

Domestic Violence as a Factor Contributing to Child Homelessness in Russia

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A Word about the Research Collaboration

With funding from the American Council on Teachers of Russian (ACTR) and the Transnational Crime and Corruption Center (TraCCC) at American University, Sally Stoecker spent the summer of 2000 researching the problem of child homelessness and exploitation in Irkutsk, Russia. She was affiliated with the criminology department of Baikal State University and Economics and Law. Professors Anna Repetskaya and Viola Rybal'skaya assigned their colleague, Tatyana Sudakova, to work with Sally to arrange meetings with practitioners, locate sources, and help with interviews and translations. Through this collaboration grew common research interests and friendship. Tatyana Sudakova recently defended her thesis on the criminological characteristics of criminal behavior among minors who use drugs and is now Candidate of Science at Baikal State University where she teaches courses in criminology and criminal law. Tatyana and Sally plan to continue their collaboration in the areas of homelessness and juvenile crime and to publicize the plight of children in Russia and United States.

Introduction

Crimes against children and child homelessness are phenomena that have reached epidemic proportions in Russia. According to the Russian Procuracy, crimes against children have grown more brutal in recent years, despite a downturn in registered crimes (Gazeta.ru, 27.5.03). Last year, 94,000 children were injured or

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killed. The Center for the Promotion of Criminal Justice in Moscow reports that increasingly, murders are made to look like accidents and in many, if not most, cases are committed by the child's parents. Infanticide and rape are becoming more common, as is the criminal exploitation of homeless children. In our chapter, we will examine why crimes against children, especially those committed by parents and guardians are increasing and how this is feeding and perpetuating the problem of child homelessness in Russia.

Today in Russia there are about 36 million youth (Sadovnikova, 2001). Every year the number of children in the Russian Federation declines precipitously. Official statistics show that this number has declined by four million in the past five years. The Committee of State Statistics estimates that it will fall to 25 million by 2005. (ITAR-TASS, 2003). One of the reasons for this gloomy demographic trend is that the rights of children to a safe and wholesome childhood are constantly being violated. In attempting to protect themselves from regular family abuse, nearly two thousand minors commit suicide, thirty thousand leave home and in effect become homeless. Running away from home and thereby sparing themselves abuse by those persons closest to them, minors become "street children." Many street children in turn become predisposed to criminal behavior and heightened *victimnost'*—that is, the characteristics and qualities that give rise to the likelihood that they will become victims of crimes committed by against them by other persons.

Homelessness has really overwhelmed Russia, just as it did after the Bolshevik Revolution in the 1920s and Great Patriotic War in mid- to late 1940s. The enormous loss of life in the upheavals of revolution, war, and famine left thousands if not millions of dislocated children without parents or guardians. With nowhere to turn, the children naturally turned to the streets and begged for alms or stole food (Stoecker, 2001, 323). Child homelessness in Russia today is especially tragic because unlike the postwar period, most of these children classified as orphans have parents who are alive. According to Russian Deputy Prime Minister,

Valentina Matviyenko, 80 percent of the one million homeless children² living in Russia have parents or guardians (Matviyenko, 2002, 176). Parental neglect, because of the physical and psychological incapacities of the parents and/or guardians or the burdens associated with current unemployment trends that require single mothers to work several jobs simultaneously in order to support their children, lay at the core of today's homeless epidemic. In addition, the demise of *vseobuch* or "education for all" in Russia, fewer children are attending school and are spending time on the streets. According to the Ministry of Education in Russia, 367,696 children between the ages of 5 and 17 did not attend school in 2000.

In 1990, the Russian Supreme Soviet ratified the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child and presidential decrees were issued to back it up. In the mid-1990s, spurred on by the unprecedented growth of child homelessness, a group of scholars and practitioners developed a policy on homelessness and juvenile crime which became the foundation for the law adopted by the Federal Assembly in June 1999 on preventing homelessness and juvenile crime. According to juvenile crime experts, the law is especially important in legalizing the protection of children's rights at the federal level and making these rights the basis of preventative work for the first time in Russian legal history. The new law, however, has many deficiencies, because it fails to create a system for enacting the new law. As deputy chairperson of the Duma committee on legislation, Elena Mizulina, puts it:

This is typical of our legislation. We announce attractive and timely reforms but do not create a system or work out a mechanism that would allow the reforms to be realized. That is why the effectiveness of the law is so weak (Mizulina, 2002, 5).

