



**Committee on the Rights of the Child**

**Day of General Discussion 2012**

**‘The Rights of All Children in the Context of International  
Migration**

**Voices of Children on the Move**

September 2012



# Voices of Children on the Move

*On paper, children's rights are perfect. But in practice I think they are not (...). During the long journey I have made, I have seen a lot of things. So I tell you this: starting from my country, Afghanistan, up to Iran, Turkey, Greece, Italy and other countries I have seen (...), to really respect children's rights what we need is action. Not a written piece of paper but practice and action.'* Young person consulted in Italy.

## Introduction

Children are becoming a more recognized part of global migration flows. However, despite this growing interest in the reasons, patterns and consequences of children's movement, the voices and views of children directly involved in migration are still too often ignored in international debates on international migration and child protection alike. Despite the obligation on States to listen to children and take into account their views on decisions that impact their lives (CRC Art. 12), children's opinions remain mostly unheard. Decisions are made on their behalf without listening to the reasons that push children to leave their homes and the experiences they have encountered during travel and at destination.

In preparation for the 2012 UN CRC Day of General Discussion on the 'Rights of Children in the Context of International Migration', Save the Children has carried out various initiatives to engage children on the move in a meaningful, ethical and creative way and bring their voices to the Day of General Discussion.

This report summarises the consultations with migrant children carried out in preparation for the DGD in 5 regions around the world over a period of 3 months, involving over 100 children. Children were consulted in China, Myanmar, Lao PDR, Thailand, Serbia, Italy, South Africa and Mozambique. The boys and girls involved were aged between 11 and 18 years and had migrated from a range of countries, including Afghanistan, Kosovo, Somalia, Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Mozambique, Swaziland, Myanmar, Lao PDR and Thailand.

This report reflects the views of these children and young people and the experiences they have lived through during each stage of their journeys, from when they left home, during travel and at destination. They describe in their own words the hopes and ambitions behind the decision to migrate and the range of rights violations that they have experienced during their journey because of their status as migrants and outsiders. Finally, it summarises children's recommendations on ways to improve the services and the support they receive.

The report also includes the views and voices of young people with whom Save the Children has consulted as part of its ongoing programmatic work on the protection and support of children on the move as well as the recommendations of the members of the African Movement of Working Children and Youths, a child led organisation with whom Save the Children works closely in West Africa as part of its work on child mobility in that region.

As young people themselves said clearly during this consultation, listening to children's own views is paramount in order to understand their specific perspectives, interests, vulnerabilities and the consequences – both positive and negative – that mobility has on them. Their views and involvement are essential to design responses that provide children with improved protection from abuse, neglect exploitation and violence and access to services that are guided by the best interests of the child and available to all children irrespective of their status.

## Leaving Home

### Why children leave

The reasons why children leave home and go on the move, with or without their families are multiple and complex. In some cases, it may offer a route out of poverty or opens opportunities, such as access to education or other services, that would not be available otherwise. Migration may be a route to safety, whether because of violence in the community or at home or in response to conflict or natural disasters. Whatever the reason, all of the children consulted were well aware of the rationale behind the decision to migrate even if they did not feel that either they or their parents were fully aware of the risks they might encounter during travel and once arrived at destination.

*“Children and families migrate to find a better life, to have a normal life.” (Girl, 13 years, returnee from Norway to Serbia)*

### What children want

Some of the children consulted took the initiative to migrate independently. Others did so together with one or both of their parents. Some children who left with the entire family said they were not consulted and that their parents made all the decisions without consulting them. All of them however, stressed that a lack of opportunities or protection were at the core of the decision to leave and therefore emphasised the need for programmes that provide viable opportunities for families and for young people in areas of origin as these can help prevent or delay children embarking on dangerous journeys. Some of the children consulted in Mozambique, for example, clearly stated that they would have preferred to stay in their country of origin where they felt safer but their families would have needed help and support. Most children thought that initiatives to help parents’ capacities to support and care for their children, increase household income or access better health or education and at tackle violence or conflict in the home would have prevented unnecessary migration.

