

Global Future



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on Violence Against Children

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Time for
action

Global Future

Third Quarter, 2005

Time for action – tackling violence against children

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"A child shall lead them"

This edition of *Global Future* focuses on the United Nations Study on Violence Against Children, which is currently underway. As one of the child-focused organisations to have called for such a study, World Vision whole-heartedly welcomes this initiative.

The Independent Expert leading the UN study, Professor Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, and other contributors to this edition explain the background, rationale and hoped-for outcomes of the study. Other articles focus on specific aspects of violence against, or by, children, and measures being taken to tackle them.

The problem is urgent, and incredibly widespread. As you read this, thousands upon thousands of precious children – full of potential – are being neglected, exploited, abused, having their bodies, minds and spirits damaged, due to the failures, needs, whims and disturbed cravings of the adult world.

If a glimpse of this reality were not enough to motivate us to take the problem seriously, another motivation could be self-interest. Children are not just inert recipients/victims of violence, but actors in the real world. They can, and do, become perpetrators of violence themselves. Violence is creating next generations that see violence as the default reaction to life's problems. This has implications for all of us, and for our planet's future.

Tackling the problem of child violence is going to take the combined efforts of all of us. But we must allow children to lead the way. In this, the systematic engagement of children – listening to their experiences and opinions – taken by the UN study is applauded. Some of these children's voices are featured in these pages.

"Our vision for every child, life in all its fullness; our prayer for every heart, the will to make it so," reads a core World Vision statement. May the UN study realise its potential to take us an enormous step in this direction.

– Heather Elliott

ERRATUM:

The woman and child featured on the front cover of our previous (Second Quarter 2005) edition were photographed in Rote Island, Indonesia (not "Irian Jaya" as we incorrectly stated).

Not just tinkering at the edges

Paulo Sergio Pinheiro

“We the children, declare violence, whether physical [or] psychological...a serious problem in this region; We regret that most laws to protect us are not implemented; We regret that all countries in this region have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, however, still many children suffer from abuse, and from the effects of occupation and war...”

THESE WORDS CAME FROM A

group of around 25 children from the Middle East and North Africa, who were participating in a regional consultation on the topic of violence against children. Their voices join those of many other children in recognising and denouncing the diverse forms of violence to which so many children are exposed around the world today – despite the many improvements in international and national instruments for their protection.

It is the extent and seriousness of violence experienced by children, and the need for urgent measures to confront it, that prompted the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child to hold the in-depth discussions that resulted in the General Assembly asking Secretary-General Kofi Annan to conduct an in-depth international study on violence against children.

Energetic participation

The study process involves many partners from around the world including UN organisations, governments, community and civil society organisations, academics and – not least – children themselves. Nine regional consultations¹ (see table overleaf) were supported by UNICEF and a broad range of the partners globally including other UN agencies, Save the Children, World Vision, Plan International, ECPAT,² ISPCAN³ and others.



The Independent Expert, Professor Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, meeting with NGO colleagues during a field visit in Mali

As the Independent Expert, for me this process involved some 50 days travelling around the world participating in fora and debates with Prime Ministers, Ministers, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academic institutions, child welfare organisations, community groups, professional associations, lawyers, medical doctors, faith-based groups, industry and, evidently, young people. Experiences were shared, problems evaluated and recommendations were drafted by an extremely diverse and active group of more than a thousand people – a unique opportunity for dialogue that sums up very well the spirit of the study.

Bringing different perspectives together has been a clear objective of the study from the very start. Even among the three UN agencies identified to coordinate the study (the Office of the High Commissioner for

Human Rights, the World Health Organisation and UNICEF), the approaches are distinct: these three agencies bring together legal frameworks and international standards, as well as on-the-ground public health and child protection approaches.

The most difficult questions always come from children, like: “What makes you think that will work?”

Key UN organisations such as ILO, UNHCR and UNESCO⁴ are also directly involved in providing specific inputs according to their expertise. And the participation of civil society has been crucial. The establishment of the NGO Advisory Panel to the study provided immediate leadership and facilitated connections globally, including in the nine regional

REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS FOR THE UN STUDY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN		
Region	Dates (all 2005)	Host
The Caribbean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 9 March, Children and Young People's Forum ● 10–11 March, Regional Consultation ● 14–19 March, Young People's Forum 	Port of Spain, Trinidad
South Asia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 17–18 May, Children and Young People's Forum ● 19–21 May, Regional Consultation 	Islamabad, Pakistan
West & Central Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 23–25 May, Regional Consultation 	Bamako, Mali
Latin America	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 30 May–1 June, Regional Consultation 	Buenos Aires, Argentina
North America	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 2 June, Children and Young People's Forum ● 3 June, Regional Consultation 	Toronto, Canada
East Asia & Pacific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 11–12 June, Children and Young People's Forum ● 14–16 June, Regional Consultation 	Bangkok, Thailand
Middle East & North Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 27–29 June, Regional Consultation 	Cairo, Egypt
Europe & Central Asia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 2–3 July, Children and Young People's Forum ● 5–7 July, Regional Consultation 	Ljubljana, Slovenia
East & Southern Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 16–17 July, Children and Young People's Forum ● 18–20 July, Regional Consultation 	Johannesburg, South Africa

consultations. World Vision has had a core role in both the global and local efforts.

Apart from promoting the regional consultations, a questionnaire was sent to governments requesting information about the major legal instruments and public policies related to violence against children. By July 2005, an impressive 117 member states had answered the questionnaire; it has been a very effective tool for alerting governments to the study and for soliciting important views and practices, which in turn has facilitated genuine participation. In addition to almost 200 formal submissions from interested parties, including academic institutions, NGOs and other civil society organisations, more than 2000 individual papers, professional journal articles and publications have been provided to the study.

“We, the children...” The participation of children has set the study apart. It has demonstrated the absolute value and inspiration of children's views and proven that “it can be done” at scale. Of course the process has not been without obstacles, but the commitment to children's participation has been strong throughout.

Indeed, the most difficult questions always come from children: “Do you think that if you just tell families to stop hitting children they will stop?

What makes you think that will work?”... “I want to know what can be done when we go home, because we will have changed and maybe our parents will not be so happy if we ask them to have our rights or if we tell them about our rights.” Children have a sense of urgency and the need for concrete outcomes – which reminds us, as adults, that we must stop these violations quickly, to make a difference to these children, now.

Forcing the pace

The study was conceived not only to gather information about the problem of violence against children, but also to uncover promising and proven responses, including those that can prevent violence before it starts. Many organisations have been implementing such programmes for some time, however sharing this experience and scaling up to reach more children is one of our most pressing challenges.

The study process itself will culminate in a report to the General Assembly late in 2006. This report will focus on identifying practical recommendations on how to address and prevent the occurrence of all forms of violence against children based on experience in different regions of the world. It is clear that a comprehensive approach is required – tinkering at the edges will not make a significant difference. The study process and the resultant report are intended to be both catalysts for the good work already being done, and advocacy tools for

forcing the pace on implementation of good practices and policy recommendations.

Across the regions many chronic problems are being clearly recognised. The disturbing acceptance of corporal punishment in homes and schools; excessive use of institutionalisation and its extremely negative effects on children and young people; the discrimination and harmful practices that girls endure, sometimes under the guise of “tradition”; the linkages between absence of basic social and economic rights (such as education, health and culture) and vulnerabilities to violence... the list is unfortunately long. No country can claim to be free of the challenges of violence against children.

To be sure, ending violence against children is not an easy path and only continuous efforts will produce concrete and reassuring effects. But as the strong contribution from the many stakeholders around the world is showing, much is already being done and the momentum is such that more will surely come. ■

Professor Paulo Sergio Pinheiro is the Independent Expert appointed by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to lead the United Nations Study on Violence Against Children. Formerly he was Brazil's Secretary of State for Human Rights, and has directed Brazil's Centre for the Study of Violence since 1990.

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²ECPAT stands for “End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes”

³International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect

⁴The International Labour Organisation, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Economic, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

Can the UN study really make a difference?

Melanie Gow

EVERY DAY, AROUND THE globe, children are subjected to violence that robs them of a secure home, a nourishing school environment or a safe community. Violence that takes the most extreme and obscene forms. Among those at risk are children with disabilities, children living in institutions, children deprived of parental care, children bought and sold (often across international borders), children subjected to harmful traditional practices, children in conflict with the law, children living in extreme poverty, and other marginalised children. Evidence demonstrates that violence has serious and lifelong effects.

This knowledge is not new; frightening statistics on sexual exploitation, domestic violence, bullying and physical abuse are well and truly on the record. Why then bother with another global study to highlight a problem that we know exists? What can it possibly achieve?

NGOs have called for such a study for some time, and worked to support the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child's recommendation, adopted at its meeting on 12 October 2001, that the Secretary-General conduct an international study on violence against children – one as thorough and influential as Ms Graça Machel's 1996 report *The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*.¹

In November 2001, NGOs were heartened by the General Assembly agreeing unanimously² to request that the Secretary-General conduct “an in-depth study on the question of violence against children”. Following up in 2002, the Commission on Human Rights proposed³ that the Secretary-General appoint an independent expert to lead the study, in collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human



PHOTO - KEVIN COOK / WORLD VISION

Despite international efforts to protect children, hundreds of millions continue to be subjected to violence.

Rights, UNICEF and the World Health Organisation. Professor Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, from Brazil, was appointed as the Independent Expert.

Hope for profound change

Many NGOs believe that the study process and subsequent follow-up can potentially bring about significant, real change that will help protect children from violence. The NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the NGO Advisory Panel to the UN study⁴ have articulated a vision for the study process and its follow-up: **to end violence against children and its destructive**

impact on children and their societies.

The study aims to provoke comprehensive national reviews of violence against children in as many countries as possible, covering areas including prevalence of violence in all settings, legal frameworks, child protection systems, and initiatives that have proven effective in protecting children and preventing violence against them. It is encouraging that already, many national governments have completed and submitted questionnaires on these areas to the UN study secretariat.

But there remains an urgent need for greater public, governmental and professional recognition of the origins, manifestations and consequences of violence. Also urgently needed is stronger, more comprehensive action. To both ends, the decision of the UN to carry out an international study on violence against children is an important step.

The study is not an end in itself; it must provoke immediate and ongoing action

To state the obvious: the study is not an end in itself; rather it must provoke immediate and ongoing national, regional and international action towards eradicating violence against children. The goal of profoundly changing the treatment of children around the world requires national action that is responsive to local realities. Not only national governments, but all elements of civil society, must see the study as an opportunity to intensify the challenge to all forms of violence against children; broad participation in the study will add to its authority and influence.

What NGOs expect

The NGO Advisory Panel has already articulated a series of expected outcomes of the study – outcomes that it believes will significantly improve the lives of children. Listed below under each of these outcomes are some examples of how decision-makers could make the outcomes more tangible.

