



# PARALLEL REPORT

TO THE COMMITTEE ON THE  
RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (CRC)

GREENLAND 2016  
MIO – Independent Children's Rights Institution (ICRI)



**PARALLEL REPORT to The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**  
**GREENLAND 2016 – MIO – INDEPENDENT CHILDREN’S RIGHTS INSTITUTION (ICRI)**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This parallel report follows up on the section on Greenland in Denmark's fifth periodic report to the UN Committee on the Right of the Child.

Through this report, MIO, the national advocacy for children's rights in Greenland, has commented on the sections of Denmark's fifth periodic report and added statistical materials and facts which MIO deems necessary to understand the challenges and problems experienced by Greenland in observing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. MIO's general observations is that Denmark's fifth report does not reflect the actual challenges faced by children and adolescents in Greenland and lacks focus on problems such as neglect, violence, exploitation, and abuse.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has been ratified in Greenland for more than twenty years. In 2017 it is expected that the Government of Greenland will propose how to incorporate the Convention as an Act. Not all areas covered by the Convention have yet been transferred to Greenland. Through its travels and surveys around Greenland, MIO has uncovered a wide gap between the Convention, law, and practice. MIO recognizes the many single actions initiated for children and adolescents in Greenland, but still sees a number of problems in the implementation of these at the regional as well as local levels, in the involvement of the population so as to achieve the best possible effect.

There is still an important need for strengthening the gathering of knowledge about children and adolescents in Greenland. Some authorities do gather data, but MIO sees an even larger need to gather and develop research and statistics within fields such as placement, school, work, poverty, and general living conditions.

There are many problems in the social field for children, especially within placement of children in alternative care where the numbers are very high compared to other Nordic countries. Supervision and control of municipal social authorities show problems with living up to legal requirements, among other things some children are placed in families without care permits and certificates stating that the holder has not been convicted of crimes involving sexual assault against children. Children experience lack of well-being and are not heard in their own cases, and case workers lack qualifications and resources in their work. Some legislation has been introduced to protect the rights of the child. In 2017 it is expected that a new law will enter into force, introducing

a national report system in case of someone being worried about children and adolescents. Furthermore, the entry into force of the Act on Parental Responsibility (Forældreansvarsloven) as of July 2016 protects children against corporal punishment when raising children. MIO is, however, worried whether the municipalities have and will receive sufficient resources to handle the added workload which follows new legislation.

The challenges within the social field also include an extremely large number of cases concerning violence and sexual abuse of children and adolescents, as well as lack of treatment offered to children victims of such abuse. Children and adolescents, who grow up in households with substance abuse and neglect, also constitute a huge problem. 27 % of Greenlandic children are victims of neglect to some degree or a large degree.

In the field of health, challenges and problems are also seen, as within the social field. The national hospital does not house a children's ward, and the different towns and settlements in the country experience major challenges when it comes to access to health services. There is only one paediatrician in Greenland.

Several children live in homes with socio-economic challenges and experience serious social problems in their everyday life, among other things rehousing of children in which cases the ensuing lack of privacy and cases of alcohol misuse and abuse may be a problem.

Children and adolescents do not have the same opportunities for education. It is the responsibility of the Government of Greenland to ensure that students in lower secondary education access to further education. Unfortunately, a very large share of students in lower secondary education do not have this access, e.g. due to lack of language qualifications in Danish, which is often the language of teaching in post-lower secondary education. Many primary and lower secondary schools face several children showing up in school with serious social problems, which poses challenges for the teachers in regards to social and pedagogical assistance.

**In MIO's experience Greenland has problems living up to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in regard to equal access and development as well as hearing (article 12), protection (article 19), and preparation for further education (article 29). MIO recommends that the CRC asks that the Government of Greenland examines these fields in particular and improves the conditions.**

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# INTRODUCTION

## MIO'S COMMENTS TO THE FIFTH PERIODIC REPORT BY THE GOVERNMENT OF DENMARK

In 2011 the Committee on the Rights of the Child under the UN (CRC) delivered its Concluding Observations after considering Denmark's Fourth Periodic Report to the CRC on the Rights of the Child. These included a number of recommendations specific to Greenland. This report follows up on the development of these recommendations, comments are made as to children's conditions in Greenland, and it includes comments pertaining to Greenland in the fifth periodic report by the Government of Denmark to the CRC. The report also addresses recommendations made by the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

Overall, the fifth periodic report accounts for many new laws, strategies, action plans, and measures to solve different problems relating to children and their families. However, MIO does not find the implementation of these sufficient. There is too wide a gap between for instance the legal framework and practices as will be shown in this report. Denmark's report explains the many measures without taking into account the important challenges which children meet in the Greenlandic society. During the Spokesperson for Children's travels in Greenland, the most important issues mentioned by children and young people are alcoholism and compulsive gambling. This also deals with abandonment, abuse, and lack of preparing the child for an education etc. The fifth periodic report therefore does not reflect the municipalities' challenge of fulfilling Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Through its research and travels around Greenland, MIO has exposed a larger gap between the Convention and practices than necessary, among other things through talks with children about their conditions and rights (Olesen and Holm, 2013; Olesen, 2014; MIO, 2015-16). Many single actions are taken, but there is no holistic approach to the child's development. The children do not receive sufficient protection and help and often action is taken too late to help the child.

Likewise, the Government of Greenland does not take into account, in the section on Greenland in Denmark's fifth periodic report, the large differences in the cultural and living conditions between towns and settlements or between big and small towns and the access to for example health services and social services. It is MIO's assessment that the actions do not sufficiently consider these conditions. In order

for actions and measures to be implemented and be effective, it is important that they are adapted to the cultural and living conditions which requires the involvement and hearing of the population, including the children, in a culturally adequate way.

## METHOD

The report is compiled by the National Advocacy for Children's Rights MIO. MIO's mission is to promote children's rights and interests in society based upon the UN Convention on the Right of the Child. MIO shall:

- Be the spokesperson for children and adolescents
- File complaints regarding general facts relating to children's conditions and rights and propose measures to strengthen children's rights.
- Offer advice and guidance on rights
- Monitor if the laws and practices are in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Compile knowledge about children's conditions. MIO has visiting right as well as right of access to authorities and institutions

The following organizations have had the opportunity to comment on the draft report: the Association for a Better Life for Children (MIBB), Save the Children Greenland, Red Cross Greenland, the Association Greenlandic Children (FGB), the Parents' Association for Mentally Disabled in Greenland Inooqqat, the cooperation project between the Government of Greenland and UNICEF Nakuusa, the Joint Council for Children's and Youth Organisations in Greenland Sorlak, Nanu Børn (Nanu Children), Blue Cross Greenland, the Greenlandic Council for Human Rights (GRM), the Teachers' Union IMAK, the Pedagogical Personnel's Union PIP, the Social Workers' Union NISIIP and the Children's Council under MIO.

**This report follows the guidelines laid down by the Child Rights Connect for NGOs and NHRIs and it should be noted that the section on Greenland in Denmark's fifth periodic report does not completely follow the same structure.** MIO intends to make recommendations and proposals for additional questions where relevant.

The inclusion of children's opinions is an important part of the work of the children's rights institution MIO, and part of the activities carried out by the institution with the purpose of monitoring children's conditions include interviews with children or exercises in which children and adolescents reflect on relevant challenges in the Greenlandic society.

In this report we have included children's views on the topics described. The depositions have been compiled during the Spokesperson for Children's travels around Greenland. Thus, the depositions represent opinions from children with highly different living conditions and possibilities.

## NGO'S CONTRIBUTING TO THIS PARALLEL REPORT

MIO has to the extent possible included all comments from hearings in this parallel report.

MIO would like to quote the Association of Greenlandic Children (FGB) concerning the section on "Act on Assistance to Children" ("*Lov om hjælp til børn og unge*"). In its report the association writes:

FGB considers, like MIO, the bill to have the potential to strengthen children's rights. However, FGB also notes (1) that the bill has not yet been adopted and (2) the bill has the potential to strengthen children's rights to a larger degree than is the present case. For example the bill will ensure that all children enjoy a universal right to assistance in social cases concerning themselves cf. article 12 of the UN Convention on the Right of the Child. FGB notices that it is not a prerequisite that a team of children's counsellors is in place in order to give children the right to a counsellor in all cases relating to them. Just as the bill must ensure a universal right to assistance, FGB finds that the bill must ensure the establishment of a professional team of children's counsellors, who can assure that all children may be heard in a proper manner and in respect of their rights.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE GENERAL SITUATION IN GREENLAND

The population of Greenland is very small and spread over a very large geographic area in 18 towns and 60 settlements. As per 1 January 2016 the population was 55,847 of whom 48,140 lived in towns and 7,435 in settlements. Approximately one fourth of the Greenlandic population is children.

## SOCIAL AND HEALTH

In 42% of all households with children, the parents misused one or more substances in 2010. The most frequent type of abuse is alcohol followed by cannabis and compulsive gambling (Bjerregaard 2010, Pedersen and Bjerregaard 2012).

## EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

Greenland is part of the Kingdom of Denmark with self-government (Statistics Greenland, 2016). The country's GDP is DKK 11,600 billion (provisional figure for 2013 in 2005 prices), of which 3,645 billion are subsidies from Denmark as a block grant. Fishing is Greenland's primary industry.

## THE SITUATION IN THE FIELD OF CHILDREN

**MIO is surprised that the part concerning Greenland in Denmark's fifth periodic report does not reflect the actual challenges for children in Greenland and the lack of focus on the biggest issues: neglect, substance abuse, and lack of education. It is therefore MIO's intention to elaborate on the challenges within the areas of living conditions for children and adolescents in its comments to Denmark's fifth periodic report.**

Read more about Greenland in the annex.

# 1 GENERAL MEASURES OF IMPLEMENTATION (ART. 4, 42, 44(6))

The following concerns MIO's observations to Denmark's fifth periodic report, sections IA, IB and IC concerning general measures of implementation.

## OBSERVATIONS REGARDING: I.A. MEASURES TO IMPLEMENT THE PROVISIONS OF THE CONVENTION

### LEGISLATION (CONCLUDING OBSERVATION, PARA.13)

MIO issues a number of observations each year to different bills. For several years, MIO has recommended that "Consequences for children and adolescents" are included in the assessment of consequences of new legislation. It has yet to be determined whether the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is to be incorporated into Greenlandic legislation. Shall the provisions of the Convention be incorporated directly into a Greenlandic act or shall Greenlandic legislation within the fields of social law, family law, and laws regarding children and adolescents be scrutinized to expose to what extent the

laws already are in observance of the articles of the Convention? MIO finds this legal technicality decisive and the question should be clarified this year – and the work on the reply should be initiated immediately upon clarification of said question.

#### COORDINATION (CONCLUDING OBSERVATION, PARA. 15)

The objective of creating four municipalities instead of eighteen in 2009 was to improve the effectiveness and the quality of the municipal service. However, this is not the reality for everybody. Many citizens experience a loss of quality in the service offered and many express a general deterioration in the monitoring of children's conditions. It has become difficult to complain about decisions regarding children and it is difficult to get in contact with the municipal caseworker. The merger of the municipalities has resulted in an additional workload for the municipal employees, leading to a deteriorated service in cases involving children and adolescents.

#### NATIONAL ACTION PLAN (CONCLUDING OBSERVATION, PARA 17)

More than twenty years after the ratification of the convention in Greenland, a bill was submitted to the Parliament of Greenland concerning the implementation of the convention as an act of law in Greenland. However, the proposal was postponed and the Committee on Family and Health under the Parliament of Greenland assigned the Government of Greenland with proposing a bill by 2017 incorporating the convention into an act of law. The lack of incorporation of the convention into an act of law does not change the fact that the convention can be invoked and put into use in connection with complaints to the government. It should be stressed that in the current Greenlandic legislation regarding assistance to children and adolescents it is stated that the Government of Greenland is under obligation to implement the UN Convention on the Right of the Child (Greenlandic Act no. 1 of 15 April 2003 on assistance to children and adolescents, art. 3). This does not result in the country not having cases of parental neglect of children and adolescents. There seems to be a lack of real legal debate in Greenland on how exactly to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child cf. the section on "Legislation" above.

#### **Not all provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child have become the responsibility of Greenland.**

This is due to the Danish-Greenlandic Self-Government arrangement and specific provisions in the Constitution. This applies to matters such as constitution, citizenship, Supreme Court, foreign affairs, defence, and security policy as well as exchange and monetary policy.

#### INDEPENDENT MONITORING (CONCLUDING OBSERVATION, PARA. 20)

The Greenlandic Parliament Act no. 11 of 22 November 2011 on a Spokesperson for children and a children's council, which covers the National Advocacy for Children's Rights MIO was adopted as part of the implementation of the provisions in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. MIO consists of a Spokesperson for children, a children's council and a secretariat with a staff too small for a country with major problems of neglect and big geographical challenges. The few resources may turn the monitoring of children's rights into a difficult task.

