



Registration No: 64689102746-48

World Vision's Submission on
the European Commission's
Communication on the Rights
of the Child
2011-2014

Paper produced by:
World Vision European Union Liaison Office
Avenue Livingstone 33, 1000 Bruxelles

August 2010

Previous Initiatives undertaken by the Commission

- 1) The 2006 Commission Communication "Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child" establishes a comprehensive EU Strategy to effectively promote and safeguard the Rights of the Child in the European Union's internal and external policies and to support Member States' efforts in this field. What is your overall assessment of the Communication?

A Timely Communication

When the Commission issued the 2006 Communication 'Toward a Strategy on the Rights of the Child' it promised an ambitious strategy - a strategy intended to increase the 'scale and effectiveness of EU commitments to improve the situation of children globally'. It correctly recognised that the 'European Union can bring essential and fundamental added value in the field of children's rights' 'to effectively promote universal human rights at national level worldwide' and 'promote and support attention to children's needs' through 'its global presence and influence'. It was document that was both timely and needed - and one intended not only for the children of Europe, as can be seen in its recognition that a 'broad and coordinated action, would add value to the efforts of the Member States and would strengthen recognition of and respect for the principles of the UNCRC both within the Union and beyond'. World Vision therefore welcomes the 2006 Communication and in particular, we affirm the Communication's inclusion of child participation; a strategic framework for all EU action that affect the rights of children; and, as the Communication emphasised, its 'particular priority' of the 'protection of the rights of children, both against economic exploitation and all forms of abuse, with the Union acting as a beacon to the rest of the world'.¹

Deficiencies of the Communication

However, the Communication is not sufficient. Firstly, **it does not cover all of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**, and, secondly, **it was only intended to be the first step in a much broader process**. We believe that the Communication was weakened by several major oversights, most notably: it did not provide a clear framework and principles for strengthening EU action on children's rights. The CRC is legally binding and considering that all Member States are signatories of the document, and that the CRC is also included in the Lisbon Treaty, its provisions should be of even greater importance to the EU in both its internal and external action. **While the Communication was structured around seven clear objectives and concrete measures, the subsequent accompanying action has been, at best, fragmented**. We believe there has been:

- **little coordination** amongst the different services of the European Commission
- **no significant engagement from Member States**
- **no meaningful political leadership**

The implementation of the communication has been, in the experience of civil society, mainly driven by European political opportunities and has regrettably ignored much of the external elements of child rights.

¹ Taken from the 2006 Commission Communication 'Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child'

The Communication was not Implemented as Intended

The Communication promised a green and white paper, and aimed to reach a strong, binding, comprehensive policy on the Rights of Children for the EU, its institutions, and its Member States. Despite subsequent Council Conclusions and European Parliament positions, these promises faced constant delays and were sadly never implemented. We hope the current Consultation will finally lead to the promised outcomes.

The Communication called for the following priorities which, we believe, did not achieve its aims:

- to set up an EU Forum on the rights of the child - this faced **constant delays and watered down implementation** and there was **little participation of experts, no meaningful child participation, and a superficial overview of a few issues chosen for political reasons**. We strongly regret the lack of attention of the Forum to children's rights in developing countries and the eurocentric nature of the topics and discussions.
- to create a web-based discussion and work platform - no web-based discussion platform has been launched;
- to encourage children's participation - while some children have been consulted to a limited extent through Eurobarometer surveys and focus groups, this restricted participation is unacceptable. The desired outcome should be the involvement of children in decision-making processes.
- to set up a Commission inter-service group on children's rights - while the inter-service group has met sporadically, its narrow mandate of appointing staff for children's rights has not been effective.
- to appoint a child rights coordinator - a child rights coordinator has been appointed but her responsibilities and relationship towards the European Commission services remains undefined.

In addition to these failures, the effective implementation of the Communication was hampered by:

- **Limited results in enhancing capacity and expertise on child rights.** Despite the training the European Commission (EC) has provided to its external relations staff, (including its delegations), we believe much more can and should be done to increase capacity and expertise in regards to child rights. We recommend that, in order to ensure that child rights remain a fundamental focus of every DG within the European Commission, the EU develop a programme that includes specific training and information in child rights for all its staff. We are particularly concerned that in the reorganization created by the EEAS there is a person in each delegation who ensures capacity building and mainstreaming of child rights in development and in humanitarian action.
- **Lack of follow-through on commitment to more effective communication.** The Communication proposed a number of measures, such as the development of a communication strategy on children's rights, which, as yet, have not been implemented.
- **Lack of child participation and the limited promotion of children's rights in external relations.** Despite a commitment to promote the rights of the child in international forums and third country relations, there has been very little information on the role and impact of EU action in this regard, as well as a low visibility profile.

What we Expect from the New Strategy

The 2006 Communication “Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child” promised to develop a comprehensive strategy to ensure the European Union contributes to promoting and safeguarding children’s rights in all its internal and external actions and support the efforts of the Member States in the area of child rights. While we appreciate the Commission’s efforts to issue the much anticipated (and overdue) 2010 Consultation, we cannot help but express our disappointment with the document. The Consultation is weakened by its limited European scope which focuses almost exclusively on Stockholm Programme priorities, ignoring Europe’s external priorities. We are concerned that the questionnaire does not match the commitments already made by European Commission, nor does it build on the excellent work that has already been undertaken by other DGs to implement the 2006 Communication, such as the RELEX family and DG Employment and Social Affairs.

A child rights approach needs to be adopted at every level of European Union decision making. The child rights approach provides a holistic framework which encourages consistency and a focus on the long-term. It can therefore help to ensure the sustainability of development programmes. Applying a child rights approach to European Community (EC) external aid would thus substantially contribute towards enabling the EC to **improve the efficiency of its external aid.**

Child rights are indivisible and inalienable and must include social and economic rights, as established in the framework approach based on the UNCRC². As fourteen year old Dilfuza Samandarova from Uzbekistan notes, the Convention on the Rights of the Child ‘is of major importance for us, it ensures that children are respected, treated appropriately and not humiliated’. **If we are to address the needs of the one billion children** who are being deprived of one or more essential services, the one billion children who are affected by violence, and, the more than 1.2 million children trafficked each year, than the EU needs to play an ambitious and action-orientated role in helping to combat the issues that underpin these statistics.

World Visions believes that that the EU has an important role to play in contributing to the promotion, protection, respect and fulfillment of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). **The EU can be an active participant in ensuring that the commitments of the EU and Member States towards children’s rights are acted on and implemented³.**

We call on the European Commission to produce the promised ambitious Strategy and to deliver a framework for EU action on child rights. This should set strategic objectives to guide the different DGs on how to follow up with specific action. The Strategy should align action taken at EU level with action of Member States at national level and include child participation. We see the objectives of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child to be:

² A child rights framework approach is based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which is underpinned by four underlying specific articles: non-discrimination (Article 2); best interest of the child (Article 3); survival and development (Article 6; and participation (Article 12)].

³ For more information see: ‘Taking Action on Child Rights Under the Lisbon Treaty: Briefing Note for Members of the European Parliament ahead of Commissioner Hearings’, p2

- **To ensure to the promotion, protection and fulfillment of child rights** in EU internal, as well as, external action; again, we remind the EU that its external actions do impact the situation of children globally.
- **To support Member States** efforts to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

To achieve this, the Strategy should focus on:

- **Mainstreaming child rights**, with adequate resources and tools
- Defining criteria for **identifying priority actions and guidance for specific action** at the DG level
- **Mechanisms for including meaningful child participation** in EU decision-making, including the most vulnerable (for example, the disabled, ethnic minorities and rural poor).
- **Monitoring and evaluating action** undertaken
- **Enhancing data collection and common indicators** at the EU level
- **Ensuring policy coherence** and coordination among Member States, both in terms of soft law and in terms of adding a child-rights lens to the policy coherence for development
- **Communicating on child rights**
- **Prioritizing funding** for the implementation of the CRC
- **Ensuring that civil society organisation (CSO) participation and ownership is increased**

Conclusion

In 2006, the EU recognized that out of the 2.2 billion children in the world, 86 per cent live in developing countries. Furthermore, it acknowledged that over 95 per cent of the children dying before the age of five; children lacking access to primary education; and victims of labour or sexual abuse; also live in developing countries. Four years later, the numbers remain largely unchanged. We therefore urge the EU to develop a strategy that strongly considers the situation of children outside the EU. If we are to address the needs of the one billion children who are being deprived of one or more essential services; the one billion children who are affected by violence; and, the more than 1.2 million children trafficked each year; then the EU needs to play an ambitious and action-orientated role in helping to combat the issues that underpin these statistics. We urge the European Commission to implement the 2006 Communication by producing **a comprehensive Strategy which places an internal and an external focus at its core while incorporating all dimensions of the CRC. The agreed policy must be elevated and binding to the EU institutions and Member States, with adequate funding and monitoring of implementation and results.**

- 2) **The EU has an obligation to abstain from acts violating children's rights, and to take them into account wherever relevant in the conduct of its own policies (mainstreaming). The Commission has put in place a number of instruments, including legislative action, soft law, financial assistance and exchanges of best practice to take specific action to safeguard and promote children's rights in line with the Treaties and in respect of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. What is your overall assessment of these outputs?**
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The recognition by the EU of its obligation to mainstream children's rights into its policy is applaudable. Furthermore, we acknowledge the desk-based work undertaken by the Child Rights Unit of the European Commission to facilitate child rights mainstreaming, in particular, the toolkit on mainstreaming for EU external relations that is currently being prepared in cooperation with UNICEF.

Yet, while a number of initiatives have been undertaken to ensure mainstreaming of children's rights at an EU level, significant work remains to be done in order to ensure that these rights form the foundation of all policy making. We are concerned that **the desk-based approach of the Child Rights Unit** to mainstreaming of child rights has limited reach and impact, for the following reasons:

- it **does not have sufficient resources or capacity** to cover all internal and external EU policy areas that impact on children's rights
- it **does not have an agreed or written guideline on best practice on internal mainstreaming** that would help ensure consistency and effectiveness. We believe that the development of resources and training material dealing with child rights issues will enable EU staff to ensure that children's rights are integrated in all decision making actions and structures.
- **there is insufficient coordination amongst the different institutions of the European Commission.** World Vision recognises the efforts undertaken by specific EU funding programmes which have supported internal and external projects that have fostered cross-national exchange. However, these programmes have not sufficiently promoted or safeguarded the rights of children in either the development or implementation of EU policy within the EU institutions themselves.

We therefore recommend that **greater emphasis be placed on ensuring that policy design and implementation is child-centred** - that is, that the well-being of the child is considered independently of his/her family situation, while consecutively recognising the importance of the familial to a child's well being. Mainstreaming belongs to all actors, not just one small unit. To achieve this we recommend the following actions:

- the appointment of a **child rights intermediary(ies)** in each Directorate General
- systematic **training and capacity building in children's rights** (as set out in the UNCRC) of all Commission staff
- the allocation of **adequate financial and human resources** to facilitate effective mainstreaming
- the **EU must always consider how its actions will ensure the protection of children**, particularly vulnerable children. EU action cannot solely focus on other other obligations which the EU must discharge in that policy area, such as, for instance, anti-terrorism measures, crime control or migration control.
- the **EU must include legally binding instruments** (regulations, directives and decisions) that ensure children's rights. In regards to third countries, these can range from political declarations of support to funding regional or third country action⁴
- **greater collaboration** between European institutions, CSOs and partner countries
- **increased monitoring and data collection** that takes seriously the evaluations findings and implements them accordingly in decision-making
- **increased funding** to ensure the implementation of the above recommendations

In addition, **we are concerned that very little financial assistance is available to take specific action to safeguard and promote children's rights globally.** Only 9.5% of EC

external aid is allocated to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and EC funding to NGOs increased only 0.7% from 2004 to 2008. Of this aid very little goes to children. In addition, under the Development Cooperation Instrument, the thematic programme 'Investing in People' encompasses children and youth under 'other aspects of human and social development' together with employment and social cohesion and culture. This **fails to recognize the specific situation of children in developing countries**. Furthermore, while the programme priorities include global monitoring and policy advocacy for child protection, the rights of children and strengthening children participation - which we welcome - we note that only 8.5% of the total budget for the "Investing in People" budget line was allocated for "Protection and participation of children and youth".⁵ Another indicator of the very low level of funding is the **EU's own calls for child rights priorities that are regularly oversubscribed**. The latest child participation call for proposals launched in November 2009 received 867 concept notes for a total budget of 11 € million. This is the largest number of concept notes received for any one call.

Under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, the thematic line "Children and Armed Conflict, Rights of the Child and Violence Against Women and Girls and Combating all Forms of Discrimination Against Them" was allocated € 6.8 million over the period of four years covering 2007-2010 which represented only 1.2% of the grant total available € 554.4 million for this period.⁶ 18.7 million has been allocated but this still only represent only 3.95% of the grant total for this period.⁷ **Overall of the total budget of €1.104 million for the EIDHR 2007-2013 € 1.104 million, only € 25.5 million was allocated to children rights, this represents 2.3% of the total budget.** One way to remedy to the lack of funding under the EIDHR would be to **effectively integrate children's rights into the EIDHR** by mainstreaming and targeting children's rights as a specific priority through creating explicit and clear policy and programming guidelines.

