 2 shows different examples of **neglect, exploitation and abuse of children** in the country. Although it does not mean that all of the cases reported here lead to abuse or violence against children, the topics listed in this table are forms of behavior that cause concern among experts.

One parent being away

It was reported in surveys that in more than 13% of cases, one parent is often away from the house. This is a risk behavior that causes alarm within the social welfare system.

Children being verbally or physically attacked in street

It was reported in the surveys that about 5 % of children are often or always attacked verbally, while about 4% are attacked physically.

Children being deprived of food regularly

The 6% reported in the surveys as a figure for children that are often or always deprived of food regularly is a very concerning figure for children’s rights in the country.

Children lack a safe place to play

About 30% of participants of the survey complain that children often or always lack a safe place to play.

Table 2: How often do we see below occurrences in our country:

	Always %	Often %	Sometimes %	Rarely %	Nearly Never %
Mother or father of at least one of the children living in the house is sometimes away from the house (not present at night)	3.3%	13%	35%	17.5%	30.5%
At least one of the children is playing a minimum of 6 hours outside of the house per day	2	6	11.3	20.5	60
At least one of the children is being attacked orally in the street	1.9	3	11	20.2	64.2
At least one of the children is being attacked physically in the street	0.8	2.8	8.2	16.7	71.2
At least one of the children is deprived of eating regularly	2.2	4.3	14.5	19.3	59.3
At least one of the children is disabled	1	1.50	8.3	17.5	71.5
At least one of the children is subject to physical violence in the school	1.3	5.7	15.3	16.2	60.7
At least one of the children is deprived of a safe play space	14.3	16.5	14.8	12.3	41.5
At least on of the children is deprived of an environment in which they can study	3.2	8.6	14.5	18.2	55.5
At least one of the children cannot get a daily allowance	2.2	6.8	15.3	20.3	53.7
At least one of the children is deprived of a circle of friends	3.8	9.7	15.3	17.5	52.8
Child is alone in the house for long periods during the day	2.3	10.3	15.2	16.8	53.5
Child is outside until late at night	1.7	4.3	6.3	11.8	74
Child’s clothes are clean	56.1	20.2	9.7	5.5	8.4
Child is consulted on matters that concern the child	21.7	19.2	35.5	15.3	8.2

It is not very common for children to be consulted on matters relevant to them.

8% of participants said children are never consulted on matters that concern the child.

Physical violence against children at school

7% of participants said children are often or always subject to physical violence at school. Awareness raising in schools is an outstanding need.

Table 3: How big of a problem are each of the below in our country?

	Not a problem at all	A problem that requires attention	A problem that demands immediate action
Verbal violence towards children (swearing and humiliation)	17.5	31.5	49.2
Sexual abuse of children	16.2	16.3	64.3
Physical violence towards children (beating etc)	18.3	19	60.7
Leaving children in the streets	23.9	26.2	47.1
Malnutrition of children	19	25.5	51.7
Children being deprived of a circle of friends	21.7	37.9	38.9
Health issues affecting children in particular	20.2	26.7	50.8
Racist assaults towards children	35.2	23.2	37.8
Exclusion of some children	25.6	27.8	43.5
Substance/alcohol abuse	16.1	14.2	67.7
Addiction to technology/TV	12.2	32.6	53.4
Gambling / betting	14.4	16.7	65.9
Children without ID/passport/birth certificate	24	26.2	38.1
High crime rate	20.9	24.7	51.3
Domestic violence	20.7	20.5	55.5
Depriving children of schooling after they reached the compulsory education age	30	18.2	48.8
Child forced to work under the age of 18	29.2	19	49.1
Not being able to ensure children' school attendance	27	25.7	43.7
Letting children to use drugs or alcohol	21.5	17	58.3
Letting/supporting children to continue inappropriate behaviours such as committing crime and being extremely aggressive	23.2	20.8	53.8
Child begging or working for food or money	36.6	13.2	45.4
Families that are socially isolated, economically weak and emotionally unprotective	13	25.2	57.3
Child being deprived of medical intervention/doctor child needs	18.7	24.6	52.8
Child dressing up dirty and smelling bad	28	26.1	41.2
Child left alone without anyone caring at home	20.3	26.3	49.5
Transortation to meet basic needs such as food, health, education etc.	17.8	26.8	51.7
Marriage and child birth under 18	19.9	15.9	60.4

Child birth at young age:

The average age of having the first child among those who have participated in the survey is: **24.5**
60.4% of interviewees reported having children at young age as a problem that requires immediate attention.

There seems to be a pressure from parents and the society on young girls, around the age of 14, that may lead to risky behaviours such as early engagement-marriage-birth cycle. Parents find it more 'acceptable' if their daughter is 'engaged' for her to go out with a boyfriend. Once engaged, a couple is likely to be pressured by parents and society to get married and once married they are likely to be pressured into having children.

During in-depth interviews teenage girls were mentioned as a risk group, when they are subject to serious pressure from their parents. According to the interviewees young girls, subject to pressure from families, tend to engage in risky behaviours as a get away from the family, which puts them at risk.

Having too many children:

Women living in rural areas lack the general awareness on birth control and prevention of unwanted pregnancies. Similarly, in case of more traditional families birth control is not preferred.

Factor 2: LACK OF A COORDINATED STRATEGY FOR CHILD PROTECTION

Currently, there is a lack of a coordinated effort on the subject of 'children's rights'. Lack of short, medium, long term strategies for the resolution of a specific issue is very common in the northern part of Cyprus. Lack of a strategy causes ongoing efforts to stay isolated and projects to fizzle out fast, thus not contributing to long term strategic improvements in the system.

Due to the lack of an overall strategy and coordination, resources are not utilized in a strategic manner to obtain maximized impact in reducing the risks. In-depth interviews reveal that there are cases where officials who are elected by voters may decide to discontinue supporting a project such as parenting skills training.

The lack of a coordinated strategy often results in the following:

- Best practices are lost,
- Demand and supply of different services might not find each other due to lack of information,
- Relevant departments may not intervene due to lack of 'authority,'
- Data and statistics are not shared,
- The full picture is not seen, problem not fully defined and thus solution cannot be devised.

Thus, it is very important to have a coordinated effort and for each actor that will participate in a network of different stakeholders to have a well-defined terms of reference and commit itself to it for a period of time.

Factor 3: LACK OF A CHILDREN CORRECTIVE FACILITY FOR CHILD CRIMINALS

Currently there is no rehabilitation center for child criminals, therefore, child criminals are imprisoned with adults. According to in-depth interviews, children that enter the criminal system, even for a minor crime, tend to become 'career criminals.' and generally tend to return with a more serious crime.