MIO is an advocacy centre for children. The spokesperson for children cannot make decisions in specific cases but can issue opinions and has access to information on children's conditions in public and private institutions. The Spokesperson for Children and MIO works closely with several organizations, among others the Greenlandic Ombudsman, who accepts complaints from children, adolescents, and adults. **In the Greenlandic Finance Bill for 2017 it is stated that it has not yet been decided how to finance the costs incurred by the implementation of disseminating the knowledge of children's access to complain and making this access possible** (Government of Greenland, 2016). MIO recommends that Greenland adopts the Optional Protocol of 28 February 2012 to the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child to complain about specific violations.

MIO cooperates with the Danish Institute for Human Rights (IMR) and the Greenlandic Council for Human Rights as well as NGO's.

#### ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES (CONCLUDING OBSERVATION, PARA. 22)

**The fifth periodic report mentions in this section the challenges within education. MIO refers to section 8 Education, leisure and cultural activities for further information and comments on this.**

#### DATA COLLECTION (CONCLUDING OBSERVATION, PARA 24)

The fifth periodic report refers in this part to the fact that data gathering has been highly prioritized in recent years. MIO sees a great need to further strengthen this field. There are a few different bodies involved in data collection, among others BUFFI, a new department of child, youth and family research. The recently established Allorfik which is a knowledge centre for abuse and early intervention. IPIS, which is a knowledge and counselling centre about disabilities. Statis-

tics Greenland which coordinates public statistics under the Government of Greenland. **Despite the existing data gathering there is a need for knowledge on the development in specific fields such as children's living conditions, poverty, and substance abuse and as mentioned placement in alternative care, disabilities, school, work etc. MIO recognizes that within the municipalities certain systems exist to gather data. However, there is a need for development of the systems as well a need for municipal employees to be trained in their use.**

#### **OBSERVATIONS REGARDING: I.B. DISSEMINATION OF KNOWLEDGE OF THE CONVENTION**

##### **TRAINING OF STUDENTS AND PERSONS WORKING FOR AND WITH CHILDREN**

In its latest recommendations to Denmark and Greenland, the CRC expresses concern that the training of persons working for and with children does not include the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The CRC furthermore reiterates its previous recommendation to develop a systematic and ongoing training program on human rights, including children's rights, for all persons working for and with children, e.g. judges, lawyers, teachers, law enforcement, civil servants, local government officials and social and health personnel.

In November 2014 MIO and the Danish Institute for Human Rights initiated a cooperation project to train students at the Institute of Learning at the University of Greenland in children's rights in order for future teachers to be able to teach children and adolescents in primary and lower secondary education about their rights. **MIO hopes that the curriculum of trainee teachers will include children's rights. MIO has also recommended that teaching in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child become part of the curriculum for social education staff and social workers in Greenland.**

#### **OBSERVATIONS REGARDING: I.C. STATE PARTIES SHALL MAKE THEIR REPORTS WIDELY AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC IN THEIR COUNTRIES**

Denmark's fifth periodic report and MIO's parallel report will be made available on MIO's website in several languages.

## **Recommendations to General measures of implementation (art. 4, 42, 44(6))**

#### **MIO RECOMMENDS THAT THE CRC ASK THE FOLLOWING TO THE GOVERNMENT OF GREENLAND:**

- What measures will be taken to further data gathering and to follow up on surveys?
- How will it be ensured that the gap between the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and practice is narrowed?
- Does Greenland intend to adopt the Optional Protocol of 28 February 2012 to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Childs concerning individual possibilities to complain?
- Does Greenland intend to make the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child a permanent part of the curriculum of relevant educational programs?

## **2 DEFINITION OF THE CHILD (ART.1)**

No comments to Denmark's fifth periodic report.

## **3 GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

The following concerns MIO's observations to Denmark's fifth periodic report, sections III.A., III.B. og III.C. on general principles.

### **3.1 Non-discrimination (art. 2)**

MIO has no knowledge of cases regarding discrimination of children and adolescents in Greenland. This may be due to Greenland's insufficient legal framework within the field of

legal rights. The fifth periodic report refers to article 100 of the Greenlandic Criminal Act, which states that it is “*a violation publicly or with intent of wider dissemination to put forward statements that threaten, ridicule or degrade a group of people due to their race, skin colour, national or ethnic origin, religion or sexual orientation*”. This applies to criminal cases only and does not include civil cases. In Greenland there is only a law on the equality of men and women, but no law that prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race/ethnic origin, age, disabilities, and religion. There is no appeal system, so children cannot file complaints about discrimination due to gender, disabilities, ethnic origin, or sexual orientation etc. and have such complaints considered. Thereby, they do not enjoy full protection.

Yet, in connection with data gathering of knowledge about children and adolescents in Greenland, MIO has obtained knowledge about children and adolescents who feel they are subject to degrading treatment in their everyday lives and education for instance because of their language.

*“The student has to adapt to the Danish teachers which may lead to bursts of anger and the students may deem themselves unworthy and not clever. Some give up during tests as they feel they are already being judged bad at the Danish language.”* (Student, East Greenland 2016).

## SPOKESPERSON FOR THE DISABLED

In the spring of 2016 a political decision was made to establish a spokesperson service for the disabled. In the Finance Act 2017, DKK 2.5 million is allocated to this purpose. The work of establishing such a spokesperson service is just about to begin. MIO questions whether sufficient resources are allocated to perform this function, for example when it comes to nationwide monitoring of disabled children’s conditions.

## 3.2 Best interest of the child (art. 3)

### ACT ON PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

On 1 July 2016 the Act on Parental Responsibility came into force in Greenland. The most important interest of the Act on Parental Responsibility is that of the child and all decisions must be made while taking the child’s own opinion into consideration as well as considering what is best for the child. With the implementation of the law, the right of parents to physically punish their child/children was abolished. As per 1 July 2016 any corporal punishment of children is to be considered violence punishable by law. **MIO believes that the Act**

**on Parental Responsibility is a strengthening of the rights of children and adolescents both when it comes to protection from violence and in regard to the right of the child to parental contact with both parents.** The Act rules questions regarding child custody, the child’s home, and parental contact. The Act also contains more specific provisions regarding the right of contact with the child for other persons than the parents in exceptional circumstances, including for example adopted children’s right to contact with their biological family.

Parents of children born after 1 July 2016 will now automatically be granted joint custody of the child provided the parents have either been married or been registered at the same address during the ten months prior to the birth of the child.

### ACT ON ASSISTANCE TO CHILDREN

In 2017 a new Greenlandic Act on Support to Children is expected to enter into force. An amount of DKK 21.7 million has been allocated for the fiscal year 2017, DKK 21.1 million in 2018, and DKK 19.1 million in 2019 to cover the expected economic consequences, and these amounts are to cover different initiatives contained in the bill, among other things rehabilitation, offers to parents-to-be and a national reporting system (Government of Greenland, 2016). **MIO regards the bill as a strengthening of children’s rights, particularly regarding article 12 on the child’s involvement as well as article 19 on protection, but it is also a matter of some concern whether the municipalities have and will receive the resources necessary to solve the tasks as described in the bill.**

### PLACEMENT IN ALTERNATIVE CARE AND MUNICIPAL PROCEDURES

In recent years, large focus has been on the problems within the social welfare administration. Surveys document that many children experience a lack of wellbeing the municipal social services struggle to live up to the requirements set out by legislation. Through its reports “Et menneske er et menneske” (“A person is a person”)(Olesen and Holm 2013, a survey of 33 interviews with children placed in out-of-home care) and “Fra lov til praksis” (“From law to practice”) (Olesen 2014), a survey of procedures related to children’s cases in the municipal administration, MIO has documented that the municipalities do not live up to the convention for instance in regard to hearing the views of children and adolescents (Art. 12) and experience major challenges in observing national legislation. The survey showed that in many cases the compulsory action plans had not been drawn up for children

placed in alternative care which meant that the children had not been involved in the plans made for them.

*“Two days before departure, I was told that I had to leave. My mother did not tell me that they were working on it. It was only when I went for a meeting with the municipality that I was told” Girl, 14 years (Olesen, 2013).*

The case workers expressed powerlessness concerning their work, in part because of the high number of cases, in part because of lack of qualifications and possible assistance measures to offer to the families and their children. Several case workers stated that due to the large number of cases, only the most serious concerns were reacted upon such as reports of sexual abuse or violence. This is further substantiated by other statements and reports<sup>1[1]</sup> from the Government of Greenland, showing a large number of failures in regards to children and adolescents in need where the municipalities for years have failed to act despite reports of lack of wellbeing and sexual abuse.

**In the fifth periodic report the challenges in this field are only treated in a superficial manner with a reference to the need for more assistance to and supervision of the case workers whereas the extent of the problem and the consequences for the children are not mentioned. MIO is surprised that the challenges in the social field and the general lack of assistance to children and adolescents are so little prioritized in Denmark’s report.**

MIO recognizes that the Government of Greenland has taken the problems seriously. In 2015 the Department of Family, Equality, and Social Welfare published a report identifying the number of children placed in alternative care, the type of alternative care and whether actions plans had been made for these children. The report showed that no action plans or updates of these had been made in 500 out of 642 cases concerning placements in alternative care. Subsequently, these matters were corrected.<sup>2[2]</sup> The Department also set up the Central Counselling Unit (DCR) in November 2015 whose purpose is to counsel and support the municipalities within the field of children and adolescents as well as developing the organizational and social practices in the administration. The Spokesperson for children’s reports from her travels around Greenland<sup>3[3]</sup> and supervisory reports from 2016 confirm that serious failures still occur.

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1 The control board may be contacted here: [http://naalakkersuisut.gl/da/Naalakkersuisut/Nyheder/2016/03/100316\\_tilsynsraad](http://naalakkersuisut.gl/da/Naalakkersuisut/Nyheder/2016/03/100316_tilsynsraad)

2 <http://naalakkersuisut.gl/~media/Nanoq/Files/Publications/Familie/DK/Rapport%20Afd%C3%A6kning%20Handleplaner%20Anbragte%20%20B%C3%B8rn%20%20og%20%20Unge.pdf>

The Parliament of Greenland passed an act in 2016 amending the Greenlandic Act on the Administration and Organization of Social Welfare, making it possible for the Government of Greenland to take over the administration of social services in a municipality for a period of time if controls show that a municipality does not, to an unacceptable degree, observe the legislation set out for example within the field of children and adolescents.

**MIO is worried if adequate resources are allocated to deal with the workload of the large number of cases involving children and adolescents – both concerning financial resources and qualifications.**

### 3.3 Right to life, survival and development (art. 6)

#### PUPILS AND STUDENTS

The drop-out rate is very high for post-secondary education. In 2013, 663 students of 1390 dropped out of without completing their programs in Greenland.<sup>3</sup>As an initiative to prevent drop-out, a Student Counselling Centre has been set up, offering assistance and support from psychologists, social workers, psychotherapist, and counsellors with a supplementary education within psychotherapy.

The Student Counselling Centre is part of the initiative National Centre for Counselling. However, the centre is only available in five towns and is meant for students in high school, vocational education, higher education, interns, and citizens under a program set up by Piareersarfiit (local job, counselling and education centres) in all of Greenland. The Student Counselling Centre offers guidance and counselling of students in other towns as well provided the centre receives notification thereof by the different educational institutions.

It should be mentioned here that children in primary and lower secondary education have several possibilities for support and guidance through talks with a counsellor. Several schools throughout the country have different partners for this purpose. The exact number is not known, however. The Spokesperson for Children’s travels in Greenland show, however, that there is a large unfulfilled need for social professionals in schools.

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3 [www.stat.gl](http://www.stat.gl)

## FUNDING OF HELPLINES

Greenland has several different helplines. The national helplines are for people who are suicidal and their relatives, one is for persons who have been sexually abused, a helpline for children and adolescents, a family counselling helpline as well as MIO's text counselling service for children and adolescents. None of the helplines run on a 24/7 basis but are usually open a few hours a day.

The majority of the helplines receive government funding. Every year, the possibility for children and adolescents (and also adults) to apply for funding depends on available means. Some of the helplines are partly financed by the government. The need for such helplines is big, for example MIO's counselling by text has generated more than 1000 contacts with children and adolescents since it began operating in October 2013. There are many calls and they are often very serious dealing with topics ranging from divorce and bullying to sexual abuse, violence, and threats of suicide. There is a big need for continued and permanent funding of these helplines.

## SUICIDE

Especially the issue of suicide as a reason for contacting MIO's text counselling service must be taken seriously, as the number of suicides is a big challenge for Greenland – also among young people under 20 years of age<sup>4</sup>.

For decades it has been known that the number of suicides is a lot larger than in other countries to which Greenland usually compares itself. **MIO proposes that regional and local strategies are made to reduce the number of suicides.**

**MIO refers to section 7.1 Survival and development (art. 6 (2)) where this field is further described.**

## 3.4 Respect for the views of the child (art. 12)

### LACK OF HEARING THE CHILD

**In Denmark's fifth periodic report it is described how municipal case workers may now obtain counselling in cases concerning children. However, there are still some practical challenges which MIO finds it important to stress.** Children and adolescents in Greenland experience neglect (cf. Section 3.2) and in recent years much focus has been on the

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.si-folkesundhed.dk/Ugens%20tal%20for%20folkesundhed/Ugens%20tal/19\\_2015.aspx](http://www.si-folkesundhed.dk/Ugens%20tal%20for%20folkesundhed/Ugens%20tal/19_2015.aspx)

problems within the municipal administrations. There is documentation that the municipal social services experience problems with case handling and do not live up to the legal requirements in several areas. There are numerous examples of children and adolescents being placed in alternative care or returned to their families without proper documentation for or against the decision to do so, without the elaboration of action plans, and without the involvement of the child in the process. There are several examples of cases where children and adolescents have not been heard in their own cases for instance:

*"I would like to have been asked whether I preferred to stay in a care center or with foster parents"* Girl, 15 years (Olesen, 2013).

