

Principles, Standards and Practices
2009 report

Introduction

Child Helpline International (CHI) is the global network of child helplines and outreach services for children and young people. It was founded on the belief that children and young people have rights, and that they can identify their own problems if they are equipped with the proper tools.

The development of Principles, Standards and Practices (PSP) has been one of CHI's guiding objectives since its founding. At CHI's first International Consultation in 2003, the network agreed to work toward setting common guidelines for membership. The development of the checklist was the first step towards ensuring that members operated as veritable child helplines. In 2008, the PSP checklist evolved into one of three elements of CHI's membership criteria¹. This report reflects responses to the 2009 PSP checklist. In total, 76 child helplines responded to the checklist, up from 47 in 2008.²

The PSP Task Force is at the helm of overseeing the development of the PSP checklist, and introducing accompanying standards. The PSP Checklist is one of three membership criteria. (see Footnote 1). This information is also useful to the Secretariat, as it allows for the development of training. In 2005, the General Assembly of child helplines agreed that the checklist was an important tool, allowing for reflection on child helpline services. Since then, it became one of three membership criteria. This means that full members are required to complete it annually.

At its two meetings through 2009, and as a result of the membership's response to the evaluation that accompanied the checklist, the PSP Taskforce has seen the need to restructure the checklist. Currently, the questions overlap and are not clear. Moreover, the network has made it clear that the scale itself should also be changed. The PSP Taskforce understands that for proper analysis, the PSP checklist needs to ask the right questions. In 2010, the checklist will be re-formatted. Finally, the Taskforce are fine-tuning the PSP glossary and creating a PSP Guidebook to guide the user in completing the checklist. Moreover, throughout 2010, the taskforce, with the network's feedback, will develop appropriate standards for each principle, according to the infrastructure of the country in which a child helpline is situated.

¹ The other two criteria are: 1) payment of the membership fee; and 2) completion of the data proforma for inclusion in CHI's annual publication, *Connecting to Children*.

² It is important to note that respondents did not answer all questions, which accounts for the variance in the total number of responses per questions.

Process

In May 2009, full members of the CHI network were asked to complete the PSP checklist. The CHI Secretariat worked closely with each of their regions to answer or clarify questions and concerns. Follow-up often consisted of emails and phone calls to the child helpline in question. Through the checklist, many child helplines expressed a keen desire for CHI to develop training on certain key topics.

CHI looks forward to continuing to assist child helplines in different stages of development, with a common goal: that child helplines adhere to standards which safeguard the rights of children.

- The CHI Secretariat and the PSP Taskforce

Cumulative Report

Core Values³

Mission and Vision Statements

Mission and vision statements are the engine of a child helpline. The network understands the need for statements which uphold the best interests of the child. Ninety two (92%) percent of child helplines have written forms of both documents. Seven percent (7%) of responding child helplines did not, but would like to have a vision and mission statement. (1)⁴

Of the child helplines that do have written vision and mission statements, 89% state that their vision statement includes that all activities are done in the best interest of the child. Two countries out of the total would like to incorporate best interest principles into their vision and mission statements. (2)

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) lays out the principles to which all organisations, institutions and individuals should aspire to in treating children as rights bearers. Child helplines are generally well-versed in the CRC. Approximately 84% of all child helplines have an integrated child

³ Legend

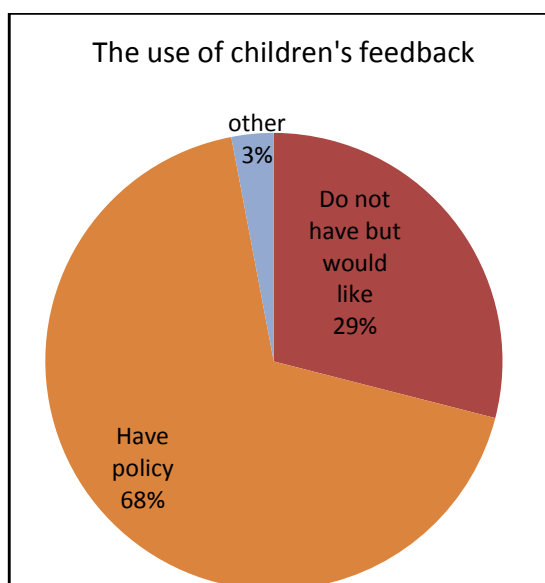
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⁴ The number behind the paragraph indicates to which question from the PSP checklist it is related to

protection policy that is based on the CRC. Similarly, 91% of child helplines have a child protection policy that is shared and understood by staff and volunteers. Of these, five child helplines did not have a child protection policy, and expressed their desire for assistance in developing one. (3)