We welcome the fact that the European Consensus not only requires that children's rights are covered as a cross-cutting issue across all development programming, but also addresses many of the essential services that are crucial to delivering on children's rights. However, the European Commission needs to ensure that rights and children's rights are fully integrated (starting with child impact analysis) into the Project Cycle Management manual and processes of external aid programmes. We also urge **DG ECHO to develop and strengthen their strategy on children to ensure at the very least that the protection of children's rights is a key element of ECHO's Global Plans and annual strategies.**

Child-Friendly Justice

3) What are the main obstacles and problems for children in relation to justice systems (civil law, criminal law, administrative law etc)? In particular, what are the challenges and problems faced by children when they have to take part in a court case, either in a civil case, a case pertaining to migration and asylum matters, or a criminal case as victim or defendant?

⁵ Taken from "Investing in People-Strategy Paper for the Thematic Programme 2007-2013" and Annex 7.1 Proposal for allocation of funding under the Thematic Programme "Investing in People" for 2007-2013

⁶ European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) Strategy Paper 2007 – 2010

⁷ European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) Strategy Paper 2011-2013

While we appreciate the importance of the question posed, it is very Eurocentric in its approach and makes no reference to third country juvenile justice systems. It is not possible to list all the challenges and problems faced by children in relation to justice systems in developing countries as they vary from country and context. However, we would like to remind the EU that it is committed to progress on the internationally agreed objectives of the Convention of the Rights of the Child and should support partners in development cooperation to implement the UNCRC.

1. Key Challenges in External Action for Children in Relation to Justice Systems

World Vision identifies the following three main challenges to receiving justice faced by children in external contexts:

- **absence of a rule of law.** This includes, but is not limited to, countries with failing governments and/or political instability.
- **inability to prove age.** Around 51 million children born each year are not registered.⁸ Without proof of age children cannot establish their legal status and thereby claim their rights. In addition, many countries do not have a clear demarcation of age of legal criminal responsibility, further denying children their legal rights.
- **lack of trained juvenile justice staff and specialist resources.**

Impact of Weak Legal Frameworks

Children are more likely to experience and suffer sexual violence and abuse in contexts of weak and un-enforced legal frameworks. This lack of enforced judicial frameworks not only magnifies children's risk of abuse (encouraging impunity and a larger disregard for children's rights) but also inhibits recourse. Those who are most vulnerable - children who are, for example, stateless, displaced, indigenous, discriminated against, disabled, or 'invisible' - are also most likely to 'fall through the cracks' where implementation does exist.⁹ Pursuing justice for children in crises means addressing both the prevention of abuse and ensuring that systems are in place to support the recovery of abused children. More must be done by the European Union to ensure child-centred policies are enforced and that there is regional cooperation between states to protect children from transnational predators.¹⁰

2. European Challenges

While the worst forms of abuse of rights of children in the justice systems occur out of Europe, sadly, there are still large deficiencies in the application of the CRC in Europe. Problems are particularly prevalent in regards to migration into Europe, as was strongly addressed in the Conclusions of the EU High Level Ministerial Conference, 'Towards a Global Action Against the Trafficking in Human Beings' in October 2009. In addition, there are pockets of children in Europe, such as the Roma minority who suffer discrimination.

⁸ UNICEF (2007). Progress for Children. A World Fit for Children Statistical Review [online]. Available from www.unicef.org/protection/index_birthregistration.html. Accessed 17 July 2009.

⁹ 'Children in Crisis Strategy: Protecting the Most Vulnerable Children from the Worst Forms of Exploitation and Abuse through Advocacy for Policy Implementation'

¹⁰ 'Children in Crisis Strategy: Protecting the Most Vulnerable Children from the Worst Forms of Exploitation and Abuse through Advocacy for Policy Implementation'

The Detention of Children

Although World Vision is more concerned with the EU overlooking the specific challenges and problems faced by children in developing countries in relation to the justice system, and would like to remind the EU that it ought to do much more to support partner countries implementing the CRC, we are concerned with the ongoing practice within Europe of the administrative detention of children and families for the purpose of removal. A UK parliamentary committee in 2009 reported that almost 1,000 children per year are detained pending removal, some for as long as two months.¹¹ Furthermore, World Vision is concerned with plans within Europe to forcibly return unaccompanied minors to their countries of origins - as can be seen in the UK government's recent announcement concerning the return of 12 under 18 boys each month.¹² Such action may overlook the best interests of the child, particularly by neglecting safeguards such as guardianship. Also, children from Afghanistan have often suffered extreme trauma and may be subject to both additional trauma upon arrival, and may be forced to engage in blood feuds, family honour obligations etc. A study conducted by medical experts in the UK in 2009 of children in detention found that they had developed mental and physical health problems as a result of their detention.¹³ Under the CRC and the European Convention on Human Rights¹⁴, detention of children should only be applied as a last resort, for the shortest time possible, and always ensuring that the best interests of the child are implemented.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In light of the challenges identified by World Vision, we call on the EU to use the CRC Committee reports on juvenile justice to inform their actions and prioritization of issues within juvenile justice assistance. Furthermore, regarding internal European matters, the EU should use its powers of scrutiny in relation to Member States' judicial systems to address cross border issues.

4) What concrete initiatives would you suggest to make justice systems child-friendly? Do you consider that the EU can contribute to these initiatives and if so how? How can the EU contribute to ensure that children's rights, in particular the respect of the best interests of the child, are effectively respected in judicial decisions that concern them?

The EU can play a pivotal role in helping to ensure that justice systems both internally and externally are child-friendly. To enable this, World Vision makes the following recommendations:

¹¹ "Migrant children held 'too long' in detention, MPs say", BBC News, 29 November 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/8384860.stm

¹² Alan Travis, 'UK to deport child asylum seekers to Afghanistan', The Guardian, 7 June 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2010/jun/07/child-asylum-seekers-uk-afghanistan>

¹³ Karen McVeigh, 'Children made 'sick with fear' in UK immigration detention centres', The Guardian, 13 October 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2009/oct/13/children-immigration-detention-health>

¹⁴ See European Convention on Human Rights, Article 5.1

Ensure that child victims are treated with dignity, non-discrimination and respect.

All victims have, without discrimination¹⁵, the right to such measures of protection as are required by his or her status as women, men or a minor. In order to do this World Vision recommends:

- **the collection of information from officials** in both Member States and partner countries to determine if they understand about the right to dignity, through interviews of authorities and victims
- **the collection of information on the treatment of victims** throughout the victims assistance process
- **the collection of evidence** of any act of discrimination and/or stereotyping against the victims on the basis of gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, sexual preference/orientation, disability or past experience as prostitutes or sex slaves, in any part of the process
- **ensuring that culturally appropriate methods are adopted** when interviewing victims of trafficking.

Ensure government and CSO engagement in providing justice for children. Justice for children requires actions by a wide range of actors, including the ministry of justice, police, court system, and prosecutors, alternative justice system, local government, administrative agencies, media, social movements, community organizations, and children and young people. Teachers and the education system have responsibilities for legal education system have responsibilities for legal education. Children's legal empowerment has to be made practical through parents or guardians and laws have to be made more accessible for children of different ages and abilities. Specific government responsibilities include:

- **Reforming of the legislative framework** to ensure children's legal empowerment and to change discriminatory laws and regulations
- **Ensuring availability of appropriate children-sensitive legal aid services** - not only for criminal cases
- **Creating opportunities for children to be heard in judicial and administrative proceedings** affecting them
- **Establishing mechanisms for consulting and assessing children** and to take their complaints into consideration in legal provisions and judicial decisions
- **Training professionals working with children in the justice system** (judges, probation officers, police and prison officers) to communicate and consult with children
- **Adopting children-oriented communication strategies** to increase legal awareness
- **Producing and disseminating legal information** for all children in accessible forms

Support the simplification of criminal processes. Eliminate the unnecessary bureaucracy, which slows down the handling of complaints. Such processes must also be more attentive and sensitive to the needs of children and their families. Municipal authorities and judges should also be given more authority to punish anti-social behaviour that is outside the criminal sphere. Adopt greater support for traditional methods of justice and conflict prevention.

¹⁵ Article 2 of the CRC explicitly stated discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

Encourage reform of prison systems in order to improve inhumane conditions within prisons and offer child inmates real opportunities for rehabilitation. This reform should include the provision of:

- adequate, gender-sensitive facilities, where children are ‘separated from adults unless it is considered in the child's best interest not to do so’¹⁶. This includes child protection policies (such as background checks on all staff who are in contact with the children) and the careful placing of children in specially designed shelters
- nutritional and medical attention for inmates
- comprehensive rehabilitation programmes (including counseling, professional training, therapy or activities to reduce stress/aggression, and conflict resolution)
- a properly staffed and autonomous office to investigate inmate complaints of abuse
- improved training for guards, focused on the fundamental rights of child inmates¹⁷
- **the provision of security for the victim.** Ensure that front line police officials provide special protection to victims, separate exploiters and alleged perpetrators during the initial investigation process, and that access to victims is limited to only authorities persons whilst they are in their care
- **clear briefing of victims** about their situation, security plans and risks
- **the protection of the identity of the victim.** Media persons should not be given access to the victims which can reveal their identity. Furthermore, additional measures should be taken before organizing meetings with the media to ensure the protection of the identity of the victims
- **data collection on the length of time it took to ensure the safety of the child victim.** All decisions regarding child victims must be taken expeditiously.

Enable child participation in judicial proceedings. Courts and other judicial bodies have to be adapted to enable children to participate in the justice system. Aspects of a trial that may frighten a child - such as cross-examination - should be conducted in a way that considers the welfare of the child without contravening the rights of the accused. Special measures are required to address the specific needs of child victims, such as the provision of psychosocial support, the use of trained investigators and the maintenance of a child's anonymity. Efforts should also be made to ensure that child victims understand the trial process, its aims and objectives, and possible consequences.

Involve children in truth commissions. Truth commissions can play an important role in addressing the past and re-establishing the rule of law in post-conflict situations. By providing a forum for victims, witnesses and perpetrators to tell their experiences, and by documenting the crimes of the war, truth commissions can serve as an important tool to build stability in societies where systematic violations have occurred. Truth-seeking mechanisms have the potential to engage communities in accountability processes and can be an effective and safe mechanism for children's involvement.

Ensure that the rights of all child victims are protected, upheld and prioritized, whether they are non-nationals, nationals or residents of the country in which they find themselves. Child victims must be considered as children first and foremost.

Ensure that all child victims are provided with accessible information regarding their situation and their rights. This includes providing gender sensitive interpretation services and information in ways that are child-friendly and sensitive.

¹⁶ Taken from UNCRC, Article 37, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>

Ensure that respect for the views of the victims are maintained in relation to the legal process, interim care and protection, and the identification and implementation of a durable solution, particularly in decisions concerning the child's possible return to the family, country or region of origin. Children must be able to express their views in a non-threatening environment. As such child participation that is gender, age and disability sensitive and maximizes the opportunity for boys and girls to express their views must be implemented. Children must be given the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting him or her, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

Ensure the protection of the child's privacy and identity to ensure the safety and security of the victim and his or her family. Information such as name, address and all other information that could lead to the identification of the victim or his or her family members must be treated with the utmost confidentiality. This information must be withheld from the public and media. Exceptions may be made in certain circumstances¹⁸, with the informed consent of the victims. For child victims, contacting the authorities of the country or place of origin should be done with caution, to avoid increasing the child's risk and or the risk to his or her family of being targeted by the authorities. World Vision has recently had a case where, enabled by a mistake in the justice system, a major media outlet of an EU Member State compromised the safety of a child in Asia. The child had been sexually exploited by a European citizen and was in a World Vision safe house. The media house tricked the girl into a meeting with the perpetrator and enabled him to meet with her family, he subsequently began grooming her younger sister.

Ensure that all victims have access to justice, equal protection before the law, legal aid and non-conditional legal assistance, representation, and are given compensation and effective remedy. To make sure this happens, gender, age and disability sensitive interpretation services must be provided to victims throughout the court procedures. The legal procedures and processes should be explained to the victim in his or her own language. Victims must be provided with camera facilities or other protection measures for testimony against the traffickers to avoid face to face contact between victim and traffickers. Pre-court proceedings information about the security measures should be explained to the victim. Administrative and legal provisions must also be available for the victims to remain in the country for the purpose of assisting in the prosecution and investigation process as witness.

Ensure that the best interests of the child is always the primary consideration in all undertakings or dealings with the public or private social welfare institutions, police, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies. Making sure the Best Interest Determination (BID) process is followed will help to ensure that such decisions take into account the fundamental right to life, survival and development of the child to the maximum extent possible. A final decision on a durable solution (whether this is voluntary repatriation, local integration, or resettlement) must only be made after informed consent of the victim.

Ensure that all victims have been provided with sustainable solutions based on systematic assessment and services for recovery, reintegration and follow up to

¹⁸ This exception may be, for example, to facilitate the tracing of family members or otherwise secure the well-being and protection of the victim.

protect them from repeat abuse. Sustainable solutions means non-shelter based housing and care facilities either in the same community or other communities, with their own families or foster families. Assessment requires a process of reviewing and evaluating the situation of the victims before planning recovery from traumatic experiences and reintegration into the society.¹⁹

Ensure that there is cooperation between European institutions and Member States and partner states make every effort to co-operate with civil society organisations.