In depth interviews have shown that economic factors are at the top of the main causes for crimes children commit. Generally, minor theft cases were reported as one of the top social problems associated with child criminals. The profile of children that commit these crimes is reported to be generally low socio-economic groups, drug users (both low and high economic income), and children of broken families.

Unaccompanied minors as well as street children also form risk groups. Children of migrant populations are another risk group. According to some interviewees these children tend to form gangs and commit various crimes, with the 'need to belong' as an underlying factor.

The lack of a rehabilitation center for children that commit crime is a major problem. It is very important for children to be:

- Free from a criminal record,
- Learn from their mistakes safely,
- Trained and/or continue their education and/or learn new skills during rehabilitation to be able to reintegrate into the society.

Factor 4: DRUG ABUSE

Drug use by parents or the child is a risk factor for the target group. There is a lack of a rehabilitation facility in North Cyprus for drug use.

Drug abuse has become a major problem for North Cyprus over the past 5-10 years. According to interviews the age of drug users might be as low as 12-14. Chemical drugs are currently very popular

among children and youth and due to easy access, they form a high risk for children throughout the country.

Interviewees expressed that there are many child drug addicts both from low and high socio-economic groups within the society.

Children of low socio-economic groups may be vulnerable to drugs both as users as well as 'carriers'. Interviews with experts show that these children were initially 'introduced' to drugs as 'carriers.'. Once part of the 'drug circle' they themselves might become addicts. Although there is a lack of statistics on how major the drug problem is, experts say drug related problems are about to 'explode' especially in the cities.

The problem with drug use among children and youth has many dimensions:

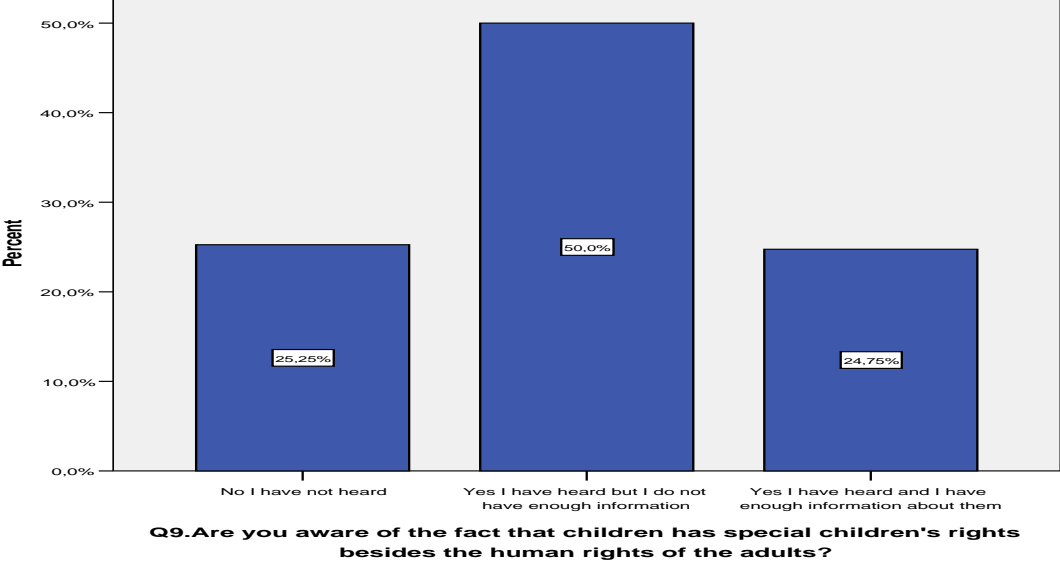
- Lack of a proper treatment center for drug addicts:
The private hospital for the treatment of drug addiction was closed down. People with drug addiction problems have to attend the State Mental Hospital for treatment. Due to the stigma attached to this institution in the society, addictions tend to be kept secret within the family without reaching out for support.
- Drug use and possession are crimes against law
Since drug use and possession are defined as a crime, children caught doing these acts are sentenced, which is likely to make them more vulnerable to drug abuse in the future.
- Stigmatization of children
Stigmatization of drug users within the society pushes these children away from the society. Once stigmatized, it is rather difficult for them to find employment and be reintegrated into the society even after they are treated and/or out of prison.
- Drug abuse may lead to mental health problems among many users
There are reportedly many children and youth who lost their mental health because of the effects of chemicals on the functioning of the brain. There is a section in the state mental health hospital that works specifically on child/youth patients.

Factor 5: LOW LEVELS OF AWARENESS ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Low awareness on children's rights

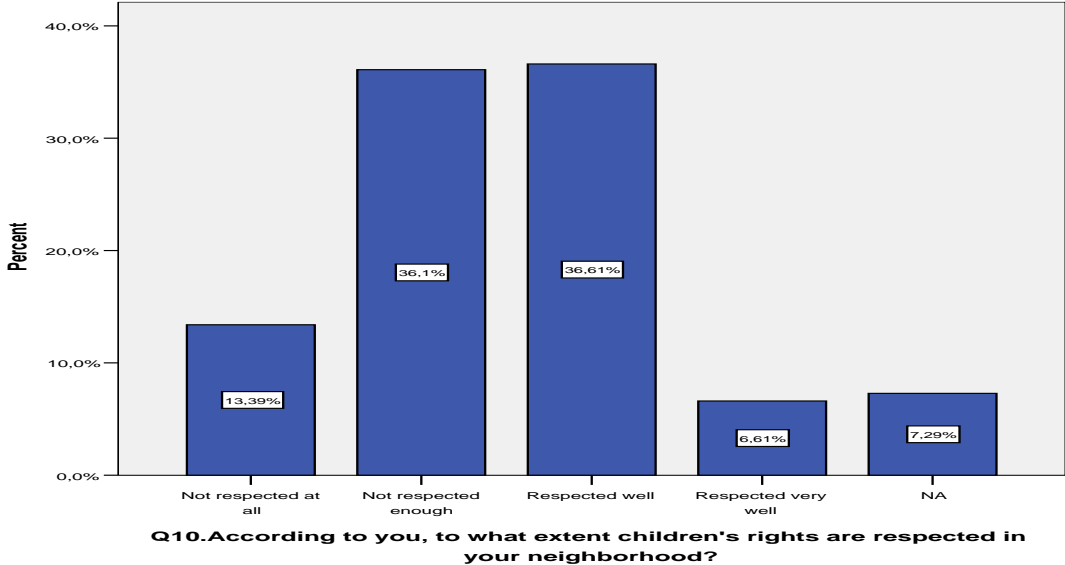
As it can be seen in many questions of the survey, there is a very low level of awareness on child rights and what these rights are. 25.25% of those, who participated in the survey, said they have not heard of children's rights and 50% said they have heard of these rights but do not know what they are.

Graph 2: Awareness Level of Society on Children's Rights



About 50% of participants said children’s rights are not respected in the neighbourhood they live in.

