

Do you know your rights



Voices of Youth
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SUMMARY OF THE VOICES OF YOUTH MESSAGE BOARD ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN THE CARIBBEAN

INTRODUCTION

"If we are to meet the goals of a 'World Fit for Children'...we will only do so with the full participation of children and young people."

Carol Bellamy
UNICEF Executive Director

In 2001 the United Nations General Assembly requested that the Secretary General conduct a study on Violence Against Children (VAC). This study, to be completed by 2006, will explore forms, causes and consequences of violence against children and adolescents (those persons under 18 years old). It is intended that the study on violence against children will be a collaborative effort amongst UN agencies, governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academic institutions, the public at large and most critically - children and young people.

UNICEF's aims to meaningfully engage children and young people in discussion, on child rights and development related issues, and so has established **Voices of Youth** (VOY). Since 1995 VOY, through web-boards, interactive quizzes, youth leadership profiles, live chats and other strategies has encouraged young people to self-inform, articulate and debate issues that impact and affect them.

This document **summarises** the discussion generated on the **message board for the Caribbean region on Violence Against Children**. These discussions were a forerunner to this Adolescent Forum and Xchange Youth Leadership Workshop being held in Trinidad in March 2005.

The original discussion can be accessed at the following link:
<http://www.unicef.org/voy/discussions/forumdisplay.php?f=69>

LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AND IMPLICATIONS OF VIOLENCE

In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

(Article3: Convention on the Rights of the Child)

The study on Violence Against Children aims to examine how laws and the legal system may fail to treat fairly with children and youth. The study is interested in whether state agencies and legislation ensure that children and young people are treated fairly and equally.

Some questions to consider in your discussions	Here are the contributions from the Message Board
<p>What do you know about the laws pertaining to children and violence in your country?</p> <p>What is the status of the law as regards children who are abused?</p> <p>What is the status of the law as regards children in police 'lock-ups'?</p> <p>What happens with children who commit crimes?</p> <p>Is there an active lobby working for children's rights, children's legal issues?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ there is some level of legal protection but there is tremendous potential for young persons to "fall through the cracks" ○ A legal framework definitely exists though it is not fully enforced. ○ certain groups of society aren't being taken seriously by the police ○ if you are black and male and from a ghetto the assumption is you are a criminal. This may be racially motivated.

VIOLENCE IN THE HOME AND OR FAMILY

Convinced that the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community.

(Preamble: Convention on the Rights of the Child)

Children may experience violence in the home. Sometimes violence within the home, because of the culture, may be seen as normal. Also abuse in the home remains hidden as the abused child is torn emotionally as he or she may love the abuser. Indeed the abuser may very well be the primary or only caregiver – a mother, a father, grandparent or other relative. There may even be violence amongst siblings in the home; this kind of violence can be devastating as the abused child has to contend with both the abusive sibling and a caregiver who fails to protect him or her.

Some questions to consider in your discussions	Here are the contributions from the Message Board
<p>What do you think about the situation of violence in the home and family in your country?</p> <p>Do you know any families who have this kind of problem in their homes and families?</p> <p>What kinds of support systems are in place for children or women who are facing these kinds of problems?</p> <p>What do you think should be done to reduce and eventually eliminate this problem?</p> <p>Do you think that child abuse has lasting effects on children?</p> <p>What can individuals do to alleviate these problems?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ many children still get 'licks' ○ often 'licks' is not seen as violence unless it is excessive and unprovoked ○ most everyone has been beaten by a family member ○ most everyone has had fights with brothers or sisters ○ getting 'licks' is embarrassing. ○ sometimes licks is good ○ parents should look for other alternatives because children will sooner or later get immune.

VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.

(Article 28: Convention on the Rights of the Child)

Children may experience violence in schools at the hands teachers and others in authority. In some schools corporal punishment is permitted. Children may also experience abuse at the hands of fellow students; most every school has had its share of schoolyard bullies! Not only does the child suffer at the hands of bullies but also may be hurt by the school's inability to protect him or her from such violence. School ought to be a safe, secure environment in which children and young people are encouraged to learn. Violence at school may lead to an aversion to learning and diminish willingness to go to school.

