It's time to listen to us!

Youth response to the Report of the Expert Group Meeting on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child

The Commission on the Status of Women
51st Session

26 February – 9 March 2007
United Nations, New York

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February 2007
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Global Youth Action Network Acknowledgements

The Global Youth Action Network (GYAN) works to facilitate youth participation and intergenerational partnership in global decision-making; support collaboration among diverse youth organizations; and provide tools, resources, and recognition for positive youth action. The views and recommendations expressed in this report are of those that chose to participate in the survey and not necessarily those of GYAN and its member organizations. The core writing team from GYAN consisted of Vidar Ekehaug, Leila Orchin and Pamela Wren, with additional support from Dustin Gerding and Marioliva Gonzalez. GYAN also wishes to thank Kimberly Baker, Yara Ghossein, Liv Elin Indreiten, Patricia Moccia, and Mima Perisic of UNICEF; and Hourig Babikian, Carolyn Donovan, and Ann Scholtz of the Working Group on Girls, for invaluable guidance and support.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Every girl should get an education.” This was the key recommendation identified by 1,318 children and young people, from 59 countries and eight regions, who responded to a questionnaire, either through a focus group or an individual survey, on what can be done to eliminate discrimination and violence against the girl child. The questionnaire asked respondents to evaluate the findings in The Report of the Expert Group Meeting, the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination and Violence Against the Girl Child, and to offer their opinions on how to protect girls from violence and discrimination. This report, prepared as an appeal to the Members of the 51st Commission on the Status of Women, summarizes the ideas, concerns and recommendations of these children and young people.

Forty focus groups were conducted around the world, with 1,032 participants. Most participants were females under age 20. The children and young people who participated in the focus groups came from varied backgrounds, with the majority coming from rural and marginalized populations. Among other groups, the respondents included: flood victims from Ethiopia, Palestinian refugee children in Jordan, young people from poor households in Dhaka, orphaned and marginalized girls from “a remote Nigerian community,” children and young people from low-income “slum areas” in Nairobi, young people who are illiterate, and indigenous groups.

Key findings:

- Governments are primarily responsible for protecting girls from violence and discrimination.
- Informal laws/cultural practices are responsible for many human rights violations.
- Families, communities and governments are responsible for empowering girls.
- When it comes to how to empower girls, females tended to see themselves as part of the solution, while males pointed to media and law enforcement as a solution.
- Education in all its forms – formal, informal and non-formal – is the most cited method to eliminate violence and discrimination against girls, and governments are responsible for providing it to everyone.

The children and young people who participated in this process call on governments to:

- Invest in and increase access to education for all girls.
- Respect and enforce laws that protect girls from violence and discrimination.
- Create gender-positive media messages.
- Build the capacity of local leaders -- teachers, counsellors, parents, guardians, social workers and local government officials – to identify and protect ‘invisible’ girls.
- Support community organizations that are working in this field and know the local context.
- Support youth organizations and networks to implement peer-to-peer and non-formal education initiatives.

The children and young people who participated in this process call on community-based and non-governmental organizations to:

- Connect visible girls to invisible girls.
- Create support groups for girls.
- Organize skill and confidence building workshops.
- Change harmful cultural practices and traditions through media and advocacy campaigns.
- Address gender stereotypes inherent in local dialogue and proverbs.
Many of the children and young people who submitted responses were very excited to be part of this process, especially in the focus groups. Many girls were able to talk openly about issues around discrimination and violence for the first time. Some facilitators noted the girls had difficulties expressing themselves in the beginning of the sessions, but towards the end, after talking with their peers, they were excited about the discussion and wanted to get involved and continue the dialogue.

This year can mark the beginning of the end to discrimination and violence against the girl child. Young people have voiced their needs and recommendations. Now, It's Time to Listen!
I. INTRODUCTION

An estimated 150 million girls under 18 have experienced forced sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual violence involving physical contact. The majority of the world’s 27.3 million refugees and internally displaced persons are children and women. In some countries, the incidence of HIV/AIDS is reaching a female-to-male ratio of 8:1 among persons aged 15-24. In some parts of India, only 800 girls are born for each 1,000 boys because of female infanticide or sex-selective abortions. According to the International Labour Organization, 218 million children around the world are engaged in child labour, of whom 126 million are in hazardous work.

Many girls are born into an environment where they suffer from human rights violations because they are not aware of their rights and/or their rights are not respected in their communities, or in their world. Discrimination and violence against girls continues to limit their opportunities to take control of their lives and to realize their full potential. Many of the human rights violations against girls take place in the ‘hidden spaces’ within a family or a community, rendering the girls and the violations committed against them ‘invisible’.

This year’s theme for the 51st United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is ‘The Elimination of Discrimination and Violence against the Girl Child’. During the CSW, the international community, including representatives from governments, United Nations agencies, and civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and, most importantly, young people will come together to discuss how to improve the situation for girls around the world.

Several reports that document the situation of girls worldwide serve as important background information and will inform discussion at the CSW. A group of experts met at the Innocenti Research Centre in Florence, Italy, in September 2006 and wrote The Report of the Expert Group Meeting, the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination and Violence Against the Girl Child, which addresses four key issues related to girls: laws and policies, discrimination, invisible girls and empowerment. The Expert Group Meeting (EGM) report served as a basis for the UN Secretary-General’s report to the Commission, which outlined the Secretary-General’s priority areas. The 2007 version of UNICEF’s The State of the World’s Children focused on the role of women and mothers in ensuring the well-being of girls. The report stressed the double dividend of gender equality, stating: “Healthy, educated and empowered women have healthy, educated and confident daughters and sons.”