Encourage the implementation and establishment of a Code of Ethics for public office holders by all Member States and partner countries. This would help reduce and prevent crimes, complicity and impunity on the part of such individuals, along with punishments for abusive and discriminatory practices for which they may be held accountable. States should also create effective control mechanisms to ensure that police interventions, in particular, remain within the limits of the law. Such mechanisms should include adequate wage systems and other incentives that will discourage police corruption, abuses, and other illicit behaviour. Well-defined procedures to manage problems of police corruption are also needed.

Ensure laws and policies regarding land ownership and private property protect children's rights. Statutes, codes and regulations should clearly articulate the rights of children to own property under national law. Procedures for ensuring enforcement of these rights should take account of gender and age differences. Focusing only on legislative obstacles is insufficient to ensure equitable property protection and transfer. Where customary law is practiced, local leaders, with support from governments, non-governmental organisations and human rights groups must be equipped to help protect orphans from losing their inheritance. Legal aid groups can provide training on writing wills, taking into account the particular vulnerability of girls. Where customary law may jeopardize the well-being of citizens, governments should be responsible for enforcing national law.

Special Recommendations

Multi-actor juvenile justice reform requires time and resources. For reform to be effective a 'juvenile justice champion' is often required to lead and coordinate the initiative. We therefore ask the EU to fund the coordination and implementation of such initiatives, as well as to provide targeted resources for key areas, including financial support for training social workers, health staff, police and legal practitioners. In addition we ask the EU to financially support the use of new technology for child testimony in partner countries. Finally, in summary, we urge the EU to:

- **ensure that all victims have access to justice, equal protection before the law, legal aid, and non-conditional legal assistance**
- **ensure that child victims are treated with dignity, non-discrimination and respect**
- **ensure child participation and CSO engagement, and appropriate training of all actors involved**

¹⁹ Assessments also include: risk assessment, socio-legal assessment, shelter assessment, community assessment, family assessments, skills and ability assessments and livelihood assessment. Furthermore, the following quality services need to be provided: medical and health services (with male and female doctors available); psychological services; legal aid (with free access to lawyers and justice); accommodation; life skills (in their local language); skill training; spiritual services; and, recreational activities (there must be age appropriate activities for children and girls).

5) Are you aware of good practices, initiatives, programmes (including training programmes) or tools that contribute to enable judicial systems to take into account the specific rights, interests and needs of children? Are you aware of cross border initiatives in this area (e.g. cooperation with, or participation to common projects, with organisations in other Member States, exchange of good practices, etc.)?

In the field of external action there are numerous agencies and governments who have established innovative and cost effective good practices relating to child rights. Some of these can be identified through reports to the Committee for the Rights of the Child, others have emerged through extensive studies, such as special reports for the UN Secretary General (as seen in the Violence Against Children study). World Vision recommends that EU Members States look to identify such good practices both in terms of prioritizing support in external action and also applying such ideas in their own national actions. We believe that EU countries have as much to learn from developing countries as partner countries do from well established systems created in the EU. World Vision therefore recommends a practice of interchange on best practices via such international organizations, such as UNICEF, which we believe would improve learning in this area.

6) Children may participate as vulnerable witnesses or victims in judicial proceedings. Do you consider that further steps should be taken to address the needs and rights of children in these circumstances? Are there legal and practical arrangements in place to avoid multiple interrogations and to reduce negative experience of being involved in the judicial proceedings?

World Vision's experience in communities in developing countries has shown that in many third countries with fragile justice systems, victims or witnesses are very vulnerable and face minimal legal protection. While the principles identified below are our recommendations for the treatment of children, these principles should also apply to all people irrespective of age and gender.

To help protect vulnerable child victims and witnesses during judicial proceedings we make the following recommendations:

Child victims/witnesses must be treated with dignity, non-discrimination and respect. All victims have, without discrimination²⁰, the right to such measures of protection as are required by his or her status as women, men or a minor. In order to do this World Vision recommends that:

- officials in both Member States and partner countries are trained and understand about the child's **right to dignity**, and that they implement this approach in all their interviews and proceedings with the victim
- **no act of discrimination and/or stereotyping**²¹ be tolerated against the victim in any part of the process
- **only culturally appropriate methods are adopted** when interviewing victims

²⁰ See Article 2 of the CRC.

²¹ Ibid.

The rights of all child victims must be protected, upheld and prioritized, whether they are non-nationals, nationals or residents of the country in which they find themselves. Child victims must be considered as children first and foremost. To do this World Vision recommends:

- **the provision of security for the victim.** Ensure that front line police officials provide special protection to victims, separate alleged perpetrators during the initial investigation process, and that access to victims is limited to only properly trained persons whilst they are in their care
- **clear briefing of victims** about their situation, security plans and risks using child-friendly language
- **the protection of the identity of the victim.** Media persons should not be given access to the victims which can reveal their identity. Furthermore, additional measures should be taken before organizing meetings with the media to ensure the protection of the identity of the victims
- **the provision of appropriate, gender-sensitive shelters, when necessary.** All staff who care for the child victim in these safe havens must comply with child protection regulations (such as background checks on all staff who are in contact with the children)
- **expeditious decision-making regarding the child victim**, to ensure the safety of the child's safety.

All child victims/witnesses must be provided with accessible information regarding their situation and their rights. This includes providing interpretation and information services in ways that are gender, age and disability sensitive.

The child victim/witness's views in regards to the legal process, interim care and protection, and the identification and implementation of a durable solution, must be respected. Children must be given the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting him or her, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

The child's privacy and identity must be protected. Information such as name, address and all other information that could lead to the identification of the victim or his or her family members must be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

All child victims/witnesses must have access to justice, equal protection before the law, legal aid and non-conditional legal assistance, representation, and be given compensation and effective remedy.

The best interests of the child must always be the primary consideration in all undertakings or dealings with the public or private social welfare institutions, police, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies.

All child victims/witnesses must be provided with sustainable solutions based on systematic assessment and services for recovery, reintegration and follow up to protect them. Sustainable solutions means non-shelter based housing and care facilities, when necessary, either in the same community or other communities, with their own families or foster families. Assessment requires a process of reviewing and evaluating the situation of the victims before planning recovery from traumatic experiences and reintegration into the society. Assessments include: risk assessment, socio-legal assessment, shelter assessment, community assessment, family assessments, skills and ability assessments and livelihood assessment. Furthermore, the following quality

services need to be provided: medical and health services (with male and female doctors available); psychological services; legal aid (with free access to lawyers and justice); accommodation; life skills (in their local language); skill training; spiritual services; and, recreational activities (there must be age appropriate activities for children and girls).

7) Do technological means (videoconference, video recordings, online complaints, etc.) constitute an important tool to enable children a better access to justice systems, or a better protection during a court case? Do you have examples of good practices in this respect?

Yes, technological means can help ensure the safety of the child. They must be used particularly in situations, such as trafficking, where the life of the child is potentially threatened. However, the uses of technology in developing countries have not been fully explored. In many countries the lack of juvenile justice friendly courts means that child witnesses or victims have to travel long distances to participate in justice processes. World Vision recommends that more creative uses of technology are researched and supported in developing countries to reduce the financial burden on the country and also to support the child's right to a protective environment - an environment as close to their community as possible.

In countries with poor technological infrastructure online complaints and other methods that require literacy and familiarity with technology are not appropriate. World Vision recommends the EU supports civil society organisations to provide outreach and support to children to access the justice system. It is essential that in all countries information and technology is child-friendly, age appropriate, and gender and disability sensitive.

8) Do you consider that those working in justice systems in Member States are adequately trained to address the rights and needs of children in judicial proceedings and decision-making? If not, can you identify and describe specific needs?

No, unfortunately there is still considerable lack of knowledge in regards to international rights legislation and children. This was highlighted in various interventions and Conclusions of the EU High Level Ministerial Conference, 'Towards a Global Action Against the Trafficking in Human Beings'.

Justice Policies Safe-Guarding Children's Rights

13) What are the difficulties and problems that you (or your organisation) encounter on the ground while dealing with international adoption cases (EU Member States and third countries)? What are the difficulties and problems that you (or your organisation) encounter on the ground while dealing with adoption decisions between EU Member States?

The Difficulties Encountered

World Vision is deeply concerned about international adoption decisions made during periods of conflict or in emergency crises. We are especially concerned about the push to

fast-track inter-country adoptions. Disasters or conflict not only cause catastrophic destruction and death but they can also produce further trauma by splitting up families, leaving many children alone. In emergency contexts a country(ies) infrastructure is usually severely damaged, and with it the ability to correctly identify children as orphans - as can be seen in the recent adoption crisis in Haiti.²² Taking children out of the country in the midst of chaos can compound the emotional distress that they are already suffering. It can also inflict long-term damage on their chances of recovery and create devastating loss for their parents and family members. If appropriate measures are not introduced immediately, there is a genuine fear that inept and potentially harmful evacuation efforts can lead to the trafficking of children through inappropriate or unlawful inter-country adoptions in emergency situations.²³

World Vision's Recommendations on International Adoption in Emergency Contexts

World Vision urges the EU to support the following measures to ensure the protection of children during adoption decisions in emergency situations:

- **Prevent the separation of children from parents and their families** either inadvertently at aid distribution sites, or through adoptions. In the immediate aftermath of a disaster or conflict, **apply a temporary moratorium on new international adoptions from the country(ies) affected.** No new adoption procedures of children should begin until every child has been given the best possible chance of being reunited with his or her family. It is almost always in the best interests of a child to remain with their relatives and extended family, when possible.
- **All local, national and international governmental and non-governmental agencies must take all necessary measures to mainstream the protection of child rights** in all their actions.
- **Insure a register of unaccompanied and separated children, tracing and reunification.**
- **Place vulnerable children in safe and appropriate care** within the country while the child's family is traced.²⁴

Vulnerable Groups of Children

14) **In your experience, what are the groups of children in a situation of particular vulnerability? Do you have data and figures relating to these situations?**

As a child-focused organisation, World Vision places special priority on vulnerable children. World Vision considers vulnerable children to be those 'children whose quality of life and ability to fulfill their potential is most affected by extreme deprivation and violations

²² See 'Call for Halt to Haiti Adoptions Over Traffickers', The Sunday Times, 23 January, 2010, http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us_and_americas/article6999280.ece (accessed 20 August 2010). Also, 'After Haiti Quake, the Chaos of US Adoption', The New York Times, 3 August 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/04/world/americas/04adoption.html> (accessed 20 August 2010)

²³ Adapted from joint statement to the European Parliament on Haiti and adoption issued by NGOs in Brussels, February 2010

²⁴ Adapted from joint statement to the European Parliament on Haiti and adoption issued by Brussels NGOs, February 2010

of their rights. These children often live in catastrophic situations and relationships characterised by violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, exclusion and discrimination'. This working definition includes **four vulnerability factors** which we believe assists in determining which children are most at risk, these are: 1) abuse/exploitative relationships; 2) extreme deprivation; 3) serious rights violations; and, 4) vulnerability to catastrophe/disaster.

We see vulnerability as a scale, not a state of being - children become increasingly vulnerable, until they are the most vulnerable children in communities. Through our experience of working in ninety countries in the world, we have chosen to prioritise **nine categories** of children who find themselves in situations of particular vulnerability, and with whom World Vision works. Children who fall into one of these broad categories are often poor and their basic survival is threatened. They will most often find themselves subject to multiple vulnerability factors that are difficult to overcome and interlinked. For example, girl children, who are affected by armed conflict and have ended up in sexually exploitative situations, may well be facing further challenges of HIV/AIDS, stigma and discrimination, and may become mothers early, thus extending the cycle of vulnerability.