- The final report to the UN General Assembly resulting from the study is in-depth and includes a clear, time-bound plan of action and core recommendations to address the problem of violence against children.
- Study participants document, disseminate and discuss the extent of violence against children, its causes and contributing contextual factors.
- The UN establishes an international clearing-house of information and best practice in addressing violence against children, accessible in a variety of communication formats.
- The study process raises the visibility and awareness of all forms of violence against children at national and international levels.
 - A global awareness campaign, highlighting in particular the most hidden forms of abuse such as those in the family, is taking place in each country; the UN, with support from national governments and civil society, initiates a global campaign that promotes the right of children to protection.
- Governments demonstrate greater political commitment to reduce violence against children, effectively implementing appropriate legislation and policies.
 - Each country adopts national legislation, policies and regulations promoting a ban on all forms of violence against children, and trains law enforcement officials and judiciary on how best to protect children from violence.
- Identifiable concrete actions to end violence against children are taking place at international, regional and national levels.
 - Governments, UN agencies and NGOs are supporting, and where appropriate replicating, best-practice approaches to eradicating violence against children – whether focused on prevention, protection or recovery – from adult education and training on parenting to child-to-child peer support interventions.
- Greater resources are available for effective action on violence against children.
 - Governments and donors are channelling noticeably increased resources into the protection of children from violence – in particular, targeting far greater resources to prevention strategies that have the greatest impact and that are known to be the most cost-effective.
- Governmental and private agencies at local, national and international levels effectively monitor and report issues of violence against children and progress towards its elimination.
 - Each country establishes independent mechanisms to receive complaints, investigate abuses and ensure accountability.

In some countries, a number of the above actions are already underway. In too many others, not enough is being done to protect children from violence and to promote their rights. Most importantly, NGOs hope that the study consultations and follow-up action will increasingly involve children – listening to them, learning from them and engaging them in the solutions to this problem that so profoundly affects their lives.

The UN study should be understood as part, albeit an important one, of an ongoing broad strategy to address violence against children. Child rights and child protection NGOs believe that the Independent Expert's final report to the General Assembly in 2006 can be a catalyst to change behaviour, and to change public attitudes and expectations of what is acceptable behaviour, toward children. But this date definitely must not mark the beginning of action on this urgent issue – too many children are suffering now, and will continue to suffer. ■

Ms Melanie Gow is Head of Advocacy and Public Influence with World Vision Australia and Co-Convenor of the NGO Advisory Panel to the UN Study on Children and Violence.

¹The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children, 1996, www.unicef.org/graca/

²Resolution 56/138

³Resolution 2002/92 on the Rights of the Child

⁴Information contained in this article is drawn from, and paraphrases, key documents written by the NGO Advisory Panel to the UN Study. Co-chairs of the NGO Advisory Panel are representatives from World Vision and from Human Rights Watch.

From outrage to action

Karin Landgren

OUTRAGE ERUPTS PERIODICALLY over a report of the violent, abusive, exploitative or negligent treatment of a child. And the horror stories are many: children shot on the streets with impunity; locked in harsh institutions for years, then abruptly turned out; trafficked intercontinentally; beheaded in ritual practices; asked for sexual services in exchange for a passing grade at school.

Fuelled by such outrage, the UN General Assembly asked the Secretary-General for a study on violence against children – an acknowledgement that violence against children is a widespread phenomenon, not simply a series of outrageous, but aberrant, incidents.

Ending the disconnect

The sheer volume of international law prohibiting violence, exploitation and abuse directed at children, and the scale on which governments have ratified those instruments, is testament to a fervent and universal belief in the rightness of protecting children. But these principles remain an abstraction to hundreds of millions of children. Even where strongly-worded national legislation has been adopted, little may have changed in children's day-to-day experiences. Why this disconnect? Many forms of violence are socially accepted – even defended as being for the good of children and society. Some degree of violence is embedded in widely-used methods of disciplining children at home and at school, in traditional practices, and in responses to juvenile offences as well as to childhood disability. Other forms of violence, including the use of children for sex (paid and unpaid), and their exploitation for harsh and hazardous labour, have faced official denial.

These major impediments to child protection are beginning to erode.

Useful interventions to this end are systematic data collection and monitoring that yield incontrovertible evidence, and systematic engagement with all levels of society around traditions, practices and attitudes that condone or conceal some forms of violence.

The UN Study on Violence Against Children has already spurred greater data collection and the development of better indicators and methodologies. For instance, UNICEF's Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey – a massive and global exercise in periodic data collection at household level – now includes a module on child discipline. Smaller-scale studies are being conducted all over the world. Successes in abandoning harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting, have boosted interest in community-based approaches to child protection.

Weaving the safety net

UNICEF's approach to child protection aims at supporting and strengthening the Protective Environment for children. It identifies eight inter-linked elements that are needed to weave a safety net for children:

- government commitment, including through budgetary and policy support;
- appropriate legislation and its enforcement;
- protective attitudes, practices and customs;
- open discussion, and the engagement of civil society and media;
- engaging children and young people as agents of their own protection;
- capacity to protect on the part of those closest to the child;

- access to adequate services that help prevent and respond to violence, exploitation and abuse; and
- monitoring and oversight, including routine data collection.

Child protection as a discipline has moved “upstream” in supporting protection systems that prevent, mitigate and respond to violence. Whatever the form of violence, and whatever the country, protection strategies will be multi-faceted. And like health systems, they need adequate budget, staffing, structures, knowledge, laws, policies, oversight, supplies and so on – as well as urgent *ad hoc* interventions should they break down.

The UN study won't be just a catalogue of horror, but will give good examples of child protection

In the nine regional consultations, governments, in particular, have shown a new and welcome openness in acknowledging widespread violence against children. Rich and poor, North and South, every country has gaps in its child protection systems. Every country also has positive practices to share, and the Independent Expert leading the Violence Study, Professor Pinheiro, is insisting that the Study provide good, evidence-based examples of protecting children against violence, not simply be a catalogue of horror.

Even so, there are still times when outrage seems the only conceivable response. ■

Ms Karin Landgren is Chief of UNICEF's Child Protection Section, www.unicef.org/protection/

Some lessons learnt from the Machel study

Helena Gezelius

THE FIRST UNITED NATIONS study proposed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child concerned the impact of armed conflict on children. Led by Graça Machel, children's advocate and former Education Minister of Mozambique, that study resulted in a report¹ that Ms Machel presented to the UN General Assembly in 1996. The launch of the study became a media success – it was the first time a UN study was mentioned in the *New York Times* at the time of its launch.

NGOs were grateful for Ms Machel's media skills and for her courage to use their information, even though some of it was highly sensitive, addressing issues that had been taboo – for example, sexual abuse of children by soldiers in UN peace-keeping forces.

Graça Machel's openness to NGO participation made a huge difference at a time when UN studies did not seek civil society influence. The approach of the current UN Study on Violence against Children, to which NGOs are expected to contribute, is a sign of how much change has taken place in a decade. Nonetheless, the power of decision in both studies remains firmly with the Expert leading the study and with the study secretariat. So how can NGOs most usefully engage?

Pro-active, strategic

NGO cooperation and mobilisation were critical to the Machel study and remain so for the current study. In both cases, the Geneva-based NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides the

meeting ground for NGOs of varying size and level of involvement.

To influence the Machel study, NGOs needed to be pro-active and strategic in their engagement. This is still the case, though so many more doors are open to NGOs this time. It proved critical, for example, that NGOs were able to provide funds when money wasn't forthcoming from the secretariat. As the current study does not commission any research, it is even more important that NGOs and others produce relevant submissions.

Children's participation

The only time children themselves were in contact with Ms Machel was during her field visits; little of the research commissioned included children's views. With the experiences



PHOTO - VICTOR CHINYAMA

Children working during the consultation for Eastern and Southern Africa. The current study encourages children's participation.

from the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children² process, Paulo Sergio Pinheiro stated early on that he wished to encourage children's participation in the current study. NGOs have supported this; in particular, Save the Children has produced toolkits for children's ethical and meaningful participation³ and has seconded a part-time staff member to the study secretariat.

Both studies have a series of regional consultations managed by UNICEF as well as expert meetings managed by various organisations involved. Again, NGOs have been much more involved in their preparations this time around, and have actively involved children's participation in these consultations.

A new format

Time frames presented major challenges in the first study process. The current secretariat has tried to apply some of the lessons learnt, for example by issuing an early report outline to facilitate the compilation of information. In the first process, the actual writing of the report became very pushed for time and non-transparent. The creation of an editorial board may help some of these problems in the current study, although text is to be drafted by many different persons.

Also, the format has changed: the General Assembly only accepts reports less than a quarter of the length of the Machel study. To compensate for this, the study secretariat plans to publish an additional, more extensive report based on the format of the WHO *World Report on Violence and Health*.

Ensuring impact

The Machel study had remarkable impact, directly and indirectly. It increased the information available to the UN, NGOs and the public about child soldiers and other ways in which war affects children, and it resulted in many actions. International law, for example, improved thanks to the Optional Protocol to the CRC, resulting in many more countries recruiting soldiers only from the age of 18. Interestingly, some armed resistance movements also "ratified" the protocol.



PHOTO - JAMES EAST / WORLD VISION

Street children, such as these at Myanmar's Yangdon Drop-in Centre, are vulnerable to violence.

Another outcome of the Machel study was the formation of the Office of the Special Representative to the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, which has led to the Security Council passing numerous resolutions on children and armed conflict.

But if you look at the reality for children living in war zones today and 10 years ago, my impression from talking with NGO colleagues is that not much has changed for the better. So, there is definitely a need for continued advocacy and monitoring by NGOs and others for existing standards to be applied.

NGOs have an important task ahead of them: to help ensure that commitments are kept

The current study includes all types of violence against children except armed conflict (already covered by the Machel study). It is expected to increase public knowledge about the detrimental effects of violence against children and to identify effective child protection measures, including child-friendly ways of dealing with issues of power and conflict. The CRC and other human rights law already provide strong protection for children

in international law, but improvement of national laws and policies is essential in many countries.

For the study to affect the lives of girls and boys, its findings and recommendations need to penetrate society as a whole: professional groups working with children, parents and others who live with children and, of course, children themselves who need to know their rights and obligations. NGOs have a critical and pro-active role to play for this to happen: to advocate for an end to violence against children, to demonstrate by example, and a most important task ahead: to ensure that recommendations and commitments made by governments and others will be kept. ■

Ms Helena Gezelius was a representative for Save the Children in Geneva, Switzerland. This article is based on a paper written in December 2002 by the author with three other NGO representatives involved with the Machel study.