Some questions to consider in your discussions	Here are the contributions from the Message Board
<p>What are the kinds of violence that happen in schools?</p> <p>Is the violence different in primary schools compared with secondary schools?</p> <p>Who causes and why are they causing violence in schools?</p> <p>Who are the victims most often?</p> <p>Who should be responsible for reducing/ removing the problem of violence in schools?</p> <p>How could they do reduce the problem?</p> <p>What can individuals do?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ there are older classes beating up the younger classes ○ younger students pay 'taxes' to get by the day without being harassed. ○ there's rivalry between schools ○ school violence exists in our primary and secondary life. ○ children who fall victim to acts of violence should feel confident to voice their complaints to the relevant authority ○ there are abusive teachers in the education system ○ there are teachers who do not care about the welfare of their students. ○ sometimes teachers are afraid of students

VIOLENCE IN INSTITUTIONS

Protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement.

(Article 19: Convention on the Rights of the Child)

Many children and young persons are "institutionalised", that is they live in institutions such as orphanages or they may have special health or learning requirements that compel them to live in special hospices or special schools or they may have had conflict with the law and so are serving time at a penal institution. The Study on Violence Against Children is interested in how institutions treat with children and young persons in their care. For instance, do such institutions treat adequately with the general wellbeing and psychological development of children in their care?

Some questions to consider in your discussions	Here are the contributions from the Message Board
<p>Is there a body which has overall responsibility for children in institutions in your country?</p> <p>What kinds of violence take place there?</p> <p>Who are the main perpetrators?</p> <p>Who are likely to be the main victims?</p> <p>What can be done?</p> <p>What can individuals do?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ boys are brutally raped in prison ○ prison authorities extort money from parents for the 'protection' of their imprisoned child ○ institutions are needed for homeless and abused children ○ special detention centres should be established for young people who have had conflict with the law ○ there is violence in orphanages, usually amongst the children themselves with the younger ones being victims ○ violence that takes place against young people in government child care systems such as molestation, rape, physical and verbal abuse.

VIOLENCE IN COMMUNITIES

Recognizing that the United Nations has, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenants on Human Rights, proclaimed and agreed that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

(Preamble: Convention on the Rights of the Child)

Regardless of one's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status the Convention on the Rights of the Child enshrines one's basic human rights, yet some minority communities may be targets of violence from majority group/s in the society. Or the people who constitute the community share similar demographics and yet there is violence within the community – this is particularly true for communities with high crime rates.

Some questions to consider in your discussions	Here are the contributions from the Message Board
<p>Is there a problem with violence against children in the communities in your country?</p> <p>What forms of violence against children are there?</p> <p>Are children deliberately targeted?</p> <p>Do you have violence against 'street children'?</p> <p>Are children safe to go to and from school and play in parks etc.?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ there are racially mixed communities, that live in relative harmony ○ community violence usually consists of small scuffles ○ in depressed communities there is gang violence which is usually drug related ○ crime related violence has resulted in great pain and rampant murders ○ because of gang associations many young people are forced to perpetrate crimes ○ the people who are more capable of committing violence are: those who are unemployed and lack education ○ many children experience violence and we don't have

What kinds of action can be taken to reduce violence in communities?	<p>adequate resources to treat with the issue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ there is the molestation of children the majority being female ○ heads of the government need to work to create a safer environment and so that the crime rate could be reduced.
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VIOLENCE IN WORK SITUATIONS

States Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

(Article 32: Convention on the Rights of the Child)

Financial hardship compels many children and young people to work well before they have attained the legal working age. Such young people and children usually have low levels of education; indeed many of them are school dropouts or have never attended school. Their lives are marked by hardship and exploitation, as often they work in unsafe environments and for low wages.

Some questions to consider in your discussions	Here are the contributions from the Message Board
<p>Are you aware of any voluntary or forced child labour in your country?</p> <p>How do you feel about child labour?</p> <p>What do you think can be done about child labour?</p> <p>What can individuals do?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Some young people voluntarily work, they prefer to earn money than go to school since they have an aversion for school ○ Young people are not well paid or well supervised ○ Work builds character and many valuable lessons about life in the real world can be learnt by young people who work at an early age ○ One's educational opportunities are limited when they are compelled to work at an early age ○ If someone is caught in a cycle of employment it is hard to stop to upgrade his/her skills set

VOICES OF YOUTH

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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.