Therefore all data has to take into account the challenge of defining boundaries for the purposes of data collection. Also World Vision recommends that all data be disaggregated according to age, gender and take into contextual challenges (such as, ethnicity, language, disability etc).

i) **Children in armed conflict.** Children represent the majority of civilians affected by armed conflict, and the number of affected children is growing. The impact of armed conflict on children differs by age and stage of development. World Vision affirms the definitions of children affected by armed conflict that includes all children drawn into conflicts not only as soldiers, but children targeted or used in conflicts to provide services, such as girl children who are targeted for sexual exploitation by armed groups. World Vision works in a number of countries, including Uganda, Sudan and Kenya, with programmes specifically targeting the 300,000 children affected by armed conflict.

ii) **Children in refugee crises/Displaced children.** About 50 per cent of the estimated 26 million people currently displaced by armed conflicts and violence are children.²⁵ Children and adolescents are often overlooked and not given high priority during the massive population shifts that accompany armed conflict. To make the situation even worse, some unaccompanied children wait years for family reunification.

iii) **Children who are deprived of parental care (CDOPC).** World Vision regards institutionalisation as an option of last resort and supports children to reunite with families or stay in communities. In 93 countries of sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean, the number of orphans (children aged 0–17 who have lost one or both parents) was estimated to be 143 million at the end of 2003. Of those children 15 million were orphaned by AIDS, more than 12 million of them in sub-Saharan Africa.²⁶ World Vision works in many of these countries on projects to provide children with safe and appropriate care options. Recent experiences from Haiti show that children living outside of parental care can be a significant percentage of the population. World Vision is also

²⁵ Celebrating 20 years of the Convention on the Rights of the Child" (2009) UNICEF, p.63 available at http://www.unicef.org/rightsite/sowc/pdfs/SOWC_Spec%20Ed_CRC_Main%20Report_EN_090409.pdf

²⁶ See http://www.unicef.org/protection/files/Parental_Care.pdf

active in new EU Member States, such as Romania, and all neighbourhood countries, where, unfortunately, institutionalisation is still far too prevalent - even when parents or family are alive. The sad consequences of inadequate care and the abuse of children's rights are frequently observed and are long lasting.

iv) **Children who are girls.** The data on the vulnerability of girl children is already complicated by the fact that even before birth, the girl child may be selectively aborted; at birth she may be killed or abandoned - 100 million girls are selectively aborted²⁷, and in China, for example, 300 of 820 women surveys admitted to trying to determine their child's sex.²⁸ As a girl child grows, she receives less food, health care and education than her brothers. She will typically work longer hours than the boy children around her, receive less education, training and lower pay, and be treated as a second-class citizen in the social, economic and legal systems that structure her life. She is extremely vulnerable to sexual exploitation through abuse, rape or prostitution; viewed as an economic and social burden, she is often married off early, becoming a bride and a mother while still a child. World Vision works on particular programmes for girls in Africa, Asia and Latin America. We mainstream a gender analysis in all our programming, which also identifies particular risks to girls and also boys as a result of their gender.

v) **Children who are sexually exploited.** The third World Congress on Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in 2008, led to strong conclusions about the value and critical importance of the participation of children in order to reach meaningful impact. Two million children are globally enslaved in sexual exploitation. The majority of these children are young girls, some under the age of five, working in brothels and forced to have sex with up to 30 men each day. World Vision implements programs targeting education, advocacy, and alternative livelihoods in countries such as Cambodia, Costa Rica, Thailand, Mexico and Brazil and EU neighbour states.

vi) **Children who are disabled.** Disabled children are among the most excluded and stigmatised of the world's children, often marginalised by society, communities and even their own families. Due to discrimination it is very difficult to collect accurate data on children with disabilities. According to a UNESCO report, 90% of children with disabilities do not attend school.²⁹ In developing countries disability is a major cause for social exclusion and poverty. In emergency situations such children are often excluded from needs assessments. Families may even hide the existence of such children due to fear of stigma. In addition consideration of the types of impairment is also needed to improve data collection as well as responses to children with disabilities (for example, physical, sensory, mental etc.). It should also be noted that many children in emergency situations may face temporary impairment due to injuries sustained or medical conditions (e.g: broken limbs in plaster, bandages etc). World Vision attempts to mainstream considerations of children with disabilities in all its responses but also supports projects in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America relating to specific impairments or groups of children with disabilities in particular contexts, especially ensuring basic survival, health, nutrition and education and also fighting for their rights more broadly.

²⁷ See 'Because I am a Girl: The State of the World's Girls in 2007', Plan International, 2007, p 10. World Vision has also documented similar findings and written about it in previous publications.

²⁸ Ibid, p 14

²⁹ Taken from UNESCO http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/know_sharing/flagship_initiatives/depliant_flagship.pdf

vii) **Children who are trafficked.** This is a global problem and there is often less data for trafficking, as well as migration in third countries. The EU has tended to focus on migration issues within an entering EU borders. Whilst World Vision recognizes that the trafficking of children is particularly complex, and a growing phenomenon into the EU, it also wishes to remind the EU that figures show that trafficking within Asia and Africa is potentially much greater than that into the European Union. This is due, in part, to porous borders and poor legal infrastructure to monitor migratory as well as trafficking movements. For example, in Nepal between 5,000 and 7,000 children are trafficked into India for sexual exploitation every year. And, in Bangladesh 200,000 children have been trafficked for sexual exploitation. Trafficking occurs in 90% of sub-Saharan African countries.³⁰

viii) **Children who are affected by HIV/Aids.** HIV/AIDs is recognised worldwide as a threat to children and their families. AIDS is the leading international cause of death for people aged 15 to 49. While many children and young people are directly infected by HIV or AIDS, many also suffer consequences of the impact of HIV/AIDS both directly (for example, close family members/carers are sick or die), but also indirectly (as seen in the impact on a country's education or health system). Orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) are particularly vulnerable - a fact recognised by EU policy on OVC. OVCs face numerous abuses of rights such as lack of access to education and means of livelihoods, loss of property, in addition to frequent burdens as caretakers of younger brothers and sisters. Through our HOPE (HIV/AIDS) programme we work through local partners including religious groups and seek to raise awareness and support community based solutions to HIV/AIDS related problems.

ix) **Children who lack proper documentation.** In some areas of the world more than 90 per cent of children are undocumented. This has enormous repercussions on the well being of the child, especially in emergency contexts. For example, the 2005 Pakistan earthquake killed an estimated 17,000 children but thousands more were left destitute because they could not prove who they were or claim what belonged to them. And, survivors of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami could not access vital services or were exposed to trafficking due to lack of identification. Reasons for the low rate of registrations vary from country to country, but can include the lack of trained registry personnel, long distances for parents to travel to the nearest registry office, or war and internal conflicts. Without birth certificates, which provide children with official identification, children are often denied access to social services, such as education and health care.

Specific Recommendations on Data

The question posed is very broad, making it difficult to respond with a concise answer. World Vision recommends that the EU take the following steps to ensure that vulnerabilities of children are incorporated and even specifically targeted throughout its activities in external relations:

- **Ensure that the vulnerabilities of children are taken into account when preparing country strategy papers.** A review of twenty Country Strategy Papers (CSPs) shows that CSPs seldom mention children and children rights. Out of twenty CSPs reviewed, only twelve had an analysis of children situation in the country concerned. Some CSPs did not include children at all while two CSPs only mentioned children as a cross-cutting issue. In CSPs that do include an analysis of children's situation, we observe that children and their special needs are not included in the focal areas, or in specific programmes, nor is the analysis linked to the financial

³⁰ 'Stop Sex Trafficking of Children and Young People', The Body Shop, 2009

assistance programming. Out of twelve CSPs that did include some analysis of children's needs, only four CSPs included children as beneficiaries in the focal areas.

- **Ensure that children are specifically named and targeted by monitoring and aid effectiveness measures.** There is a dire lack of disaggregated data enabling proper evaluation of any EU action and its impact (internally and externally).
- **Use and support existing mechanisms for identifying child rights concerns and analyzing children's vulnerabilities.** The CRC committee and national based commissions provide information on country specific situations.
- **Use and fund resources, guidelines and good practices on vulnerable children developed by civil society groups, international organizations and developing country governments.** Research and advocacy on vulnerable children is still limited and often underfunded, as is programming within the specific sectors.

15) What are the activities of your organisation relating to vulnerable groups of children? What are the difficulties and problems that you encounter on the ground when developing actions in favour of vulnerable groups of children?

World Vision's Approach to Vulnerable Children: Area Development Programmes (ADPs)

World Vision's approach to vulnerable children is implemented through our Area Development Programmes (ADPs). ADPs are a comprehensive means of addressing issues of poverty across extensive areas, usually including several communities in a similar context. Skilled local national World Vision staff work with local people to plan and implement a programme that will last for up to 15 years with the goal of establishing a stable and sustainable local organisation, many of which have already been established around the world. Through the ADP structures World Vision is able to work with communities and children to further define and identify context specific vulnerabilities and vulnerable groups. We do this through our **Design, Monitoring and Evaluation (DM&E)** approach which:

- **Analyses the child protection threats and resources in the community** and how they may be impacted, positively or negatively, by the planned programmes as part of the assessment and design process
- **Invites the meaningful participation of children and young people in the design of the programmes**, especially in helping to identify risks and opportunities relating to child protection
- **Includes community discussions and decisions** on appropriate initial feedback and complaint mechanisms in relation to child protection during the design of projects
- **Develops plans to strengthen local organisations to become more child-safe** during design discussions
- **Identifies opportunities to promote and strengthen the protective environment**
- **Assesses and minimizing child protection risks for every activity**
- **Monitors and evaluating whether children are kept safe during programme activities**, and whether efforts to promote and address child protection in communities have been successful

This DM&E approach not only helps to direct specific assistance to identified families and/or children but it also helps World Vision identify vulnerable groups who may need particular attention and support. While World Vision's activities on behalf of vulnerable children are important, we believe it is fundamental to strengthen communities so that they themselves can provide a protective environment for children, as many of the vulnerable

groups identified in the nine categories explored in this document will receive the majority of their assistance through flexible and responsive community-based structures.

World Vision's protection of vulnerable children at a community, national and international level incorporates **three main strategies: prevention, protection and restoration**. All of our programming activities will follow at least one of these strategies:

- **Preventative** activities– these **aim to prevent violation of children's rights and their descent into further vulnerability**. This includes sensitizing communities, raising awareness and strengthening families through, for example, peer education and/or creative communication (such as the radio, theatre, etc). Preventative activities can also address the structural causes of vulnerability and advocate for social protection mechanisms, such as birth registration, child benefits, and child protection services.
- **Protective** activities – these **address the violations of children's rights and the factors directly causing their vulnerability**. Protective activities aim to help remove children from harmful situations; strengthen behavior change to address exploitative/abusive situations; and/or reduce the risk to children living in dangerous/vulnerable circumstances. Such action may include providing direct assistance and services: as seen in the provision of medical assistance to sexually exploited children, or tracing families of children separated during a crisis. It may also include activities at national or international level, such as ensuring children's legal rights are respected in refugee crises.
- **Restorative** activities – these activities **address the children's right to full enjoyment of their rights and dignity and to restore them to a 'normal', that is, much less vulnerable state**. These activities include: reconciliation and long term tracing programmes for children affected by armed conflict; community-based support for child headed households; and supporting national structures; and, for example, the creation of child rights committees.

World Vision believes that the protection of vulnerable children needs to be mainstreamed within all programmes. However, the particular groups of vulnerable children that we have identified may have particular needs or challenges that require specific projects or programmes. All of our programmes for these specific groups continue to follow our basic model of protection and, as far as possible, are linked to or integrated with our community-based programmes. World Vision mainstreams child protection into all of all our activities (see Question 20).

Specific Programming

In order to briefly illustrate the way in which our theoretical community-based framework is adopted into all of our activities for vulnerable children in the ninety countries in which we work, we have identified the following examples:

i) Children in Armed Conflict

World Vision works in many conflict affected countries. It has programmes particularly targeting children severely affected by armed conflict in countries such as: Uganda, Sudan, Jerusalem, Lebanon, and Myanmar. World Vision considers that there are many factors within the international system that create and sustain conflict and have detrimental

consequences on children and their communities. As such, World Vision advocates for coherence in actions between policy statements and actions by EU actors (including companies, individuals and member state governments).

Examples of World Vision's Activities

Our expertise of building community-level conflict management capacity and desire to promote peace and reconciliation can be seen in our intentional conflict mediation programmes in the Balkans and Southeast Asia. Our staff are trained in conflict management techniques and the Local Capacities for Peace (LCP) methodology is mainstreamed in our relief and development programmes. World Vision also uses its own participatory analytical tool: Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts to help analyse the conflict drivers and this is also used in programming for children in conflict areas.

Prevention: Children are the Best Educators for Peace

World Vision has a number of projects which seek to build peace through the provision of alternatives for resolving conflicts, and the support we give children to act as peer educators. Such programmes often face challenges from adults in the community or leaders who feel threatened by the alternative methods of conflict resolution and the children's empowerment. As a result, World Vision has learned it is important to engage a wide range of actors in such programmes in order to secure widespread support. An example of our work can be found in **Kosovo**, where World Vision-run peace club, 'Kids for Peace', brings together children and youth by providing opportunity for children to interact with one another across community divisions. There are 350 children in 14 clubs engaging each other on how to make a different future. A young Kosovan girl recognises the importance of these peace clubs: *'By telling other children about how to avoid conflict and by showing them with our own behaviour, by learning more ourselves about it, then we will be able to make decisions against conflict and war, by starting now to build our skills to resolve differences, by means other than conflict'*.³¹

Protection: Safe Places to Play

World Vision provides child-friendly spaces for children in conflict affected communities in order to support their psychosocial well-being and reduce their risk to being drawn into conflict. For example, in the **Democratic Republic of Congo** World Vision provides life skills education in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs). We are assisting 26,000 children in twelve Child Friendly Spaces where children, youth and adults receive training about child rights and engage in sport and fun activities with volunteers who respect the children's mother tongue and traditions. Given the high levels of danger (of physical and sexual violence) in this context ensuring children have a safe space is an important part of strengthening their protective environment. A challenge in protective programmes, including in formal and non-formal education is that they can become a target for violence or recruitment of children. Another significant challenge is securing qualified well trained staff who are able to provide basic psychosocial support.

Restoration: Recovery takes Time

Restorative programmes often face challenges for funding and also the lack of a social welfare infrastructure in conflict affected countries. Reintegration can take up to five years or more. Children who engaged in armed conflict often face severe discrimination and are not always able to return to their original community. In **Uganda**, for example, World Vision's Gulu Child Rehabilitation Project, has been responsible for the reintegration of

³¹ See <http://meero.worldvision.org/frontline-focus/childrenofwar.html>

more than 5,000 children with their respective families and guardians after having received psycho-social support, medical attention and vocational skills to help them return to their community with self-esteem. World Vision's community development programmes have ensured that many of the children receive long-term follow up in their home communities.