*"I don't want to be in foster care. I want to live with my parents!!!"* Boy, 14 years (MIO, 2016).

The report "Et menneske er et menneske" ("A Person is a Person") published by MIO was based upon interviews with 33 placed children from all over the country. The report supports that there is a lack of involvement of the children. For instance, older children are not involved in their own action plans (Olesen and Holm 2013).

The survey "Fra lov til praksis" ("From law to practice") also stresses that several case workers have too large a case load, that the response time in placement cases is too long and in certain cases, the lack of resources results in a total lack of case handling. (Olesen, 2014). *"Children under the age of 10 are only rarely heard if it is deemed appropriate after specific assessment"* (ibid.). According to the case workers, they do not always hear the children in their cases due to the case workers being pressed for time and having too large a case load.

**Adequate professional resources and qualifications must be secured to ensure the hearing of the children in the municipal procedure. Furthermore, structures and procedures must be set up to ensure the hearing of children and adolescents.**

### CHILDREN'S COUNSELLOR NAJORTI

Children have the right to be heard and involved in cases concerning themselves. This must be a permanent part of the municipal case handling within the area of children and adolescents. With the opening of MIO in 2013, children and adolescents were given a mouthpiece through the Spokesperson for Children, and in 2015 MIO and the Association Greenlandic Children (FGB) created the possibility for children and adolescents to have access to a "Children's counsellor Najorti" to help them understand the municipal case handling and

express their experience of and opinions in municipal cases concerning themselves..

## Recommendations to General principles

### MIO RECOMMENDS THAT THE CRC ASK THE FOLLOWING TO THE GOVERNMENT OF GREENLAND:

- Does the Government of Greenland intend to work for the finalizing of action plans in cooperation with the municipalities to ensure that current legislation is observed, including the hearing of children?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to draft a plan for training of professionals within the field of children?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to work for prioritizing the field of children and adolescents when the Government and the municipalities allocate their resources?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to work for a revision of the legal framework within discrimination and draft a bill protecting all groups in society against discrimination, within the labour market as well as outside thereof.
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure permanent funding of national helplines (telephone, text etc.) as well as longer opening hours?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to set up regional and local strategies in cooperation with the population in order to reduce the number of suicides?

## 4 CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

The following concerns MIO's observations to Denmark's fifth periodic report sections IV.F. and IV.G. on civil rights and freedoms.

### 4.1 Birth registration, name and nationality (art. 7)

No comments to Denmark's fifth periodic report.

### 4.2 Preservation of identity (art. 8)

No comments to Denmark's fifth periodic report.

### 4.3 Right to seek, receive and impart information (art. 13)

In Greenland there is very limited access to educational information aimed at children and adolescents on the radio or on television.

### 4.4 Freedom of thought, conscience and religion (art. 14)

No comments to Denmark's fifth periodic report.

### 4.5 Freedom of association and of peaceful assembly (art. 15)

No comments to Denmark's fifth periodic report.

### 4.6 Protection of privacy and protection of the image (art. 16)

MIO refers to section 5.2 Right not to be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including corporal punishment (arts. 37(a) and 28(2)) concerning information on the use of force.

## 4.7 Access to information from a diversity of sources and protection from material harmful to his or her well-being (art. 17)

### THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION

In Denmark's fifth periodic report, the 3000 students in primary and lower secondary education as well as teachers in two municipalities who have received iPads. An iPad does not necessarily mean access to information. In a number of small towns and settlements there is internet access only through either the school or the library desktops (many libraries are located in the schools). In 2014 MIO set up a panel of 6th and 7th grade students. MIO's objective with the panel was to learn about the students' use of the internet and social media (MIO, 2015). Of 910 responses from students, 33% use the internet daily. More than half of the students had access to the internet on their smartphones, and they used available computers or tablets either in school or at home. The internet was mainly used to access social media; however one third of the students used the internet to read (mainly local) news. This survey is limited to the age group mentioned.

**Children's access to information from different sources is limited, and mainly children and adolescents in large towns have the possibility of seeking knowledge through different media.**

### PROTECTION FROM HARMFUL INFORMATION

Protection from harmful information e.g. on the internet or on cell phones is a relatively new area in Greenland and further research is needed to establish what importance the internet has for children and adolescents.

In Greenland there are not (yet) any rules regulating the protection of children and adolescents within marketing. Advertising of and encouragement to use for example alcohol and cigarettes can be done freely. It depends only on the individual stores' attitude to advertising whether children and adolescents are protected from harmful advertisements which may affect their health and well-being. Alcohol advertising will be topic of political debate this fall.

## 4.8 Measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of child victims (art. 39)

MIO believes that this section of Denmark's fifth periodic report is insufficient and is surprised that the areas of neglect, violence, and sexual abuse have not been described. MIO estimates that the assistance in cases of neglect and abuse is not adequate and often depends on where in Greenland the child lives. Thus, children in settlements will have fewer options for assistance than children in towns.

*"The ones with special needs do not get the necessary help" Child in primary or lower secondary education, North Greenland (MIO, 2015).*

MIO refers to section 5.1 Abuse and neglect, including physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration (arts. 19 and 39).

### DUTY OF NOTIFICATION

All citizens in Greenland are subject to the duty of notification, and everyone working with children is under subject to an even stricter duty of notification. Notification is made to the municipality. The objective of the duty of notification is to protect children and adolescents against circumstances that may put their health or wellbeing at risk. When a municipality receives notification about a child, it is under obligation to examine the child's circumstances. However, the supervisory reports by the Government of Greenland show lack of or slow action upon notifications by the municipal authorities. (Government of Greenland, 2016). Lack of action can, in the utmost circumstances, result in the death of the child. The problem was experienced by MIO in Eastern Greenland where the head of the school stated that notifications are not acted upon: *"If the system worked, there would be many more notifications. You feel ridiculous if you make a notification"* (MIO, 2016). The same situation was seen by the Spokesperson for Children in North Greenland

## Recommendations to Civil rights and freedoms

### MIO RECOMMENDS THAT THE CRC ASK THE FOLLOWING TO THE GOVERNMENT OF GREENLAND:

- How does the Government of Greenland intend to strengthen children's access to information wherever they may live?

- How does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure specific actions and equal access to assistance, physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration after neglect, abuse, violence and assault?

## 5 VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

The following concerns MIO's observations to Denmark's fifth periodic report sections V.A., V.B., V.C., V.D., V.E. and V.F. on violence against children.

### 5.1 Abuse and neglect, including physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration (arts. 19 and 39)

**MIO finds these sections on neglect, abuse, violence and assault against children in Greenland inadequate. MIO finds it positive that a strategy against violence has been prepared, but it is extremely important to describe this area properly in order to illustrate the extent of neglect, violence, abuse and assault against children. There are important challenges in this field, and MIO is concerned about the distribution and allocation of resources to ensure that the strategies are in fact implemented and become effective. It is significant that professionals working in this field do not know the strategy which makes its implementation difficult.**

#### LEGISLATION

MIO refers to section 3.2 Best interest of the child (art. 3) concerning observations to the description of the Act on Parental Responsibility (Forældresvarsloven) in Denmark's fifth periodic report.

#### VIOLENCE

Violence is a wide-spread problem in Greenland. A population survey in 2010 showed that a total of 59 % of the population had been exposed to violence or threats of violence at some time in their adult life. (Bjerregaard and Aidt 2010).

The report "Unges trivsel i Grønland 2011" ("Young Welfare in Greenland 2011") shows that one in six adolescents has experienced violence against his/her body by at least one parent, and that one in ten had experienced brutish violence by at least one parent (Pedersen and Bjerregaard 2012). More girls are subject to or witnesses to physical violence and conflict in the home (ibid). There is also a relation between violence in the family and the children's perception of the family's resources so children who perceive their family as being the least affluent, have experienced physical violence to a higher degree (ibid.).

In 2011 24.8 % girls and 12.1 % boys stated that they had been yelled at or ridiculed during conflicts at home; 5.6 % of the girls and 2.8 % of the boys stated that they had been threatened with violence during conflicts at home (Pedersen and Bjerregaard 2012). The same survey showed that on in ten adolescents had witnessed brutish physical violence against their mother within the past year (Ibid.).

Many children grow up in a home with physical violence while the extent of violence outside the family, for instance in school, is less well mapped. "The HBSC Survey 2014" estimates that 22 % of school-aged children and adolescents have been in fights within the past year, more boys than girls (Bjerregaard et al., 2015).

*"No children should be exposed to sexual abuse. No children should be exposed to violence or assault" School-aged child, North Greenland (MIO, 2015).*

#### THE RIGHT OF PARENTS TO PHYSICALLY PUNISH THEIR CHILD/CHILDREN AND CAMPAIGNS AGAINST VIOLENCE

The CRC' recommendations to Greenland upon the last periodic report resulted among other things in a campaign informing adults that they should not use corporal punishment or other use of physical force when raising children. On 1 July 2016 the Act on Parental Responsibility (Forældresvarsloven) came into force in Greenland. **The act abolishes the right of parents to physically punish their children and from 1 July 2016 any corporal punishment of children is punishable by law. MIO refers to the information in section 3.2 Best interest of the child (art. 3).**

Already in 2013 the Government of Greenland put forward a proposal for a strategy and action plan against violence for 2014-2017. Under this strategy there have been several cam-

paigns against violence, e.g. new websites containing information materials for professionals and citizens about violence. Besides, the police have run a campaign “Dialogue instead of domestic disturbance” where the police officers enter into a dialogue with the persons involved in violence in the homes. **MIO supports the good initiatives, but calls upon campaigns aimed at children and adolescents.**

## RECOVERY AFTER VIOLENCE

Today there are seven local crisis shelters in Greenland for women with children, which can be used as refuge in case of violence. There are no crisis shelters for men with children. In July 2014, the nationwide crisis and treatment centre Illernit opened, also for women and children subject to violence. The wide-spread violence in society shows, however, a need for preventive measures with the objective of changing reaction patterns and attitudes to violence. **MIO estimates that despite family and crisis centres, there is a general lack of assistance to children and adolescents with psychological problems resulting from neglect, violence, and abuse – including for those who are not in touch with a crisis and family centre.**

## SEXUAL ABUSE

Several surveys have been carried out on the subject of sexual abuse in Greenland.

The survey “Som ringe i vandet. Baselineundersøgelse – Befolkningens viden om og holdning til seksuelle overgreb” (“Like ever-widening circles. Baseline survey – the population’s knowledge of and attitude to sexual abuse”) shows that 67 % of the population knows someone who was the victim of sexual abuse as a child. 25 % had been victims themselves of sexual abuse, of whom 20 % were under the age of 15 at the time of the abuse (Pedersen et.al. 2014). In the survey “Unges trivsel i Grønland 2011” (“Young Welfare in Greenland”) almost one in ten boys (9.4%) and one in three girls (32%) stated that they had been victims of sexual abuse by an adult and/or peers, and that the majority had experienced it as abuse.<sup>5</sup> The number of adolescents having been victims of sexual abuse has not changed compared to the survey “Unges trivsel i 2004” (“Young Welfare 2004”) (Pedersen and Bjerregaard 2012).

The survey “Unge i Grønland – med fokus på seksualitet og seksuelle overgreb” (“Youth in Greenland – focus on sexuality and sexual abuse”) showed that alcohol often – in 42 % of the cases – was part of the picture related to abuse. Sexual abuse is a nationwide problem, which does not prevail in one region compared to others (Christensen and Baviskar, 2015).<sup>6</sup>

**MIO finds it positive that surveys are made to map sexual abuse of children and adolescents; however, there is still a big need for action before the sexual abuse happens as well as for assistance to children and adolescents who have been victims of abuse.** It is well-known that professionals working with children do not know how to act when they know or suspect that sexual abuse has taken place.

## RECOVERY AFTER SEXUAL ABUSE

The survey “Unge i Grønland – med fokus på seksualitet og seksuelle overgreb” (“Young in Greenland – focus on sexuality and sexual abuse”) states that almost half of the adolescents (41 %) have not talked to anyone about the abuse (Christensen and Baviskar 2015).

In 2011 the Greenlandic children’s house Saaffik opened, offering among other things a treatment of children. Upon evaluation of Saaffik i 2014 (Guldberg, C.), Saaffik was reorganized and is now part of the Central Counselling Unit (DCR). Saaffik’s objective is to strengthen the local family centres in connection with sexual abuse cases. Treatment of children is offered to a limited extent in so far as there are sufficient professionals to carry out the treatment. Video interviews with children in the capital Nuuk are no longer carried out in a special room in the children’s house Saaffik developed for this purpose but rather in hotel apartments adapted for the interviews. Not all towns in Greenland have trained video interviewers. MIO sees a need to find a solution to this issue, either by training more professionals in video interviewing or through cooperation agreements between the towns so children and adolescents do not have to wait for a long time for video questioning.

