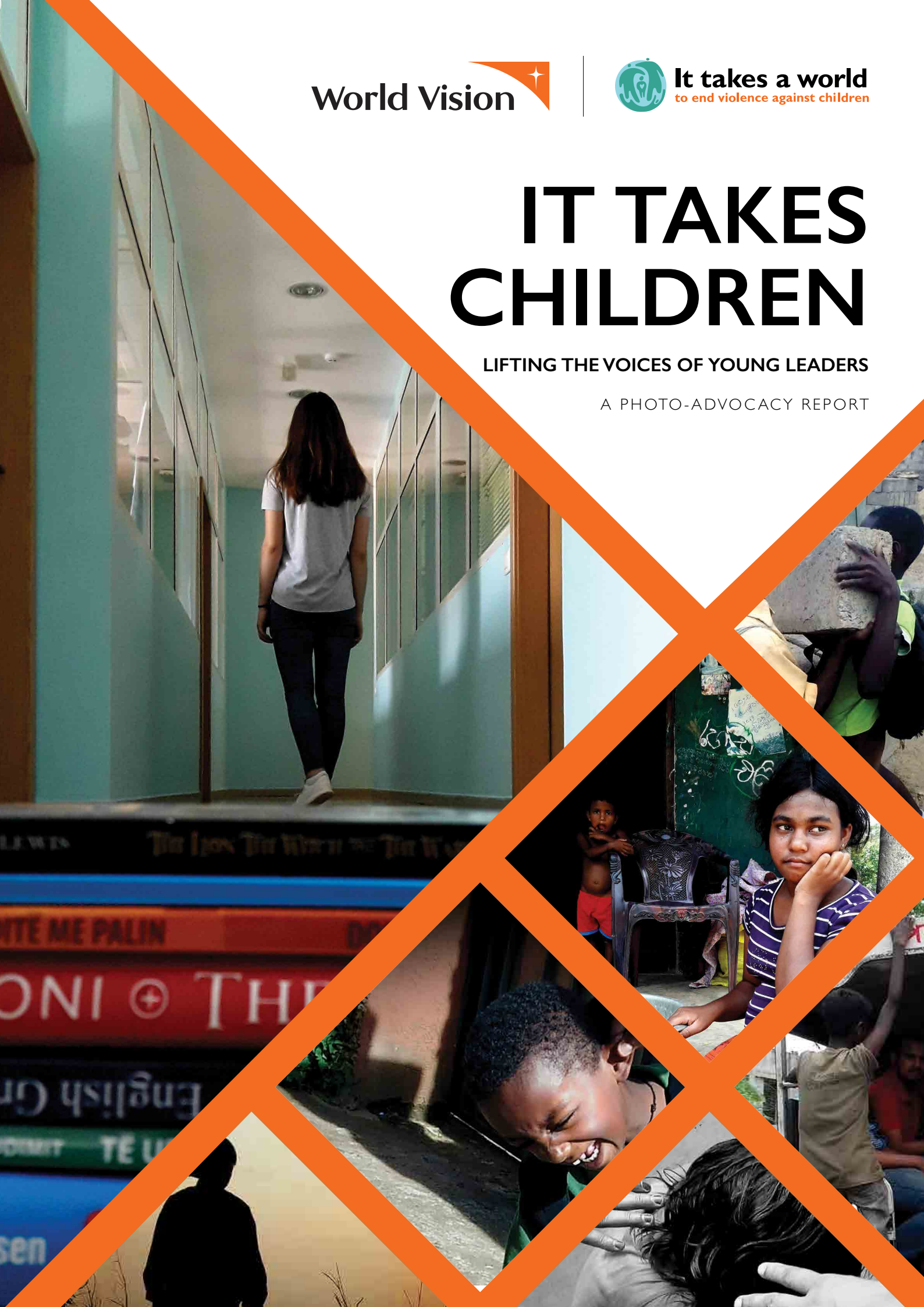


IT TAKES CHILDREN

LIFTING THE VOICES OF YOUNG LEADERS

A PHOTO-ADVOCACY REPORT



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FOREWORD

Dear Friends,

I am very pleased to commend this very inspiring photo-advocacy book. Children and young people, who are very proactive agents of change, show us very clearly how they want to be engaged in social movements and actively participate in public policy debates. By campaigning and awareness-raising, children and young people can make significant changes in their own lives and the lives of millions children across the world.



In almost all the consultations we have with children and young people, they are constantly telling us that their participation and protection are major priorities for them. Therefore, World Vision is very committed to creating multiple spaces and opportunities for children and young people to participate meaningfully on all issues that are relevant to them, including the number one issue affecting children today: violence. It takes place in every community and in every country. Worldwide, violence affects 1.7 billion children each year and it robs them of their childhood and their dignity.

This photo-advocacy report is a testament to the strong desire we see from young leaders who want to engage in campaigning to end violence against children. World Vision will actively improve and increase the opportunities for the meaningful participation of children and young people. Participation is about giving voice to the vulnerable and oppressed and this is an essential component to challenge poverty, injustice and inequality. That's why the voices of children and young people are a central component in World Vision's campaign, ***It Takes a World to End Violence Against Children***.

Let's celebrate these wonderful examples of children and young people making themselves heard and let's encourage and empower many more children across the world to participate, be heard and be proactive agents of change.