Main Challenges

In our work with children in armed conflict World Vision regularly encounters the following difficulties:

- **Discrimination of children** involved in or affected by armed conflict by family, communities, and national governments.
- **Lack of livelihood opportunities** for children who were formerly actively engaged in armed conflict.
- **Insufficient long-term funding** for projects reintegrating children who have formerly participated in armed conflict. Reintegration takes time, resources and requires a sustained, long-term approach which makes finding financial resources difficult.

ii) Children in refugee crises/Displaced Children

Emergencies such as wars or natural disasters are devastating for any human population, yet children require and have the right to additional care and protection. A common feature of emergencies is that children and their families may be forced to leave their homes and are at heightened risk of becoming separated from their parents or caregivers. Separated children are at particular risk of all types of abuse and often lack legal protection. World Vision's long term development programming is supported by our humanitarian programming during international emergencies.

Examples of World Vision's Activities

Prevention: Encouraging Families to Stay Together

In **Rwanda**, World Vision works with children to prevent separation, reunite families, and help communities care for their children. Following the conflict in Rwanda World Vision's programme gave relief to 400,000 people both within Rwanda and in refugee camps in bordering Zaire and Uganda. Later, World Vision trained staff for peace-building (including addressing their own trauma from the genocide), and facilitated the building of partnerships with other organisations working for peace, and chose collaboration with the government in youth work, education and advocacy. Through our projects we assist returned refugees and other vulnerable groups with resettlement and rehabilitation.

Protection: Caring for the Individual

An example of World Vision's work to protect children's future can be found in our work with **Iraqi refugee children in Jordan**. World Vision has been helping 20,000 refugees in Jordan since 2007 by providing supplies such as food, mattresses, basic healthcare items, and psychosocial support and education for children. We also train members of local organizations in child protection and program management. Safe places for children to play and continue informal learning activities have also been constructed.

Restoration: Building Livelihoods

World Vision works with nearly 300 communities in southern and central **Chad** in 17 long-term development programmes. We aim to alleviate poverty by: improving education for children, particularly girls, as well as helping adults learn to read and write; helping

communities have access to clean water, equipping hundreds of water sources with pumps, as well as training local committees to manage and maintain their water sources; working with local associations in the fight against HIV/AIDS, supporting people to take HIV tests, and helping those living with HIV/AIDS with income-generating activities; and promoting children's rights - so far World Vision has helped 20,000 sponsored children have a birth certificate – and be recognised as a citizen of Chad where only 9% of births are registered.

Main Challenges

- **The period and location of displacement.** Children may be in 'temporary' camps for years, as is the case in Darfur, Sudan. Children may also find themselves moved out of their spontaneous camps to their home region (as in Pakistan post the 2005 earthquake) or to new camps (as seen in Port au Prince, Haiti, this year). This presents challenges to World Vision in planning and resourcing its projects and maintaining the quality of staff and resources.

iii) Children who are deprived of parental care (CDOPC)

Improving care for CDOPC contributes to all aspects of a child's well-being, whether this is by enabling vulnerable children to enjoy good health, education, or by contributing to children being cared for, protected and participating in the midst of extremely difficult circumstances.

An Example of World Vision's Activities

Protection and Restoration: Deinstitutionalisation - Helping Georgian Children into Better Care

World Vision **Georgia** (WVG) is involved in a number of deinstitutionalisation projects which aims to move children and youth from institutions to stable, family environments. WVG was the first organisation to introduce the small group home model to Georgia in 2006. The organisation has always worked in partnership with Georgia's Ministry of Education and Science, which took over funding of the programme at the beginning of 2008 and is in the process of assuming full responsibility of all full operations of the homes. The small group homes are run by host parents and try to mirror as closely as possible a 'regular' family environment. World Vision's Operation Manager, Tamuna Barkalaia, says that small group homes can serve as a model of effective alternative of care: particularly in critical cases where reintegration with biological families or foster care is not possible. The organisation has had success with group homes. Giga, a 20-year-old young man who now lives independently and works at a gas station reflected on his time in one of World Vision's small group homes, *'This house made me feel different – I feel so much care from everyone. I know that if something goes wrong, I have people who I can count on in the future.'* The relationships developed within the homes are long-term and provide life-long emotional support. World Vision Georgia is also involved in the child welfare reform process and is a long-term partner with the state in deinstitutionalisation, reunification and alternative care.

Main Challenges

- **The tendency of governments, parents, religious groups and communities to regard institutional care as a good or even best option for children.** The challenges

of poverty, lack of locally available educational opportunities and economic or environmental shocks can cause families to perceive institutions as the best option for the child. However, World Vision firmly believes that children have a right to live with their families in their home communities, and that the family is fundamentally the best place for a child to grow up.

iv) Children who are girls.

To address the injustice and inequality experienced by girls, World Vision has implemented a number of projects that work with girls who might otherwise be denied basic rights to education and economic opportunities, and has carried out interventions that address problems such as female genital mutilation, dowry, trafficking and sexual exploitation. Targeting girls for assistance does not disregard boys. Girl child initiatives seek to bring a balance in opportunity, investment and resources for girls, but effective strategies will involve and benefit boys and ultimately the whole community. World Vision conducts gender sensitisation and training to help communities understand and develop gender equality. To date, World Vision has trained more than 1,000 staff and community members with the World Vision Gender Training Toolkit. World Vision offices in Tanzania, Guatemala and Sri Lanka, amongst others, have appointed Child Rights staff members to advocate for the rights of girls. World Vision has an international Gender and Development Department which, supported by a global network of staff, promotes programming and advocacy for the empowerment of girls. In Burundi, for example, World Vision is working to influence how society values girls and women, empowering women to become more socially and economically productive, helping girls and women report sexual violence to authorities and their communities, and creating awareness with the media and other influencers to denounce all cases of violence, sexual abuse and injustice against girls and women.

An Example of World Vision's Activities

Prevention: Countering Female Genital Mutilation Practices

World Vision Programmes in **Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia** target different aspects of this harmful cultural practice. More than 2,000 girls have refused female circumcision and completed the alternative rite of passage celebration promoted by World Vision, and more than 200 boys have also participated by supporting their female peers who have refused FGM.

Protection: World Vision provides alternative income-generating activities for the women who have chosen to no longer perform FGM, such as small loans and assistance with business plans. In addition, in **Kenya**, for example, World Vision is a member of Childline Kenya, a helpline where girls in danger of FGM or early marriage can report their situation.

Restoration: In **Ethiopia** World Vision funds a clinic which handles fistula patients exclusively.

Main Challenges

- One of the main challenges facing the girl child is the **value and respect for her rights felt by male relatives**. World Vision has seen that projects that tackle the whole community's attitudes towards girls have far greater impact.

v) Children who are disabled

As has been indicated in Question 14, children who are disabled are often overlooked, especially in emergency situations. Many see disability as a 'side issue' that should be dealt with by specialist disability organisations. Work must be done with humanitarian agencies and local education authorities to ensure issues of disability are mainstreamed through all aspects of emergency response and development strategies. and are no longer viewed as an 'add on' or as belonging to the domain of 'specialist' agencies'. In order to include disabled children in education programmes, humanitarian agencies must ensure that they work with communities, families and disabled people's organisations to identify these children and address their needs. Key to including disabled children in education interventions is awareness amongst humanitarian personnel, communities, families and teachers about the right of disabled children to education. Training should also be provided on how disabled children can be effectively included in education programmes through child-centred teaching methodology, accessible buildings and countering negative attitudes towards disabled children and education.

An Example of World Vision's Work

Protection: An example of how World Vision addresses the challenges faced by disabled children, can be found in our work in **Pakistan**. Following the earthquake that hit the country in 2005, World Vision - through 17 children's councils organised as part of World Vision's child protection programming - identified 512 children in and around the city of Balakot who had been left with physical impairments and were homebound since the quake. Most of the children were injured when schools collapsed during the disaster. Identifying children with disabilities is the first step into addressing their needs and understanding what resources are required for follow up.

Main Challenges

- **The lack of mainstreaming of issues of disability through all aspects of emergency and development strategies.** Addressing disability must not be viewed as an 'add on' or as belonging to the domain of 'specialist agencies'. In order to include disabled children in education programmes, government and social agencies must ensure that they work with communities, families and disabled people's organisations to identify these children and address their needs.

vi) Children who are sexually exploited

Children who suffer sexual violence are often blamed for the crime, feel too ashamed to tell anyone, may demonstrate behavioural problems due to lack of appropriate adult guidance, are more vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse, property and land grabbing and labour exploitation, and are reluctant to report the violence to authorities for fear they won't be taken seriously. Through our work in communities, World Vision is uniquely positioned to address the problem of sexual violence. All staff are trained on our child protection policy for a child safe organisation, and World Vision's child protection networks and children-in-crises units are being built up in every community which we work.

Examples of World Vision's Work

Prevention: Raising Awareness

World Vision has initiated a number of awareness-raising activities, such as campaigns aimed at reducing the flow of girls from rural areas to urban brothels. Building such activities into income generation, HIV and AIDS awareness, and maternal and child health programmes in **Thailand, Myanmar/Burma and Cambodia** has ensured that awareness-raising is owned and managed by local people. World Vision has also undertaken projects aimed at those most at risk, such as the street children of **Dhaka, Bangkok, Manila and Phnom Penh**. The role of parental education, awareness-raising and poverty reduction cannot be underestimated in the larger fight to end the sexual exploitation of children. In 2004, World Vision, in partnership with the US State Department and US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), introduced the Child Sex Tourism Prevention Project in the **United States, Thailand, Costa Rica and Cambodia**. The project aimed to warn Americans of the serious consequences for anyone participating in child sex tourism. The messages were positioned in places where potential child abusers would see them, such as airports, on television and on roadside billboards. In **Cambodia**, World Vision has worked with law enforcement agencies to build their capacity to deal humanely with the rapidly growing problem of child prostitution and has also worked with the Ministry of Tourism to research the problem of sex tourism. World Vision also seeks child-friendly legal reform and specific interventions that will strengthen responses where exploitation occurs. During the First World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (Stockholm, 1995), World Vision's ground-breaking report *The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children* was a major contribution to the process surrounding the Congress. World Vision has also convened the Sub-Group on Sexual Exploitation for the NGO Group on the Rights of the Child, and in this role participated in the international planning committee for the Second World Congress. A further positive example occurred during the third World Congress on Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents (WCIII) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 2008. 300 children and adolescents from around the world participated. Of this number, a further group of children participated in the drafting of the overall conclusions of the conference, which emphasised the importance of child participation.

Main Challenges

- **The lack of international legal frameworks and judicial coordination to help prosecute offenders/users of commercial sexual exploitation.** While some European countries, such as the UK and the Netherlands, have made some progress in this area, World Vision staff from our Cambodian project are concerned about the challenges of convicting paedophiles in other European countries, like France, for instance.
- **Overcoming the stigma attached to children involved in sexual exploitation.**
- **The lack of long-term funding** needed to care for children rescued from sexual exploitation (this includes funding for training staff and the provision of livelihood options).

vii) Children who are trafficked

As has already been stated, World Vision recognises trafficking as a worldwide phenomenon. Trafficking is also difficult to define and we work actively to inform children of the challenges and potential dangers of migration.

Examples of World Vision's Work

Prevention and Protection: Awareness Raising and Life Skills Training

In **Georgia and Romania**, World Vision is responding to victims of trafficking, providing direct services and referral. In Georgia, for example, we have set up a hotline staffed by the government, have led the training of social and public health workers, developed materials and university curriculum, and set up a regional network of social workers and a joint database. The project is expanding to work among teachers, social agents, public health workers and institutionalised youth; providing information, resources, as well as life skills and employment help. As a result, World Vision was invited by the government to participate on the Interagency Coordination Council with five government ministries and multi-lateral bodies. Together they will help write the next National Action Plan on human trafficking. Children from around Georgia are preparing their own council to provide direct contributions. They will join children from around Eastern Europe for a stronger movement against trafficking. A **World Vision survey of 327 persons** of the general population of Georgia (of which 10 per cent were under 18 years of age) revealed that:

- of the total respondents, 10.5% acknowledged they had been offered a job abroad, and 10 per cent acknowledged they were actively seeking a job abroad
- many respondents said that they did not know who to address in researching a job offer or in what ways they could get accurate information on a job offer abroad.

Main Challenges

- As noted, due to the challenges of staffing borders, and due to the huge economic pressures on children and youth, trafficking is a global problem. A major **challenge is to equip judiciary systems to identify, gather and prosecute traffickers.**

viii) Children who are infected/impacted by HIV/AIDS

The impact of HIV/AIDS on children is far-reaching. Children may suffer from severe psychosocial distress, lack food, shelter, clothing, and/or health care. They may be abandoned and left to grow up in state institutions and children's homes, in child-headed households, or on the street. They may be forced to drop out of school or be required to care for younger siblings or chronically ill adults. Clearly, orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) are at a distinct disadvantage. They may face discrimination, abuse or exploitation. They may also be vulnerable to HIV infection. To help children affected by HIV/AIDS World Vision works in partnership with governments, faith communities, peer agencies, local communities, families and children, responding to HIV and AIDS-related needs in nearly 60 countries.

