What is the United Nations Study on Violence against Children?

INTRODUCTION

This paper tells you about the United Nations (UN) Study on Violence against Children. It is written for children and young people aged 12 to 18, and can also be used to talk with younger children about the Study. It is a child-friendly version of the ‘concept paper’ for the Study.

The concept paper was written more than a year ago, so some things mentioned in this paper have already happened.

This paper will tell you:

1. Who asked for the Study and why it is happening?
2. Who will be in charge of the Study and who else will be involved?
3. How will the Study be done?
4. What will the Study look at?
5. What will the Study achieve?
6. How can children and young people be involved?
7. What will happen at the end of the Study?

If there are words you don’t understand, look at the Word Bank at the end of this paper.

Save the Children has produced this child-friendly version with the help of the UN Study team, children, and other organisations.

The concept paper was the first official document of the UN Study. You can find it on the web site of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/6/crc/conceptpaper.doc

If you have finished reading this paper and have more questions, ask for a copy of “Questions and Answers on the UN Study on Violence against Children”.

The e-mail address to the Secretariat for the UN Study is: secretariat@sgsvac.org
The UN Study on Violence against Children is an international project. It will look at violence committed against children across the world and what can be done about it. The Study will take two years to finish. It will help the UN, governments, communities, parents, children and organisations working with and for children to learn and better understand:

- what violence is faced by children around the world
- how violence affects children
- what needs to be done to prevent all forms of violence against children
- how best to help children who have faced violence
- what children can do to protect themselves from violence
- what are the causes of violence against children

It is an important opportunity to find out what children themselves, as well as their families and communities, are doing about the violence that they experience. It is also a chance to hear about ideas that children have to prevent violence. Everyone who is responsible for protecting children from violence can learn how to do it better.

The United Nations (UN) was created after the Second World War to provide a place for all the countries in the world to discuss problems and deal with issues that affect them all. Although the UN is not a world government, it is a place where the 191 countries that belong to it can discuss how they want to work together.
1. WHO ASKED FOR THE STUDY?

This Study was suggested by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Committee thought that more should be done to prevent violence and to protect and help children who face violence. They hope that a Study can help find ideas to stop violence against children.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child: is a group of experts on children from all over the world who meet in Geneva three times a year to hear what governments have been doing to protect and promote children's rights, as set out in the “United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child”. The experts are elected by the governments of the world in the UN General Assembly. They help governments to make sure that they take all the steps needed to make children’s rights real in their daily lives.

The Committee wrote a letter to the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan. The Secretary-General took the letter to the UN General Assembly where governments from all countries of the world are represented. These governments then agreed to ask the Secretary-General to appoint an independent expert to be in charge of the Study.

The UN Secretary-General is the head of the UN, elected by all governments of the world. At the moment this is Kofi Annan, who was elected in 1997, and who is the UN’s seventh Secretary-General.
2. WHO WILL BE IN CHARGE OF THE STUDY AND WHO ELSE WILL BE INVOLVED?

An independent expert was appointed to lead the study. His name is Paulo Sergio Pinheiro and he is a human rights expert and professor from Brazil. He will work with a small team in Geneva, in Switzerland, called a Secretariat.

He will be helped by three UN organisations:

- The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
- The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)
- The World Health Organisation (WHO)

Paulo Pinheiro will also work with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, other parts of the UN, governments, international and national organisations, especially those that look at the rights of children.

The Study will look at other work that has been done about violence, including the *World Report on Violence and Health* from the WHO. It will also use the experience and research of organisations that have worked to protect and help children who face violence.

Paulo Pinheiro and organisations working with him think it is very important that children are actively involved in the Study. You can read more about this in Section 6 “How Can Children Be Involved?”

3. HOW WILL THE STUDY BE DONE?

The Study will rely on research about violence against children that has already been done. It aims to bring together in one place what we know now. It will, for example, use information from the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children. Official statistics from the UN and other organisations, such as UNICEF, will also be used. If gaps in knowledge are found, research can then be carried out on new or neglected issues.