*‘Governments should take action in the villages (in the areas of origin, before children leave home) and encourage children and young people to stay by improving their living conditions, by increasing access to education and training, and by helping children to get organised into groups where they can support each other’.* Recommendations from young people members of MAEJT.

Children also insisted that more support and information should be provided to their parents, their communities and children themselves in order to understand the risks and the opportunities opened up by migration. Awareness raising campaigns and targeted information provided to adults and children alike were considered important but in many cases still inadequate.

*‘We felt that there is no awareness raising activity on unsafe migration for children and youth or their family. These did not happen either on TV or radio...’* Young person consulted in Lao PDR

However, broad awareness campaigns are not enough. When asked about what they would need to prepare for the journey and make the journey safer, many children said that they needed very practical information. The young people consulted in Myanmar, Thailand and Lao PDR, for example, mentioned the importance of information on the documentation needed to travel and work abroad, the employment opportunities and regulations at destination, points of reference at each stage of the travel and contact details of people or groups that they can refer to if they need protection and support.

*“We would like to get information on the weather, conditions of work, culture and traditions, education, health services, security of the destination country”.* Young person consulted in Myanmar.

*“If I travelled alone, I would take the contacts of Anti-Trafficking Task Forces. If I suspect that something unusual/bad is going to happen to me, I would have contact them”.*

*I would get the contacts of the Women Affairs Federations, Migrants Affairs Federation, and migrant workers unions, and leave my contacts with these people”* Young people consulted in Myanmar

Children were also keen to be part of the solution to inform other young people on strategies for keeping safe, especially if children travel alone.

*“If there was an awareness raising activity or campaign we would like to disseminate the experience we had to our friends so that they will not be in the same situation as us.”* Young Person consulted in Lao PDR

Crucially, all the children consulted felt very strongly that it is impossible to understand the reasons why children migrate and the necessary solutions to risky migration without asking and involving them directly.

*“Children should be asked about reasons for their migration, their experiences, problems and concerns”* Young person consulted in Serbia.

*“Social workers and police officers should investigate more on the reasons behind why children migrate unaccompanied.”* Young person consulted in Mozambique.

Many of the children who travelled unaccompanied wished that their parents had migrated with them. The children consulted in Mozambique, for example, said that even if they had made the decision to migrate independently, they

felt scared and wished an adult were with them. However, they were also well aware of the dangers of travelling as a family without documentation and the possibility of being separated once on the move because of their status as illegal migrants. Despite their awareness of the risks linked to illegal migration, however, many of the children felt that migration could not be stopped.

*It is impossible to stop children ( ...) move from country to another country because.. if the war is inside the country the person will move! (...) if I say, ok I have the problem in my country, you can tell me: ok I can help you (giving you) something to do inside your country, you can benefit yourselves and in the future you can have something to do. But if there's war in my country I know you can't go and visit me because you think you die.*

*18 year old boy from Senegal\_consulted in Italy.*

## **Crossing Borders**

### Children's experiences

Whether travelling alone or accompanied by families or by strangers, the journey can be the most dangerous stage in a child's movement. Those children travelling independently from their families can be particularly at risk. In some cases children might start their travel by themselves and, along the way, come in contact with others such as other migrants who may provide some support and help or they may end up in the hands of smugglers and traffickers. At key points such as border crossings, the travel can become particularly perilous and children can be vulnerable to physical violence, theft and sexual exploitation or abuse. The children consulted told stories of dangerous border crossings, mutual support between migrants along their route and extreme danger particularly at the hand of border police, law enforcement officials or traffickers.

*"Smugglers transported people as if they were animals. For example, I was in a truck when I had to cross the border between Iran and Turkey. We were 80 people in a truck for 10 hours without being able to move". 17 year old boy, from Afghanistan consulted in Italy*

*"I paid smugglers and they hide me in a truck with a lot of people. There was no air and no space. I was lying for 36 hours in a container small like a grave. Some people died." (Boy, 17, from Afghanistan consulted in Serbia)*

All the children told of the fear and dangers associated with crossing borders and the violence experienced at the hand of border police.

