



Children and youth consultation on the Communication on the Rights of the Child

Key findings

This report consolidates the findings of consultations made with 255 children and young people from ten non-European Union member states in the developing world on the European Union's proposed Strategy on the Rights of the Child.¹ The consultations were conducted between January and March 2007 by Plan International with the aim of better understanding what children outside Europe², as its beneficiaries, would like the Strategy to achieve as well as explore the best methods of involving them in its future development; as children in the Myrada group, India, stated, "we know our problems best".

This summary presents the key conclusion from the report.³

EMERGING THEMES

The consultations resulted in key emerging themes. These include the main issues that affect children and young people, which they regard as **poverty**, **violence** (such as child labour and abuse), **exclusion** (especially of orphans and girls) and, to a slightly lesser degree, **health**.

In addition to this, a key issue is that children believe that they are **not being heard**, especially by their parents. They perceive the lack of awareness about child rights as a huge obstacle to its enactment, and expressed a strong **desire to see awareness-raising constitute a key part of the Strategy**. They also believe that laws must be strengthened to protect children from the worst child rights abuses.

Participation

Children and young people strongly believe that they should be involved in the decisions that the EU makes as it concerns them and their wellbeing. There are different methods in which they would like to be engaged, including through questionnaires (accompanied by one-day workshops incorporating focus-group discussions to enable the EU to have a thorough understanding of their responses) and meetings with other children and adults. It is also very important to them that they receive information in a child-friendly format, for which their preferred mediums are newspapers and magazines as well as television and radio. It is still unclear how children and young people would like to be involved in the European Forum on the Rights of the Child although consultations reveal that this is an area they are very keen to participate in.

Training

¹ Commission of the European Communities (2006) *Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child*, 367 final (Brussels)

² Save the Children conducted the same consultation with children from within the EU.

³ For the full version of the draft report, please email info-eu@plan-international.org

Research into children's backgrounds also reveals that they are adept at providing training to others. This provides a route to engagement with young people that is both empowering for them as well as of the highest educational value for adults who can learn about the obstacles children face from children themselves.

Finally, this report outlines four recommendations that have emerged from the consultations:

1. The four main thematic issues which emerged from the consultation, namely **poverty, violence, exclusion, and health**, should be addressed adequately in the implementation of the Strategy and EC policies and programming in thirds countries.
2. **Orphans** should be a key part of the Strategy to improve the lives of children throughout the world as their lack of protection by parents makes them more vulnerable to exploitation.
3. **Laws should be strengthened** and **parents/adults should be made aware of children's rights** so that adults are deterred from engaging children in child labour, early marriage, and committing acts of violence against them. Stronger laws would deter perpetrators.
4. The best way to mainstream children's rights is to **include children in decision-making** processes so that they can give their perspective and opinions on how to make policies most effective. Information should be regularly disseminated to children and young people on the EU's work through the media. Children and young people should also be engaged through questionnaires and meetings for which all expenses must be covered.
5. Children and young people should be engaged in the **training of adults** and peers to raise awareness of certain child rights issues in order to deter violations from occurring. These are to be organised with the help of the EU and include the training of EU staff by children as in Objective 5 of the Strategy.⁴ This will allow those working for the rights of children to be engaged with the issues affecting them at a practical level.

⁴ Objective 5 is: "Enhancing capacity and expertise on children's rights".