

Session 55 – Sri Lanka

Recommendations made under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict

Prepared by Child Helpline International and Don Bosco Sri Lanka LAMA SARANA – April 2010

Background:

Sri Lanka child helpline is operated by Don Bosco Sri Lanka and available from 10.00 am to 9.00 pm. This child helpline is partly toll free. Don Bosco Sri Lanka Lama Sarana is very active in reaching out to children that have been a victim of the hostilities that took place in 2009, either directly or indirectly. Don Bosco is taking care of 300 former child soldiers and providing them with education and rehabilitation so that they may become law abiding citizens. The organisation is reaching out and taking care of many more children that have been affected by the conflicts in other ways, for example because they had to flee hostilities. Child Helpline International and Don Bosco make the following recommendations to achieve full implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

Recommendation I

The government of Sri Lanka should ensure that the child helpline, can assist in rehabilitation of former child soldiers. To this end the government should:

- Allocate a short toll-free number to the child helpline. Ideally in South Asia this number will be 1098;
- Allocate appropriate resources to the child helpline to ensure national coverage and that all children in the country, even those marginalised can reach the child helpline.
- Allocate appropriate financial resources to support long-term activities of Don Bosco to assist and rehabilitate child soldiers;
- Draft and implement a national strategy to ensure that in future conflicts neither parties will make use of child soldiers.

Recommendation II

The Government should recognise the important role that Don Bosco has in reaching out to affected by the conflict, for example those that have been displaced internally.

- Acknowledge the helpline as a tool for the protection of children and marginalised children specifically;
- Cooperate with Don Bosco and other civil society organisations to design and implement outreach programmes for marginalised children, including those internally displaced by the conflict;
- Raise awareness in the country on the existence of the child helpline and how it can be reached.
- Draft and implement a national strategy together with civil society to ensure that internally displaced children and their families in due time can return home;
- Draft and implement a national strategy to ensure that children will be protected from harm as much as possible in any future conflict

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