

**TOWARDS AN EU STRATEGY ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD  
FINDINGS OF A CONSULTATION WITH CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE  
IN NON-EU MEMBER STATES**

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**Plan**

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## CONTENTS

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<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Background.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Consultation process.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Methods used.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Presentation of findings.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Consultation findings.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>The issues that children and young people believe the Strategy should focus on.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Analysis of children and young people’s views on the Strategy....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>The best methods of involving children and young people in future development of the Strategy and how to share information with them effectively.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Summary of findings and recommendations.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Appendix A: Information on the respondents</b>	
<b>Appendix B: Save the Children questionnaire</b>	
<b>Appendix C: Plan Vietnam questionnaire</b>	
<b>Appendix D: Respondents’ views towards the Strategy (rankings)</b>	

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Consultations were held with 255 children and young people in ten non-European ‘developing’ countries from January to March 2007 to gauge their views on the EU’s Communication *Towards a Strategy on the Rights of the Child*. The essential aim of the consultations was to better understand the rights-related issues pertinent to children and their recommendations on how best these rights could be realised through the Strategy.

The issues that emerged of the most concern to the children and young people consulted with were violence, exclusion and, to a lesser degree, health, with these all being manifestations of child poverty. These were further broken down into the recurring themes of child labour; abuse; exploitation; exclusion of orphans, girls and the disabled; early marriage; denial of access to education; and poor health. Respondents highlighted that in addition to these issues as key obstacles for the realisation of their rights are the lack of awareness about children’s rights - especially amongst parents - and the lack of adequate laws to protect them.

A significant outcome of the consultations is the reinforcement by children and young people that they want and need to be ‘heard’ through involvement in decision-making processes. The rationale behind this is that only children know their problems the best. Methods to involve young people include through questionnaires (in conjunction with workshops), as well as meetings between children and adults/ children and their peers. The fantastic resource of children as trainers also emerged, with many respondents having been involved in effective training of child rights, which poses the opportunity to extend this to training of EU staff and other policy-makers.

Finally, children and young people expressed their desire to be kept up to date with the Strategy’s development through child friendly communications. A medium to disseminate information was found to be the media, with newspapers, magazines, television and radio deemed to be the most effective outlets. This emphasises the strong will amongst children and young people to be engaged as global citizens.

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## INTRODUCTION

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*Child rights are “everything that the child can do and that no one can stop him from doing, everything that is allowed for children, everything that must be done for children once they have accomplished their duties, everything that helps children grow and develop better”.*

- Children and young people consulted in Benin on the meaning of ‘child rights’.

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.<sup>1</sup> The consultations were conducted between January and March 2007 by Plan International with the aim of better understanding what children outside Europe think of the Strategy, would like it to achieve and explore the best methods of involving them in its future development; as children in the Myrada group, India, stated, “we know our problems best”. The findings outlined in this report are from consultations made with children and young people from within Plan International’s projects, and therefore children from amongst the poorest communities. Consultations were also carried out with children and young people from within EU member states, the findings of which can be found in a separate report.<sup>2</sup>

### Background

The European Commission presented the *Communication Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child* in July 2006 in response to the increasing priority the EU is placing on child rights following on from the *Communication on Strategic Objectives 2005-2009*.<sup>3</sup> This outlined that:

a particular priority must be effective protection of the rights of children, both against economic exploitation and all forms of abuse, with the Union acting as a beacon to the rest of the world.

As a result, the *Communication Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child* is mandated “to effectively promote and safeguard the rights of the child in the European Union’s internal and external policies and to support Member States’ efforts in this field”.<sup>4</sup> It is separated into seven objectives that aim to significantly reduce child poverty and to strengthen the rights of children. These are:

1. Capitalising on existing activities while addressing urgent needs;
2. Identifying priorities for future EU action;
3. Mainstreaming children’s rights in EU actions;
4. Establishing efficient coordination and consultation mechanisms;
5. Enhancing capacity and expertise on children’s rights;
6. Communicating more effectively on children’s rights;

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

<sup>2</sup> This report is forthcoming by Save the Children will be available in April/May 2007.

