

Our Process

Today, we the delegates present to you our declaration first because we would like to think of it as strategy to get you to listen to what we have to say before you formulate the plans you have for us. This would further concrete the reason as to why you are here to first ask us what we think as opposed to you planning and deciding and then asking. Therefore we would like to present our points and hope that our voices won't be left in this conference room.

The Caribbean community, uniting to hear our voice and our views on the issues that are affecting us, is deemed a remarkable effort in bringing forth greatness to the region. However, hearing the voice of all children who are severely affected through the cruel acts of abuse is being hindered. We are here today, as a united force that stands up for ourselves and other children who are being neglected and exploited and mistreated through unjustifiable reasons. The children that have become an outcast within our society are robbed of their true self-worth, dignity and pride. They need to be guided on a path that is healthy and nurturing, therefore empowering them and ensuring they have a sense of well-being. We need to ensure children are fully equipped, will all the resources they need so they do not stray to find those resources.

We want to share with you a little about our process and how we have been working for the past few days.

Through the process of socializing and exploring different subjects and themes, we have basically each selected the particular area or 'opportunity' that we are most comfortable with. We actually formulated our own rules and guidelines that have been followed since the first day, right up to the end of the delegate's advocacy and meetings.

We have discussed matters and situations that have been experienced by both adults and children in terms of violence and abuse. In fact, much emphasis was placed on the issues children faced in their lives each day and makes us – the youth – realize that we should implore all of you here today, to act in a concentrated effort and with determinations to quell issues that are hindering the true potential of children.

While we were at the Wyndham Hotel on Sunday, we actually had the chance to use fun and games to explore the serious situations that impact children's lives and to explore the possible solutions needed to end violence. We have also discussed the different forms of punishments that could be administered to person's who seek to destroy children's lives.

I want for everyone who is here today to look deeply into these words that I and my fellow delegates are sharing with you, and begin the drive to reach the destination for the greatness of our children and youth.

DECLARATION OF THE YOUNG PERSONS OF THE CARRIBBEAN
Kingston, Jamaica, 15 May 2012

We, child and youth representatives from the Caribbean have gathered in Jamaica for the Violence against Children Sub-Regional Conference to proclaim the present Declaration:

Violence can be described as using your position of power or strength to inflict intentional damage to someone. This may include emotional or mental damage and not merely the physical.

Violence or any violent environment is not fit for a child. Children are more sensitive than adults realize. Things mean much more to a child than what an adult can see.

Violent acts against children affect them as it changes their lives forever. A child will never remain the same after. A damaged childhood leads to a damaged personality, development of trust issues, attachments issues and such. And this would lead to a damaged society where other children will grow up continuing the cycle and showing no improvement.

Violence happens in the family and home. Children are physically, emotionally, psychologically and verbally abused. Children are also being neglected by parents in the home. There are also incidents in the family homes where children are being sold into prostitution and other situations of trafficking. Violence happens in the school environment, including verbal and physical abuse and sexual abuse by teachers. Where student or children's councils exist, the children are sometimes not respected or listened to and adults/principals still have the last word.

In the community is where much of the violence against children happens. All forms of abuse are inflicted upon children in the community – physically, emotionally, psychologically and sexually. Churches in the communities also promote corporal punishment and they believe 'spare the rod, spoil the child'.

Violence happens in the workplace. Child labour is present and the business owners abuse children in order to gain an edge over their competition. So now, it can be said, that violence occurs everywhere in society.

Violence against children in the Caribbean continues to be the norm or tradition in the region and is being passed on to our generations. This makes violence against children harder to eradicate. Therefore drastic actions need to be taken now.

We, the child and youth delegates from the Caribbean, call on the governments of the region, those with the power and authority, to pay a listening ear to our views and solutions. The Study is about violence against children in the Caribbean, so we are the victims and believe that we know solutions to the problem.

We the children and youth also have a responsibility as there are incidents of violence against children by other children. Therefore we should wise up and cooperate with the move against violence.

Adults who work with children daily are also responsible for solving the problem. People such as teachers, parents, the police and more should work and cooperate with the solutions established by the government.