Graph 3: How well Children’s Rights are respected in the Society



Factor 6: ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

45.4 % of participants of the survey indicate that child begging is a problem in the country that requires immediate action. Similarly 57.3% report that economically weak and socially isolated families are a problem that requires immediate action.

In depth interviews show that poor economic conditions are one of the main factors for children to be forced into crime. Many children groups that are under risk are vulnerable due to poor economic conditions such as the children of Roma, seasonal workers, and street children. Economic conditions are worse in rural areas since work opportunities are more limited.

Sub-factor: THE LEGAL DEFINITION OF ‘CHILD’ IS PROBLEMATIC

It should be noted that there is no distinction in the North Cyprus Children Legislation between children who are at risk of losing parental care and children who ost parental care. Additionally according to the local definition, children are defined as people under the age of 18 (according to Children’s Legislation Fasil 352 page 4). Nevertheless, the legislation itself defines a system that benefits children below the age of 16, leaving children between the ages of 16-18 in a vacuum. There is no reference to children above the age of 16 in the legislation. This problem, although voiced for many years, has yet to be rectified by the relevant legislative authorities. Children above the age of 16 are thus not part of the legal social welfare system and thus are not able to receive any benefits they might be entitled to, if they were subject to the conditions of the legislation.

3. PROFILE AND NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN TARGET GROUP

The SOS target group is defined as:

- **Children who are at risk of losing parental care** – this means that children’s basic material, emotional, health and educational needs are being neglected or they are abused, because their care-givers lack the capacity or commitment to adequately care for their children.
- **Children who have lost parental care** – this means that children live physically separated from their family.

([SOS Children’s Villages Programme Policy](#), May 2009)

In North Cyprus, the legislation that refers to 'children in need of protection' is called the Children Legislation (Fasil 352) and defines children in need of protection as:

Children under 16 years of age,

- c. Who lack a parent or official custodial or are abandoned by his/her parents or official custodial or are in a situation where his/her parents or custodial are missing
- d. Whose mother or father or custodial are incapacitated due to a physical or mental illness or any other condition that prevents them from functioning; and thus lack access to suitable accommodation, care and growing opportunities; and no other person or people who are competent, suitable or willing to give protective care are found

Legislation on child criminals and other legislation on children talk about children 'that are exploited', 'forced into crime' and are 'neglected'. Thus although the official definition of child that needs protection does not differentiate between those who have lost parental care and who are at risk of losing parental care, other legislation as well as the practices of officials under the social welfare system show that there is a distinction. The distinction is made clearer with the practices of the social welfare department.

According to Fasil 352, once the SWD receives information that a child might be exploited, neglected or might be at risk, a house visit to observe the situation at hand is arranged. The family might be put on a 'watch list' depending on the level of risk the situation poses for the child, and follow up visits to the household are carried out in order to observe whether the 'conditions' improve. SWD also starts 'working with the family' trying to improve the conditions for the child and the family in order to prevent the need for alternative care. This work includes empowering the family with the parenting and social skills that might be necessary for the 'health' of the child. Economic benefits might also be provided to the family, if the department believes this help will enable the family to take better care of the child and eliminate the risk conditions.

If this process does not work, the child is taken away from the parents and placed in the temporary state facility and/or with a protective family while the family is given a period of time to 'correct' their situation. The last means is to take the child away from the parents.

3.1 Which children, how many and why are they at risk of losing parental care?

There are many economic, social and traditional reasons for children to carry the risk of losing parental care. Since these risk groups are generally part of the 'undocumented' populations, and/or there is a general lack of statistical data available in all public offices, it is almost impossible to even estimate how many children are in each risk group.

- The children of migrants, who enter North Cyprus under tourist or student visas and work illegally. This group is generally living in urban areas, in the city centers in Nicosia, Famagusta and Kyrenia.
- The children of seasonal workers. This group is mainly in Morphou and Famagusta.
- The children of Roma population living in North Cyprus. Famagusta, Morphou and Akdogan are the 3 cities where a large percentage of this population lives.
- The children of Roma population living in North Cyprus.
- The children of migrants from Turkey who came to North Cyprus in the 1980s. Although this group is dispersed throughout the country, those who form a higher risk group are

found in central Kyrenia and in rural villages. It has been harder for these children who might be defined as second generation migrants, to integrate with the local population. The pressure they feel to 'blend in' is higher than children of migrants living in other cities.

- The children of broken families - Throughout North Cyprus
- The children of disabled parents - Throughout North Cyprus
- Disabled children - Throughout North Cyprus
- Children of refugees - Throughout North Cyprus
- Street Children - mostly live in Nicosia and Famagusta. Those who live elsewhere might be taken to these two cities to work/beg.
- Children whose parents returned permanently to Turkey and themselves are now staying with relatives or friends – Throughout North Cyprus, mostly in cities
- Children who committed a crime and been sent to prison - Throughout North Cyprus, both high and low socio-economic classes enter this risk group. Although children of higher socio-economic classes may find a way to find a place in the society or may migrate to other countries where they get a fresh start, children of lower socio-economic status are stigmatized for life and have a risk of becoming a repeat criminal, committing a larger crime than the one before.
- Children of families with low socio-economic status
- Children of parents with low education levels
- Children of parents with low parenting skills
- Children of parents with alcohol or substance abuse
- Children from households with domestic violence

4. THE CAUSES FOR CHILDREN TO LOSE THEIR PARENTAL CARE IN THE COUNTRY

According to the results of the in depth interviews, below are amongst the factors causing children to lose their parental care in North Cyprus:

Reason 1: Low socio-economic and education situation of the family, particularly mothers:

Generally, it is families with one parent missing – usually with a lacking father figure, divorced parents, families with poor economic conditions/poverty, and cases where parents are outside the home throughout the day (or one or both parents have to leave the village/city for long periods of time for work) that form a risk factor for children. In depth interviews with experts, as well as data on children under the protective care system reflect that an overwhelming majority of children that are in the protective system have mothers with minimal or no education. Thus, it can be deduced that education of women and/or mothers is an important factor in the prevention of social risks.

Reason 2: Child abuse

Interviews with experts as well as field visits show that child crimes and child abuse cases often overlap.

Reason 3: Child neglected by parents

Interviews with experts as well as field visits show that child crimes and child neglect cases often overlap.

Reason 4: Violence against women and child

Interviews with experts as well as field visits show that child crimes and domestic violence cases often overlap.

Reason 5: Drug abuse by parents

Interviews with experts as well as field visits show that child crimes and drug and alcohol abuse cases often overlap.