To ensure that children are assisted in a constructive and consequent manner, child helplines should have guidelines describing how it will assist children who require protective action. Eighty-nine percent (89%) of child helplines indicate that they do have fully developed guidelines. (4)

Children's feedback should be seriously considered in developing and improving child helpline services. Thus, child helplines should strive to develop feedback policies. This is an area of attention, since 29% of child helplines indicate that do not have such a policy, but would like to develop one. (5)



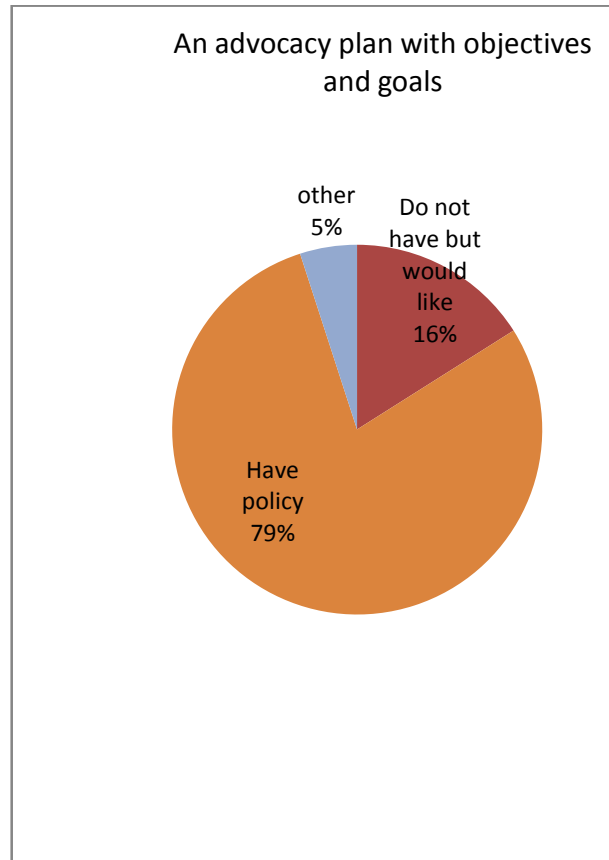
The work of a child helpline should not stop upon providing a child needed assistance. Child helpline should also develop advocacy plans which set goals and objectives. These plans should work towards changing public policy and accepted cultural beliefs that are detrimental to the rights of the child. While 79% of child helplines implement some form of an advocacy plan, 16% do not have one, but would like one. (6) and (7)

Children and Telecoms⁵

Creating access for children in need of care and protection is a fundamental aspect of assisting as many children as possible. Child helplines understand the importance of forming telecommunication strategies which includes providing toll-free services for children. The range of responses show that 92% of the child helplines responding to the PSP checklist have such a strategy. Eight percent (8%) of the respondents wanted assistance in forming such strategies. This is a high-priority area for CHI. (8)

⁵ **Legend**

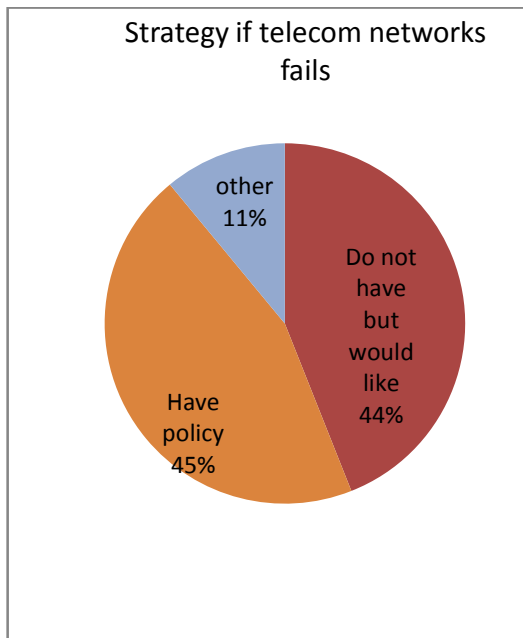
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Developing a policy of creating access to the child helpline for marginalised children, such as immigrants, ethnic and religious minorities and child beset by poverty should be an area that merits attention by all child helplines. While the responses showed that 75% of child helplines implemented a policy in some form, 20% (a total of 15 child helplines) did not have such a policy, but wanted assistance in developing one. Given that CHI's philosophy is creating access for all children, especially the most marginalised, this is another priority area for the network. (9)