We recommend that:

Children need to be aware of their rights.

Knowledge of children's rights and responsibilities should be integrated into the school curriculum to ensure that the effect is wide-reaching.

Stakeholders in children's development, that is, teachers, parents and other caregivers should be knowledgeable of the rights of children.

These stakeholders need to be educated on such matters in order that they can be better held accountable for the infringements of these rights. Increased public awareness would enable the penalties for such infringements to be stricter.

Prevention orientated programs need to be established

Stakeholders in child development need to be made aware of the negative physical and psychological effects of violence on children and should be made aware of other alternatives to discipline. Specific attention needs to be placed on the approach which is taken to inform stakeholders. The approach should be far-reaching, suited and applicable to the audience which it is targeting. It is hoped that educating the masses on the effects and alternatives to Child Violence would allow for such acts to be prevented

Enforce our solutions and rights into laws and create effective support systems to promote the advancements of rights

We are knowledgeable of the fact that support systems exist for the advancement of Children's rights especially as it relates to abuse against children. However the systems tend to be excessively bureaucratic which affects the efficiency of the organization. The delayering and retraining of staff in these arrangements need to be considered as well as resourced.

More trained and resourced personnel to enforce laws

More opportunities need to be provided to training in the areas of Social Work and Regional Development. Scholarships and internships could be provided as incentives to motivate individuals to pursue these areas of study.

When children do decide to report, the process needs to be easy and friendly to children; ensure people/staff are properly trained to know how to work with children and create friendly environments

The smooth process of reporting would be motivation to the victimized children to continue reporting and not be afraid to come forward. The way in which reports are addressed need to be more responsive as this could increase the confidence us children place in these established institutions.

Children need to support other children

The support of other children in the fight to get our rights publicized can be very influential in shattering the silence that exists between the problem the child encounters and the solution.

Children need to be involved in finding the solution

The involvement of children in finding the solutions necessary to remedy and prevent these problems can increase the chance of these problems being corrected.

Appropriate psychosocial support in place to know how to handle case of abuse

Specialization is necessary when dealing with emotionally laden issues, as this increases the level of effectiveness and improved results for the children.

Need resources and supports to implement rights and actions at the regional and sub-regional levels

The implementations of certain resources that could increase the coordination between nations would better aid in the fight against violence against children. The establishment of networks across the regions not only formal conferences but informal opportunities where information can be continuously exchanged and countries can advance in unity to eradicate violence once and for all.

Dear delegates,

It has been seven years since this has been instigated, how much have we accomplished since then? I mean, I hear promises and negotiations but that only goes so far without real action. Speaking on behalf of my fellow delegates, we do not want the mere comfort of hearing that we will be heard and some change will be made. What we want is to see actions. All forms of violence should be eradicated.

See, I shouldn't need an eloquent speech or a series of fancy words for you to understand or realize that this is real, any form of violence against a child has serious implications on him or her and furthermore the society.

You can never forget children are the present and the future, sooner or later members of our generation will become the new leaders, and what will become of our society when we, the members of our society, were damaged from our early youth, so we fail to take the necessary initiatives when we are older.

So, in short terms, what we need is more public awareness, adults and children alike should be aware of the child's rights. You have heard our thoughts, you have heard what we have to say. Just simply enforce our solutions and rights into laws and with this or these laws, it is only fitting that we will need trained and trustworthy personnel dedicated to enforcing them.

Emphasis should also be placed on making the process of reporting violence against children simple and easy for children. But, to be honest, the thing about laws is it only hinders you, it does not kill the thought. A world free from child violence is not a utopia, it can exist. But only with hard work and perseverance and hopefully a little help. There should be region wide conferences for parents or just any typical adult informing them that there are other means of solving problems, than resorting to violence. And, in the case, if you have a child, various ways of communicating with them should be introduced as well as substitutes for corporal punishment.

Children are our pride and joy and naturally pure and kind hearted. In order for them to remain this way, we have to: Get Up! Speak Out! and Make the Change!