*"When we left our home country. we did not have travelling document. We took the way through the forest, mountain or some people used the boat. We used a temporary border pass for three days which the agent would do for us. If someone did not have the passport or border pass they paid money to the police and they would take them across. It was scary." Young person consulted in Lao PDR*

*"If I think about the travel, the main danger is the police at check points. They ask for money from you.. Sometimes you travel with smugglers. (...) I went through Benin and Nigeria. In Nigeria all problems were with the police. At checkpoints, if the police stop you, they just want money. If you pay there is no problem. They ask for lots of money and if you don't have it, sometimes they beat you because they think you have the money. But if you don't have it, they can beat you until you die and you cannot do anything because you don't have the money'. 18 year old boy from Senegal consulted in Italy.*

*"The most dangerous is to cross the border between Afghanistan and Iran, Iran and Turkey. It is life dangerous....They were shooting at us." Boy, 18, from Afghanistan consulted in Serbia.*

*For the Afghans the most dangerous part is the border with Iran. There, soldiers shoot you when they see you and you can get killed. There is drug and arm trafficking and they get money from other states to stop it. But there are so many people crossing that they cannot arrest them all, so they shoot I 7 year old boy from Afghanistan consulted in Italy.*

*"Police are often suspicious of migrant children. They insult them and beat them with no reason.'. "Border officials didn't believe me. And beat me. They forced me to tell that I was older than 18." (Boy, 17, from Afghanistan consulted in Serbia.*

## Detention and Deportation

### Children's experiences

Despite being obliged under international law to protect vulnerable children, many governments see children on the move as criminals or illegal migrants leaving them open to prosecution, detention or unsafe repatriation. The fear of being arrested due to their status as illegal migrants and the experience of detention featured as a key concern and a traumatic experience in all of the stories told by the children who participated in the consultation. Children described the inhumane conditions they experienced during detention and the profound impact that this experience had on them and on other members of their families. Children talked about the uncertainty about the length of their detention and the lack of knowledge about their future as one of the most difficult moments of their migratory experience.

*"When police caught us to cross the border in Bosnia they arrested us – my parents and sisters. We were in a jail for forty days. It was terrible."* Girl, 13, from Afghanistan consulted in Serbia

*"Border officials found me and immediately deported me from Italy to Greece. I was in detention for 30 days. So many people were in one room, adults and children. There was no space for all of us to lie down to sleep."* Boy, 17, from Afghanistan consulted in Serbia.

*(...) I was in detention for one year in Malta.. One year in prison for no reason and with nothing. You can't get out. You can only stay in your room. Some people must stay for one year but the majority have to stay for 18 months. They decide (...) In prison you don't do anything, you sleep, nothing else. You don't study (...) When you are sick they take you to hospital handcuffed. The first time you ask to be taken to hospital they don't take you. It's very difficult. You have to ask many times because they think you want to run away. Food was good and enough, but the problem is that you cannot get out. We were 35 in the room.... 18 year old boy from Senegal consulted in Italy.*

Most of the children consulted were immediately deported from the border where they came into contact with state officials back to countries where they had transited from or to their countries of origin without any concern for their age, health and individual situation.

*"They didn't ask anything – just deported us."* Girl, 13 from Afghanistan consulted in Serbia.

*"I travelled for days. And I was in very bad conditions. But they just deported me from Italy back to Greece. They were violent."* (Boy, 17, from Afghanistan consulted in Serbia. Young people consulted in Serbia.

Some of the children consulted were deported back to Serbia from Western Europe after Serbia signed readmission agreements with many EU countries. Children described the experience of deportation and the difficult process of adaptation to a country that they did not feel they belonged to.

*"They came one morning. It was very early, so they woke us up. We had half an hour to pack our things. The bus was waiting."* (Boy, 10 years, returnee from Norway to Serbia)

*"I belonged there. I still somehow feel that it was my country."* (Girl, 14 years, returnee from Norway to Serbia)

Many children talked about their determination not to be brought back where they had started their journey and some talked about how they would go to extreme lengths to avoid deportation.

