

SOME HIGHLIGHTS FROM CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL'S STUDY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

We feel our juvenile justice systems have the responsibility to rehabilitate youth and integrate them back into society rather than subject them to more violence

(source: North American children and young people)

We feel that primary prevention begins in the home - with proper communication between parents and children - and with proper implementation on a personal, direct and engaging level in schools. With proper education and preparation, children will be less likely to react violently to situations as they grow

(source: North American children and young people)

In 'violence against children', children are the ones who are being hurt. We have to voice out and take action in order to protect ourselves! We are children. We can communicate with children more easily. We can help to reflect the view of the victims

(source: children and young people from East Asia and the Pacific)

This compilation of children's recommendations from a series of Regional Consultations in 8 regions around the world has been adapted to highlight those most relevant for the CRC Day of General Discussion 'Children without Parental Care' held in Geneva on 16th September 2005. Two under 18 participants from the Europe-Central Asia regional consultation were supported by Save the Children to participate in this meeting and to present an analysis of children's recommendations from all the Regional Consultations.¹

¹ A document containing a compilation of children's recommendations from all the 8 Regional Consultations is been produced by Save the Children/the UN Study Secretariat. It contains general recommendations from all the violence 'settings' brought together under different headings, specific recommendations on the various settings of the UN Study, specific recommendations on some of the different forms of violence which are of most common concern to children and a complete set of children's declarations, statements, recommendations from the Regional Consultations or preparatory meetings. This document can be found on www.violencestudy.org, www.childrenandviolence.org, www.savethechildren.net

Children's participation is central to the ongoing UN Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children, both in terms of the content of the Study's report to the General Assembly and in fulfilling the Study's mandate to include, encourage and facilitate the participation of children and young people. Their participation - as advisors, researchers and as participants in national, regional and global consultations - has given greater importance to children's violence, has recognised their concerns and recommendations and, most importantly, has provided a platform for the recognition of children's own actions to end violence against girls and boys.

One of the roles of the Study Secretariat, with support from UN agencies and NGOs, has been to support the ethical & meaningful participation of children and young people in the Regional Consultations. Thus far, a total of 260 children have had direct input to Regional Consultations (29 children attended the Caribbean consultation, South Asia: 25, West & Central Africa: 25, North America: 22, East Asia: 26, Middle East & North Africa: 27, Europe & Central Asia: 24, East & Southern Africa: 55, Latin America 30

In some regions, the Regional-level Consultations were preceded by national processes where children identified key issues, made recommendations and selected their representatives for the Regional Consultation. Immediately before the Regional Consultations most regions held a children's consultation or preparatory meeting.

This compilation of children's recommendations provides key duty bearers (local, national, regional and international) with a framework with which to follow up on the recommendations that children and young people have made through these national and regional processes, to develop concrete actions and to involve children in their implementation. Children will also advocate for these recommendations to be implemented, primarily at local and national levels but also at regional and international levels.

**WHAT SHOULD BE DONE TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN
A SUMMARY OF CHILDREN'S RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE REGIONAL
CONSULTATIONS ON THE UN STUDY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN
WHICH ARE RELEVANT FOR THE CRC DAY OF GENERAL DISCUSSION,
16.09.05**

1. All Settings

IN ALL THE REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS CHILDREN HIGHLIGHTED THAT THEY WOULD LIKE TO SEE CONCRETE ACTIONS TO PREVENT AND ADDRESS VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN.

As a statement of principle the children participating in the West and Central Africa consultation stated that they too have duties, such as respecting their parents, teachers and adults in general. But they cannot live up to these duties if the adults do not do their part in acknowledging their duty, that is to say respecting the rights of children. This was taken up as one of the general recommendations formulated during this regional consultation.

