

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE SAYING



FEBRUARY 2005 NO. 14

SPEAKING OUT: UN STUDY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

From 13 December – 13 January young people from around the world gave their views on violence against children – and lent their voices to the United Nations Secretary General’s Study on Violence Against Children. *Voices of Youth* is thrilled to have effectively facilitated children’s and adolescents’ participation in the study’s global consultation, and dedicates this 14th issue of “What Young People Are Saying” to their thoughts, reflections and suggestions on violence.

OVERVIEW

The one month e-discussion event on *Voices of Youth*, titled “Enough Silence! Make Your Voices Heard about Violence against Children”, was designed to involve the opinions of children and young people in the Study on Violence process. Children and adolescents from all regions contributed messages to the forum, with the majority living in East Asia and the Pacific and South Asia. The largest single country represented was the United States of America. Overall, participants were overwhelmingly girls between 15 and 19 years of age.

Participants were asked to define the various forms of violence affecting them. With this as their focus, participants ventured to discuss forms, causes, and the impact of violence. In general young people feel strongly about psychological and emotional violence, noting that they are equally as harmful as physical violence. They also noted poverty as a contributing factor to violence, and stated that we all have a shared responsibility in combating violence against children.



NIGERIA

“Beating, threatening a children, hard labour, punishments, etc. must not be welcomed at all. For I am sure the child becomes insecure thereafter. The insecure child will live in fear, fear will cos’ pain n weakness of the heart, a weak heart will know no courage no boldness, a weak heart might just rob a child of the opportunities n the strength he needs to go and become the best he can be in life.” *boy, >21*

Participants feel strongly that violence denies children of their right to develop to their fullest and called on governments, civil society, parents and policy makers to protect children from all forms of violence.

Following is a brief summary of young people’s comments, suggestions and reflections on violence against children.

For more information contact: Amber Oliver, Coordinator, voy@unicef.org

THIS MONTH ON VOICES OF YOUTH

[Violence Study: Caribbean discussion](#)

Caribbean children and adolescents contribute to the global violence study through *Voices of Youth*!

[Tsunami updates!](#)

Read what young people are saying about the Dec. 26 tsunami now!

WEBSITE SPOTLIGHT

[Make a difference! 1-minute video contest](#)

Submit a video by 1 March about making change and win!

UPCOMING

[Want to be a judge?](#)

VOY is looking for youth judges for the Make a difference! contest! [E-mail us your interest now.](#)

[Water! Water! Water](#)

New game! Want to help test it? We need your feedback. [E-mail us.](#)

INSIGHT OF THE MONTH

“I think no matter how many security you have and measures in place to protect children, it boils down to the predators and ethics. if people are intent on causing harm, they will find a way to do so no matter what...”

by boy, >21, Singapore

UPCOMING APRIL ISSUE
Gender

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

ISSUES IN CONTEXT

February 2005

Click on a link to read **What Young People Are Saying about Violence Against Children**

[Defining violence](#) [Causes of violence](#) [Exploitation](#) [A call to action](#)
[A poll on violence](#) [Conclusion](#) [More on the UN Study on Violence](#)

DEFINING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

The definition of Violence against Children, as used by the Study, is intended to be broad:

“the intentional use of physical force or other forms of power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.”

Emotional: When asked to define violence, participants focused on emotional and verbal violence.



AUSTRALIA

“To me emotional violence is just as bad as physical because it can stay with you throughout adulthood and the rest of your life.” *girl, 16*

Child rights: They also made a clear link with child rights more generally, speaking of the denial of a child’s rights as another form of violence.



UNITED STATES

“A definition of violence Against Children would be anything that doesn’t benefit the child with respect to their well-being and their future...denying a child of a solid education of the highest caliber is a serious case of child abuse; just as denying them contributions of a child’s culture, race or ethnic group is seriously abusive. In addition, denying a child the right to achieve or to pursue a true personal interest...” *(a group response from a government school in Florida, 12 - 18)*

CAUSES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

After defining violence, young people on *Voices of Youth* continued to have

in-depth discussions about the forms, causes and impacts of Violence against Children.

Poverty: Many noted poverty as a major contributor to child violence, particularly in the developing world. Poverty was seen as a cause of child trafficking, family violence, child labor and exploitation. As always, the group eagerly proposed strategies for combating sexual abuse and Violence against Children in general.