Reason 6: Child forced into crime

Reason 7: Drug abuse by child

UNDERLYING CAUSES:

There are many underlying causes to the reasons listed above. Many of these causes are reflections of the general social and economic problems faced in the country as well as the traumas of the conflict (due to the Cyprus problem) that are now handed over to the new generations. These causes may be listed as follows:

- Cultural traditions
- Economic reasons
- Unemployment
- Position of women in the society
- Position of children in the society
- Low levels of parenting skills (of young parents)
- High divorce rates
- Unregistered/irregular migrants
- Refugees
- Domestic violence
- Low awareness about children’s rights
- The general attitude of society about not taking action against violence against children
- The general attitude of society about not becoming involved in ‘other families’ business’
- The general attitude of society about not acknowledging ‘taboo’ issues such as violence against women and/or children
- Parent in prison
- Death of parent
- Disabled child
- Disabled parent
- Broken families (including due to imprisonment)

Number of children without parental care

	2012	2013	2014
SOS Children's Village	70	73	68
SOS Youth Facility	21	21	19
SOS Semi-Independent Living Facility	16	16	21
Nicosia Child Center	19	17	24
Social Welfare Semi-Independent Living Facility	3	1	1
Foster Care	32	31	32
Adoption Applications	5	2	3
Approved adoptions	-	1	2
Children who are imprisoned	34	29	31

Child criminals under 'monitoring of SWD but remaining under parental care'	1	24	33
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Main Informal and Formal Alternative Care² Types in the Country

The national alternative care system is designed with Fasil 352 (articles 11-22). According to the legislation, the head of the SWD is responsible for the protection of the rights of the children who lose parental care. The main responsibilities of the department head are to find safe alternative care mechanisms for the child and to ensure the child is treated well. Follow up visits/inspections are carried out in order to ensure the well treatment of the child.

In the northern part of Cyprus, SOS Children's Villages is the only family based care option providing long term alternative care. There is one state institution called Nicosia Child Center. Although it is designed as a transition/crisis house for children who lost parental care as a short term basis, it also, often, provides long term alternative care. The Foster Care system, which is run by the SWD, provides both short and long term alternative care. There is also one non-governmental organization, called the Foundation for Prevention of Social Risks, that intervenes in emergency situations, however, with rather limited resources and capacity.

Foster care

Once the child is taken away from the parent(s) s/he is either placed with a foster family (who may or may not be a 'relative') or in the Nicosia Child Center. The 'better alternative' is to find a 'relative' of the child who would provide this care. If a relative is not found, a foster family would be the second choice. The SWD has a database of families as foster parents. If a suitable foster family is found in the database, the child is placed under the care of this family until the conditions of the 'parents' improve. If that does not take place, the child might continue to stay with the foster family.

The foster parents are compensated with benefits that are parallel to the needs of the child. The legal guardianship of children remains with the SWD. There are no limits in the legislation on the number of children each foster family can provide care for. Additionally, the recruitment process has room to improve in terms of capacity building and training provided to families before they become foster families and while they provide care. A proper monitoring and evaluation system should also be established in order to ensure the child's protection under care.

According to the results of the focus group discussions, amongst the registered foster care families are those families who are not able to have children through natural means. According to the officials, these families constitute 10% of the existing foster care families. On the other hand, the information gathered by the SWD shows that around 38% of foster carers become so in order to provide income for themselves and approximately 62% become foster carers due to kinship with a child.

The head of the SWD has the responsibility to define a budget that reflects the needs of the alternative care system in the country and has the right to start campaigns to raise funds for this purpose. If a short term foster family could not be found, then the child is placed in the Nicosia Child Center, which is supposed to provide short term care as a transition center.

Nicosia Child Center

This center is designed to provide services as a transition center for children, who are taken away from parental care by the SWD. Children are kept here for a short period where the parents are 'monitored' by the department for improved conditions of living. If the conditions improve, the children are given back to the parents. Otherwise, the child is taken away from the parents and are placed in a more 'permanent arrangement' depending on the conditions of the child and/or the arrangement/facility.

In the longer term, the child needs to be placed in alternative care. The state alternative care facilities have very limited capacities and thus private alternative care options are sought. The head of the SWD, who holds the legal guardianship of the child once s/he is taken away from the parent(s) has the responsibility to make the best choices for the child and place him/her in the best alternative option. It

² For the definitions of different alternative care types refer to the [UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children](#) (p. 10).

is required by law that the consent of the child is taken as well. According to the in-depth interviews with experts in the field sometimes the consent of the child is not taken and decisions are made on his/her behalf.

Social Welfare Semi-Independent Living Facility

The state started closing its care institutions in 1994 with the purpose of deinstitutionalization and increasing the number of alternative care options, i.e, SOS family based care, for the best interest of children. However, one institution, located in Famagusta, remained open, which was closed in 2005 to channel more support to SOS youth programmes in the country. The young people, above the age of 18, who could not be placed elsewhere, in 2005 due to this institution's closure, were moved to integrated houses in the community that the government rented. SWD's semi-independent living was a transitional solution (an exit strategy) for the closure of the institution in Famagusta.

SOS Children's Village

As part of the protocol with SWD, children between the ages of 0-15, who lost their parental care, can receive family based care in the village. The children are admitted to the village based on admission criteria, in line with the international SOS standards. Children live together with their biological siblings, if they have any, SOS siblings and SOS mothers and aunts in a family environment. Based on the situation of biological families, children can visit their family of origins regularly. SOS also provides pedagogical support to children and their caregivers as well as their biological families in order to enhance quality development of each child. Currently, 68 children receive care in the village.

SOS Youth Care Programmes

Children above 15 years old transit to the Youth Facility (YF), located in Kyrenia and live there for a maximum of 5 years. The aim of SOS is to prepare young people to become independent and stand on their own feet when they complete SOS programmes. In YF, young people are prepared for independent life with the support of youth educators and pedagogical team. SOS YF serves for this purpose with maximum 38 people capacity. Currently, there are 19 young people living in the YF. There are reportedly plans to admit young people from the community who are above 12 years old and at risk to reach out to more beneficiaries.

SOS Semi-Independent Living (SIL) Programme

The young people who complete SOS youth programme can rent flats throughout the northern part of the country with the support of SOS. They share flats with friends or siblings and work and/or continue their education at the same time. Currently, there are 21 young adults in the frame of SOS SIL programme.

When young adults complete SOS SIL programme, with a duration of 3-4 years, they become independent. SOS North Cyprus continues to provide support, to 'independent' young adults if needed, through its networks and social connections.

Adoption of the child

Children, who lost their parental care for various reasons, are taken under the custody of the SWD. Families, who would like to adopt a child, are examined by the SWD in terms of their psycho-social and economic situations within the articles stipulated in the law concerning child adoption. Prior to initiating the legal procedure for adoption, a period of 3 months is granted for observation purposes by the SWD. In terms of adoption of children, there is also a cooperation between the SWD and the Ministry of Family and Social Policies in Turkey. Some experts mentioned that adoption of children is not preferred in the northern part of Cyprus as it used to be due to lack of anonymity and the increased number of IVF centers in the country. The effect of these two factors on adoption is not determined.