While this is an important first step, laws to control family violence have yet to be adopted--other than rape or assault--at the federal level. Family abuse and child homelessness are multi-faceted phenomena that are based on considerable research among sociologists, criminologists, and medical professionals. From a

² Matviyenko's figure on homeless children in Russia is conservative. The General Procuracy estimates 2 million; the MVD estimates 2.5 million and the Federation Council estimates 3 million.

criminological perspective, we suggest that child homelessness is related to the role of violence within the family. A child's exposure to domestic violence, whether leveled at the child directly or at other family members, may influence a child's decision to leave home and live on the street. However, it is extremely difficult to establish a direct link between these two phenomena, especially because violence in the family is usually concealed out of shame. We can only skim the surface of the problem by examining the statistics in the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) reports of cruelty towards children or cases whereby the health and well-being of children were violated to various degrees. This includes cases of murder, where the victims are the children and the perpetrators are their parents (natural or adoptive) or legal guardians. Another reason that linkages are hard to establish is that children and youth are not emotionally mature enough to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Because they do not know their elementary rights or how to seek protection, in many cases children view neglectful and even criminal behavior as "normal."

Definitions/Terminology

In order to discuss the linkages between abuse and homelessness, it is imperative to provide definitions of the phenomena under discussion, taking account of both the Russian and western contexts and usages.

What is a child?

For the purposes of this research, we use the common understanding (in Russian civil law and American jurisprudence) of a child (also referred to as "youth" or "minor") as a person who has not reached 18 years of age. In most cases, we will refer to a child as a victim of abuse; however, in instances where we discuss a juvenile *offender*, a child is defined as a person between the ages of 14-18. In Russia, a child can be held responsible for committing a crime only if she/he is 14 years of age or older. In the United States, the age of criminal responsibility varies from state to state and on the nature of a given case (especially murder). There

have been instances where children as young as seven years have been held responsible for their crimes.

Domestic violence

The term “domestic violence” or “domestic abuse” in the West is often used to describe abuse inflicted by or against one’s spouse or intimate partner and does not usually connote abuse of children or minors. Family violence in the legal sense has broader application in that it covers not only spousal abuse, but abuse between parents and children as well. It also refers to situations in which children witness violence between their parents (Pathfinder on Domestic Violence, 2000, 14). In Russian literature, domestic abuse (*domashnee nasiliye*)—draws on its very root—“home” (*dom*). However, this choice of wording is also problematic as it connotes a narrow view of the problem—confining it to behavior within the home, when such abuse can occur in other locations. Although both terms, domestic and family, indicate familial or relational ties among family members, it is also important to have a broad understanding of the term “family member” because in many cases children reside with persons who are not blood relatives. “Child abuse” is clearly a strong candidate for use in this work, but we want to recognize that the abuse, especially psychological, can result from children witnessing violence between other family members that may not be directed at the child. Therefore, for the purposes of this paper, we will employ the term “family abuse” in order to have a broader understanding of the problem than that associated with child abuse and domestic violence. Abusive behavior against children and youth should be understood as action or threat of action that is characterized by physical, psychological, sexual or emotional abuse against a victim affecting her/his life, health, or sexuality that violates criminal law. In the broadest sense, abuse can be defined as behavior that causes harm to others and limits free choice—“usurps free will” (Gilinsky, 2002). From the perspective of criminal law and criminology, the term “family abuse” with respect to minors can be broken down into at least four forms (Ugolovnoye pravo, 1998, 96):

- 1) Physical abuse: actions against a minor that cause physical pain and suffering
- 2) Psychological abuse: actions against a minor that cause psychological suffering or a high degree of psychic tension
- 3) Sexual abuse: violation of a minor's sexual inviolability, accompanied by physical and/or psychological suffering.
- 4) Emotional abuse: actions against a minor that cause emotional stress.

