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DICASTERO PER IL SERVIZIO DELLO SVILIPPO UMANO INTEGRALE

COVID-19 VATICAN COMMISSION

BAMBINI E COVID-19

Le vittime più vulnerabili della pandemia

La pandemia di COVID-19 ha spinto molti bambini in condizioni di grave povertà lasciandone altrettanti senza genitori o persone care che si prendevano cura di loro. In tutto il mondo, lo sfruttamento e la violenza contro i bambini sono aumentati, e l'accesso alle strutture educative è stato ridotto o sospeso. I governi, le organizzazioni della società civile e la Chiesa devono unirsi per alleviare la crescente sofferenza dei bambini più vulnerabili.

1. Situazione

Una generazione di bambini sta sopportando il peso delle conseguenze economiche, sanitarie e sociali della pandemia di COVID-19. L'improvviso aumento della povertà estrema in tutto il mondo, la crescente insicurezza alimentare e le misure di contenimento dei governi hanno messo a dura prova le famiglie. Il COVID-19 colpisce rapidamente, lasciando alle famiglie e alle comunità poco tempo per prepararsi alla morte o alla malattia a lungo termine dei genitori e di chi si prende cura di loro. Le denunce di violenze, abusi e sfruttamento dei bambini sono aumentate notevolmente dall'inizio della pandemia. Le avversità affrontate dalle comunità più povere sono sproporzionate.

C'è una crescente consapevolezza che garantire e proteggere i diritti dei bambini può promuovere uno sviluppo economico e sociale a lungo termine. I bambini che vivono in un ambiente protettivo ed educativo hanno più probabilità di raggiungere il loro pieno potenziale e meno probabilità di cadere in povertà, di incorrere in problematiche legali, di avere problemi di abuso di sostanze o di salute mentale. Il COVID-19 è paragonabile ad altri problemi umanitari per lo shock profondo subito dai bambini e dalle famiglie colpite, e, tuttavia, in questo caso, lo shock è di portata globale: sono stati colpiti, infatti, sia i paesi a basso che a medio e alto reddito, ed in particolare i poveri e i vulnerabili.

·**Si stima che, entro il 30 settembre 2021, più di 5 milioni di bambini abbiano perso un genitore, un nonno o un tutore secondario, a causa del COVID-19.**[1] Ciò significa che un bambino perde un genitore o una persona di riferimento ogni 12 secondi. Stime conservative suggeriscono che nei prossimi anni, altri milioni di bambini subiranno queste perdite e saranno esposti maggiormente al rischio di cadere in povertà, rimanere privi di cure familiari, essere messi in orfanotrofio e avere un accesso ridotto all'istruzione.[2]

·**I bambini stanno sperimentando un forte aumento della povertà** delle loro famiglie, che si prevede continuerà nel 2021 nei paesi a basso reddito.[3] Dopo decenni di riduzione della povertà, il COVID-19 ha fatto precipitare 150 milioni di bambini nella povertà. Per la prima volta da decenni, il numero di bambini impiegati nel lavoro minorile è aumentato raggiungendo i 160 milioni.[4]

·**La crescente insicurezza alimentare sta danneggiando un gran numero di bambini.** Nel 2020, i 6-7 milioni di nuovi casi di malnutrizione acuta nei bambini sotto i cinque anni hanno portato alla morte di circa 10.000 bambini al mese, l'80% dei quali nell'Africa subsahariana e nell'Asia meridionale.[5]

·**I bambini stanno subendo ritardi significativi nella loro istruzione.** Più di 168 milioni di bambini hanno perso un intero anno scolastico durante i primi dodici mesi della pandemia e molti altri hanno avuto una scolarizzazione ridotta o a distanza.[6] Questo si tradurrà in una perdita stimata di 10 trilioni di dollari di guadagni futuri per questa generazione, a cui si aggiungono ulteriori perdite economiche dovute alla chiusura delle strutture educative per la prima infanzia.[7]

·**I bambini sono molto più a rischio di violenza e sfruttamento.** I servizi di prevenzione e risposta alla violenza sono stati interrotti per 1,8 miliardi di bambini.[8] Il segretario generale dell'ONU ha espresso preoccupazione per "l'orribile aumento globale della violenza domestica" verificatosi a causa del COVID-19, con chiamate alle hotline per abusi domestici aumentate significativamente in alcuni paesi.[9]

·**Le ragazze corrono un rischio enorme.** Circa 10 milioni di ragazze sono a rischio di matrimonio infantile a causa della pandemia, e numerosi rapporti parlano di un aumento delle gravidanze infantili.[10]

·**I bambini immunocompromessi o con disabilità sono particolarmente vulnerabili al COVID-19.** Questo rischio è maggiore per i bambini che vivono in strutture di assistenza.[11]

2. Analisi

Prima della pandemia, il mondo era "lento nello sviluppare istituzioni economiche e iniziative sociali che possano dare ai poveri un accesso regolare alle risorse di base" (*Laudato si'*, 109). Con l'inizio della pandemia, il mondo è stato "costretto ad affrontare una serie di gravi e interrelate crisi socio-economiche, ecologiche e politiche"

(Papa Francesco, 7 aprile 2021). **L'impatto sui bambini è stato particolarmente profondo.** Gesù "si identifica specialmente con i più piccoli" e questo ci ricorda "che tutti noi cristiani siamo chiamati a prenderci cura dei più fragili della Terra" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 209). Il "grido silenzioso" dei bambini poveri dovrebbe "trovare il popolo di Dio in prima linea, sempre e dovunque, per dare loro voce, per difenderli e solidarizzare con essi davanti a tanta ipocrisia e tante promesse disattese, e per invitarli a partecipare alla vita della comunità" (Papa Francesco, 15 novembre 2020).[12]

I bambini che perdono un genitore o un tutore a causa della pandemia dovrebbero rimanere in una famiglia, quando possibile. La Chiesa riconosce che i genitori "hanno il dovere di amare e di rispettare i figli come persone e come figli di Dio, e di provvedere, per quanto possibile, ai loro bisogni materiali e spirituali" (Compendio, 460). "La vita di famiglia è un'iniziazione alla vita della società" (Compendio, 457). I bambini che perdono un genitore o una persona che si prendeva cura di loro, e che non possono essere accuditi dai loro parenti, dovrebbero poter contare su coloro che "possono mostrare la loro generosità mediante l'affido o l'adozione [...] e realizzano così una preziosa fecondità spirituale" (Compendio, 501). I genitori di "bambini con gravi difficoltà" non devono essere lasciati soli - "[dobbiamo] accompagnare la loro fatica, ma anche offrire loro momenti di gioia condivisa..." (Papa Francesco, 8 aprile 2015).[13]

"E chi accoglie anche uno solo di questi bambini in nome mio, accoglie me"(Mt 18,5).