*"We always have a blade with us. If they want to deport you, you hurt yourself. Many children hurt themselves to avoid deportation. But often they are deported."* Boy, 17 from Afghanistan consulted in Serbia

### What Children Want

Despite reporting cases of abuse and violence at the hands of police and law enforcement officials, many children indicated that the police were amongst the authorities they would ideally like to contact for their protection and, in the case of a young person consulted in Myanmar, also to make decisions about their future.

*"Who should help? The police is the main one to help us".* Young person consulted in Lao PDR

*Migrant children shouldn't trust anyone and they are aware of the dangers of talking to strangers. They should be able to trust someone official like social workers and police rather than strangers. Young person consulted in Mozambique.*

Unfortunately, young people's mistrust of border police and law enforcement officials emerged very strongly during the consultations. Such fear and suspicion was not dissimilar from the mistrust expressed for smugglers and traffickers. All children wished to be protected and treated with respect by state actors but found the interaction with them one of the most terrifying experiences of their journey. Yet, their wish to be able to rely on law enforcement officials for their own protection emerged very strongly. For this reason, when asked what services might have helped them during their travel, many of the children consulted struggled to provide suggestions other than stopping the violence and abuse from the police and the criminalisation they faced.

*"Stop shooting migrant children at the border!"*

*"Don't put migrant children immigrants in jail!"*

*"Stop violence against migrant children!"*

*"Provide water, food and medical help to children who migrate!"*

Recommendations from young people consulted in Serbia

The accounts of the children deported demonstrate that in too many cases deportation procedures are blind to the needs of the children involved and can have a profoundly traumatic impact on them. Children voiced the need for appropriate child focussed procedures.

*"I know that the job of the border police is to catch illegal migrants. But to deport children and families back immediately without any procedure - that is wrong!"* Girl, 15, from Afghanistan consulted in Serbia

*"Deportation of children and families should be organized to be least stressful as possible. The dignity of children and their parents should be respected in the process of deportation".* Recommendations from young people in Serbia

## **At Destination**

### Children's Experiences

Arriving in a new country can be a daunting experience for many children. Some of the young people consulted provided positive accounts of the new life and the opportunities they could access especially when compared with what they had left behind. Many of the children from Kosovo consulted, for example, explained how they had started a new life in various European countries.

*"We were safe. We were welcomed."* (Girl, 14 years, returnee from Norway to Serbia)

*"We got a support to integrate. We had special classes to learn the language, translator to help us during other classes"* (Girl, 12 years, returnee from Norway to Serbia)

*"My mother got a job. We started to go to school."* (Boy, 10 years, returnee from Norway to Serbia)

However, the reality for many children who arrive at a new location, particularly those with no legal status, can be very different. They risk exploitation, discrimination and stigma which means that many children find it difficult to integrate, find a safe home and access services. Many of the children consulted provided painful accounts of the discrimination they faced upon arrival in a new country and the exploitation they were subject to. For many children, lack of documentation means that they cannot access education or health services or are easy prey of unscrupulous exploiters who take advantage of their vulnerable position as illegal migrants. However, in some cases, as some accounts from the children consulted show, even having the right documentation is not always a guarantee of equal treatment.

*"The police treat you badly and if they want, they take and destroy your ID card and sends you to prison."* 18 year old boy from Afghanistan consulted in Italy.

*"In Lybia there has always been discrimination. (...)especially for black people. People hide. If you need to buy something you have to hide...and you need good shoes because if the police arrive you have to run fast (...) sometimes you can find a job. You need to go by taxi. You can walk on the street but you need to be careful. I don't want to talk about Lybia because it makes*

me sad". 17 year old boy from Burkina Faso consulted in Italy.

Despite the fact that many children and their families leave their countries of origin to access services and education, many of the children consulted reported that they found difficulties in accessing basic services mainly due to the lack of documentation, the fear of being deported and the lack of money to pay for these services.