Although the research and expertise that go into these types of reports and recommendations can have a positive impact, they are generally the voices and opinions of adults. Girls and boys are rarely asked to participate in the formation of these reports or, more importantly, in making decisions on the issues that affect them. Yet, who can better report on the situation of young people and offer solutions to the issues facing young people, than young people? Girls, boys and young people are not ‘contaminated by experience’ and, when given the opportunity, will come up with innovative and practical solutions to traditional problems. It is time to listen to us.

In order to provide an opportunity for children and young people to contribute to the CSW, a youth-friendly version of the Expert Group Meeting report was written in November 2006. The youth-friendly version summarizes the findings and recommendations of the EGM report and includes eight questions to gauge what children and young people think is missing from the report, and what they believe can be done to

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1 As a general principle, the UN definition of young people is persons 10 to 24 years of age, youth are 15 to 24, and adolescents are 10 to 19.

2 See the full Report of the UN Secretary-General on elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child.
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improve the situation of girls. It also asked children and young people what they would do for girls if they were to lead their country for one day. This paper summarizes the responses of children and young people to the EGM report, and their ideas, concerns, and solutions for preventing and protecting girls from discrimination and violence. It is time to listen to us.

Governments are asked to carefully consider the opinions and recommendations presented in this paper. The theme of this year’s Commission represents an important opportunity for governments to exercise Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and to give children and young people a chance to participate in making decisions on the issues that affect them and to influence change. It is time to listen to us.

In addition to the recommendations in this report, governments are asked to consider the work and recommendations already put forth by young people. The 2005 report ‘Youth and the Millennium Development Goals: Challenges and Opportunities for Implementation’, for example, is written by young people and includes many examples of how they are already working on a number of projects to address the situation of girls. The United Nations World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) outlines further commitments from governments to girls and young women. Youth organizations presented a number of recommendations in their response to the 10-year review of WPAY in 2005. The elimination of discrimination and violence against the girl child will require the recognition of the energy and creativity of girls, boys and young people working towards their own solutions. It is time to listen to us.

II. METHODOLOGY AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Methodology

The youth-friendly version of the EGM report was written in November 2006 in English and was translated into six languages: Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian, Spanish and Swahilii. On 1 December 2006 a call to action was posted on the UNICEF, Voices of Youth (VOY) website. It called on children and young people to read the youth-friendly version of the EGM report and to submit their responses to a questionnaire evaluating the EGM report. It also asked them to offer their opinions on how to prevent and protect girls from discrimination and violence. The call to action was further distributed through news lists and electronic newsletters, primarily to the online network of VOY members, but also through the networks of the Global Youth Action Network and the Working Group on Girls, and through a number of children and youth networks, including TakingITGlobal, Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS, the UN Programme on Youth and UNESCO’s Section for Youth.

Visitors to the VOY website, as well as staff from UNICEF country offices and their NGO partners were encouraged to conduct focus groups in their countries. Emphasis was placed on encouraging girls and boys from rural areas to participate in the groups. A facilitator’s guide, which was prepared in November 2006 along with the youth-friendly report, offered instructions to individuals on how to conduct a focus group. The guide asked facilitators to invite girls and boys aged 10 to 17 years old to participate, but to divide girls and boys into separate groups. After the focus group, the facilitator prepared a summary of the discussions.

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3 See Annex I for full questionnaire.
4 The Working Group on Girls (WGG) and its International Network for Girls (INfG) are dedicated to promoting the rights of girls in all areas and stages of their lives, advancing the rights and status of girls and assisting them to develop their full potential as women.
5 See Annex II for the full facilitator’s guide.
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Demographics

- A total of 1,318 young people from 59 countries and eight regions responded to the call to action via focus groups or individual surveys.
- 1,032 participants took part in 40 focus groups.
- Focus groups ranged from 6 to 169 participants, with an average of 25 participants.
- More than half of the young people who participated in this process were girls.
- 87 per cent of the participants were under 20 years of age.
- 215 responses were in English, 65 in Spanish, 22 in French, 4 in Russian, 2 in Arabic and 1 in Chinese.

The children and young people who participated in the Focus Groups came from varied backgrounds, with the majority coming from rural and marginalized populations. Among other groups, the respondents included: flood victims from Ethiopia; Palestinian refugee children in Jordan; young people from poor households in Dhaka; orphaned and marginalized girls from a remote Nigerian community; children and young people from low-income slum areas in Nairobi, where there was limited access to education and the Internet; young people who are illiterate; and indigenous groups.

TABLE I: FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS BY REGION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Focus group</th>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CEE/CIS</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West and Central Africa</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern and Southern Africa</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia and the Pacific</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrialized countries*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>1318</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Industrialized countries include responses from Australia, Austria, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the United States. The majority of responses from this region were from the US.

TABLE II: FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS BY AGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Focus group</th>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19**</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 and over</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Specified</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>1318</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** In many of the focus groups, participants ranged from 10 to 19 years old and were therefore included in a separate category.
**TABLE III: FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS BY GENDER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Focus group</th>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both***</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>1318</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** Seventeen out of 40 focus groups were comprised of mixed genders, and a breakdown of female and male participants was not always provided.
TABLE IV: OVERVIEW OF COUNTRY RESPONSES AND PARTICIPANTS

Note: Some focus groups and surveys did not list the number of people participating and were recorded as 1 response and 0 participants. Therefore, in some countries/territories, the number of responses may be higher than the number of participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/terr.</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central African Republic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Côte d'Ivoire</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djibouti</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guyana</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong (China SAR)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>32</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madagascar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>458</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/terr.</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupied Palestinian Territory</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico (US)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian Federation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania, United Republic of</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinidad and Tobago</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic of</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 309 1,318
“If you were the head of your country for one day, what would you do for girls?”