Charles Badenoch
Partnership Leader, Advocacy and External Engagement
World Vision International

I am proud to introduce this photo-advocacy report at a time when World Vision is seeking to fully engage children and young people in the global campaign to end violence against children.

This report was photographed and written by 21 children and young people, aged 13 to 18, who are part of the World Vision Young Leaders project, which aims to equip and empower them to engage in actions to end violence. I have had the privilege of working with these children and young people from countries throughout Asia, Africa, South America and Europe. I have watched them create a global network where they communicate, share their own experiences and the experiences of other children in their countries, and together try to find solutions to the problems that affect them, especially those related to violence. They write blogs, represent their peers at high-level debates, and speak in the name of all the children who do not have a voice.



This project gives young leaders space and opportunities to gain skills, knowledge and tools to engage in campaigns across the globe, and make their voices heard in policy discussions and at high-level debates.

We are celebrating this photo-advocacy report today, because World Vision and the Young Leaders want to call upon the whole world to immediately stop all forms of violence against children, and to push the international community to implement laws that ensure that children can live in a world free of violence.

Children and young people need to know that it is their right to live without violence and to stand up for one another -- and for society to support them when they do. That's why we called this report ***It Takes Children***. It takes children to be empowered. It takes children to share their stories. It takes a world to listen.

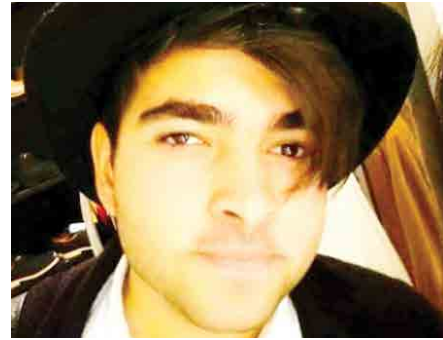
It is our hope that this photo-advocacy project will support this approach, so that we can contribute to a society where children and young people are respected as competent social actors. I would like to thank all the children and young people who have done and are doing their best to change their lives and to make from this world a better place to live, and I would like to invite you to support them in their fight against violence.

Mario Stephano
Child Participation Advisor, Advocacy and External Engagement
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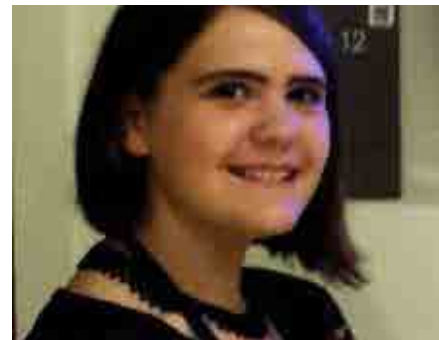
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IT IS A CRY OF THE HEART! IT IS THE VOICE OF CHILDREN

By Fatou, aged 17, Young Leader from Senegal

In Senegal, violence against children is numerous and varied. For instance, we know that children suffer rape, incest and forced circumcision.. Children are not registered at birth due to parents' negligence and many experience the worst form of labour; especially in the mines of Kedougou in southeast Senegal.

Moreover, in Senegal, child marriage has become a widespread phenomenon. Each year a lot of girls are forced into marriage, sometimes even before they reach the age of 15.

The issue is more accentuated in rural areas than in urban, and it is more common in poor families. In Senegal, unfortunately for the children, there are laws to protect them but their application is lacking.

Girls who are married early are exposed to violence, abuse and risky pregnancy. In Senegal, the mortality of young mothers under 20 and their babies is very high. Married girls often drop out of school as soon as they become pregnant.

One of my friends, at just 16 years old, was given in marriage by her grandfather. He thought he was protecting her from pregnancy out of wedlock. She revolted against the marriage and the whole family abandoned her. Being unhappy, she finally accepted to get married and now she faces horrible forms of abuse from her husband.

In order to put an end to these abuses I work in my community with a local child protection committee. I also educate my peers, adults and the local authorities about violence and abuse against children. I am also a peer-to-peer educator; which means that I have been trained to sensitise my classmates and peers on different themes such as early marriage.

I want to call for everyone to stand by us and focus your interventions very deliberately to ensure the protection and well being of all children. We, the children and young people, are vulnerable and we need to be accompanied by you to create our future. So, I ask you to support us, to stand by and protect us from any obstacles to our survival. It is a cry of the heart! It is the voice of children.



WE HAVE TO TAKE ACTION

By Dana, aged 17, Young Leader from Romania

Violence affects us every single day, directly or indirectly. The problem with this phenomenon is that becomes accepted as normal and as such, there are not many people who will react when they witness it.

But there are people who are more exposed to it, for whom it is especially hard. They find it almost impossible, to defend themselves against violence; the homeless people, minorities, poor people, but, especially, children and women.

Violence is the response of some people who are unable to express their needs by words and they direct their anger towards the ones who are incorrectly considered to be weaker: children and women. We are not born violent; it's not in our nature, as it is said. Being exposed several times to violence, will lead for sure to such behaviour. As an example, it's more likely, for a woman to be physically, emotionally or financially abused by her partner and a child that lives under these circumstances will act violently to his peers. Moreover, their chances of become a violent adult are very high. So, there is a clear vicious circle that needs to stop.

In 2015, over 13.000 cases of violence were reported in Romania, but the reality is that the number could be much higher. Together, boys and girls, young leaders and grown-ups, have to take action and one of the first steps is to be engaged in actions and campaigns against violence.

