



Child sexual abuse is a silent epidemic throughout the world, creating social havoc. It can be prevented treated with a conscious and sustained effort. Stop the Silence provides that effort.

August 21, 2017

### **Cyprus Education and Training on Child Sexual Abuse**

Stop the Silence: Stop Child Sexual Abuse, Inc. (Stop the Silence, [www.stopthesilence.org](http://www.stopthesilence.org)) has been focused on providing local, national, and international programming to address child sexual abuse (CSA) prevention and mitigation for the past 15 years. Its staff and associates are experts in the field of CSA and childhood trauma. CSA and related trauma constitutes a broad range of behaviors and occurs in epidemic proportions across the globe resulting in a host of poor outcomes for children, the adults they become, and society at large, severely affecting mental and physical health, life expectancy, and the monetary cost to nations. Other childhood traumas (e.g., physical and psychological abuse, neglect, parent incarcerated, parental substance abuse) are also extremely damaging as well as multiplicative in terms of negative impact (for information about ongoing research on adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, and their outcomes originally conducted by Felitti and Anda, see [www.ACEsTooHigh.com](http://www.ACEsTooHigh.com)). Stop the Silence's focus is largely on awareness-raising, policy development, education, and training a host of service providers and the public. Stop the Silence leadership sees the organization's role as helping to catalyze change, providing information and skills to those in-country so that others in-country move programming forward, providing a sustainable base and momentum (all materials used are left in country).

For the past 2.5 years, Stop the Silence has been working with the nation of Cyprus to carry out comprehensive and successful programming to combat CSA and related childhood traumas. We have advised the government and NGOs on policy, program and service focus and components, and carried out trainings for administrators, teachers, school psychologists and counselors, and members of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Work continues. Information on the progress of the nation of Cyprus is presented on Attachment A, below. While Cyprus is a small nation, it has, because of its size, provided an ideal place to carry out and test a comprehensive prevention, treatment, mitigation model.

Given the success of the program in Cyprus, and the successful use of components that Stop the Silence has provided elsewhere (e.g., U.S., UK, Kenya), we have a model that we believe would be of continued success in Cyprus and in other countries. Components and suggested next steps (bolded) consist of:

- Identifying an initial small group of government and other relevant administrators and leaders from ministries that can include the Ministries of Education, Health, and Youth and Sports, as well as NGOs and providing an initial interactive training that provides a detailed overview of the issues (we see initial and ongoing government involvement and support as one key to all progress);
- Assisting the government and others to develop a specialized committee on the prevention, treatment and mitigation of CSA and other ACEs;
- Assisting governments and others to review and identify needed policy revisions and/or additions, as well as services;
- Assisting the Government and others to identify and train groups to be further trained (e.g., teachers, psychologists, judges, lawyers, doctors) and assisting in the development of training manuals and processes so that those initially trained can conduct training for others, e.g., teachers, doctors, judges;
- Assisting governments and others to identify various audiences' needs for information, and designing, implementing, and evaluating public informational campaigns.

The cost of all training/consultation is kept low so that work can be sustained by others in each country.

**Att. A. Cypriot Ministry of Education and Culture Actions to  
Combat Child Sexual Abuse (CSA), July 2014 – March 2017**  
April 4, 2017

Actions of the Cypriot Ministry of Education and Culture concerned four primary levels:

1. National Level
2. Ministry of Education and Culture
3. Schools Level
4. Student Level

### **NATIONAL LEVEL**

**July 2014:** Cypriot Parliament passed legislation to address the need for reducing child sexual abuse (CSA).

**August 2015:** The training, conducted by Stop the Silence in December 2014 (see below, Ministry of Education and Culture Level) for Ministry administrators, teachers, psychologists, and NGO staff, helped catalyze the establishment of a national committee, which was initiated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and involved the Ministries of Health, Social Work, Justice, and Education. One purpose was to create a National Strategy and Action Plan to Combat CSA and Child Pornography.

**November 2015:** The Ministry decided to create a “*Children’s’ Home*” based on the Icelandic model of assessment and therapy for children sexually abused. The idea was to protect children from victimization and further trauma during the investigation. This is in process.

**March 2016:** The Cypriot government approved a three-year National Strategy and Action Plan (2016-19) to Combat CSA that was moved forward through the Ministerial committee.

**January 2017:** The Ministry supported a Ministry-mandated training for all school counselors and psychologists focused on “CSA basics”, and conducted by Stop the Silence: What CSA is and its outcomes; actions to prevent CSA; recognition of signs and symptoms, and; actions to address the issue with victims, families, and communities. Stop the Silence: Stop Child Sexual Abuse, Inc. Minister lays out importance of focus on the issue at a national press conference.

### **MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE LEVEL**

**December 2014:** Experts from Stop the Silence: Stop Child Sexual Abuse, Inc. (Stop the Silence) based in the USA, and a partnering organization (Survivors Healing Center) conducted a training for 25 officers from various departments and services of the Ministry. Partners from NGOs also attended. The primary focus of the training was to increase knowledge about CSA, create a unit in the Ministry for making decisions and training others, and establish policies.

**December 2014:** The Ministry sent a circular to schools informing them about the new legislation passed and their obligations as teachers arising from the law focused on CSA.