PERU

“Here in my country... there is one problem: poverty. It’s very sad to drive in the car and see in every corner one, two or three little kids asking and begging for money. It would be better if our authorities take more interest on the topic, they can make campaigns, educate these children or simply start programs in the different districts to avoid that this children spend their days walking in the ...streets without learning...” *girl, 19*

Gender discrimination: Participants also spoke about discrimination against girls in particular, linking it both with poverty and behavioural norms in certain parts of the world.



INDIA

“Poverty is undoubtedly the scrooge responsible for gender discrimination and subsequent societal ills. Gender disparities and atrocities against the girl child have been part of ‘developing countries for centuries and undoubtedly a critical area of concern. Persistent gender discrimination and inequality towards a girl child manifested in the form of heinous practices like female infanticide and feticide, genital mutilation, domestic abuse, incest, sexual exploitation, non-accessibility of primary education and child labor...” *girl, 22*

EXPLOITATION: VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

In addition to the forms of violence already mentioned, participants gave focused attention to the exploitation of children, looking specifically at trafficking and child labour.



UNITED STATES

“Child labor laws around the world are horrible.... Children are working in factories as young as the age of 6 and are not given proper protection. Girls that work in sewing factories often cut and in some cases blinded by needles that break off...” *girl, 17*



MEXICO

“...trafficking... is really serious, indeed. The reasons for it that come to mind are...1. Children are generally healthier than adults...2. Sexual Exploitation...3. Slavery. Even if we want to think slavery does not exist anymore, the truth is it still exists.” *girl, 14*

Parents: Particularly interesting is the direct responsibility many participants placed on parents for the violence committed against children:



MALAYSIA

“Violence against Children in Malaysia is mostly about parents on their children rather than being tortured while working. Some parents have psychological problems and they use their children as punching bags. They might hit their children hard enough to cause death and sometimes, parents don’t abuse their children but the maid that abuse the children. Other than that... children mostly get affected the most when their families are poor. These children might have to work to feed the family...” *girl, 17*

A POLL ON VIOLENCE:

Who do you think is responsible for keeping a child safe?

Family (21.5%)
Community (3.8%)
Schools (2.3%)
Government (4.9%)
Religious institutions (2.0%)
All of the above (61.8%)
None of the above (3.5%)

TOTAL VOTES: 2131

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

CONCLUSION

With this being the first of several discussions on Violence against Children on *Voices of Youth*, it will be interesting to see what other issues young people raise about the violence affecting them.

As evidenced by this discussion alone, violence against children is a complex issue that is in need of attention, which is the main purpose of the Study on Violence against Children. The study will also provide a framework for creating a violence-free society. Given that young people emphasize that we are all responsible for keeping them safe (family, community, schools, government, religious institutions) their continued participation is highly encouraged and much needed. Together, we can all make our voices heard to stop Violence against Children!

THE UN STUDY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

In 2001, the General Assembly requested that the Secretary General conduct a study on Violence against Children (VAC). This study, to be submitted to the General Assembly in 2006, will explore the forms, causes and impacts of violence affecting children and young people (those under 18 years old). It will provide an in-depth picture of Violence against Children and among other things, will review legal and institutional responses to VAC. In its final study report, clear recommendations for improved legislation, policy, and programming will be proposed.

With the vision of being an inclusive study that blends practical and theoretical information, the study on Violence against Children will be a collaborative effort between UN agencies, governments, non-government organizations, academics and institutions, the public, and most importantly children and young people. Their views, strategies, and interventions, particularly those designed by children, will inform the study process and the final report.

For more information on the Study visit:

<http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu2/6/cr/c/study.htm>

A CALL TO ACTION!

Young people on *Voices of Youth* set out strategies and recommendations for protecting children against violence



AUSTRALIA

Prevention: "I believe in preventing rather than stopping something that has already happened. If you find a...cure...the child may not have the physical damage, however, they will carry throughout their adulthood the emotional damage of being abused and mistreated by a stranger, or worse someone they know."
girl, 16



MALAYSIA

Shelters & laws: "I say we should come together and build shelters for abused children. Or we could encourage governments to modify laws to protect children...."
girl, 15



MEXICO

Awareness & accountability: "... the governments could make more campaigns to make the child rights all across that country, including those campaigns the punishment people would get if they decide to violate any of them."
girl, 14



MALAYSIA

Speak out! "I think one of the ways to get our voice heard is petition...I think that MAKING A DIFFERENCE is better than just being in our own comfort zone and being contented with what we are."
girl, 19