¹ *The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*, 1996, www.unicef.org/graca/

² www.unicef.org/specialsession/

³ www.savethechildren.net/alliance/resources/chpart_chi/ldrenviolence.doc

Protecting Canada's children from violence

Landon Pearson

MOST CANADIANS ABHOR violence against children, at home or abroad, and highly value actions that protect children. In spite of this, evidence suggests that child maltreatment at the hands of adults and other children continues to be a serious problem in Canada. In recent years there has been an increase in reported, and substantiated, cases of child abuse and neglect. Peer-to-peer violence – including bullying at school, on the internet and in the streets – has drawn national attention. Sexual exploitation of children is harder to quantify but we all know it exists. There is also concern about violence in the media, both electronic and print. Canadians are daily witnesses, by means of the same technology, to the violence inflicted on hundreds of millions of children all around the globe.

No wonder the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on children in 2002 spent so much effort designing the strategies and actions articulated in *A World Fit for Children* to “protect children against abuse, exploitation and violence”. No wonder Canadians from every sector of society contributed to the national action plan *A Canada Fit for Children*. And no wonder the UN Secretary-General has commissioned a study on violence against children, to determine both the extent of the problem world-wide and effective solutions for governments to consider implementing. At long last, the world community seems ready to recognise that violence against children is not only a profound abuse of their human rights, but also a root cause of the vast extent of adult violence that surrounds us.

Federal legislation

All persons, including children, living in Canada are guaranteed protection from violence by our Constitution

and specifically by our *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Legislation is essential for the fulfilment of this right. The Constitution accords distinct roles and responsibilities to federal, provincial and territorial governments, but all legislation must conform with the Charter. The federal government is responsible for the Criminal Code, while the provinces and territories are responsible for civil child protection laws and policies, and for the administration of justice and much of its enforcement.

Violence against children is a root cause of the adult violence that surrounds us

The Criminal Code addresses violence against children and others, and sets out the penalties that may be imposed on persons convicted of criminal offences. Its provisions apply to all acts of violence committed in Canada against all people, including children – in the home, school, military school, medical institution, correctional facility, detention centre, workplace or sporting facility. In the case of sexual exploitation committed against children abroad, criminal liability can be applied extra-territorially.

Child-specific offences in the Criminal Code include failing to provide the necessities of life to a child under the age of 16, abandoning or exposing a child under the age of 10 to a situation that endangers the child's life or causes permanent injury, and many child-specific sexual offences. During my 10 years in the Senate, I have sponsored a number of amendments to the Criminal Code to protect children, the most recent of which were contained in Bill C-2 which received Royal Assent on 20 July 2005. These amendments broaden

the definition of child pornography to include audio and written material, increase protection for children who are sexually exploited, and increase the penalties associated with crimes against children. C-2 also amends the *Canada Evidence Act* to facilitate testimony by child witnesses.

Earlier bills have added new sections to the Criminal Code to deal with violence in the media, in recognition of the fact that children are being exploited through new technology such as the internet. It is now an offence to communicate via a “computer system” with a person under a certain age, or a person whom the accused believes to be under a certain age, for the purpose of facilitating the commission of certain sexual offences in relation to children or child abduction. Other federal legislation designed to protect children's rights and promote their best interests with which I have been involved include the new *Youth Criminal Justice Act* and the *Divorce Act*.

The Senate Committee on Human Rights is currently studying Canada's international obligations in regard to the rights and freedoms of children, and will release an interim report on its findings in November 2005.

Federal policies and programmes

Protecting children depends not only on legislation but also on healthy public policy. In recent years research has identified three key conditions for enabling healthy child development, and the federal government has designed policies and programmes to create them:

- **Adequate income for families with children.** The federal government fully recognises the role that poverty plays in increasing the vulnerability of children to violence so

it is steadily increasing income support through the Canada Child Tax Benefit and other income tax-related measures. Currently, over 80% of families are beneficiaries, half of whom receive the supplemental as well.

● **Effective parenting within strong and cohesive families.** In order to support the federal government, the Family Violence Initiative, led by Health Canada, involves 12 government departments and agencies. It has designed, under the employment insurance scheme, maternity and parental benefits to support effective parenting during infancy. Emerging early learning and child care agreements, under federal leadership, are intended to ensure greater security as well as healthy development during childhood. The programme promotes public awareness of the risk factors for family violence and the need for public responses, and supports data collection, research and evaluation efforts to identify effective interventions. It also collaborates with the provinces and territories, First Nations, NGOs, and other stake-holders.

● **Supportive and inclusive communities.** The federally-funded Community Action Program for Children supports community-based coalitions that establish programmes and deliver services to meet the developmental needs of children aged under six who are living in conditions of risk.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), within the Ministry of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, is responsible for the National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS), which targets children, youth, women and Aboriginal peoples. The NCPS seeks to prevent crime through social development and community capacity building. For example, its National Youth Strategy focuses on community-based early intervention to address the root causes of crime and victimisation, while the National Aboriginal Policing Services Branch has developed an Aboriginal youth suicide prevention programme. In 2005, the federal government reiterated its commitment to building a new

relationship with Canada's Aboriginal peoples, and federal ministers, together with Aboriginal leaders and provincial and territorial governments, are exploring ways to make progress in such key areas as health, life-long learning, housing, economic opportunities, land claim settlements and accountability.

The RCMP's National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre is a national clearing-house for all international requests to conduct investigations in Canada related to child sexual exploitation on the internet. NCECC provides support to investigators involved in specific cases; collaborates with domestic and international partners to raise awareness and combat criminal activity that targets, exploits and abuses children; and will help develop standards and guidelines within Canada and provide many levels of support to law enforcement investigators dealing with the sexual exploitation of children on the internet.

The Canadian International Development Agency's *Action Plan on Child Protection* (2001) has worked its way into CIDA's new priorities. Its focus on supporting child labourers and children affected by armed conflict, street-involved children, children with disabilities, children facing discrimination because of their ethnic or religious identity, sexually exploited children, and children in conflict with the law or in institutional care, will continue in all of CIDA's programming designed to reach the Millennium Development Goals.

Input to the UN study

In June 2005, Canada and the United States participated in the North American Regional Consultation for the UN Study on Violence Against Children. Youth participation and engagement were key, with young people discussing violence in different settings, its effect on children and youth, and solutions that would work for them. Their presentations brought authenticity to the deliberations and had a major influence. We look forward to the study's final report in 2006.

Of course, neither legislation nor programmes nor policies can solve



Senator Pearson

the problem of violence against children. Ultimately it is the individuals committing violence who must change. But government initiatives can reduce the social acceptability of violence and address the conditions in which violent behaviour most frequently erupts: poverty, ignorance, discrimination, alienation, and so on.

In my view, actively promoting the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* – ratified by all jurisdictions within Canada – and ensuring that it becomes an integral part of all our domestic law and policy related to children, is our most effective means for changing behaviour. By promoting a culture of respect for children, which the convention embodies, attitudes will shift and children will be able to enjoy the childhood without violence that they all deserve. ■

The Hon Senator Landon Pearson is Adviser on Children's Rights to the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs. This article was written with the assistance of Kim Chao, an MA in International Affairs, Carleton University, Ottawa.

Violence against children without parental care

Nigel Cantwell



Young boy in an institution in Uzbekistan. World-wide, many children living in institutions suffer physical and psychological abuse – ill-treated by staff, officials and other children.

MILLIONS OF CHILDREN

throughout the world have lost their primary protective shield: their parents. Substitute care for these children needs to respond to their special vulnerability and offer a nurturing environment. But as research progresses for the UN Study on Violence Against Children, it is confirming what many feared: children without parental care are a group at high risk of falling victim to violence of all kinds.

Children find themselves without parental care for many reasons: definitive loss of parents; temporary absence of parents (such as through illness, imprisonment or migration); voluntary placement by parents (due to economic difficulties, the child's disability or need for respite care); and removal from parental care by the competent authorities (for reasons such as maltreatment and incapacity).

Children in residential care, foster placement or kinship care are doubly vulnerable – by being “alone” in a

more-or-less closed living environment, and because of the personal and circumstantial reasons for their placement.

Residential care

Most concern has always focused on the potential for violence against children in residential facilities, particularly the large ones that still exist world-wide, including many that operate unlicensed and escape inspection. Evidence collected so far in the context of the UN study shows that this concern is not misplaced.

The problem has often been viewed in terms of staff maltreatment of children. Save the Children has noted that, particularly in the West, there are increasing reports of such abuse, with public inquiries and convictions receiving widespread media attention,¹ though cases of institutional maltreatment – “everyday violence”, harsh punishments, and abusive or exploitative acts – are documented on all continents.

Yet child-to-child violence in residential settings is an equally important issue. Indeed, commentators cite recent research as indicating that “children may be significantly more at risk of physical and sexual violence from other residents than from staff”.²

This means that staff must not only be fit and qualified to work with children, but also have training in conflict resolution and the proper use of physical restraint in order to deal with the most dangerous situations. It also means ensuring that vulnerable children are not mixed with those who might take advantage of them; this may be very difficult in facilities that cater to a diverse clientele. In many countries, emergency care units and short-term assessment centres

provide care for children of both sexes ranging from three to 17 years old, who may be variously victims of abuse, homeless, illegal immigrants or under-age offenders.

Conditions in residential facilities – such as inadequate food, lack of privacy, few opportunities for study and recreation – contribute to creating an environment that fosters violence. Poor staff conditions also impact significantly on motivation and, consequently, quality of treatment.

Foster care

Little information is available on violence in the foster care setting. The incidence of physical or psychological violence by foster carers is generally considered to be very low, with only “occasional” cases documented. It has often been felt that, since foster children invariably have greater automatic access to the outside world than most of their peers in residential facilities, they have more opportunities to express concerns.

This may not always reflect the reality; it has been noted, for example, that foster families are notoriously difficult to inspect, that children in small foster families are less likely to complain than they are in residential facilities, and that it is harder to ensure that these children's voices are heard. While qualifying the increasing preference for foster care over placements in residential facilities as “generally an improvement”, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) in England has warned that children are, paradoxically, “more isolated” in the foster setting.³ The often-high rate of absconding and the frequency of changes in foster placement undoubtedly indicate problems.

Too often, foster care is seen as a relatively cheap option that is easy to

organise. In reality, foster carers need to be carefully selected, trained, supervised and supported if they are to feel comfortable in their very difficult role. If they are not, inability to cope can generate violent reactions: in those cases, “cheap” translates as “poor quality” and “dangerous”.

