

INFORMATION SHEET for Save the Children country programmes

COUNTRY VISITS by UN SPECIAL PROCEDURES

Follow up to the UN Study on Violence against Children
When a relevant United Nations Special Rapporteur / Special Representative visits your country - give children and young people the opportunity to speak directly with them!

Aim of the information sheet

This information sheet is an invitation to Save the Children country programmes to consider participating in the work of the UN Special Procedures and in particular to liaise with them during their country visits. In particular, it provides some ideas about how **children and young people can be involved** in this process in genuine and meaningful ways, including monitoring and follow up.

As part of Save the Children's work to support children's participation in follow up to the UN Study on Violence against Children we would therefore like to encourage and support a process whereby consultations with children are more systematically included in the country visits of Special Representatives & Rapporteurs.

WHY? To ensure that the work, plans and initiatives of children to stop violence against them continue to be included in all efforts to put in practice the recommendations of the UN Study. Supporting children to talk directly – or indirectly through gathered contributions - to Special Representatives & Rapporteurs so that they can hear children's views on their right to be protected from violence is one way of achieving this.

With the forthcoming appointment of a Special Representative on Violence against Children this initiative is particularly relevant.

Introduction

United Nations Special Representatives and Special Rapporteurs (generally referred to as Special Procedures SPs¹) frequently **make visits to countries** as part of their mandate and then report to the UN - the Human Rights Council, sometimes to the UN General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

¹ Special procedures usually examine, monitor, advise and publicly report on human rights situations in specific countries or territories, known as country mandates, or on major phenomena of human rights violations worldwide, known as thematic mandates. Various activities can be undertaken by special procedures, including responding to individual complaints, conducting studies, providing advice on technical cooperation at the country level, conducting country visits and engaging in general promotional activities. For the complete list of SPs look here: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/chr/special/index.htm>

The Special Rapporteurs with whom we have had experience in working with include the **Special rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography**, the **Independent Expert of the Secretary General on Violence against Children**, the **Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education**, the **Representative of the Secretary General on the Human Rights of IDPs**, the **Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict** and others.

The country visits that they make take place at the invitation of the relevant Government. The result of such visits is a report with specific recommendations that is then presented at the Human Rights Council²

Save the Children country programmes are often alerted and contacted by the advocacy office in Geneva or by their respective Head Offices to see whether they can link in with these visits, to meet with the Special Representatives/Rapporteurs and to provide them with as much information as possible on key child rights issues within country.

In some cases these have included consultations with children and young people to provide an opportunity for the issues that are important to them to be heard and input into the reports of these high level global representatives.

How can you get involved?

- Once you have information about a forthcoming visit by a **relevant** Special Representative / Rapporteur, consider working with relevant partner organisations to organize consultations with children who are involved in work to address violence against children. ***These visits are often confirmed at very short notice. If you engage in this activity you may need to be prepared and ready to act quickly!***
- OR, invite the relevant SR to participate in specially organised children's consultations. **Get inspiration & ideas from the case study from children's consultations in Côte d'Ivoire with the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education which were supported by Save the Children Sweden in October 2007** (see annex)
- Document the consultations and give this documentation to the SR as input into his/her report and work
- Monitor how children's views and recommendations are reflected in reports and recommendations from these country visits and feedback to the children involved
- Monitor how the reports and recommendations are implemented / taken up by UN bodies and Governments and feedback to the children involved.

Be aware!

- That the SRs will have to write comprehensive reports on their visits, documenting the human rights situation of all and not only of children. So, do not expect the report to be solely focused on child rights. This will be different in the case of the SRSG on Violence against Children, the SR on Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and the SR on Education who have a specific child-right focus.
- That the SRs are always accompanied by a Governmental representative. Make sure, therefore, that you do not expose children to unnecessary risky or difficult situations. Or, alternatively, ask for a private meeting.

² To learn more about Special Procedures, their functions, and how visits are carried out read their manual: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/chr/special/manual.htm>

- If individual cases of violations of child rights (with names and facts) are going to be raised during the meeting with the SRs, make sure that s/he knows whether these cases are confidential or not. That is, whether s/he can refer to them in the dialogue with the authorities, in the report, etc. or, also, if the cases could be used as examples of a situation or pattern, without mentioning the personal details.

What can you do?

- try and **organise consultations with different groups of children in different locations** so that different perspectives can be heard (younger/older; girls/boys; rural/urban; in school/out of school and so on) and then passed on to the SR as part of his/her visit to your country. **Note: it will be necessary to secure a commitment from the SR in advance that s/he will be willing to accept and take into account these contributions from children to make this initiative worthwhile to the children involved. Liaise with the Geneva office to secure such advance commitment.**
- **OR, try to invite the SR to meet with different groups of children in different locations, as above.** Note: this will have to be negotiated as the SR will undoubtedly have a busy itinerary and, in the case of these formal visits, will also have to meet with government or other authorities in the country. Liaise with the Geneva office. They can put you in contact with the OHCHR who is responsible for the visit schedule.
- in preparation for the visit, try and **submit information and recommendations to the SR – through the OHCHR** - on government officials to meet, NGOs to meet, places to visit (neighbourhoods, institutions, schools, detention centres, camps, work places, etc) and specific issues to be raised
- try and find ways to **make sure that the most marginalised, vulnerable and discriminated-against groups of children are included and their voices heard** - children with special needs, children living in difficult circumstances (in the street, in institutions, in marginalised rural areas and so on)
- make sure you have a **team of good interpreters** for any direct dialogue between the SR and children
- if the children are meeting directly with an SR (rather than having separate consultations which feed into the SR's visit and report), **make sure that children are well prepared for their consultation.** This includes the methods that will be used during the direct consultation, the areas that will be discussed, any special questions and so on
- if the children are meeting directly with an SR, **find out which methods s/he would like to use to consult with children** **OR**, suggest methods yourselves to ensure that a good dialogue is created
- as part of the preparation process, and in consultation with the SR and children, **establish the mechanisms that will be put in place / taken up to ensure follow up to children's ideas and recommendations**
- **document the process and feed it back to the SC advocacy offices** so that other countries can draw from and be inspired by your experiences! **Remember to include lessons learned and challenges as these can be as important as the successes and achievements**