*"Migrant children and ethnic children who do not have document do not receive scholarship and opportunity to study further to the highest level – for example at the university. The Government said that they have allowed all children to study regardless of their legal status, but many stateless children are still excluded and do not receive equal educational opportunity. Migrant children do not receive support to study more; they need to drop out of school to help their parents work."* Boy, 16, consulted in Thailand

*"(... ) We want to earn money. Anyways, we are not able to attend school since we have no passport or border pass."* Young person consulted in Lao PDR

*"we must have the passport or ID card to be able to get treatment from the hospital therefore most of the time when we feel sick we just buy the medicine by ourselves"*. Young person consulted in Lao PDR

Finding a safe place to stay, where they can meet other children, store their possessions, wash or escape from abuse or violence are considered extremely important. Many of the children consulted experienced the hardship of living in the streets and the dangers associated with it. Those children who were able to stay in a shelter or centre were relieved to have somewhere safe to live. Shelters were for most of the children the only places where they received support.

*"When you come to some country, it is important to have where to live."* Girl, 13 from Afghanistan consulted in Serbia

*"After deportation a lot of families lived in very hard conditions, much worse than when they were in EU. A lot of children work or even have to live on the street."* (Boy, 14 years, returnee from Germany to Serbia)

*"We have everything in this Asylum, we have roof, where to sleep, what to eat."* Boy, 11, from Afghanistan consulted in Serbia.

*"When we arrived I went to the doctor, here in the Centre. She was nice."* Girl, 15, from Somalia consulted in Serbia.

Children spoke about the importance of doing activities specifically tailored for them.

*"Children should have a space to meet other children, to play and have fun. Education is very important but also other activities and spaces for children"* (Girl, 13 from Afghanistan consulted in Serbia.

*"We have nice time here. We hang around the Centre, play, talk... That means a lot to me."* (Girl, 15, from Somalia)

However, while they felt safe in the shelter, many children still felt that their voices and opinions were not being sought or heard appropriately by adults. In Serbia, for example, the asylum centres where the consultations were held did not have any personnel properly trained to interact with children. Similarly, children interviewed in Italy, complained about the lack of direct consultation with them at the shelter and the lack of contact with their legal guardian.

*"In the Center there are people who provide help, but they are talking just to adults."* Girl 15, from Somalia consulted in Serbia.

*"There is no person in the centre who would speak with children".* Boy, 12, from Somalia consulted in Serbia.

*"It is good to ask children as well when support is provided to the family. Children have their own concerns and problems."* Girl, 14, from Afghanistan

*"I did not even know what a guardian was. Then I asked about it. But when I wanted to speak to him, the Head of the Centre said: What is your problem? Talk to me instead".* 17 year old boy from Afghanistan consulted in Italy.

*I have met the Guardian. I have asked a lot of times to speak to him. It's normal. If he signs all the papers for you, you have to know who he is* 17 year old boy from Ivory Coast consulted in Italy.

### What Children Want

When asked about the type of help they would need upon arrival at any destination, children listed very practical information including someone who can assist as a translator; information about the type of work available and someone who can provide good and trusted guidance about the host country. For many children it is key to find out where to find people from their own nationality and start building a network of support. In fact many children indicated that peer support is particularly important. Being able to rely and relate to other young people represents a key point of reference for information and emotional support.

Many of the children were well aware of the risks of exploitation they faced when looking for work and the need of having prior information about jobs, employers and labour regulations featured as a key concern for many of them as highlighted by the children consulted in Myanmar, Thailand, Lao and China. These children asked for practical measures, such as labour inspections, equal opportunities and equal treatment for migrants as for local citizens and measures for protecting them from trafficking.

*"I wish that the government hotline was available free of charge to ease reporting trafficking cases. Right now, we need to use coins to dial this number. I am thinking that if trafficked children escaped from the factory or workplaces without money, how can they call and ask for support?" A girl, 14 year old from Thailand*

Obtaining the right documentation at destination was a real concern for all the children consulted, who were well aware of the practical implications that the lack of documentation or the delays in obtaining it might have for their current and future life.