This question was posed to children and young people in the beginning of the youth-friendly version of the EGM Report. Responses included:

“If I was the head of my country for one day, I would do many things for girls in order to stop discrimination and violence against girls: 1. Increase opportunities for all girls in education systems; 2. Create laws to protect girls from violence and discrimination; 3. Use quotas in the political system; 4. Explain and teach all girls to understand about their rights; 5. Use media to show a girl's ability in society, so all men would understand.” – Cambodia, girl university student

“...I would make sure every girl gets an education!” – United States, female, 22 years old

Most of the replies to this question came from Cambodia, where a university professor assigned the question to students in his/her class on gender studies.

The majority of respondents prioritized education (70 out of 93 responses), but they had numerous other ideas. As leaders of their countries, respondents would also:

- Develop and enforce laws against discrimination (51 responses)
- Provide job opportunities for women (30 responses)
- Increase participation of girls and women in politics (29 responses)
- Give stronger punishments to those who violate girls’ rights (28 responses)
- End child prostitution and trafficking (27 responses)
- End harmful cultural practices (24 responses)
- Send a strong message in the media that girls are equal (14 responses).

Sadly, not all participants were able to do this exercise because the concept of being a leader and decision-maker is still a far-away dream for many girls.

“Although [the girls] were given the chance to imagine themselves as leaders, many could not bring themselves to visualize such a thing.” – Ethiopia, Facilitator of focus group, ages 10 to 19

III. LAWS, POLICIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Although virtually every government in the world has committed to protecting the welfare and rights of children, there continues to be offences against these fundamental agreements. Humanitarian law and international conventions – such as the CRC, which has been ratified by all but two governments – too often fail to protect the rights of girls. **Governments are often unable or not willing to enforce these laws at the national and sub-national level.** As a result, girls continue to face severe human right violations without legal, social, or political recourse.

The Expert Group Meeting report listed human rights violations most experienced by girls and suggested various ways to make sure laws and policy are put into place to address these violations. Young people were asked to view the list of human rights violations provided in the EGM report and to identify any additional violations they believed to be missing. Respondents were also asked to suggest ways to ensure laws and policies protecting girls are put into practice, as well as who should be the responsible for preventing and protecting girls from violence and discrimination.
Findings

The young people had a lot to add to the list of human rights violations; 95 per cent of the focus group participants added at least one new violation that the Expert Group had not included. The most commonly cited categories across all regions are:

- Culturally specific violation
- Abuse
- Hindering the right to speak freely
- Lack of access to social services
- Discrimination in the workplace.

Culturally specific violations include machismo in Latin America and the Caribbean, the dowry in South Asia, and the price for a bride in West and Central Africa. Abuse included verbal, emotional and physical abuse, in that order of frequency. Lack of access to social services was divided evenly between lack of access to education and lack of access to health care.

A girl from Mexico discusses the weight of living with a female work burden:

“…that's why here exist all that violence against us and our rights, we [the girls] needed to clean up the house, cook and also work.” — Mexican Focus Group Respondent, 10- to 18-year-old female

The human rights abuse mentioned by the Expert Group with the most frequent confirmation by respondents is the female work burden. Overall, both focus groups and individuals mentioned this violation more than any other outlined in the EGM. Responses that echoed the EGM include:

- Female work burden
- Child and forced marriages
- Son preference
- Continuation of harmful traditional practices.

An example of an informal law that reinforces the human rights violation of the female work burden is the ‘Code of Women’ in Cambodia. Many respondents specifically mentioned this code in their responses:

“'Code of Women' is suggested to abolish. The study Code of Women shows that women and girls overall are prohibited in getting involve in the society. For instance, girls are supposed to stay to look after young brothers and sisters, they cling to strict rules as being girls. However, the Code of Women also has good points of view that keep girls being valuable. Thus, I would critically think of this and override or abandon the bad points.” — Cambodia, female university student

Recommendations identified by children and young people to best ensure laws and policies are put into practice to protect the rights of girls are:

- Creation of more interest groups run by girls and women
- Creation of special monitoring teams to ensure that workplaces, communities and schools respect the rights of girls and women; increase transparency
- Harsher punishments for those who violate the human rights of girls and women.

“Well there are so many laws and not everyone knows every law that exists. I think the government should make it clear on what kind of laws exists.” — Netherlands, boy, 14
The young respondents agreed with the Expert Group that the best way to make sure laws and policies are put into practice is by:

- Creating more effective and detailed communication and knowledge.
- Enforcing the laws that are in place to protect the rights of girls.
- Creating new laws to fill in any holes in the legislation.
- Ensuring more consistency between international standards and national laws.
- Train national police and legal courts to take appropriate action against violations in communities and, if necessary, within families.
- Promote greater legislative and political focus on the rights of girls.

The children and young people think the following groups are responsible for ensuring that laws and policies are put into practice:

- Governments
- Families
- United Nations
- Civil society
- Communities
- Young people.