Physical Abuse

Although the idea of physical violence may seem straightforward, it is multifaceted and complex. How do we classify spankings, slapping and other forms of corporal punishment—actions that combine elements of both physical and psychological abuse? Although the child may accept this as the norm, she may also experience considerable stress, because corporal punishment is a serious humiliation. Periodic spankings can be a source of maladjustment. Corporal punishment is always a form degradation and it not only contributes to a child's fear, but teaches a child improper behavior toward others.

Psychological Abuse

Psychological abuse takes two forms: verbal and nonverbal. Verbal abuse involves threatening statements, humiliation, degradation, and so on. Nonverbal abuse involves threatening actions such as the perpetrator threatening the child with a knife and often becomes a combination of physical and psychological abuse. The psychological literature describes child abuse as a type of child-rearing called in Russian "hedgehog gloves" (*yezhevyye rukavitsy*). An extreme example of this type is raising a child in an environment devoid of compassion and respect. Rather the environment is one of heated aggression filled with hatred and sadistic relations, as well as the regular infliction of physical force and/or denial of food and water for several days at a time. The psychological profile and social status of the child are important. Because children are dependent on their parents materially

and psychologically, they do not complain about abuse but rather prefer to leave home. The fact that they are unaware of their elementary rights complicates the situation. Moreover, mother-child ties are very important to boys and girls, therefore it is not surprising that any kind treatment by strangers nonetheless draws the child closer to the mother, regardless of how poorly she acts and how indifferently she relates to her child.

Emotional Abuse

Closely related to psychological abuse is emotional abuse. The child is not critical of her parents, because that is all she knows. The child develops a stereotype of parental behavior. She may feel sorry for her mother because she loves her. In this kind of contradictory situation, a child may become afflicted with post-traumatic stress. Emotional abuse can affect the health and psychological state of the victim just as much as physical abuse does.

Cruel, Degrading and Inhumane Treatment

The concept of cruelty against children varies among cultures and societies. The “Declaration on neglect of parental duty and maltreatment of children” adopted at the 36th World Medical Assembly in Singapore, in 1984, related “maltreatment” to physical, sexual or emotional cruelty as well as negligence of parental duty---inability or failure of parents or guardians to provide for the child’s basic needs and adequate level of care. “Neglect” is defined as failure to fulfill responsibilities such as ensuring that the child is fed properly, clothed, given medical check-ups and treatment and protected from actions that threaten the child’s physical and psychological well-being.

Today, specialists speak of a “syndrome” of child maltreatment in the family because the instances of physical abuse are not isolated, but are unrelenting. In fact, it has almost become a trend that is manifested in various ways—including physical and/or sexual abuse, neglect of child-rearing obligations and maltreatment in the form of emotional abuse.

Families of Misfortune/State of the Family

The contemporary family--as an important microcosm of society, charged with performing child-raising functions--is faced with an assortment of problems. In many cases, families are run and children are raised by single parents or other relatives—such as the grandmother. In many cases, this is accompanied by amoral parental or guardian behavior and psychological dysfunction in the family. These are the most commonplace forms of family misfortune. The pathology of family relations, first of all, affects various aspects of deviation in a child's behavior. Homelessness, crime, and drug addiction all have one thing in common: social maladjustment, the roots of which are found often in the problems of the family. A socially maladjusted child or youth is a victim whose rights to full development and self-realization in society have been severely violated. When a child becomes a law breaker, she is, in essence, signaling the society that her own rights have been violated.

The pervasiveness of poverty in Russia requires many parents to work two or three jobs simultaneously, allowing them little time to spend with their children and to monitor their behavior properly. Separated, single parents, because of the stress, anxiety or depression, tend to be rude and aggressive, and often become a direct source of violence against their own children. A 2002 analysis of household budgets shows that families with children comprised almost 59 percent of all families with per capita household incomes lower than the subsistence minimum. Extremely poor families with resources lower than the subsistence minimum by a factor of two made up 70 percent (KDN, 2002, 3).