Private Child Day Care Facilities (total number: 54)

According to Fasil 352, the SWD also has the right and/or responsibility to inspect the child day care facilities in the country.

Informal Alternative Care:

Informal alternative care services exist only as day-care services. There is no informal alternative care system for 24-hour child care. These are generally centers (mostly voluntary) run by civil society and other actors such as municipalities.

The **Foundation for Prevention of Social Risks** runs a shelter for victims of domestic violence, which also provides a shelter for the children of these victims on a short-term basis. The shelter also provides day care services to children in a specific neighbourhood in Nicosia, where children may drop by to receive food and a safe space to play, do homework and so forth.

Preventative Efforts:

The SWD provides training for parents through the Social Services Center so that the parents might be more empowered to care better for their children. Similarly through providing economic, social and psychological support to the families, the department tries to reduce the risk factors on children. This is the first priority option for the department as it is seen that the best alternative for the child is to stay with the biological parents as long as the conditions are ‘improved and are healthy for the child.’

Once the child is taken away from the family, the legal guardian is the Head of the Social Services Department. The alternative care options are necessary, however the priority is to reintegrate the child with biological parents if the conditions of the parents improved.

Youth Family Support and Education Center (GADEM)

This is a center formed under the SWD, as part of the Social Welfare Centers. Its main objective is to strengthen families to decrease risk factors for children and youth and thus prevent them from being involved in criminal activities. The Center carries out trainings and seminars for parents, and offers various other activities and services to children and youth (such as help with studies, a safe space for children to do their studies, socialize and so forth) to reduce the amount of unaccompanied time children spend on the streets.

Similarly, COGEM (a child center) provided support for a total of 163 children since its establishment. This center functions more like a community center, offering children and youth a safe space during working hours.

SOS Family Strengthening Programme (FSP)

SOS FSP supports children, who are at risk of losing their parental care due to different social reasons, by strengthening their families to increase capacities so families can provide better care environment for their children. FSP focuses on capacity building of families, providing access of families to main social services and increasing awareness with respect to human and child rights in order to prevent child neglect and abuse. The main goal of this programme is to strengthen families both economically and psycho-socially and consequently make them self-reliant. SOS North Cyprus cooperates with SWD in the selection and support of FSP families. Currently, there are 28 families and 72 children in this programme.

5. OVERVIEW OF CHILD RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE TARGET GROUP

The results of phone surveys, as part of this study, and in-depth interviews show that generally there is a low level of awareness and understanding of child's rights in the country. This is amongst the main causes of many child rights related violations.

The table below summarizes the violations of child's rights by areas.

Broad areas	Main child rights violation	Describe risks & problems children are facing	Causes for child rights violations
Non-discrimination (art. 2)	Discrimination of different groups of children by ethnicity, citizenship, crime record, disability, economic level, presence of	There are different reasons for discrimination based on: 1. Citizenship / residence status If a child is not a citizen of North Cyprus, or is a child of an undocumented migrant, she/he is unable to benefit from any social benefits	There are causes for these violations: - Lack of awareness about child's rights - Due to lack of information about children's rights, and support mechanisms,

	<p>one or both parents in the country, citizenship status of parents, etc</p>	<p>provided by the state. This may be the case, even if the child is born in North Cyprus.</p> <p>There are examples of children born to migrants, who stay in North Cyprus with work permits and have been living in North Cyprus for more than 20 years without citizenship. These children may not benefit from social benefits even if they are disabled.</p> <p>2. Ethnicity (Roma, etc) Children of Roma families tend to be not registered. Even if they are registered, they are not monitored to ensure children access their rights such as compulsory education and health services. They are often labelled as 'difficult children' by many and thus discriminated against at schools.</p> <p>3. Children of Turkish migrants are discriminated against in schools where they tend to be 'unwanted by parents of other children'. Children of Turkish origin tend to be placed in separate classes, where they may receive less attention and care, according to in-depth interviews.</p> <p>4. Disabled children tend to be stigmatized by society and are mostly kept home, according to interviews. Thus, they do not access regular schooling and are not integrated into the society, which can make them vulnerable.</p> <p>5. Unaccompanied minors Since they do not have any parents or legal guardians in the country, they are unable to receive their rights (schooling, social benefits, health care) and/or benefits they may be entitled to. This group of children are the most vulnerable group for risks.</p>	<p>some state authorities in various capacities may also shy from getting involved in resolution of the problem of a child and family.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - - - Disabilities and illnesses are often viewed as taboos in society and are thus mostly kept secret. <p>North Cyprus is a small society where stigmatization and labelling of certain groups is amongst the risks. In a small society where almost everyone knows everyone, stigmatization and labelling mean an individual may not be able to get proper employment, find a life partner/marry or carry out any economic / social / political act like any other 'normal' member of the society.</p>
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		<p>6. Children taken to foster care / alternative care These children can be often labelled by society. In depth interviews with experts highlight this as a possible risk factor for the discrimination of children who lose parental care.</p> <p>7. Children forced into crime These children are often stigmatized by society and may be discriminated against throughout their adult lives.</p>	
Survival and Development (art. 6, 7, 8, 23, 27, 28, 29)	Violence Health Neglect Exploitation Education	<p>Children are reported to be beaten up often by figures of authority in their lives as a means of 'discipline.'</p> <p>It is usually very difficult for children who are abused to 'convince' an adult about the abuse.</p> <p>There is a limited capacity of alternative care options in the country. This is a risk factor, where 'proper' care facilities may not be 'open for all who need them'. This may result in the violation of child's rights when children who are in need of alternative care may not be able to get alternative care due to the lack of capacity of the care providers.</p> <p>Similarly, the lack of a 'fully efficient' follow up and investigation system under the alternative care regime provided by the state may result in the neglect / abuse / exploitation of children in alternative care. In depth interviews show that 'follow up' of foster families are carried out at the SWD, instead of the foster care provider's home, which might lead to problem and risk areas being overlooked.</p>	<p>Physical violence against children is viewed as an act of discipline and almost 'necessary.' Some interviewees indicated that some sexual abuse cases may not be reported due to taboos.</p> <p>Generally there are different causes for neglect and abuse by parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic reasons - Lack of parenting skills - Lack of capacity of the care-giver <p>Lack of or limited numbers of local efforts where child day care may be provided by the local authorities and/or civil society</p>
Protection (art. 5, 9, 19, 20 and 37)	Psychological Physical Personal Data/Identity of victims	<p>'Police, health officials etc are not able to protect the psychological health of the child as they should' says one expert. Although it is required by global norms that children that are victims of violence should only be questioned once, this is not the case in North Cyprus. They may be repeatedly questioned and examined by the police, health officials (if necessary to carry out body examinations), in court etc.</p>	<p>There is no personal Data Protection Act that protects individuals in general.</p> <p>The lack of child-based policies and practices in public offices is a major cause for many problems.</p>