“The governments should be responsible for making that happens, and the United Nations should, to the countries that do not put their laws and policies into practice, take control of that issue in the country and take some of the “power” of that country.” – Portugal, girl, 17

**General trends**

**The message of young people is clear:** They want more representation in the groups that interact with the political and legal decision makers to ensure that the rights of girls are respected, and viewed as important. They want the laws that protect their well being to be clearly defined by governments, and they want those who abuse the human rights of girls and women to be punished severely.

**Unwritten laws still hold incredible power:** In addition to formal laws, young people emphasized the need to amend the cultural practices of their communities.

**Regional trends**

**Lack of communication between regions:** From the small pool of respondents who did not think any human rights violations were missing from the Expert Group Meeting report, 66 per cent were from Industrialized Countries. As a whole, respondents in the industrialized countries do not witness the full magnitude of human rights violations that are possible. Since there is a lack of communication and information about the human rights violations of girls in other regions; they are unaware such possibilities exist. Although human rights violations in industrialized countries might not be as frequent, young people in these countries must learn that their human rights are not respected universally. Again, this can be done by creating cross-cultural partnership between and alliances of young people across boundaries.

“I really cannot say for sure how the bride price issue will be eradicated. If you say lets stop bride price, the men will take the woman to be cheap; if bride price is collected the men will take the woman as their household property that was bought with money. I can't see a law for now that will help reduce the effect of bride price but I believe since it is purely a cultural thing and culture is dynamic, then one day it will change.” – Focus group in Nigeria, female respondent
It’s time to listen to us!

**Gender trends**
Son preference was identified as a human rights violation by more boys than girls.

## IV. DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE

"Discrimination is affording different treatment between girls and boys, giving boys more rights than girls and preferring boys to girls. In other words, discrimination is extremely broad term and can be conceptualized in a number of ways.” – Palestine refugee in Jordan, age 10 to 17

Discrimination against girls can take its form in the unequal amount of access that girls have to education, healthcare services, employment opportunities, and property in comparison to boys. An estimated two-thirds of illiterate people in the world are women. Discrimination also takes its form against girls in the extremely high and often unrealistic expectations that are placed on them within their homes. Some of these expectations are to maintain a beautiful image, marry and have children, and uphold innumerable household tasks. These expectations and the resulting discrimination often cause girls to become prisoners in their homes and silenced in their communities.

Young people were asked to think beyond the causes of discrimination and violence outlined in the Expert Group Meeting report, and to list causes of discrimination and violence against girls that the Expert Group might have overlooked. In addition, young people were requested to recommend strategies to eliminate violence and discrimination against girls, and to identify who they think is responsible for implementing these strategies.

"In conclusion, success in eliminating discrimination against girls is a miracle-like Yet, this miracle can only take place when everyone takes part in making it happen." – Cambodia, female, 24

### Findings
Fifty per cent of respondents from focus groups noted that societal “thinking of girls as inferior to boys” was a major cause of discrimination and violence. Other causes highlighted by the young respondents are:

- Thinking of girls as inferior to boys
- Lack of school attendance
- Inability to ‘name-carry’, or to pass family name onto children
- Lack of knowledge about their rights
- Inherent ‘fear’ that is instilled in girls to behave a certain way.

"In my opinion I believe that the only reason why girls are being discriminated against is because they have no education. If they have no education they most likely aren’t able to do a lot of things, and that’s the only reason why people look to girls as if there not anything…” – United States, girl respondent, 13
More than half of the focus group respondents echoed the EGM Report by stating that both the objectification/physical judgement of girls and the presence of culturally specific traditions perpetuate discrimination and violence and reiterated the following causes of discrimination:

- Culturally specific traditions
- Objectification or physical judgment of girls
- Alienation from communities
- Lack of ownership.

Recommendations highlighted by young people on how to eliminate discrimination and violence are to:

- Develop an international/national media campaign
- Enforce laws that protect girls from discrimination and violence
- Outlaw traditional proverbs and sayings that propagate discrimination and violence against girls
- Increase job opportunities.

Other recommendations for elimination of discrimination and violence mentioned by the young people that resonate with the Expert Group are to:

- Give young women/girls more education opportunities
- Create safe spaces
- Encourage young women/girls’ collaboration with young men/boys
- Provide access to health care and reproductive services.

Children and young people think the following are responsible for eliminating discrimination and violence:

- Governments
- Families
- Civil society
- NGOs
- Young people.

“Parents must be responsible on the image they portray to their children, because if the sons see violence happening in their family they will think its all right and the girl will also say ‘If my mother went through this and she’s still married, maybe I should just stick it out as well’.”

– Malawi, Male, 22 yrs
General trends
Diversity of responses: Since the 1,318 children and young people who participated in this process are so diverse, coming from 59 countries and eight regions, their responses were found to be extremely diverse and wide-ranging.

“This is very important to me and should be to the rest of the world.”
– United States, girl respondent, 14

Responsibility in the hands of many: Although the children and young people thought governments should be responsible for eliminating violence and discrimination against the girl child more than any other party, government was rarely expected to act on its own. Respondents usually listed governments and other responsible parties, such as civil society, NGOs, and families, together.

“We have a moral/ethical obligation to stop children from getting harmed. We can help decide how the generation after us will turn out…” – Netherlands, girl respondent, 16

Gender trends
Females named victimization, unaware of rights: Female respondents named the victimization of girls and the lack of awareness of their rights as major causes of discrimination and violence, yet males never mentioned these.