Kinship care

Most children not looked after by their parents are cared for on an informal basis by relatives. This applies to the vast majority of children affected by HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, but it is also true for a country like the United States where some 2.1 million children are being raised solely by grandparents, over 90% of them on an informal basis.⁴ In many industrialised countries, social welfare authorities and courts increasingly prefer kinship care as a formal option over placement with an “unknown” foster family. In New South Wales, Australia, for example, kinship placements accounted for 14% of the total in 1991/1992 but were up to 24% by 1995/1996, second only to non-kinship foster care as a placement option.⁵

Children placed in care can be doubly vulnerable, “alone” in a more-or-less closed environment

Yet, kinship care should not be idealised. The Durban Children's Society (South Africa) has noted “cases where orphaned children in the care of relatives are subjected to the 'Cinderella syndrome', i.e. they receive food and resources only after the needs of the biological children have been satisfied and are expected to do most, if not all, the household chores”.⁶ Some types of informal kinship care arrangements are notoriously likely to result in child exploitation, as in Bénin, where children known as *vidomégon* are placed with relatives or outsiders and constitute the most common and exploited category of child workers in urban areas.⁷

Research in industrialised countries shows that relatives caring for

children may be abusive or neglectful because they come from the same “troubled” family. Children may also suffer psychological violence by becoming the focus of intra-familial conflicts over custody and responsibility.

Responding to these problems is a special challenge where the family has chosen an informal care option precisely, in part at least, to avoid “interference” from officialdom. In addition, numbers are so high in many countries that they effectively preclude monitoring and the provision of support services by social welfare authorities. Remedial efforts – such as registration, sensitisation, and advice for carers – clearly need to be tailored to each society.

Child-headed households

One form of substitute care often disregarded is child-headed households, which are especially vulnerable to marginalisation, insecurity, violence and exploitation. At the same time, they are numerically a major and growing care option: in the extreme and complex situation of Rwanda, one estimate suggests that their numbers increased three-fold between 1997 and 2001, reaching 227,500, or 13% of all the households in the country.⁸ Believing that such households can provide a viable form of care if they are properly recognised and protected, the South African Law Reform Commission has proposed their legal recognition “as a placement option for orphaned children in need of care”⁹ and for statutory provision to be made to ensure adequate supervision and support. Legislative and policy moves on these lines, designed to reduce these children's vulnerability to violence and exploitation, must clearly be taken in a far wider range of countries.

Tackling violence in care settings

Efforts to reduce violence towards children in out-of-home care cannot take place in a vacuum; violence present in wider society is likely to be magnified several-fold in closed care settings. Children placed unnecessarily, or in facilities that do not correspond to their needs, are at

special risk of either expressing their frustration through violence or, conversely, withdrawing and falling victim to the violence of others.

One of the major problems is the **lack of opportunities for children to make their voices heard**. They rarely have access to an effective complaints mechanism, or a special person in whom they feel able to confide. And they often have little say in the kind of care setting to which they are allocated – or, indeed, whether they want to be placed at all.

It is particularly disturbing to note the degree to which material **poverty** accounts for so much out-of-home care, and thus for exacerbating children's vulnerability to violence. Not only does it lead parents to abandon or relinquish their children to relatives or institutions; it still “justifies” too many decisions by the authorities to remove children from parental care. A change in tactic – providing support to families rather than putting resources into other forms of care – would go a considerable way to reducing violence towards children in alternative care. ■

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¹ A last resort: The growing concern about children in residential care, Save the Children, 2003

² Physical and sexual violence amongst children in residential settings: Exploring experiences and perspectives, University of Luton and NSPCC, January 2001

³ National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, cited by BBC News Online, 15 February 2000

⁴ US Department of Health and Human Services, AFCARS, October 2000 estimates

⁵ Children out of home: Analysis of substitute care data, 1991/2 to 1995/6, Department of Community Services, NSVV, Australia, 2000

⁶ South African Law Reform Commission, Discussion paper 1/03, 2002

⁷ UNICEF, The issue of child domestic labour and trafficking in West and Central Africa, July 1998

⁸ Research into the living conditions of children who are heads of household in Rwanda, Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development (ACORD), London, March 2001. Data on orphans in Rwanda vary; Rapid Assessment Analysis and Action Planning (RAAAP) for OVC: Rwanda draft report (October 2004), citing Rwanda's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (June 2002) estimate of 85,000 child-headed households, which would constitute under 5% of total households.

⁹ South African Law Reform Commission, *supra*

Gun violence and youth in Brazil's urban centres

Luke Dowdney and Marianna Olinger

THE IMPACT OF FIREARMS

on youth in Brazil is of great concern. In Rio de Janeiro, like most of Brazil's urban centres, firearms kill more young males than all other external causes combined, including disease and motor vehicle injuries.¹ Of all adolescents aged 15–19 who died in 2002 in Brazil, 30.1% were victims of firearms. In Rio de Janeiro, Pernambuco and Espírito Santo, over 50% of juvenile deaths are caused by firearms. Due to the highly lethal nature of gun violence, of every four victims of gunfire who are hospitalised, three die.²

The figures for youth seem even more alarming when compared with those for the overall population. Between 1993 and 2002, the number of 15–24 year olds killed increased by 88.6%, compared with a 62.3% increase for the general population – more than four times the population growth rate for that period. From 1993 to 2002, only Colombia, El Salvador and Russia registered more firearm-related homicides than Brazil.³ Gun violence in Brazil is more lethal for youth than some situations of war: while 467 under 18-year-olds were killed as a result of the Israel/Palestine conflict between 1987 and 2001, in the same period 3,937 children were killed by gunfire in Rio alone.⁴

The drug culture

One reason is that, in Brazilian urban settings over the last two decades, young people have become increasingly involved in organised drug trafficking. In Rio, changes in the scale and organisation of the criminal groups that have dominated drug trafficking in the *favelas* (slums) since the 1980s are partially responsible for this trend. Statistics show a substantial increase in the number of minors detained for involvement in drug-related crime – from 110 in 1980 to 1,584 in 2001. This increase is only

partly due to more efficient policing: the 1,340% jump in numbers indicates significantly more adolescents involved in the drug trade.

Drug trafficking offers these children and adolescents things that society does not: status; money and access to consumer goods; the possibility of social ascension. It is seen as exciting and has been glorified by “funk” music popular in Rio's *favelas*. Many children view the traffickers as powerful heroes with pretty girlfriends, who refuse to accept the poverty that is a reality for the majority of *favela* residents. *Favela* children may also be influenced by parents or friends involved in the drug trade, or come from unstable family situations, but poverty plays a part. Interviews with children and adolescents involved in the drug trade show that those who are the most independent, and who seek to take responsibility for their own lives, often consider the trade to be a means of improving their lot and the best way to meet their needs.

That young people are the main protagonists, not just the victims, highlights the need to invest in them

Controlling small arms

Viva Rio has taken a public health perspective to the problem of gun violence in Brazil – a science-based collective approach that focuses on investigating why violence occurs, exploring ways to prevent violence and implementing what appear to be promising interventions. As small arms⁵ are the main vector for the transmission of armed violence, it has been important to understand small arms distribution and ownership within Brazil in order to develop strict



PHOTO - KITA FERROZA / VIVA RIO

This Brazilian girl sends a simple message through her drawing: No guns.

control measures. Although young people often become involved in crime and organised armed violence due to a lack of realistic alternatives, it is impossible not to correlate the high levels of lethal violence in Brazil with the high levels of small arms availability. Thus, understanding where the small arms are, who holds them and which types of weapons are used is critical.⁶

As small arms registration was first systematically regulated at a national level in 1997, we can assume that there is a huge informal market – small arms that, while not necessarily in the hands of criminals, are undeclared and/or unregistered, and thus illicit and more susceptible to being diverted into criminal markets.⁷ A recent study by Viva Rio⁸ highlights that violence is concentrated in big urban centres, that Brazil is the second-largest producer of small arms in the Western Hemisphere, and that this production grew massively in the same decade that gun violence began rising.

If controlling the criminal market is a matter of police efficiency and intelligence, controlling the informal market is an even more delicate issue. In 2003 the Brazilian parliament passed a disarmament statute, which includes a buy-back campaign to encourage Brazilian citizens to voluntarily hand over their guns (via

cash incentives and amnesties for unregistered guns), and compulsory registering of firearm possession. The campaign collected 385,800 small arms in a 12-month period and is now going to its final phase, with an unprecedented referendum on the prohibition of firearms sales to civilians in Brazil.

Effective governance

Viva Rio's experience shows that tackling youth violence is a matter of combining universal protection and service delivery policies, with directed policies. Directed policies aim to take into account the nature of the groups involved, with a view to prevention as well as withdrawal/reintegration of youths already involved in crime.

Although gun control policies are very important, the Brazilian government's sole focus on repressive policing policies over the past 20 years has proved ineffective. Moreover, punitive measures, principally the removal of freedom, tend to cost significantly more than the alternative measures or prevention. Knowing that young people are the main protagonists, as well as victims, of violence, makes clear that socio-economic investment in this age group has great potential to bring about a decline in violence levels. ■

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¹Dowdney 2003; also see Weisselfeiz, J J, *Mapa da Violência IV*, UNESCO, 2004, for more updated mortality statistics. This also includes suicides, which may or may not involve firearms, but suicides represent only 3.4% of deaths for this age group.

²Phebo, L, "The impact of firearms on public health in Brazil", in *Brazil: The Arms and the Victims*, ISER, Viva Rio and Small Arms Survey, 2005

³Weisselfeiz, *op. cit.*

⁴Israeli Centre for Human Rights Information in the Occupied Territories, and Instituto Superior dos Estudos da Religião (ISER), research dated 1987–2001

⁵Small arms in this context refer to firearms that can be carried and used by a single person: revolvers, pistols, shot-guns, rifles, semi-automatic rifles, and machine-guns.

⁶Dreyfus, P & Nascimento, M, "Small Arms Holdings in Brazil: Towards a comprehensive mapping of guns and their owners", in ISER, Viva Rio and Small Arms Survey, *supra*.

⁷ISER, Viva Rio and Small Arms Survey, *ibid.*

⁸*ibid.*

Violence in cyberspace

Carmen Madriñán

CYBERSPACE IS A COMPLEX and rapidly changing territory which brings new benefits and challenges to society as a whole. As technology is adapted and changes to meet our real-world needs, the virtual world gradually extends to more areas of our lives. Referring to activities in cyberspace as unreal or "virtual" disguises its reality and impact on the human experience. This is especially so for children, who are the dominant users of cyberspace.

Cyberspace is a realm of action and influence which children of all social classes, cultures, religions and regions – a variety of "real world" settings – can enter. Young people aged under 18 commonly comprise half the total populations of countries in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean, and there is little doubt that they will account for most expansion of internet usage in coming years. Children and young people already are in the vanguard of those who quickly embrace new information technologies – the world wide web and the internet, mobile phones and cameras, web-cameras, digital cameras, and on-line and off-line electronic games.

