

MENA Regional Consultation on Violence against Children

Every child has the right to be protected from all forms of violence

Cairo, 29 June 2005

Closing Session

Children's Final Statement

we, 28 Arab children (14 girls and 14 boys), representatives of nine countries in North Africa and the Middle East (Yemen/Qatar / Bahrain/ Jordan/ Lebanon/ Egypt/ Sudan/ Algeria/ Tunisia) have agreed, over three working days from 24 to 26 June 2005, to close ranks under one slogan namely "rejection of violence against children".

We organized and participated in many national activities in our countries as preparation for this conference. Here, in Cairo, we delved into lengthy workshops about (32 hours) where we listen to different presentations from group of experts. Then we work in four small groups. Each group assigned one participant to run the discussion, other as timekeeper, third write down our idea in proposal, which presented to all group members. All group members participated in the discussion.

Then we met in plenary to present our ideas, discuss, comment, and persuade each other. We form drafting committee to review the recommendations came out from the groups, so that we can vote on them.

We based our recommendations on persuading, modifying and voting, if there is no consensus on a proposal, we exclude it.

Here is our statement as children for the conference:

- Recognising that violence (physical, sexual, emotional or neglect) is a common problem in the MENA region.
- Regretting the fact that despite the laws concerning child protection have been set up in the MENA region, many of them are not being implemented.
- Reminding countries of the MENA region that they have ratified the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, they have agreed to implement its provisions including right of the child to be protected from violence, abuse, exploitation.

- Considering that, many children in the MENA region suffer from violence (in all forms) due to war and occupation in some countries including Iraq, Palestine and Sudan.
- Taking due account of the fact that violence negatively affects a child psychologically, physically and emotionally.
- Fully aware of the fact that violence is happened in homes, schools, communities and institutions as orphanages and alternative care centers.
- Acknowledging many countries put large amount of effort in trying to eliminate violence against children.
- Reminding all countries of the fact that the first step to solve the problem of violence against children is admitting to it.
- Emphasizing the importance of our participation -as children- and our effective role to encounter our problems, we are capable and willing to be part of the solution.

Here is our proposed plan of actions:

First: Policy and legislation:

- 1- Enact laws protecting children from violence at schools, homes, communities and institutions.
- 2- Enact national and international laws banning violence in institutions completely and setting mechanism to follow up its implementation combating the violations acts against children.
- 3- Enacting a law that prohibits employers from exploiting children (under legal age), while intensifying control thereon
- 4- Providing free schools and rendering children's education compulsory, while earmarking a portion of the state budget for homeless children
- 5- Establish monitoring system for media on violence issues
- 6- Establish special child courts on violence issues, and assign officials to protect the complaint applicant and recover the rights of the child subject of violence
- 7- Detach the party responsible for the act of violence from the family for psychological treatment forcing him/her to provide for the family during that period - if he/she were the family provider. Treat the victimized child psychologically without separation from the family
- 8- Set up a specialized committee to identify problems related to children subject to domestic violence and their recording on video tapes to use them as a testimony of those children before court without having to repeat demonstration of this problem or giving this testimony more than once, so as to minimize child embarrassment and help soothe his psychological disturbances

Second: Awareness:

- 1- Preparing awareness publications (posters, wall magazines, lectures, flyers...etc) that raise children's awareness on harmful consequences of violence;
- 2- Setting up websites and media channels (internet, Radio...etc) concerned with protecting children against violence and allowing them to pose their problems and seek appropriate solutions;
- 3- Combating all uncivilized and violent behavior, such as discrimination and exclusion ;
- 4- Produce drama works aiming to reject violence that are spontaneously assimilated by all children;
- 5- Activate the positive media role (audio-visual-print), and harness the various media to educate and change false ideas
- 6- Exchange the treatment of drama about good and evil conflict with nonviolent solutions. At the same time, set up warning/ banning code to protect children's mentality.
- 7- Emphasizing the role of media on raising the awareness of families and communities about harmful consequences of violence;
- 8- Preparing plays and films for distribution on all schools, clubs...etc which promoting culture of peace and dialogue to raise the awareness of the society as whole.
- 9- Organize awareness workshops highlighting the need for child care

Third: Services:

- 1- Setting up shelters for homeless children, and the children victims of violence to rehabilitate them;
- 2- Setting up special centers for handing out assistance, and preparing programs for sponsoring orphans and street children, while allowing them to help in running them.
- 3- Establish a specialized centers accessible for the child exposed to any form of violence.
- 4- Appointing multi-disciplinary team (medical, psychological, social) in the institutions and activate its rehabilitation role.
- 5- Training teachers pedagogically, and culturally to become more efficient in treating pupils;

Fourth: Monitoring and follow-up:

1. Appoint a representative for child protection at the local level to receive the complaints of children and to work out their solutions seriously.
2. Establish associations in the local level to follow up the approved plan of actions and to report regularly to central association.
3. Monitor the implementation of the strategies and decisions taken by the government to guarantee full implantation.
4. Supervise and monitor the schools and institutions to guarantee to its commitment to combat violence and implement other alternatives.
5. Prepare reports from children and experts and present them to officials hoping to take them into consideration (not put aside as former conferences)