“The girls had a difficult time understanding that they were being discriminated or abused [that their rights had been violated]. They have accepted the things that happen to them as being right.” – Ethiopia, focus group facilitator

Females recommended safe spaces, access to services: While male respondents focused on developing girls’ social skills and enforcing anti-discrimination laws, female respondents asked for the creation of safe spaces and access to health/education services.

Females favored formal education; males favor non-formal: Although both girls and boys said that girls need to be given more educational opportunities, they often wrote about two different forms of education. Both girls and boys stated that governments must be held responsible for ensuring girls have access to education by allocating funds for programmes.

Females put responsibility on girls: Female respondents tended to state that girls need to be helping each other to eliminate discrimination and violence. They stressed the importance of the girls coming together in solidarity in order to take action. Males never mentioned this as a recommendation.

“This issue is everyone’s responsibility, especially the girls who face such discrimination. No one can know your problem except you mention it.” – Nigeria, girl focus group respondent, 13

“This society in general needs to stand up in solidarity against discrimination. Women in particular need to push aside those barriers of discrimination and help other women to push aside those barriers.” – Trinidad and Tobago, young person, 18
V. INVISIBLE GIRLS

There are many girls in the world who have, until now, existed without voice in their communities and lived beyond the reach of aid organizations. These girls, at particularly high risk for discrimination and violence, fall into the cracks and spaces between protection and representation due to their existence as marginalized, hidden, or disconnected individuals. For instance, many invisible girls live in conditions of extreme poverty, zones of war and violence, or behind the doors of communities that are closed off.

The Expert Group Meeting report has identified reaching invisible girls as a most integral, if complex, component to be undertaken at the CSW. The Expert Group suggests that more research must be done on invisible girls to properly identify their needs and to design effective outreach programs that address their specific conditions.

“Girls who suffer from psychological pain, including feeling lonely, having low self-esteem, losing hope, and unable to trust others. Girls who suffer from psychological pain are more vulnerable than the ones who suffer from physical pain. And a lot of times, these psychological pains are much more severe, less noticeable, and more difficult to heal.” – China, girl respondent

Children and young people were asked to look at the list of groups of invisible girls outlined in the EGM report and add to the list any groups they thought might be missing. In addition, respondents were asked to suggest how community leaders, young people, and others could better find and protect invisible girls. Young people were asked to name the parties they thought should be held responsible for helping invisible girls. Again, it is important to note, many of the respondents, especially from the Focus Groups, are invisible girls themselves. This opportunity might represent the first time these invisible girls had the chance to speak out on the issues that affects them and an important chance for policy makers to listen to their voices.

Findings

Many young respondents agreed with the Expert Group’s list of ‘invisible girls’, such as child mothers and girl heads of households; refugee, asylum-seeking and internally displaced girls; girls in marginalized groups; and girls facing harmful social and traditional practices. In addition, the respondents identified:

- Orphaned girls
- Girls who are abused by a boyfriend, husband or parent
- Girls living in extreme poverty
- Illiterate girls
- Girls living in rural areas
- Girls who are drug addicts.

“I feel the group of orphaned and homeless girls is missing. These girls have no one to look after them and they are very much vulnerable to exploitation, abuse and trafficking. This is a largely neglected group and definitely needs to be included in the list.” – Anonymous girl respondent

Almost half of the focus groups suggested the creation of mentor programmes and counselling as the way to find and protect invisible girls. Other recommendations included:

- Create safe spaces as resource centres
• **Peer-2-Peer** outreach and networking
• Being able to speak out to someone
• Create an alliance between the visible and the invisible
• Train parents and school teachers to notice the signs of girls in trouble
• Eliminate corruption so that outreach and/or resources will actually get to these girls
• Reach out to invisible girls and include them in networks where they feel valued and respected
• More programmes to protect and support invisible girls.

“**It would be perfect if special hospices, care centres and other places were created where girls would feel safe and sound, where they would be able to get the help of a doctor, psychologist or where they could express themselves and talk to others about their problems.**”
- Palestinian refugee in Jordan, age 10 to 17

The children and young people think the following are responsible for protecting invisible girls:
• Governments
• Families
• Communities
• Civil society
• Youth/peers.

“**Very less number of political leaders take actions about the invisible girls cases, and also police rarely deal with those matters, they take proper actions only if the pressure from the society and higher authorities is high.**” – India, female, 20

**General trends**
**Role of the family:** Young people who responded to the online survey did not consider the family as responsible for protecting invisible girls as communities. On the other hand, Focus Group participants, the majority of whom are from rural and marginalized populations, consistently stressed families as most responsible in helping invisible girls. This suggests that girls in marginalized communities are not made aware of the support structures and networks that exist within their own communities, and that advocacy efforts are needed to be better disseminate this information.

“We suggest that the government train personnel who can go to the remote areas to enlighten parents on some of these issues so that they can respect our dignity as human persons.” – Nigeria, female in girls’ secondary Catholic school

**Invisibility can happen anywhere:** It is not only girls in marginalized communities who may feel invisible, nor is it only their voices which contribute to the discussion.

“**Especially in western countries, where girls and boys seem to be treated equal, people are blinded by the belief that everything is perfect. The bad conditions in other countries are seen as nightmares, but almost nobody notices that we have invisible girls among us as well.**”
- Germany, female focus group respondent, 15 to 19
There is a need for increased partnerships and networking, and exchange of knowledge between young people in different regions of the world. **An alliance between the visible and the invisible girl child** is an example of the type of cross-cultural partnership desired by respondents.

