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Voices of Youth
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Young people speak out against violence in schools

13 April 2005 / New York / Tunis – To facilitate the substantive contribution of young people into the International Colloquium on Violence in Schools in Tunis (14 – 16 April 2005), *Voices of Youth*, in collaboration with the UNICEF Tunis Country Office, opened an online discussion space for children and adolescents around the world to contribute their thoughts and recommendations on this important topic. 229 young people participated from CEE/CIS, EAPRO, ROSA, WCARO, and industrialized countries. They unanimously call for safe schools that are conducive to learning, and look to teachers, administrators and their peers to ensure a secure learning environment for all children.

Their contributions to this discussion, as well as their participation in a live chat on 11 April, will inform the Colloquium and its resulting outputs.

“A safe environment”

Young people around the world are concerned about physical safety in their schools. Not only should guns and other weapons be prohibited by schools and parents, they say, but rules against violence and gangs should be enforced. Schools should also be vigilant against violence from teachers and other staff.

“In the city of Mumbai in India, a person was sponsoring the education of a girl child in a school. He was also a caterer in the school. He started making physical advances towards the girl. When the girl objected, he threw acid on her.... The school should thoroughly verify the background of a person before admitting him/her as the employee of the school.” (*Ashinbangalore, male, 16, India*)

“If children see no evil they will do no evil.” (*Guy Sangster Loum, male, 22, Gambia*)

“A supportive environment”

Good counselors and well-trained educators are the keys to combating violence in schools, say young people. Programs aimed at getting children out of gangs are especially important.

“... a well trained adolescent/child social worker ... can't fix everything, [but] can go a long way. [And] ... decent training for educators ... fosters the building of meaningful relationships with students.... A student who feels they are supported and valued is less likely to strike out. A student who feels they are supported and valued is also likely to speak out if they are being bullied.” (*jmsie, female, 20, Australia*)

“It's not only physical violence that is the problem... verbal harassment is also a form of violence that in some (not all) cases causes more long time damage.” (*Vysh_ious →Peace ←, 13, female, Canada*)

“We have one child club called hatemalo (hand to hand).... They are working ... with 5 of Kathmandu Valley's schools to make [them] child-friendly.” (*Sanjog, 19, male, Nepal*)

“A learning environment”

Learning about violence through documentaries or biographies of famous peacemakers is one way to help combat the media's glorification of violence. Alternative ways of dealing with violence should be offered.

“Martial arts or very physical sports are good for unusually aggressive people. There's a kid like that in my aikido class who has mellowed a lot since he first started.” (*Future WHO doctor, female, 16, USA*)

Since 1995, VOY has focused on exploring the educational and community building potential of the Internet, and facilitating the active and substantive participation of young people on child rights and development related issues. Through web boards, interactive quizzes, youth leadership profiles, live chats and more, Voices of Youth provides thousands of young people from over 180 countries with an opportunity to self-inform, engage in lively debate, and partner—with their peers and decision makers—to create a world fit for children.