We need to take this problem to a higher level, as we are doing here today. It may take a lot of time, because here, we are talking about changing a mentality that has lasted for too many years already. We need to educate the children, teachers and the parents, especially the young ones, that violence is not the answer and that it causes scars deeper than the marks on the skin. It's a hard mission; it's true, because every situation is different. But we cannot dream about a developed society, if we still continue to disrespect the others and be aggressive.

I am a Young Leader and I dream of a world without violence, based on peace and respect. Yes, you can call me a dreamer, but I know that every single person here has exactly the same dream. So, let's be those dreamers who changed their dream into reality!



LETS STOP CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

By Eyoel, aged 14, Young Leader from Ethiopia

I am here writing about sexual abuse because this is something very serious that affect many children in our society. Sexual abuse is forcing the child to engage in sexual acts or have sexual intercourse to indulge the abusive adult. In this activity, children suffer from a lot of emotional and physical problems like HIV, fistula, pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

In many cases, as a result of these abuses a baby will be born. When a young girl is pregnant and gives birth to the child, there are two babies in the house: the new mother and her actual baby. Also in many cases the baby cannot have the chance to meet his father, does not have the opportunity to develop a good relationship with his father nor do they have the opportunity to see the love of the father. This causes further emotional abuse to the baby.

I know a girl who is 10 years old. An adult sexually abused her and she became mentally and physically sick. Mentally, as she had a broken heart and physically, she suffered from fistula, which means she cannot control her urine due to the abuse and until today she is wearing diappers. She also dropped out of school, which means another abuse: the lack of education.

I want to ask you: What if this girl was your daughter, your sister, your cousin? What would you do to stop this?

So please, be with me, please let's stop this problem, and let's prevent it from happening to another child. I am sure if we are together we can stop it. It takes a world to end violence against children.



WE MUST STRONGLY STAND AGAINST CHILD LABOUR

By Foysel, aged 15, Young Leader from Bangladesh

Child labour is a big problem in our country. Children from poor families, street children and orphans are the victims of child labour. There are many causes behind this phenomenon; poverty is one of them. Poor people can hardly maintain their family and educate their children, so they are forced to engage their children in doing different jobs.

Besides poverty, the rapid growth of population, selfish attitudes and ignorance of parents, in addition to their indifference and lack of awareness, are greatly responsible for child labour.

It is an irony of fate that children, the future of the nation, are losing their childhood forever by doing different jobs. They are being deprived of their basic rights such as food, shelter, clothing, education and proper treatment. It is known that child labour is cheap labour: children work hard but they are low paid. They do not get any sympathy or love from anybody. Sometimes they are tortured physically and mentally.

Many child workers are not given proper food. They often suffer from malnutrition and get affected by various diseases at an early age. Thus, their condition highlights only the distressed condition of the nation.

Children are the present and the future citizens of a country. Their rights should be protected at all costs. So all of us must strongly stand against child labour and try hard to ensure a peaceful, carefree and secure world for the children in the country.



FLOWERS SHOULD GROW IN THE LIGHT, NOT PERISH IN DARKNESS

By Sansala, aged 15, Young Leader from Sri Lanka

The sunrises to provide light for us and we are born to look into the world through that light. Every newborn child will grow up and become a good citizen to the country. The Rose is a very pleasant flower among flowers. Every flower blooms with the light of the sun. Some flowers bloom and fade on the same day. But the Rose takes few days to fade. So it is very special. Rather than a flower gets faded in a day, it would be better and wonderful if it lasts for few days.

If a child were able to live long in this world it would be great to the family and community. But we can see that insects and worms eat the beautiful flower and the beauty is faded. Likewise as the society made beautiful by children there are many factors, which can take away that beauty. When there is a small hole in the flower petals because of the worms and insects it gradually grows and become a big hole that takes off the beauty of the flower. This type of flower gets faded very soon. When worms and insects eat the flower it spoils the beauty of the whole bush. This situation will resist the bees also of coming to that affected bush to enjoy the honey.

Likewise when a child is affected he or she is neglected from the community. There will be no proper acceptance. Like the worms and insects that eat the flower, a child's beauty is being destroyed by various factors such as, child abuse and violence against children. Hence the value of the children is lost or decreased. Most of the time the society neglects such incidents.

There children who face mental and physical abuses. For an example children who are engaged to use and sell alcohol. They are not respected and they are neglected by the society. They are neglect as a flower eaten by worms and insects. Children are born to the world to create a meaning in life. But, because of dangerous people around them that situation is destroyed. As a child is very much interested in learning and experiencing new things, he or she can become addicted to many wrong activities.

If precautions are taken to destroy the worms and insects that eat the flower we can protect the beauty of a flower. Likewise when the factors, which affect children lives, are improved the children can live happily with their beauty.



CYBERBULLYING VIOLATES CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

By Alexandru, aged 17,
Young Leader from Romania

Cyberbullying is when someone uses technology to send mean, threatening or embarrassing messages to or about a person. Cyberbullying might be in a text email, personal message, or an online post.

There are aggressive teenagers who are taking part in the phenomenon of the cyberbullying and they are repeating what they are seeing in their family, society, or even in movies or cartoons. These teenagers may have been bullied themselves and now they treat others as they were treated.