For the most part, the human experience of cyberspace is positive (offering education, sharing of ideas, formation of new friendships and communities, etc). But just as children may face harm in physical locations, they are also confronted with the risk of harm and violence in and via the virtual world. Cyberspace-generated actions and ideas, whether intentional or inadvertent, can cause real harm to children, be it physical or psychological, immediate or potential.

Forms of cyber-violence

Protecting children from violence in cyberspace calls for a critical

understanding of the way children and others use and experience new technologies, and careful assessment and analysis of:

- the physical and psychological harms caused to children in the short term and the long term;
- the frameworks of governance, rule of law and law enforcement in the virtual world as well as the challenges of implementation at the local, national and global levels;
- interpretations of freedom of speech rights in cyberspace and their impact on child protection and related legal issues; and
- provision of care services for child victims of crimes in and via cyberspace.

The forms of harm posed to children and young people via new technologies and through the experience of virtual life are multiple, and commonly intersect. They can be organised into four main areas: child sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation; bullying; psychological manipulation; and the socialisation consequences of witnessing violence.

Sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation. Perhaps the most well-known risks that children face in cyberspace relate to sexual crimes. Primary concerns are the production and dissemination of images of child sexual abuse (child pornography); organised sexual abuse and violence against children by networks of people who (commercially or non-commercially) produce or exchange images of child abuse, as well as sex tourists, pedophiles and traffickers; and forms of prostitution of children and young people that are facilitated by new on-line and telephone technologies.

Violence is clearly inflicted against the individual child in the making of

pornography, whether made off-line or in the course of real-time/live video screenings on-line. The people who access and view child pornography fuel the demand for images of sexual abuse of children, which requires that further sexual violence be committed against children. Using children to make pornography also harms children in general, particularly by normalising images of sexual violence and abuse of children and a complementary mainstream packaging of children as sexual commodities readily available for consumption – manifested in child sex tourism, for example.

New technologies have vastly expanded the realm of possibilities for adults seeking to “befriend” and then abuse a child. This occurs in various ways: for example, when adults seek children out in chatrooms or on-line games or cyber and phone dating sites for teens. In on-line and texting situations, abusers often use “grooming strategies” to gain children’s confidence and lower their resistance and inhibitions, sometimes to persuade them into unguarded camera displays, sexual or otherwise, or even to meet the abuser in person.

Bullying. In some parts of the world, a culture of cyber-bullying among young people – using new technologies such as threatening text (SMS) messages, harassment, abusive on-line discussion groups – appears pervasive and can be extremely vicious. The consequences of this abuse are devastating, and have led to suicides. It seems that virtual facilitation of this behaviour may be intensifying both the experience of the abuse from the victim’s perspective, and young people’s participation in committing such abuses. The harassers may feel shielded by the anonymity afforded by new technologies; they may be emboldened by the greater distance between them and their victims, in that they rarely witness the impacts of their actions.

Psychological manipulation. Even where real-world interaction does not occur, the experience for a child of engagement with a manipulative

adult who plays games with emotions and vulnerabilities can be very damaging. While children and young people themselves may enjoy the creativity of adopting fictitious personas for their on-line life, for example in games using Multi-User Dimension or Dungeon (MUD) systems, these interactions are known also to present psychologically damaging scenarios. Adults interacting with young people in a multi-user on-line game may lure a young player with the intent of confusing them about their sexual identity to the extent that their identity is “transformed” in reality; this can be extremely damaging for a developing personality.

On-line abusers may feel shielded by anonymity, emboldened by their distance from their victims

Socialisation and normalisation of violence. The easy and seemingly anonymous access in cyberspace to both adult and child pornography also supports the rapid and widespread transmission of a psychology of sexual violence. Studies have shown how this works to normalise abuse and violence in the minds of both children and adults, and by extension the wider society. Abusers know this and commonly use the socialising influence of exposure to sexual images as a tactic for “grooming” a child to be sexually abused and/or exploited. The impacts of witnessing violence and pornography may not be noted until after the child comes to harm or causes harm.¹ The impact on children is overt in cases where children who have been witness to images of sexual abuse of children or adult pornography then seek to act out what they have seen.²

ECPAT’s study

The UN Secretary-General’s Study on Violence Against Children will organise information according to locations or sites at which children are subjected to (or at risk of) physical and psychological harm. Locales identified include the home, the family, the street, the school,

institutions and the workplace. A critical site of violence, however, is cyberspace. At the request of the UN study’s Editorial Board, ECPAT International will coordinate the gathering, analysis and compilation of information on violence against children in relation to virtual settings and new technologies. ECPAT’s experience in seeking to combat images of child abuse and to protect children against abuses in and via the on-line environment gives it a base of strong links and relationships with specialists who have a wide range of expertise relevant to the virtual world. This expertise encompasses counselling and care for child victims of pornography; international and national policing to combat crimes on-line and increasingly via mobile phones; legal interventions; technological developments; internet service providers and hotlines for reporting child pornography.

In assuming its coordination role for the “virtual settings” aspect of the UN study, ECPAT will continue to draw global attention to the need to ensure that children are protected in all spheres, including the virtual world. ■

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¹In Australia, one study reveals that 90% of 101 children aged under 10 attending a hospital child-at-risk assessment unit for “sexually abusive behaviour” reported they had regularly seen sexually explicit images on-line. Cited by E. Colman, “Children ‘act out’ net porn images”, *The Australian*, 26 November 2003, retrieved from www.theaustralian.news.com.au/, and N. Wallace, “Net helps children start sex attacks”, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 November 2003, retrieved from www.smh.com.au/.

²In one example, in Cambodia, two boys in their early teens raped a seven-year-old girl in mimicry of a pornographic video they had seen in a video bar: “Violent and child pornography widespread”, *Phnom Penh Post*, 6–10 June 2003, p 5.

Violent boys – how we can save them?

James Garbarino

MY WORK FOCUSES ON BOYS, who commit about 90% of all lethal assaults and who are also the predominant perpetrators of serious but non-lethal assault. As a result of my investigations I have drawn five basic conclusions about why boys turn violent and how we can save them – conclusions that parents and professionals can use in their efforts to make schools and communities safer; conclusions that have important implications for the faith community.

Conclusion 1: Recognise internal crisis

There are boys in every school and community who have developed a pattern of aggressive behaviour, who have established an internal state in which they see themselves as victimised by peers and society, and whose emotions and moral judgments have become harnessed to their aggressive rage. These boys can make the transition to murder readily if weapons are available and they reach a crisis state.

Knowing how these boys reach this point and what we can do to reclaim them empowers us to reduce the odds that they will commit acts of lethal violence. **Violence prevention is everybody's business.**

Conclusion 2: Equip parents and teachers

The problem of lethal youth violence usually starts from a combination of early difficulties in relationships that are linked to a combination of difficult “temperament” and negative experience. Every parent who knows children knows that children come equipped with different temperaments. Some are sunny and easy; others are stormy and difficult. Some children are easy to parent; others are very challenging. Some are so difficult that no “normal, average” parent will

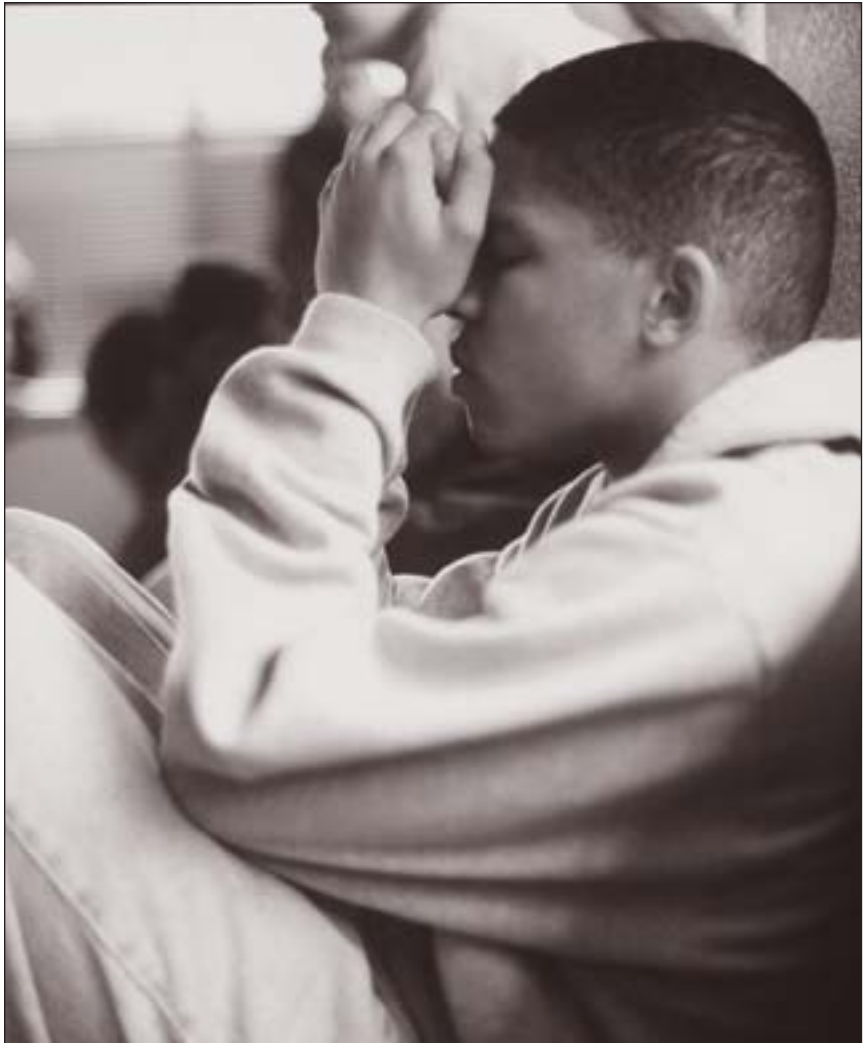


PHOTO - DOROTHY FOO / WORLD VISION

Spiritual development is a powerful counter-weight in a society permeated by violence.

be able to succeed without expert professional advice and support.

When it comes to developing patterns of aggression, some of the difficulties lie in being impulsive, emotionally insensitive, having a high activity level, being of less than average intelligence, and being relatively fearless. These temperamental problems do not spell doom, however. What matters is how well sensitive and empathic parenting and the

educational experiences of these children meet the challenges posed by their difficult temperaments.

Of special concern are two patterns: escalating conflict in the parent–child relationship, in which parent and young child get caught up in mutually coercive and aversive interactions; and a gradual process of emotional detachment arising when parents and teachers abandon these children by withdrawing from them in the face of

their negative behaviour. These patterns of response increase the odds that these vulnerable children will become increasingly frustrated and out of sync as they meet up with the challenges of paying attention in school. In cultures where there is intense cultural imagery that legitimises and models violence, this emotional abandonment is particularly dangerous. **Parent education, starting before children are born and continuing through adolescence, is crucial for preventing violence.**

Once they are “lost” in this way, children tend to form aggressive and anti-social peer groups that build negative momentum throughout childhood and into adolescence.