Countries will be encouraged to carry out a national review to consider carefully everything that they are doing about violence against children. It should include how many children are facing violence and what laws exist, and other ways to protect children. After the review each country should have statistics and a full picture of the extent of violence against children in their country.

To help governments with the national review the Secretariat of the Study will send out a questionnaire (a list of questions). These questionnaires will ask questions about the law and plans that governments have to stop violence against children.

Many organisations in your country should be involved in the national review. Children, including children’s organisations, can work together with government and non-government organisations (NGOs) to make sure that children are included in the work of the Study.
Each region of the world will be holding a consultation – a meeting to discuss violence against children in that region. The regions are: East Asia and Pacific, South Asia, Eastern and Southern Africa, West and Central Africa, Middle East and North Africa, Europe and Central Asia, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean.

The regional consultations will gather together representatives of governments, UN agencies, and NGOs. Again, children can work together with UN agencies, such as UNICEF, and NGOs to make sure that children are invited to and heard in these meetings.

National reviews and regional consultations can be used to make sure that countries pay attention to the problem of violence against children. All countries and regions will be asked to share ideas on what to do to prevent violence against children and to better protect them. As part of this, developing countries, for example in Africa, Asia, and South America, can share good ideas with other developing countries. The Study will lead to networks being set up that help find and make known good ways of dealing with violence against children and to help children who have faced violence to rebuild their lives.

The independent expert, Paulo Pinheiro, will also visit countries to look at what governments are doing to prevent violence and protect children.

4. WHAT WILL THE STUDY LOOK AT?

Many girls and boys around the world face violence in their daily lives. There are many types of violence experienced by children in different ways in different regions of the world. It occurs in cities and the countryside, within families, schools, places of work and on the streets.

The World Health Organisation’s World Report on Violence and Health has tried to say what violence means, and this Study will use the same definition. Violence is:

“The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.”

This Study focuses on violence that happens when someone uses their strength or their position of power to hurt someone else on purpose, not by accident. Violence includes threats, and acts which could possibly cause harm, as well as those that actually do. The harm can be to a person's feelings, their mind, or their general health and wellbeing, as well as to their body. It also means harm people do to themselves, including killing themselves.
What does violence against children include?

For this Study, children are: everyone under the age of 18.

For this Study, violence against children is:

- All forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse (harming your body or harming your mind)
- Neglect or bad treatment
- Maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse and exploitation (such as child prostitution)
- Trafficking (sale and trading) of children
- Child abuse is any form of violence against children when it is done by someone who is responsible for them, or has power over them, that they should be able to trust (such as parents, other close family or teachers).

Where does violence occur?

The study will look at all the different places where there is violence against children, and will make a special effort to find good ways to prevent violence or deal with it when it happens. It will pay special attention to violence against children within the family. This means not just violence done by parents but also by anyone else who might be thought of as part of a child’s family. The extended family includes grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins and others. Violence by brothers and sisters is also included.

Finding out about how families and communities protect children is an important goal of the Study; But there are also certain customs that are harmful to children, especially girls, which are included as a kind of violence against children within the family. For example:

- female genital mutilation (cutting of a girl's sexual parts)
- child sexual abuse, including girls married very young or being forced to marry;
- honour killings, where men kill girls in the name of family 'honour', for example for having sex outside marriage, or refusing an arranged marriage.
Violence happens in public and private places:

- in schools (including military schools)
- in religious institutions
- in the street
- in children’s homes or orphanages
- in the home, family and community
- in prisons and other detention facilities
- in sport
- in the workplace
- in gangs

Violence in schools includes bullying and how teachers and other staff use discipline or punishment. The study will also consider violence that children can face when they are in trouble with the law or police, for example when they get arrested. It will look at the use of physical punishment and the death penalty, as well as torture and degrading treatment. All kinds of violence towards children by those involved in organized crime, including when drugs are involved, will be studied.

