



World Chronicle

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Global Study on Violence Against Children

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“Violence Against Children”

Forty million children around the world are suffering from serious forms of abuse or neglect, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Children experience violence during wars, in the streets, in schools, at home, within their families... and from other children. Violence against children also takes different forms, from psychological abuse to corporal punishment, and from sexual exploitation and imprisonment to forced child labour. All can cause severe damage to a child's development.

How can violence against children be better prevented? Can the perpetrators of violence (mostly adults) be reformed through education? And what body of laws and international conventions exists to protect the rights of children? In this edition of World Chronicle, these issues are explored with guest Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, a UN Independent Expert who leads the Global Study on Violence Against Children.

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ANNOUNCER: From the United Nations in New York, an interview programme on major global issues. This is **World Chronicle**. And here is the host of today's **World Chronicle**.

JENKINS: Hello, I'm Tony Jenkins. Everyone agrees that violence against children is a terrible thing. So why is it so difficult to prevent, or even discuss?

Today were talking to one of the worlds' greatest experts on violence, Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro. Welcome to **World Chronicle**.

Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, appointed you to put together this study on Violence Against Children which is due to be released in 2006. How do we know that this isn't going to be another one of those UN reports that gets put on the shelf to gather dust. What concrete actions are you hoping to come out of this report?

PINHEIRO: I think that what is going to make a difference is that the report, an in depth picture of the problem, is really the first study on violence in the UN. We had one by Madam Graça Machel's report dealing with child soldiers and children but never violence in general was addressed in the UN. There isn't any specific mechanism dealing with violence. We have some special reports on violence against women or other things regarding children but not specifically on violence. The difference is the nature of the report. It is policy oriented. It's a document that addresses the Member States. It will not just provide a list of recommendations but we are very concerned with the implementations of these recommendations. The mechanism to follow up will unite the existing agencies like UNICEF, WHO and the Office of the High Commission, and the regional institutions. My crystal ball cannot guarantee anything but I think our concern with the follow up will help.

JENKINS: So you want to hold people's feet to the fire. We'll see. We're joined in the studio today by Oyiza Adaba of Africa Independent Television and by the former Bureau Chief of Brazil's Tele Globo – independent filmmaker Simone Duarte. Simone...

DUARTE: I would like to know more about the idea of corporal punishment that is widely accepted in the home and school as mentioned in the report that you had just presented to the UN. How do you change this cultural acceptance of corporal punishment? Are laws enough to change it?

PINHEIRO: The States have an obligation because they have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It's very clear that corporal punishment is a violation of Human Rights.

That is a reference for the report – the interpretation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. We believe that States and governments have a pedagogical role. They need to have legislation, a very few countries have legislation that makes corporal punishments illegal in families and in schools. But the countries that did this demonstrate that this is a good thing to have. The State also has a pedagogical role in offering alternatives to the families. We don't want to criminalize parents or teachers for minor assaults on children. But you want them to develop alternative ways to discipline children. Save the Children, by the way, has prepared important publication demonstrating that this is possible and implement-able. But children cannot expect a cultural revolution. What we need is the engagement of States in terms of the transformation of the acceptability of corporal punishment. Nowadays we cannot accept that women are beaten but why do we tolerate the beating of children? Children are not mean human beings. They are citizens and they must have access to the same privileges that adults, women and men, in general have.

JENKINS: Before we go to Oyiza, you had mentioned that there are some States that have legislation now, which have gone about changing their culture. Would you like to mention them?

PINHEIRO: There are two that were mentioned in this Debate that we had recently in the UN. Sweden and Germany, where you have research on the implementation of this law, guarantees are by not using this corporal punishment much and the acceptance is also decreased. I think that there's a clear indication that this is possible in principle.

ADABA: Where do you draw the line between that discipline and tradition?

