Mistreated Children: there are about 100.000 victims and girls are the more exposed.

The pilot survey of Terre des Hommes Italia and CISMAI provides the first detailed picture of the phenomenon.

Around 100 thousands children in Italy are victims of mistreatment and abuse: more than an half are female. For the first time, it is possible to estimate a number thanks to the consistent data collected by Terre des Hommes Italia and CISMAI as part of qualitative and quantitative survey presented today in Rome at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.

“For ten years, the UN Committee for the Convention on the Rights of the Child has been asking to our country to adopt an effective system to collect data in order to discover and contrast the mistreatment of children” said Federica Giannotta, Head of the Advocacy Program at Terre des Hommes Italia. “For this reason, we have decided to contribute to the first picture on the true incidence of the phenomenon in Italy that involves the 0.98% of the under-aged population. The majority are females”.

“For years, we have been asking to establish a monitoring system on children’s mistreatment. This first research provides us homogeneous data that can be compared and distributed on a national scale and contributes to the necessity of creating new policies” says Dario Merlino, the President of CISMAI. “The collected data shows us how many children are cared by the Social Services for mistreatment even thought we know that there are at least 20 times more cases that have not arisen. Child abuse is still a hidden phenomenon”.

The survey conducted by Terre des Hommes Italia and CISMAI shows that mistreatment plays a leading role among the causes that involve the intervention of the Social Services, covering the 15.64% of the total number of children taken into care.

“The importance of this work is double. In fact, on one hand it reveals that abuse is a real problem that involves daily ten thousands of children. On the other hand, it shows the necessity to implement a mapping on the mistreatment of children” – said Vincenzo Spadafora, the Authority for Childhood and Adolescence. “The work of Terre des Hommes Italia and CISMAI tells us of children abused and mistreated systematically in every area of our country. The monitoring of mistreatment is also crucial to identify the most appropriate measures both at the cultural and political levels”.

Moving on a more detailed analysis of detected cases of abused minors, we find that 52.51% are females. The lack on the material and/or emotional sphere is the predominant type of mistreatment (52.7%), followed by witnessing domestic violence (16.6%), emotional abuse (12.8%), sexual abuse (6.7%), pathology of care (6.1%) and physical abuse (4.8%).
The survey "The Mistreatment of Children: How many victims in Italy?" was conducted on a sample of 31 Italian towns spread throughout the country, through a questionnaire that pictured the situation at the 31/12/2011. The population intercepted is equal to almost 5 million inhabitants, of whom 758,932 are children. Children in charge of Social Services were 48,280, of which 7,464 were cared for mistreatment. This figure, which is equal to 0.98% of the children resident, allows a plausible estimate of nearly 100,000 children abused when projected on a national scale.

"Knowing that 1 in 100 children ends at Social Services for child mistreatment increase the necessity of creating a social cooperation around the service of prevention and protection for the children already damaged by abuse " say the organizers of the survey.

"The fact that about half of the children are victims of neglect should make us reflect on the need of a series of measures that our country should adopt to fight poverty and deprivation, especially during these negative economic cycles. Also, knowing that 6 children in 1000 are suffering of sexual abuse, it is something that should make us think about the measures of prevention especially considering the fact that assisted violence affects 16 children in 1000. In fact, too often family conflict results in violence. "

This project is part of the Campaign “Unprotected” of Terre des Hommes, created to guarantee the girls around the world with education, health, protection from violence and abuse. This Campaign involves actions to prevent and fight some of the worst forms of discrimination against girls in the world, such as the "home slave girls" of Peru and Ecuador, the "child brides" of Bangladesh, the "moms girls" in Côte d'Ivoire to the "girls saved from infanticide" in India and the prevention of abuse of girls in Italy.

To open a national debate on these issues, CISMAI organized in 2013 the States General on Child Mistreatment in Italy, that it will conclude in Turin on 12th and 13th of December, with a national conference entitled: "Protecting Children in Italian Changing".

Full documentation can be downloaded at www.indifesa.org, www.terredeshommes.it and www.cismai.org

For more information:
www.terredeshommes.it