In October 2015, the DCR launched a new initiative to treat children who are victims of sexual abuse: “The traveling task force for the treatment of children”. The task force consists of two therapists only, has visited three towns as per August 2016, and has had several children in treatment (DCR, 2015). **MIO believes that the treatment of children who have been sexually abused is insufficient as the traveling task force does not reach all towns and settlements over a foreseeable period and does not have the possibility of contin-**

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5 The numbers cover a broad spectrum of abuse and include everything from a single case of unwanted physical contact to very serious sexual abuse.

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6 It is important to note that the definition of sexual abuse may differ from one survey to another, which is important to keep in mind in case of comparison of different surveys.

ued follow-up as needed. It is worth noticing that the offer of treatment requires the municipality to be aware of the abuse and the exact number of abuse cases is probably unknown.

## SUBSTANCE MISUSE

The population survey of 2010 among adults showed that some sort of substance abuse existed in 42 % of all households with children (Bjerregaard 2010). Several surveys point out that the most common type of substance misuse is alcohol followed by cannabis and compulsive gambling. (Bjerregaard 2010, Pedersen and Bjerregaard 2012).

In "Young Welfare in Greenland 2011" half of the school-aged children state that there is some sort of substance abuse in their close family. The survey points out regional differences in substance misuse in the family. The number of adolescents experiencing alcohol misuse is largest in East Greenland whereas a larger share of adolescents report cannabis misuse and compulsive gambling in Mid and Western Greenland (Pedersen and Bjerregaard 2012). The same survey shows that one in three adolescents has experienced alcohol misuse by their parents. Further, three out of four of these adolescents say they feel unsafe in connection with the misuse of alcohol (Ibid.). Several children express a strong wish that their parents would stop drinking alcohol.

As appears from "Unge velfærd i Grønland 2011" ("Young Welfare in Greenland 2011"), one in ten adolescents has experienced compulsive gambling by their parents of whom one in three has experienced the negative impact on the family caused by the parents' compulsive gambling. Furthermore, one in five adolescents is estimated to have experiences cannabis misuse within the near family; one in ten adolescents has stated that their parents misuse cannabis. Half of these adolescents have felt unsafe due to their parents' misuse of cannabis (Pedersen and Bjerregaard 2012)

*"Children should be treated with respect and they must have the best living conditions possible. In our settlement, many parents brew their own beer and gamble. The children feel they are not being respected when their parents do not care about them. In our settlement, home-brewing and compulsive gambling should be stopped" School-aged child, North Greenland (MIO, 2015).*

*"When my mother and father drink, it makes me sad. I feel very bad. I am with my siblings. Sometimes, I have nowhere to be" Girl, East Greenland (MIO, 2016).*

*"I run away and we seek help. I take refuge with my grandmother" Boy about his family's alcohol misuse, East Greenland (MIO, 2016).*

## NEGLECT

The sections above show the extent and magnitude of the social challenges among children and adolescents in the Greenlandic society. In the survey "Børn i Grønland" ("Children in Greenland"), it is estimated that 27 % of all Greenlandic children are neglected to some extent or to a large extent. The survey concludes that a large number of children are neglected and that it is mainly passive psychological neglect, where the child is exposed to serious neglect of a psychological nature due to the parents' lack of ability to provide security, care and love (Christensen et al. 2008).

MIO further refers to section 4.8 of this report (Measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of child victims (art. 39) – section V.E. in Denmark's fifth periodic report) concerning physical and psychological recovery and social recovery of children; and section 3.3 Right to life, survival and development (art. 6) concerning help lines for children and adolescents (section V.F. in Denmark's fifth periodic report).

## 5.2 Right not to be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including Corporal punishment (arts. 37(a) and 28(2))

### ACT ON THE USE OF FORCE

Article 4 of Greenlandic Act no. 1 of 21 November 2013 on the Use of Force within social work (Inatsisartutlov nr. 1 af 21. november 2013 om magtanvendelse inden for det sociale område) states that corporal punishment and physical restraint is prohibited. Besides, humiliating, spiteful or other degrading treatment is not allowed. Article 5 states that the use of force is permissible for example by restraining the child or moving the child to a different room is permissible if:

- 1) the child's behaviour makes his/her continued stay in the common areas a hazard, or
- 2) the child is thus prevented from causing harm to him-/herself or others.

Both in high-security and low-security residential institutions physical punishment is permissible according to article 5 of the act. Furthermore, the search of the child's person, rooms, letters, telephone conversations, and other communication is permissible under article 8 of the act. Article 19 of the act states that any type of use of force must be registered and

reported by the residential institution to the municipal boards of the municipality of residence, the municipality of origin, the Government of Greenland and the child's counselors, if any.

**All cases of use of force must be reported to the Government. How the act is applied in practice depends on the staff's resources and qualifications. MIO has sought information about the number of cases of use of force with the Government. However, it has not been possible to obtain these numbers. MIO is concerned that data about the extent of the use of force under the law cannot be obtained.**

## Recommendations to Violence against children

### MIO RECOMMENDS THAT THE CRC ASK THE FOLLOWING TO THE GOVERNMENT OF GREENLAND:

- Does the Government of Greenland intend to launch preventive campaigns against violence and abuse aimed at children and adolescents?
- What measures does the Government of Greenland intend to initiate in order to prevent violence and abuse so children do not become victims of or witnesses to violence or abuse?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure assistance and social recovery to children and adolescents who experience violence, including psychological violence, and abuse?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to elaborate regional and local strategies for the prevention of substance misuse in cooperation with the local population in order for the initiatives to have the best possible effect?

# 6 FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND ALTERNATIVE CARE

The following concerns MIO's observations to Denmark's fifth periodic report, sections VI.A., VI.B., VI.C., VI.D., VI.E., VI.F., VI.G. and VI.H. on family environment and alternative care.

## 6.1 Family environment and parental guidance in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child (art. 5)

**MIO supports all the different initiatives for families with children and adolescents, in particular initiatives launched early and with follow-up through the years. However, there is a big need for statistical data in this field as well as evaluation of the different initiatives.**

### OFFERS

There are a number of different programmes for children and parents in Greenland.

**MIO supports the initiatives, but also believes that there is a need to strengthen this field, making it possible for the whole family to receive the assistance and counselling needed. A holistic approach to the family and the well-being of the child is needed. Besides, attention to the accessibility of these initiatives is important; for example there are no family centres in the settlements and treatment of late complications is done in one town at a time, resulting in an indefinite timeline for the treatment of everyone.**

**MIO believes that initiatives must focus on prevention to a higher degree in order to prevent children from being damaged.**

## 6.2 Separation from parents (art. 9)

**Denmark's fifth periodic report publishes statistical data on the number of placements of children, but does not describe the scope of the problem, its reasons nor plans for**

**reducing the number of children who do not enjoy wellbeing at home and have to be placed. Likewise, the wellbeing of placed children is not described.**

## OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT

The extent of social issues is reflected in the number of out-of-home placements, and Greenland has a large number of placed children compared to the other Nordic countries. The latest report to state the total number of placed children in Greenland is "Afkllaring, Handleplaner, Anbragte børn og unge" ("Mapping, Action Plans, Placed Children and Adolescents) by the Department of Family and Justice in 2015. The report estimates that 4.2% children and adolescents were placed in alternative care in 2015 (Government of Greenland). Former surveys estimated the share of children aged 0-17 placed in alternative care to 7 % in 2010 and 6 % in 2006 (Deloitte 2011, Bengtsson and Jakobsen 2009). It is uncertain whether there has been a drop in the number of placements or if it is another calculation method.

Under Greenlandic law the Municipal Board has the power to decide to place a child in alternative care, with or without the consent of the holder of parental custody or the child, should the child be 15 years of age at least, when there is a clear risk of damage to the child's health or development (Greenlandic Act no. 1 of 15 April 2003 on support for children and adolescents (Landstingsforordning nr. 1 af 15. april 2003 om hjælp til børn og unge)). The Municipal Board is under obligation to make decisions regarding where the child should be placed, and all possibilities of placement in Greenland must be exhausted, before placement outside of Greenland is possible (ibid.). In cooperation with the person who usually takes care of the child, the Municipal Board must ensure that the child's contact to his/her parents is maintained. This entails among other things a yearly trip to visit the family. Efforts should be made to create the possibility for the child to return to his/her home unless consideration for the child's continued development and health speaks against it.

The report "Plejefamilier rammer og vilkår" ("Framework and Conditions for Foster Families") states that the municipalities prefer placing children in foster families to residential institutions. Approximately one fourth of placed children are with foster families. Besides, the report stresses that neglect is the most common cause of placement with foster families (65 %), followed by the parents' misuse of alcohol (19 %) and by the parents having died (13 %). The fourth group accounts for parents with severe disabilities (Deloitte 2010). When placement with foster families is highly prioritized, it should be considered whether the foster families have sufficient and

adequate qualifications to take care of children who have been subject to massive neglect.

The travel reports by the Spokesperson for Children show that there is an issue with the well-being of a number of children in care and a need for support for the foster families, just as supervision reports by the Government of Greenland supports that there is a need for a better control with foster families (MIO 2015 and 2016, Department of Family and Justice 2016).

Read more about Out-of-home placement in the annex.

## PLACEMENT OF DISABLED CHILDREN

Severely disabled children may also be placed in alternative care in a residential institution with reference to Greenlandic Act no. 7 of 3 November 1994 on support to severely disabled persons and Executive Order no. 64 of 29 December 1994 on residential institutions etc. for children and adolescents as well as severely disabled persons (Landstingsforordning nr. 7 af 3. november 1994 om hjælp til personer med vidtgående handicap og Hjemmestyrets bekendtgørelse nr. 64 af 29. december 1994 om døgninstitutioner m.v. for children and adolescents samt for personer vidtgående handicap) (Hansen, 2014).

The executive order offers two trips per year to the disabled person or to the holder of parental custody or another person than the holder of parental custody during the disabled person's stay in a residential institution in another town than the person's hometown. The order contains very few remarks on the child's right to contact with the family and other networks (ibid.). It is worth noticing that the child's right to contact is not limited to the holder of parental custody, but the order does not provide for contact when a disabled child is placed outside his/her hometown. When children are placed in Denmark (cf. Greenlandic Act no. 7 of 3 November 1994 on support to severely disabled persons), it must be presumed that the contact to the child's network is further limited.

"The lack of involvement of the adolescent in the legislation and the very limited access to the family may be at odds with the general principles of involvement and the right to family life and protection, in case of separation from the family, both in the Convention on the Right of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Hansen, 2014).

**Cf. also section 3.2 Best interest of the child (art. 3) concerning placement of children.**

## THE CENTRAL WAITING LIST

Children who are awaiting a place in one of the care centres of the Government of Greenland will be put on the Central Waiting List.

*"The existing central waiting list includes only residential institutions for children and adolescents with social problems. Placement in residential institution for severely disabled children and adults is not done through a central waiting list, but often it assumes the nature of bilateral processes on a first-come-first-served basis which results in unequal access to these residential institutions as well as a lack of overview of available places or lack of places for the Government of Greenland"* (Deloitte, 2011). **This is stated in an analysis of the residential institutions form 2011. MIO has tried to obtain information as to the waiting time on the Central Waiting List, but it has not been possible to obtain this information.**

## CHILDREN IN SCHOOL HOSTELS

**Article 20, section 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the government. Children in school hostels in Greenlandic towns are covered by this definition.** MIO estimates that the conditions in school hostels do not observe the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as these do not guarantee the children the social, pedagogical and psychological care they need and do not guarantee satisfactory physical living conditions. **MIO calls for clear legislation on the physical and pedagogical framework of school hostels to ensure psychological well-being.**

Most schools in settlements in Greenland offer classes to the 7th grade. From the 8th through the 10th grade, the students move to the towns to finish their schooling (Inerisaavik, 2015). To ensure that all students are offered the schooling required by the law on elementary education ("Folkeskolen"), school hostels and dorms have been established in connection with existing schools (Department of Education and Research, 2011). In 2011 there were 13 school hostels in Greenland with room for 325 students, and in the school year 2014/15, approximately 240 students lived in school hostels (Department of Education and Research, 2011, Inerisaavik, 2015). The act on schools of 2012 established that socio-educational staff and other people with a relevant education can handle the pedagogical work related to school hostels and dorms.

MIO questions whether this is sufficient as the law does not in practice mean that the children have access to the caregivers they need. It is important to bear in mind that the transfer from a settlement to at town can be very demanding on some children and is perceived as an emotional, social, and cultural change. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the children are protected and receive the care they need during their stay at the school hostel and that the school hostels provide good social, pedagogical and psychological frames for the children as these will have an important effect on the children's schooling and development. The staff in the school hostels must serve both as professionals and as caregivers as well as replace the parents for a period of time. **MIO recommends therefore that a set of demands is made up regarding the pedagogical framework in school hostels in order to ensure the children the social, pedagogical and psychological care they need.**

*"We have no-one to talk to. We miss our parents' way of raising us. When you look at the conditions in the school hostel as a home, it is very different. Sometimes we have someone to talk to. When we are sad, we are cheered up"* Child in school hostel, East Greenland (MIO, 2016).