Examples of World Vision's Work

Prevention: Community Awareness Raising

In **Bosnia-Herzegovina**, World Vision initiated the Partnership in Prevention and Combating HIV and AIDS Project seeking to raise awareness among the public and with relevant authorities on HIV prevention practices, sexual and reproductive health, drug abuse, and social inclusion of people living with HIV and AIDS. Project leaders work closely with parents, pupils, and teachers, and train 120 peer educators. The use of young adults and activists trained and certified as peer educators ensures that the information is disseminated effectively and knowledge is transferred to the community. Parents are

provided with information that will enable them to create an open dialogue with their children about sensitive issues, especially in areas where the topic is culturally taboo. This project includes 200 peer education workshops for 2,500 students in 31 schools.

More generally, World Vision seeks to provide expanded prevention for youth aged 5 to 24 years through values-based and age-appropriate life-skill training, peer education and targeting of key stakeholders who impact children. We also work with vulnerable population groups to limit the spread of HIV through comprehensive health awareness programmes. Our HOPE Initiative - our organisation's HIV and AIDS programs - focuses on mobilising community-based care for orphans and vulnerable children, mobilising and sensitising faith communities to the needs of those affected by HIV and AIDS and motivating them to respond in effective ways, and providing children with the resources they need in order to make healthy life decisions to avoid acquiring HIV. One in five programmes addressing HIV in the world is conducted by a faith-based organisation.³² We have also developed a local-level advocacy model - Vulnerable Child Advocacy - to help communities change their government policies and practices to respond to HIV and AIDS. As a result we have worked with nearly one million children and young people each year to help equip them as well as their parents, peers and environment to prevent further transmission of the virus. In addition, World Vision, advocating through UN and global forums, has raised the profile of children affected by HIV and the need for resources required for the global response. For instance, World Vision Austria hosted the child-focused pre-conference at the recent International AIDS Conference in Vienna; and, we have created influential relationships with international partners and networks through our work on HIV. We have also assured that HIV and AIDS programming is included in emergency situations.

Protection: Community Care

World Vision seeks to protect and strengthen family and community care for orphans and vulnerable children through our development and implementation of core models, including Channels of Hope and Community Care Coalitions, to organise and mobilise communities, including faith leaders to understand and respond with compassion to those suffering because of AIDS. And, we have seen promising results:

- our current HIV portfolio programmes serve 1.3 million vulnerable children;
- the Hope Initiative provides care through 73,000 home visitors, training 60,700 child peer HIV educators, and forming 6,700 peer support groups (among others);
- 93 per cent of our area development programmes and projects are engaged in advocacy for vulnerable children

Main Challenges

- Many of the challenges are noted under other sections (such as lack of legal protection, stigma and discrimination). Despite advances in access to healthcare many sufferers face problems in avoiding infection and access ARVs regularly.

ix) Children who lack proper documentation

Children without proper documentation are a growing problem globally as populations are increasingly mobile. For example, in the context of growing urbanisation, children without

documentation may lack access to basic services. Lack of documentation coupled with illiteracy disempowers children and their families.

An Example of World Vision's Work

Prevention and Protection: Valuing Roma communities

World Vision has placed Roma rights among its top three advocacy priorities in the Eastern European region. World Vision is working with programming, advocacy and local Roma leaders to fight discrimination at every level against the Roma. Adopting the motto 'Nothing about us, without us' World Vision is engaged in a three year project entitled 'Fighting Discrimination and Stigma against Roma population'. The project has a strong education and advocacy component and aims to construct a positive dialogue between Roma and non-Roma that includes all the key players in the community, from grassroots to government, schools, churches, children and parents and the media. In **Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania**, for example, under specific World Vision programmes, such as "Children in Crisis" and Child Sponsorship, Roma communities have been integrated into a variety of projects. Here, World Vision has undertaken projects specifically created for Roma children and their families in recognition that the Roma in our region are amongst the most vulnerable people we serve.

Main Challenges

- The overwhelming **discrimination** that Roma people face, coupled with the **lowest literacy** rates in Europe, has ensured that Roma children are prevented from fulfilling their potential. World Vision's experience has shown that when Roma communities feel ownership of initiatives then results can be dramatic.

16) **Are you aware of good practices, initiatives or programmes that contribute to a better protection of the most vulnerable groups of children? Are you aware of cross border initiatives in this area (e.g. cooperation, or participation in common projects, with organisations in other Member States, exchanges of good practice, etc.)?**

There are excellent documents by numerous organizations, in particular UNICEF, Child Rights Information Network (CRIN), and the Child Rights Action Group (CRAG) through which World Vision has contributed in-depth recommendations to the EC (for example on child participation). As a respected child focused agency World Vision has also participated independently for other child rights related consultations, as seen in the ECHO consultation on Child Protection in emergencies. We encourage the EC to start implementing the well-known examples of good practice that it already has, and to monitor the implementation of globally recognized best practices. We further urge the EC to use the many studies, resources and academic articles that already exist of evaluating good practices and devising guidelines for quality child rights work, in its own practice.

17) **What concrete initiatives do you consider necessary to better protect the rights and promote the best interests of vulnerable children? Do you consider that the EU can contribute to these initiatives and if so how?**

As the largest aid donor in the world the European Union has a crucial role to play in contributing to the protection and promotion of child rights. In order to maximise its impact

on the most vulnerable children, World Vision asks that the EU consider the following recommendations which, firstly, set out specific suggestions relating to vulnerable groups of children, and, secondly, sets out general considerations:

i) Children in Armed Conflict

Given that many factors within the international system create and sustain conflict and have negative consequences on children and their communities, the impact of a conflict to continue long past the official peace; World Vision calls for coherence between policy statements and actions by EU actors (including companies, individuals and member state governments), and to allow sufficient time and funding for conflict affected children to reunify and reintegrate into their communities, and ensure proper research and monitoring.

To assist World Vision in the challenges faced by children caught in conflict, World Vision asks the European Union to take the following actions:

Prevention

- **Stop the use of child soldiers** through effective implementation of the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, and the non-recruitment and non-deployment of those under age 18.
- **Implement the call of the Security Council** to ‘restrict arms transfers which could aggravate existing tensions...and collaborate in combating illegal arms flows’
- **Give the needs of children higher priority** in World Bank, International Monetary Fund, EC and Member State country strategies. In conflict-prone countries, seek public child-impact assessments of fiscal policies and monitor the policies’ commitment to the CRC.
- **With the active participation of children, invest more resources in preventive peacebuilding initiatives** within community development programmes
- **Support initiatives specifically designed to promote non-violent conflict resolution** and to reduce demand for weapons

Protection

- **Strengthen early warning systems.** Establish a child-focused early intervention team to aggressively monitor and report systemic violations, as well as an effective mechanism to pursue complaints of serious violations through UN channels
- **Promote and implement strategies based on the concept of children as ‘zones of peace’**, enforce Geneva Convention prohibitions against attacks on schools, hospitals and places where children congregate
- **More actively protect children’s rights to access humanitarian assistance**, and allocate more resources to the needs of children in camps for displaced persons
- **Maximise young people’s participation**, and make them aware of the risks and consequences of involvement in armed conflict

Recovery and Reintegration

- **Establish education** as a key component of emergency assistance
- **Give priority to children’s issues early in the peace process**, using such means as civil society children’s advocates drafting child-specific provisions in peace agreements
- **Implement child-specific demobilisation and reintegration efforts** that expedite a clear break with military life. Allow a sufficient time frame of successful reintegration and promote active participation by young people in their communities

- **Pay special attention to the needs of girls**, including reproductive health services and overcoming community rejection - especially following sexual abuse by enemy forces
- **Use community-based approaches** to deal with the psycho-social impacts of conflict, with respect for the children's cultural context

In addition to the above recommendations World Vision also calls for **further action** to be taken by the European Union:

- **Increased funding** for the prevention of armed conflict and grassroots peacebuilding by governments
- **Improved interaction** between grassroots peace builders and UN agencies, especially the UNDP
- **Inclusion of peacebuilding objectives in the MDGs**
- **Collection of disaggregated data by age on key indicators**
- **Sufficiently funded research and monitoring of EU interventions**

ii) Children in refugee crises/Displaced Children

Despite interest by ECHO, and a consultation by experts, guidelines for delegation staff, and intentions to increase the opportunity for Child Protection during emergencies, such activities have not yet received the attention or funding that is necessary.

World Vision's work of supporting displaced children would be greatly assisted if the EU implemented the following recommendations:

Provide children with access to education. The right for children to have access to non-formal education becomes even more critical during emergencies, and minimum standards of safe, inclusive, quality education must be maintained.

Ensure that all emergency relief workers are trained on children's vulnerabilities during an emergency, and how to protect children. This also involves relief workers educating children and their families on the dangers of sexual abuse and exploitation, trafficking, child labour and other vulnerabilities that are faced by displaced children. As part of their education, children should learn about their rights and participate in making decisions that will affect their lives.

Prioritise the establishment of Children-Friendly Spaces (CFS). Child-friendly spaces are places where children can go to play, relax and learn. The spaces are designed to help children learn about the emergency around them, and deal with the challenges they are encountering. The spaces also provide a meeting place where parents can support one another. World Vision has found that children-friendly spaces are an important means of providing care, support and protection for children in emergencies. Emergencies present the risk of being separated from family members, or of being caught up or injured in hostilities or by the effects of natural disaster. In all emergencies and according to the context, World Vision creates child friendly spaces as soon as the situation allows. These are spaces to shield children from the effects of the emergency and help them cope with emergency situations and loss. They are places of learning and of recreation, giving the community a chance to engage with the process of helping children return to a sense of normality. CFS can be established anywhere, and can be as simple as a large tent or supervised open area. CFS provide a location in which children can receive formal or non-formal education, give parents or care-givers a chance to hand over the responsibility for the children for short periods and, critically, give the children a safe place to be.

Establish family tracing programmes. This needs to involve searching for parents, guardians or family of separated children, and ensure that all children receive birth registration papers. World Vision's family tracing programme has been very successful in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe.

Ensure application of legal frameworks and accountability in emergency situations. World Vision believes that it is not a lack of legal frameworks that allows so many children in emergencies to become increasingly vulnerable. Rather, it is the poor application of those frameworks and their lack of accountability. Furthermore, the protection of children in emergencies requires a combination of international humanitarian law, international and regional human rights law, and national legislation; however there must be firm measures to ensure compliance with each level of law. In addition, a greater emphasis should be placed on **prevention strategies**. World Vision adopts a child-focused strategy as laid out in the Oslo Conference, which developed detailed recommendations for improving coordination and implementation of family reunification programmes. This includes: birth registration; prevention of separation whenever possible; and early family reunification.

Support children in refugee situations. In order to assist children caught up in refugee crises, World Vision believes that the following action, if taken by the EU and the international community, would help the most defenceless and vulnerable in society:

- **Provide refugee children with desperately-needed education solutions.**
 - Immediately fund education solutions for refugee children across the region and ease the burden of host countries
 - Ask host countries to permit the implementation of informal and formal educational solutions for refugee children, accommodating reasonable and responsible alternatives provided by the NGO community
 - Ensure official recognition of past schooling, allowing for grade advancement
- **Provide children in refugee situations with proper health care, for both their physical, psychological, and emotional needs**
 - Fund clinics addressing the special health needs of children while easing the burden of host countries
 - Explore measures for mental health care targeting the special needs of children, some of whom have suffered extraordinary levels of mental and physical violence
- **Provide a 'way out' for vulnerable children and their families**
 - Establish reasonable certification procedures for this population in exile - including the children - by providing a form of recognised status and expedited processing
 - Provide expanded admissions to other countries, particularly for families with children.

iii) Children who are deprived of parental care (CDOPC)

In our extensive work with CDOPC World Vision has found that the following recommendations - based on our foundations for alternative care, strengthening families, strengthening communities, engaging national governments, empowering children and supporting caregivers - are highly effective in protecting and caring for these vulnerable children. As such our recommendations to the European Union are to:

Promote awareness and full implementation of the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children. The Guidelines were adopted by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) on 20 November 2009 - the same day that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

celebrated its 20th anniversary. The Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children are intended to enhance the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and other relevant provisions of international and regional human rights law, in matters of protection and well-being of children who are in need of alternative care, or at risk of so being. It therefore focuses on two main aspects:

- **ensure that children do not find themselves placed in alternative care unnecessarily;** and
- **where out-of-home care is provided,** it is provided in appropriate conditions which **respond to the child's rights, needs and best interests.**

Establish an agreed foundation of alternative care:

- **Seek the best interests of the child.** The overriding guiding principle for all planning for alternative care interventions is the child's best interests. The 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) affirms the norm of the best interests of the child as the primary consideration of all actions affecting children. Because the UNCRC has been signed and ratified by 192 countries, this norm represents an international standard for all nations and agencies to observe. Regardless of the position of models upon any designated hierarchy of community-based care options, the decisions involving alternative care must ultimately be in the best interests of the child. Defining processes for determining the child's best interests must be a priority for every organisation involved in alternative care.
- **Seek family-like care environments.** A family-like environment provides the child with experience necessary for social and cultural development, and the ability to attain economic self-sufficiency as the child becomes an adult. Families model for children's social skills, teach them how to negotiate cultural aspects of life, and provide them with experience and knowledge of income-generating activities (Williamson, 2004, p. 4). Within their families, children absorb the values of their culture and develop the skills they will need in adulthood (Olson et. al., 2006, p. 4). In addition, psychological studies have provided insight into the importance of a secure relationship with an adult caregiver for the healthy social and emotional development of a child. This has been referred to as the 'attachment theory' (Bowlby, 1999). World Vision believes that children grow and thrive best in a family-based environment (WVI, 2007). Whether in extended families, foster families, adoptive families, or family-like group homes, children should be given the protection, love and support they are entitled to within a family-like environment.
- **Utilise a child well-being approach within a rights-based framework.** Alternative care options should be implemented with a primary focus on child well-being, a concept well articulated in the UNCRC rights-based framework. The UNCRC challenges all duty-bearers to work towards the goal of child rights. This goal includes, among other things, seeking the best interests of the child, developing the child's capacities, and providing provision for and protection of the child. The UNCRC assigns accountability to the State when such rights are not achieved. Although the UNCRC provides a starting definition to child well-being, World Vision adds further language: Aside from child rights, child well-being includes the actual quality of the child's life and relationships. A child well-being approach, enabled by the child rights framework, allows for a holistic vision of 'life in all its fullness' for children.
- **Seek integration.** All forms of alternative care should keep the focus on preparing a child for integrating into society, whether through reunification with his or her original family, integration into a new family or family-style group in a community setting, or through independent living and adulthood. A child needs to be supported in shaping his or her future. Alternative care arrangements and monitoring must revolve around the central goal of integrating the child into society.