**Regional trends**

**Regional clusters:** Young people from different regions identified different groups of invisible girls. In Central and Eastern Europe, they identified abused girls, drug addicts and workers in pornography; East Asia and the Pacific, orphan girls, abused girls, illiterate girls, girls with disabilities and girls in extreme poverty; Eastern and Southern Pacific, orphans, internally displaced and refugee girls; industrialized Countries, abused girls, often reported that nothing was missing; Latin America and the Caribbean, girls with disabilities, indigenous girls and girls in extreme poverty; Middle East and North Africa, girls who practice certain religions that forbid them to seek help from outside their marriage; and West and Central African groups noted young, unwed mothers and girls living in rural areas.

> “On who should be responsible for helping invisible girls, they all in one voice said, ‘Everyone is and should be responsible for helping invisible girls.’” – Nigeria, focus group facilitator’s note

**VI. EMPOWERMENT**

**Introduction**

Because girls are often the victims of discrimination and violence, they are often left feeling disempowered and weak in comparison to boys. Many times they end up feeling silenced and alienated from their communities, making it impossible for them to voice their opinions and needs. If a girl is denied her right to attend school, for example, she is robbed of her chance to develop the necessary skills to maintain a well-paying job. She is starved of any future opportunity to be economically independent. She is forced to stay at home, except when her family calls her to do otherwise, and, in the end, her voice in the community is lost. She is absolutely disempowered.

In order to truly reverse this cycle of discrimination and silence, girls must be given the chance to gain control of their lives. Girls must be empowered, or given the opportunity to incorporate knowledge, skills, and tools for their own benefit and for the benefit of future generations of girls. Instead of being the targets of violence and discrimination, girls must be empowered so that they can grow into the dynamic and visible community members that they long to be.

Young people were asked their views on how to empower girls, what they thought was missing from the EGM report, to recommend strategies for empowering girls, and who they think is responsible for implementing these strategies.

**Findings**

Training initiatives were recommended by most of the respondents as a very important way to empower girls affected by discrimination an violence. Examples of training initiatives, e.g., **workshops or support groups**, included: career and confidence building, skills acquisition and rights awareness. **Families and community members** were often encouraged to organize and attend such workshops and support groups. Their involvement, according to the respondents, was crucial for spreading awareness about the importance of empowering girls. Other prevailing recommendations were an increase in **access to education and information**, as well as the creation of **safe spaces**.
Recommendations on how to empower girls:

- Develop training workshops, i.e. career building and self empowering workshops.
- Promote counselling and support groups.
- Unfold an international/national media campaign on behalf of girls.
- Create girl-to-girl networks, especially for those from rural/underdeveloped to urban/developed communities.
- Encourage families to maintain an empowering environment for girls at home.
- Invite girls to take action themselves, such as through self-defence classes.

“Why don’t they allow women into politics? Because should a woman make it into politics she is going to promote the rights of women. And do the men like to hear that… do they need it?” – Belarus focus group, girl respondent, 16

- Create safe and supportive spaces.
- Promote equal access to education, i.e., abolish school fees and create youth friendly education programmes.
- Access to health care, especially related to reproduction and avoiding infectious diseases.
- Design channels for girls’ participation in decision-making processes.
- Develop girls’ social assets, or communication skills necessary for socializing, i.e. mentor and peer-to-peer programmes.

“Girls are often treated as inferior and are socialized to put themselves last, thus undermining their self-esteem. Initiatives should be taken to prepare girls to participate actively, effectively and equally with boys at all levels of social, economic, political and cultural leadership.” – Cambodia, anonymous

The children and young people think the following are responsible for the empowerment of girls:

- Governments
- Families
- Communities
- NGOs
- Civil Society/media
- Teachers/schools.

“It’s everyone’s responsibility to empower girls because at the end of the day, we have one thing in common – they are our sisters, mothers, cousins, friends, neighbors, and even grandmothers. Girls should be empowered from the day they are born.” – Kenya, Young male respondent, 22

General trends

A variety of training: An assortment of training sessions for girls was recommended as an important empowerment strategy. The sessions were described as either workshops or support-groups, and focused on: career training, skill acquisition, confidence boosting, and rights awareness.

“… Arranging free-of-charge courses, hobby groups for girls, especially from poor families.” – Tajikistan, focus group girl respondent, 12
**Males recommended media awareness and law enforcement:** Males suggested governments and the media develop anti-discrimination laws and campaigns.

“There are basic elements in empowering communities and upholding the rights and responsibilities of all community members ... using the media to raise the awareness of both girls and parents in order to encourage parents to allow their daughters to go out into society...” – Jordan, Palestinian refugee, age 10 to 17

**Regional trends**

**Eastern Asia and the Pacific and Latin America:** Young people from these regions were the only ones who asked for judicial action by governments and international agencies for the empowerment of girls.

**Latin America and West/Central Africa:** Free access to healthcare and education was stressed by respondents from these regions.

**Middle East and North Africa:** Respondents from this region were the only one who did not give any responsibility to government and to local authorities for empowering girls. Instead, young people pointed to NGOs, civil society, and communities as the responsible parties.