		<p>Although the identity of child victims in court cases needs to be classified, the details and information violating the privacy and confidentiality of the victims make their way to the media.</p> <p>Although the criminal records of child criminals are classified and/or erased in many countries, this is not implemented in North Cyprus.</p>	
Participation (art. 12, 18, 23)	Participation in decision making	The most violated right of children in North Cyprus is their right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. According to experts interviewed, even the foster care system that is based on the 'well-being and best interest of the child' violates the child's right to have a say on the matter. 'Often consulting the child is seen as an unnecessary step' says one expert.	This is mostly caused by the fact that children are not seen as 'individuals' but rather 'projects of their parents'. The local culture does not allow children to become 'independent human beings.'

6. RESPONSIBILITIES OF DUTY BEARERS AND THEIR MAIN STRATEGIES

The main responsibility in terms of providing alternative care for children lies with the Head of the SWD (Fasil 352). The Head of SWD is responsible for carrying out all duties that would protect the 'best interests of the child'. This includes taking away the child from the biological parents, if necessary, placing them in alternative care, providing economic support for the parents, paying for alternative care services to private institutions, follow up and investigation of alternative care conditions, as well as providing emergency care. The Head of SWD is responsible for making the final decisions about the child at risk and the placement of the child in the 'right' alternative care. The possible interventions by the Head of SWD are limited by the lack of a range and capacity of alternative care options. Within the context of limitations about the availability and capacity of alternative care in the country, the Head of SWD makes the best decision for the child.

Duty-bearer/ stakeholder	Main responsibilities in the protection and care of children in the target group or	Capacity analysis		
		Motivation/willingness	Authority	Resources
Immediate caregiver, e.g. parents	Providing the basic rights of a child such as protection, nutrition, education, healthy conditions for development and so on.	Does the duty-bearer accept his/her responsibility? If not, why not?	Does the duty-bearer have the authority to carry out his/her role? If not, why not?	Does the duty-bearer have the knowledge, skills, organisational, human + material resources? If not, what is missing?
		Although it is the main duty of the family to protect and care for their children, some parents, more than others are less able to do so.	Yes	Some lack parenting skills, while others lack economic means. Some parents are

				incapacitated by alcohol or substance abuse, while others might be in prison or in another country or city.
Community, e.g. village leader	Mukhtars or municipalities might get involved in domestic violence issues including violence against children, upon calls from community members. Nevertheless, it is not part of the mandate of mukhtars or mayors to be involved in domestic violence or child negligence cases.	Reservation to get involved in family matters: In depth interviews with mukhtars and municipality staff show that in addition to not having a jurisdiction over interfering in family matters, they are also unwilling to do so. The general attitude of the society that 'things should stay in the family' is reflected in the attitudes of mukhtars as well.	No authority to get involved unless authorized or asked to follow up by the relevant authorities.	Low knowledge or awareness on child rights
Private sector, e.g. businesses	Providing alternative care options Alternative child drop centers Sponsorship for alternative care options	There are examples of this in the past or some current projects. More awareness raising is needed for this to become more accepted.	-	If private alternative care is made more attractive as a business model, more businesses might take this on. Very limited number of businesses currently takes part in sponsoring initiatives.
Civil society	Providing alternative care options Alternative child drop centers Training/awareness raising/lobbying	There are NGOs and some activists willing and working on issues related to the target group such as Foundation to Prevent Social Risks and Free Academy (run by a few activists). These tend to provide space for children where they can feel safe	Yes	Limited resources, capacity Since these options are not recognized by the state as alternative care options, or are not part of the child drop off mechanism

		and be fed so they do not spend time on the street. These centers are run by volunteers and serve the children in old city Nicosia.		that is controlled by SWD under Fasil 352, they may be under the risk of being shut down by the state.
Local government, e.g. teachers, health workers	Protection Providing alternative care Education Intervention etc.	Very limited willingness to get involved in family matters Low awareness on children rights. High need for training.	Health workers and police are required to report to social services in violence cases against children. There are problems in this process as some cases of 'non-reporting' have been mentioned during in depth interviews.	Low awareness
Ministry of Labour and Social Security The Social Welfare Department functions under the Ministry of Labour and Social Security.	Legislation Protection Education Health Strategy Action Plan Follow Up Monitoring Awareness Raising	Although the SWD has all the authority on issues related to the child, it has very limited financial and human resources to carry out their duties to the full extent. The current legislation needs to be improved, reflecting the current context of needs and situation. The protective system and the protection of the 'child's best interest' is not carried out at the optimal level due to limited resources and lack of alternative options. Due to limited resources, follow up and investigation of children in alternative care might not be carried out to a full extent. The Social Services Centers (which is under the Social Welfare Department) provided	The main authority on child issues is the Social Welfare Department.	Limited resources Low priority

		<p>training for police, health care workers, families, etc to raise awareness on child rights as well as preventing the need for alternative care, by empowering parents in terms of parental skills.</p> <p>There is a lack of a national action plan and major strategies to strengthen the child protection system.</p>		
International community, e.g. UN agencies, international Governmental development agencies, International Corporate donors	Funding relevant projects	Since North Cyprus is unrecognized due to the division of the island and political issues, many international organizations lack the authority or willingness to get directly involved.	Acquis communautaire is suspended in the northern part of Cyprus due to the division of the island.	Very limited international resources are made available by these organizations for Northern Cyprus. And the process to receive funds is very competitive, making it very hard for the vulnerable groups to even participate in the process.

Most of the alternative care options (other than foster care) are centralized in Nicosia and Kyrenia. Other options, that may be the day care etc facilities of municipalities are the only care facilities that are outside these two cities, but these are not full-day care alternatives.

There is a lack of strategy in terms of how to improve the alternative care system in a coordinated manner.

Ensuring availability of a range of alternative care (including assessment, proper care, after care and follow-up support, monitoring as well as the professional training for caregivers), Articles 52 to 135

National authorities established a coordination committee, two years ago, working on the possibility of the establishment of a Child Monitoring Center in the country, under the auspices of the Presidency. This committee consists of different stakeholders such as the state authorities as well as the police, legislators, health care workers etc and is in the planning stage.

Nevertheless, it has been reported in in-depth interviews that alternative care options might be expanded through making foster care more attractive in the community. This could be promoted via PR campaigns as well as financial incentives and provision of necessary support mechanisms. This option is among the strategies used by the SWD and is one that could be utilized further to expand alternative care options.

