

Voices of Children Key to Stopping the Global Scourge of Violence Against Them: New Educo from ChildFund Alliance Report

Global survey including almost 5,500 children from 15 countries reveals children feel poorly protected and unheard. Nine in 10 say recognizing child rights is key to preventing violence.

More than 40% of children across the globe believe they are not adequately protected from violence, with girls expressing a higher perception of insecurity, and one in two believe adults do not listen to their opinions on important matters, according to this new report which features one of the largest child surveys of its kind.

Small Voices Big Dreams 2019, released September 4, 2019 by Educo, a member of ChildFund Alliance, includes a survey of almost 5,500 children aged between 10 and 12 years old from 15 different countries, as well as 21 group interviews, and provides startling insights into the perceptions of children and adolescents throughout the world about violence, and the efforts of adults to protect them from it.

Just weeks away from the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the report calls for far greater involvement of children in decision-making on issues affecting them, particularly the prevention of violence, and urges world leaders to listen to children and take action based on their recommendations.

“Every year more than a billion children around the world experience violence and exploitation – that’s more than one in three. It’s a global scourge that cuts across borders, class, culture, ethnicity, race, gender, and socioeconomic status,” said ChildFund Alliance Secretary General Meg Gardinier.

“Yet rarely do decision makers take into account the opinions, experiences, and expectations of children,” she added. “This report provides insights into the voices of children who talk about suffering from fear, low self-esteem, and loneliness because of the adults around them, and who are often left feeling unprotected and unheard. Today we are calling for children to be part of the decision-making process on issues that affect them. Children have so much to contribute toward global efforts to end violence against children, and the success of any policy or action aimed at children depends on our ability to engage and respond to their voices.”

According to the report, children highlighted three main causes of violence: their own defenselessness, the cycle of violence, and adults’ loss of self-control due to substance use.

Children also reported that there was almost always a power imbalance between victim and aggressor in violent situations, and more than half said that violence occurred because children could not defend themselves from adults or older children.

Some of the key findings of the survey are:

- One in two children say adults in their country do not listen to their opinions on issues that matter to them;
- Nine in 10 believe the most important thing adults can do to end violence against children is to love children more and listen to what they have to say;
- More than 40% believe that children are not sufficiently protected against violence in the country they live in;
- More than two-thirds of children (69%) reject violence as an educational tool;
- Only 18.1% of children think that politicians and the people who govern protect children from violence.

José Maria Faura CEO of Educo, a member of the Alliance, said: “Sadly, no matter where they live, and no matter who they are, no child is immune to violence. In many parts of the world, violence against children is occurring at epidemic levels. We know that when children experience violence, whether it be physical, sexual, or emotional, it can have a catastrophic impact on their sense of self-worth, their cognitive development, and their ability to achieve their full potential.

Often, they are targeted because they are physically smaller, and are perceived as being easy prey. That's why we need to empower children to be part of the decision-making process. Children should be involved when it comes to developing any policy or action aimed at helping children."

Ainhoa, a report participant from Spain said "What adults need to do most of all is try to understand what happens to children and try and understand how we are feeling."

Noemi, another participant from Honduras, told us "We need to be listened to. Our voice is important."

To read the full *Small Voices Big Dreams 2019* report in English, Spanish or French, click here: www.smallvoicesbigdreams.org.

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About *Small Voices Big Dreams*

Small Voices Big Dreams is an initiative involving all the members of ChildFund Alliance. Our aim is to elevate the voices of children on issues that directly affect them. The 2019 edition compiles the opinions of nearly 5,500 children on violence against children. Children surveyed are from diverse geographical origins, living conditions, and cultural traditions, and from countries including Brazil, Burkina Faso, Canada, Ecuador, Ghana, Honduras, India, Mexico, Nicaragua, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, New Zealand, Thailand and Vietnam.

About Educo

Educo is a global development and humanitarian action NGO with over 25 years' experience working in 13 countries to defend children and their rights, and especially the right to an equitable and quality education. We work with children and their communities to promote just and equitable societies which guarantee their rights and wellbeing. We envision a world where all children fully enjoy their rights and lead a life of dignity.

About ChildFund Alliance

Founded in 2002, ChildFund Alliance is a global network of 11 child-focused development organizations that helps nearly 13 million children and their families in more than 60 countries. It works to end violence and exploitation against children and to overcome poverty and the underlying conditions that prevent children from achieving their full potential. ChildFund Alliance works in partnership with children and their communities to create lasting change and to facilitate the meaningful participation of children in decisions that affect them.