**VII. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

**For governments**

- **Invest in and increase access to education for all girls.** Governments need to allocate more resources and ensure all girls have access to quality education. Education is the key to both empowerment and to increased knowledge about human rights.
- **Respect and enforce laws that protect girls.** Governments should be much more direct and clear when formulating laws about the rights of girls and make sure they are consistent with international conventions, leaving little or no room for different interpretations. Law enforcement agencies need to ensure laws are respected in every part of the country, especially in rural areas. Violations against girls should be more severely punished.
- **Create gender-positive media messages.** Governments should partner with NGOs to run media campaigns that raise awareness about the rights of girls, and broadcasts positive images of girls and women. Messages need to reach rural and marginalized areas and should be created in partnership with local communities.
- **Build the capacity of local leaders to identify and protect invisible girls.** Governments should roll out training programs that build the capacity of parents, teachers, social workers, and other community members to identify invisible girls, and to provide guidance and assistance to those who need it.
- **Support community organizations working in this area.** Governments should provide more resources to community-based organizations and youth organizations. Programs should be run by individuals with knowledge of the local context, culture, and traditions.
- **Support youth organizations and networks to implement peer-to-peer and non-formal education.** Governments should partner with and invest resource in youth organizations that engage, educate and empower their peers.

**For community-based and non-governmental organizations**

- **Connect visible girls with invisible girls.** Create programs and solutions that allow girls from different backgrounds to come together, locally, nationally, and globally. Allow for open and anonymous sharing of experiences and discussions. Encourage transnational networks.
- **Create support groups for girls.** Girls should be able to reach out and connect to someone in
their environment whenever they to, be it their peers, their families, a mentor or ‘just someone to talk to’. Support groups should be established, especially in rural areas, which respect anonymity.

- **Organize skill- and confidence-building workshops.** Organize workshops where girls and young women can gain skills and knowledge that will boost their confidence and increase their opportunities for economic advancement.

- **Change cultural practices and traditions through media and advocacy campaigns**— Initiate evidence-based campaigns to inform communities about the consequences of harmful practices and traditions. Outlaw proverbs and other sayings that indicate women are inferior.

Over the past decade, several reports and recommendations have been put forth on how we can improve the situation of girls and boys. Yet, many of them still live in a situation of severe human rights violations and do not have a voice in society. It is time for governments to consider the ideas and concerns of the girls and boys themselves. As this report has shown, they certainly have strong opinions on how they want to shape their own futures.

At the 51st Commission on the Status of Women, governments should take into account the recommendations outlined in reports by experts and academics. It is essential, however, to consider the views of girls, boys and young people, because they know better than anyone else what will work to improve their daily lives. Their recommendations are outlined in this report. **It is time to listen and ACT.**
ANNEX I: ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

Those who responded to the report through the Voices of Youth website were directed to the following website: http://www.unicef.org/voy/takeaction/takeaction_stopping_discrimination_violence.php and the questionnaire below.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT AND ANSWER

These are the same questions that appear at the end of each section. Think about and discuss them and then send us your answers by ….

Name:
Country:
Age:
Email:
Gender:

1. Look at the list of human rights violations. Do you think any are missing? If so, which ones would you add and why do you think they are important?

2. What can be done to make sure laws and policies are put into practice and who should be responsible for making sure it happens?

3. Look at the list of causes of discrimination and violence. Do you think any are missing? If so, which ones would you add and why do you think they are important?

4. What can be done to stop discrimination and violence against girls and who should be responsible?

5. Look at the list of groups of invisible girls. Do you think any groups are missing? If so, which ones would you add and why do you think they are important?

6. How can community leaders, young people, and others better find and protect invisible girls? Who should be responsible for helping invisible girls?

7. Look at the 4 strategies for empowering girls. Are there any strategies for empowerment you think are missing? If so, which ones would you add and why do you think they are important?

8. What else can be done to empower girls and who should be responsible for doing it?
ANNEX II: FACILITATOR’S GUIDE FOR CONDUCTING FOCUS GROUPS

A FACILITATOR’S GUIDE TO CONDUCTING FOCUS GROUPS WITH CHILDREN ON “STOP DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS”

Never conducted a focus group before? Here is a brief ‘ABC’ on how to do it.

All in all you might need three full days to prepare, conduct and report on your focus group session. This includes agreeing with the invited focus group participants on a date, time and place, most likely one or more weeks ahead of the time of the focus group.

A. To prepare yourself to conduct the focus group you need to:

1. Familiarize yourself with and read through various times the Youth Friendly Version of the EGM report. Feel comfortable with the contents and the questions asked, try to respond to them yourself – think of the cultural context of the country you are in – think of the characteristics of the group you will do the focus group with.

2. If you find that any of the questions need more explanation than what is available in the text, organize that information in advance to help you explain the questions.

3. Define the criteria for the selection of the participants in your focus group. Do they come from a project, programme, do they all have the same background, same age? Do you need to arrange for any support adults to follow up with any of the group members that would like more information on topics discussed, who might encounter psychological reactions to the discussion – who would these helpers be?

4. We recommend that you carry out the focus group with young people who are between 10-18 years old, but divided into two age groups, 10-13 years and 14-17 years, so that the participants are at the same level.

5. You should also take note of the age and sex of each participant to be included in the final report.

6. Since some of the issues to be discussed can be seen as sensitive, it is recommended that girls and boys be separated into single sex groups.

7. If the group is conducted with girls it is recommended that the facilitator be female, and for a focus group with only boys the facilitator should be male.

8. You should prepare to conduct the focus group with between 6-10 young people; smaller groups are more manageable than bigger groups. Part of your job will be to engage and make sure that all focus group participants get an opportunity to express their views.

