

# **CONCEPT OUTLINE FOR THE UN STUDY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN**

*prepared by the NGO Advisory Panel for the UN Study  
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## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

There is accumulating evidence that children all over the word are victimized by violence in their homes, their schools, other institutions, and in their communities. Among the children who are at risk are children with disabilities, children living in institutions, children deprived of parental care, children subjected to harmful traditional practices, children in conflict with the law, children living in extreme poverty, and other marginalized children. Evidence demonstrates that these violations of child rights have serious and lifelong effects. There is an urgent need for greater public, governmental and professional recognition of the origins, manifestations and consequences of violence. The decision of the United Nations to carry out an international study on violence against children is an essential step towards the elimination of these child rights violations. It merits the broad and sustained support of the world's citizens and their governments

## **VISION**

End violence against children and its destructive impact on children and their societies.

## **GOALS**

- to raise **international awareness** of all forms of violence against children
- better understand the problem and its causes through **data collection and analysis**
- establish sustainable human-rights based local, national, regional and international **action plans**
- establish effective mechanisms for **implementation**

## **EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

- Completion of an in-depth report on violence against children, to be submitted to the United Nations General Assembly, which includes a clear, time-bound plan of action and core recommendations to address the problem;
- The extent of violence against children, its causes and contributing contextual factors have been documented, disseminated and discussed;

- Visibility and awareness of all forms of violence against children have been raised at national and international levels;
- Greater political commitment to reduce violence against children has been demonstrated, including effective implementation of appropriate legislation and policies;
- Identifiable concrete actions to reduce violence against children are taking place at international, regional and national levels;
- Greater resources are available for effective action on violence against children;
- Issues of violence against children and progress towards its elimination are effectively monitored and reported.

## **WORKING DEFINITION OF VIOLENCE**

Physical, psychological (psychosocial), and sexual violence to children through abuse, neglect or exploitation, as acts of commission or omission in direct or indirect forms, that endanger or harm the child's dignity, physical, psychological, or social status, or development.

## **SCOPE AND CONTEXT**

The study should, at least briefly, acknowledge all areas of violence against children, and outline those that have received substantial attention elsewhere (e.g. armed conflict via Machel Study, or commercial sexual exploitation via Stockholm and Yokohama commitments).

However, the priority areas of focus for the study should be determined according to the following **criteria**:

- Violence against children which is widespread,
- Violence against children which is particularly severe,
- Violence against children which is under-recognized,
- Violence against children which is under-reported.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The UN Study on Violence Against Children should be based on **universal principles of human rights** and it should respect and incorporate:

- participatory approaches involving civil society, including children;
- emphasis on prevention, accountability and addressing impunity;
- locally-derived data to drive action;
- cultural sensitivity;

- gender awareness and a particular acknowledgement of the susceptibility of girls ;
- contextual analysis;
- ethical standards of research;
- holistic child-centered approach;
- transparency;
- special attention to vulnerable and marginalized groups, with a particular focus on the impact of discrimination.

## **STRATEGIC APPROACH**

Key strategic elements to ensure that the Study results in sustainable action to create a safe environment where the dignity and rights of children are protected:

- Employ a **universal human rights framework**, while at the same time promoting **local approaches and priorities**;
- Identify, mobilise and engage **key actors** who can effect change;
- Involve **children as experts** (e.g. representatives of child-led organisations), **researchers** (collect, compile and analyze data), **subjects/objects** (of adult or child-led research), **participants/contributors** (e.g. in regional and other consultations) and **advocates/educators** (to engage others in the study, advocate and participate in its follow-up);
- Reinforce and build on **existing mechanisms, networks and processes** already in place (avoid duplication);
- Strengthen **accountability mechanisms** through improved monitoring and reporting processes;
- Facilitate effective and regular **communication** within and between key actors and levels;
- Integrate **advocacy** into all research design and actions **from the start**;
- Mobilise **media** as an integral part of the study process throughout;
- Promote **space and opportunities** for a broad range of activities and action at local levels which have validity in their own right;
- Generate **practical, accessible resources** (tools, materials, services) that people can use to effect practical change at local levels;
- Promote mechanisms for multiple-level **fundraising**.

These approaches will lead to the development of sustainable local, national, regional and international plans of action, that include measurable and time-bound goals.

## **RESEARCH**

- 1) Research the existing human rights framework, including
  - international instruments, CRC and other treaty bodies, special rapporteurs, regional mechanisms, etc.

- 2) Review of what is known about violence against children, to establish base-line data and gaps in knowledge
  - desk reviews of existing studies, including statistics, causes and effects;
  - matrix/mapping of existing prevention, rehabilitation and other programmes, highlighting good practices.
- 3) Develop core instruments for multi-site studies on all forms of violence against children
  - core questions developed by a diverse group;
  - core questions to be incorporated into locally-devised and applied instruments;
  - questions devised to elicit local problems, not impose preconceived ideas.
- 4) Stimulate other types of research, information and documentation
  - e.g. contextualised ethnographic research, documenting a "day in the life of a child," case studies;
  - a special emphasis should be placed on children's perspectives and voices, including through child-led research.
- 5) Provoke comprehensive national-level assessments that include
  - relevant laws and enforcement;
  - child protection systems;
  - accountability mechanisms;
  - existing data/knowledge.

## **REGIONAL PARTICIPATION AND CONSULTATION**

Priority for action should be at *national* and *local* levels; such action should be encouraged as soon as possible. *Regional* level action is particularly useful in supporting, prompting and promoting local action, as well as learning across countries and enhancing advocacy.

Considerations for planning regional consultations:

- Identify and engage key actors – government, UN, civil society, private sector;
- Identify, utilize and strengthen existing networks and mechanisms (including meetings and planned conferences);
- Consult and engage government structures at all levels to facilitate ownership.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION**

The study process will lead to the formulation of clear, strategic recommendations that will inform action plans and should be implemented by all levels of government, with the full involvement of civil society.