*"(...)my biggest problem is not having the documents and finding a job, which is connected to having documents" 17 year old boy from Mali consulted in Italy.*

When asked about which adults they would trust and how these adults should act for them to feel protected and supported most children mentioned the willingness and ability to listen to them.

*"They should listen. They should be kind and nice to us so we are not scared. Young people consulted in Lao PDR.*

*"They shouldn't just do their job, (like in a factory), thinking that they work only for their salary and not for you" 17 year old boy from Afghanistan consulted in Italy.*

*"They cannot always say: "talk to someone else" or "it's not my fault, blame the government," They should understand what is useful for your future and help you to do so. They should give you trust and support you in your decisions and challenges.. 18 year old boy from Senegal consulted in Italy.*

### **(Re)Building a Future**

#### Children's experiences

For many of the children consulted migration was a route to a better life and new opportunities. This ambition clearly emerged during the consultations. Many children however indicated that decisions were in many cases made without them being consulted. Children repatriated to Serbia, for example, said that they had no say in any of the asylum procedures and their current situation, level of integration in the host community and the challenges they might encounter in integrating back in Serbia were not investigated or considered in the final decisions. Yet, many of the children found it very challenging to adapt to life in Serbia where they felt they did not belong. The conflict between the child's best interests and those of the authorities of the host or sending country also was also clear to some of the children:

*"They said our return will help Serbia to enter EU. But I still don't understand how that could contribute. It would have been easier if I understood." (Girl, 14 years, returnee from Norway to Serbia)*

*"I really don't understand why we had to return. There was a space for us in our town. We were completely integrated." (Girl, 12 years, returnee from Norway to Serbia)*

### What Children Want

Children stressed that they needed assistance and interim care but also guidance and support to find the best long term solutions to their individual situations, whether that be reuniting with their family or integrating into another country. Identifying the best short and long-term solutions for a child requires gathering information and

making contacts with key actors at various levels and, in many cases, in different countries. Children were therefore asked about who should gather this information and the people they thought should be contacted in order to make such decisions in their best interests. All children consulted were adamant that they should be part of the solution and that whoever is involved in making such decisions should first talk to them, particularly on decisions regarding returning home.

*“the child him/herself should have the right to speak for him/herself first. The child knows everything about what’s going on”*  
Young people consulted in Myanmar

Many children indicated that if a child is travelling unaccompanied, efforts should be made to reach out to parents and communities back at home to make an assessment. However, there were exceptions:

*“Parents should not be involved or contacted if the cause of their migration is ill treatment and abuse from their families.*  
Young people consulted in Mozambique.

Social services, international organisations and authorities were all listed as actors that should be involved, but they did not think they would find the right information unless they asked children directly why they migrated in the first place, their experience during travel and their expectations and ambitions for the future. Being part of identifying and building their own long-term plan for the future meant for many children learning skills and being active members of the host community.

*(...) they say: I give you 10 cents go and buy this or that. The best thing they can do for me is to teach me how to get those 10 cents in the future”.* 18 year old boy from Senegal consulted in Italy.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

What follows is a summary of the recommendations emerging from discussions with the children consulted. Children have not identified specific targets for their recommendations but generally expressed these views to be brought to the Day of General Discussion.

The voices of the children consulted and reflected in this summary clearly say that listening and responding to what children have to say about why they move from their homes, their experiences as they journey across countries, borders and seas and what they hope to find and build at their destination, is vital if we are to guarantee that their rights are respected, protected and fulfilled.