The only form of violence that the Study will not look at is the violence caused by war or armed conflict. This type of violence against children was reported on in the 1996 report on *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*. If you want to know more about this study, look at: http://www.unicef.org/graca

Discrimination can cause violence, whether you are treated badly because you are a girl, or from a different race, religion, or area of the country, or you are poor, or because you are disabled or some other reason. The Study will look at effective ways to stop this happening.

Some groups of children are more likely to be exposed to violence, for example migrant children who have moved from another country, indigenous children, and children from different races, religions and or ethnic groups.

The Study will look at how people think about gender - the roles that societies give to men and women, boys and girls - and how these can cause or prevent violence.

Governments themselves can be responsible for violence to children, if the people they employ, such as police officers, prison officers, or people running schools, orphanages or
hospitals, use violence against children. Governments also have a responsibility to do everything in their power to stop violence against children by anyone, including their families.

5. WHAT DOES THE STUDY HOPE TO ACHIEVE?

The Study aims to help to improve the situation for children. It will do this by bringing worldwide attention to the daily abuse of children. It will also publicise ways in which children who face violence can be helped and how violence can be prevented in the first place. Because of the importance of the Study, and because the Study will try to attract a lot of attention to the problems and solutions related to violence, it is hoped that governments will be convinced to make more effort to stop violence against children.

In 1996 the UN completed a Study on the impact of war and armed conflict on children, led by Graça Machel. This let everybody know that thousands of children were being used as soldiers, and made clear suggestions on what to do to help, like changing international laws. It is hoped that this new Study will be just as successful.

At the end of the Study there should be ideas for:

- how things can be improved so that there is less violence against children at home and in families, in schools, and in the community
- what laws can do to help stop violence and protect children who face violence.
- why different types of violence are happening and what can be done to prevent violence and to protect children from it. Children’s own ideas on prevention and protection will be an important part of the Study.
- what governments, the UN and other organisations can do to help children who have suffered violence.
- what children themselves, as well as their families and communities, can do to stop violence.
- how boys and men, as well as girls and women, can help make changes to prevent violence against children
- what is working and what is not working to stop violence against children.

These ideas will be for governments all over the world, international organisations including the UN and community-based organisations. Ways of working that have been successful in preventing violence and protecting children will be shared across the world so that we can all learn from them.

By encouraging children to talk about their experiences and views on violence the Study will help to increase understanding. This also helps governments, the UN and everybody to think of ways that will work better to protect children from violence.

Children will be able to share their own ideas and make plans to help themselves. They will also be able to learn from other children from other countries about their experiences and how they have dealt with violence in their own environment.
6. HOW CAN CHILDREN BE INVOLVED?

At the UN Special Session on Children adults have seen how children can be involved in big international projects. Children’s organisations such as UNICEF have also involved children in research and training of other children. This Study will build on that work and make sure that children’s voices are heard.

How will children participate in the Study?

- By sharing their experiences and views
- In planning for the Study
- In national and regional meetings
- As researchers
- By looking at what the information collected means
- By promoting the messages from the Study
- In helping to create websites and other ways of telling people about the Study and getting people involved in the Study.

Plans will be made to make sure that children are safe when participating in the Study. For example:

- Only children who WANT to participate will be involved
- The parents or community in which children live will need to agree that the children may participate
- If children participate in the Study or its related activities, what they say in confidence will not be shared with others
- If children talk about abuse, they need to know that they can get help, and that the organisers may have to report this to the authorities after discussing it with the child.
7. WHAT WILL HAPPEN AT THE END OF THE STUDY?

The Study will come up with ideas and plans for making things better for children who face violence. These ideas will be for governments, the UN and other organisations. Because children will be involved in the Study, they can also help put the ideas and plans into action.

The independent expert Paulo Pinheiro will write a report that will be sent to the Secretary-General of the UN in 2006 (date moved forward from 2005). The report will be given to governments and other parts of the UN such as the Commission on Human Rights. After that, a big book will be published, along with a report especially written for children.