Ensuring proper care in emergency situations (including prevention of separation, proper care arrangements and tracing and family reintegration), Articles 152 to 166

Interviews with the SWD representatives reflect one of the most urgent needs in the country is **ensuring proper care in emergency situations**. The transition center called Nicosia Child Center has a capacity of about 30 children, depending on availability of care givers.

Additionally, SWD's plans to establish a Rehabilitation Center for children pushed into crime are also underway. Budget and policy discussions have been reportedly taking place.

7. INITIATIVES OF COOPERATION BETWEEN STATE DUTY BEARERS AND NGOS RELATED TO THE PROTECTION AND CARE OF CHILDREN

Although there are non-state initiatives by different stakeholders, these tend to be on a project basis or one-off initiatives. There are also community initiatives in inner city Nicosia, or in rural places. These initiatives are also limited in the sense that they are mainly based on a voluntary basis, or cooperation with limited sponsorships that are time-based.

Some municipalities have initiated parental capacity building activities, and they set up drop centers for women within the limits of their capacity to contribute to the needs of the community.

Akdoğan, DipKarpaz, Tatlısu Municipalities have reported that they provide some trainings with the aim of strengthening families. Similarly, Yeni Erenköy, Mehmetcik, Iskele, Büyükkonuk municipalities mentioned that they will start to provide trainings for families soon. There is a lack of announcement and/or publication of the social services provided by municipalities which limits the number of beneficiaries. The services of municipalities in this regard usually remain as one-off project-based initiatives, instead of continuous efforts.

8. CONCLUDING COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The groups of children, families and communities that are in greater need for support are mostly those who are generally isolated from the society due to economic, social and other reasons mentioned above.

The following children groups are at greater risk and need more support:

- The children of migrants who enter North Cyprus under tourist or student visas and work illegally. This group generally lives in urban areas, in the city centers in Nicosia, Famagusta and Kyrenia.
- The children of seasonal workers. This group is mainly in Morphou and Famagusta.
- The children of Roma population living in North Cyprus. Famagusta, Morphou and Akdoğan are the 3 cities where a large percentage of this population lives.
- The children of migrants who came to North Cyprus in the 1980s. Although this group is dispersed throughout the country, those who form a higher risk group are found in central Kyrenia and in rural villages. It has been harder for these children who might be defined as second generation migrants, to integrate well with the local population. The pressure they feel to 'blend in' is higher than children of migrants living in other cities. Thus they are driven to crime or become members of gangs to feel that they belong.
- The children of broken families throughout North Cyprus
- The children of disabled parents throughout North Cyprus
- Disabled children throughout North Cyprus

- Children of refugees throughout North Cyprus
- Street Children mostly live in Nicosia and Famagusta. Those, who live elsewhere, might be taken to these two cities to work/beg.
- Children, whose parents returned permanently to their countries of origin, and themselves, are now staying with relatives or friends- throughout North Cyprus, mostly in cities.
- Children who committed a crime and been sent to prison - Throughout North Cyprus, both high and low socio-economic classes enter this risk group. Although children of higher socio-economic classes may find a way to find a place in the society or may migrate to other countries where they get a fresh start, children of lower socio-economic status are stigmatized for life and have a risk of becoming a repeat criminal, committing a larger crime than the one before.
- Children of families with a low socio-economic status

What are the key priorities for the improvement of the child care and protection system in the country?

The most urgent priority should be the preparation of a comprehensive National Action Plan for the protection of children. This plan should be able to bring together all stakeholders, and initiate dialogue and coordination among them.

There is a need for more statistical data and research in finding out the need on the ground. Documenting the exact numbers of those who are at risk and what specific needs each risk group has should be a priority. This study could also serve as a baseline study for the National Action Plan.

As part of the National Action Plan, there is a need for a 24 hour hotline. This hotline will serve as an alert for the 'child help mechanism' that will be formed. It should be operational 24 hours a day and should be promoted throughout the country with an awareness raising campaign. There is a need among the public to realize the importance of tackling together by 'getting involved and taking action' against violence to children.

There is a need for multi-purpose community centers throughout the country. These centers will be multi-functional in the sense that training women on various issues including birth control and parenting skills, day caring for kids so that to increase the opportunities for women to work and so on. The community centers will also serve as places for social activities for children and young adults so they become less vulnerable to crime. Women and young adults will also have alternative work opportunities by this means. .

Parental capacity building efforts should be enhanced pre and post process of being parents in order to ensure child development in a healthy family environment.

Awareness raising campaigns should be developed for media staff, lawyers, judges, teachers, police, health workers, doctors, and other relevant experts in the field to ensure child friendly environment in different domains.

What are the types of intervention and which additional services are required in the country for children in our target group to grow up in a caring family environment?

Type of interventions and additional services (e.g. legislation, cooperation, creation of structures and monitoring systems, allocate	Duty bearers which bear the main responsibility for the services	Regions (e.g. province, municipality) where services are most needed, respective groups of children, young
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resources, direct intervention services, etc)		people and families who are at greater need for such services
A new legislation on children is needed	State authorities	Throughout the country
Cooperation among all stakeholders are needed	State, private, civil society as well as local governments.	Throughout the country
National Action Plan on Children	State, private, civil society as well as local governments.	Throughout the country
Creation of alternative care facilities for children	Private and/or state	Nicosia or elsewhere
Improving parenting skills throughout the society	State, private, civil society	Throughout the country
Creation of Multi-Purpose Community Centers throughout the country	State and/or civil society; private sponsorship	Throughout the country

The Primary Needs of the Country:

1. A national family and social risk reduction strategy:

There is a lack of social strategy in the country therefore interventions of the SWD, NGOs and of particular donors are not coordinated enough under the umbrella of a strategy. There is a need for a strategy in order to make interventions more effective and to ensure efficient use of resources for the reduction and prevention of risks before they become a deadlock.

2. Adapting the structure of SWD to the needs of the country:

There is a need to reviewing the structure of the SWD in order to serve the purpose of the risk reduction strategy. The services of SWD are limited with cash contribution to the families in need that is not sufficient for strengthening the parental capacity of families. There is also lack of monitoring and evaluation system, which causes a child to live in an alternative care for a long term once separated from the biological family. Moreover, lack of the monitoring system sometimes result in a child to be abused even when s/he is placed in an alternative care such as foster care, and also make it difficult to interfere with a problem of abuse timely.

3. Establishment of an operational State Institute of Statistics:

There is a lack of statistical unit in the state and a few number of private companies throughout the country, which leads to a minimal access to meaningful official statistics by the public, if at all. This is very important in terms of keeping the pulse of the social problems in the country to devise effective strategies.