PINHEIRO: Tradition and culture sometimes are an excuse for authoritarian practices. I think the limit is a penal code. There are some practices of sheer child abuse that fall under the consideration of the penal code. I think that all member States, with the exception of two, have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

JENKINS: Excuse me, is this a gray area? I mean there are lots of parents who will smack their child on the backside. That's corporal punishment. In most countries that's not the sort of offence that'll land you in trouble with the penal code, you won't get arrested for that, you won't go to jail for that?

PINHEIRO: No... no... precisely what I'm saying is that parents who are smacking children because they think that this is the way to discipline them, of course, the study or Committee on the Rights of the Child never propose the criminalization of the parents. I think

this is to confuse this discussion. What we consider is that the family is the most fundamental institution to guarantee the development of the child and to establish an environment of non-violence. We focus a lot on the capacity of the family. Corporal punishment is not the only aspect of violence against children. This is just one aspect of the study.

DUARTE: You've traveled in various continents to take a look in the field what the situation is. What are some of the worse situations?

PINHEIRO: I think that's very difficult to tell which region is worse. You've gray zones in every region, in every country. In the North and in the South. In developed countries and in developing countries. Of course, you have some manifestations of some kind of violence that are not present in every region but I must say that every region has some problems of violence against children. But this study will not make a ranking for the simple reason that we don't have adequate data. It'll also be completely unfair to have a ranking in terms of what is the champion and what's the friendliest for children.

ADABA: Traditional practices such as honor killings, early marriages and female genital mutilations. Would you consider these as violence against children or is it just a continuation of tradition?

PINHEIRO: If we consider the practice of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. All these practices are considered manifestation of violence against children and several countries are dealing with this in a very positive manner. In Senegal, for example, several communities have taken the problem of female genital mutilation and have demonstrated how this practice is not positive for the development of children. We also have a very impressive regional consultation in Pakistan. These issues of early marriage and honour killings are very much dealt within countries itself. I see in some regions the political will to deal with these types of violence.

DUARTE: But you think in general girls are more subjected to violence than boys?

PINHEIRO: It's difficult to say. In the Americas, for instances, homicides are the first cause of deaths of boys between 15 and 18. Girls are very much affected by trafficking and child abuse by rape. Boys are also affected. I think it's difficult to say if boys or girls suffer more violence. I think it depends on what kind of violence and what regions we are talking about.

JENKINS: We're talking about with the UN's independent expert Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro about how to prevent violence against children. Here's what UNICEF is doing to promote good parenting in Jordan.

VIDEO AND AUDIO IN

NARRATION: The men file in. Police officers in the Kingdom of Jordan. Ready to confront a little talked about problem in this region. Ready to break the silence on child abuse. Pioneering the effort in the Middle East, Jordan, with help from UNICEF, now trains law enforcement to detect abuse cases...It's just one part of a breakthrough national effort to protect Jordan's children.

MAHA HIMSI: Parents do love their children very much but there are problems in their rearing practices.

NARRATION: Maha Himsi of UNICEF.

MAHA HIMSI: There are a lot of ways that you can set limits and adhere to these limits without any violent behaviour from the part of the mother or father.

NARRATION: A kingdom-wide outreach programme now teaches adults to improve their parenting skills. Groups of parents meet with trained counsellors where they learn alternatives to corporal punishment, like giving time-outs...and where they learn how to listen to their children, not dictate to them. Mothers, like these programme graduates, also learn the importance of shared activities, like taking their kids to parks...activities common in other parts of the world, but rare in this region.

BASMA AL-RIFAI: After the workshop, we started to consult with our children which makes them happier.

AFNAN MUSTAFA: We started to reason with the children who now accept our opinion, not like before.

NARRATION: But while the mothers were coming to the programme in droves, fathers were largely absent. So the experts went directly to the men -- here, in the Mosques. Religious leaders are now involved – giving parenting advice to fathers after their sermons. More than forty thousand parents have received preventive training, a crucial step toward fulfilling this nation's promise to better protect its most valuable asset - its children.