- **Do no harm.** As external agents, the European Union and international NGOs must recognise their ability to cause harm to communities, families and children. Organisations need to be conscious about how their methods for child care might compromise a child's safety, and implement protection mechanisms to avoid those risks. In addition, without a thorough understanding of the context, a NGO can unintentionally subvert community support for the most vulnerable. Resources given to one people-group over another can cause resentment and discrimination. External support can relieve a community from their own sense of responsibility, disrupt existing community actions, create dependency and halt traditional coping mechanisms (Grainger, Webb & Elliott, 2001). In every context, the risk of doing harm should be assessed prior to any programming and action must be taken to minimise any risk. All programmes should be organised and implemented to strengthen community mechanisms and local people. When a community takes responsibility for the care of vulnerable children, NGO or social providers are able to focus on programmes for raising awareness, training and capacity development, strengthening data collection and analysis, linking communities with resources, and advocacy (Richter, Manegold & Pather 2004, pp. 19-20). However, when social structures and services are broken or underdeveloped, international NGOs must ensure that vulnerable children are protected (ICRC, 2004. p. 2). NGOs can then develop interventions to care for children in need, but present them as models for local agencies to duplicate. Financial or material support might be necessary for a limited period of time, but plans for financial independence should be developed and implemented. Every attempt must be made to develop local ownership and responsibility without jeopardising the safety and development of children.
- **Incorporate into community development.** Interventions for alternative care should be part of a larger community development effort that increases a community's own knowledge and ability to care for the most vulnerable individuals in their community. External interventions for one specific type of CDOPC without community input or support can cause problems. For example, providing exclusive services to child-headed households (CHHs) not only ignores the needs of other children who may need the services more, but can also cause resentment towards children in CHHs. Or, if special services are provided to children in group homes, impoverished extended relatives caring for CDOPC may be more motivated to hand the child over to a group home. The United Nations' (2001) Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS recognises the importance of community development in reducing the vulnerability of HIV/AIDS orphans and suggests that services should not only focus on orphaned children or CDOPC, but target all of the most vulnerable children in the community through a participatory process. Community development and capacity building is essential to build community assets for and commitment to the long-term, sustainable care of CDOPC.
- **Seek an insider's perspective.** External agencies need to recognise their need for greater understanding of the local culture, context and community.³³ An insider's perspective is invaluable and necessary for efficient and successful programming, especially in developing appropriate alternative care options for children deprived of parental care.

³³ In the article 'Orphan Care in Malawi: Current practices,' B. Beard (2005) states that the greatest resources of knowledge on how to help Africans are Africans: Help begins by trying to understand African culture and not by imposing our Westernised culture. It starts... by listening to the children and the people of Africa as they tell us what they want to do and what we can do not for them but with them (p. 114).

- **Avoid potential for discrimination and stigmatisation.**³⁴

Strengthen Families

- **Strengthen the capacity of families.** The family, both immediate and extended, is the natural support network in crisis situations. Efforts must focus on strengthening the capacity of families to care for their own, not only as a preventative measure to CDOPC, but also to reinforce kinship care. Family preservation is the preferred option to other forms of community care and therefore strengthening families must be a priority (George, 2003, p. 355). In *The Framework for the Protection, Care and Support of Orphans and Vulnerable Children Living in a World with HIV and AIDS*, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2004) promotes strengthening the capacity of family as the first key strategy in caring for CDOPC and recommends providing economic, psychosocial and other support. Capacity building for families might also include: arranging access to savings and credit mechanisms through village banking programmes; vocational training of parents or youth; reducing demands on household members by assisting in household farming or access to potable water; freeing up time for parents to undertake income-generating activities by providing child care; or making arrangements for permanent child placement prior to parental death through writing of wills and conversations with the child (Hunter & Williamson, 2000, p. 7). The principle of strengthening family capacity refers to foster families or other community-based care arrangements as well, so that strong families are a feature of every community-based care arrangement for children.
- **Increase social protection for families.** Social protection can be described as 'all initiatives, both formal and informal, that provide: social assistance to extremely poor individuals and households; social services to groups who need special care or would otherwise be denied access to basic services; social insurance to protect people against the risks and consequences of livelihood shocks; and social equity to protect people against social risks such as discrimination or abuse' (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004). World Vision has an increasing interest and experience in social assistance for children, including family and child allowances, social pensions, and in-kind provisions. In a recent discussion paper, the organisation presented the rationale for 'child-focused social assistance,' arguing that social protection interventions must be structured so as to impact children and their families (Stephenson & Clarke, 2007). Social protection mechanisms have great potential for reducing poverty and empowering the poor, therefore strengthening poor families' ability to care for children. Vulnerable households which provide care for CDOPC (whether original or foster family) could often greatly benefit from social assistance schemes that help them build and maintain a margin for child protection and care.
- **Maintain contact with family.** The child's relationship with his or her family of origin should be encouraged, maintained and supported, if this is in the best interests of the child and if the child chooses to do so (IFCO et. al., 2007, p. 33; Richter et. al., 2004, p.

³⁴ NGOs must take the appropriate measures to ensure that children in alternative care are not stigmatised, and to combat existing discrimination within the community. In *Save the Children's First Resort Series: Facing the Crisis*, David Tolfree (2005) describes how the term 'orphan' can carry connotations of misfortune and a loss of social status. Tolfree recognises that the stigma associated with orphanhood is often compounded by other factors, such as HIV and AIDS, disability, and gender. Tolfree also suggests that community members charged with caring for such children are not immune to these deep-seated cultural beliefs and therefore may be a threat to the healthy development of children (p. 3). Stigma and social exclusion can also be a problem for children who have had certain experiences such as living on the street, sexual exploitation, or children whose parents died of HIV and AIDS-related illnesses or who may be HIV-positive themselves. Social education, such as developing empathy or teaching the basics of HIV transmission and prevention, can reduce community ignorance and stigma (Mathambo & Richter, 2007, p. 77), and prepare households to provide community-based care for children from these difficult situations.

39). Contact with family can decrease a child's experience of trauma and distress, support the process of returning the child to the original family, and provide the child with a sense of identity and belonging. Even some children with very abusive histories report that they like meeting their parents, in monitored and controlled situations. However, the family situation must be thoroughly assessed to consider whether contact is in the best interests of the child. If unrestricted contact with the family is not considered to be in the best interests of the child, for example the family is not deemed safe due to past abuse or exploitation, then special consideration should be taken to facilitate interactions, such as supervised visitation at a neutral location. In the absence of family with whom to maintain contact the most proxy family contact arrangement based on local context might be encouraged.

Strengthen Communities

- **Strengthen and support community-based responses.** External agencies must attempt to build on a community's existing strengths to ensure sustainability and community ownership (Tolfree, 2005, p. 20). In the HIV/AIDS context, World Vision, UNICEF (2004) and others identifies mobilising and supporting community-based responses as the key strategy for the protection, care, and support of orphans and vulnerable children, for example engaging local leaders to respond to the needs of vulnerable community members, organising and supporting activities that enable community members to talk about the issues, and organising cooperative support activities. World Vision has developed the Community Care Coalition (CCC) project model. This approach mobilises communities to care and support the most vulnerable children in a community by bringing together various entities within the community for decision-making, while utilising community volunteers for the identification, monitoring, support and protection of vulnerable children (Newsome, 2008). With the necessary adjustments, this model could be adapted to other situations of CDOPC, drawing on the community for the knowledge and resources necessary for alternative care models. NGOs must be willing to give up control to community stakeholders and become a facilitating agency, empowering the community to care for its own vulnerable members.
- **Create a supportive environment for children.** Not all communities are immediately open to care for vulnerable children due to cultural beliefs and stigmas. In such cases, it is therefore important that an external agency assist in creating an enabling environment through community awareness and education. Efforts might include changing public recognition of the problems of children from 'their problem' to 'our problem,' providing information on the child's situation and challenging myths (Hunter & Williamson, 2000, p. 10). By overcoming ignorance and discrimination, a community will become more inclined to support their children. Local advocacy for children's issues can transform attitudes. It is the most vulnerable children who are often overlooked by the community, especially children with disabilities in many communities. For example, in World Vision's Middle East and Eastern Europe region, children with disabilities were often placed in institutions to keep them 'away' from other children and society. Within this paradigm, institutional staff worked on the medical model of disability. That is, that they should work to 'fix' the problem that the child has in order for the child to become a member of society. If the 'problem cannot be fixed,' then the child is sequestered away from society. NGOs must work to encourage inclusive societies and systems that can adapt to the special needs of children. By overcoming ignorance and discrimination, a community will become more inclined to supporting their children.
- **Facilitate collaboration.** No single organisation can provide the necessary long-term holistic support needed for CDOPC. Therefore interventions require innovative partnerships, collaboration, and a referral network to meet health care, food, education,

shelter, psychosocial, spiritual, legal, protection and economic needs (Wakhweya, Dirks & Yaboah, 2008, p. 26). A multi-sectoral approach should include all relevant government departments, NGOs, community-based organisations, religious bodies, schools, local businesses and others, as part of a continuum of care (Parry-Williams, 2005, pp. 15-16). Collaboration combines efforts to strengthen the community's capacity to care for vulnerable families and children.

- **Utilise community volunteers.** Children in alternative care should be given the opportunity to talk with someone outside of their placement who can ensure or monitor for adequate protection and care (Tolfree, 2005, p. 12). This role can be filled by a paid social worker, but trained community volunteers can provide the same support. These community volunteers serve as secondary caregivers to vulnerable children who need adult figures whom they can trust and who can provide them with affection, supervision and stability (Richter et. al., 2004, p. 39). World Vision's CCC model relies on 'home visitors,' community volunteers who visit the children on a regular basis to monitor the child's well-being; to provide care for chronically ill and HIV-infected family members; to protect the child from abuse and neglect through advocacy, awareness raising and referrals; and to teach life skills (Newsome, 2008). Relying on community volunteers encourages neighbourly bonds, increases community members' child care skills and supports programme sustainability.
- **Place children within the community or a similar context.** Children should remain within their community, not only to decrease the child's distress in moving to a new community (Richter et. al., 2004, p. 39), but also to reinforce community responsibility, engage traditional coping mechanisms and strengthen the community's capacity to care for their children. However, there are exceptions where keeping children within their original communities is not preferred or possible, such as scenarios where there is danger of strong discrimination or of abuse from community members, or where the community cannot be identified. In these situations, efforts should be taken to place a child within a similar context to their original community, for example, placing children from a rural community into another rural community with similar cultural norms.
- **Integrate children into community.** Every community-based alternative care model must include activities that integrate children into their surrounding community to ensure the long-term growth and development of the child into a functioning member of society. Special care for social and cultural integration should be incorporated in the core programming of institutional models, such as children's villages (SOS- Kinderdorf International, 2005, section 4.7). A reciprocal benefit occurs for both children and communities when children participate as active citizens in community decision-making, as classmates in schools, as participants in cultural activities and as eventual contributors to the local economy.

Engage Governments of Partner Countries

- **Support partner governments' responsibility for social protection.** National governments must be held accountable to their responsibility to provide social protection for their citizens and supported to ensure that social protection programmes directly benefit poor families and children. Article 9 of UNHCHR's International Covenant of Social, Economic and Cultural Rights (1966) recognises the right of social security and highlights the state's obligation. NGOs' roles include advocating for the establishment and implementation of effective social protection systems. In addition, NGOs also have a role in facilitating support of government programmes. For example, social cash transfers (SCTs) are one social protection mechanism that is gaining support among humanitarian organisations. It is vital that much thought is put into the decision of which form of SCTs is appropriate for a specific intervention's context and objectives: conditional or unconditional, vouchers or cash, 'cash for work', food aid or other forms

(Bailey & Savage, 2008). NGOs can inform the decision of which form of SCTs the government should use and provide advice for the structure of the mechanism. NGOs also have an important role to play in making those SCTs effective for protection and support of vulnerable families and children. World Vision supports the use of government SCTs in the appropriate form and context, and promotes programme interventions that complement government programmes with community-based monitoring and support to ensure that children benefit from the increased household income (Stephenson & Clarke, 2007). When communities and families are strengthened by government social protection and SCTs, they are better equipped to care for the needs of CDOPC. Households that take in orphans or other CDOPC can be greatly strengthened in their ability to care and protect these children through SCTs.