The number of parents and guardians who fail to fulfill or unreliably fulfill their child-rearing responsibilities continues to grow, according to reports of police (MVD) agencies. In 1996 the internal affairs agencies of the Russian Federation investigated 182,700 parents who failed to fulfill their responsibilities; the number had increased to 280,700 in 2002 (KDN, 2002). Each year the number of abandoned children grows—in 2000, there were 123 thousand. The number of

court actions/prosecutions involving the revocation of parental rights also increased from 19,800 in 1998 to 43,100 in 2002.

Homelessness

Child homelessness is defined in Russia in two ways. First, the homeless or neglected youth (*beznadzornyi*) who is a minor whose parents or legal guardians fail to fulfill or reliably fulfill their child-rearing responsibilities and therefore there is no control over the child's behavior. *Bezprizornyi*—a more commonly used term in Russia—is a *beznadzornyi* who lacks a place of residence. This usually refers to orphans and in some instances to children who have no place to sleep (Federal'nyi zakon, 1999, 8). For the purposes of this paper, we will employ the term “homelessness” to refer to both Russian terms whether or not the child has a home or a bed.

Research Trends and Criminal Cases

In the last decade, sociologists and psychologists have begun to focus more attention on the problem of abuse, and in particular, abuse of the least protected member of society—the child. Theoretical elaborations of the concept of family abuse and its manifestations have reached a rather sophisticated level. Now the phenomenon is researched within the frameworks of several disciplines, including psychology, sociology, medicine, and criminal law. Although intentional or premeditated violence against children may be hard to fathom, it is a serious and growing problem. Sociological research underscores the fact every year millions of minors are subjected to abuse by family members.

Establishing a direct link between family abuse and homelessness is difficult, because the abuse is hidden within and confined to the family. We can only scratch the surface of the problem by examining the cases of cruel treatment of children reflected in the MVD reports or cases of heinous crimes, such as murder and torture, wherein the victims are children and the perpetrators are either their parents or guardians. Such behavior is accepted by children as normal because they are not aware of other forms of treatment by their family members. Medical

records indicate that children often enter the hospital with signs of severe physical abuse. For example, traces of torture and mutilation are found on their bodies, as well as evidence that they were nearly starved to death (Volkova, 1996, 140). An example of such abuse was reported by the PDN, OVD³ or units within the MVD agencies that deal with youth, in April 2003. For the purposes of confidentiality, we will call this boy “Demyan.”

A thirteen-year old boy named Demyan missed school several times a week. His mother, a doctor by profession, told her son’s teacher that when he takes a long walk and comes home, he then goes to school. After being away for a longer time than normal and missing numerous school days, Demyan finally showed up. He was very tense, appeared sick, and lost consciousness during class. The medical authorities uncovered several bruises and abrasions on the child’s body. The boy stated that his mother beat him with a stick because he took 500 rubles from her. He left home. Such conflicts with the mother, combined with beating, happened frequently and drove the child to the streets.

Profile of an Abused, Homeless Child

Nearly 80 percent of the children requiring social services use alcohol, toxicants, narcotics and cigarettes. Many of them have already broken the law and the majority of others are potential law-breakers. (Sotsial’naya rabota, 2000). Parents who force their children to beg on a regular basis essentially groom them to become homeless juvenile offenders whether they realize it or not. The child is on the street, as a rule, for a long period of time and his territory changes and expands over time. The majority of children who beg are very young, six to ten years of age. After learning to get money “the easy way,” with age the child expands his sphere of activity and territory and adapts to this lifestyle. Having learned how to survive, children are reluctant or refuse to go to a shelter or other

³ PDN, OVD in Russian stands for podrazdeleniye po delam nesovershennoleynykh pravonarushitley, organy vnutrennykh del—units dealing with juvenile offenders. Formerly, this unit was known as PPPN—podrazdeleniye po profilaktike nesovershennykh pravonarushitelei.

institution because they know that their freedom will be curtailed. They are used to doing what they want, when they want, and those habits are hard to change.

