

THE MULTI-COUNTRY STUDY ON THE DRIVERS OF VIOLENCE AFFECTING  
CHILDREN

# The Violence Prevention Research Process: ITALY

Department of Equal Opportunities, Prime Minister's Office

Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) Forum 2015

Special Session II

17 September 2015

Istituto  
degli  
Innocenti



# Overview of VAC in Italy

- **Sexual abuse**

- Sexual abuse reported by women as minors: 33% (Bianchi and Moretti, 2006).
- Abuse in Italy occurs within children's **circles of trust**: the family being the most common place but also within the schools. Overall, girls are significantly more likely to report sexual abuse than boys.
- High levels of **trafficking** of foreign children especially for sexual exploitation.
- Increasing attention to child prostitution and on-line violence.

- **Physical abuse**

- In schools **bullying** affects over 1/3 of students (HBSC, 2010).
- Italian fathers (more than mothers) believe in the educational 'value' of **corporal punishment** especially for boys (Arace et al, 2013).

- **Emotional abuse**

- 20% of children who accessed services have **witnessed domestic violence** - this is likely underreported

# Factors leading to Italy's involvement in the 'drivers' research process

- Violence against children is a **priority of the Italian government** with investment in surveys, extensive observatories and legislation reflected in different policies and practices.

However, rationalizing services in the face of economic austerity will be critical - so too is a prevention focus (rather than service response).

- Italy has recently created a **comprehensive national system of data** collection on child abuse with a data bank of multiple data sources. Understanding the national 'picture' will help advocate for common service provision indicators and more informed prevention efforts.
- Italy is suffering from the global (and specifically European) **economic downturn**. Understanding what drives violence will help prioritize practices and prepare for changing population dynamics.

# Lessons learned in Italy by the end of Stage 1

- Children and adolescents often **do not have a clear perception** of what is violence, especially on-line violence (sexting, grooming, etc) as well as bullying.
  - Awareness raising and **training of teachers/educators** emerges as crucial for prevention as well as research to better understand how different types of violence affect children's lives so that prevention can be more directed.
- European countries like Italy, even with comparatively low levels of registered abuse, face the challenge of **below replacement fertility, aging populations** (and a disappearing extended family) leading to family isolation and weaker social networks. This may be affecting the size and strength of adult and children's care and support networks.
- **The increase of refugees and migrants**, especially minors and women of child-bearing age, is likely to present new challenges for violence prevention and service provision.

# Changes created by the 'drivers' process in Italy

- Findings from the national report fed into Italy's ***National Plan of Action for Children and the National Plan to Prevent and Combat the Abuse and Sexual Exploitation of Children*** approved last July.
- The Government of Italy recognizes the importance of carrying out an **evaluation of interventions** to better understand 'what works', to determine priority services vis-a-vis the economic crisis.
- The Department of Equal Opportunities has expressed willingness to participate in **Stage 2 of the Multi-Country Study**; there is particular interest in the work around social norms as an entry point for effective violence prevention.