La violenza contro i bambini è contraria al messaggio del Vangelo, che ci affida la cura e la protezione dei più deboli e indifesi(Lettera Apostolica in forma di Motu Proprio sulla Protezione dei Minori e delle Persone vulnerabili).[14]"La corsa frenetica verso guadagni facili e veloci comporta anche lo sviluppo di piaghe aberranti come il traffico di bambini, lo sfruttamento e l'abuso di minori e, in generale, la privazione dei diritti inerenti all'infanzia sanciti dalla Convenzione internazionale sui diritti dell'infanzia". (Papa Francesco, 15 gennaio 2017).[15]"In questo momento di riflessione, in cui cerchiamo di modellare la nostra azione futura e di dare forma a un'agenda internazionale post-COVID-19, dovremmo prestare particolare attenzione al pericolo reale di dimenticare quanti sono rimasti indietro. Corrono il rischio di essere attaccati da un virus ancora peggiore del COVID-19: quello dell'indifferenza egoista". (Papa Francesco, 17 giugno 2021).[16]

I bambini di oggi sono il fondamento del nostro futuro. "Se i genitori sono come le fondamenta della casa, i figli sono come le "pietre vive" della famiglia" (*Amoris Laetitia*, 14). I bambini che sono accuditi e protetti hanno maggiori probabilità di raggiungere il pieno potenziale del loro sviluppo fisico, cognitivo, emotivo, sociale e spirituale.[17]Hanno anche maggiori probabilità di frequentare la scuola, di avere risultati accademici migliori e di avere una salute migliore per tutta la vita. Sostenere il benessere dei bambini oggi contribuirà alla riduzione della povertà e della disuguaglianza nel corso delle generazioni future.

Valorizzare le cure basate sulla famiglia."I bambini, appena nati, incominciano a ricevere in dono, insieme col nutrimento e le cure, la conferma delle qualità spirituali dell'amore. Gli atti dell'amore passano attraverso il dono del nome personale, la condivisione del linguaggio, le intenzioni degli sguardi, le illuminazioni dei sorrisi" (*Amoris Laetitia*, 172). Inoltre, "la famiglia, la comunità naturale in cui si sperimenta la natura sociale umana, dà un contributo unico e insostituibile al bene della società" (Compendio, 213). I nostri sforzi fisici e spirituali dovrebbero concentrarsi sul rafforzamento della capacità delle famiglie di prendersi cura di questi bambini, specialmente dei poveri.

Le nostre risposte alla vulnerabilità dei bambini, rispetto all'attuale situazione sanitaria, dovrebbero essere olistiche.L'intera gamma dei loro bisogni dovrebbe essere affrontata durante la pandemia, ma anche e soprattutto dopo. Questa è la base dello sviluppo umano integrale. Quando, nel 2020, le scuole di tutto il mondo hanno chiuso, circa 39 miliardi di pasti scolastici non sono stati serviti, portando ad un aumento della malnutrizione infantile.[18]Il peggioramento della povertà, durante la pandemia, ha aumentato la probabilità del matrimonio infantile, per esempio, come modo per alleviare la pressione finanziaria in un momento di incertezza economica.[19]"L'inequità non colpisce solo gli individui, ma Paesi interi, e obbliga a pensare ad un'etica delle relazioni internazionali" (*Laudato si'*, 51). Questa etica include il dovere di massimizzare i nostri sforzi per garantire allo stesso tempo la protezione, la cura, la salute e l'educazione di ogni bambino, un approccio che, nel tempo, ridurrà significativamente questa disuguaglianza.

3. Azione

Ai responsabili politici e alla società civile:

·**Promuovere l'equa distribuzione del vaccino COVID-19.** Gli effetti nocivi del virus sui bambini possono essere completamente mitigati solo se si limita la diffusione del COVID-19. Vaccinarsi è "un atto d'amore", "amore per sé stessi, amore per familiari e amici, amore per tutti i popoli" (Papa Francesco, 18 agosto 2021).[20]

·**Rafforzare i sistemi che promuovono la cura dei bambini all'interno della famiglia:** il COVID-19 si muove rapidamente e lascia poco tempo alle famiglie per prepararsi. Ogni sforzo dovrebbe essere fatto per evitare la separazione dei bambini e per fornire assistenza ai genitori superstiti o alle famiglie affidatarie/adottive. Catholic Relief Services e i suoi partner hanno lanciato "Changing the Way We Care", che contiene risorse utili su come i governi e i loro partner possano assicurare che i bambini rimangano con le loro famiglie.[21] Ai bambini in lutto dovrebbe essere fornito un sostegno psicosociale.

·**Dedicare una maggiore spesa di bilancio alla protezione dei bambini.**[22] I governi dovrebbero riconoscere come la protezione dei bambini dalla violenza, dallo sfruttamento e dall'abbandono può contribuire, a lungo termine, al raggiungimento dei loro obiettivi in materia di istruzione, salute e riduzione della povertà. La protezione dell'infanzia è spesso una bassa priorità e riceve finanziamenti minimi dal governo. I governi dovrebbero sviluppare, rafforzare e finanziare i loro sistemi di protezione dell'infanzia.

·**Combinare i trasferimenti di denaro per i poveri con programmi complementari.** Gli studi dimostrano che i trasferimenti in contanti che mirano, nell'ambito della protezione sociale, a contrastare la povertà di reddito, sono molto più efficaci se combinati con programmi di assistenza sociale come il sostegno psicosociale e la genitorialità positiva, che affrontano le significative barriere non finanziarie con cui devono fare i conti i bambini poveri e le loro famiglie.[23]

·**Proteggere i bambini che hanno subito un trauma alla riapertura delle scuole.** Molti bambini che tornano a scuola hanno subito un trauma durante il lockdown, compresi abusi fisici e sessuali. Molte ragazze potrebbero non tornare più a scuola a causa delle sfide specifiche che devono affrontare. Le scuole dovrebbero lavorare per rispondere ai bisogni dei bambini colpiti dal trauma e per aiutare quelli che affrontano barriere all'accesso e alla partecipazione scolastica.

Alle organizzazioni della Chiesa:

·**Le diocesi e le parrocchie dovrebbero essere preparate a intervenire rapidamente quando le famiglie sono colpite dal COVID-19.** Poiché il COVID-19 progredisce rapidamente, le parrocchie possono istituire squadre di risposta rapida per identificare preventivamente le famiglie a rischio, fornire loro preghiera e assistenza, guidarle attraverso il processo di lutto e sostenerle dopo la perdita. L'improvviso insorgere della povertà può aumentare il rischio che un bambino venga separato dalla sua famiglia

·**Garantire un'assistenza sicura e arricchente all'interno della famiglia dovrebbe essere una priorità per la Chiesa.** I membri della parrocchia possono mobilitarsi per assicurare che i bambini colpiti dal COVID-19 rimangano nell'assistenza familiare. In caso di morte di un genitore o di chi si prende cura del bambino, le chiese possono anche aiutare a identificare e sostenere i parenti che si prenderanno cura del bambino, o sostenerne l'affidamento o l'adozione.