Losing confidence in the ability and motivation of the adults in their world to protect and care for them can lead them to adopt the orientation of “juvenile vigilantism”. When a boy says, “If I join a gang I am 50% safe; if I don't join a gang I am 0% safe”, adults don't enter into the equation.

This can be avoided. Children whose difficult temperament and experience put them on track for problems with aggressive behaviour need help from parents and teachers to learn to manage their behaviour. **Teachers need special skills and a high level of motivation to create classroom environments that prevent violence.**

Research shows that patterns of aggressive belief and behaviour start to become stable and predictable by the time a child is eight years old: unless we do something to intervene, children identified as aggressive at this age will tend to be aggressive 30 years later (becoming adults who are violent in their families, get involved in fights in the community, and drive their cars aggressively).

Conclusion 3: Prevent child abuse

The most common pathway to this pattern of aggression at age eight is for temperamentally vulnerable children to be the victims of abuse and

neglect at home, and as a result to develop a negative pattern of relating to the world in general. This maltreatment can be both physical abuse (beatings) and psychological abuse (rejection).

Among vulnerable kids, being abused produces a seven-fold increase in the odds of developing a conduct disorder. About a third of these children with conduct disorder will eventually become violent, delinquent youth (and about 90% will go on to demonstrate some serious problem in adulthood). In juvenile prisons, typically about 80% will have shown this negative pattern. **Child abuse prevention is the cornerstone of preventing lethal youth violence.**

Conclusion 4: Detoxify the social environment

Troubled lost boys will be as bad as the social environment around them. I have identified this as the issue of “social toxicity” – the presence of social and cultural “poisons” in the world of children and youth – to which lost boys are especially susceptible. Just as asthmatic children are most affected by air pollution, so “psychologically asthmatic” children are most affected by social toxicity. The glorification of violence on television, in the movies, and in video games is part of this social toxicity, and it affects aggressive boys more than others. **Detoxifying the social environment of children and youth is essential to protecting them from the problem of lethal violence.**

Conclusion 5: Nurture boys' spirits

At the core of the youth violence problem is a spiritual crisis. Human beings are not simply animals with complicated brains; rather, we are spiritual beings having a physical experience. This recognition directs our attention to the multiple spiritual crises in the lives of violent boys. They often have a sense of “meaninglessness”, in which they are cut off from a sense of life having a higher purpose. By the same token, they often have difficulty envisioning themselves in the future. This

“terminal thinking” undermines their motivation to contribute to their community and to invest their time and energy in schooling and healthy lifestyles.

Non-punitive, love-oriented religion institutionalises spirituality and functions as a buffer against social pathology. On the other hand, a shallow, materialist culture undermines spirituality and exacerbates these problems.

One way to deal with these issues is to have schools join with community leaders to promote character education. The USA's National Character Education model offers positive elements within a community a focal point for their actions, a rationale for benevolent adult authority, and a framework in which to pursue an agenda that nourishes spirituality. For those boys already caught up in severe and illegal violence, it offers a foundation for rehabilitative programming – changing the prisons, boot camps, and detention centres into meditation and study centres, where the values of obedience, service, reflection, and spiritual development are powerful counter-weights to violent boys' troubled pasts. **Lost boys are wandering in a spiritual wilderness. Our task is to find them and lead them back down the path of goodness.** ■

Dr James Garbarino holds the Maude C Clarke Chair in Humanistic Psychology at Loyola University, Chicago, USA. He was formerly Elizabeth Lee Vincent Professor of Human Development at Cornell University. This article is based on his book Lost Boys: Why our sons turn violent and how we can save them, The Free Press, New York, 1999.

* Listening to children *

“Find someone you can trust...”

PHOTO - AMBOKA WAMEYO/ WORLD VISION



Discussions between Somali children, their chaperone and a parliamentarian from Malawi.

“The UN Secretary-General’s Study on Violence Against Children is an important opportunity to find out what children are doing about the violence that they experience. It is also a chance to hear about ideas that children have to prevent violence. As a step to achieve this, regional consultations have been organised throughout the world so governments, organisations and children can come together and discuss issues about violence... you will have the chance to meet and get to know the other children and also talk about violence against children.”

THESE ARE THE WORDS THAT were read by children from 18 African countries as they prepared for the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Consultation for the UN Study on Violence Against Children. Organisations including World Vision had a consultative process prior to selecting these children to represent their respective countries.

Children of different colours, languages and dispositions gathered at the Children’s Forum on 16–17 July in Johannesburg, South Africa. They found that they had common experiences of violence and shared a deeply ingrained desire to see a stop to the untold abuse that they had experienced or had seen their friends experience. On the morning of Saturday 16 July, children raised their hands to let the organisers know what their

expectations were. They spoke in their local languages without the fear and inhibition that often accompanies adults.

“I expect to learn more about children rights so that I can go back to my country and teach other children.”

– A CHILD FROM ZIMBABWE

“I look forward to hearing how children’s violence will be stopped.”

– A CHILD FROM RWANDA

STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING VIOLENCE IN THE COMMUNITY

EXTRACTS FROM PRESENTATION BY CHILDREN, JOHANNESBURG, 17 JULY 2005

- Avoid doing errands at night
- Think about others while exercising your rights. What are your responsibilities? Think about how what you are doing is affecting others
- Report abuse to the police and also seek help from NGOs
- When abused or threatened, find someone you can trust and ask them to help you; you can also call a child help line
- Communicate your needs and issues with those around you

By 11.00am that day, children were hard at work discussing violence in the context of

schools. Children in different rooms communicated through drawing and talking – in the language they were most comfortable with; translators helped other children understand what was being said. Over two days children discussed and made recommendations on violence in schools, in institutions, in the context of communities, violence at home and violence in the workplace.

On Monday 18 July, the “adults’ consultation” began, and children filed in to present their recommendations to adults. Again, in keeping with the trend, children used different languages to make presentations. Culminating the children’s presentations was a display of boxes with the children’s pictures on the outside, and recommendations on the inside.

The children urged Professor Paulo Sergio Pinheiro (study coordinator) to take these recommendations to the United Nations for consideration. The “children boxes” remained a powerful reminder to adults to think about them as they continued to deliberate on children’s issues during the three-day adult consultation. ■

Reported by Ms Amboka Wameyo, World Vision Africa’s Regional Advocacy Adviser. As part of World Vision’s contribution to the UN Study, World Vision Africa, Tanzania and Uganda researched and published two reports featuring children’s own views on violence (see page 25).



A display of boxes with children’s pictures – to remind the adults of the children and what they had recommended

PHOTO - AMBOKA WAMEYO/ WORLD VISION

Eastern & Southern Africa

* Listening to children *

“Most people ignore it or are unaware of it”



A Chinese child raises questions during the consultation.

CHILDREN WORLD-WIDE SUFFER from violence and need protection. This is a war on terror that we should have. Yet in many countries and contexts, children's own views about the violence directed towards them are not publicly known. A national study¹ undertaken in Cambodia in 2005, seeking to bridge this gap, found that community ignorance, acceptance of violence and indifference can be the biggest barriers to positive change that children face.

Cambodia was once known as “the gentle kingdom” but the Khmer Rouge genocidal regime of the 1970s changed this. More than two decades later, the recovery continues. Cambodia is now on the international tourist trail. But lives take longer to repair than roads. Conflict continued well into the 1990s; legacies include soldiers returning to families, reconstituted families and ongoing landmine clearance. Essential services like education, health, and law are lacking in many parts of the country. Cambodia is vulnerable to negative regional developments; it is seen as a country popular with pedophiles, and trafficking in both drugs and humans poses new dangers for the nation's children.

Response to child protection issues is essential to safeguard children's basic rights. Recognising “the best interest of the child” through focused attention to threats is an expression of the values underpinning law, society and family, making normal community function possible. “No society in the world can prosper without healthy children,” David Reader, the British Ambassador to Cambodia, has said. One child from Kampong Tralach expressed this compellingly:

“When a child's pain is held in silence, the body suffers, the heart with pain.”

As children reminded the international community at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children in 2003, they are not just “the future” but very much “the present” – their issues of concern need immediate action. This is far from the experience of the majority of Cambodia's children. They are vulnerable to many forms of maltreatment, from the terror of physical violence, to discrimination and being deprived of schooling – violations of their rights that have horrific and lasting consequences. Violence and sexual abuse are known to affect children's ability to learn, to cause illness, isolation and depression. The immediate and long-term effects are influenced by:

- the type of abuse or neglect;
- how often it happens;
- how severe it is;
- the stage of the child's development when the abuse occurs; and
- the relationship of the abuser to the child.

Limited responses from governmental and other actors to causes of current child abuse can lead to a next generation of violent offenders. Indeed, if children see or experience violence, there is a high risk that they will consider it an acceptable means to solve problems and that they will imitate it, with peers or later with

their own children. If they see adults using alternatives to violence, they will learn a different way.

The Cambodia study's approach

Tear Fund, with support from the British Embassy, World Vision, World Hope and others, implemented the national study to gather Cambodian children's perceptions of violence, using methods that encouraged children's participation. The study interviewed 1,324 children aged between 12 and 15 in each of Cambodia's 23 provinces, in gender-balanced sample groups.

Preparatory work with a local human rights organisation (LICADHO) helped to establish what were the common types of violence against children, then a Cambodian artist was invited to make line drawings of scenarios of children experiencing and acting violently: children bullying a disabled child, a drunk step-father beating a child, a child being sold/trafficked, rape of a child by an adult, and a woman being robbed at gun-point by a teenager.

The first stage of the research used role play and focus groups where children responded to the artist's impressions of violence. The second stage used an anonymous questionnaire to gather school children's written responses and proposed solutions.

What children said

Half of the boys and more than a third of the girls admitted to being beaten. Disturbingly, more than 63% said that they know of a child who has been raped, with 21.4% of girls and 23.5% of boys saying they have witnessed the rape of a child by an adult.

At school, 24.1% of girls and 34.7% of boys said they have been beaten by teachers. Children called on the government to draft stronger laws against teachers acting violently towards students, saying that:

“Teachers need to follow the school law and find alternatives for discipline.”

* Listening to children *

Children saw violence in the home as a big concern, noting that:

“Most people ignore or are unaware of it.”

“Parents who beat their children because they (parents) are drunk or playing games; we ask that the government provide more development and give more work to adults.”

“Parents who follow traditional ideas of beating children need to be educated on the negative outcomes of violence for the child's future.”