INFORMATION SYSTEMS/MONITORING

- *More concrete actions to address violence against children. Close the gap between research and recommendations to make sure that research outcomes are used to develop policies and actions to address violence*
- *Engage children and young people in the research process - identifying and conducting relevant research on violence against children. Publicise and disseminate the results of this research in age specific and child friendly form*
- *Produce child friendly information material in local languages - posters, leaflets, films, comic books - and promote communication (for example, through e-groups) to help children better protect themselves against violence and to help them discuss and organise collective action*
- *Encourage children to be part of the monitoring of programmes to end violence against children, including the development of child led indicators*
- *Appoint a representative for child protection at the local level to receive the complaints of children and to work out their solutions seriously*
- *Establish associations at the local level to follow up approved plans of action and to report regularly to the central authorities*
- *Prepare reports from children and experts and present them to officials so that they get seriously considered*

LEGISLATION

- *Enact national laws to protect children from all forms of violence at home, in schools, communities and institutions*
- *Develop mechanisms to ensure that laws are strictly implemented*
- *Governments should ensure that laws are widely known by everybody*
- *Encourage governments to consult children when developing laws on violence against children*

- *Establish special child courts to deal with issues of violence against children, which uphold the rights of children and which have proper child protection mechanisms*
- *Legislation to end CSA and physical and psychological punishment of children and its implementation*

POLICY/COORDINATION

- *Consult with children while developing policies and programmes to end violence against them*
- *Reduce poverty as poverty can cause stress within families*
- *Increase the amount of aid given to families in need and make sure that it is specifically earmarked for children. It is important to give support to low income families to make sure that they have enough economic resources so that their opportunities are not limited*
- *Provide more awareness about and funding to ensure that the services (child welfare) in place are better used and can help to prevent violence against children*
- *Dedicate more funds to prevention programmes, which will reduce the longer-term rehabilitation costs*
- *Make sure that children who are victims of violence are not rejected by society*

ADVOCACY/AWARENESS/MOBILISATION

- *Advocate for the establishment of an independent ombudsperson in all countries with special provisions for children who cannot be easily reached*
- *Raise public awareness about human rights and children's rights, in particular by developing and distributing educational publications, video clips and ensuring that the CRC is on the educational curriculum in schools*
- *Organise seminars in schools and in the community for children, parents and teachers so that everyone understands what violence is and to inform people that violence is wrong*
- *Prepare awareness publications (posters, wall magazines, leaflets, flyers etc.) that raise children's, families and communities' awareness of the harmful consequences of violence*
- *Set up websites and media channels concerned with protecting children from violence and which allow them to present their problems and seek appropriate solutions*
- *Encourage people to intervene personally or alert the authorities when violence happens*
- *Provide children with information where they can report violence and where they can be safe if they report violence*
- *Carry out awareness campaigns for children to make them aware of the services and protection measures already available to them*
- *Let children and adults visit residential institutions*

- *Help young people who have been through the (institutional) systems to talk to those who haven't been through the systems - establish permanent committees of children from inside and outside institutions to help each other*

PREVENTION/SERVICES

- *Help families to build relationships based on trust and communication through the provision of appropriate parental education social assistance, services, and counseling*
- *Provide social assistance, social workers and psychologists to families who are violent or are at risk of becoming violent so that checks can be made on children and their welfare*
- *Prevent children who have been subjected to violence from returning to violent families and to help them integrate well into other families*

RESPONSE/SERVICES

- *Ensure a fast response from relevant authorities to complaints made by children and young people*
- *Ensure that schools make a complaints procedure available to children who need to report violence in any setting*
- *Ensure that there are professionals or specialists that children can trust who are available for help and support both inside and outside schools (for example, through help-lines or hot-lines, through supervised internet forums or chats where children can seek help, communicate and post personal messages, as social workers, psychologists or tutors who provide the bridge or connection between the child or young person, the family and the school)*
- *Create child help lines for children in rural areas and urban centers for taking action against violence*
- *Set up peer counselling or support mechanisms to help children*
- *Ensure follow up to the UN Study in all countries*

CAPACITY BUILDING

- *Help young parents or young people who intend to become parents to understand the psychology and behaviour of their children*

CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION

- *Adults should listen to children's suggestions on how to address violence against children and activate them*
- *Invest in and support children participation initiatives*
- *Promote children's groups, clubs, parliaments, organisations and initiatives and involve them in developing actions to address violence against children*
- *Help and support child led organisations and initiatives so that they can prevent and fight against all forms of violence committed against children*