·**Raddoppiare gli sforzi per trovare una famiglia per ogni bambino.** L'Unione Internazionale dei Superiori Generali ha lanciato l'iniziativa "Catholics Care for Children International", che si occupa dei bisogni di circa 5,6 milioni di bambini in strutture residenziali cattoliche. L'obiettivo è quello di trovare una famiglia amorevole per il maggior numero possibile di questi bambini e di poter realizzare il passaggio dagli orfanotrofi ad altre risorse della comunità, come asili o altri fornitori di servizi sociali.

Affrontare direttamente l'aumento della violenza contro i bambini durante la pandemia di COVID-19. I bambini sono il futuro della Chiesa. Le parrocchie possono lavorare per ridurre la banalizzazione della violenza contro i bambini dentro e fuori la famiglia. Possono creare spazi sicuri dove i bambini a rischio possano ricevere consulenza e sostegno come membri a pieno titolo e di valore della comunità parrocchiale. Possono anche istituire gruppi di sostegno tra pari per ridurre l'isolamento sociale dei bambini e dei giovani durante l'emergenza sanitaria. Si possono, inoltre, promuovere relazioni positive tra genitori e figli, attraverso programmi di formazione specifici, da realizzare per gruppi e in case individuali. Le chiese possono anche individuare i bambini a rischio di violenza e fornire loro un sostegno diretto o metterli in contatto con i programmi e servizi disponibili.

Città del Vaticano, 15 dicembre 2021

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DICASTÈRE POUR LE SERVICE DU DÉVELOPPEMENT HUMAIN INTÉGRAL

COVID-19 VATICAN COMMISSION

ENFANTS ET COVID-19

Les victimes les plus vulnérables de la pandémie

La pandémie de Covid-19 a fait basculer d'innombrables enfants dans une pauvreté extrême et a laissé beaucoup d'entre eux sans parents ni proches veillant sur eux. Dans le monde entier, l'exploitation et la violence à l'égard des enfants se sont accrues, et l'accès aux établissements scolaires a été réduit ou suspendu. Les gouvernements, les organisations de la société civile et l'Église doivent s'unir pour soulager les souffrances croissantes des enfants les plus vulnérables.

1. Situation

Une génération d'enfants subit de plein fouet les conséquences économiques, sanitaires et sociales de la pandémie de Covid-19. L'augmentation soudaine de la pauvreté extrême dans le monde, l'insécurité alimentaire croissante et les mesures publiques de confinement ont mis les ménages à rude épreuve. La pandémie de Covid-19 frappe rapidement, laissant aux familles et aux communautés peu de temps pour se préparer au décès ou à la maladie de longue durée des parents et du personnel soignant veillant sur eux. Le nombre des cas de violence, d'abus et d'exploitation des enfants signalés a fortement augmenté depuis le début de la pandémie. Les adversités que doivent supporter les communautés les plus pauvres sont démesurées.

Il est de plus en plus reconnu que la garantie et la protection des droits des enfants peuvent favoriser le développement économique et social à long terme. Les enfants qui vivent dans un environnement protecteur et stimulant ont plus de chances de s'épanouir pleinement et sont moins susceptibles de tomber dans la pauvreté. Ils risquent moins d'avoir des problèmes avec la justice et de connaître des problèmes de toxicomanie ou de santé mentale. Le Covid-19 ressemble à d'autres problèmes humanitaires dans la mesure où les chocs subis par les enfants et les ménages touchés ont été profonds, mais dans ce cas précis, les chocs sont d'envergure mondiale. Les pays à faible, moyen et haut revenu ont été touchés, en particulier les pauvres et les vulnérables.

D'ici le 30 septembre 2021, on estime que plus de 5 millions d'enfants auront perdu un parent, un grand-parent ou un proche veillant sur eux à cause du Covid-19.[1] Cela signifie qu'un enfant perd un parent ou un proche toutes les 12 secondes. Des estimations prudentes suggèrent qu'au cours des prochaines années, des millions d'enfants supplémentaires subiront ces pertes et seront exposés à un risque accru de pauvreté, de perte de soins familiaux, de placement dans des orphelinats et d'accès réduit à l'éducation.[2]

Les enfants sont confrontés à une forte augmentation de la pauvreté des ménages, qui devrait se poursuivre en 2021 dans les pays à faible revenu.[3] Après des décennies de réduction de la pauvreté, le Covid-19 a plongé 150 millions d'enfants dans la pauvreté. Pour la première fois depuis des décennies, le nombre d'enfants victimes du travail a augmenté, atteignant 160 millions.[4]

L'insécurité alimentaire croissante nuit à un grand nombre d'enfants. En 2020, les 6 à 7 millions de nouveaux cas de malnutrition aiguë chez les enfants de moins de 5 ans ont entraîné la mort d'environ 10 000 d'enfants par mois, dont 80 % en Afrique subsaharienne et en Asie du Sud.[5]

Les enfants subissent d'importants retards dans leur éducation. Plus de 168 millions d'enfants ont manqué une année scolaire entière au cours des douze premiers mois de la pandémie, et beaucoup d'autres ont vu leur scolarité réduite ou en distanciel.[6] Cela entraînera une perte de revenus futurs estimée à 10 000 milliards de dollars US pour cette génération, à laquelle s'ajoutent les pertes économiques supplémentaires dues aux fermetures d'établissements d'éducation de la petite enfance.[7]

Les enfants sont beaucoup plus exposés à la violence et à l'exploitation. Les services de prévention et de réponse à la violence ont été interrompus pour 1,8 milliard d'enfants.[8] Le secrétaire général de l'ONU a exprimé son inquiétude face à une «horrible flambée mondiale de la violence domestique» due au Covid-19, les appels aux lignes d'assistance téléphonique augmentant de manière significative dans certains pays.[9]

·**Les filles sont exposées à d'énormes risques.** Quelque dix millions de filles risquent d'être mariées de force à cause de la pandémie, et de nombreux rapports font état d'une recrudescence des grossesses chez les enfants.[10]

·**Les enfants immunodéprimés ou handicapés sont particulièrement vulnérables au Covid-19.** Ce risque est plus élevé pour les enfants placés dans des établissements de soins collectifs.[11]