Natural disasters have a particularly detrimental effect on children, who often lose loved ones and all semblance of stability in the

aftermath. The important role child helplines can and do play in leading children to safety in emergency situations, not only natural disaster, cannot be overstated. For this reason, it is important that child helplines have a strategy addressing how it will remain operational if the telecommunications network fails or is interrupted. Currently, 45% of child helplines have a policy in how to continue operations during an emergency situation. A whopping 44% (a total of 33) of child helplines did not have a strategy, but would like one. (10)



Operations of the Helpline⁶

A child helpline is a critical component of the child protection wheel; thus, it cannot work in isolation. To be able to have a positive outcome in children’s lives, it should enter into partnerships with like-minded and/or relevant organisations and allied services (hospitals; law enforcement; shelters; etc). The wide range of responses showed that 89% of child helplines have agreements. Nine percent (9% - 7 child helplines) welcome assistance in developing such working agreements. (11)

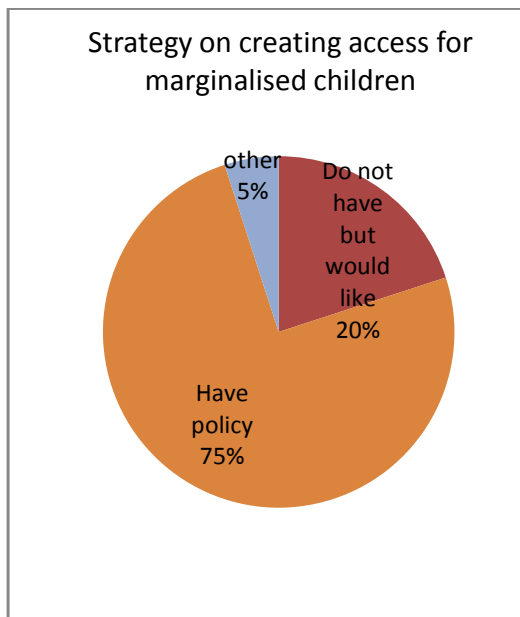
In a fast-changing world, child helplines need to remain abreast of technological advances, and those most used and preferred by children. More and more child helplines provide online counseling, but how to engage children through the use of sms, mobile phones, instant messaging...and other innovations? Overall, 80% of child helplines explore and implement emerging technologies to some degree. Despite this high number, 16% (12 countries) would like assistance in identifying and adapting country-appropriate innovations at their child helpline. (12)

A child helpline should have a well-developed method of answering calls from children. If it

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cannot respond to a child in a professional and thoughtful way, a precious opportunity has been lost forever. This is a clear area of strength for the CHI network. All but two child helplines answering the checklist have a call/contact response strategy. Although the number is low, this should be an area of attention. (13a and 13b)



A child contacting a child helpline should be able to rely on the child helpline as a resource for getting assistance. If a child helpline cannot provide requested services, it should know where to direct the caller. Of the child helplines that participated in the survey, 75 child helplines have a resource directory. (14a)

Counsellors and volunteers should undergo training that ensures their comprehension and adeptness at answering and responding to calls. Responses to the PSP checklist show that child helplines understand the importance

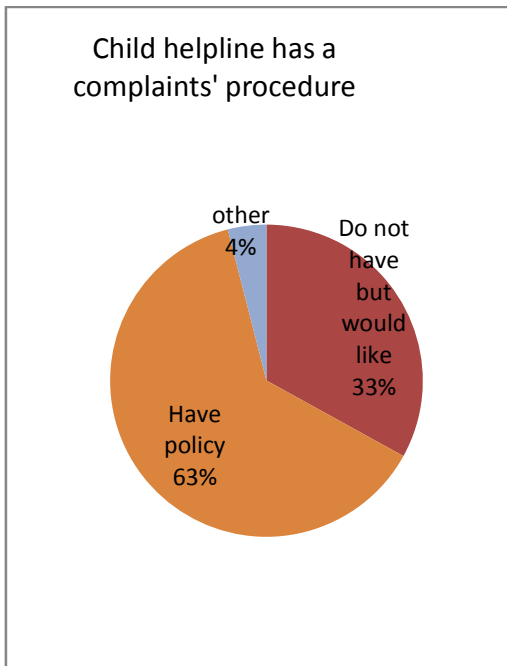
of this. One-hundred percent (100%) of child helplines offer a training module to counsellors and volunteers. Although compliance is high, child helplines should regularly review their counselling practices. Because this is an area of priority, CHI has developed a Counselling Practices manual, which will be available as of January 2010. (14b)