- *Youth engagement and interventions are key because children can relate to other youth*
- *Let children know about their rights*
- *Let children be involved in family life*
- *Let children's choices be heard*

RESOURCES

- *Provide funds for helping children to participate in a meaningful way*
- *Provide funds for developing child friendly information and child friendly services*

2. SPECIFIC SETTINGS

The UN Study on Violence against Children is looking at the following settings where violence occurs:

- *in the home and family*
- *in schools and education settings*
- *in other institutional settings, including children in conflict with the law*
- *in the community and on the streets*
- *in work situations*

Each regional consultation discussed the settings most appropriate to the region. Children formulated recommendations on violence against children in the following settings - schools, street and community, home and family, residential facilities/juvenile justice settings and in the work-place. The recommendations relating to the home and family and residential facilities/juvenile justice settings are most relevant to the CRC Day of General Discussion on Children without Parental Care.

HOME AND FAMILY

- *Take action against corporal punishment in families by encouraging parents/guardians to have an open dialogue with children and promote positive discipline*
- *Parents and guardians must be educated in non-violent means of communicating with and disciplining their children*
- *Need to develop parental education and distribute information and knowledge about alternative child education models*
- *Help parents learn about bringing up their children without violence and to discipline them in other ways*
- *Family-support institutions need to be revisited, revamped and restructured, ensuring that these institutions' core objectives meet the goals of more adequately equipping our parents to become better guardians and role models*
- *Adults should show love to children and act as examples because we learn from them*

- *Help parents be good role models to ensure their child can develop positive relationships rather than some sort of power relationship*
- *Make parents understand what violence is and that it's wrong*
- *Help parents accept their children for who they are - children - and to understand and listen to their children's problems*
- *Parents should be more connected with their children - listen to them and see things from their point of view*
- *Help parents to avoid using any form of violence, argument, abusive or inappropriate behaviour against their children*
- *Organise information and awareness raising campaigns about violence in families as it is an unknown subject or one that is not talked about*
- *Encourage and help people to report on violence in families that they may know about or witness - for example, neighbours who see that children are beaten or neglected*
- *Provide different sorts of training for parents - for example, on being better parents*

RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES/JUVENILE JUSTICE SETTINGS

- *The judicial system needs to be reformed so that we do not feel threatened and intimidated when reporting instances of abuse against us*
- *Combat the physical, sexual, mental and emotional abuse of children and young people in juvenile justice settings by*
- *Providing daily counselling sessions for children and young people in custody*
- *Improving rehabilitation programmes to improve the quality of life of convicted children and young people*
- *Ensuring an immediate response to a complaint by children and young people - possible transfer or training of staff on how to deal appropriately with children and young people*
- *Appoint multi-disciplinary teams (medical, psychological, social) in institutions and activate their rehabilitation role*
- *Avoid placing young offenders in jail. Provide alternatives such as community service and eliminate life sentences without parole for young people*
- *Make sure that correctional institutions are not places of punishment for children and young people*
- *Make sure that children in residential institutions are thought of as children and not as 'criminal' if they have done something criminal*
- *Give future support of children when they are out of the institution so that they have a place to live, a place to work and continuing education*
- *Help young people who have been through the systems talk to each other*
- *Enable children from orphanages, alternative care centres and children in special needs institutions to participate in children's parliaments and other activities so that the issue of violence in institutions can be raised in these forum*

- *Have outside individuals who are specialised staff to go into institutions to periodically report on the situation of children and young people in institutions. This must include the views and experiences of children and young people and staff Youth worker support*
- *Make residential institutions more visible and in more centralised locations*
- *Allow periodical visits to institutions by the media to let people know what they are like for children and young people*
- *Help young people in institutions report on their situations and write about their experiences*
- *Set up complaint boxes in institutions where children can make complaints which are received and dealt with by the appropriate officials*
- *Government should fund organisations where children can participate and discuss violence in institutions*

STREET AND COMMUNITY

- *Children should be taught about violence in communities so that they know where to go for help and feel able to report it to the authorities*