2. Analyse

Déjà, avant la pandémie, « les institutions économiques ainsi que les programmes sociaux qui permettraient aux plus pauvres d'accéder régulièrement aux ressources de base ne se mettaient pas en place assez rapidement » (*Laudato Si*, 109). Avec le début de la pandémie, « notre monde a été contraint d'affronter une série de graves crises socio-économiques, écologiques et politiques liées entre elles » (Pape François, 7 avril 2021). **L'impact sur les enfants a été particulièrement profond.** Jésus « s'identifie spécialement aux plus petits », et « ceci nous rappelle que nous tous, chrétiens, sommes appelés à avoir soin des plus fragiles de la terre » (*Evangelii gaudium*, 209). Le « cri silencieux » des enfants pauvres devrait « trouver le peuple de Dieu en première ligne, toujours et partout, afin de leur donner une voix, de les défendre et de se solidariser avec eux devant tant d'hypocrisie et devant tant de promesses non tenues, pour les inviter à participer à la vie de la communauté » (Pape François, 15 novembre 2020).[12]

Les enfants qui perdent un parent ou un proche en raison de la pandémie devraient rester dans une famille dans la mesure du possible. L'Église reconnaît que les parents « ont le devoir d'aimer et de respecter leurs enfants comme personnes et comme fils de Dieu et ils ont à pourvoir, autant que faire se peut, à leurs besoins matériels et spirituels » (Compendium, 460). « La vie de famille est une initiation à la vie en société » (Compendium, 457). Les enfants qui perdent un parent ou la personne qui s'occupait d'eux, et qui ne peuvent pas être pris en charge par leurs proches, peuvent se tourner vers ceux qui peuvent « marquer leur générosité par l'accueil ou par l'adoption... Ils réalisent ainsi une précieuse fécondité spirituelle » (Compendium, 501). Les parents des « enfants ayant de graves difficultés » ne doivent pas être laissés seuls ! « Nous devrions les accompagner dans la difficulté, mais aussi leur offrir un moment de joie partagée... » (Pape François, 8 avril 2015).[13]

« Et quiconque accueille en mon nom un petit enfant comme celui-ci, m'accueille moi-même » (Mt 18, 5).

La violence contre les enfants est contraire au message de l'Évangile qui nous confie le soin et la protection des plus faibles et des sans défense (Lettre apostolique *Motu Proprio*).[14] « La course effrénée vers des gains rapides et faciles comporte aussi le développement d'aberrants fléaux tels que le trafic d'enfants, l'exploitation et l'abus de mineurs et, en général, la privation des droits inhérents à l'enfance entérinés par la Convention Internationale relative aux Droits de l'Enfant » (Pape François, 15 janvier 2017).[15] « En ce moment de réflexion, où nous cherchons à modeler notre action future et à donner forme à un agenda international post-Covid-19, nous devrions prêter une attention particulière au danger réel d'oublier ceux qui sont restés en arrière. Ils courent le risque d'être attaqués par un virus encore pire que le Covid-19: celui de l'indifférence égoïste » (Pape François, 17 juin 2021).[16]

·**Les enfants d'aujourd'hui sont le fondement de notre avenir.** « Si les parents sont comme les fondements de la maison, les enfants sont comme les "pierres vivantes" de la famille » (*Amoris Laetitia*, 14). Les enfants qui sont nourris et protégés ont plus de chances de s'épanouir sur les plans physique, cognitif, affectif, social et spirituel.[17] Ils ont aussi plus de chances d'être scolarisés, d'obtenir de meilleurs résultats scolaires et d'avoir une meilleure santé tout au long de leur vie. Soutenir le bien-être des enfants aujourd'hui contribuera à réduire la pauvreté et les inégalités au fil des générations.

·**Valoriser la prise en charge familiale.** « Dès qu'ils naissent, les enfants commencent à recevoir en don, avec la nourriture et les soins, la confirmation des qualités spirituelles de l'amour. Les actes de l'amour passent à travers le don du nom personnel, la transmission du langage, les intentions des regards, les illuminations des sourires » (*Amoris Laetitia*, 172). De plus, « la famille, communauté naturelle au sein de laquelle s'expérimente la socialité humaine, contribue d'une manière unique et irremplaçable au bien de la société » (Compendium,

213). Nos efforts physiques et spirituels devraient se concentrer sur le renforcement de la capacité des familles à prendre soin de ces enfants, en particulier des pauvres.

· **Nos réponses à la vulnérabilité des enfants face à la pandémie doivent être holistiques.** L'ensemble des besoins des enfants doit être pris en compte pendant la pandémie et au-delà. C'est la base du développement humain intégral. Quand les écoles du monde entier ont fermé en 2020, quelque 39 milliards de repas scolaires n'ont pas été servis, ce qui a entraîné une augmentation de la malnutrition des enfants.[18] L'aggravation de la pauvreté pendant la pandémie a augmenté la probabilité de mariage d'enfants, par exemple, comme moyen de soulager la pression financière en période d'incertitude économique.[19] «L'inégalité n'affecte pas seulement les individus, mais aussi des pays entiers, et oblige à penser à une éthique des relations internationales» (*Laudato Si*, 51). Cette éthique inclut le devoir de maximiser nos efforts pour assurer en tandem la protection, les soins, la santé et l'éducation de chaque enfant, une approche qui réduira fondamentalement cette inégalité au fil du temps.

3.Action

Aux décideurs politiques et à la société civile :

· **Promouvoir la distribution équitable du vaccin Covid-19.** Les effets néfastes du virus sur les enfants ne pourront être pleinement atténués que si la propagation du Covid-19 est limitée. Se faire vacciner est «un acte d'amour», « amour pour soi, amour pour sa famille et ses amis, amour pour tous les peuples» (Pape François, 18 août 2021).[20]

· **Renforcer les systèmes qui favorisent la prise en charge familiale des enfants :** le Covid-19 se déplace rapidement et laisse peu de temps aux familles pour se préparer. Tous les efforts devront être déployés pour éviter la séparation des enfants et pour que les parents survivants ou les familles d'accueil/ adoptives puissent s'occuper d'eux. *Catholic Relief Services* et ses partenaires ont lancé *Changing the Way We Care*, offrant aux gouvernements et à leurs partenaires des outils utiles afin que les enfants puissent rester dans leurs familles.[21] Les enfants en deuil doivent bénéficier d'un soutien psychosocial.

· **Consacrer des dépenses budgétaires accrues à la protection des enfants.** Les gouvernements devraient reconnaître combien la protection des enfants contre la violence, l'exploitation et la négligence peut contribuer à leurs objectifs à long terme en matière d'éducation, de santé et de réduction de la pauvreté. La protection des enfants est souvent une faible priorité et ne reçoit qu'un financement minimal de la part du gouvernement.[22] Les gouvernements devraient développer, renforcer et financer leurs systèmes de protection de l'enfance.