The biggest problem of cyberbullying is that many of the young people who are victims of this emotional and psychosocial violence choose to isolate themselves from their family, their friends, or from even any kind of activities where there may be other young people involved. In some cases, the victim has taken their own life because they can no longer handle the pressure of the cyberbullying.

When a teenager is mocked making him lose his self-esteem and confidence in friends or family the only way out he can see is death.

There are many kinds of cyberbullying, and some of them are: sexting (when a child receive a message with sexual content); exclusion (many teenagers are excluded from some groups); trolling (when another person makes you say something that you regret); happy slapping (using a video to film when a teenager is randomly attached then posting the video online) can seriously affect a young persons self-esteem.

A study from European Union Kids Online research network shows that in Romania about 41 per cent of children have been victims of bullying and 13 per cent of them have been victims of cyberbullying. Also, more than six percent of teenagers are victims of sexting. Cyberbullying is a delicate subject and most young people from Romania, especially the teenagers from the rural areas don't know how to solve this problem.

However, there are few steps that can be taken for combating the cyberbullying:

- Determine the current state of the phenomenon in schools and high schools by interviewing students.
- Inform students about the contents and effects of cyberbullying and educate them on some ways to secure their online surfing.
- Provide emotional support and protection for victims, especially those who are facing depression and isolation due to cyberbullying.
- Organise debates and open discussions involving children, parents and local authorities to raise awareness of the phenomenon.



I FORGAVE TO SET MYSELF FREE

By Nurys, aged 15, Young Leader from Nicaragua

I want to share the story of Guillermina (a fictional name). I wrote the story in first person but this is not my story.

My name is Guillermina and I am 15 years old and I live in Managua, capital of Nicaragua. When I was a child, I lived very happily with my family in a rural community. I am the oldest of four siblings, we all shared good family times, but one winter day my existence changed drastically. An unfortunate situation occurred in my own family. This marked my life in a brutal way and also changed my future.

The person who said he loved me and would protect me the most, the one who gave me the opportunity to be born, the one I call father began to touch my body in inappropriate ways when I was only nine years old. He was the one who sexually abused me for three long years.

I did not know that was wrong. I felt a lot of fear, pain and sadness whenever the abuses occurred. I felt dirty, guilty and I hated myself. I wanted to not exist in order not to go through this painful experience that led me not to love myself. I was an empty person with no purpose in life.

I asked my mother if she loved me, if she trusted and believed in me. In tears, she said yes. I then told her everything that was happening, what my father was doing to me. My mother cried when she heard it. She was very angry with my father, and she was filled with courage and reported him.

He was arrested and then sentenced to 10 years in prison, a sentence he is currently serving in a penitentiary in Managua. Once my father was taken to prison, I stopped living the fear, the anguish and the pain of having been raped by my own father.

Today I have recovered the tranquillity. I feel clean and I am happy. My mother with her immense love and her great strength has helped me a lot to overcome this immense pain. The unconditional love of my siblings has been invaluable to me.

Let us not be chained to suffering and resentment, we can live in freedom if we so choose. Let us not tolerate more acts of violence towards children and adolescents.



TOGETHER WE CAN SAY NO TO BULLYING

By Benjamin, aged 13, Young Leader from Chile

There was a lot of bullying and violence in my school and we ourselves used to kick each other violently during our playtimes which was very bad. Since we started the workshop of the young researchers, where we learn how to be researchers, we have changed our way of seeing things and have stopped playing those aggressive games. This has been a positive experience.

I learned that bullying greatly affects children's self-esteem and many children are not able to cope with this emotional violence and in some extreme cases some children have killed themselves. This is the reason why we need to learn how we can stop the bullying and how to respect each other, not to fight and also to take care of each other.

Children, both boys and girls, are affected by bullying. It is not just bullying by the classmates, sometimes by the adults, the teachers or parents. This is very painful because children do not have the power to stop the bullying alone. But, if we all are together we can say no to the bullying and we can stop the bullies from upsetting other people. We need to start with ourselves, we need to stop fighting or having bad behaviour towards others.

I recommend that children do not to remain silent; instead, that we need take care of ourselves and importantly be respectful to others to be respected.



POVERTY AND CHRONIC ILLNESS: A GIRL WHO LOST HER RIGHT TO EDUCATION

By Sewmini, aged 16,
Young Leader from Sri Lanka

Kamal and Kusumalatha's families (fictional names) are living in the Nawagattegama area and facing many economic challenges.

There are five children in this house, three girls and two boys. The children's hunger is satisfied only with the little money, which they earn by collecting herbal plants and leaves from the forest and selling it every day.

The eldest child in the family is the daughter. The youngest son and the eldest daughter married early due to family struggles. The main character in my photograph is one of the daughters, Tharushika who is longing for her parents to come home soon. Behind is her little brother Chanaka.

Tharuskika is supposed to be in grade nine in school, but due to her chronic Asthma, and that there is no one else that can care for her little brother; she is unable to go school. The parents leave home at five thirty in the morning for the forest in search for plants and leaves. Then all the responsibilities for cooking, cleaning, carrying water and taking care of her siblings are given to Tharushika. She also has to prepare hot water pot for her parents to bathe in the evening as they suffer from Asthma too. Due to family's economic situation and other unbearable difficulties, Tharushika has lost her right to education.

This story shows how poverty can lead to exploitation of children, which is a form of violence. This story is only one example from our village where many children suffer from violence and exploitation due to poverty. Tharuskika's story reflects the pain of many children who need to carry out domestic work because of the poor situation of the family. I believe the government should pay attention to these kinds of underlying root causes which lead to violence against children. When children are exploited for any reason, their rights are violated.