Resources and Support available

- **Information can be supplied by the SC Geneva office of forthcoming & relevant SR visits.** You can expect this information one month in advance of the visit. But, be aware that **you may receive this information at shorter notice**, depending on when authorisation for the visit is obtained.
- **Involve children according to agreed quality standards in children's participation** and make sure you are aware of and take on board all ethical considerations when consulting with children. This includes making sure that children's views and experiences shared in any reports resulting from such visits remain **anonymous and confidential**. It is enough – and good practice – to provide a minimum of information which indicates where the view / opinion / experience came from but which does not identify either individual or groups of children: *for example, an 11 year old school going boy, Child Club member, Nepal.*

Use: *Save the Children's Practice Standards in Children's Participation* www.savethechildren.net; *So you want to consult with children - a toolkit of good practice* www.savethechildren.net; *Minimum standards for consulting with children, and accompanying Operations Manual on children's participation in consultations – both available from the Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation, SEAP* www.iawgcp.com

- **Use the child friendly material on the UN Study and the global follow up mechanisms** - such as the Special Representative - to inform children so that they can learn from the material and use it in their consultations

Use: *Safe You Safe Me, a resource on violence against children for children aged 7-12 years* www.bookshop.rb.se; *Our Right to be Protected from Violence, activities for learning and taking action for children and young people* www.crin.org; *UN Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children adapted for children and young people* www.bookshop.rb.se; *Report of the Independent Expert for the UN Study on violence against children* www.crin.org; *Children's Actions to end violence against girls and boys, Save the Children, 2006* www.bookshop.rb.se; *ACT NOW! Some highlights from children's participation in the regional consultations for the UN Study on violence against children, Save the Children, 2005* www.bookshop.rb.se; *One Step Beyond; an Advocacy Handbook for children and young people, Save the Children, 2008 [forthcoming]* www.rb.se; *NGO Advisory Council, series of new child friendly material [forthcoming]*

If you have any questions / comments / suggestions about this initiative please contact:
Roberta Cecchetti (roberta@savethechildren.ch) or Clare Feinstein (clarefeinstein@wanadoo.nl)

Annex

A Case Study from Côte d'Ivoire The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education visits the Save the Children programme in Côte d'Ivoire

1. Save the Children Sweden invited the Special Rapporteur to participate in child consultations in Côte d'Ivoire.
2. The purpose was to give him an opportunity speak directly to children to hear their views on education in emergencies as input for his report.
3. The visit to Côte d'Ivoire lasted from 21-26 October 2007
4. The Special Rapporteur travelled with his assistant and was accompanied by a staff member from Save the Children in Stockholm and by staff members from the SCS office in Abidjan and education staff in Abengorou
5. Staff had prepared the visit with the children. The consultations and meetings were interpreted from French to Spanish
6. Child consultations took place on the 3rd day of the visit where the SR met with 2 separate groups of five children between the ages of 8 to 12 years old as well as with members of the School Management committee (both adults and children) and with most of the teachers at the school
7. The next day they met with 3 children/young adults who previously had been living in military camps of the rebels in the north of the country
8. The last day, in between other meetings, the group met with the Country Director of SCUK in Côte d'Ivoire
9. The visit only lasted 3,5 working days and it was not possible to travel extensively in the country and meet with more children living in different areas
10. This was not a formal visit to Côte d'Ivoire by the SR so no meetings were arranged with the government or other authorities
11. The meetings and consultations were documented by Save the Children staff members
12. This documentation will be given to the SR as input into his report and is intended to directly reflect what happened. It is not therefore an analysis of the situation regarding education in Côte d'Ivoire
13. The documentation will also be used as basic material for other reports/documents that will be produced on this topic by SC in 2008 and 2009
14. SCS staff members from Abidjan and Abengorou selected the children for the consultations
15. The children in the groups ranged from the ages 8-12 year old and attended 2 different schools in the area of Abengourou, which Save the Children has repaired within the programme of Rewrite the Future
16. The children are all members of children's clubs formed by Save the Children and were elected by their classmates for these positions
17. The staff members met twice with the children before the consultations. They explained to the children what the United Nations is, who the SR is, his role and the purpose of the visit. The children were told that the SR wanted to discuss very openly with them about education in emergencies and wanted them to talk about their own experiences, thoughts and opinions on education, including the problems they face and the things they enjoy. The children were given examples of questions to give them time to start thinking about their own views on the issues. They also practiced listening to someone speak a different language and then have the question interpreted into French. The last preparatory meeting took place one week prior to the consultations

18. During the sessions, the SR chose to start by playing games with the children for them to feel more at ease. After a while they continued by playing a game of dialogue during which issues regarding education in emergencies were brought up
19. During the consultations and meetings many issues were brought up. These include:
Children out of school; Physical environment and location of the school; Teaching methods/ use of physical punishment and humiliating treatment; Curriculum; Effects of the war on children; Thoughts of the future; Financing of the schools
20. There were also a set of outcomes from the meetings with former child soldiers – lack of food/lack of money for food; children not necessarily recruited by force; children have been able to leave the armed forces/rebel groups after negotiations – it has been more difficult for some than for others

17 June 2008