UPDATE: WHAT HAS HAPPENED SINCE THIS CONCEPT PAPER WAS WRITTEN?

❖ A questionnaire was sent to all governments in February 2004 to find out about:

- laws that help prevent violence and protect children who have faced violence
- things that are done to stop violence against children
- how organisations in each country help to stop violence
- how children themselves are involved in preventing violence
- what plans there are to improve the situation
- what statistics and research has been done on violence against children
- what has been done to make people aware of violence against children and what to do about it.

A lot of governments have already responded and sent their questionnaires to the UN.

❖ Meetings are being planned for all the regional consultations in 2005

❖ Information is being collected and an outline of the Study Report has been prepared
WORD BANK

abuse bad treatment that causes physical or mental harm

bullying bullying includes

- People calling you names
- Making things up to get you into trouble
- Hitting, pinching, biting, pushing and shoving
- Taking things away from you
- Damaging your belongings
- Stealing your money
- Taking your friends away from you
- Spreading rumours
- Threats and intimidation
- Making silent or abusive phone calls
- Sending you offensive phone texts
- Posting insulting messages on the internet
- Bullies can also frighten you so that you don't want to go to school, so that you pretend to be ill to avoid them.

child abuse any kind of harm done to children, including through neglect, physical, sexual or mental violence by someone who is responsible for them, or has power over them, that they should be able to trust

child-friendly designed for children, and understandable to them

child prostitution when a child has sex in return for money or other rewards. Children may be forced into prostitution by other people or because they have no other way to survive. Child prostitution is against the law and is a serious form of child abuse.

children's homes places where groups of children who don't have parents or whose families cannot look after them, are looked after.

Commission on Human Rights The United Nations Commission on Human Rights, composed of 53 States, meets each year in March/April for six weeks in Geneva. Over 3,000 delegates from member and observer States and from non-governmental organizations participate. It looks at human rights issues across the world.

Committee on the Rights of the Child a group of 18 experts on children from all over the world who meet in Geneva three times a year to hear what governments have been doing to protect and promote children's rights, as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The experts are elected by the governments of the world that are members of the UN. They help governments to make sure that they take all the steps needed to make children's rights real in their daily lives.
community  a group of people that know each other, or live near each other, or have other things in common

consultations  asking people what they think

Convention on the Rights of the Child  The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child spells out the basic human rights to which children everywhere are entitled. 192 countries in the world have signed up to the Convention. You can find out more about it on http://www.unicef.org/crc

death penalty  when someone is executed (killed) when a court of law has found them responsible for a serious crime

degrading treatment  treating people without respect, humiliating people

detention facilities  places where people who are accused or found guilty of breaking the law are kept against their will

developing countries  countries where most people live on a low income - sometimes also called underdeveloped countries, the South or the Third World. Around 70% of the world’s people live in the developing countries

discrimination  when a powerful person or group of people treat less powerful people or groups badly and unfairly. Many people experience discrimination including women and girls, people from some ethnic or cultural groups, and disabled people

expert  someone who knows a lot about a subject

exploitation  mistreatment, taking unfair advantage of someone, for personal gain. As in making a child work to pay off her or his parents’ debts or making children do dangerous or illegal work (such as child prostitution) to make someone else better off

family  meaning not just parents and child but everyone who might be thought of as part of a child’s family. The extended family includes grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins and others

female genital mutilation (FGM)  the removal of all or part of girls' or women's external sexual organs, or injury to them, for any reason other than medical treatment. Sometimes called ‘female circumcision’, this is a tradition in some parts of the world

Gender  the way in which different cultures and societies understand the biological differences between men and women; what it means to be feminine and masculine in particular cultural and social settings, and how this influences ideas about what women and men and girls and boys do and how they behave.
The United Nations General Assembly is attended by representatives from 191 countries. It is a parliament of nations that meets in New York to discuss the world’s most important problems. Although the UN is not a world government, it is a place where countries can discuss how they want to work together.