Methodology and Findings

A multi-faceted methodology was used to determine the degree and mechanisms of the influence of family violence on child homelessness. Sociological research tools, such as surveys of those working within the PDN, OVD with children of potential or previous vulnerability or “weakened social immunity” to homelessness were used. In addition, criminal court cases of abusive behavior against minors and criminal cases of crimes committed by abused minors revealed that they were subjected to cruel treatment for a long period of time. Court-appointed psychiatric experts examined the victims and juvenile offenders and their reports provided valuable insight into the children’s psychological profiles. Finally, there was an analysis of special operations where investigators entered homes of persons suspected of neglect of parental child-rearing practices.

Surveys

Thirty respondents of the surveys were PDN staff workers within the regional Administration of Internal Affairs and local MVD agencies responsible for preventing homelessness. They were asked about the links between family abuse and homelessness and how this is illustrated in their special raids and operations, their study of children who willingly leave home regularly and are homeless. In addition, psychologists and staff workers at special, closed schools for juvenile offenders in Irkutsk were polled about the ties between abuse and homelessness and about the features of their families.

The connection between family violence and child homelessness is illustrated in a survey of respondents who worked at special closed schools for juvenile offenders (*TsVINPy or Tsentry vremennoy izolatsy nesovershennykh pravonarushiteli*). The survey shows that almost 90 percent of the youth

experienced violence against them by their close relatives and that running away from home in protest against physical abuse was a regular occurrence.

The youth spoke boldly about the relationship with their parents, often calling their mother “good” and “kind” in situations where the reality was completely different. Children of eight to nine years spoke about physical abuse whereas older children tended to speak about psychological violence, such as threat of beating, threat of being thrown out on the street, beaten up and isolated if some request of the parent or guardian were not fulfilled. Very little was said about sexual abuse, but this cannot be excluded.

Court-Appointed Psychiatric Expertise and Criminal Cases

One of the most reliable and convincing methods of determining the impact of abuse on the child is the study of reports prepared by court-appointed psychiatric experts. The psychiatric reports on juvenile criminals analyzed were those of closed criminal court cases in the city of Irkutsk and Irkutsk oblast between 1997 and 2002. They represent solidly-based, comprehensive research because they include the mandatory participation of psychologists and contain rather thorough analyses of the children’s pubescent development, family characteristics, and relationships within the family. The research focused on youth offenders in Irkutsk City and Irkutsk Oblast who had adapted very poorly socially and, most important, had used psychotropic substances: narcotics, toxicants such as sniffing glue, inhaling poisonous gas fumes, and drinking alcohol. Thirty percent developed dependence on narcotics or toxicants. The other control group of 90 percent of the youth suffered from chronic alcoholism.

Special Operations/Raids

One measure of the extent of homelessness is the number of children uncovered by the MVD units during their special operations to establish the identity and whereabouts of missing children, as well as those in social shelters or orphanages in Irkutsk Oblast. Their regularly conducted operations to prevent

homelessness--such as “Brodyaga” and “Besprizornik”--illustrate, first, that homeless children can be divided into three basic categories: children who are always on the street (usually more than one-two months); children who are periodically on the street (usually when parents are intoxicated, when conflicts with parents or legal guardians arise, or after a beating.) The third category applies to those minors who regularly go home for sleep, but all other needs are met on the street.

An analysis of these law enforcement reports reveal that 30 percent of the children leave home because of regular abuse by parents, 30 percent suffer from what specialists call “Wandering Syndrome,” and the remaining 40 percent suffer from a variety of other family dysfunctions and other problems. However, the results of these operations reveal only the tip of the iceberg. In order to render an accurate accounting of the scale and scope of homeless children and dysfunctional families, ongoing, frequent investigations are needed.