THE STORY OF JOSÉ

By Maria Auxiliadora, aged 16, Young Leader from Nicaragua

José is a teenager who lives in a rural community in the municipality of La Concepción in Nicaragua. He is the eldest of three siblings. He lives with his mother, father and his two brothers. The economic conditions that his family faces forces him to work in the pineapple plantation. He devotes 10 hours a day to this work. This is the reason why he could not continue his studies and he only reached 6th grade of primary school. He is also exposed to physical risks due to the use of pesticides in the pineapple crop, as he does this work without all the necessary protection equipment. José works like this so he can help his parents for the acquire food for everyone in their home.

Unfortunately Jose's story is repeated with many children adolescents in Nicaragua. According to information from the International Labour Organization, 2013, more than 300,000 Nicaraguan children and adolescents, mostly aged 10 to 17 years old, are working in agriculture, trade, services and artisanal mining to help their families to survive.

Child labour is a form of violence since children and adolescents are exposed to many risks according to the type of work they do and whilst children work, they often drop out of school, thus their right to education, recreation and important personal development is violated.



SAVING OUR FRIENDS FROM CHILD MARRIAGE

By Samia, aged 14, Young Leader from Bangladesh

We have many problems like other countries. Poverty is the everyday problem facing many families; child marriage, child labour, physical and emotional violence against children are the big social problems for us. For this reason, children who come to our world cannot get their rights and they suffer in many ways, every day.

If we see the statistics, as per UNICEF Data, in Bangladesh, the rate of child marriage is 54 per cent and physical and emotional violence rate is 82 per cent. These numbers are very high and terrible for any country and society.

These are big problems in our country and a huge problem is the lack of protection for children based on high illiteracy and strong cultural beliefs of our country, which maintains and accepts violence as a normal thing. However, beside cultural beliefs, due to poverty, many parents have to marry off their children.

There are many parents who don't understand this problem. They think girls are born to do household work and if they get married early they can be happy in life. I have a friend who lives next to my house. When she was 12 years old, her parents wanted to arrange a marriage for her. But she did not agree with her parents and went against her parents will.

One day she told us that her father arranged her marriage for that day. She needed help to stop the wedding. We called the local government officer and luckily he came with the police officers before the marriage took place. The boy who wanted to marry her, escaped. Then the police made the family understand that child marriage is against the law and the girl needs to be 18 years old to get married. In the end, the marriage didn't happen. Now she is in class 7 and wants to continue her studies and get a good opportunity to shine in the future. This was a great learning and experience for us. We felt really good that we saved one of our friend's lives.

Cultural beliefs, illiteracy and lack of knowledge cannot be used as excuses anymore. If we give people the knowledge, they will understand what is right and what is wrong, what is good and bad. Hopefully, they will end all forms of violence.



UNFULFILLED PROMISES: MIGRATION & VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

By Olga, aged 14,
Young Leader from Guatemala

Migration is when people move to another country. In the case of my country, the causes of this are extreme poverty, lack of jobs and lack of services. Some migrate in order to meet with their families who have already migrated abroad. But others migrate from crime that they experience in the country, which causes fear and insecurity.

In countries like mine, more and more teenagers like me migrate to other countries, mainly the United States. For example, Cristian, an 11-year-old boy from my community left for the United States because his father and then his mother migrated and he was alone with his grandparents. He felt very sad and wanted to join his family.

Cristian died on the way to the United States. An acquaintance from my community who was traveling with him called his grandparents to inform them. It was never known how Cristian died and his body was not returned to his grandparents.

I could tell you many more stories like this. Migration affects us because adults who are forced to migrate abandon us. This affects us because we run into danger if we try and follow them. To migrate we must cross deserts where we can die, there are also traffickers who pick up the boys and girls and sell or rape them.

Families are also destroyed; parents die on the road or never return, leaving a promise that is not fulfilled- the promise "to return."

If our countries fight for better opportunities, to continue studying, more employment, more security, it would not be necessary to go to serve another country and risk our lives. We want our governments and those in other countries to listen to us, so that they feel pressured to listen to our needs and to put our childhood and adolescence first.

That is why, world leaders, I want to ask you to act; to use your knowledge, your experiences and your spaces to talk about childhood and what we need. Talk to the governments so that they also commit.

We should already understand that we have the power in our hands and take courage; there is no time to lose.



CHILD MARRIAGE IS VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

By Abigail, aged 13, Young Leader from Ghana

Child marriage is when a young girl under 18 years of age is forced into marriage without her consent or will. This can be termed as violence because it is an infringement on the right of the individual or victim as stated by many United Nations documents.

Child marriage can be caused by lack of parental care; financial difficulties, ignorance of the law and lack of education. A girl who is forced into marriage is perpetually denied the opportunity to enjoy her sweet world of childhood and this may give her an identity crises.

Another cause of child marriage is financial difficulties faced by parents. Some parents are not financially stable and because of this, they are compelled to give their girl child into marriage so that they can receive money and gifts.

The third reason I would like to highlight as a cause of child marriage is custom and tradition. Among some tribes in Ghana, there is a traditional practice called exchange marriage. This is a major cause of child marriage in the country. In practice, a man who is ready to take a wife, is obliged to also take a female from his family and present her to his wife's family. So it is normal to see a nine or ten year old girl being exchanged as part of a marriage arrangement between two families.