· **Associer les transferts en espèces aux pays pauvres à des programmes complémentaires.** Des études montrent que les transferts de fonds pour la protection sociale qui ciblent la pauvreté monétaire sont beaucoup plus efficaces lorsqu'ils sont associés à des programmes de protection sociale tels que le soutien psychosocial et la parentalité positive, qui s'attaquent aux obstacles non financiers importants auxquels les enfants et les familles pauvres sont confrontés.[23]

· **Protéger les enfants victimes de traumatismes lors de la réouverture des écoles.** De nombreux enfants qui réintègrent les écoles ont subi des traumatismes pendant le confinement, notamment des violences physiques et sexuelles. De nombreuses filles risquent de ne jamais retourner en classe en raison des difficultés spécifiques auxquelles elles sont confrontées. Les écoles doivent s'efforcer de répondre aux besoins des enfants traumatisés et d'aider les enfants confrontés à des obstacles en ce qui concerne l'accès et la participation à l'école.

Aux organisations ecclésiastiques :

· **Les diocèses et les paroisses doivent être prêts à intervenir rapidement lorsque des familles sont touchées par le Covid-19.** Comme le Covid-19 progresse rapidement, les paroisses peuvent mettre en place des équipes

d'intervention rapide pour identifier de manière préventive les familles à risque, leur assurer des prières et des soins, les guider dans l'élaboration du deuil et les soutenir après la perte d'une personne de leur entourage. L'apparition soudaine de la pauvreté peut aggraver le risque qu'un enfant se sépare de sa famille.

Garantir une prise en charge familiale sûre et enrichissante devrait être une priorité de l'Église. Les membres de la paroisse peuvent se mobiliser pour assurer que les enfants touchés par le Covid-19 soient pris en charge par des membres de leur famille. En cas de décès d'un parent ou de la personne qui s'occupe de l'enfant, les Églises peuvent également aider à identifier et à soutenir les proches qui s'occuperont de l'enfant, ou soutenir le placement en famille d'accueil ou l'adoption de l'enfant.

Redoubler d'efforts pour trouver une famille pour chaque enfant. L'Union Internationale des Supérieurs Générales a lancé l'initiative *Catholics Care for Children International*, qui répond aux besoins d'environ 5,6 millions d'enfants placés dans des établissements catholiques. L'objectif est de trouver une famille aimante pour le plus grand nombre possible de ces enfants et d'assurer la transition entre les orphelinats et d'autres ressources communautaires telles que les garderies ou d'autres prestataires de services sociaux.

Affronter directement la montée de la violence contre les enfants pendant le Covid-19. Les enfants sont l'avenir de l'Église. Les paroisses peuvent s'efforcer de réduire la banalisation de la violence contre les enfants au sein et en dehors de la famille. Elles peuvent créer des espaces sûrs où les enfants à risque peuvent recevoir des conseils et un soutien en tant que membres à part entière et appréciés de la communauté paroissiale. Ils peuvent également mettre en place des groupes de soutien formés de pairs afin de réduire l'isolement social des enfants et des jeunes pendant le Covid-19. Les relations positives entre parents et enfants peuvent être encouragées par des programmes de formation des parents dispensés en groupes et dans les foyers particuliers. Les Églises peuvent également identifier les enfants exposés à la violence et leur apporter un soutien direct ou créer un lien avec les programmes et services disponibles.

Cité du Vatican, 15 décembre 2021

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Traduzione in lingua inglese

DICASTERY FOR PROMOTING INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

COVID-19 VATICAN COMMISSION

CHILDREN AND COVID-19

The Pandemic's Most Vulnerable Victims

The Covid-19 pandemic has thrown countless children into severe poverty and left many without parents and caregivers. Worldwide, there has been increased exploitation of and violence against children and reduced or suspended access to educational facilities. Governments, civil society organizations, and the Church must come together to alleviate the escalating suffering of the most vulnerable children among us

1. Situation

A generation of children is bearing the brunt of the economic, health, and social impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Sudden global increases in severe poverty, rising food insecurity, and public quarantine measures have put major stress on households. Covid-19 strikes quickly, leaving families and communities little time to prepare for the death or long-term illness of parents and caregivers. Reports of violence, abuse, and exploitation of children have sharply increased since the pandemic began. Poorer communities disproportionately bear these adversities.

There is growing recognition that guaranteeing and protecting children's rights can promote longterm economic and social development. Children who live in a protective and nurturing environment are more likely to reach their full potential and are less likely to fall into poverty. They are less likely to come in conflict with the law and experience substance abuse or mental health issues. Covid-19 resembles other humanitarian issues in that the shocks to affected children and households have been profound— only in this case, however, the shocks are global in scale. Low, middle, and highincome countries have been affected, particularly the poor and vulnerable.

·By September 30, 2021, over 5 million children are estimated to have lost a parent, custodial grandparent, or secondary caregiver to Covid-19.[1]This translates to a child losing a parent or caregiver every 12 seconds. Conservative estimates suggest that over the next several years, millions more children will suffer these losses and be at an enhanced risk of increased poverty, loss of family care, placement in orphanages, and reduced access to education.[2]

·Children are facing sharp increases in household poverty, which are projected to continue in 2021 in low-income countries.[3]After decades of poverty reduction, Covid-19 plunged 150 million children into poverty. For the first time in decades, the number of children in child labor rose, reaching 160 million.[4]

·Rising food insecurity is harming large numbers of children.The 6-7 million new cases of acute malnutrition of children under the age of 5 in 2020 translate to an estimated 10,000 child deaths per month, 80% of those in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.[5]

·**Children are suffering significant educational setbacks.**More than 168 million children missed an entire school year during the first twelve months of the pandemic, and many more experienced reduced or remote schooling.[6]This will lead to an estimated loss of US\$10 trillion in future earnings for this generation, compounded by additional economic losses from early childhood education closures.[7]

·**Children are at much higher risk of violence and exploitation.**Violence prevention and response services have been disrupted for 1.8 billion children.[8]The U.N. Secretary General has expressed concern that there has been a “horrifying global surge in domestic violence” due to Covid-19, with calls to domestic hotlines significantly increasing in some countries.[9]

·**Girls are disproportionately at risk.**Some ten million girls are at risk of child marriage due to the pandemic, and there are widespread reports of an upsurge in child pregnancies.[10]

·**Children who are immunocompromised or with disability are especially vulnerable to Covid-19.**This risk is greater for children in residential congregate care settings.[11]

2. Analysis

Prior to the pandemic, the world was “slow in developing economic institutions and social initiatives which can give the poor regular access to basic resources” (Laudato Si’, 109). With the onset of the pandemic, the world has been “forced to confront a series of grave and interrelated socio-economic, ecological, and political crises” (Pope Francis, 7 April 2021).**The impact on children has been particularly profound.**Jesus “identifies especially with the little ones,” and this reminds us “that we are called to care for the vulnerable of the earth” (Evangelii Gaudium, 209). The “silent cry” of poor children should “find the people of God at the forefront, always and everywhere, in efforts to give them a voice, to protect and support them in the face of hypocrisy and so many unfulfilled promises, and to invite them to share in the life of the community” (Pope Francis, 15 November 2020).[12]