Although it seems obvious that all child helplines would have intervention policies with the best interest of the child at heart, it is important that this principle be reflected in all official policy documents. Fortunately, 96% of all child helplines do have a written policy. However, three child helplines would like to develop such an intervention policy. (15)

Once developed and implemented, a contact response strategy must be regularly monitored to remain current. Fully 95% of child helplines monitor the quality of contact response. Five percent (5% - 4 child helplines) would like assistance in developing such a monitoring system. (16)

A complaints' policy can allow child helplines to build on their strengths by working on their weaknesses. Child helplines can gain constructive knowledge about the quality of their call/contact response strategy through a formal complaints' policy. Based on responses to the 2009 PSP checklist, this is a clear training need for the network. While 63% of child helplines had a complaints' policy, one-third of child helplines responding (25 in total),

did not have one, but wanted assistance in developing one. (17a and 17b).



Having a proper data collection/records policy is an important aspect of a child helpline. The information can help track a child's path through the child protection system. It also plays an important role in the development of services, and the resulting data is critical for advocacy efforts. Ninety-two percent (92%) of child helplines have a data collection/records policy, but six would like to have one. On this note, CHI will launch a data "country package" that can be readily adapted by child helplines for data collection. The country package will be available for distribution in March 2010. (18 and 19)

Providing confidential services to callers is essential to maintaining the integrity of a child helpline and ensuring a child's right to privacy. All the same, the content of confidentiality

policies varies within regions and between countries. Despite the variances, 97% of child helplines have some form of a confidentiality policy. Two countries did not have one, but would like assistance in developing. (20). Ninety-two percent (92%) have their confidentiality policy available in some form to the public. (21) Of those child helplines that do have a confidentiality policy, 85% inform callers how their information will be used. Ten percent (10%) of child helplines wanted to develop policies detailing how to inform callers about their confidentiality policy. (22)

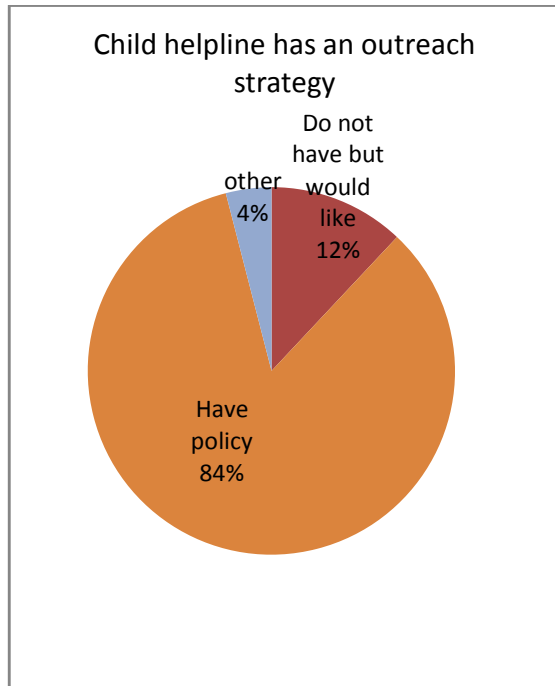
The media plays an important role in letting the public know about the services of a child helplines. However, when it comes to safeguarding a child's confidentiality, the child helpline should have a clear policy stating what and how the media will be handled. Indeed, 80% of child helplines have a policy, and 14% wanted to develop one. This is an area of attention for CHI. (23)

Outreach strategies that target marginalised groups should be a priority for all child helplines. Overarching outreach strategies are often developed with the idea or hope that information will trickle down to all children. Marginalised children, such as trafficked, institutionalised and minority children are especially vulnerable to being overlooked by broad outreach strategies. Eighty-five percent (85%) do look at various segments of society and accordingly target certain groups. Five helplines wanted to know how to do this. Given the important role child helplines play in

reaching children, including marginalised children, CHI considers this a clear training need. (24)

Documenting calls and contacts that arise from outreach is an important tool which can aid child helplines in adjusting and improving their services. In this regard, 67% of child helplines document the source of all calls and contacts. This is a significant drop from 2008, where 81% of child helplines did so. Moreover, in 2009, 21% of child helplines would like assistance in developing a plan. This is another potential training area for CHI. (25)