## 6.3 Family reunification (art. 10)

No comments to Denmark's fifth periodic report

## 6.4 Illicit transfer and non-return (art. 11)

Greenland acceded to the Hague Convention in 2016.

MIO has no further comments to Denmark's fifth periodic report.

## 6.5 Parents' common responsibilities, assistance to parents and the provision of childcare services (art. 18)

## PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

MIO refers to section 3.2 in this report concerning the Act on Parental Responsibility.

## ASSISTANCE TO PARENTS AND CHILDCARE SERVICES

Through visits MIO compiles knowledge about the well-being and conditions of children and adolescents in Greenland. On several visits in Greenland, MIO has seen many examples of parents needing counselling and guidance in their parenthood.

*"A citizen suggests that a kind of School of Life is established where you can learn about raising children, budgeting, cooking etc."* Citizen, East Greenland (MIO, 2016).

**MIO further refers to section 6.1 Family environment and parental guidance in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child (art. 5) concerning assistance to empower parents in their role as parents.**

## DAY CARE

Meeqerivitsialak – a department under the Government of Greenland developing "The Good Day Care" visits systematically towns and settlements and holds courses and coaching for staff in day care institutions in cooperation with the four municipalities and the Social Education College (SPS) (Meeqerivitsialak, 2016). MIO knows, though, that day care centres in Greenland lack trained professionals as well as continued education. This is also shown in the statistics in Denmark's fifth periodic report. In several towns and settlements the day care centres do not have trained staff and there is much rotation of the staff. Through calls from citizens, MIO has also learned that there is a lack of places in day care centres. **MIO sees a need for further qualifying the staff in day care centres to ensure stimulation and development of the children as well as qualifications to discover lack of well-being.**

## LEISURE ACTIVITIES AND MINDING

Through calls from citizens, MIO has knowledge of lack of places in after-school centres for children and adolescents, among other things during summer when the schools are closed. **There is a need for alternatives to day care and daily activities for children and adolescents in some towns** just as there are no activities for children and adolescents during the times of year when there is no school.

## 6.6 Children deprived of family environment (art. 20)

MIO is surprised that such an important area has not been described further. MIO believes there must be on-going data collection on placements of children and adolescents and a continued focus on the prevention of placement of children and adolescents. **A very large part of Greenlandic children are placed in residential institutions or in foster families, because their own families are unable to secure their well-being, which stresses the Government's failure to secure protection, development and well-being for children and adolescents.**

## RIGHT TO A CULTURAL IDENTITY

In connection with a hearing on a bill on support for children, MIO became aware that it is estimated that half of all placed children are placed in another town than their hometown and therefore live far from their parents and other networks ([www.ina.gl](http://www.ina.gl)). The possibility of maintaining a healthy and nurturing contact – when estimated to be beneficial to the child – between the child and its caregivers will be scarce and often only by phone. To access towns/settlements it is necessary to go by ship, boat or plane and domestic travel in Greenland is both costly and time-consuming. There are many reasons why children should have access to their hometown and networks as well as may be good reasons for moving the child to another town, for example because of treatment or for protection. However, conditions vary a lot in Greenland, the language from south to north, east to west differs; the culture is different; so is the social code. If children from East Greenland are placed in West Greenland, they are met by conditions that are completely different from what they are used to.

## 6.7 Adoption, national and inter-country (art. 21)

Adoptions in Greenland are handled by the High Commissioner to Greenland. Based upon existing legislation it is important that the population does not confuse placement in alternative care, which is a municipal decision, with the legal adoption, which is a decision by the High Commissioner to Greenland. Historically, the expression "care with a view to adoption" has been used by the municipalities, which in some cases has created an expectation that an adoption was

in process. It seems, however, that there has been a certain clarification in recent years.

## 6.8 Periodic review of placement (art. 25)

**According to Greenlandic law, the Government is obliged to supervise residential institutions operationally, financially, and pedagogically while the municipalities are responsible for follow-up on the child's well-being under placement (Greenlandic Act no. 1 of 15. April 2003 on support to children and adolescents). In reality, there are major problems in this area. MIO finds it important that the Government of Greenland and the municipalities strengthen the effort in this field.**

In the report "Analyse og evaluering af døgninstitutionssområdet" ("Analysis and evaluation of residential institutions") compiled by Deloitte in 2011 it is described that there is no systematic and regular follow-up by the municipalities on placements in residential institutions. In 2012 MIO made a survey among placed children which showed that several children are placed on numerous occasions during their out-of-home placement: *"Unluckily, some children suffer from lack of well-being. These children have often been through a number of placements since their early childhood. For some up to 20 places. They have no faith in the current placement or the future"* (ibid.). Similar problems are seen in the report "Afdækning handleplaner anbragte børn og unge" ("Mapping, Action Plans, Placed Children and Adolescents") from 2015, which paints a clear image of the lack of updates to action plans for placed children among other things due to lack of overview over cases and necessary prioritizing of the most urgent tasks.

In 2016 the Department of Family, Equality, Social Welfare and Justice established a supervisory unit whose objective is to control that the municipalities observe the provisions of social law and administer in accordance with administrative rules and laws. The unit's report on the Municipality of Kujalleq shows continued problems. Children are placed in families without care permits and certificates stating that the holder has not been convicted of crimes involving sexual assault against children, action plans are inadequate and no action is taken upon notifications (Government of Greenland, 2016). MIO recognizes similar problems from travels in North, East and West Greenland. There is still a big need to strengthen the periodic and personal supervisions within the field of children placed in foster families and residential institutions.

## THE OMBUDSMAN

The Ombudsman can initiate inquiries into the conditions in public institutions, including residential institutions. MIO cooperates with the ombudsman an inspection of residential institutions for children.

## 6.9 Recovery of maintenance for the child (art. 27(4))

There are a number of financial possibilities for contributions to the maintenance for children, including child maintenance, alimony and maternity allowance. Yet, some families find themselves in a financially difficult situation and find it difficult to ensure their children's well-being and development. This may have several causes. Single parents and unemployed parents are often on a tight budget. In other cases, children experience deprivation due to their parents' way of life and priorities, for instance if the parents' have an addiction. A group of children in North Greenland had this wish:

*"That the parents are given a requisition (for food in the store) so there is enough food for their children. So the money is not all spent on gambling" (MIO, 2015).*

**The child's best interest must always come first. Therefore, it is necessary to support the families in the management of their finances just as the municipal help must always be given in the best interest of the child.**

## Recommendations to Family environment and alternative care

### MIO RECOMMENDS THAT THE CRC ASK THE FOLLOWING TO THE GOVERNMENT OF GREENLAND:

- Does the Government of Greenland intend to prioritize early action and in this context establish family school to empower the parents?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to reduce the number of placements of children and adolescents?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure continuous data in the future within the field of placed children and adolescents?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to secure regular supervision of children in placement care, both in residential institutions and in foster families?

- How does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure children in school hostels and dorms special protection and help?

## 7 DISABILITY, BASIC HEALTH AND WELFARE

The following concerns MIO's observations to Denmark's fifth periodic report sections VII., VII.A., VII.B., VII.C. and VII.D. on disability, basic health and welfare.

### POVERTY

MIO has commented on the subject of children and poverty under section 7.5, Standard of living and measures, including material assistance and support programmes with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing, to ensure the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development and reduce poverty and inequality (art. 27, paras. 1–3) in this report.

### HEALTH

The Public Health Program Inuuneritta II includes the themes smoking, physical activity, nutrition and alcohol and cannabis. The misuse of alcohol and cannabis are the most important themes of the program and will cover the whole programming period (Government of Greenland, 2012). In 2015 draft was made for a national plan for treatment of substance abuse in Greenland. The initiatives include among other things early discovery of substance abuse with pregnant women as well as information campaigns aimed at these women. Preventive measures in primary and lower secondary education entails the implementation of existing teaching materials as well as initiatives aimed at young men aged 15-25. **MIO supports all the excellent initiatives but lack specific initiatives described in detail and ensuring that all children and adolescents will benefit from the program as well as focus on social reintegration and assistance to break unhealthy family patterns.** MIO has as mentioned earlier knowledge of unequal access to health care.

**Denmark's fifth periodic report states that resources have been allocated at the same level to the health services and**

**the preventive measures. It is stated that: "The funding secures special health services for children in settlements and with special needs by midwife, health nurse, and for paediatric and child psychiatric care since 2012". There are still major challenges in this area.** As an example, pregnant women must go to one of the towns that have a regional doctor, who can supervise child births and, if necessary, perform a caesarean incision. Of 16 towns and 60 settlements in Greenland, only five to six towns have a regional doctor. Pregnant families do not, as a consequence, have equal access to midwives and paediatric care (Paediatrician Inga Hjuler).

**MIO has commented further on health (Health and Health services) under section 7.2.**

### DISABLED CHILDREN

Denmark ratified the UN Convention on Persons with Disabilities on 24 August 2009 without making an exception for Greenland.

**In Denmark's fifth periodic report to the CRC, initiatives for persons with disabilities are described briefly. MIO notices that the report does not take into account the special challenges which children with disabilities and their families meet, for instance when it comes to school and education where there is a shortage of teachers with special training. The areas of access to complaint and involvement should also be mentioned.**

The National Information and Research Centre on Disability IPIS, which opened in 2009, is responsible for gathering, developing, and providing information about disabilities (www.ipis.gl), but the knowledge of the conditions for children and adolescents with disabilities in Greenland is very limited. There are no recent surveys on the conditions or key figures for children and adolescents with disabilities. However, the "HBSC Survey 2014" states that the number of children and adolescents, who have the right to assistance under the executive order on assistance to severely disabled persons, is on the rise (Niqlasen 2015).

According to Deloitte's report "*Analyse og evaluering af døgninstitutionssområdet*" ("Analysis and Evaluation of Residential Institutions") there were 7 residential institutions as well as 4 satellite institutions for children and adults with severe disabilities in 2010. According to the institutions, the majority of the children and adult with severe disabilities are mentally impaired (Deloitte 2011).

Within the field of education and disabilities there is very little knowledge. The report "*Naalakkersuisuts uddannelsesplan II*" ("*Education plan II by the Government of Green-*

land”) shows that in 2012, 502 students received extensive special needs education either in special classes (62 %), in teams (22.6 %), private tuition (11.9 %) or personal assistance (1.9 %) (Government of Greenland, 2016). The report *”Grønlands folkeskole – Evaluering 2015”* (*”Greenlandic elementary education – evaluation 2015”*) shows the big differences between the competencies available for special need education in the schools.

As described in the report *”Gennemgang af internationale konventioners betydning for barnets rettigheder i Grønland”* (*”Overview of the Importance of International Conventions for the Rights of the Child in Greenland”*), the Greenlandic Act on support to persons with severe disabilities does not yet contain any provisions regarding involvement of children and adolescents (Hansen, 2014). The regard for children with disabilities seems to be placed with the holder of parental custody and not with the child proper (ibid.).

It is important to stress the right of children and adolescents to be heard in matters concerning them; also children with disabilities. Children, adolescents with disabilities as well as their caregivers must like any other citizen receive information about their right to complain. Children and adolescents, who need assistance in this matter due to their disability, must be given the right information, assistance and guidance in relation to their right to complain.

## 7.1 Survival and development (art. 6(2))

### SUICIDE

MIO participated in the hearing on the National Strategy for the prevention of suicide in Greenland 2013-2019 (hereinafter NSSG 2013-2019). **MIO believes targeted action must be taken to prevent suicide and it must be clarified how to take care of children and adolescents, who experience suicide either in the family or among their friends.**

There must be follow-up on survivors, children and adolescents at risk and family of those who committed suicide. There is a need for specific action in this field, especially when we know the suicide rate which have been stable for several years.

According to *”Unges trivsel i Grønland 2011”* (*”Young Welfare in Greenland”*) one in ten boys and one in four girls have attempted to commit suicide. The survey shows that two in

three adolescents having attempted suicide, have attempted to take their own lives more than once, and that half of those having attempted suicide have not spoken to anyone about it (Pedersen & Bjerregaard, 2012).

Statistics from the Health Inspection Authority show that in 2014, 8 men and 7 women aged 15-24 took their own lives. Numbers from *”Unge i Grønland - med fokus på seksualitet og seksuelle overgreb”* (*”Youth in Greenland – focus on sexuality and sexual abuse”*) from 2014 show that 41 % of women aged 18-25 have considered suicide at some point in their life while the rate for men of the same age is 19 %. At the same time, 21 % of the young women and 19 % of the young men state that they have attempted suicide (Christensen and Baviskar 2015).

The trend in the number of suicides is unchanged from 2005 to 2011 (NSSG 2013-2019). From 1990-2013, 141 children and adolescents aged 11-17 took their own life (Statistics Greenland [www.stat.gl](http://www.stat.gl)).