Children who cannot go to school or who work need protection. They want the government and others to do more to prevent child labour, saying:

“Those who commit violence against children, overwork them, or put them at risk need to be punished.”

Children were concerned about the lack of protection for any child who speaks out about violence. They have high expectations of the police, with 993 of the 1,324 children identifying “the police” as where they would go for help – more than the 843 who said they would go to “parents”. They said existing laws need to be better implemented, and called on government to develop a separate law to address violence against children.

Children also saw civil society organisations as having a key role in drawing attention to these matters, and expressed hope for greater collaboration between groups and government ministries to address violence in its different forms.

Outcomes

The researchers presented their findings to relevant government ministries, donors, children's and adults' forums, four UN Agencies and 30 NGOs. Patterns emerging from the research and a review of relevant legislation and commitments to children has led to fruitful discussion on how violence could be addressed. The findings have also led to a *Safe Children*



PHOTO: FOR NENG / WORLD VISION

Children's speeches at the closing of the consultation

“karaoke video” training pack, to be used by the Ministry of Education to train teachers in creative ways to promote child protection, and by children's groups.

Information and lessons from the Cambodia study have contributed to the global UN Study on Violence Against Children. The report was presented at the UN study's East Asia and Pacific Regional Consultation in June 2005. Two Cambodian young people who had participated in the local study were selected by their peers to give their views on violence at this consultation. Messages they took from Cambodia included:

“Children need to be helped to find ways to challenge their elders who are being abusive towards them or others.”

“Children need to be helped to explore alternative non-violent ways of conflict resolution.”

“Children need to remind adults to take seriously their protection responsibilities.”

Their voices joined those of other young people from 22 countries in the East Asia

and Pacific region. NGO groups, together with governments, discussed the different forms of violence, gave presentations on their national activities and proposed solutions and best practices. Regional consultations like this one, indeed the entire UN study process, represent an opportunity to challenge silence, inaction and indifference; to take actions that will bring hope to those whose life journeys are just beginning. ■

Mr Laurence Gray is Director for Advocacy and Child Protection, World Vision's Asia-Pacific Region. World Vision supported this Cambodia study with funding, assisting researchers to survey children's groups through schools in some World Vision programme communities, and other input and collaboration.

¹ *Stop Violence Against Us! Summary Report, A preliminary research study into the prevalence and perceptions of Cambodian children to violence against children in Cambodia, principal author Glenn Miles. The study was funded or otherwise supported by the Child Welfare Group, Tear Fund, World Hope International, World Vision International and the British Embassy to Cambodia.*

* Listening to children *

“Help them get to know us better...”



Mexican children participating in a discussion about violence

IN PREPARATION FOR THE LATIN American Regional Consultation of the UN Study on Violence Against Children, 1,790 children and adolescents in 17 Latin American countries participated in a consultation to gather their views on violence. These young people took part in 208 focus groups of between seven and 12 participants, some comprising children aged 9–11 and others children aged 15–17.

All of the children were able to identify clear forms of violence to which they are exposed or experience daily in every context in which they live and grow.

At home... most children revealed that they experience intra-family violence. They identified as common practices hitting (with objects), threats, punishments as discipline, defamatory remarks and sexual violence. As they see it, parents are violent towards them because of a lack of understanding, communication and respect, and because they are replicating violent experiences they themselves had when they were children:

“I think it depends on the kind of childhood they experienced...their parents would hit them, and so they think it's alright and do the same thing with us.”

– A CHILD FROM ECUADOR

At school... they identified other children as the main perpetrators of physical violence, which ranged from

hitting to robbing them. Teachers were associated with severe punishment, verbal scolding, abuse and sexual harassment.

“They hit us on the back with a ruler, send us to clean the restrooms, put us out in the sun [even] just for talking. They get angry when we can't understand something. They make us kneel. They make some classmates stay in the office all afternoon, holding up some benches.” – A CHILD FROM HONDURAS

In communities... Young people perceive insecurity and threats as constants in their communities. Verbal violence, sexual abuse, theft, abduction and gang violence, received from adults and other young people:

“... I remember when I was a little boy I would play in the street until very late with no danger. But now even in the morning it's dangerous to go out in the street.”

– A BRAZILIAN TEENAGER

“What we see most in this community are violations against women, girls, of all ages... They oblige women to prostitute themselves and children to steal.”

– A CHILD FROM GUATEMALA

In wider society... They also identified public institutions, transportation services and mass media as spheres in which they are violated:

“[The police] think they are the bosses, that they own everything, so they abuse us. They want to get everything by force, they threaten, abuse young people, if we don't give in to their wishes.”

– A YOUNG DOMINICAN

“[At health centres,] if you don't have any money it's late, you die; there's no other way to treat yourself.”

– MINING CHILDREN IN BOLIVIA

“What leads fathers to do that [violence] are pornographic movies, because they look at them and say: 'I want to do it'; and if Mum isn't there, they look at their daughter and say, 'I am going to try it on her.'... Those programmes should be prohibited...”

– A YOUNG NICARAGUAN MAN

Young people named vulnerability, repetition of family patterns and the consumption of harmful substances as broad causes of violence; consequences of violence included depression, distress, incest, physical injuries, repeating violent behaviour with their own children, becoming “violators”, getting revenge, and joining gangs.

STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

SOME OF THE SUGGESTIONS BY LATIN AMERICAN CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE, 2005

- Confidentiality
- Avoiding places where one has been, or could be, a victim of violence
- “Enabling” parents, guardians and other adults – by offering them spaces for dialogue, to peacefully resolve conflicts; sensitising them to the consequences; and helping them get to know their children better. More specifically:

“...they need to be taught more values”

– YOUNG PEOPLE FROM COLOMBIA

“What's needed is... love, respect, staying away from alcohol, friendship, tranquility, understanding”

– GIRLS FROM CHILE

“Design school-based training on violence for fathers, mothers, sons”... “provide space for dialogue with parents and teachers”... “family-based support mechanisms”

– CHILDREN FROM THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

These are some of the suggestions that ought to be our mainstay in the fight against violence. Boys and girls are offering clear ideas that involve and challenge us: governments, civil society, families and – inexcusably – you and me. ■

Reported by Ms María José Meza, Child Rights Coordinator for World Vision Latin America and Caribbean. As part of World Vision's contribution to the UN Study, World Vision has produced an interactive CD on Violence for NGOs to disseminate to children and youth in the region (see page 25).

* Listening to children *

“Where is the so-called civilised world?”

“We the children, declare violence, whether physical violence, psychological violence, ... a serious problem in this region; We regret that most laws to protect us are not implemented; We regret that [despite] all countries in this region [having] ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child...still many children suffer from abuse, and from the effects of occupation and war...”

THESE WORDS, FROM CHILDREN

at the Middle East and North African consultation on violence against children, highlight the reality that so many children in their region are exposed to violence and abuse, despite international and national laws providing for children's protection.

To prevent violence, to identify ways to try and tackle the drivers that cause the cycle of violence to go on regenerating itself, it is important to understand the perceptions and sentiments of the younger generation.

A 2004–2005 interactive study by Dr Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, a professor in Hebrew University's Institute of Criminology and School of Social Work, examined the perceptions of Palestinian young people on the violence and human rights violations against them in the shadow of the Israeli separation wall.

The young people shared their narratives and experiences of the wall in written compositions and in focus groups. The high-profile ruling on the wall by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) encouraged some to voice their perceptions of the role of local and international law in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

These young people's responses reflect both hope in, and frustration with, the international system that struggles to deliver concrete results. Here are some of their words, translated from Arabic:

“All girls know that at checkpoints, at the wall gates, and with the occupiers, there is no law, no rule...only the law of the jungle is applied here.”

– A 16-YEAR-OLD GIRL

“Where is the so-called civilised world that claims that the whole world is independent, free and safe and that every individual lives in dignity? Let them come to Palestine and see the killing, destruction, house demolition, the uprooting of trees and the devastation of the Palestinian environment.”

– A 14-YEAR-OLD GIRL

“We, Palestinian children...can't reach our schools safely, and our mothers can't even give birth to her child in the hospital. So, who is the one that needs to be secure?”

– A TEENAGE GIRL

“The entire world has objected to the idea. Demonstrations took place all over Palestine and the International Court of Justice in The Hague has decided to debate the issue of the wall.”

– A TEENAGE GIRL

“Don't you get it? We are presenting our cause to the International Court of Justice...”

– A TEENAGE GIRL

According to Dr Shalhoub-Kevorkian's research, the young people's comments revealed that:

- Most girls believed that local military rules and laws granted the occupying forces an unlimited licence to violate and harm them. Fewer girls believed that laws are one of the main methods to fight back and regain their rights.
- Despite their frustration with the effectiveness of the ICJ to remove the

wall, many young women considered international legal interventions a core strategy to help and support the Palestinian quest for justice. Looking to international law and legal treaties raised young people's hope, and encouraged them to search for international legal remedies.

- The inefficacy of law has led some girls to adopt a very fatalistic approach, while others have decided to “go with the flow” and employ a “day to day” policy. Others wanted to take the law into their own hands; still others believed in their power peacefully to make a difference.

In their reflections on violence and injustice, these Palestinian girls and boys challenge the international community to recognise our responsibility to shield them from “the law of the jungle” they perceive themselves as living under, and to develop and implement laws that will protect their rights to safety and security.

Their questions and challenge mirror those of other children and youth across the region facing situations of violence and uncertainty. The UN Study on Violence must address the need for concrete action, as words on their own are no longer enough. ■

Ms Holly Dhynes is Child Rights Advocacy Coordinator with World Vision Jerusalem–West Bank–Gaza. Dr Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, on whose research this article is based, is a professor in the Institute of Criminology and School of Social Work at Hebrew University, Jerusalem, and Visiting Assistant Professor of Law at the University of California (Los Angeles) School of Law and Centre for the Study of Women.

* Listening to children *

“Involve us...we can help”

IN MAY 2005, JUST PRIOR TO THE South Asia Regional Consultation for the UN Study on Violence Against Children, 25 children from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka participated in a **Children and Young People's Forum** in Islamabad, Pakistan. Facilitated by Save the Children, Plan International and UNICEF, this forum prepared the children for meaningful participation in the Regional Consultation, encouraging them to dialogue on the various forms of violence against children in the region.

The children were 13 girls and 12 boys aged 10–18, accompanied by chaperones or translators. Half of them understood basic English, so many participated in their own languages. They had been selected for participation either by a selection process based on their past involvement in children's issues, or by their peers.

After viewing the film *Children's Voices Against Violence Against Children*, which presented children's perceptions and concerns about violence against children in different contexts within South Asia, and their actions against it, these children and young people pondered and discussed the film's issues and recommendations and their own understanding of the issues. Then in individual country groups, they discussed the violence that occurs against children in their own countries. The country presentations that followed led to discussion on types of intervention against violence – including children's own actions – in each other's countries.