Children and adults need to be aware that a child helpline exists in the first place. This awareness can be done through outreach strategies. This is a child helpline's way of making the child helpline known amongst the community. Outreach strategies can be targeted at adults and/or children. Eighty-four percent (84%) of participating child helplines have outreach strategies, and 12% (9 child helplines in total) would like to develop one. (26a)

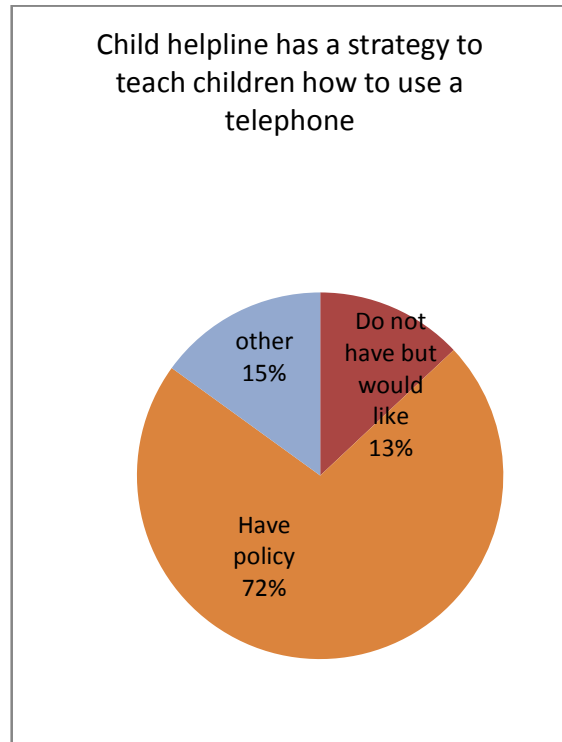


An effective media strategy is an important tool towards educating the public about child helpline services. Ideally, the media should look to the child helpline as an expert source for child protection issues. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of child helplines have a media strategy, and 8% of child helplines would like one (6 child helplines in total). (26b)

Although telephone usage, especially mobile phones, continues to grow in all parts of the world, many children do not use telephones on a regular basis. Knowing how to use a telephone can increase the number of contacts from marginalised children to a child helpline. An outreach strategy covering this element is a plus for a child helpline. Seventy-two percent (72%) of child helplines have such a practice in place, and 13% (10 child helplines), would like to implement one. (26c)

Child helplines can forge important partnerships with members of allied services, such as the police, the health care sector, education and transportation ministries and shelters. In short, with all sectors that touch upon and have a direct influence on the well-being of children. Outreach plans directed at allied services improves the efficacy of systems available and, in turn, helps more children obtain the services needed on a timely basis. Eighty-nine percent (89%) of surveyed child helplines have outreach policies with allied services. Ten percent (10%) indicate that information on how to do so would be welcome. (27a)

Adults are an important factor in every child's life. Making sure that adults know about the service a media awareness strategy can play a powerful role in creating awareness about accessing child helpline services. Eighty-three percent (83%) have such a strategy. Overall, 13% would like to develop a media strategy directed at adults. (28)



As alluded to in questions 18 and 19, the documentation of contacts is important for the ongoing monitoring of a child's situation, for improvement of child helpline services and for advocacy efforts. It is not a surprise that all child helplines (100% - 74 child helplines in total) responding to this question have a policy in place. Interestingly enough, two child helplines do not have a *policy* which explains *how* to document calls. Of course, the content of the policy varied, as 85% of child helplines had a system outlined indicating how to analyse calls and develop services accordingly. (29 -31)

Management of the Helpline⁷

All organisations need the support of an active, qualified and legally-established board. Child helplines understand the role of good governance in an organisation, as 85% of respondents had a board. However, 24% had a board at that was unevenly qualified. (32a) To this end, CHI has developed a Good Governance Manual, which has become one of our most popular guidebooks. Child helplines are encouraged to look to it for practical advice on good governance principles.

For child helplines, the board should reflect the racial and cultural diversity of the country. This is an area of concern, as only 66% of child helpline boards do so. (32b) Eighty-one percent (81%) of child helplines do select members who bring a diverse set of skills to the board/advisory committee/ parent organisation. (33) For this to happen, the board should be provided with appropriate training and opportunities for growth. Sixty-five percent (65%) of child helplines do indeed provide training for board members, but 6 countries indicated that they would appreciate assistance in developing such a system (35) In light of the importance of having a well established board, which is an element of

CHI's membership criteria, CHI would like to explore this issue further.