4. Amendment (and EU harmonization) of laws relevant to child welfare (providing child friendly services to all children):

In the northern part of Cyprus, there is an attempt to change outdated legislations for EU harmonization, however, the process sometimes is interrupted with referendum or stuck in the parliament due to political reaction or frequent changes in the authority.

5. Compulsory couple therapies before the initiation of legal divorce processes:

The divorce rates are increasing every year according to available statistics from the family courts. However, there is no reliable study analysing the reasons behind this trend.

In this study, high divorce rates are also shown as underlying cause for children to lose their parental care.

In some countries, it is part of the process to consult a couple therapist for at least six months before the court makes a final decision for the divorce. This kind of regulation makes it difficult for couples to get divorced and contribute to the family integration, which is most of the time for the best interest of the child.

6. Establishment of local Family Resources Centers, across the country:

There is a lack of family centers in the northern part of the island, providing parental capacity strengthening support. The existence of the family centers is very significant to contribute to the prevention and intervening in all forms of child abuse and neglect, by strengthening families through therapeutic, educational, and support services.

7. Improving day care system for preschool aged children,

In the northern part of Cyprus, there is a lack of fee-free day care centers and/or kindergartens. Most of those centers are private, which charge high rate of fees. As a result, one parent takes the responsibility for providing care for the child (during the day), which subsequently leads a family to depend on single income and cause socio-economic problems which sometimes brings along the family disintegration. Enhancing the day care services in the country for a nominal fee or fee-free will contribute to the increasing of the quality of living conditions of families and children.

8. Improving regional and local Family Strengthening Programmes in collaboration with SWD, municipalities and village leaders:

The family strengthening services are provided to the families around Nicosia by SOS Children's Villages North Cyprus. SWD has limited capacity to provide these services thus signed a protocol with SOS North Cyprus since 2005 in close coordination and cooperation. In this regard, family strengthening programmes should be enhanced throughout the country especially in other risky areas, in collaboration with SWD, local authorities and other relevant stakeholders in order to provide wider services to children at risk.

9. Improving support mechanisms for parents with children with different developmental problems and needs,

There is lack of professional support in the area of special developing children. Children who have developmental problems cannot take appropriate care nor from their families neither from teachers. There should be different support mechanisms in this area such as cost-free special education centers, counselling, etc. For instance, when a child is detected with such a developmental problem, the parents should immediately be directed to professionals in this area, and this should not be the preference of the parents to take this counselling or not. **Improving the quality of fee-free special education centers** also plays an important role when the right of the child to development is considered.

10. Improving alternatives of family type care for children without parental care,

"Every child and young person should live in a supportive, protective and caring environment that promotes his/her full potential. Children with inadequate or no parental care are at special risk of being denied such a nurturing environment." (UN Alternative Care Guidelines, 2010)

When there is a risk of abuse or neglect for any child, it is the role of the state, through its competent authorities, NGOs and the society to keep all children safe by protecting their rights. In the northern part of Cyprus, there are few numbers of alternatives to place a child when s/he faces neglect or abuse by his/her biological family. The available options comprise of one institution with maximum 25 children capacity, SOS Family Based Care and Foster Care, which needs to be improved especially in terms of monitoring and evaluation.

11. Capacity Building and Monitoring and Evaluation system for caregivers in alternative care system:

In all developed societies, the role of caregiver has been increasingly recognized as an important one. The caregiver does not only provide basic care, but also plays an important role in the healthy development of a child. The children are very important in every society because they shed light on the future. They are a mirror of the society. If we want to live in a safe and a well-developed system, we need to pay attention to the healthy development of all children in the society.

Contribution of SOS Children's Village:

- Promoting the Ministry of Labor and Social Security to develop a risk reduction strategy based on a deep research
 - Providing direct services through Children's Village, Youth Facility / SIL, Kindergarten, FSP
 - Providing family based care for young people above 14 years old who are at risk.
 - Increasing the capacity to reach out to more children who are at risk of losing their parental care
 - Diversifying the family based care options for children, who lost their parental care, by improving the foster care system
 - Improving the awareness and respect to children's rights among the community
 - Creating effective, structured and targeted fund raising systems in order to provide sustainable services for children at risk
 - Building awareness raising activities to increase social responsibility of private sector
 - Contributing to the relevant social policies in order to create a conducive legal environment
 - Improving strategic links with the government, universities, other NGOs, donors and the community to be able to utilize more resources.
 - Offering of best practices in the field of child protection and prevention of child abandonment
 - Promoting the government to provide cost-free day care centers
- In summary, contribution of SOS in the northern part of Cyprus can be as enhancing programmatic interventions both as an advocate and as a leader in child and youth care, family strengthening, foster care and pre-schooling for increased outreach.

Contribution of Other Stakeholders:

➤ **Central Government**

- Ministry of Labour and Social Security (Social Welfare Department, Child and Youth Center)
 - Assessing the social risks in the country and developing a strategy
 - Developing the infrastructure for more effective and efficient social services based on a risk reduction strategy
 - Promoting and actively taking part in the revision and regulation of social policies based on a need assessment
 - Implementing a foster care system improvement programme for the country, which includes capacity building of current foster families, recruitment and training of new foster families and setting up of a monitoring and evaluation system
 - Developing family type care options and centers for monitoring and rehabilitation for children at risk
- Ministry of Health
 - Developing a monitoring and evaluation department for children who are at risk of abuse or neglect
 - Become important partners with SWD to detect children at risk to coordinate support mechanisms for biological families.
- Ministry of Education
 - Developing a strategy in order to improve the quality of education system

- Establishing monitoring and evaluation system in order to enhance the quality of educational services
 - Promoting regular capacity building of the professionals
 - Promoting the awareness raising about child rights throughout the country by activating educational institutions.
- **Local authorities (municipalities)**
- HR contribution to the family strengthening services
 - Promoting social responsibility projects in the area of child and youth welfare
 - Promoting the awareness raising about child rights
- **NGOs**
- Turkish Cypriot Human Rights Foundation
 - Promoting legal regulation for fundamental human rights including child rights
 - Raising awareness about child rights
 - Association of Refugee Rights
 - Enhancing the rights of the children of the refugees
 - Preventing abuse and neglect of refugee children
 - Raising awareness about child rights
 - Foundation of Preventing Social Risks
 - Providing short term care for families at risk
 - Raising awareness about child rights
- **Other:**
- Private sector
 - Financing social responsibility projects in child and youth welfare
 - Channelling their resources for children who lost parental care and who are at risk to lose parental care.
 - Universities
 - Capacity building of core care co-workers via exchange of expertise and know-how
 - Promoting social responsibility projects in the area of child and youth welfare
 - International Organizations
 - Providing strategic partnership in order to set up a new legal framework for the protection of children rights and to improve social services without prioritizing the political conditions.
 - Media
 - Raising awareness of the community with regard to children's rights and for policy work.