<sup>3</sup> COM (2005) *Strategic Objectives 2005-2009; Europe 2010: A Partnership for European Renewal, Prosperity, Solidarity and Security*, 12, 26.01.05.

<sup>4</sup> Commission of the European Communities (2006) *Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child*, 367 final (Brussels), p.2

## 7. Promoting the rights of the child in external relations.<sup>5</sup>

The Communication paper outlines why a strategy on child rights is needed; the issues that the strategy will focus on; and which action points the European Commission will adopt in order to meet each objective. The consultations with children and young people therefore highlight their opinions, thoughts and suggestions on the Strategy.

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### THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

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*“There is no child rights without children. And for every decision made in the EU, children should be involved.”*

- Respondents from Mikumi DA, Tanzania.

The ten countries from which children and young people were consulted are:

- Albania
- Benin
- Cambodia
- India (2 groups)
- Indonesia
- Kenya (3 groups)
- Sierra Leone
- Tanzania (4 groups)
- Thailand
- Vietnam.

The age range of the respondents is 13-17 years and good gender representation was achieved.<sup>6</sup> It is significant that most children consulted with are from youth groups in which they have already gained a very good understanding of child rights. Having prior knowledge of this topic enabled respondents to engage with the issues confidently. All respondents took part voluntarily.

#### Research methods used for effective consultations

In order for children to give their opinion on the Communication, two child-friendly versions of the *Communication Towards the Rights of the Child* were created. The first was designed for children aged 7-12, while the other was intended for youth between 13-17 years old.<sup>7</sup> This allowed respondents to better understand the strategy in their own words as these were translated by country offices and studied before the consultations.

The key research method employed was the **questionnaire**, as it can elicit information in a short space of time. Two different questionnaires were used, one created by Save the Children Europe and another by Plan Vietnam. Both were disseminated to Plan International’s programme units in developing countries allowing programme staff or the facilitators of youth groups to select the most

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<sup>5</sup> It is beyond the scope of this report to go into detail on each objective but this can be found in: Commission of the European Communities (2006) *Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child*, 367 final (Brussels)

<sup>6</sup> For a full breakdown of respondents, including group names and methods used to consult with them, please go to Appendix A. This also illustrates that groups differed in size.

<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately the consultations with 7-12 year olds did not occur due to time constraints but all future consultations will also include younger children.

appropriate questionnaire for use with children in their communities.<sup>8</sup> For example, although the aim of both questionnaires was the same, facilitators were able to select which they felt would be most easy for the children they work with.

The majority of questionnaires were completed as a group after a day/ two day workshop on the Strategy with respondents. This allowed staff trained in participatory research methods with children to work alongside them to explain the terms of the Strategy and facilitate discussions so that they could collectively think about the issues presented in it and discuss their opinions of them.<sup>9</sup> It also complemented the questionnaire method as it allowed follow-up questions to be asked to better understand responses, with some country offices attaching extra information with the questionnaire results. Indeed, these were particularly useful and it is clear that questionnaires accompanied by workshops elicited the most in depth opinions.

Not all groups chose to answer the questionnaire. The groups in Albania and Indonesia followed a method of creative **workshops** using art and visual stimulation (responses to photographs), as well as role-plays and discussion, to gauge children and young people's views on the Strategy. The groups in Kisumu DA (Kenya) and Cambodia, on the other hand, reported back on **focus-group discussions** held with respondents. Leaving the method of consultation up to each individual group allowed them to keep with practices that they were most comfortable with in the hope that it would elicit responses with ease.

### **Presentation of the data**

As the groups varied in size and responded in different ways, the research findings will be presented as 'key emerging themes' rather than as statistical results in order to avoid generalisation. This will therefore include the views of all respondents on the Strategy and be a more representative method of presenting findings from the fieldwork.