SINGAPORE

Positive reinforcement: "I think in order to reduce atrocities to female children, incentives, tax relief or other government policies can be used to encourage and help change people's mindsets that female children are burdens. This [will, in the] long term diminish the violence towards daughters."
boy, >21



UNITED STATES

"What most people do not understand about child abuse is that once the abuse occurs the cycle never ends. In research studies I have done, many of life's ills happen to be directly related to child abuse. You connect such things as prevalence towards crime, drug addiction, spousal abuse, promiscuity and others to the effects of child abuse..... **Maybe what we need is an international forum on the importance of preventing child abuse in regards to all the other avenues affected by such crimes.**" (girl, >21)

VOICES OF YOUTH

<http://www.unicef.org/voy/>

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.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THE UN STUDY?

A CHANCE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO ASK QUESTIONS

The UN Study on Violence against Children looks at violence committed against children across the world and what can be done about it. The UN and Save the Children have produced a child-friendly paper that tells you more about the Study. Click [here](#) for a copy of What is the United Nations Study on Violence against Children?

Save the Children and the United Nations are preparing "Questions and Answers" especially for children. It will be based on questions asked by children and young people about the Study.

Each region of the world will be holding a meeting to discuss violence against children in that region. Children can work together with UN agencies, such as UNICEF, and NGOs to make sure that children are heard in these meetings. The Questions and Answers should be ready in time for the regional meetings.

We are asking YOU to send us your questions about the Study. You could ask any kind of question, big or small, such as:

- When are the regional consultations?
- Who will be at the meetings and what will they do?
- How can children go to these meetings?
- How will the Study change the lives of children?
- Why should I get involved in the Study? What can I do?

Or perhaps there are other things you would like to know about the Study. Whatever questions you have about the Study, please send them to:

vacganda@blueyonder.co.uk

Your question will be answered within seven days. If we do not know the answer within that time, we will let you know how long it will take to get the answer for you. If the answer we send you is not clear to you or you have more questions, you can mail us again.

This Email address is open for questions **until Friday 11 February**. After that date all questions and answers will be collected and made available as a document.

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU SEND US YOUR QUESTIONS:

Your Emails are read only by the people who are producing the Questions and Answers booklet. No-one else will read your Email.

Your Emails are confidential. The questions you ask may be printed in the Questions & Answers but we will not use your name. We will only mail you about the UN Study on Violence Against Children. We will never ask you for your address, telephone number or other personal details. And we will not pass your Email address on to anyone else.

For more information on the Study, go to:
<http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu2/6/crc/study.htm>

Continued...

The Next Generation Newspaper

Are you a young person, or do you know a young person who is dedicated to child rights and protection?

Windzofchange is an International Youth Newspaper that is dedicated to addressing issues affecting young people today. These issues range from child abuse, HIV/AIDS, war, education, and more. Its aim is to spread the views and opinions of young people. Windzofchange is currently working on its first publication which has been dedicated to Violence against Children. The organization has several articles in the works, however, is looking for additional submissions on Violence against Children from other young people.

Windz of Change has already gathered support from a number of young people around the world, namely, India, Malaysia, Nepal, USA, Ireland, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Australia, Canada and Vietnam. This eclectic group of young people hopes to make the future better for themselves and the generations to come. They believe that the fate of tomorrow lies in the hands of the youth.

Windzofchange is an inclusive organization that is growing everyday. Members are always welcome! Please visit: www.windzofchange.org

REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS IN YOUR AREA:

The Caribbean	10-11 March, 2005 (linked to existing young people's forum)	Host: Trinidad
East Asia and Pacific	10 – 12 May 2005	Host: Bangkok, Thailand
South Asia	16-20 May, 2005 17-18 May, Young people's forum	Host: Kathmandu, Nepal (to be confirmed)
West and Central Africa	23-25 May 2005	Host: Mali
The Americans	30-31 May & 1 June, 2004	Host: Argentina, Buenos Aires
North America	2 – 3 June 2005 2 June, Young people's forum	Host: Toronto, Canada
East and Southern Africa	6-10 June, 2005	Host: South Africa
Middle East and North Africa	27-29 June, 2005	Host: Egypt (Cairo)
Europe and Central Asia	5-7 July, 2005	Host: Ljubljana, Slovenia key partner: Council of Europe