Children who lose a parent or caregiver due to the pandemic should remain in a family whenever possible.The Church recognizes that parents “have the duty to love and respect their children as persons and as children of God and to provide, as far as possible, for their physical and spiritual needs” (Compendium, 460). Family life is the “initiation into the life of society” (Compendium, 457). Children who lose a parent or caregiver, and who cannot be cared for by their kin, can turn to those who can “show their generosity by way of foster care or adoption... [i]n this way they realize a precious spiritual fruitfulness” (Compendium, 501). The parents of “children in grave difficulty” should not be left alone– “[w]e should accompany them in their toil, and also offer them moments of shared joy ...” (Pope Francis, 8 April 2015).[13]

"Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me." (Mt 18:5)

Violence against children is contrary to the Gospel message that entrusts us with the care and protection of the weakest and defenceless(Apostolic Letter Issued Motu Proprio).[14]“The unrestrained competition for quick and easy profit brings with it the cultivation of perverse scourges such as child trafficking, the exploitation and abuse of minors and, generally, the depriving of rights intrinsic to childhood as sanctioned by the International Convention on the Rights of the Child” (Pope Francis, 15 January 2017).[15]“In this moment of reflection, in which we seek to shape our future action and shape a post-Covid-19 international agenda, we should pay particular attention to the real danger of forgetting those who have been left behind. They run the risk of being attacked by a virus even worse than Covid-19: that of selfish indifference” (Pope Francis, 17 June 2021).[16]

·**Today’s children are the foundation of our future.**“If the parents are in some sense the foundations of the home, the children are like the ‘living stones’ of the family” (Amoris Laetitia, 14). Children who are nurtured and protected are more likely to reach the full potential of their physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual development.[17]They are also more likely to attend school, perform better academically, and have improved lifelong health. Supporting the welfare of children today will contribute to the reduction of poverty and inequity over generations.

·**Valuing family-based care.**“Children, once born, begin to receive, along with nourishment and care, the spiritual gift of knowing with certainty that they are loved. This love is shown to them through the gift of their personal name, the sharing of language, looks of love and the brightness of a smile.” (Amoris Laetitia, 172). Further, “[t]he family, the natural community in which human social nature is experienced, makes a unique and irreplaceable contribution to the good of society” (Compendium, 213). Our physical and spiritual efforts should focus on strengthening the ability of families to care for those children, especially the poor.

·**Our responses to children’s vulnerability from the pandemic should be holistic.**The full spectrum of children’s needs should be addressed during the pandemic and beyond. This is the basis of integral human development. When schools around the world closed in 2020, some 39 billion in school meals were missed leading to increased child malnutrition.[18]Worsened poverty during the pandemic increased the likelihood of child marriage, for example, as a way to relieve financial pressure during economic uncertainty.[19]“Inequity affects not only individuals but entire countries; it compels us to consider an ethics of international relations” (Laudato Si’, 51). Those ethics include the duty to maximize our efforts to secure in tandem the protection, care, health, and education of every child– an approach that will fundamentally reduce that inequity over time.

3.Action

To policymakers and civil society:

·**Promote the equitable distribution of the Covid-19 vaccine.**The impacts of the virus on child adversity can only be fully mitigated if the spread of COVID-19 is limited. Getting a vaccine is “an act of love,” “love for oneself, love for our families and friends, and love for all peoples.” (Pope Francis, 18 August 2021).[20]

·**Strengthen systems that promote family-based care for children:**COVID-19 moves quickly and leaves families little time to prepare. All efforts should be made to prevent child separation and to provide for care by surviving kin or foster/adoptive families. Catholic Relief Services and its partners have launched Changing the Way We Care, which has helpful resources on how governments and their partners can keep children in families.[21]Bereaving children should be provided with psycho-social support.

·**Devote increased budget expenditure to the protection of children.**Governments should recognize how the protection of children from violence, exploitation and neglect can contribute to their long-term education, health, and poverty reduction goals. Protection of children is often a low priority and receives minimal government funding.[22]Governments should develop, strengthen, and fund their child protection systems.

·**Combine cash transfers for the poor with complementary programs.**Studies show that cash social protection transfers that target income poverty are much more effective when combined with social welfare programs like psycho-social support and positive parenting that address the significant non-financial barriers that poor children and families face.[23]

·**Protect trauma-affected children as schools re-open.**Many children re-entering schools will have been affected by trauma during quarantine, including physical and sexual violence. Many girls may never return to the classroom due to the specific challenges faced by girls. Schools should work to address the needs of trauma-affected children and to reach out to assist children facing barriers to access and participation in school.

To Church organizations:

·**Dioceses and parishes should be prepared to intervene rapidly when families are affected by Covid-19:**As Covid-19 progresses quickly, parishes can assemble rapid response teams to proactively identify at-risk families, provide them with prayer and care, guide them through the bereavement process, and support them after their loss. The sudden onset of poverty can compound the risk of a child separating from their family.

·**Ensuring safe and nurturing family-based care should be a Church priority.**Parish members can mobilize

support to ensure Covid-19 impacted children remain in family care. In the event of parent or caregiver death, churches can also help to identify and support kin to care for the child, or support the foster care or adoption of the child.

Redouble efforts to find a family for every child. The International Union of Superiors General has launched Catholics Care for Children International, which is addressing the needs of an estimated 5.6 million children in Catholic residential care facilities. The aim is to find a loving family for as many of those children as possible and transition orphanages to other community assets such as daycare facilities or other social service providers.

Directly address the rising tide of violence against children during Covid-19. Children are the future of the Church. Parishes can work to reduce the normalization of violence against children within and outside of the family. They can create safe spaces where children at risk can receive counseling and support as a full and valued member of the parish community. They can also set up peer support groups to reduce the social isolation of children and youth during Covid-19. Positive parent-child relationships can be promoted through parent training programs delivered in groups and individual households. Churches can also identify children at risk of violence and provide direct support or connect them to available programs and services.

Vatican City, December 15, 2021

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DICASTERIO PARA EL SERVICIO DEL DESARROLLO HUMANO INTEGRAL

COVID-19 VATICAN COMMISSION

INFANCIA Y COVID-19

Las víctimas más vulnerables de la pandemia

La pandemia del COVID-19 ha sumido a innumerables niños en una gran pobreza y ha dejado a muchos sin padres o seres queridos que los cuidaran. La incidencia de explotación y violencia contra niños ha aumentado alrededor del mundo a la vez que se ha reducido o suspendido el acceso a centros educativos. Gobiernos nacionales, organizaciones de sociedad civil y la Iglesia deben unir sus esfuerzos para aliviar el creciente sufrimiento de los niños más vulnerables.

