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## **SUBMISSION ON CHILD RIGHTS & SDGS - SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT RECOVERY FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

The Danish Institute for Human Rights welcomes the call for submissions, communicated by email on 7 October 2020 by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, on the status of children's rights in relation to 'sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic', and relevant goals under review, addressing the most urgent challenges and noteworthy good practices.

The Institute would like to draw attention to the following points:

### **1. MOST URGENT CHALLENGES**

In Denmark, the Minister for the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Interior has emphasised the need to protect the rights of vulnerable children during COVID-19.<sup>1</sup> There has been a focus on the rights of vulnerable children, e.g. children from homes with abusive, violent or mental health issues.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the task of identifying mistreatment of children has been additional challenging during COVID-19.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Social Affairs and the Interior, Op-Ed, 31 March 2020, available in Danish at:

<https://sim.dk/nyheder/nyhedsarkiv/2020/mar/vi-skal-passe-ekstra-paa-udsatte-og-saarbare-boern-i-denne-tid/>

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Social Affairs and the Interior, press release, 1 April 2020, available in Danish at:

<https://sim.dk/nyheder/nyhedsarkiv/2020/apr/boernepakke-skal-sikre-hjaelp-til-udsatte-boern-under-covid-19/>

<sup>3</sup> 34 organisations and institutions, primarily NGOs, Op-Ed., Kristeligt Dagblad (daily newspaper), 13 October 2020, available in Danish at <https://www.kl.dk/forsidenyheder/2020/oktober/debatindlaeg-34-organisationer-i-faelles-opraab-om-boerns-ensomhed/>, and newspaper for the local authorities, 7 April 2020, available in Danish at:

Several organisations have expressed concern on vulnerable families, who have experienced added pressure due to COVID-19, both economic and psychological.<sup>4</sup> The added pressure can be attributed to the increased number of hours which the family members spend together at home.

The pressure has led to an increase in conflicts and violence. The request to be admitted to at crises centre for women who experience domestic violence doubled in the spring 2020.<sup>5</sup> The violence affects children equally when they are the victims or witness domestic violence.

As a related challenge, the organisations for children experience capacity challenges due to a higher demand for their services.<sup>6</sup>

Regarding children placed in foster care, the child's social contact with parents should, in general, proceed as usual. However, local authorities have the authority to assess whether visits/contacts may be suspended or limited due to COVID-19-restrictions or non-compliance with health recommendations by the parents.<sup>7</sup>

A survey conducted with the participation of 350 social workers found that 55% of social workers experienced less contact with vulnerable children. Some social workers (app. 30) experienced cases, where the decision of placing a child in care has been communicated through online meetings.<sup>8</sup>

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<http://www.danskekommuner.dk/Nyhedsarkiv/2020/April/07/Bekymringer-over-fald-i-indberetninger/>

<sup>4</sup> The Danish Parliament, the Finance Committee, decision on 2 April 2020 (*aktstykke nr. 132*), available in Danish at:

[https://www.ft.dk/RIPdf/samling/20191/aktstykke/aktstk132/20191\\_aktstk\\_afgjort132.pdf](https://www.ft.dk/RIPdf/samling/20191/aktstykke/aktstk132/20191_aktstk_afgjort132.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> The Danish organisation Women's Shelter (*Kvindehjemmet*), press release, 25 March 2020, available in Danish at:

<https://kvindehjemmet.dk/noedkrisecenter/>

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Social Affairs and the Interior, press release, 1 April 2020, available in Danish at

<https://sim.dk/nyheder/nyhedsarkiv/2020/apr/boernepakke-skal-sikre-hjaelp-til-udsatte-boern-under-covid-19/>

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Social Affairs and the Interior, press release, 15 March 2020, available in Danish at:

<https://sim.dk/nyheder/nyhedsarkiv/2020/mar/anbragte-boern-skal-kunne-blive-i-deres-hjem-trods-coronasmitte/>

<sup>8</sup> Survey conducted by University College Copenhagen (KP), 20 November 2020, available in Danish at:

<https://www.kp.dk/nyheder/socialraadgivere-mister-kontakt-til->

Moreover, digital offences have proven a challenge given an increased use of social media during the pandemic. The number of offences on the internet has allegedly increased significantly compared with 2019.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. GOOD PRACTICES

The authorities have addressed challenges in close collaboration with civil society, exemplified by a political agreement joined by all parties represented in parliament on partnerships on different vulnerable groups during COVID-19, including a partnership on vulnerable children and young people.<sup>10</sup> The partnership consisted of 33 actors across sectors, including Save the Children, Children's Welfare and the Red Cross, which was politically appointed to facilitate the partnership.

The partnership's task is to continuously identify key challenges and act on them, by either coordinating or adjusting their initiatives or by initiating new initiatives together.

The parliament reached an agreement in the spring 2020 to establish 55 additional temporary places at the crisis centre as a response to the increased demand during COVID-19. The places in the emergency crises centre were occupied by 23 women and 28 children.<sup>11</sup> There has

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[udsatte-boern-og-unge-under-coronakrisen/](#) and <https://www.kp.dk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/socialraadgiveres-erfaringer-under-covid-rapport.pdf?x26856>

<sup>9</sup> Information from Rescue Child, available in Danish at:

<https://via.ritzau.dk/pressemeddelelse/flere-born-risikerer-seksuelle-overgreb-pa-nettet-under-coronakrisen?publisherId=13559618&releasId=13591986> and Danish

statistics from the Prosecutor General's at:

<https://www.berlingske.dk/samfund/stigning-i-antallet-af-anmeldelser-af-seksuelle-kraenkelser-af-born-online>

<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Social Affairs and the Interior, press release, 25 April 2020, available in Danish at:

<https://sim.dk/nyheder/nyhedsarkiv/2020/apr/alle-partier-indgaar-aftale-om-hjaelp-til-saarbare-og-udsatte-grupper/#:~:text=Tre%20nye%20partnerskaber%20p%C3%A5%20social%20omr%C3%A5det,hos%20s%C3%A5rbare%20og%20udsatte%20grupper.&text=Dette%20for%20at%20d%C3%A6mme%20op%20for%20ensomhed%20og%20mistrivsel.>

<sup>11</sup> Women's shelter organisation "Danner", press release, 24 August 2020, available in Danish at: <https://danner.dk/nyt/rigtig-beslutning-bne-n-dkrisecenter-under-corona-nedlukning>

recently been a political majority in favour of establishing 100 extra permanent places.<sup>12</sup>

On 9 June 2020 the parliament reached a political agreement to add additional funds to summer activities for children and juveniles. The summer activities had the object of crime prevention through academic or social activities and fill out the vocational gaps occurred because of the closure of schools in the spring.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, the parliament adopted an act in September 2020, which enables parents unable to work from home or unable to arrange with vacation days, to stay home with children barred from going to school or day care due to local outbreaks of COVID-19 in the school or day care, for up to 10 days per child with unemployment allowances.<sup>14</sup>

Yours sincerely,

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LEGAL ADVISER

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<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Social Affairs and the Interior, press release, 11 August 2020, available in Danish at:

<https://sim.dk/nyheder/nyhedsarkiv/2020/aug/omkring-100-ekstra-pladser-paa-kvindekrisecentre-paa-vej/>

<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Children and Education, available in Danish at:

<https://www.uvm.dk/puljer-udbud-og-prisuddelinger/puljer/puljeoversigt/tidligere-udmeldte-puljer/grundskole/pulje-til-sommeraktiviteter-for-boern-og-unge-i-2020-som-foelge-af-covid-19>

<sup>14</sup> Act no. 1427 of 29 September 2020 amending the act on maternal/parental leave (Temporary right to unemployment allowance when taking care of children due to COVID-19) (*Ændring af barselsloven (Midlertidig ret til dagpenge ved pasning af børn som følge af covid-19)*), available in Danish at:

<https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/ta/2020/1427>