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<sup>8</sup> Save the Children's questionnaire can be found in Appendix B; Plan Vietnam's questionnaire can be found in Appendix C.

<sup>9</sup> This is also important to include children who cannot read.

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## CONSULTATION FINDINGS

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*“An EU strategy will help to improve children’s rights and stop child rights violations. It will help reduce child labour, child slavery and grooms the child to become a moral character. It can further prepare the minds of children to know their rights and responsibilities, thereby becoming responsible global citizens.”*

- Children and young people consulted in Sierra Leone responding to their expectations of the Strategy.

The consultations with children and young people resulted in three main areas of findings:

- i. The issues that children and young people believe the Strategy should focus on;
- ii. Analysis of children and young people’s views on the action points accompanying the Strategy;
- iii. The best methods to involve children and young people in the Strategy as well as how to share information with them about it.

This section will present the research findings under these three main areas.

### **i. THE ISSUES THAT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE BELIEVE THE STRATEGY SHOULD FOCUS ON**

Children and young people were asked to share information on what they believe to be the key issues that affect them in their communities and countries as well as the areas they would like the Strategy to focus on to improve the lives of children in developing countries overall. Their responses have been separated into the following issues: **violence**, **exclusion** and, to a lesser degree, **health**, with these all being the manifestations of **poverty**.

#### **Violence**

Violence against children is a recurring theme which respondents emphasised as a key issue. This takes the form of **child labour**, **abuse** and **sexual exploitation** (especially of **girls**).

The groups from Albania; Benin; Dharampuri, India; Myrada, India; Indonesia; Tharaka (Kenya); Manyara (Tanzania); Victoria (Tanzania); and Thailand cited **child labour** as a major problem that faces children in their countries. When respondents were asked about different forms, they predominately answered dangerous work and begging, as well as sexual exploitation. The causes of child labour were stated as parents being poor (Vietnam; Nairobi) or due to children being orphans needing to fend for themselves.<sup>10</sup> A 15 year old respondent from Nairobi, Kenya, stated, “a child has to work for them [parents] to have money to eat”.

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<sup>10</sup> This is explored further in the section under ‘Exclusion’ as a key issue.

Another element of violence against children and young people is **abuse**, including sexual abuse. Respondents from Dharmapuri (India), Myrada (India), Kilimanjaro (Tanzania), Victoria (Tanzania) and Vietnam highlighted abuse as one of the main issues faced by children in their community or country. The Myrada group in India stated the consequences of sexual exploitation on a child's rights: "If she becomes a child prostitute, she cannot lead a life of dignity. Even parents of such children will neglect them". Violations faced by **girls** also extend to **early marriage**, another recurring concern of respondents (Dharmapuri, India; Indonesia, Nairobi, Kenya; Thailand; Tharaka, Kenya; Sierra Leone). The reason for discrimination against girls was given as tradition due to cultural views of girls being of 'less value' than boys – because they will marry and join another family (Dharmapuri, India; Myrada, India; Nairobi; Sierra Leone; Vietnam).<sup>11</sup>

**Child labour** and **discrimination against girls** were cited as reasons for children being unable to exercise their right to **education**. The Kilimanjaro group (Tanzania), Mikumi group (Tanzania) and children from Vietnam believe access to primary education is one of the top 3 issues that needs to be dealt with to help children in developing countries. This sentiment was also shown in other groups' consultations; in Albania, a 13-year old boy stated, "I know a lot of young boys who are forced by their parents to work every day. They cannot go to school and cannot play with other children". In regards to girls, a role play by children consulted in Indonesia depicted a father finally consenting to his daughter going to school with deep shame. Ironically it was felt by the Kilimanjaro group from Tanzania that the best way to protect the rights of girls specifically is through education.

The standard of education overall was viewed as an issue that needs to be addressed by improving facilities as well as increasing parents' knowledge on the importance of sending their children to school (for both genders). The Tharaka group (Kenya) also suggested that it is not just school fees, but also hidden costs, such as school uniforms, that need to be taken into account.