**honour killings**
when men kill girls or women in the name of family 'honour', for having sex outside marriage, sometimes even when they have been victims of rape, or for example, for refusing an arranged marriage or seeking a divorce.

**human rights and child rights**
rights belonging to everyone because they are human, including rights to basic freedoms, and to have what they need to survive, develop and participate in society. Adults have rights and so do children.

**indigenous**
the original or native inhabitants of a place, the people who first lived in a place. Often now in danger from other people who want control over their land or resources.

**mental violence**
insulting, degrading or humiliating someone; hurting someone’s feelings or causing emotional harm.

**migrant children**
children who move country or to another part of the same country.

**neglect**
not looked after properly, failing to care.

**NGO**
Non-Governmental Organisation – used by the UN to describe all organisations that are not part of a government and are not working to make a profit. Many NGOs exist to help people who have some sort of problem (such as poverty or disability) or to protect something (such as animals or plants).

**OHCHR**
the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights – The High Commissioner is appointed by the UN Secretary General. The Office aims to help ensure and promote human rights for all.

**organized crime**
when gangs or illegal organisations make money through crime, for example the mafia.

**orphanages**
places where children whose parents have died and whose families cannot look after them, are looked after.

**participation**
being involved in, playing a part in, something. Having your voice heard and being taken seriously – usually when decisions are being taken about something.

**physical punishment**
physical punishment includes any kind of physical violence including smacking, beating, whipping that is done with the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>intention of controlling, educating, or discipline</td>
<td>careful study and investigation for the purpose of discovering and explaining new knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secretary-General</td>
<td>the head of the UN, elected by all governments of the world. Currently Kofi Annan, who was elected in 1997, and who is the UN’s seventh Secretary-General</td>
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<tr>
<td>sexual abuse of children</td>
<td>any kind of sexual activity done to children, especially by someone who is responsible for them, or has power over them, that they should be able to trust</td>
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<tr>
<td>sexual exploitation</td>
<td>mistreating, abusing and/or taking advantage of someone for personal gain, by involving them in sex work or sexual activity which is illegal or inappropriate</td>
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<tr>
<td>special session</td>
<td>see UN General Assembly’s Special Session on Children</td>
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<tr>
<td>strategy</td>
<td>an agreed plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>torture</td>
<td>to cause severe pain or suffering to someone, either mental or physical, to get information, to get them to admit or agree to something, or to scare them</td>
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<tr>
<td>trafficking</td>
<td>illegal trading (that is buying and selling) in people, especially women and children. Often occurs across the borders from different countries, especially between richer and poorer countries</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>the United Nation’s Children’s Fund, originally set up in 1946 as the UN International Children’s Emergency Fund. The main organisation in the UN which works for the protection, survival and development of children. It works closely with governments around the world to provide services for children such as medicines, vaccines, water, food and schooling</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>the UN (United Nations) was created after the Second World War to provide a place for all the countries in the world to discuss problems and deal with issues that affect them all. (All the members together are called the UN General Assembly). The United Nations is based in New York and Geneva, but also has offices in other countries. If you want to find out more about the United Nations, go to <a href="http://www.un.org">http://www.un.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN General Assembly’s Special Session on Children (UNGASS)</td>
<td>In May 2002 the UN held a special meeting to talk about the situation of children across the world and what could be done to make life better for all children. You can find out more about the Special Session if you go to <a href="http://www.unicef.org/specialsession">http://www.unicef.org/specialsession</a>.</td>
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</tbody>
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violation  Action or lack of action that harms someone or denies them their rights

WHO  World Health Organisation  - The World Health Organisation is the UN specialist agency for health. The organisation works to help control disease and improve general standards of health and nutrition through international co-operation. It works to make sure that all people across the world can have the highest possible level of health.

23/11/04