1. Children’s views, experiences and recommendations must be heard to respond to their needs and support them before, during and after travel.
2. The protection of children from risky migration starts before they leave. Support for parents, access to education and training and protection from harm and violence within the family and communities are essential to prevent unsafe migration.
3. Families, children and communities need information to take decisions about migrating or not. Information campaigns should not be just about the risks of migration but include practical information about the travel, the destination and the labour market so that they can better protect themselves from exploitation and access support if and where they need them.
4. During travel, children, especially if they travel alone, are very vulnerable. Border crossings can be extremely dangerous for children especially if they don’t have the right documentation. Border police and law enforcement authorities should protect children from smugglers and traffickers, they should be trained to interact with children in an unthreatening way and should always respect them. Police and immigration officers across borders should collaborate to protect children not just to stop them from migrating.
5. When they arrive at a new destination, children need immediate help, including food, clothing and a safe place to stay. They should not be criminalised for their migration status and should never end up in detention because they are on the move.
6. When they arrive at a new destination, children on the move should have the same rights and access to services as local children, including education, health, protection, vocational training and decent work for children of working ages, and family-based care for children in need of alternative care. Children should be able to access such services even if they lack documents. Delays in obtaining documents can have a very negative impact on children.
7. Children have the right to a nationality. States should make sure that no child is left stateless
8. Decisions or actions that involve children should not be based on their migration status but on their best interests and should

*listen to the child's views.. Return to their areas of origin should never happen without assessing the situation of each child, of the child's family and the situation they are likely to find in the area of origin. Children should receive long-term support to help them reintegrate and overcome problems when they return to their home communities or to build their skills to integrate and start a new life in a new place or country.*

9. *It is important that social workers, the border police and other adults who interact with children on the move, communicate and collaborate between them across borders to understand the situation of the child and provide the right support.*
10. *Children rely on other young people for support and encouragement. Children's organisations and network are very important for the protection and support of all children who are on the move.*

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## **Annex I – Child Friendly Material and Questions developed for the Consultation with Children**

### **COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD**

#### **2012 Day of General Discussion Working Group's**

#### **“Key” Questions for Consultation with Young People**

*Version to share with Young People (approximately 12 years and over)*

#### **What is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child?**

Conventions are legal agreements made by governments to protect girls, boys, women, men and also our planet. They highlight the promises governments have made on an issue (for example: to protect children and women's rights) and they are part of international law.

On 20 November, 1989 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child – also known as the CRC. The CRC sets out the human rights that all children, every boy and girl, everywhere in the world have.

It has 54 Articles (or sections) and addresses things like health care, education and legal, civil and social services. The CRC says that all children have equal rights. It recognizes that children are vulnerable and need more protection than adults do. At the same time, children, like adults, have an important role in “realizing” their rights. This means that adults must listen to and involve children when decisions are made which will affect children.

When governments/states ‘ratified’ the CRC they also made the promise to take action at the local/country level to ensure the promises found in the CRC are also a part of local laws and processes. To help make sure this happens, there is a special Committee that reviews what each country is doing and gives advice on how they can improve.

#### **What is a Day of General Discussion?**

Every year, in September, the Committee holds a ‘Day of General Discussion’ to look at a section of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child or at a specific theme in more detail. The goal is to provide governments with advice and recommendations on how they can better make that theme (or right) a reality in their countries.

For each Day of Discussion, non-governmental organizations, children, youth and other experts are invited to submit reports and to be part of the discussion.

This year, the Day of General Discussion will be on the theme of the rights of all children who ‘migrate’ or move from one country to another. It will take place on Friday 28 September 2012 during the 61st session of the Committee in Geneva (Palais des Nations). It will be attended by the members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, representatives of countries, international organisations like UNICEF, NGOs representatives and civil society, and children. There will be around 200/250 people at the meeting.

## Specific objectives of the 2012 Day of General Discussion<sup>1</sup>

1. To help work out what the main problems are for young people who ‘migrate’ or move from one country to another. In particular, they want to find out which children’s rights are not being respected as a result of young people’s migration.
2. To find some really good examples of the best ways to support young people who migrate.
3. Around the world, countries have agreed about the best way to protect and support children and young people who migrate. They have created what they call a ‘set of international standards’ which explain what they will do and how they will do it. At the Day of General Discussion, they want to check that the ‘international standards’ make sure that children and young people’s rights are respected when they migrate.
4. It’s the job of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to recommend to governments how they should do better to respect the rights of children and young people in their own countries. Through the Day of General Discussion, the Committee wants to find out more information about the most important issues for children and young people who migrate, and what it should be recommending to governments to make sure they are given the best support and protection, and that their rights are respected.
5. The Committee wants to use the Day of General Discussion as a great opportunity for people to share their views about the theme of children and young people who migrate. All the people who come together for the meeting can learn from each other and make sure they are working in the best possible way to protect and support children and young people who migrate.