The data of the MVD youth affairs units of Irkutsk Oblast indicate that the number of criminal cases opened on the basis of article 156—“Failure to Rear Children Responsibly” grew steadily between 1997 and 2000 and then began to taper off. (Ugolovnyi Kodeks, 1996, 5). In 1997, 49 cases were opened, in 1998 there were 88 cases, and in 1999-77. By 2000, the number of such cases declined by 10-12 percent, which corresponds with the general tendency of fewer crimes being reported and registered than actually occurred.

How did this happen? Why do the statistics reveal only a few instances of parents being held accountable for these crimes when family abuse is so widespread? There are several explanations.

It is important to note that a serious preventive mechanism for law enforcement work/investigation in this area is hindered by a shortage of special services, absence of a single coordinated system of exposing these facts or proof and means of bringing the guilty parties to account for their crimes of neglecting parental responsibilities in child rearing, particularly if such actions are combined with cruel treatment of their children. Law enforcement agencies note the

difficulties of collecting evidence that could help them solve crimes and bring the members of a family to court for failing to fulfill or fulfill properly their child rearing responsibilities.

Research Findings

In nearly 90 percent of the cases examined in Irkutsk city and oblast, there was evidence of a link between family abuse and the child's decision to leave home. An elaboration of this general finding is illustrated in the following:

- ? Abuse against 14- and 15 year-old minors usually went on for several months, especially against minors between the ages of 16 and 17 who sometimes experienced such abuse for three to five years. Nearly 90 percent of the minors were physically abused, 88 percent were psychologically abused (including 72 percent who were subject to both forms of abuse) and 4 percent were subjected to sexual abuse.
- ? Criminal abuse against children fell out in the following way: complete families: 9 percent; families in which the mother or father is replaced by a father in law or mother in law 68 percent; in "incomplete" families 23 percent (20 percent in cases where there is no mother and 3 percent in cases with no father).
- ? Sexual crimes against children usually are committed by parents or guardians. Statistics reveal that such crimes are much more frequent in families where there are step-parents, or in single-parent families than they are in "whole" families. For example, only 9 percent of the crimes were committed in "whole" families, whereas 68 percent of the crimes are committed in families in which the mother or the father is replaced with a stepfather or stepmother.
- ? According to law enforcement practitioners, many crimes are uncovered by accident—usually when the victim becomes pregnant or after a victim has been harmed or murdered. Because they are ashamed, it is very rare

for minors to reveal that they have been sexually abused by a father, stepfather, or uncle. In Germany, for example, the correlation of documented cases of family sexual abuse against minors and the number exposed varies as dramatically as 17:1 or 20:1 (Kriminologiya, 1998, 165). Physical abuse of minors by family members in the form of beatings occurs in 64 percent of the cases and the denial of food, water, and heat occurs in 8 percent of the cases.

- ? Tying down, confinement to a dark place, restriction of movement and other methods are characteristic, according to the author's data, in 4 percent of the cases. (Revin, 1996, 21)
- ? There are also cases whereby children witness family violence—particularly the beating of wives by their husbands. Children, in some cases, may grow to accept this behavior as normal and this may lead to family violence being perpetuated over time.

According to our research, 50 percent of the abuse cases were related to alcoholism. It is important to underscore that the misuse of alcohol alone on the part of the parents is not the main reason why a child leaves home, but rather the consequences of the drinking: neglect of their parental responsibilities, poor behavior, inability to hold down jobs and material shortages (poverty). Most of the youth respondents said that they left home due to fear of beating, not wanting to live with step parents, quarrels with parents or quarrels between their parents, parents' threats to make them leave home, hunger, and harassment.

In families of single mothers, alcoholism is less pervasive and was encountered in 40 percent of the cases. In full families alcoholism was encountered in more than 70 percent of the cases and became the basic reason for the social maladjustment of the youth.

An example is found in a criminal case described below. For the purposes of confidentiality, we will call the boy Ivan.