9. If the focus group includes very vulnerable girls, you may consider holding one-on-one discussions instead of bringing them together in a group. You may also want to invite another person who can provide additional support to the vulnerable girl before, during and after the consultation (e.g. programme or project officers who already are working with the girls).

10. Your job is to explain the contents of the document. Since we assume that you will conduct the focus group with young girls (and boys) from especially vulnerable situations you will most likely need to illustrate the text by giving examples that are easy for young people to understand and to relate to. This may require presenting some drawings or using other youth friendly tools that will help them understand the topics.

11. Remember your job is to give confidence to the participants so that they express their views. You should try to remain as “neutral” as possible. Try not to be judgmental, or let differences in points of views come through. At the same time, you should try to make sure that all participants respect each other and feel safe to speak openly. Think through how you will explain and say things before you speak to avoid using emotionally loaded or judgmental words and expressions that may offend other participants.
Remember you will have to plan in detail how you will spend your time with the focus group; that is you need to define how long an introduction you will make, how many question you will ask, how many interventions will you expect as a minimum, how to ensure that all participants get a chance to express their views, how to wrap up, what will the participants get in return from you? How will you register all the interventions? Who will take notes? How long do you need to draft the report of the focus group discussion?

**B. To carry out a focus group you need:**

1. Make sure that the local authorities (community leaders, parents, guardians, teachers, religious leaders, programme or project managers are informed and agree to let young people from their community or group participate) as this is crucial for the safety and integrity of the participants.

2. A quiet and undisturbed place to meet with the focus group participants. For example: a room where all can sit in a circle, under tree with shadow, away from noise or curious public.

3. A helper, that will help you take notes and register who would like to talk or if you oversee someone.

4. Find out if you can communicate directly (recommended) or if you have to use an interpreter, if so this person comes in addition to the helper. If you have to communicate via an interpreter you should rehearse with her or him and you must make it clear that he or she should not be judgmental, emotional or add their own opinion; this is very important in order to receive real information. Make sure your local interpreter is acceptable to your group (if you are a woman conducting a focus group with girls your interpreter also needs to be a woman or young girl).

5. Use a tape or voice recorder so you can register all interventions and concentrate on the young people you are interviewing.

6. You must explain in the beginning and at the end what the purpose of the focus group is, ensure all participants that personal data will be kept confidential, set the ground rules for the group with the participants, for example one has to raise his or her hand and get a signal from you that one can talk.

7. Remember your job is to explain and ask questions, not to have an opinion. You want to find different ways of explaining the same question to ensure that all participants will understand clearly.

8. Keep eye contact with the participants, make sure you shift your attention between all participants, and make sure you include everyone.

9. Prepare some ice breakers to use to make participants feel comfortable and feel that this is fun and interesting.

10. The focus group should last anywhere between 45 minutes to 1 hour – NEVER more than one and a half hour, no exceptions!

11. Make sure at the end you restate the intention and for what the information that the participants have provided will be used. Let them know if you will come back and share with them the outcomes, local, national and international results to which this focus group contributed. If you are not sure of how or what you will bring back, do NOT promise what you cannot keep.

**C. To make a report from the focus group you conducted you need:**

1. Record the first name, age and sex of each participant in your focus group.

2. As soon as possible after conducting the focus group write down your impressions (was it a good tone in the group, were there many contradictory opinions, did everyone agree, did all participate or did some of the people participate much more than others, was it an interesting or lively discussion or was it rather dull and hard to get going?). If a helper or interpreter was used, have them put down their impressions.

3. Have your helper finalize her or his notes from the focus group discussion.
4. Write out the notes from the tape or voice recorder.

5. Start with a brief introduction, giving the characteristics of your group, how many people participated, age, sex, level of education, living conditions, geographical location real or fiction, pseudonyms for the participants if it is necessary for security and integrity of the participants. (In any case you will not use their full names and address, just first names).

6. Explain the questions asked (write them out) and responses. Try to group the different responses and answers into the four sections of the youth friendly report, using quotations if they will help clarify what was expressed.

7. Write out any major findings and results in your conclusions.

8. Try to keep your report to no more than 5 pages maximum.

9. Please write your report in Arabic, English, French, Russian, Spanish or Swahili.

10. Send your report to us by ..... in one of three ways:
    - **Online**: Log on to Voices of Youth (http://www.unicef.org/voy/) and click on “Stop discrimination and violence against girls” to fill in the online questionnaire.
    - **Email**: voy@unicef.org, with “Stop discrimination and violence against girls” in the subject line.
    - **Mail**: Voices of Youth, 3 UN Plaza, New York City, NY 10017, USA.

Now that you have gone through this ‘ABC’ you are ready to start:

**HAVE A SUCCESSFUL FOCUS GROUP SESSION!**
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS acquired immune deficiency syndrome
CEDAW Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CEE/CIS Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States
CRC Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSW Commission on the Status of Women
EGM Expert Group Meeting
HIV human immunodeficiency virus
MDG Millennium Development Goals
UN United Nations
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF United Nations Children’s Fund
NGO non-governmental organization
VOY Voices of Youth (UNICEF)
WPAY World Programme of Action for Youth

REFERENCES


This is a working document, prepared to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and to stimulate discussion.

The text has not been edited to official publication standards and UNICEF accepts no responsibility for errors.
It's time to listen to us!

Youth response to the Report of the Expert Group Meeting on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child

The Commission on the Status of Women
51st Session

26 February – 9 March 2007
United Nations, New York

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February 2007