### **How can you let the Committee on the Rights of the Child know what you and other children and young people think about these things?**

The ideas and suggestions made by young people from various countries will be written up and shared with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. They will also be used by the child delegates to prepare their speech at the Day of General Discussion in Geneva.

Below you can see a set of questions that you can use to ask other children and young people you know about these issues. Once you’ve asked others what they think about these questions, we will create a document that shows all of the recommendations from young people from many countries.

There were lots of questions, but we chose a selection of questions that we thought would be the most interesting and relevant for young people to discuss.

### **Questions for children to discuss**

***1. When you or other children and friends are travelling from one country to another, what kind of information and support would you like to receive at each stage of your journey and from whom? Would you have liked and were you able to access school or get help from a doctor if ill? And when you come into contact with people like Border Officials, Social Workers or the police how would you like to be treated by them?***

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<sup>1</sup> Further information about the UN CRC 2012 DGD can be found at:  
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/discussion2012/DGD2012Outline.pdf>

**2. When you're moving from one country to another there are some things adults can do to keep you safe, make sure you are well looked after and can get help if you need it.**

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**3. What are the best ways that adults can make sure these things happen? How can adults make sure you get the same level of support and assistance as you move between places/ countries? (for example, ensuring that you avoid risks, or keeping in touch with your friends or families so they know you are OK or if you need help?). Do you remember of any organisation that helped you?**

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**4. When you're moving from one country to another your rights should always be respected and you should always have a good level of support from adults when you need it. Wherever you started your journey, throughout the route you take and in the place where you end up, adults should communicate with each other to make sure that you receive the support you need at every stage of the journey. Which adults do you think would be best placed to provide that support and what are the best ways in which they can work together so that you get a good level of support regardless of the country you find yourself in? Who should they talk to at home or in the place where you are heading to so that you can be properly supported?**

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**5. What steps do you think have been taken already in your country to avoid that children or entire families migrate in a way that puts them in danger. For example, your government might have done a campaign through radio or TV to alert children thinking about migrating of the dangers they might face if they migrate in an unsafe way. Are these campaigns saying the rights things? Are the dangers they warn you about the real ones? Do you think these campaigns are providing the information you needed when you were thinking about migrating? If not, which ones should they have been focussing on?**

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**6. What more do you think needs to be done to help children and young people avoid dangers and risks if they are moving from one country to another or dissuade them from moving all together if too dangerous? What do you think needs to be done to protect and support those children who are left behind by parents who migrate?**

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**7. When you're moving from one country to another, your rights should always be respected regardless of which country you are in. For example, you should not be seen to be breaking the law by entering a new country. What do you think would help a child as soon as he or she arrives in a different country? And who would you trust to make decisions about your future? if you're stopped and asked questions by someone official during your journey or if your right not to be arrested was not respected?**

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**8. If children travel to another country alone, or without their parents/ carers who should decide that sending them back to their own country is in their best interests? And what information would be needed to make the right decision? about whether a child should be returned to their own country? Who do you think should be contacted back home and who should be involved in this decision? Importantly, How would you like to be consulted about this possible decision?**

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**9. If a child is sent back to his/ her own country, what do you think would be the benefit of this? What would this achieve?**

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**10. If children are born to parents who also move around between countries or to parents who do not have all the legal papers to stay in a country they sometimes suffer abuse or discrimination. What do you think governments can do to support children of migrant parents to feel at home wherever they are and to prevent others treating them badly? What are some of the other things that children of migrant parents experience in their day-to-day life (both positive and negative things)?**

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