



Addressing children's vulnerabilities in detention

26-27 June 2014

Conference Room *La Pastorale*, Geneva

Overview

Deprivation of liberty for children should be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time and should aim at rehabilitating and reintegrating children into society. However, more than one million children are deprived of their liberty worldwide.

Children deprived of their liberty are particularly vulnerable and at risk of abuse, ill-treatment and even torture, from their first contact with the law. In many countries, concerns have been raised regarding the conditions and treatment of children in detention, including the use of solitary confinement and means of restraint, the detention in adult facilities, the lack of complaints mechanisms and contact with family, the lack of specialised staff and the inadequate education and recreation. Girls deprived of their liberty are particularly vulnerable, due to their age, gender and small numbers.

National Preventive Mechanisms (NPMs) established under the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture can play a very important role in preventing abuse and ill-treatment against children deprived of their liberty. In order to identify strategies to fully perform this role, the APT is organizing a two-day meeting with NPMs and other relevant experts.

The Symposium will provide a unique space to have in-depth discussions on the vulnerabilities and risk factors related to children in conflict with the law¹ deprived of their liberty and how NPMs can effectively address those issues when carrying out their preventive mandate. The 2014 Symposium will be the first of a series of annual two-day meetings, the **Jean-Jacques Gautier NPM Symposium Series**, a unique international forum to exchange knowledge and practices among NPMs from all regions of the world and other experts on vulnerabilities in detention.

Objectives

Day 1: NPMs and other experts

- ✓ Examine the risk factors and situations which contribute to the abuse and ill-treatment of children in conflict with the law in detention.
- ✓ Identify strategies for NPMs to address these issues when carrying out their preventive mandate.
- ✓ Reinforce cooperation between NPMs and other key actors.

Day 2: NPMs

- ✓ Discuss the challenges faced by NPMs in carrying out their preventive mandate regarding the specific issues addressed on the first day of the symposium.
- ✓ Exchange good practices and working methods between NPMs.
- ✓ Strengthen cooperation between NPMs.

Outcomes and outputs

- NPMs will have clear understanding of children's vulnerabilities in detention.
- NPMs will have identified strategies to address these issues in carrying out their preventive mandate.
- Contacts for exchanges and collaboration between NPMs and external experts are established.
- Working methods of NPMs will be adapted to address children's vulnerabilities in detention.
- 1st Jean-Jacques NPM Symposium paper is developed and available.

¹ "The term children in conflict with the law refers to anyone under 18 who comes into contact with the justice system as a result of being suspected or accused of committing an offence", UNICEF:

http://www.unicef.org/chinese/protection/files/Conflict_with_the_Law.pdf

