

UN Study on Violence Against Children

NGO Position Paper

April 2002

Child rights NGOs welcome the General Assembly's request (A/Res56/138) that the Secretary General conduct an in-depth study of violence against children and view it as a unique opportunity to expose the extent of the problem and identify safeguards to better ensure protection of children from violence. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child proposed the study following its two general discussion days on violence against children in 2000 and 2001.

Child rights NGOs strongly support the Committee recommendations that the study should document as comprehensively as possible different types of violence against children - this refers to the 'different types' causes and impact on children, adults and societies. We agree that the study's aim should be to make violence to children visible as an essential step towards reducing and ending it, and that it should include the development of strategies to effectively prevent and combat all forms of violence against children.

In its recommendation to the GA, the Committee states that the study "should be as thorough and influential as the report of the expert of the Secretary-General, Mrs. Graça Machel, on the impact of armed conflict on children (see A/51/306)."

In order to achieve this, we believe certain factors are critical:

1. The study should be based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant international standards; and its mandate and scope should be in accordance with the Committee's recommendations following its two general discussion days.
2. The appointment of an independent expert to lead the study – a person with a strong record in children's rights who is well respected and able to serve as a public advocate for the study, and for children affected by violence.
3. The establishment of a separate secretariat for the study led by the independent expert and sufficiently funded to carry out its task. An independent secretariat would facilitate the contributions of partners and provide a single focal point for experts and NGOs.
4. The meaningful involvement of children in the study and in strategising and promoting actions to challenge violence against children. The Committee has stressed that in conceptualising violence, the critical starting point and frame of reference must be the experience of children themselves.

5. Clear avenues for NGO participation in the study, in order to draw on our considerable experience and knowledge relating to violence against children, through a formal advisory group.

We recognize and warmly welcome the support for the study from UNICEF, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the World Health Organization, and other UN bodies. Each will be an essential contributor to the study and their active involvement and support will be key to the study's success. As the UN's lead agency for children, UNICEF will have a particularly important role to play.

The undersigned non-governmental organizations are members of the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and/or of the Caucus on violence against children – created in response to the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children. We believe the study has the potential to bring about real improvements in the ways children are treated and we wholeheartedly offer our assistance to it.

Anti-Slavery International
Associação de Apoio à Criança em Risco
Casa Alianza
Child Rights Advisory and Legal Centre (CRADLE)
Children at Risk Foundation
Christian Children's Fund
Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers
Consortium for Street Children
Covenant House
Defence for Children International
European Association for Children in Hospital (EACH)
European Network of Street Children Worldwide (ENSCW)
Global Initiative to End all Corporal Punishment
Human Rights Watch
International Alliance of Women
International Catholic Child Bureau (BICE)
International Childcare Trust
International Council of Women
International Federation of Social Workers
International Federation Terre des Hommes
International Save the Children Alliance
International School Psychology Association (ISPA)
International Social Service
Open Family Australia
Women's World Summit Foundation
World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts
World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)
World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations
World Vision Canada
World Vision International

Y Care International
Young Women Christian Association