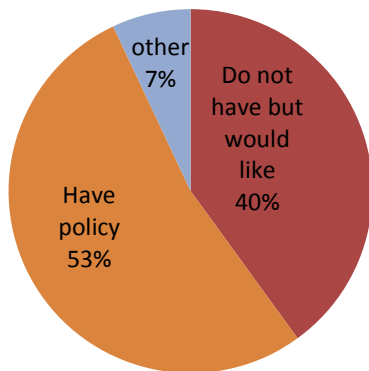
For child helpline personnel, knowing what goes on behind closed doors at board meetings fosters a sense of unity with the organisation. Circulating minutes and sharing board activities organisation-wide can assist, and 85% of child helpline board's have adopted this practice. Moreover, 76% of child helpline's share all board activities with their staff. (34a and 34b). This is similar to staff understanding the board's role in overseeing the direction of the child helpline, with 82% of child helplines stating that their staff understand it. (36)

To ensure that a child helpline remains operational during a crisis, it must have adequate resources and a contingency plan. Fully 40% of the child helplines responding to this question would like advice in developing such a plan. (37) Forty-six percent (46%) would like to know how to build a reserve. (38)

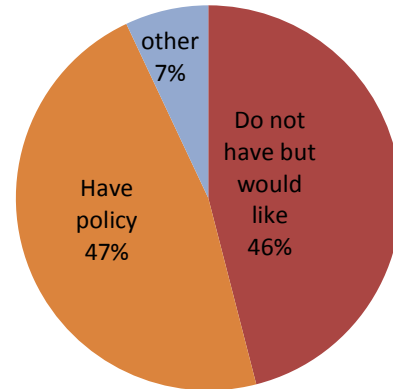
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There is contingency plan how to remain operation during a financial crisis



There is a reserve budget for emergency situations



Recruiting the right people is important for a child helpline. The first step is developing written job descriptions and specifications for each vacancy. Job descriptions, as the name implies, outlines the role that the candidate will play within the organisation. A job specification outlines the qualifications needed to carry out the role (academic requirements; appropriate training; languages). Ninety-six percent (96%) of child helplines develop written job descriptions, and 96% had written job specifications. (39)

Adults are in a position to positively (or negatively) influence children's lives. Child helplines should take extra precautions to guarantee that child helpline employees do not jeopardise the well-being of the children who contact the child helpline. Ninety-one percent (91%) of child helplines invoke screening procedures. In relevant part, five child helplines indicated the desire to put screening procedures in place. (40) Because of the delicate nature of this issue, this is an area of high-priority for CHI. In fact, in 2009, the Secretariat has begun collecting the various practices applied to by the network. In 2010, the PSP Taskforce will develop guidelines on the same.

Child Helpline personnel are the first point of contact for children calling a child helpline. Each child helpline should properly train paid

staff and volunteers to properly answer children's calls. Fully 92% of child helplines have a comprehensive training plan for staff and volunteers. Six respondents wanted assistance in developing one. (41) Given the delicate nature of this need, this is a high-priority for CHI.

Working with children in need of care and protection can often be taxing on personnel, and can easily lead to burn-out amongst employees and volunteers. Child helplines should look towards developing systems that motivate and assess workers to prevent burn-out. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of all child helplines have a system, and 12% (9 countries), would like assistance in developing such a system. (42)

Being accountable to children and stakeholders is paramount. Transparency through an annual report should be at the core

of every child helpline. Most child helplines widely distribute an annual report, with 88% of child helplines responding to this question doing so. Even so, 12% of child helplines (9 in total) do not publish and distribute an annual report, but would like to start doing so. CHI's Good Governance manual is an excellent source for guidance. (43)

Fundraising is possibly the greatest area of concern to all child helplines. Without adequate resources, the child helpline will have to shut down. For this reason, it is important for child helplines to not depend solely on one source. Indeed, 86% of child helplines responding to this question do look for funding from a wide range of sources. Seven countries (10%) would like guidance on how to do this.

Conclusion

The path to creating Principles, Standards and Practices began with the birth of the CHI network in 2003. For the 2010 PSP Checklist, the PSP Taskforce aims to have a reformatted checklist and accompanying resources to pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses of child helplines on the one hand, and assist the Secretariat in determining the needs of the network. With direct guidance on filling in the gaps in shortcomings at child helplines, and with accompanying assistance from the Secretariat and network, the child helpline movement will grow stronger.

We hope the information in this report has provided the reader with a general overview of the current reality in which child helplines exist. CHI and the PSP Taskforce will continue to work hard to develop systems which can and should be adapted by child helplines in all stages of development.