**March 2015:** The Ministry established a trained unit: the “*Committee of Protection and Prevention of CSA.*” This action facilitated coordination, the establishment of policies and work

allocation, and identified shared responsibilities. The primary focus of the Committee (all of which the Ministry has since accomplished) was to:

1. Plan informative campaigns for students, teachers and parents,
2. Supervise sex education programs in schools,
3. Create a procedure for schools in case a student is suspected or informs sexual abuse, and
4. Create a Teachers Manual on CSA

**October 2015 – February 2016:** The Ministry set procedures of handling CSA cases in schools. The National Committee to Combat CSA as well as representatives from Police Headquarters discussed and approved the procedures.

**February 2016:** The Committee set out a second detailed circular for schools that analyzed procedures and gave emphasis to child protection in case of abuse. They developed step-by-step school procedures.

**March 2016:** A text with Ministry's policy on Children Sex Education was established by a unit of the Pedagogical Institute and then circulated to schools. It served to coordinate all of the Ministry's actions as well as the Pedagogical Institute's training actions on sex education.

**March 2016:** The unit informed all directors and inspectors inside the Ministry of Education and Culture as well as the District Offices about on-going actions, policies, law and procedures.

**February – June 2016:** Some of Ministerial staff that had formerly been trained provided an informative seminar about CSA law and procedures to School Headmasters.

**September 2016:** The unit oversaw the development of a parents' circular and it was given out by the schools to inform parents about CSA law, procedures and sex education in schools.

**October 2016:** The unit developed a Teachers' Manual that was distributed to all schools.

**January 2017:** Stop the Silence conducted a Ministry-mandated training for all school counselors and psychologists. The Minister laid out the importance of focus on the issue in a national press conference. Discussions begin on further training needed (e.g., doctors, police, judges) and informational campaigns.

## **SCHOOL LEVEL**

**December 2014:** Schools acknowledged the new legislation passed and promoted information about their obligations arising from the law of CSA.

**February 2016:** Schools studied and applied the detailed procedures provided in the Circular, giving emphasis to child protection in the case of abuse.

**February – June 2016:** School Headmasters participated to informative seminars about CSA law and procedures.

**March – June 2016:** Members of the unit and NGOs conducted a school-based training for on CSA law and procedures.

**September 2016:** Schools sent out a parents' circular about CSA law, procedures and sex education policy in schools developed by the unit of the Ministry.

**September 2017-2020:** All teachers were invited to participate in a daily seminar about CSA law and school procedures.

**Early 2016:** The Teachers Manual on CSA is distributed to all schools. The Ministry began planning for a new training serving school counselors and psychologists.

**December 2014-Today:** The established work created an environment where schools can communicate at any time with the Ministry committee members and other leadership to ensure proper counseling and guidelines for handling and reporting cases of CSA.

**January 2017:** Stop the Silence conducted a Ministry-mandated training for all school counselors and psychologists. After the training, the Minister laid out importance of focus on the issue in a national press conference.

**March 2017:** Early in 2017, the social welfare office decided to train their officers with the educational psychologists. This recognition of the importance of this came after social workers joined teachers in the earlier training for teachers and came to understand that both teachers and social workers had to be trained at the same level so that these collaborating professionals had the same perspective and use the same practices. This is the first time that teachers and psychologists were trained together on any subject, including CSA prevention and mitigation.

The first training with teachers and social workers took place in March on the techniques of forensic interviewing with sexual abused children and those who are suspected of being sexually abused. This training will next be done with 24 educational psychologists, as well. This inter-professional training is allowing for a better-prepared, inter-connected, and skilled service provider network.

**March 2017:** Also in March, the Ministry supported a training for primary school educators at the Pedagogical Institute.

**May 2017:** School staff conducted a training on Health Relationships for 15-year-old students in one school, with a focus was on consent and protection.

## **STUDENT LEVEL**

### **Academic years 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17**

Development/application of:

- Prevention programs for all ages, mostly done by NGOs
- Sex education at school (6-15 years old)
- Information about Students' Helplines
- Students' leaflets for different ages

## **FUTURE PLANS**

May 2017: In the first half of May 2017, a meeting with the Minister of Education took place to discuss next steps, especially the *Strategic Plan for the School Year 2017-18*. The Ministry decided to train *teenagers* about sexual abuse awareness, peer relationships without violence, and internet use risks.

Additionally, with, in association with, and / or as additional related work, there will be:

- *Training for special educators on Children with special needs: protection from sexual abuse and sexual education.* This will be conducted with the participation of an NGO.
- *Training for Pre-school Teachers on Child Sexual Abuse and Sexual Education* (Ministry of Education and Culture - Social Welfare Services)
- *Joint trainings* with Social Welfare services, legal services (state lawyers), educators, educational psychologists (on going, there is a second joint training at the end of May 2017), organized by the NGO Hope for Children on *children forensic interviewing*.
- *Empower sex education* in schools (material, educators' assessment).
- *An initiative to be forwarded for a Trainings for Judges* by the Minister of Education and Culture to the Court system, given by experts.
- *Training of Parents* with lectures, flyers, etc. This will be done with the help through their formal representatives.

Furthermore, the work will continue with:

- *Training for therapists and psychologists outside the school system* so that when a national campaign is rolled out, there will be help available for those who learn more, disclose, and seek help.
- *A national campaign*, using billboards, TV, radio, social media, and more.