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Voices of Youth
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Tsunami Terror Alert: Voices of Youth

7 February 2005 / USA / *Voices of Youth* – A young person from the Ukraine, currently living in the USA, with contributions from the VOY team, has submitted the eighth summary of what young people are saying about the tsunami. This update focuses on how active children and adolescents are – and continue to be – around tsunami relief efforts. It also highlights the continued focus on child protection issues, specifically the increased vulnerability of separated and orphaned children. In response to the UNICEF East Asia Regional Office, young people also spoke of the tsunami as an opportunity for peace building.

Voices of Youth member summary *Shabanu14, 14, USA (Ukraine)*

Teenagers from the entire world stand united!

More than a month has passed since one of the biggest natural disasters in the world devastated parts of South Asia. Today, the primary issue that all people are focusing on is helping out the tsunami victims – young people are no different. Children and adolescents have already done a lot, and are looking to do more. Everyone in *Voices of Youth* is trying to convince their friends to help out.

World's unity – The tsunami as an opportunity for peace

In response to the UNICEF East Asia Regional Office's question: "How can the tsunami present an opportunity to promote peace and resolve conflicts in Aceh and Sri Lanka?" young people on *Voices of Youth* answered that natural disasters have an uncanny capacity to bring nations together and promote collaboration and potentially international peace.

When asked about the potential to promote national peace in countries in crisis, one girl from France responded:

"Difference of opinion is the main reason for conflicts. And when people have something in common, even if it's pain or loss, it ultimately creates a link, a union of solidarity. I've heard many stories about people inside the countries supporting themselves emotionally... This brings them together. Hatred and conflict aren't obvious things to come over but as I said in the previous post, it seems like all conflicts have been put on hold during this time of grief and world wide sympathy and solidarity." (*Cami78, France*)

Separated and orphaned children

Voices of Youth members are particularly concerned with keeping children who have lost, or been separated from, one or more parent safe. They continually speak of the risk of exploitation and violence to these children and ask that UNICEF and its partners take immediate action for their protection. They are also asking for more information on this issue and guidance on what they can do to help.

"I read about the children who were orphaned as a result of the tsunami disaster and some of them are being lured into prostitution and slavery by predators who have gone over there for that particular reason. It makes me sick to my stomach to think that something like this could happen to those children when they're in such a vulnerable state. I also heard...that there are orphanages in the area that are trying to buy children back from these predators to bring the children into a safer environment...I want to be able to do something to help those children who have been taken into prostitution and slavery and try to bring them into safer environments and possibly try to locate parents or distant relatives." (*Sublimegiantsgirl, USA*)

Important issues that raise concerns of the teenagers

While we will agree that the world has become more united, there are also numerous problems that the young people of VOY are very concerned about.

- A newspaper claims that evangelists are trying to convert Sri Lankan Buddhists into Christians. There was a discussion about how we can prevent this from happening.
- Protection of children from exploitation, violence and abuse, particularly: slavery, sex trade, and prostitution. This issue raised concerns on what we can do, and more ideas on what should be done.
- Some members from different countries feel that children and adolescents around the world are ignorant and unfeeling about the victims of the tsunami, and are asking for guidance on how to educate and sensitize.

Concluding message: Psychosocial support

"Tsunami left millions to suffer in many ways...We've been successful in providing material goods such as food and clean water to the victims. But there's one thing which we should concentrate more on. It's the mental status of these people. They've lost everything. One thing they hardly can come up with is the loss of their loved ones. We have to help them get back to where they've stopped. Please help them to be fit in mind and body. Not only material goods will do. They need someone to talk to. To tell their grief and pain. So let's go to them and reach them and hear their story." (*simigalo17, Sri Lanka*)

A poem for tsunami

A drop of water falls in the sand
a foot away from a boy.
he looks up
and screams
mama
the wave crashes
over him
forcing him
under
the
waves
holding his mother's hand,
he feels breath
and life
leaving him
he lets himself go
the day the
tsunami
hit
(*Danagirl, 11, USA*)

Voices of Youth members help out!

The tsunami relief is very efficient. Everyone is being active not only with ideas, but also with donations and leadership.

- Good job to tranquility13 for selling the "tsunami relief" bracelets, and donating a great amount of money to the needy in South Asia.
- Also, great job to Azeeta from UK, when the Ellen Wilkinson School for girls is taking action by collecting money and organizing a talent show on February 10, 2005. All proceeds will go to the tsunami crisis.

You can read more of the Voices of Youth discussions on the Voices of Youth discussion forums at: *Tsunami Terror*: <http://www.unicef.org/voy/discussions/forumdisplay.php?f=68>. We request you to please use available channels to publicise this e-space with your staff, partner organizations and especially youth organizations and networks in your country and region.