The children/young people's discussion focused on three types of violence: physical and psychological punishment, gender-based violence and child sexual abuse. They then discussed collective recommendations that they would present to the high-level regional consultation, government representatives, NGOs, media, academics, and UN agencies, and chose representatives for the Statement Drafting, Media and

Feedback committees. The draft statement included the following excerpts and the recommendations in the text box:

Where and how children face violence... “Physical and psychological violence, gender-based violence and sexual abuse happen to different degrees in all countries in the region. Violence not only has physical consequences, but also psychological/emotional consequences, which might even affect children more severely...Adults seldom listen to children when they talk about abuse. Some forms of violence are considered taboo...If children are abused in school or at home, they do not talk to their friends because they feel ashamed about it. Some adults also abuse children for their own pleasure. In other cases adults think that punishment is good for children and do not see it as abuse. Since many adults themselves were beaten or psychologically punished as children they may believe it is necessary for adults to punish children for the children's own good...Young brides may be tortured and harassed by their husband's family for not understanding family matters...When children suffer violence, they sometimes learn to fight violence with violence. This is how cycles of violence are continued.”

Causes of violence... “Sometimes cultural, traditional and/or religious practices can be harmful for children. At times poverty can cause neglect and violence, since parents do not have enough money to fulfil their needs or educate their children. Patterns of violence are also reproduced from one generation to another, making a cycle. Adults, like teachers, may lack knowledge of children's rights or the effects of physical and psychological punishment. Discrimination and unequal power relations in society also make violence against children worse. Some countries do not have laws on violence against children, or their laws may not be enough to protect children. Often children are not aware of how to get legal help. There are not enough counselling and



PHOTO - LENA KARLSSON

Professor Pinheiro with children in South Asia

psycho-social services to rehabilitate children who have been abused.”

What children can do... “**We can keep a watch.** For example, in some countries in the region, National Task Forces of Children have been formed. These monitor situations related to violence against children within the country and report to governments and NGOs about it.”

“We can help. Girls have developed centres to help other girls who are facing problems such as abuse or threat of forced and early marriage.”

“We are a part of awareness-raising, using street plays for making the community aware of abuse by teachers and parents and its negative impact; making radio shows, monthly newspapers and movies by children for children; child-to-child forums to create awareness of child rights; making visual arts and creating posters; bulletins that are displayed in their clubs and in public places; documentaries on child abuse that have been broadcast on satellite channels.”

One day later, children presented the statement at the high-level consultation.

South Asia / Africa / Latin

* Listening to children *

And their voices were heard: many of their recommendations were reflected in the work plan made by the governments on the last day. The challenge remains, however: will these recommendations translate into action backed with adequate commitment and resource allocation? One thing children insisted upon was recognition of children as social actors and their ongoing role in monitoring this work. ■

Reported by Mr Ravi Karkara, South and Central Asia Regional Programme Manager for Save the Children Sweden, and Y G Bhavani, Regional Child Participation Adviser.

¹The film was made by child media groups with Save the Children Sweden's Regional Programme Office for South and Central Asia.



PHOTO - LIEWA KARLSSON

Consulting with children in South Asia

STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM 'DRAFT STATEMENT BY SOUTH ASIAN CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE', MAY 2005

"We recommend that..."

- Adults listen to children's suggestions on how to address violence against children and activate them
- Governments make the laws concerning children in line with the CRC and make sure that they are strictly implemented
- Create and have special task forces all over the country to end violence
- Create and hold regular consultations with the parents' and children's committees and community leaders
- Create child-related laws and stop violence against children
- Involve parents, teachers, NGOs and children in programmes to address violence against children
- The community should pressurise government administration to stop violence
- Use the existing government and NGO bodies for stopping violence against children
- Raise parents' awareness of the CRC by establishing a parents' association in the community so that they can raise their voices on violence against girls/boys
- Parents be more connected with their children – listen to them and see things from their point of view
- Media should not use names, pictures and addresses of children who have been abused
- Produce more child-friendly information and materials on violence against girls and boys and its prevention
- Children who are part of children's clubs, task forces, child parliaments and child media groups should be trained on violence against children so that they can train more children to end violence
- Children need to be informed of the responsibilities that come along with rights so that they also do not abuse other children

End physical and psychological/emotional punishment and promote love and affection for children...

- Governments should create national laws against physical and psychological punishment and make systems to implement and properly monitor these
- Teachers should behave lovingly and affectionately towards children
- Governments should ensure that laws are widely known by everybody
- Teachers should be given proper teacher's training and training on positive discipline and parents on parental education
- There should be mechanisms in school and out of school where children can complain about severe punishment

End gender-based violence...

- Parents should know about children's rights and treat girls and boys equally
- The government should make laws for violence against girls specifically and implement them strictly throughout the country
- Governments should raise awareness frequently and regularly on violence against girls – through media, such as radio, papers, television, posters, notices and school curriculum throughout the country

End child sexual abuse...

- Try to implement the laws of the CRC relating to sexual abuse for children and abusers
- Counselling and other support should be accessible in the community for the children
- Forming Child Task Forces which will work on preventing child sexual abuse
- Include prevention of child sexual abuse education in the curriculum – provide safety education from a young age

We urge you to activate these recommendations, and others made by children in previous consultations, and to involve us when designing actions on violence against girls and boys in each country and the region."

A force against violence, for justice

José Miguel De Angulo

VIOLENCE IS A MAJOR SOCIAL problem facing humanity today. Families, society and the media tend to be mutually reinforcing when it comes to violence: families shape the attitudes and habits that manifest as violence in the community and in the media. In turn, families often internalise and act out the violence of society that they experience in the media and in public places.

Tragically, families nurture a variety of forms of violence in children: verbal, affective, physical, sexual, hierarchical abuse, and negligence. All these expressions of violence may have serious psychological, physical and social impacts. Expressed in human relationships at family level, they can in turn strengthen violent and unjust organisational, community, national and international socio-economic structures.

Working in health in Latin America in the last 30 years, I have clearly seen the health indicators that reflect physical violence, such as injuries from car accidents, gunshot wounds, cuts, broken arms and legs. An increase in affective violence is reflected in the growing incidence of sexually transmitted diseases (including AIDS), depression, suicide, wife-battering, and the cruellest one, child sexual abuse. Social indicators such as divorce rates, street children, drug addiction, and unwanted teenage pregnancies show that the family is a place where people both experience and generate violence.

I have also seen socio-economic violence manifested in the incidence and prevalence of diseases caused by poverty, such as malnutrition, diarrhea, pneumonia, skin infections and cholera. And the number of people who are displaced, tortured or mutilated, or missing persons; racial conflicts; marginalisation of minorities; impunity for human rights violations; unjust trade rules, corporate abuse of workers, powerful countries imposing development models on poor countries, and indiscriminate destruction of ecosystems show that socio-economic violence is not going away. The social groups that are worst affected by most forms of violence are women and children.

But there is no cause to be fatalistic about the prevalence of violence. The Prince of Peace, announced by the prophet Isaiah (Is. 9:6–7 and 11:1–9¹), came to earth 2000 years ago. Jesus came “to guide our feet into the way of peace” (Luke 1:79). Unfortunately, religious teachings have been grossly misused to reproduce hierarchical and abusive structures that justify the use of violence (especially against women and children), blame victims, and perpetuate inequalities of power that lead to subjugating relationships.

Far from standing by and watching (or ignoring) the incredible suffering of children, we must follow Jesus in pro-actively resisting all forms of violence, demonstrating that life in all its fullness can be a reality for all. Rather than being on the defensive, worrying that the evil world will come inside to damage our families, churches or communities, we need to draw on God's strength and love to go against “the gates of hell” and bring about a new order of justice (with its expressions of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and trust among people and the whole creation).

Isaiah prophesied that peace will be like a river, and righteousness like the sea (Is. 48:14–19). Let us turn our eyes to Jesus who called His followers to avoid all kinds of verbal violence (Matthew 5:21–22), to love our enemies (Matt. 5:44; Luke 23:33–34; Romans 5:10), to spurn physical violence (Matt. 26:51–53), and to leave anger and revenge (major sources of violence) in God's hands (Matt. 5:45–48; Luke 23:33–34).

Children and women, the most common victims of violence, can begin to be free of it when we assume our God-given responsibility to transform the unjust structures that maintain and reproduce violence, in public places as well as within families. ■

Dr José Miguel De Angulo is a Bolivian physician, and a member of the World Vision International Board.

¹ Bible references can be read in full at: www.ibs.org/niv/.

NEW! NEW! NEW! NEW! NEW!

World Vision publications on Children and Violence

A SELECTION OF WORLD VISION'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE UN STUDY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Recognising children's fundamental right to participate in their own development and to be key partners in finding solutions to their problems, World Vision has been documenting **children's voices** to feed these into the UN Study process. Our primary research including case studies, key informant interviews and focus-group interviews of community leaders, parents and children, reveals that children are deeply concerned about violence, but also have ideas for how to stop it. These publications emphasise not only the extent of the problem but also solutions and recommendations for positive interventions.



1. What is violence?

Perspectives from children in Tanzania

Features Tanzanian children's views, gathered in 2005, on various forms of violence familiar to them – including beatings, child labour, denial of education, and genital mutilation.

2. Violence against children affected by HIV/AIDS:

A case study of Uganda

Features Ugandan children's views on violence, abuse and neglect of children, with a particular focus on the violence stemming from HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination.

Both available online! go to:

www.childrights.org/PolicyAdvocacy/pahome2.5.nsf/crreports?openform
click on publication title



3. Consulta sobre violencia a niños, niñas y adolescentes en América Latina

Child-friendly interactive CD that consults children's opinions on violence, created for NGO use in Spanish-speaking countries. It asks children the same questions that the UN study questionnaire asked of governments, enabling useful comparisons. Children's answers are submitted and processed electronically.

Available in Spanish only.

For copies contact: **María José Meza**,
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WORLD VISION

is a Christian relief and development partnership that serves more than 85 million people in nearly 100 countries. World Vision seeks to follow Christ's example by working with the poor and oppressed in the pursuit of justice and human transformation.

Children are often most vulnerable to the effects of poverty. World Vision

works with each partner community to ensure that children are able to enjoy improved nutrition, health and education. Where children live in especially difficult circumstances, surviving on the streets, suffering in exploitative labour, or exposed to the abuse and trauma of conflict, World Vision works to restore hope and to bring justice.

World Vision recognises that poverty is not inevitable. Our Mission Statement calls us to challenge those unjust structures that constrain the poor in a world of false priorities, gross inequalities and distorted values. World Vision desires that all people be able to reach their God-given potential, and thus works for a world that no longer tolerates poverty. ■



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