

Update on the United Nations Study on Violence against Children: oral report

Background note

1. In its resolution 56/138 of 19 December 2001, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to conduct an in-depth study on the question of violence against children, following a recommendation by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. An Independent Expert, Professor Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, was appointed in February 2003 to direct the study, in collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO). The final study report will be presented to the General Assembly in 2006. A child-friendly version will also be produced.

Objectives of the Study

2. The Study will lead to the development of strategies aimed at effectively preventing and combating all forms of violence against children, outlining steps to be taken at the national and international levels for prevention and response, including treatment, recovery and reintegration. It is guided by international human rights treaties, in particular the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the jurisprudence of its Committee on the Rights of the Child and other human rights treaty bodies.

3. The Study focuses on children as victims of violence, although some attention is paid to children as perpetrators of violence against other children. It seeks to provide an understanding of the nature, extent, causes and consequences of different forms of violence against children, taking into account the settings in which violence takes place – including the family, schools, religious institutions, care and residential institutions, detention facilities and prisons, in sports, on the streets and in work situations. Physical, sexual or mental violence and neglect of children by individuals and groups in the course of organized crime, including drug-related organized crime, commercial sexual exploitation and the sale and trafficking of children are also being examined. The Study comes 10 years after the 1996 United Nations study on the impact of armed conflict on children, known as the Machel study (A/51/ 306 and Add. 1). Therefore, violence against children in armed conflict is not addressed explicitly in the present study.

* E/ICEF/2006/10.

Outline of the Study report

4. The Study report to be presented to the General Assembly in 2006 will feature the following chapters:

- (a) an introduction and overview – background information and models for understanding the global context of the situation and conditions in which children live, how they affect children’s vulnerability to violence, and the impact of violence on children’s development;
- (b) an overview of States’ obligations, legal frameworks and agreements;
- (c) violence against children in the home and family;
- (d) violence against children in schools and educational settings;
- (e) violence against children in other institutional settings (orphanages, children in conflict with the law);
- (f) violence against children in work situations;
- (g) violence against children in the community and on the streets;
- (h) conclusions and recommendations.

Developments so far

5. The Independent Expert, Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, presented progress reports to the General Assembly in 2004 and 2005, and also to the Commission on Human Rights in 2004 and 2005. He has emphasized the value of the strategy that he has implemented, including the importance of the nine regional consultations, in building momentum and support from partner agencies and Governments, and the follow-up activities that have emerged so far. In the lead-up to the final report, the focus is on continued mobilization and partner activities to sustain consistent participation from the various stakeholders involved in this process, including representatives of Governments, international organizations, civil society entities, and children. Several elements of follow-up are already in place, especially in the regions, and many countries are already using the platform provided by the Study to extend the reach of effective strategies.

6. The key elements of the Study’s strategy are:

- (a) The questionnaires sent to all Governments worldwide at the beginning of the study process, to which 125 responses have been received. See <http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/study.htm>;
- (b) The call for public submissions and other contributed information. More than 250 public submissions and thousands of other documents have been received;
- (c) Expert and thematic meetings on such topics as juvenile justice, gender-based violence, trafficking, disabilities, the role of faith-based organizations and international mechanisms to protect children from violence;
- (d) Children’s participation as a key strategy in mobilizing partners at international, regional and national levels;

(e) The nine regional consultations, related national consultations and field visits by the Independent Expert, which indicated increased openness by Governments and partners to address the issue of violence against children;

(f) A global communications strategy to involve all partners in advocacy and follow-up.

Preparing for the follow-up to the Study's recommendations

7. UNICEF convened a high-level inter-agency meeting on 2 March which was attended by representatives of OHCHR, WHO, the Division for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Bank, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Development Fund and the United Nations Development Fund for Women. Representatives of the NGO Advisory Panel and Save the Children were also present. All agencies promised to support the implementation of the Study's recommendations and to participate in the global, regional and national launches that are planned for the Study following its adoption by the General Assembly.

8. A follow-up meeting to the regional consultation for the Middle East was held in Cairo at the end of March. The follow-up to the Study was also discussed in a meeting of countries from Europe and Central Asia organized by the Council of Europe in Monaco in early April. A technical meeting of Governments to support initiatives addressing violence against children in South Asia is planned for July in Islamabad. The Permanent Representative of South Africa convened a meeting of all African government delegations to the United Nations in New York to follow up the Regional Consultations in Africa with the involvement of the African Union. Ambassadors to the United Nations in Geneva have also met in this connection.