We can prevent child marriage by enforcing the laws of the country. In Ghana it is illegal to marry a person below 18 years of age. If our law enforcement agencies are proactive and punish perpetrators, it will deter others from indulging in it.

We can end child marriage by talking more about it. We need to keep educating communities about the negative effects of child marriage. We have to also create support systems like child protection committees in the communities, which can protect children's rights at the community level.

We also need to empower young girls to be able to insist on their rights and know the avenues of support available to them where they can report cases of child marriage.



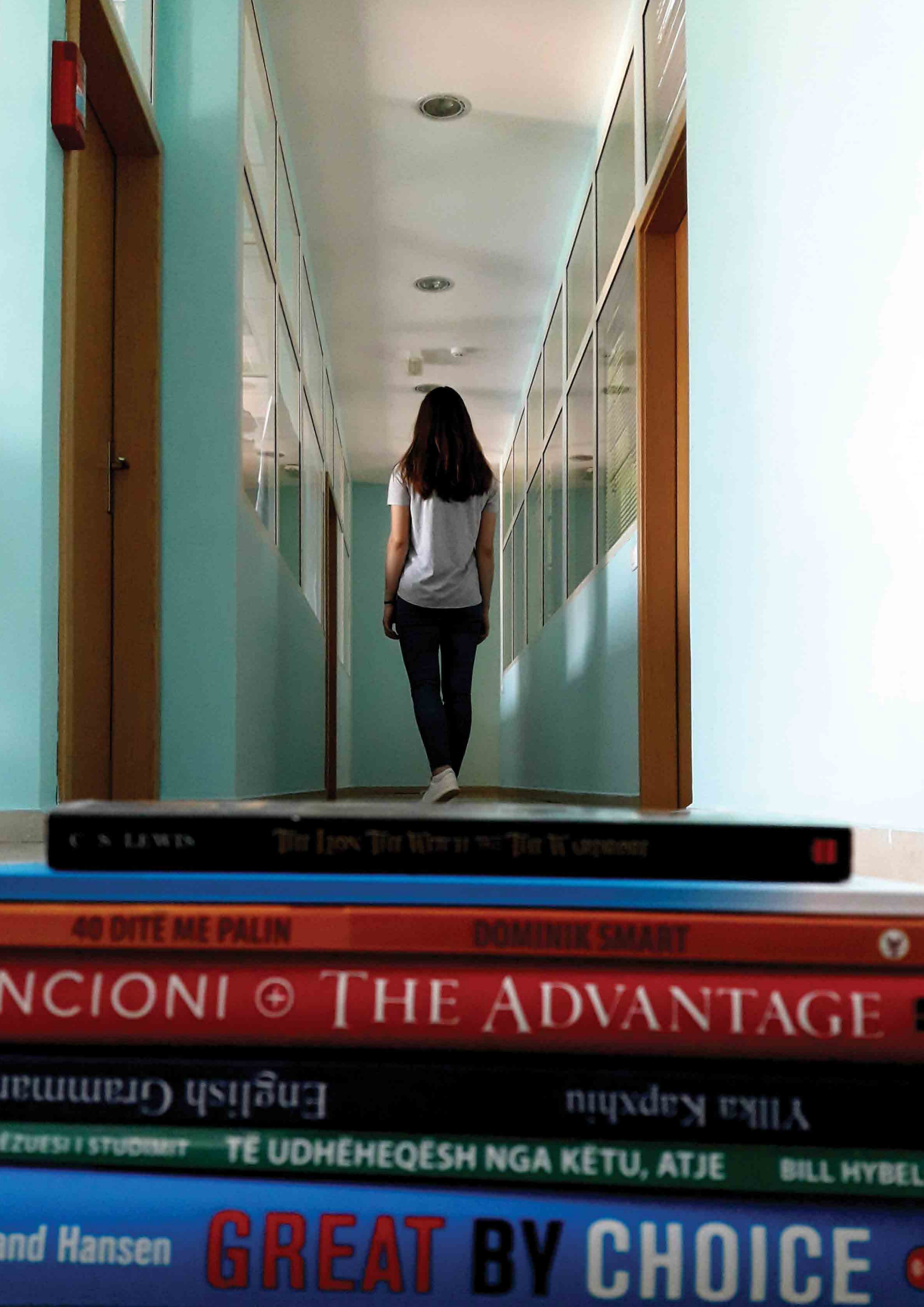
WORKING TO ENSURE CHILD PROTECTION ONLINE

By Suelv, aged 13, Young Leader from Albania

One of the main problems in our everyday life is Internet safety, that's why we decided to focus our efforts on this issue. Firstly, we started making workshops with the schools across the city explaining to students the main rules for safe internet surfing. After raising awareness about the risks of using the internet and the ways we can protect ourselves online, we started writing some recommendations to the government so they would add more information about internet safety on the school curriculum and on the (TIK) books we would learn about the ways to protect ourselves online. Some representatives of the group, myself included, were part of the Safe Internet Campaign in collaboration with the government where we represented our recommendations to the ministers of the government.

Our child protection group was founded in 2013 and was initially made up of 15 members from children and young people aged 10 to 15 years old. In the beginning we attended different workshops such as life skills, team building, nutrition etc. Then, we were part of different trainings about children's rights, child abuse, safe Internet etc. After taking these trainings we decided it was time to start doing some campaigns so we could start to make a change in our community.