A young boy of 15 years named Ivan, suffering from addiction to toxins and held accountable for the cruel murder of his peer, came from a single-parent family consisting of his mother and his grandmother. The whereabouts of the biological father were unknown. Both the mother and grandmother drank hard liquor frequently and lived on the grandmother's pension. Ivan was essentially homeless, because there was no control over his behavior. A violated mechanism of social adaptation did not delay him from becoming an addict of toxins by the time he was fourteen.

According to the reports of the PDN he became a drug distributor. The youth's mother warned the Commission of Minors' Affairs (KDN). Yet the youth himself revealed in an interview that when he came home periodically, his mother was usually drunk. He reacted violently to her drunkenness and on one occasion took a stick and beat his sleeping mother and grandmother. His systematic absences from home and physical violence toward relatives were a form of protest against their alcoholism.

In many cases the presence of a romantic partner, not related to the youth, worsens the situation. Frequently, the partners in these families experienced alcoholism and/or abused the children. In many instances, parental rights are revoked as a juridical fact, however in practice the child is not placed in a new home and stays at home periodically when the mother or father are sober—which is rare.

Approximately 15 percent of cases of maltreatment, which is especially acute in the families of single mothers, were tied to the psychological problems of the parents. In 13 percent, treatment was linked to the parent's irritation and desire to get rid of the child.

Conclusions

This research confirms the existence of indirect links between family misfortune and various forms of asocial behavior in children. Analyses reveal that 70 percent of the families have some form of misfortune. In 40 percent of the

cases, child offenders are homeless. Criminal records relating to actual cases of family abuse reveal that in 90 percent of the cases, there were linkages between abuse and the child's decision to leave home. While abuse, and especially sexual abuse is extremely difficult to document, research illustrates that one in every two persons convicted of assault or rape of a minor was either the natural father, stepfather, brother, grandfather or teacher of the victim (Nasilstvennaya prestupnost', 1997,115-116). Approximately 13 percent of the children living in shelters had suffered from incest and 10 percent behaved in a manner that suggested that they had been sexually abused in the past (Veklenko, Volkova, 1996, 72).

Family misfortune is more likely to occur in single-parent families—in most cases where the mother is supporting children alone. Family misfortune is also manifested in cases of inverted family functions, such as the grandmother raising the children, alcoholism of both parents (drug addiction was more rare) and in situations involving families with hidden psychological problems and poor intra-family relations.

Many children, especially those of younger age, treat violent or abusive behavior by their parents as the norm. This is not unusual, if we consider the psychological profile of a youth who is only beginning to develop the capacity for concrete thoughts and automatically adapts to the patterns of behavior he/she observes in the family. Specialists have shown that in some instances, youth answer the question of family relationships to the effect that everything was good, but adding phrases such as “Mama sometimes beats me with a stick, if I don't listen.”

President Vladimir Putin's commitment to child protection is difficult to measure. In 2002, he publicly allocated 3,189,000 rubles from Presidential Reserve Funds to the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection for social protection of children (RIA Novosti, 17.6.02). How the Ministry is implementing social protection of children is not clear. A major impediment to caring for children is the lack of clearly defined roles and authority. Several articles on dealing with

homelessness, for example, have shown that the new law on combating homelessness and juvenile crime empowers the MVD, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Justice, Procuracy, Ministry of Labor and Social Development, Ministry of Health, and Commission on Juvenile Affairs (KDN) to address the problem. However, to what extent and with what resources are left undefined (Komsomolskaya Pravda, 2002, 2).

Although family abuse and child homelessness are major issues that may have a devastating impact on the future of Russian society and the health of its human capital, funding for these social needs compete with other federal priorities in the social sphere, such as poverty and services for the physically challenged as well as key strategic goals of combating terrorism and maintaining defense readiness.

It is too simple to dismiss family abuse as confined to the family and therefore not the society's or the world's problem. The plight of abused children is getting more publicity in many countries and the presence of unprotected and highly vulnerable street children as fodder for exploitation by criminal groups is visible and real. We hope that our governments will do what they can to continue to publicize these atrocities and find ways of criminalizing negligent and abusive behavior of parents and permitting children to experience childhood without violence or fear.

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