1. Contexto general

Una generación entera de niños está sufriendo las consecuencias económicas, sanitarias y sociales de la pandemia del COVID-19. El repentino aumento de la pobreza extrema, la creciente inseguridad alimentaria y las medidas de contención sanitarias han supuesto una enorme presión para familias alrededor del mundo. El COVID-19 ataca rápidamente, encontrando familias y comunidades desprevenidas y con poco tiempo para prepararse a enfrentar la muerte o la enfermedad prolongada de padres y cuidadores. Las denuncias de violencia, abusos y explotación de niños han aumentado considerablemente desde que comenzó la pandemia. Las comunidades más pobres soportan estas adversidades de forma desproporcionada.

Sin embargo, hay cada vez más evidencia que demuestra que garantizar y proteger los derechos de niños puede traer beneficios a la promoción del desarrollo económico y social de comunidades en el largo plazo. Los niños que viven en un entorno sano, seguro y enriquecedor tienen más probabilidades de alcanzar todo su potencial y menor riesgo de caer en la pobreza, entrar en conflicto con la ley, tener problemas de abuso de sustancias o de salud mental. El COVID-19 es comparable a otras crisis humanitarias en cuanto a la profunda conmoción que ha causado en familias y futuras generaciones, aunque en este caso la conmoción tiene un alcance mundial: de hecho, se ven afectados tanto los países de alto ingreso económico como de medio y bajo ingreso, pero afecta a estos últimos de manera particular.

· **Se calcula que hasta el 30 de septiembre de 2021, más de 5 millones de niños perdieron al menos uno de sus padres, abuelos o cuidadores debido a COVID-19.**[1] Esto significa que un niño pierde a un padre o cuidador cada 12 segundos. Las estimaciones más conservadoras sugieren que en los próximos años, millones de niños más sufrirán estas pérdidas y correrán un mayor riesgo de caer en la pobreza, quedar sin atención familiar, ser internados en orfanatos y tener un acceso reducido a la educación.[2]

· **Los niños son los primeros en sufrir crecientes tasas de pobreza familiar.** Tras décadas de reducción de la pobreza, el COVID-19 ha sumido a 150 millones de niños nuevamente en ella.[3] Por primera vez en años, el número de niños sometidos al trabajo infantil ha aumentado, alcanzando 160 millones.[4]

· **La creciente inseguridad alimentaria está perjudicando a un gran número de niños.** En el 2020, los 6-7 millones de nuevos casos de desnutrición aguda en niños menores de cinco años provocaron la muerte de unos 10 000 niños al mes, el 80% de ellos en el África subsahariana y el sur de Asia.[5]

· **Los niños y niñas en edad escolar son quienes están sufriendo los más importantes retrasos en educación y desarrollo.** Más de 168 millones de niños perdieron un año escolar entero en el 2020, y muchos más experimentaron una escolarización reducida o a distancia.[6] Esto supondrá una pérdida estimada de 10 billones de dólares en ingresos futuros para esta generación, agravada por las pérdidas económicas adicionales derivadas del cierre de centros de educación infantil.[7]

·**Los niños corren un riesgo mucho mayor de sufrir violencia y explotación.** Los servicios de prevención y respuesta a la violencia se han interrumpido para 1.800 millones de niños.[8] El secretario general de la ONU expresó su preocupación por el "espantoso aumento global de la violencia doméstica" que se produjo a causa del COVID-19, con un aumento significativo de las llamadas a las líneas telefónicas de ayuda doméstica en algunos países.[9]

·**Las niñas corren un gran riesgo mayor.** Unas diez millones de niñas corren el riesgo de contraer matrimonio infantil debido a la pandemia, y numerosos informes hablan de un aumento de los embarazos infantiles.[10]

·**Los niños inmunodeprimidos o con discapacidades también son especialmente vulnerables al COVID-19.** El riesgo es mayor para los niños que viven en centros de acogida.[11]

2. Análisis

Antes de la pandemia, el Papa Francisco ya denunciaba que en el mundo "no se elaboran con suficiente celeridad instituciones económicas y cauces sociales que permitan a los más pobres acceder de manera regular a los recursos básicos" (*Laudato si'*, 109). Con la llegada de la pandemia, "nuestro mundo se ha visto obligado a enfrentarse a una serie de graves e interrelacionadas crisis socioeconómicas, ecológicas y políticas" (Papa Francisco, 7 de abril de 2021). **El impacto en los niños ha sido particularmente profundo.** Jesús "se identifica especialmente con los más pequeños", y esto nos recuerda "que todos estamos llamados a cuidar a los más frágiles de la tierra" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 209). El "grito silencioso" de los niños pobres debe "encontrar al pueblo de Dios en primera línea, siempre y en todas partes, para darles voz, defenderlos y solidarizarse con ellos ante tanta hipocresía y tantas promesas incumplidas, e invitarlos a participar en la vida de la comunidad" (Papa Francisco, 15 de noviembre de 2020).[12]

Los niños que pierden a sus padres o cuidadores, a causa de la pandemia, deben poder permanecer en una familia siempre que sea posible. La Iglesia reconoce que los padres "tienen el deber de amar y de respetar a sus hijos como personas y como hijos de Dios, y proveer, en cuanto sea posible, a sus necesidades materiales y espirituales" (Compendio, 460). "La vida de familia es una iniciación a la vida de la sociedad" (Compendio, 457). Los niños que pierden a uno de sus padres o a un cuidador, y que no pueden ser atendidos por sus familiares, deben poder recurrir a quienes pueden "mostrar su generosidad mediante la tutela o la adopción... Así ejercen una preciosa fecundidad espiritual" (Compendio, 501). No hay que dejar solos a los padres de los "niños con graves dificultades": "Deberíamos acompañar su fatiga, pero también ofrecerles momentos de alegría compartida..." (Papa Francisco, 8 de abril de 2015).[13]

"El que recibe a uno de estos pequeños en mi Nombre, me recibe a mí mismo". (Mt 18,5)

La violencia contra los niños es contraria al mensaje evangélico que nos confía el cuidado y la protección de los más débiles e indefensos (Carta Apostólica *Motu Proprio*).[14] "La carrera desenfrenada hacia un enriquecimiento rápido y fácil lleva consigo también el aumento de plagas monstruosas como el tráfico de niños, la explotación y el abuso de menores y, en general, la privación de los derechos propios de la niñez sancionados por la Convención Internacional sobre los Derechos de la Infancia." (Papa Francisco, 15 de enero de 2017).[15] "En este momento de reflexión, en el que tratamos de modelar nuestra acción futura y de dar forma a una agenda internacional post COVID-19, deberíamos prestar especial atención al peligro real de olvidar a los que han quedado atrás. Corren el riesgo de ser atacados por un virus peor aún del COVID-19: el de la indiferencia egoísta" (Papa Francisco, 17 de junio de 2021).[16]

·**Los niños de hoy son la base de nuestro futuro.** "Si los padres son como los fundamentos de la casa, los hijos son como las «piedras vivas» de la familia" (*Amoris Laetitia*, 14). Los niños que son alimentados y protegidos tienen más probabilidades de alcanzar el pleno potencial de su desarrollo físico, cognitivo, emocional, social y espiritual.[17] También es más probable que asistan a la escuela, tengan un mejor rendimiento académico y una mejor salud para toda la vida. Apoyar el bienestar de los niños hoy contribuirá a reducir la pobreza y la

desigualdad durante generaciones.