## **Exclusion**

The issue of exclusion extends beyond **girls** to also include **orphans** (and the disabled).

**Orphans** are a group that respondents recommended should have prominence in the Strategy. This is due to their being the most vulnerable to exploitation. In Tharaka (Kenya), respondents spoke of the large families that orphans would sometimes go to live with (such as their extended family) which led to them being mistreated and in "most cases" ending up as maids or street children. A 15-year old Roma girl from Albania's consultation also said, "One of my friends, a Roma girl, had been trafficked in Greece by unknown people. Her parents died five years ago, she was living with

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<sup>11</sup> Factors such as early marriage and child labour result in children being forced to grow up too soon. The Myrada group in India believed that early marriage leads to "girl children losing their childhood" whereas children consulted in Tharaka (Kenya) highlighted the early rite of passage into adulthood through circumcision at the age of eight leaving them confused as to whether they are adults or children.

her grandmother who was forcing her to beg on the streets”. Respondents from Thailand also attributed poverty amongst children to the lack of parents to care for them.<sup>12</sup> The group in Sierra Leone were particularly keen that the Strategy should “pay special attention to orphans” and “provide structures for the care of children, especially orphans and handicapped children” (Sierra Leone).

It is important to note that **disabled** children were also highlighted as particularly vulnerable and requiring special attention by respondents in Tharaka (Kenya) and Manyara (Tanzania), with both placing this as one of the main issues to be addressed in developing countries.<sup>13</sup>

Exclusion also emerged as an issue in consultations in Albania where Roma children felt discriminated against at school due to racism. In India, also, the caste system and religious divide between Hindus and Muslims were mentioned as fostering the exclusion of some children.

## **Health**

When respondents were asked why they believed so many children around the world fall ill, factors such as poor sanitation, unclean water, inadequate medical services and nutrition were given.<sup>14</sup> It was therefore an issue that mainly emerged through this prompting statement, although significantly two groups believed that one of the top three issues that the EU should focus on to help children all over the world is health (Myrada, India; Kilimanjaro, Tanzania).

## **Poverty**

All of these issues that emerged from the consultations are the manifestations of **poverty**. In some cases, groups consulted with named **child poverty** as one of the biggest issues facing children in the world today (Kisumu DA, Kenya; Kilimanjaro, Tanzania; Victoria, Tanzania).

## **II. ANALYSIS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE’S VIEWS ON THE STRATEGY**

Respondents who answered Save the Children’s questionnaire were asked to rank the Strategy’s objectives in order of importance to them, with those answering the Plan survey discussing which objectives they think there should be more or less of.<sup>15</sup>

Two particular Objectives resonated well with respondents: Objective 5, explained to them as “*To improve people’s understanding, skills and expertise on children’s rights*” and Objective 6, “*To produce an awareness-raising strategy for children on*

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<sup>12</sup> In Thailand and Nairobi a strong case was made for the link between **HIV/AIDS** and orphans.

<sup>13</sup> Respondents in Tharaka (Kenya) also cited single-parent families as an issue that needed to be addressed, as well as female genital cutting.

<sup>14</sup> This is question 4 in the Plan survey.

<sup>15</sup> Others simply stated that they were happy with the Objectives and had nothing more to add. The Kisumu DA group (Kenya) felt the objectives were “not adequate” but did not have any suggestions for improvement. In contrast, the group consulted in Cambodia thought all of the Objectives were good and had nothing more to add.

*children's rights*" (as termed in the 13-17 child-friendly document).<sup>16</sup> For example, respondents stated:

*"There is lack of awareness on child rights in the community and among children."*  
Dharmapuri, India

*"People need to understand first and then come together to prepare strategies and find solutions to children's problems."*  
Mikumi, Tanzania

*"People should be aware that children should enjoy their rights, once this is done all children will enjoy their rights and parents will also love them."*  
Myrada, India

These choices highlight the opinion that there needs to be greater understanding on child rights by practitioners, society and children themselves. Indeed, when respondents were questioned on what they believed the EU should do to make sure that children's rights are mainstreamed, as well as the support they need from adults to be involved in decision making, the two emerging answers were to **raise awareness amongst adults**, especially **parents**, as well as to **strengthen laws to support child rights**. Further information on both points is presented below, as well as respondents' thoughts on the proposed telephone numbers for children in need of help as outlined in the first Objective in the Strategy.