Suicide attempts in Greenland are often triggered by social or personal crises and are only rarely related to mental illness (NSSG 2013-2019).

*”I have not lived with my mother since I was six years old and now I am 14 and I have still not lived with my mother. And it is not fun not having lived with your parents. I remember when my mother packed my things. I have always thought about killing myself. I have almost killed myself. I am still thinking about killing myself. It is no fun at all. SO WAKE UP AND STOP DRINKING”* Girl, East Greenland (MIO, 2016).

**MIO believes that assistance should be possible 24/7 due to the high suicide rates, especially among adolescents, for example through longer helpline opening hours.**

## 7.2 Health and health services, in particular primary health care (art. 24)

**MIO is surprised by the cursory description of the health services. Many areas within the topic of health give reasons for concern whether children and adolescents live in health standards and enjoy the well-being they have a right to**

### HEALTH SERVICES

It has been known for years that the national Dronning Ingrid's Hospital (DIH) does not have a national children's

ward, there is a lack of staff, and staff rotation is commonplace. A new children's ward is part of the Government of Greenland's coalition agreement for 2014-2018, but the work of establishing a ward with facilities and staff for children has not yet begun.<sup>7</sup>

There is one paediatrician in Greenland and one trained children's nurse working in this field. Both of them work in the country's capital Nuuk. For children and adolescents to be able to visit a paediatrician, the DIH make use of medical assistance from Denmark some times a year. Often the doctors are not the same and thus they are unfamiliar with the children's cases and history and the language is often a barrier, too. Children in need of special medical examination (scans, EEG etc.) must travel to Nuuk, and children whose treatment cannot be done in Nuuk (for example heart surgery) must go to Denmark or Iceland. **Equal access to health services does not exist in Greenland.**

## CHILDREN'S WARDS

In the capital Nuuk the national hospital Dronning Ingrid's Hospital (DIH) is located, where children and adolescents from all over Greenland can receive medical treatment. At the DIH there is not a children's ward, and children are therefore placed in a ward in connection with a ward for seriously ill adults. In the ward with room for eight children, some beds are taken up by adults due to lack of beds in the other wards. Often children will meet ill adults they do not know, which may be scary to see and hear. When two older children and two parents are in the same room, the room becomes so crowded that the staff has pointed out that the situation may be life threatening in case of an emergency situation as the staff does not have sufficient room to give the necessary medical assistance (paediatrician Inga Hjuler).

Besides, there is no special ward for premature babies. Such cases are brought to the intensive care unit which has room for three ill or premature children. In Greenland, 9 % of approximately 800 yearly births are premature, and there is a need for more resources. If more than three children need to be admitted to the intensive care unit, these children are transferred to Denmark or Iceland.

**MIO sees a need to strengthen the area of children and adolescents within the health services.**

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<sup>7</sup> [http://naalakkersuisut.gl/~media/Nanoq/Files/Attached%20Files/Naalakkersuisut/DK/Koalitionsaftaler/SIUMUT\\_DEMOKRAATIT\\_ATASSUT\\_Isumaqatigiissut%20atuuqqoq\\_04122014\\_dk\\_endelig.pdf](http://naalakkersuisut.gl/~media/Nanoq/Files/Attached%20Files/Naalakkersuisut/DK/Koalitionsaftaler/SIUMUT_DEMOKRAATIT_ATASSUT_Isumaqatigiissut%20atuuqqoq_04122014_dk_endelig.pdf)

## PREGNANT CHILDREN

In 2014 the Health Inspection Authority registered two births by girls aged 15, and 17 births by girls aged 16-17. The number has been relatively stable over the past ten years.

MIO recognizes the efforts made to prevent early pregnancies. **However, the number of births and abortions indicate that the efforts are not sufficient.**

## ABORTIONS

In 2014 the Health Inspection Authority registered two legal abortions performed in the age group 12-13 (the age of consent in Greenland is 15), 28 abortions within the age group 14-15, and 75 abortions in the age group 16-17. The numbers are more or less unchanged since 2010. In Greenland the birth of a child prior to the 28th pregnancy week is considered an abortion; despite the fact that such premature children are often physically strong enough to survive (Paediatrician Inga Hjuler, DIH). There is a significant need for development in these areas within the health services and a need for a change of definitions so as to allow the treatment of viable premature children born before week 28.

## SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

The number of sexually transmitted diseases in the Greenlandic population is high compared to international numbers, also the number of children with sexually transmitted diseases. The occurrence of gonorrhoea and chlamydia has increased in recent years. In 2014 the Health Inspection Authority registered five cases of boys and 22 cases of girls – aged 1-14 – with gonorrhoea. The reports for chlamydia were 3 cases of boys and 51 cases of girls. One case of a boy under age one with chlamydia was reported. In the age group 15-19 years, 120 young men and 301 men were reported with gonorrhoea. There were reports of 299 men and 898 women of the same age group with chlamydia. (Health Inspection Authority [www.nun.gl](http://www.nun.gl)). According to DIH the number of cases of sexually transmitted diseases is highest among the "young adults". (Paediatrician Inga Hjuler).

## MENTAL DISORDERS

The Spokesperson for children has, during her travels, received notification from professionals indicating a rise in the number of children and adolescents showing problems with relations and behaviour. **MIO recommends that accessible data is ensured within the area of child psychiatry in order to establish proper initiatives.**

## OVERWEIGHT CHILDREN

In Denmark's fifth periodic report, there is mention of a pilot project for obese children focusing on physical activity and healthy eating habits. According to the report, evaluation will take place in 2016. However, this is only the internal evaluation made by the health services. Final evaluation will be carried out in 2018 (Michael Lynge Pedersen, DIH). The health services see child obesity mainly as a result of malnutrition. (Paediatrician Inga Hjuler, DIH). MIO hopes that adults, through the project, will have the possibility of learning about healthy and unhealthy food and thus be able to improve children's possibilities for physical development and learning. **MIO believes it should be noted that there is not equal access to healthy food in all towns and settlements in Greenland.**

## SUBSTANCE ABUSE BY CHILDREN

**MIO refers to section 7.6 Measures to protect children from substance abuse (art. 33) on the lack of treatment for children with substance abuse issues.**

## **7.3 Measures to prohibit and eliminate all forms of harmful traditional practices, including, but not limited to, female genital mutilation and early and forced marriages (art. 24(3))**

No comments to Denmark's fifth periodic report.

## **7.4 Social security and childcare services and facilities (arts. 26 and 18(3));**

## FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD

**MIO is familiar with major challenges in the field of debt prevention and believes the CRC should take note of this.** The Finance Bill 2017 states that too many families are evict-

ed from their housing (Government of Greenland, 2016). If the families are in arrears with the payment of their rent and the family ends up being evicted from their housing, the children may end up in foster care or in a residential institution. Besides, more social problems such as homelessness and alcohol abuse may ensue (ibid.). MIO has confirmation of this problem through "Tidlig indats" ("Early action"), a program aimed at young pregnant women (cf. section 6.1), which describes how children are removed from their homes if the parents are in arrears with their rent. Problem is further stressed by calls from citizens saying that the municipalities will offer the families to place their children in out-of-home care if they lose their housing. **MIO sees a need for preventive financial counselling of families with children, and the basic rights of the children must be ensured when families are evicted.**

## CHILD MINDING

MIO refers to section 6.5 Parents' common responsibilities, assistance to parents and the provision of childcare services (art. 18).

## **7.5 Standard of living and measures, including material assistance and support programmes with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing, to ensure the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development and reduce poverty and inequality (art. 27, paras. 1-3)**

## CHILD POVERTY

The Government of Greenland refers in Denmark's fifth periodic report to the two reports on child poverty, "Børns levestandard" ("Children's Standard of Living") from 2008 and "Ingen børn skal vokse op i fattigdom" ("No Children should Grow up in Poverty) from 2013. MIO is surprised that the Government of Greenland does not commit to the large number of children who live in poverty and social inequality.

The survey "Børn med afsavn - interviewundersøgelse med børn og forældre i familier med knap økonomi" ("Children in

need – interviews with children and parents in families with few financial means”) points out the fact that several children living in poverty experience the lack of basic things such as healthy food, clothes and housing. Many children choose to work in their spare time to assist their family financially which in turn has an effect on their education (Nielsen and Wulf 2007a).

Child poverty and social inequality are related to a number of social problems such as alcohol abuse, violence in the home, suicidal behaviour among adolescents, self-assessment of health, and risky behaviour such as alcohol consumption and smoking (Pedersen et al., 2013).

*“If you are hungry or thirsty, you have the right to food and water. It is a problem here because the parents suffer from compulsive gambling. So the money that was supposed to be spent on food has been spent on gambling” School-aged child, North Greenland (MIO, 2015).*

*“When my parents are drunk, I have nowhere to be. I love my siblings and I take them to NN. Sometimes I stay with NN overnight. When we are together, I am happy. When mom and dad are drunk, I go hungry” Girl, East Greenland (MIO, 2016).*

## REHOUSING OF CHILDREN

**MIO finds it problematic that the Government of Greenland does not mention children of homeless parents in Denmark’s fifth periodic report.** There is no data showing how many children are placed in alternative care due to their parents’ housing conditions but there are examples of children who live in rehousing facilities with their parents, just as the Spokesperson for Children during her visit to East Greenland learned that some families live with random people when they are evicted. There are several problems in relation to this. Among other things it is mentioned in the report “Hjemløshed i Grønland” (“Homelessness in Greenland”) that the children cannot develop properly when they experience a lack of privacy and in some cases are victims of abuse during their rehousing.

There is uncertainty about the number of homeless people in Greenland. In the report “Hjemløshed i Grønland” (“Homelessness in Greenland”) from 2013 it is stated that approximately 600 people without permanent address have been registered in 2012. Add to this number the households in rehousing programmes, corresponding to about 250 persons (Andersen & Hansen, 2013).

In one case a family of two adults and seven children live in one room (Andersen & Hansen, 2013). As a result, children in rehousing programmes do not have the same possibilities of development as other children. The parents also state that the children are stigmatized and are ashamed of their situation. Rehousing also means that the families will have to move every 2 or 3 months, which creates a sense of insecurity because the children will have to relate to new tenants in the same apartment. **MIO finds it problematic that better solutions for families with children are not provided when the families are evicted. The children need secure and stable living conditions in order to learn and to develop.**

Read more Child poverty and in the annex.

## 7.6 Measures to protect children from substance abuse (art. 33)

### TREATMENT OF CHILDREN WITH SUBSTANCE ABUSE

**No treatment possibilities for children with substance abuse exist in Greenland yet.** MIO finds it worth noticing that in Denmark’s fifth periodic report it is stated that free treatment is offered to all citizens including children. The Finance Bill 2017 states that the expenditure for free treatment of substance abuse for children and adolescents from 2017 will be included in the joint allocation for free treatment for substance abuse (Government of Greenland, 2016). Children and adolescents whose parents have a substance abuse are offered the possibility of participating in a support programme for children and adolescents (BEM and TAPP<sup>8</sup>), and enter into a joint treatment programme with their families. The result is that existing offers are only for children *as relatives*. If a young pregnant woman has a substance abuse problem or is suspected of having substance abuse problem, she is informed of the possible consequences of the abuse for the foetus, of abuse treatment and family treatment options and that the child may be removed from the home either voluntarily or by force if the substance abuse continues (Tax and Welfare Commission, 2011).

**MIO knows from interviews with social case workers that there is a need for substance abuse treatment for children and adolescents from 12 years of age (Olesen, 2014).**

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<sup>8</sup> BEM = *Børn er også mennesker* (Children are also humans), TAPP = *Teenage Power Program*

## Recommendations to Disability, basic health and welfare

### MIO RECOMMENDS THAT THE CRC ASK THE FOLLOWING TO THE GOVERNMENT OF GREENLAND:

- How does the Government of Greenland intend to secure equal access to health services for all children in Greenland?
- Is work being done to create a special children's ward with special qualification aimed at children?
- Are there ongoing measures to monitor social inequality in relation to health?
- Do health policies within the field of day care centres and schools exist?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to prioritize focus on data and actions within the area of disabilities?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure that children with disabilities have the right and possibility to express freely their opinions on treatment, services, and support?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure qualifications for all teachers in relation to children with special needs?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to work out regional and local strategies for the prevention and treatment of children and adolescents in order to reduce the suicide rate?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to work out regional and local strategies for initiatives within the fields of sexuality and sex education in light of the rates of abortions and sexually transmitted diseases?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to secure accessible data within the field of child psychiatry in order to make proper initiatives?
- Does the Government of Greenland envisage the launch of specific actions to reduce social inequality and does the Government of Greenland still work on the definition of a poverty line?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure safe living conditions for children of homeless parents?
- Does the Government of Greenland work on the establishment of treatment for substance abuse aimed at children and adolescents with substance abuse?

## 8 EDUCATION, LEISURE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The following concerns MIO's observations to Denmark's fifth periodic report sections VIII.A., VIII.B., VIII.C. and VIII.D. on education, leisure and cultural activities.