·**Valorar el cuidado basado en la familia.**"Los niños, apenas nacidos, comienzan a recibir como don, junto a la comida y los cuidados, la confirmación de las cualidades espirituales del amor. Los actos de amor pasan a través del don del nombre personal, el lenguaje compartido, las intenciones de las miradas, las iluminaciones de las sonrisas". (Amoris Laetitia, 172). Además, "la familia, comunidad natural en donde se experimenta la sociabilidad humana, contribuye en modo único e insustituible al bien de la sociedad" (Compendio, 213). Nuestros esfuerzos físicos y espirituales deben centrarse en fortalecer la capacidad de las familias para cuidar de esos niños, especialmente de los pobres.

·**Nuestras respuestas a la vulnerabilidad de los niños ante la pandemia deben ser holísticas.**El espectro completo de las necesidades de los niños debe ser abordado durante la pandemia y después. Esta es la base del desarrollo humano integral. Cuando las escuelas de todo el mundo cerraron en 2020, se perdieron unos 39.000 millones en comidas escolares, lo que provocó un aumento de la desnutrición infantil.[18]El empeoramiento de la pobreza durante la pandemia aumentó la probabilidad de que los niños se casaran, por ejemplo, como forma de aliviar la presión financiera durante la incertidumbre económica.[19]"La inequidad no afecta sólo a individuos, sino a países enteros, y obliga a pensar en una ética de las relaciones internacionales" (*Laudato si'*, 51). Esa ética incluye el deber de maximizar nuestros esfuerzos para asegurar conjuntamente la protección, el cuidado, la salud y la educación de todos los niños, un enfoque que, con el tiempo, reducirá fundamentalmente esa desigualdad.

3. Acción

A los responsables políticos y a la sociedad civil:

·**Promover la distribución equitativa de la vacuna COVID-19.**Los efectos nocivos del virus en los niños sólo pueden mitigarse plenamente limitando la propagación del COVID-19. Vacunarse es "un acto de amor", "Amor a uno mismo, amor a los familiares y amigos, amor a todos los pueblos". (Papa Francisco, 18 de agosto de 2021).[20]

·**Fortalecer los sistemas que promueven el cuidado de los niños en el seno de la familia:**el COVID 19 se mueve rápidamente y deja a las familias poco tiempo para prepararse. Hay que hacer todo lo posible para evitar la separación de los niños y para que los parientes responsables o las familias de acogida u adoptivas puedan encargarse de su cuidado. Catholic Relief Services y sus socios han lanzado una iniciativa Changing the Way We Care, que incluye propuestas sobre posibles acciones que puedan ser tomadas por gobiernos y sus socios para garantizar que los niños permanezcan con sus familias.[21]Por otra parte, los niños en duelo deben recibir apoyo psicosocial.

·**Dedicar un mayor gasto presupuestario a la protección de los niños.**Los gobiernos deben reconocer que proteger a los niños de la violencia, la explotación y el abandono puede contribuir, a largo plazo, a alcanzar sus objetivos de educación, salud y reducción de la pobreza. La protección de la infancia suele tener poca prioridad y recibe una financiación mínima de los gobiernos.[22]Estos deberían desarrollar, reforzar y financiar sus sistemas de protección infantil.

·**Combinar las transferencias monetarias para los pobres con programas complementarios.**Los estudios demuestran que las transferencias monetarias como medidas de protección social dirigidas a contrastar la pobreza de ingresos son mucho más eficaces cuando se combinan con programas de asistencia social como el apoyo psicosocial y la crianza positiva que abordan las importantes barreras no financieras a las que se enfrentan los niños y las familias pobres.[23]

·**Proteger a los niños afectados por el trauma cuando se reabran las escuelas.**Muchos niños que se reincorporan a las escuelas habrán sufrido traumas durante el confinamiento, incluida la violencia física y sexual. Es posible que muchas niñas no vuelvan nunca a las aulas debido a los problemas específicos a los que se enfrentan. Las escuelas deben trabajar para atender las necesidades de los niños afectados por

traumas y apoyar a los que se enfrentan a obstáculos para acceder y participar en las actividades educativas.

A las organizaciones de la Iglesia:

·**Las diócesis y las parroquias deben estar preparadas para intervenir rápidamente cuando las familias se vean afectadas por el COVID-19.** Como el COVID-19 avanza rápidamente, las parroquias pueden reunir equipos de respuesta rápida para identificar preventivamente a las familias en riesgo, proporcionarles oración y asistencia, guiarlas en el proceso de duelo y apoyarlas después de una pérdida. La aparición repentina de la pobreza puede aumentar el riesgo de que un niño sea separado de su familia.

·**Garantizar un cuidado seguro y enriquecedor en el seno de la familia debe ser una prioridad para la Iglesia.** Los miembros de la parroquia pueden movilizarse para garantizar que los niños afectados por el COVID-19 permanezcan bajo el cuidado de su familia. En caso de fallecimiento de los padres o de los cuidadores, las iglesias también pueden ayudar a identificar y apoyar a los familiares para que cuiden del niño, o apoyar su acogida o adopción.

·**Redoblar los esfuerzos para encontrar una familia para cada niño.** La Unión Internacional de Superiores Generales ha puesto en marcha la iniciativa Catholics Care for Children International, que se ocupa de las necesidades de unos 5,6 millones de niños acogidos en residencias católicas. El objetivo es encontrar una familia cariñosa para el mayor número posible de esos niños y poder hacer la transición de los orfanatos a otros recursos de la comunidad, como guarderías u otros proveedores de servicios sociales.

·**Abordar directamente la creciente ola de violencia contra los niños durante la pandemia de Covid 19.** Los niños son el futuro de la Iglesia. Las parroquias pueden trabajar para reducir la trivialización de la violencia contra los niños dentro y fuera de la familia. Pueden crear espacios seguros donde los niños en riesgo puedan recibir asesoramiento y apoyo como miembros de derecho y valiosos de la comunidad parroquial. También pueden crear grupos de apoyo entre iguales para reducir el aislamiento social de los niños y jóvenes durante la emergencia sanitaria. También pueden promover relaciones positivas entre padres e hijos a través de programas de formación específicos impartidos en grupos y en hogares individuales. Las iglesias también pueden identificar a los niños en riesgo de violencia y proporcionarles apoyo directo o ponerlos en contacto con los programas y servicios disponibles.

Vaticano, 15 diciembre 2021

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