### **Better information on child rights, especially amongst parents**

*"Parents' awareness should be increased... They should be made aware of the laws."*  
- Myrada, India

A key obstacle for the realisation of children's rights is the lack of knowledge about it by adults, especially parents. Their better understanding of child rights would enable children to go to school, reduce child labour and violence against children.<sup>17</sup> This was found in consultations with children and young people in Albania; Benin; Dharmapuri, India; Myrada, India; Nairobi, Kenya; Tharaka, Kenya; Manyara, Tanzania; Mikumi, Tanzania; and Victoria, Tanzania.

Groups in Kenya and Tanzania elaborated on this point further; when asked how the EU could mainstream children's rights as in Objective 3 of the Strategy, respondents from Victoria, Tanzania, suggested that this start at a grassroots level, as the "EU should educate parents and care-takers on child rights". In Manyara (Tanzania) the solutions offered for the main three issues affecting them all involved awareness raising amongst parents.<sup>18</sup> Mikumi group (Tanzania) extended this to all of society

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<sup>16</sup> The results are provided in Appendix D.

<sup>17</sup> The Kilimanjaro group (Tanzania) suggested the best way to protect children from violence against them is by being loved by their parents, which echoes the third quote above by the Myrada group in India.

<sup>18</sup> The three issues are: lack of access to education; children are not listened to; child labour. The three solutions are: parents understand the importance of education (also cited in consultations with the group in Tharaka, Kenya); children's views and opinions be respected by parents; and the laws against child labour be adhered to by all adults/ the community.

needing to be educated on child rights to alleviate the worst child rights abuses facing children.<sup>19</sup> This emphasises the protection that children and young people feel they are lacking from adults in society. Respondents were asked if they need support from adults to which all answered “yes”; the reasons for this were given as the vulnerability of children and guidance needed by them from their elders. However, a sense of frustration emerges that children feel they are not listened to by their parents and elders. As one 16-year old female respondent in Nairobi said, “It’s always very difficult for a child to openly express his opinions to a parent or other elder people as most of the time it will be turned down and not respected”. This can result in alienation; in Sierra Leone the group highlighted that young people are “future leaders... [who] need to be respected”.<sup>20</sup> In Benin also respondents stated that children need to be protected “because they are the future, they are more exposed to danger than adults, they are naïve and vulnerable” (Benin).<sup>21</sup> Strengthening laws was viewed as an effective way to foster protection as a part of awareness-raising.

### **Strengthen laws to support child rights**

*“Laws against the offenders of children’s rights should be very punitive to deter people from violating them.”*

- Respondents in Nairobi, Kenya.

Adults can also help to achieve child rights by strengthening laws and ensuring that these are then implemented.<sup>22</sup> This was felt by respondents in Dharmapuri, India; Indonesia; Nairobi, Kenya; Kilimanjaro, Tanzania; Manyara, Tanzania; and Mikumi, Tanzania. Indeed, this was a key response of children and young people when asked how the EU could mainstream child rights in everything that it does.

### **Views on the proposed helpline and hotline for children**

Finally on analysis of children’s views towards the Strategy, the questionnaire included a question on what young people think of the action for Objective 1 - to have a single telephone number for child helplines and another for child hotlines specifically for missing and sexually exploited children *within the EU*. Respondents noted that a single number for both areas was a good idea, except Dharmapuri, India, and Victoria, Tanzania, with both groups feeling it could be confusing. However, positive comments ranged from “it will facilitate to get quick help” (Manyara, Tanzania) as well as “it will simplify the work for the police and will be easier and faster for the EU to help children who need it” (Mikumi, Tanzania). Interestingly, only respondents from Albania viewed it as the most important part of the Strategy,

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<sup>19</sup> Mikumi’s three most important issues affecting boys and girls in their community/ Tanzania were: child poverty, trafficking and prostitution, violence.