### 8.1 Right to education, including vocational training and guidance (art. 28)

#### EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Denmark's fifth periodic report describes how it is Government of Greenland's responsibility to allocate and distribute resources in the country to ensure equal opportunities for education for children and adolescents. After completing lower secondary education, a large share of the children never go on to secondary education. **Children and adolescents in Greenland do not yet have the same opportunities for education. According to recommendations by the CRC, MIO estimates that this area is still a very big challenge. Children's right to education regardless of social and cultural background is a field still requiring further resources and targeted development. Furthermore, the children and adolescents whom this concerns are not involved and there is a lack of strategies and action plans respecting their social and cultural difference to solve the problem.**

#### GAP BETWEEN LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION AND FURTHER EDUCATION

**A very large part of children in lower secondary education do not have access to further education. Due to lack of qualifications in for example languages, many children and adolescents do not have equal access to further education.**

Most educational programs in Greenland are taught in Danish. Access requirement is therefore a certain minimum level of Danish and English. In 2015 "just about half (48.8 %) of the students in the 10th grade received insufficient grades (F-FX) or just sufficient (E) which showed their ability to demonstrate the minimum degree of requirements for fulfilling the goals of the subject" (Inerisaavik, 2015).

In comparison the numbers for English are 61.6 % (FX/F: 38.4 % and E: 23.2 %) and it is estimated that too large a group of children in a year completing lower secondary education do not have sufficient English grades to access secondary education (ibid.).

Besides the lack of qualifications in languages, the Spokesperson for children has noticed under her hearings in Greenland that the schools lack resources for the right special educational and socio-pedagogical support which many children need. This has to be seen in light of the large number of neglected children in Greenland. These children and adolescents also experience unequal access to preparation for further education.

### GAP BETWEEN TOWN SCHOOLS AND SETTLEMENT SCHOOLS

**It is the responsibility of the Government of Greenland to ensure that Greenlandic children continue their education after completing lower secondary education. Due to linguistic problems in education as well as a lack of trained teachers, students in settlements experience larger challenges in regard to opportunities for further education than students from towns.**

In the school year 2014/2015 the total number of schools was 83. Twenty-three of these are in towns while 60 schools are located in settlements (Inerisaavik, 2015). In the school year 2014/2015 more than half of the teachers were temporary teachers. This is in sharp contrast to the towns where almost 80 % of the teachers are trained professionals (Department of Education and Research, 2011). This creates a large gap in the quality of teaching between towns and settlements (ibid).

### TEACHING AND RESULTS

The report "Analyser og resultater af trintest 2014 i den grønlandske folkeskole" ("Analyses and results of nationwide tests 2014 in Greenlandic Primary and Lower Secondary Education") shows that students in settlements do better in Greenlandic than children in towns, as well in maths, but worse in the foreign languages Danish and English (Inerisaavik, 2015). It is to be noticed, though, that the average test results cover big differences among the settlement schools (Inerisaavik, 2015). The direct cause of the better result in Greenlandic is that this language is more widely used in the settlements. This is problematic because teaching is done in

Danish in many further educational programs (Department of Education, and Research, 2011). **The qualifications of students in settlements in foreign languages are crucial for their opportunities for further education which is why they risk being prevented from taking an education.**

### SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION

MIO is aware that under Greenlandic Act no. 15 of 3 December 2012 on primary and lower secondary education (Inatsisartutlov nr. 15 af 3. december om folkeskolen) special needs education must be offered. MIO has been informed by the Teachers' Union that there is still a lack of trained teachers in this area and there is a lack of a common definition and understanding of children with special needs.

## 8.2 Aims of education with reference also to quality of education (art. 29)

### THE ADOLESCENT TARGET GROUP

**In Denmark's fifth periodic report the Government of Greenland shows the percentage of young Greenlanders between 16-18 who are not enrolled in an educational program. MIO asks for further examination and involvement of this group as well as targeted initiatives to make sure more adolescents enrol in education. MIO also asks for research into the reasons why such a large share of this age group 16-18 are not enrolled in an educational program and why this group has been on the increase in recent years.**

There are different definitions of "the adolescent target group". In its Political and Economic Report 2016, the Government of Greenland define this group as young people aged 16-18, who are not enrolled in secondary education or attending a continuation school. This group made up 63.5 % of all adolescents in Greenland in 2014 (Department of Finance, 2016). If this group is defined as adolescents who are neither enrolled in an educational program nor have a job, the total percentage has risen from approx. 44 % in 2009 to approx. 52 % i 2014 (Department of Finance, 2016). In the National Education Plan II from 2016 the Government of Greenland states its objectives for the development of this group. The objective is to reduce the number of young peo-

ple in this group to 25 % by 20124. The initiatives to achieve this goal include stays in folk high schools and continuation schools (Department of Education, Culture, Research and Church, 2016). **MIO recommends that further work is done to illuminate the composition of the adolescent target group due to the limited knowledge of who the adolescents in this group are, why they become part of this group, and what their needs are.** Therefore, MIO calls for initiatives respecting the young person and his/her life situation in order to help the person move on.

### **8.3 Cultural rights of children belonging to indigenous and minority groups (art. 30)**

All children in Greenland, regardless of place, language, and cultural background, have the right to education cf. General Comment No. 11 (2009). The Government of Greenland must safeguard measures ensuring the opportunity for all children regardless of place, language or cultural background to complete elementary education preparing them for further education.

### **8.4 Rest, play, leisure, recreation and cultural and artistic activities (art. 31)**

MIO refers to section 6.5 Parents' common responsibilities, assistance to parents and the provision of childcare services (art. 18).

## **Recommendations to Education, leisure and cultural activities**

### **MIO RECOMMENDS THAT THE CRC ASK THE FOLLOWING TO THE GOVERNMENT OF GREENLAND:**

- How does the Government of Greenland intend to secure that all children and adolescents are prepared for further education, regardless of place, language or culture?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure that students in need of special education receive this by teachers with the necessary qualifications?

- Does the Government of Greenland intend to examine the barriers for further education by involving the adolescent target group?

## **9 SPECIAL PROTECTION MEASURES**

The following concerns MIO's observations to Denmark's fifth periodic report sections IX.A., IX.B., IX.C. and IX.D. as well as X. on special protection measures.

MIO refers to section 7.5 Standard of living and measures, including material assistance and support programmes with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing, to ensure the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development and reduce poverty and inequality (art. 27, paras. 1-3) concerning rehousing of children.

### **9.1 Children outside their country of origin seeking refugee protection, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, internally displaced children, migrant children and children affected by migration (art. 22)**

No comments to Denmark fifth periodic report.

### **9.2 Children belonging to a minority or an indigenous group (art. 30)**

#### **INUIT**

The Greenlandic people is part of the indigenous people Inuit. After implementation of self-rule, the Govern-

ment of Greenland has recognized its responsibility to implement ILO C169 and the UN Declaration on Indigenous peoples for example in connection with the latest report under the UN UPR (Universal Periodic Review) process in February 2011, where the Government of Greenland writes: *"F. Indigenous peoples 108. On 18 January 1996, at the request of Greenland, Denmark ratified ILO Convention No. 169 of 27 June 1989 Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries. Greenland reports jointly with Denmark to the Convention.*

Inuit covers many different cultures; this is also true in Greenland. The size of the country provides for big differences in the way of life of people in the north, east and south/west. **MIO stresses, however, that children and adolescents live in close contact with nature, with their own traditions and without the same opportunities for education, information and social and health services.**

MIO refers furthermore to section 6.6 Children deprived of family environment (art. 20) on the Right to cultural identity in connection with placement in alternative care as well as section 8.3 Cultural rights of children belonging to indigenous and minority groups (art. 30).

### **9.3 Economic exploitation, including child labour, with specific reference to applicable minimum ages (art. 32)**

No comments to Denmark's fifth periodic report.

### **9.4 Use of children in the illicit production and trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances (art. 33)**

No comments to Denmark's fifth periodic report.

### **9.5 Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (art. 34)**

"Greenland requested in 2012 that Denmark took steps to revoke/abrogate the territorial reservation for Greenland to the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. This request has not yet been met" (Greenlandic Council for Human Rights, 2015). **MIO recommends that Greenland accede to this protocol.**

In Denmark's fifth periodic report it is described how children prostitute themselves for material goods. MIO can confirm this and is aware, through counselling sessions that few children and adolescents offer sex in exchange for material goods such as cigarettes, alcohol and phone cards for their cell phones. However, there are no official statistics on this topic.

In 2014 there were 52 cases of violation of the Greenlandic Criminal Code regarding sexual relations with a child under the age of 15, and 7 cases of violation regarding sexual relations by seduction of a person under the age of 18 ([www.politi.gl](http://www.politi.gl)).

**Continued data collection must be ensured on the extent of sexual exploitation of children, including the circumstances and the type of exploitation and abuse.**

The field of sexual abuse is further commented on in section 5.1 Abuse and neglect, including physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration (arts. 19 and 39).

### **9.6 Sale, trafficking and abduction (art. 35)**

Greenland has now acceded to the Hague Convention. MIO has no further comments to Denmark's fifth periodic report.

### **9.7 Other forms of exploitation (art. 36)**

MIO refers to section 5.1 Abuse and neglect, including physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration (arts. 19 and 39) and section 9.5 Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (art. 34).

## **9.8 Sentencing of children, in particular the prohibition of capital punishment and life imprisonment (art. 37 (a)) and the existence of alternative sanctions based on a restorative approach**

The Greenlandic system is based upon a Criminal Code and actions rather than a penal code as is seen for instance in Denmark (Balvig). This has resulted in, among other things, Isikkivik, the only secure institution in Greenland for young offenders where a target approach is to help the young offenders gain insight into their own problem areas, based upon their action plans and in cooperation with their parents.

In 2015 young offenders under the age of 14 account for 0.6 % of all sentences for persons under the age of 19. The sentence “notification of social services” is imposed in relation to persons under the age of 15 with a sentence. Persons at the age of 18 account for the majority of young offenders with a sentence with 19 %. The most common sanctions for persons under the age of 19 are fines and notification of the social services which account for 34 % of all sentences in 2015 (Statistics Greenland, 2016).

Since the opening of Isikkivik in 2014 no young offenders under 18 has been placed in any of the institutions of the Probation Service in Greenland (Director, Isikkivik). The young offenders are placed in a separate location from adults as prescribed by article 37 (c) of the UN Convention of the right of the child. If adolescents are placed in institutions of the Probation Service, it is only for brief periods of time, until an adequate socio-pedagogical placement is found (Chief of Police for Greenland; Director of the Probation Service). In 2014 there were two admittances to the secure institution (and one discharge), in 2015 three admittances (four discharges) and in 2016 so far four admittances (to discharges) (Isikkivik). Up until this date there has not been a waiting list for the secure institution (ibid.). The adolescents in this unit are between 15 and 17 years of age.

The staff’s job is more to act as counsellors and support for the young offenders rather than educationists (Isikkivik). **MIO finds it recommendable that the staff working with the young offenders is specially trained within the socio-pedagogical field. It is also important that they hold the qualifications necessary to coordinate the actions for young offenders during their placement and after-care. It is important that placement is done with the goal of social reintegration in mind. MIO follows the development in this area.**

## **9.9 children deprived of their liberty, and measures to ensure that any arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be used as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate time and that legal and other assistance is promptly provided (art. 37 (b)–(d))**

In its recommendations to the fourth periodic report, the CRC recommended that the conditions for pre-trial detention of persons under the age of 18 be defined and, as far as possible, limit the duration of the detention as well as prohibit the placement of persons under the age of 18 in solitary confinement (Hansen, 2014). According to the Greenlandic Probation Service the opinion is that detention of a person under the age of 18 should be avoided. Adolescents are only placed in institutions with adults while awaiting the proper placement – and this only for a very limited time and only dependent upon the domestic traffic situation (Director of the Probation Service). The Establishment of Isikkivik seems to have had a positive effect on the placement of adolescents in institutions of the Probation Service. The young people placed in Isikkivik are often well-known by the social services before they are placed and come from socially vulnerable families (ibid.). **MIO finds it important to ensure the protection of the adolescent, from detainment to placement.**

MIO refers to section 9.8 concerning further information on children and adolescents in police custody.

## **9.10 Children in armed conflicts (art. 38), including physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration (art. 39)**

No comments to Denmark’s fifth periodic report.

## 9.11 Physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration (art. 39)

MIO refers to 9.8 Sentencing of children, in particular the prohibition of capital punishment and life imprisonment (art. 37 (a)) and the existence of alternative sanctions based on a restorative approach.

## 9.12 Administration of juvenile justice (art. 40), the existence of specialised and separate courts and the applicable Minimum age of criminal responsibility

The administration of justice has not been transferred to Greenland and is safeguarded by Denmark. Under the administration of justice is the Council for the Greenlandic Judicial System (Rådet for Grønlands Retsvæsen).

## Recommendations to Special protection measures

### MIO RECOMMENDS THAT THE CRC ASK THE FOLLOWING TO THE GOVERNMENT OF GREENLAND:

- Does Greenland intend to accede to the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure continuous data on the extent of sexual abuse of children, including the circumstances and the types of abuse?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure that young offenders in secure institutions are taken care of by staff with qualifications within social reintegration?