We take our group very seriously. We really appreciate the quality time that we spend not only preparing the activities but also getting to know each other better and being a role model for others. We have two main rules; collaboration and inclusiveness and we don't miss any chances to joke and have fun with each other!



I WISH I WERE A CHILD AGAIN: CHILD MARRIAGE IN ALBANIA

By Ermenda, aged 16,
Young Leader from Albania

Sometimes books and school remain just a dream for some children in my country, especially those living in rural and isolated areas like my hometown. Even if you have excellent grades or you are smart enough to succeed and to become someone when you grow up. Even if you continuously express your dreams for education and the future, it is still really hard. Sadly this becomes much harder if you are a girl.

Now that I'm sharing this; feelings and ideas are flying around my head. Sara, Katerina, Sosja, Nevjana and many other girls, between 15 to 17 years old already share their lives and future next to a man. Some of them have now erased, forcibly or not, their dream to become a teacher, an engineer, nurse or doctor just so they can be a wife

Denisa is a 15 year old girl who is engaged to a 28 year old man after continuously being pressured by her family and relatives. "At first it was like a bomb" - she says. "My family were trying to convince me, it was like my body was there but my head and heart wasn't. Now I'm thinking with myself; I wish I were a child again. It's not that I'm grown up now, at least not for myself. But other people say so. I can't believe that at this age I have to take such a decision for my life."

Probably, this upcoming school year Denisa and other "Denisas" won't be attending school. They won't be doing homework after one o'clock in the afternoon, but will instead be serving the lunch to their fiancées or husbands. They will not have time to take an afternoon coffee with their friends because their in-laws won't like it. They will have to take big decisions; to talk less than they used to be; dream less and work harder.

We just need to remind our government that it is time for them to respect and monitor everything they have put on paper for child protection. Me, you, all of us have to do this. A ring around girls finger cannot weigh more than a school book.



CHILD LABOUR IS LEGALLY AND MORALLY WRONG

By Justice, aged 16, Young Leader from Ghana

Child labour refers to the use of children as a source of labour while depriving them of their fundamental rights in the process. Such rights include the opportunity to enjoy their childhood, attend school regularly, have peace of mind, and live a dignified life.

Children who come from poor families are forced to work to support their siblings and parents or supplement the household income when expenses are more than the parent's earning. When this happens, the child has no choice than to comply with their parents, hence preventing the child from enjoying the right to personal liberty.

Recent research by one NGO in Ghana indicated that parents sometimes sell their children for various sums of money ranging between USD\$40.00 and USD\$160.00 to traffickers who end up exploiting these children on Lake Volta. The children undertake hazardous work such as diving deep into the lake to disentangle nets and sometimes get killed by their masters to attract fishes. Some of the children who have been rescued can no longer remember where they came from and who their parents are.

The demand for unskilled labourers is another cause of child labour. Children are mostly unskilled and provide a cheap source of labour, making them an attractive option for many greedy employers. Can you imagine that these greedy employers in my country employ children as young as 13 years of age? These children work on construction fields, cocoa farms and stone quarries as well as in the mines.

Poor people are the most affected by child labour. Empowering poor people through knowledge and income generating projects would go a long way to reducing cases of child labour. So too would enforcing laws that prohibit the exploitation or employment of children to undertake hazardous work. Perpetrators should be arrested and prosecuted and children should not be allowed to provide labour at the expense of getting an education and enjoying their childhood. Child labour should not be entertained at all. It is legally and morally wrong.

Governments should provide social interventions such as cash transfer, school feeding and health insurance to most vulnerable families and children to avoid parents giving their children out in servitude, trafficking, child marriage and exploitative labour.

We want to remind global and world leaders of the pain and suffering children go through. We want to remind them it is time to fulfil their promises to make the world a safer place for children. We therefore call on them to take action now to end violence against children all over the world.



MY STORY: THE VULNERABILITY OF CHILDREN IN TIMES OF ARMED CONFLICT

By Mary Hannah, aged 16, Young Leader from South Sudan

My mother took care of us as our father was absent in our lives. My mother went every day to the bush to collect grass and made it into bundles of brooms to sell and get some money to feed us. Life was very hard. People never moved fearing they could be killed. However, my mother thought that if we stayed in my village, we would die of hunger.

In 2009, we moved to Juba. The journey was hard. My mother put my little sister on my back. All we had was the clothes we were wearing and no shoes on our feet. For three days we ate wild fruits and drank dirty brown water. It was hot. My feet hurt and my sister was very sick and heavy on my back, but we kept on walking. I was afraid to die at night.

Once in Juba, I became a street child. The police arrests some girls and put them in prison for stealing or doing other bad things. Girls are mostly affected by the conflict; they suffer more violence as they are raped and some of them died. Girls are raped, and others became sex workers.

I was aware of all the raping and violence against girls that was going on around us - especially at night so I slept lightly to watch over my sisters. One night a man came to our shack. He managed to undress my sister but I shouted and beat him and he ran away.

Some of the children lost hope because people talk about peace but we see people fighting again and again, so children think that nothing will change in South Sudan. When I go out I get scared because I think that another fight will start at any time.

Despite everything that happened to me I consider myself a very lucky girl. There are still many children in South Sudan who are not lucky like me. They cannot make it on their own; they need all the help they can get.