<sup>20</sup> This is a key issue in post-conflict Sierra Leone where children and young people played a significant part in the war only to feel sidelined with the coming of a peace agreement.

<sup>21</sup> Kilimanjaro (Tanzania) group also stressed needing particular protection “when we are not in classes”.

<sup>22</sup> However, children in Nairobi expressed scepticism about new strategies, policies and laws being introduced. They feared “the actions may be documented but not put into actions. They noted that they had not been accorded their rights as enshrined in the UNCROC in which many countries are a signatory”.

whereas the overall sense from others was that it is not as important as some of the other action points (as understood through the ranking exercise).<sup>23</sup>

The final aspect of the questionnaires is that they researched the best ways to involve young people in the Strategy, with the proven understanding that plans to improve the wellbeing of children stand a far greater chance of success when children are involved in the entire process.

### **III. THE BEST METHODS OF INVOLVING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS OF THE STRATEGY AND TO SHARE INFORMATION WITH THEM.**

Respondents unanimously agreed that children should be involved in making decisions that affect them; as the Myrada group in India remarked, “we know our problems best”. The questionnaires asked children and young people the ways in which they would most like to achieve this, as well as how they would like to be involved in the proposed European Forum for the Rights of the Child.<sup>24</sup> Methods of participation were broken down as follows:

#### **1. How children and young people would most like to be involved in decision-making and sharing their opinions**

- A very popular method was through **questionnaires** (Albania; Benin; Dharmapuri, India; Myrada, India; Sierra Leone; Kilimanjaro, Tanzania; Victoria, Tanzania). However, one needs to be aware that this may be because it was the main research method used for this particular consultation, which may have influenced respondents’ answers, although it may also highlight their enthusiasm and enjoyment of this method.<sup>25</sup>

- **Meetings between children as well as meetings between children and adults from all over the world** were also preferred methods of being consulted (Albania; Benin; Dharmapuri, India; Mikumi, Tanzania; Sierra Leone). In addition to this, respondents in Dharmapuri, India, highlighted the effectiveness of village assemblies, children’s forums and children’s parliaments. It is worthy to note that respondents in Tanzania warned that participation through meetings can only be best achieved when transport costs are met so that all children, including the poorest, can take part.

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<sup>23</sup> Respondents from Nairobi (Kenya) suggested that the number be accessible from mobile phones and not be restricted to landlines as is the Kenyan helpline for children. They also suggested that many reporting offices and desks should be established, especially in rural areas.

<sup>24</sup> The European Commission will create a European Forum for the Rights of the Child. This Forum will include all the relevant people and organisations who are working for and can promote and implement children’s rights. These include countries belonging to the EU, agencies of the United Nations, the Council of Europe, civil society organisations and children.

<sup>25</sup> Most questionnaires were accompanied by a workshop which certainly increased understanding judging by the answers and detail given. It is therefore suggested that the questionnaire combined with workshops is a more effective method of gauging children and young people’s views and opinions, especially as with questionnaires alone it is difficult to follow-up on responses.

Other methods of involvement included group media, such as puppet shows, posters, street plays, writing on walls, theatre, arts and choir.<sup>26</sup>

## **2. How children and young people would like to be involved in the European Forum on the Rights of the Child**

Respondents were given options in Save the Children's questionnaire on how they would like to be involved in the proposed Forum. Of the seven groups that answered, their preferred methods are as follows:

### ***1. A Co-ordinator is appointed who makes the links between the Forum and children and young people's groups***

1 <sup>st</sup> and only response	Kilimanjaro, Tanzania
1 <sup>st</sup> and only response	Victoria, Tanzania
1 <sup>st</sup>	Vietnam
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Myrada, India