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## CONCLUSIONS

MIO recognizes the actions and ideas of the Government of Greenland to improve the conditions for children and adolescents in Greenland, but is also surprised that Denmark's fifth periodic report does not describe or take into account the implementation of the Convention in practice at all levels of society, national, municipal and local.

Data and statistics should be more prominent in the report in order to give the CRC a clear image of the number of children and adolescents, who experience abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect. The description of placement in alternative care and of the educational opportunities ought to also be more detailed and clearer in relation to the gaps between Convention, legislation, and practice.

MIO sees important challenges in Greenland in relation to the observance by the Government of the UN Convention on the Right of the Child especially on protection (article 19) as well as challenges to ensure children and adolescents a proper education (article 29) preparing them to lead a responsible and healthy life. With the involvement of the local population, increased importance should be attached to regional and local strategies and initiatives to promote equal access for all children and adolescents in Greenland regardless of place, language, and culture. This will bring meaning to the many good initiatives and increase the protection of and support to children and adolescents.

MIO sees a need for improvement within the field of data collection and statistics to ensure that the implementation of further initiatives is based upon knowledge and analyses of current conditions.

MIO thanks for the opportunity to draft this parallel report to the section on Greenland in Denmark's fifth periodic report and thus contribute to strengthening the rights of children and adolescents in Greenland, in particular their right to equal access and protection.

Below is a list of MIO's recommendations to the CRC.

**FOR ALL OF THE ABOVE MIO RECOMMENDS THAT THE CRC ASK THE FOLLOWING TO THE GOVERNMENT OF GREENLAND:**

## **Recommendations to General measures of implementation (art. 4, 42, 44(6)):**

- What measures will be taken to further data collection and to follow up on surveys
- How will it be ensured that the gap between the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and practice is narrowed?
- Does Greenland intend to adopt the Optional Protocol of 28 February 2012 to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child concerning individual possibilities to complain?
- Does Greenland intend to make the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child a permanent part of the curriculum of relevant educational programs?

## **Recommendations to General principles:**

- Does the Government of Greenland intend to work for the finalizing of action plans in cooperation with the municipalities to ensure that current legislation is observed, including the hearing of children?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to draft a plan for training of professionals within the field of children?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to work for prioritizing the field of children and adolescents when the Government and the municipalities allocate their resources?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to work for a revision of the legal framework within discrimination and draft a bill protecting all groups in society against discrimination, within the labour market as well as outside thereof.
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure permanent funding of national helplines (telephone, text etc.) as well as longer opening hours?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to set up regional and local strategies in cooperation with the population in order to reduce the number of suicides?

## **Recommendations to Violence against children:**

- Does the Government of Greenland intend to launch preventive campaigns against violence and abuse aimed at children and adolescents?
- What measures does the Government of Greenland intend to initiate in order to prevent violence and abuse so children do not become victims of or witnesses to violence or abuse?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure assistance and social recovery to children and adolescents who experience violence, including psychological violence, and abuse?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to elaborate regional and local strategies for the prevention of substance misuse in cooperation with the local population in order for the initiatives to have the best possible effect?

## **Recommendations to Family environment and alternative care:**

- Does the Government of Greenland intend to prioritize early action and in this context establish family school to empower the parents?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to reduce the number of placements of children and adolescents?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure continuous data in the future within the field of placed children and adolescents?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to secure regular supervision of children in placement care, both in residential institutions and in foster families?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure children in school hostels and dorms special protection and help?

## Recommendations to Disability, basic health and welfare:

- How does the Government of Greenland intend to secure equal access to health services for all children in Greenland?
- Is work being done to create a special children's ward with special qualification aimed at children?
- Are there ongoing measures to monitor social inequality in relation to health?
- Do health policies within the field of daycare centers and schools exist?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to prioritize focus on data and actions within the area of disabilities?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure that children with disabilities have the right and possibility to express freely their opinions on treatment, services, and support?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure qualifications for all teachers in relation to children with special needs?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to work out regional and local strategies for the prevention and treatment of children and adolescents in order to reduce the suicide rate?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to work out regional and local strategies for initiatives within the fields of sexuality and sex education in light of the rates of abortions and sexually transmitted diseases?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to secure accessible data within the field of child psychiatry in order to make proper initiatives?
- Does the Government of Greenland envisage the launch of specific actions to reduce social inequality and does the Government of Greenland still work on the definition of a poverty line?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure safe living conditions for children of homeless parents?
- Does the Government of Greenland work on the establishment of treatment for substance abuse aimed at children and adolescents with substance abuse?

## Recommendations to Education, leisure and cultural activities:

- How does the Government of Greenland intend to secure that all children and adolescents are prepared for further education, regardless of place, language or culture?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure that students in need of special education receive this by teachers with the necessary qualifications?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to examine the barriers for further education by involving the adolescent target group?

## Recommendations to Special protection measures:

- Does Greenland intend to accede to the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure continuous data on the extent of sexual abuse of children, including the circumstances and the types of abuse?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure that young offenders in secure institutions are taken care of by staff with qualifications within social reintegration?

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# ANNEX

## 1

### The general situation in Greenland

Children and adolescents in towns and settlements live under very different conditions. Of the total number of inhabitants, 13,913 are children (Statistics Greenland, 2016). The geographical conditions pose specific infrastructure challenges as it is only possible to travel between towns and settlements by air or by sea. Internet access is also very costly depending on the connection being by sea cable, radio chain, or satellite. These conditions also affect the possible offers to children and result in a certain difference between town and settlement. At the same time, they make it difficult to implement policies and strategies.

In Greenland especially the consumption of alcohol is common, and the public health research from 2014 shows that 48 % of the population misuse alcohol at least once a month (Bjerregaard, Niclasen, Frederiksen and Aidt 2015). 27 % of all children are estimated to be victims of parental neglect to some extent. (Christensen et al 2008). 4.2 % of all children and adolescents were placed in alternative care in 2015 (Department of Family and Legal Affairs, 2015). The average age for children placed in alternative care was 13.7 years in 2010 (Tax and Welfare Commission, 2011). In the survey, "Unges trivsel i Grønland 2011" ("Young Welfare in Greenland 2011") it is stated that 9.4 % of all boys and 32 % of all girls had been victims of sexual abuse or assault by an adult and/or peers (Pedersen and Bjerregaard 2012). The number of abortions is high in Greenland; in 2013 the number of abortions exceeded the number of births. The number of abortions amounted to 865 in 2014, of which 12.5 % among minors (Statistics Greenland, 2016). From 1970-2011 the average number of suicides per year was 40 (Bjerregaard and Larsen 2015). Compared to the size of the population, there are 7.4 times more suicides in Greenland compared to Denmark. From 1990-2013, 141 children and adolescents aged 11-17 have committed suicide (Statistics Greenland [www.stat.gl](http://www.stat.gl)). The majority of suicides are committed by young men aged 15-24 (Rønne et al., 2011).

The labour force amounts to 26,764 people aged 18-64. The unemployment rate is 10.3 % of the labour force. The average personal gross income was DKK 218,491 in 2014, whereas in the towns it was DKK 226,892 and 157,958 in the settlements. In 2014 a total number of 17,287 persons received some kind of social benefits. Of these, 8,606 persons received social welfare benefits while 3,254 persons received unemployment benefits (Statistics Greenland, 2016). Approximately one third of the Greenlandic population has completed an education or professional training.

## Out-of-home placement

Several surveys have pointed out that there is limited knowledge about the number of placed children and their conditions. (Deloitte 2011, Bengtsson and Jakobsen 2009). Therefore, there is a significant need for more and more recent knowledge in this field. "Analyse og evaluering af døgninstitutionsområdet" ("Analysis and evaluation of residential institutions") by Deloitte in 2011 showed that the municipalities do not follow up on placements on a regular basis, but it is often the residential institution initiating a dialogue. In the report "Afdækning, Handleplaner, Anbragte children and adolescents" ("Mapping, Action Plans, Placed Children and Adolescents") as well as the latest supervisory reports from 2015-16 it is seen that the follow-up on action plans within the field of out-of-home placements is insufficient or lacking. The Finance Bill 2017 states that residential institutions determine their pedagogical policies based upon the residents' problems through the action plans they receive when the children are transferred (Government of Greenland, 2016). This will be problematic if there are no action plans. Especially when the children, who are placed in alternative care, are severely neglected and have several problems (ibid.). The Department of Family and Justice established a mobile task force whose objective is to support the municipal social services in writing and updating the action plans (Government of Greenland 2015). As described, there are, however, still major challenges in this area.

### 3

## **Child poverty and rehousing of children**

The "HBSC Survey 2014" uses the number of children who go to bed hungry or to school hungry as an indicator of child poverty. 17 % of the children replied in 2002 and 2006 that they often went to bed or to school hungry, while the share was 14 % in 2014. The survey also indicates that there are geographical differences when it comes to the number of children going to bed or to school hungry: In the capital Nuuk 8 % replied that they always or often go to bed or to school hungry, while the rates are 12 % in towns and 17 % in settlements in 2014 (Nielsen 2015). At municipal level, two municipalities (the Municipality of Kujalleq and the Municipality of Qaasuitsup) show a larger percentage of poor children than the national average.

According to the report "Hjemløshed i Grønland", approximately 100 households are evicted every year, mainly due to being in arrears with their rent. Of these, about half receive an offer of rehousing; families with children are given highest priority. Housing associations in Greenland are not obligated to offer rehousing to evicted persons, but will usually offer rehousing facilities (INI.gl). Usually each household will get one room, meaning that families with children will also only have one room.

## **MIO recommends that the CRC ask the following to the Government of Greenland:**

### **Recommendations to General measures of implementation (art. 4, 42, 44(6)):**

- What measures will be taken to further data collection and to follow up on surveys
- How will it be ensured that the gap between the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and practice is narrowed?
- Does Greenland intend to adopt the Optional Protocol of 28 February 2012 to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child concerning individual possibilities to complain?
- Does Greenland intend to make the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child a permanent part of the curriculum of relevant educational programs?

### **Recommendations to General principles:**

- Does the Government of Greenland intend to work for the finalizing of action plans in cooperation with the municipalities to ensure that current legislation is observed, including the hearing of children?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to draft a plan for training of professionals within the field of children?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to work for prioritizing the field of children and adolescents when the Government and the municipalities allocate their resources?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to work for a revision of the legal framework within discrimination and draft a bill protecting all groups in society against discrimination, within the labour market as well as outside thereof.
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure per-

manent funding of national helplines (telephone, text etc.) as well as longer opening hours?

- Does the Government of Greenland intend to set up regional and local strategies in cooperation with the population in order to reduce the number of suicides?

### **Recommendations to Violence against children:**

- Does the Government of Greenland intend to launch preventive campaigns against violence and abuse aimed at children and adolescents?
- What measures does the Government of Greenland intend to initiate in order to prevent violence and abuse so children do not become victims of or witnesses to violence or abuse?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure assistance and social recovery to children and adolescents who experience violence, including psychological violence, and abuse?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to elaborate regional and local strategies for the prevention of substance misuse in cooperation with the local population in order for the initiatives to have the best possible effect?

### **Recommendations to Family environment and alternative care:**

- Does the Government of Greenland intend to prioritize early action and in this context establish family school to empower the parents?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to reduce the number of placements of children and adolescents?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure continuous data in the future within the field of placed children and adolescents?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to secure regular supervision of children in placement care, both in residential institutions and in foster families?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure children in school hostels and dorms special protection and help?

## Recommendations to Disability, basic health and welfare:

- How does the Government of Greenland intend to secure equal access to health services for all children in Greenland?
- Is work being done to create a special children's ward with special qualification aimed at children?
- Are there ongoing measures to monitor social inequality in relation to health?
- Do health policies within the field of daycare centers and schools exist?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to prioritize focus on data and actions within the area of disabilities?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure that children with disabilities have the right and possibility to express freely their opinions on treatment, services, and support?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure qualifications for all teachers in relation to children with special needs?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to work out regional and local strategies for the prevention and treatment of children and adolescents in order to reduce the suicide rate?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to work out regional and local strategies for initiatives within the fields of sexuality and sex education in light of the rates of abortions and sexually transmitted diseases?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to secure accessible data within the field of child psychiatry in order to make proper initiatives?
- Does the Government of Greenland envisage the launch of specific actions to reduce social inequality and does the Government of Greenland still work on the definition of a poverty line?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure safe living conditions for children of homeless parents?
- Does the Government of Greenland work on the establishment of treatment for substance abuse aimed at children and adolescents with substance abuse?

## Recommendations to Education, leisure and cultural activities:

- How does the Government of Greenland intend to secure that all children and adolescents are prepared for further education, regardless of place, language or culture?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure that students in need of special education receive this by teachers with the necessary qualifications?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to examine the barriers for further education by involving the adolescent target group?

## Recommendations to Special protection measures:

- Does Greenland intend to accede to the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography?
- Does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure continuous data on the extent of sexual abuse of children, including the circumstances and the types of abuse?
- How does the Government of Greenland intend to ensure that young offenders in secure institutions are taken care of by staff with qualifications within social reintegration?