VIDEO AND AUDIO OUT

JENKINS: Anyone who has children of their own knows that parenting is one of the most rewarding but also one of the most demanding jobs on earth. And yet hardly anyone is ever trained to do the job properly. You spoke earlier about the pedagogical element in what

you're doing and we saw in the tape the teaching processes that are going on. Do you think that's one of your recommendations - that the UN should encourage countries to set up training programmes for parents? Do you need to be taught how to be a parent?

PINHEIRO: Certainly. I think that especially with very young parents, they don't know anything. Sometimes they can repeat the same mistakes as their parents. I think it's the responsibility of the States. Of course the NGOs and the UN agencies can provide help but the States have a role to articulate and coordinate these efforts. It's the responsibility of the States that have ratified the Convention to perform this role.

DUARTE: What about training key professionals to have this responsibility, mainly for kids who have disabilities and are in war zones? You mentioned this in your report that was presented at the UN. Do you think this is possible? I'm say this because when I was in Africa, I visited a blind school and the way they treat the children there really affected me. There was so much violence. I think it's possible to train people in poor countries to deal with children better.

PINHEIRO: I think it's not only possible but necessary. Several UN agencies have experience in dealing with practitioners like the WHO and our study reveals the vulnerable groups of children. Not only boys and girls with physical disability but also mental disability. As you said, for instance, the situation in orphanages is disastrous. And the majority of the professionals are open to the training to the alternative forms of practices. This will also be a very strong recommendation of the study. Not just to hope for but to demonstrate how this is feasible, how this is possible because the study will not just be a couple of orals. We also want a collection of good practices.

ADABA: Which brings me to the next point because in the beginning about implementation. I mean what kind of review mechanism are you going to have in place to measure the success or progress of the recommendations that you will make?

PINHEIRO: That's a very good point. Because we'll need some monitoring to evaluate if the recommendations are being implemented or not. For many months I'm trying to skip the discussion about mandate or someone to have the responsibility to deal with the aftermath of the report. Someone who will be in contact with the agencies, regional bodies, the treaty bodies, governments of each region...

JENKINS: You're trying to escape all of that?

PINHEIRO: I will not be there because my mandate will finish in December 2006 but we need to define the role for someone that will be another Special Representative of the

Secretary-General. Like how there's one for child in war conflict but we are trying to be imaginative, trying to establish a commissioner or an ombudsman.

JENKINS: What's wrong with UNICEF? Why more duplication within the UN system?

PINHEIRO: UNICEF has a key role and will have a key role but I think it's important that someone, within the framework of inter-agency taskforce, who will be able to articulate with the different agencies because, after all, UNICEF, WHO, the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, ILO or UNESCO. Someone who has an enormous practice in addressing non-violence in schools. I think someone will be necessary as a focal point to guide the recommendation of the statute.

JENKINS: We should allow the impression to go by that this is a problem that's mainly concentrated in Africa or it should be associated with the poor. It's also not just a problem of adults for perpetrating violence against children, sometimes its children perpetrating violence against children. I can think of several recent examples, like child soldiers in central Africa, minors in the United States. We heard the recent report from the Human Rights Watch about how the large number of young people who were put in jail for life in this country for the crimes committed at the age of 16 or younger. Street children in Central America or Brazil who have been executed by private militias for reasons so called public security. Is this sort of violence or life imprisonment for that matter an appropriate response to violent children?

PINHEIRO: Not at all. We have a lot of concern about the responses that are given to juvenile offenders. But the situation in most parts of the world is atrocious. Of course, you have good practices. I've seen good things being done in several countries in the south but we cannot accept the criminalization and penalization of children. In Brazil there is an expression that I like – the place for children is schools, not prisons. Children behind bars, we cannot continue accepting this penalization. State-governed societies must be more sophisticated in dealing with this problem.

JENKINS: Children are often the first casualties of conflict – we know this intuitively. But few regions of this earth have seen as many systematic violations of children's rights as Central Africa. Here's our report from Burundi.

VIDEO AND AUDIO IN

GIRL: He came into my room with a machete and threatened to cut my head off if I

cried...then he raped me. After a while, I managed to run out of the house but he followed me and told me not to cry and not to tell anybody, that these things happen.