### ***2. Children and young people are nominated and selected to be members of the Forum***

1 <sup>st</sup> and only response	Manyara, Tanzania
1 <sup>st</sup> and only response	Mikumi, Tanzania
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Dharmapuri, India
4 <sup>th</sup> (jointly)	Vietnam

### ***3. Members of the Forum have close links with children and young people's groups and represent their issues***

1 <sup>st</sup>	Myrada, India
1 <sup>st</sup>	Dharmapuri, India
4 <sup>th</sup> (jointly)	Vietnam

### ***4. A Children's Advisory Group is created to work closely together with the Forum***

2 <sup>nd</sup>	Vietnam
4 <sup>th</sup>	Myrada, India
4 <sup>th</sup>	Dharmapuri, India

It would be inaccurate to report that any of these answers are the preferred method of involvement in the Forum by children and young people due to a variation in answers and the fact that not all of them responded. However, it emphasises that children are keen to participate within the Forum and that further thinking and consultation around this issue is necessary.

<sup>26</sup> The Nairobi group also suggested that the EU visiting communities in developing countries and exchange programmes between children and young people.

### 3. How children and young people would like to receive information from the EU

Respondents “strongly agree[d]” that, in addition to giving their opinions, it is of tantamount importance that they also receive information from the EU in a child-friendly way. The best form of achieving this is through the **media**, with the following methods highlighted:

- **Newspapers and magazines;**
- **Television and radio.**

This was the opinion of children in Albania; Benin; Dharmapuri, India; Myrada, India; Nairobi, Kenya; Kilimanjaro, Tanzania; Manyara, Tanzania; Mikumi, Tanzania; Victoria, Tanzania; and Thailand. In Vietnam all children consulted with suggested that there should be a letter and presentation from the EU to disseminate information on the Strategy. Other groups did not comment.

Finally, it is also useful to acknowledge the role that children and young people can play in being involved in the Strategy through providing training to others, especially adults, as this is the group they would most like to raise awareness amongst. The questionnaire therefore gathered information on respondents’ experience in both providing training and their advocacy skills.

#### **Training and advocacy expertise of respondents**

As the majority of respondents were from children’s youth groups, many have also taken part in training and awareness-raising of certain issues. A summary is provided below:

<b>Type of training</b>	<b>Areas</b>	<b>By group*</b>
Peer group training	Child protection, child rights and child health (immunisation, polio); Support from adults for information (teachers and NGOs).	Myrada, India
	Child rights and responsibilities.	Mayanara, Tanzania
	Child rights, health, education, responsibility of adults.	Mikumi, Tanzania
	Child rights and peer group training.	Victoria, Tanzania
Training of adults and children	Sensitisation on child rights among teachers, parents and young people.	Dharmapuri, India

*\* Please note that not all respondents answered the type of training they have given or received and therefore this is only a snapshot of the knowledge and expertise that exists within the groups consulted.*

The different methods employed include through **media, plays, discussion, songs and campaigns**. It is therefore advisable that children and young people are empowered to train others on what they see as issues that affect them the most to increase understanding of the problems and obstacles they are faced with in their daily lives.

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## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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This report consolidates the findings of an international consultation that was held with 255 children and young people from ten developing countries on the European Union's *Communication Towards a Strategy on the Rights of the Child*. The consultation will be shared with the European Parliament in April 2007 in order to help shape the Strategy according to the views and opinions of its beneficiaries, children and young people.

### **EMERGING THEMES**

The consultations resulted in key emerging themes. These include the main issues that affect children and young people, which they regard as:

- Violence (such as child labour and abuse);
- Exclusion (especially of orphans and girls);
- Poor health (to a slightly lesser degree);
- Poverty (as the overarching cause of the above).

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** as well as **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

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:

### **Recommendations**

1. **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.

2. **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.

3. 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.

4. 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.<sup>27</sup> This will allow those working for the rights of children to be engaged with the issues affecting them at a practical level.

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<sup>27</sup> Objective 5 is: "Enhancing capacity and expertise on children's rights".