SHE IS CARRYING HER SUFFERING.

By Meghla, aged 15, Young Leader from Bangladesh

There are two types of child violence. One is physical and the other is mental. Physical violence can be seen, but mental torture or violence cannot.

We all consider that we are very secure in our family, but actually this is not true. Really, most children are being tortured in their family, both physically and mentally. This picture shows how the girl is being tortured mentally by the members of her family. There are different kinds of mental torture, such as being insulted by someone, being pressured, being scared for doing something wrong, doing something against a child's will or desire, etc.

So from the picture, we can understand the girl is mentally tortured by someone in her family. Because of this she is suffering, and is not interested in sharing her suffering with others. She is carrying her suffering alone, and it is impacting her everyday life.

For instance, in my school, I witnessed how a girl was insulted and slapped by a teacher and she ended up in hospital. The teacher apologised to the family and the parents accepted the apology in order not to have problems. How horrible: they ignored the violence that the girl suffered.

We are all responsible for supporting children who suffer from violence, for instance by behaving friendly, by motivating them and by giving them spaces where they can talk freely. We must support those who are victims of violence and not ignore them. We can reduce this problem by knowing what violence is, how and where it is happening, and how we can stop it. "It takes me" to end violence against children!

Violence Against Children

TOGETHER WE MAKE THE VOICE
TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN
STRONGER. THE MORE UNITED WE ARE
THE MORE PEOPLE WILL LISTEN, AND
CHANGE CAN HAPPEN FOR ALL CHILDREN.

YOUNG LEADERS FOR ENDING
VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN.

Abigail, Justice
Narangerel.

NO TO CORPORAL PUNISHMENT!

By Narangel, aged 16, Young Leader from Mongolia

In our society today, all around us, parents prefer to use corporal punishment rather than positive discipline methods with their children.

When adults talk about violence against children; corporal punishment, peer pressure and bullying are not really taken into consideration. Research done in 2014 showed 80 per cent of Mongolian children received corporal punishment from their parents and teachers. There is a child protection law prohibiting corporal punishment in a public places but still today children are experiencing corporal punishment in home, kindergarden and school. In Mongolia two out of every three children experience pressure and bullying from peers.

From experience, I can see that corporal punishment has affected my peers in different ways, such as:

- It slows down a child's physical and mental development.
- Children who are regularly being given corporal punishment become unsociable and closed off to people. They tend to avoid and hide from their parents, keeping things secret from them and therefore it causes problematic relationships between the parents and children.
- Children who are victims of corporal punishment sometimes bully their peers and younger siblings. Thus the violence produces another violator.
- Children lacking in life skills, care and love from the parents and teachers and their attitude as well as being badly treated are more likely to become bullies.
- All of us must take action to stop corporal punishment against children.

Parents, Caregivers, Stakeholders!

- Use positive discipline methods to show you care and love us.
- Help the children and report the perpetrator when you witness violence against children.
- Be a role model to other adults to make your community and country child safe and friendly.
- Educate yourselves and others - please learn about child rights, protection and allow us to participate meaningfully in decision-making process.

Children, we can also make changes for ourselves by supporting adults around us to learn about our rights and how to protect us from violence. Also never forget our role to help our peers whose rights are endangered and accept and appreciate differences among all children to help stop bullying.



VIOLENCE AFFECTS OUR LIVES

By Chamindu, aged 13, young leader from Sri Lanka

I want to write about violence that children face at home and how this is affecting children's lives.

For example, parents and adults use physical force to discipline children, older siblings use violence to embarrass younger children, and children hit other children to dominate them.

Besides physical abuse, there are many cases where people sexually abuse children, causing huge damage in their lives. Many adults and youth also drive children to use alcohol and drugs, which is a form of abuse and violence as well.

As a child, the biggest impact I see throughout these situations is the mental health of children when they are beaten and humiliated by others. Violence against children – physical, emotional or sexual – causes severe emotional breakdown in children, and many of them lose faith in life.

I think that violence emphasises the idea that children are unworthy and worthless. When we experience violence, we children feel insignificant and this hurts our feelings immensely. Violence also breaks the relationship between parents and children and can push us apart. Let's stop violence against children now!



BULLYING AFFECTS CHILDREN'S SELF-ESTEEM

By Fernanda, aged 13, Young Leader from Chile

It is very important for me as a representative of a group of young researchers to be able to be a voice, for every boy and girl of La Pintana, one of the most deprived areas of our capital city. We are very interested in learning and addressing the issue of the emotional violence against children in our community, which is reflected in the low self-esteem of every child who suffers bullying.

We engaged in a process to see how children and adults perceived bullying. It was a very interesting process for us as we were able to research and realize how bullying directly affects self-esteem and well-being of children.

A lot of boys and girls suffer from bullying. I believe that somehow children are very vulnerable and experience bullying from their classmates and peers and as a consequence they have low confidence and self-image. For this reason, we, the children, call on adults, organizations and authorities not to leave us alone in the fight against bullying. Together we protect children from violence in schools. For example, we have some ideas:

- We should intervene effectively when we observe bullying.
- We should have a dialogue with children who suffer from bullying since this can help them to get things off their chest and feel better.
- Ask other people to intervene as well.

We thank those who believe in us as young researchers and we would like more children and young people to experience what it means to be a young researcher and realize their right to be heard.



It takes a world

to end violence against children



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