NARRATION: A story no mother ever wants to hear. Her 13-year-old daughter raped at knifepoint. This mother and daughter have come to a special clinic for victims of sexual violence. It's one of four in Burundi, this one funded by ECHO, the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Department, with technical assistance from UNICEF. Its' mission: to deal with an alarmingly high number of sex crimes. Early intervention resulted in this girl's attacker being caught and jailed awaiting trial.

MOTHER: I am really sad about what happened to my daughter. We don't blame her, we don't say anything. We just care for her as we did before.

NARRATION: Since it opened six months ago, this clinic in Muyinga Province has treated 95 women and girls, more than half of them under the age of 18. Run by the Society for Women Against AIDS in Africa, the clinic combines medical care with psychological and legal support as well as HIV counselling and testing.

YORGOS KAPRANIS/ ECHO: It was difficult really to begin or address that issue because it is a taboo in the society here. And it is something that is very, very delicate for the victims so it took some time to begin. But now I think the work has spread and the reputation of the centre is becoming more and more important and we see that there is a steady increase of women that come to the centre to seek help.

NARRATION: With the support of international partners, Burundi is emerging from the shadow of a dozen years of civil war and ethnic strife. As part of a national campaign against sexual violence, police and court officials are receiving extra training and a thousand social workers have been mobilized to raise public awareness in sessions like this. Dealing with sexual violence against the most vulnerable members of the community like this 13-year-old girl, is a crucial step towards a safe and stable society.

VIDEO AND AUDIO OUT

JENKINS: Breaking the cycle of violence in societies where children have grown up believing that violence is normal has got to be one of the more different aspects of what you're tackling. How long do you think it takes? When I was in school I was beaten until my backside bled. In the U.K. now, they have outlawed the corporal punishment. So in my case, I would say,

it took forty years for them to get there. Have you any idea how long it takes to break that cycle?

PINHEIRO: The only think that I know is that the kids are very sceptical about words, declarations, statements, reports. The message that I get from the kids is that they want to see action now. In Ljubljana, the motto was Action Now! Then I think that Member States must receive this very clear message. Kids are very tired of being considered the citizens of the future, they don't want to be the future, they want to be the citizens of the present.

ADABA: In the recent past, there have been reports on violence against children in religious institutions. Your report is partnering with other organizations and agencies. Now is the Church part of this report?

PINHEIRO: We are working with faith-based organizations to address this problem. But of course, this kind of practice is considered by one of the sections of the study – the schools. In schools - military schools, public schools, private schools and, of course, religious schools. We are very keen to work with different creed and religions.

DUARTE: You had mentioned that there are two countries that haven't ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child – the U.S. and Somalia. You don't fear that when you come with your recommendations and go to the countries with the recommendations, they might say that the U.S., the most powerful country in the world, didn't even sign the Convention to protect children. Why do then have to follow these recommendations?

PINHEIRO: No government is obliged to ratify the Convention. We must consider that even if the U.S. has not signed or ratified the Convention, several aspects of the policies of the United States respect and try to implement the principles of the Convention. I don't think it's a good excuse just to say that this country has not ratified because all the other countries have and they have obligations.

JENKINS: We don't have much time left but how about psychological violence? Or abuse committed against children? I suspect that it might actually be the most prevalent form of violence. Is that true? And if so, how do you deal with that?

PINHEIRO: It is very prevalent and there is a lot of research. Of course, it is more difficult to deal with physical violence. This study deals with every manifestations of violence with the exception of war conflict. Because there's another Special Representative dealing with this issue.

JENKINS: Well, I'm afraid that's all the time we have this afternoon. Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro of Brazil has been our guest and he is the Independent Expert on Violence against Children. He was interviewed by Oyiza Adaba of Africa Independent Television and the Independent filmmaker, Simone Duarte. I'm Tony Jenkins, inviting you to be with us for the next edition of **World Chronicle**.

ANNOUNCER: Electronic transcripts of this programme may be obtained free of charge by contacting World Chronicle at the address on your screen:

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