Empower Children

- **Increase the capacity of children to meet their own needs.** The focus of community-based interventions for CDOPC needs to be increasing the capacity of children and young people to meet their own needs and resilience at age-appropriate levels, through formal education, vocational development and life-skills training. For child-headed households, free childcare for younger siblings and free meals at school can decrease the burden on heads of households, thus freeing them to attend school. Promoting policies which waive school fees and uniform requirements and provide free transportation eliminates prohibitive school expenses. Flexible school hours provide youth with time to assist with household chores and income-generating activities (Hunter & Williamson, 2000, p. 9). Vocational training through apprenticeships and skills training are effective for developing a child's financial ability to support him or herself (Olson et. al., 2006, p. 9). Children should be offered life-skills training to improve survival skills and define a better life for themselves and their community.
- **Do not separate siblings.** Siblings should not be separated by placement in alternative care unless it is in the children's best interests (Government of Brazil, 2007, p. 5; IFCO et. al., 2007, p. 24). Siblings provide life-long support for one another and provide a sense of family identity. Practitioners have discovered that keeping siblings together is often one of the best child protection and psychosocial care and support interventions (Interview with Stefan Germann, 2 March 2009).
- **Assist in maintaining a child's sense of identity.** It is important that a child maintains a sense of identity when placed in an alternative community-based care arrangement, especially when his or her parents have died. Children who lose their parents lose a connection to their history and heritage (Olson et. al., 2006, p. 15). A life story book or box with information, pictures and mementos of the family and child's life created by both the dying parent and the child can promote a child's self-identity (Government of Brazil, 2007, p. 16). Victims of trafficking should be helped to obtain necessary documents for establishing his or her identity, such as a birth certificate (SARI, p. 9).
- **Facilitate after-care support.** After the child has left an alternative care arrangement, he or she should have the opportunity to receive assistance and support so as to smooth the transition into the new living arrangement and avoid a major disruption in the child's or young adult's life. Contact with caregivers and peers from the former care arrangement should also continue, serving as an emotional support network (IFCO et. al., 2007, p. 55).

Support Caregivers

- **Support income-generating activities for caregivers.** Poverty should not be a deciding factor in determining a family's ability to take in and care for a child in need. Community-based care models must help caregivers provide for children by strengthening their ability to earn livelihoods through income-generating activities, micro-

finance loans, and small business training (Olson et. al., 2006, p. 8). When possible, income-generating assistance should be preferred over allowances or payments which lead to dependence and decrease sustainability. However, regular monitoring is required to evaluate the effectiveness of the income-generating activity and the family's ability to care for the child.

- **Train caregivers.** Caregivers should receive continuous training and professional support in developmentally-appropriate childcare and effective parenting practices in order to provide quality care and avoid potential for harmful or abusive parenting approaches (IFCO et. al., 2007, p. 35; Grainger et. al., 2001). Training should include health and nutrition screening, HIV/AIDS prevention, child protection monitoring, psychosocial support and enhancing the needs of children with disabilities and special needs.
- **Develop special assistance to older caregivers.** The duty to care for children often falls on grandparents or older caregivers. However, these older caregivers might lack the physical and economic ability or parenting skills to care for children. Governments should be held responsible to provide social security to meet the economic needs of these vulnerable caregivers. Special supportive services allow older caregivers the opportunity to provide for children and allow children the opportunity to be raised in a supportive and loving household. Along with economic and physical support, older caregivers may also be in need of training and support in intergenerational parenting skills (Interview with Stefan Germann, 2 March 2009).

iv) Children who are girls.

World Vision asks that the EU take the following action to protect girl children:

- **Promote awareness-creation programmes**
- **Support the development of programmes** that address the root causes of these practices
- **Promote prevention** through solutions such as economic options for parents, bicycles to keep girls traveling to school, and community protection structures to prevent early marriage
- **Build the capacities** of staff and community members to change stereotypes, beliefs and attitudes toward gender issues
- **Network with other NGOs** working to eliminate harmful practices
- **Support the development of culturally appropriate alternative rites of passage** to FGM that allow girls to celebrate their passage to adulthood without negative consequences

v) Children who are disabled

In a number of countries, policies and provision for disabled children remain cursory or have not been implemented. We ask the EU to:

- **provide disaggregated data** on the number of disabled children in total, the proportion enrolled in and out of school, and the range of provisions for disabled children
- **ensure effective planning** across a range of measures to improve provision, respond to the diversity of learning needs and increase capacity
- **provide financial resources**, funding mechanisms and incentives to encourage and support inclusion
- **partner with parents, children, communities and CSOs** to raise awareness about disability, inclusion and child rights
- **tackle weak inter-ministry/sectoral/services links**

vi) Children who are sexually exploited.

During 2007 and 2008 World Vision consulted over 400 boys and girls across the world involved in our projects that address the sexual abuse and exploitation of children and adolescents. Young people aged 10-21 from Africa (9), Europe (26), Asia (165) and Latin America (257) shared stories of how they have dealt with and are already engaged in combating such abuses in their communities. This diverse group share a common concern: the protection of children and adolescents from sexual abuse and exploitation. This wide sample of children recommended the following:

- Governments and civil society should **provide more education, life skills and information** to adults and children
- **Parents should love and protect their children** with action
- **Governments must protect children**
- **Law enforcement agencies must uphold laws** and eliminate corruption
- **Adults must respect and include young people** as equal participants and partners in this work
- Communities, civil society, children, adolescents and governments **must work together**

As 17 year old Christelle Binti Lutala, gender spokesperson of a Children's Parliament, 'I will not remain silent when a child is abused!'. As a champion for child rights, she fights against sexual abuse and all types of discrimination, has exposed cases of child abuse in her community, and has helped ensure that perpetrators were brought to justice.

vii) Children who are trafficked

Child trafficking is a global problem and there is often less data for trafficking, as well as migration in third countries. The EU has tended to focus on migration issues within an entering EU borders. Whilst World Vision recognizes that the trafficking of children is particularly complex, and a growing phenomenon into the EU, it also wishes to remind the EU that trafficking is much greater beyond EU borders, due in part to porous borders and poor legal infrastructure to monitor migratory as well as trafficking movements.

Create partnerships for Comprehensive prevention that includes Social Protection and rights. Effective prevention must go beyond awareness raising. Much more must be done in countries of origin to reduce the vulnerability of children and to promote the development of protective systems to prevent the trafficking and exploitation of children. World Vision recommends innovative methods, both for the target population (eg through peers) and for the service provision and institutional population that are involved (judiciary, law enforcement, immigration, education, transport, psychosocial). Member States should invest in programs that aim to develop local capacity and promote economic opportunity in countries of origin. Safe migration information must be a component of trafficking prevention programs in countries of origin. States should also invest in the development of community-based child protection structures in countries of origin to strengthen these countries' overall response to trafficking and exploitation within their borders. The EU needs to focus on increasing partnerships with NGOs. This is critical given the need to put in place an integrated panoply of social protection and prevention services. For example, in World Vision's programs in Romania, child and youth peers have developed and implemented innovative and powerful awareness raising events through theatre and film.

The project is a success, motivating children and youth in the community to participate, get involved and take action.

Ensure that children participate in the development of effective and relevant trafficking prevention and protection mechanisms. There is a precedent to include children in the diagnosis of complex problems and in the design of the most effective integrated solutions. Child participation is invaluable to understand how issues affect children directly. Children who are implicated directly or who are in close proximity or related to others who are involved in unaccompanied migration, child labour, or trafficking, are best suited to explain the reasons for involvement, as well as the effects of these atrocities on children. In terms of prevention and protection programs, children and youth should also be consulted during the program design and the establishment of partnerships between citizens, civil society organizations, institutions and authorities, to ensure that programs are relevant and responsive to child needs and specific vulnerabilities. For effective protection, the agency of child victims must be respected in their individual assistance and reintegration programs. Protective structures must recognise the child's value in expressing their needs and desires in rehabilitation and reintegration programming. Further, state assistance programs should consider the feedback of child victims in the development of future assistance mechanisms to ensure its responsiveness to child needs. The countries of origin and arrival must take measures to ensure that all programming is child-focused and rights based. Children can be agents of change and effective advocacy or program agents. They should be given the opportunity to be active participants in preventative programs. A positive example of the effectiveness of this can be found in the third World Congress on Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in 2008 when 300 children and adolescents from around the world participated in the conference. One of these children was Madalina, a 15 year-old delegate from Romania. She represented other children on plenary panels and met with UN Special Rapporteurs. A group of children participated in the drafting of the overall conclusions of the conference, which emphasized the importance of child participation. 'We, children and adolescents, think that it is important to be able to speak to our government,' noted Madalina, 'and this is why I have specifically asked to be invited more often to debates and round tables organised by institutions or organisations fighting against sexual exploitation.'

viii) Children who are infected/impacted by HIV/Aids

We are convinced that the best means of caring for orphans and vulnerable children in this context is to apply the Framework for the Protection, Care and Support of Orphans and Vulnerable Children Living in a World with HIV and AIDs. The Framework has been endorsed by all UN agencies that are cosponsors of UNAIDS. The Framework recognizes that targeting only children affected by HIV/AIDS can exacerbate stigma and discrimination, and advocates that protection, care, and support for orphans and vulnerable children be integrated with other programs designed to reduce poverty, promote children's well-being, and combat HIV/AIDS. The five key strategies of the Framework, which World Vision recommends be implemented by the European Union are:

Strengthening the capacity of families to protect and care for orphans and vulnerable children by prolonging the lives of parents and providing economic, psychosocial, and other support. Family relationships provide the most immediate source of support and supporting the family must be at the core of a response strategy.

Mobilizing and supporting community-based response to provide both immediate and long-term assistance to vulnerable households. After families, the community is the next safety net. Reinforcing the capacity of communities to support, protect, and provide care is fundamentally important to building a response that will match the scale of the HIV/AIDS crisis and its long-term impact on children.

Ensuring access for orphans and vulnerable children to essential services, including education, health care, birth registration, and others. Partnerships with nongovernmental and civil society organizations are often critical in extending essential services to vulnerable communities. For greater impact and sustainability, there is an urgent need for increased resources, innovative services, and interventions that build the capacity, quality, collaboration, and reach of service delivery programs.

Ensuring that governments protect the most vulnerable children through improved policy and legislation and by channeling resources to communities. While the family has primary responsibility to care for and protect children, national governments have the ultimate responsibility to protect them and ensure their well-being. To meet this obligation, governments must undertake and receive support for a range of multisectorial actions.

Raising awareness at all levels through advocacy and social mobilization to create a supportive environment for children affected by HIV/AIDS. No single stakeholder has the resources and capacity to mount an effective national response to the impact of HIV/AIDS. Collaboration is essential at community, district, national, regional, and global levels. Public, private, and civil society groups must develop a sense of shared responsibility for the protection and well-being of orphans and vulnerable children.

Provide reliable and accurate monitoring and evaluation tools. Monitoring national indicators, systematic monitoring of program effectiveness and quality is critical. Identifying best practices and disseminating lessons learned will contribute to program improvement and the expansion of responses that work.

Ensure child participation in planning and carrying out efforts to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS in their communities. Children can be a vital part of the solution by providing psychosocial support to peers and younger children. They should be seen as important contributors and agents of change, not simply as audiences for HIV/AIDS messages and beneficiaries of HIV/AIDS programming.

Focus on the most vulnerable children and communities, not only children orphaned by AIDS. Programs should not single out children orphaned by HIV/AIDS. Targeting specific categories of children can increase stigmatization, discrimination, and harm to those children while denying support to other children and adolescents in the community who may also have profound needs.

Define community-specific problems and vulnerabilities at the outset and pursue locally determined intervention strategies. It is necessary to identify orphans and vulnerable children and collect baseline information about them, including the households in which they live, before support activities can be designed.

Give particular attention to the roles of children, men, and women, and address gender discrimination. Much of the burden of caring for people with HIV or AIDS and

for orphans and vulnerable children falls on women and girls. Particular attention needs to be given to protecting and supporting girls in these circumstances.

Strengthen partnerships and mobilize collaborative action. The impact of HIV/AIDS on children, their families, and their communities cannot be addressed without collaboration and coordination among stakeholders.

Link HIV/AIDS prevention activities and care and support activities for people living with HIV/AIDS with support for vulnerable children. The HIV/AIDS-related problems of children and families are complex and interlinked. They demand holistic, multisectorial, mutually reinforcing program strategies.

Use external support to strengthen community initiative and motivation. Governments, donors, and nongovernmental, faith-based, and community organizations must focus on strengthening and supporting the outgoing efforts of communities themselves.

In addition to the Framework, we ask the EU to assist World Vision to help children affected by HIV/AIDS by:

- supporting and intensify efforts to **develop an HIV and AIDS vaccine**
- scaling up resources to **ensure access to anti-retroviral drugs and testing facilities**
- **ensuring the availability of adequate funds for HIV and AIDS prevention education** and other related interventions including research on new prevention technologies (microbicides and vaccines)
- **earmarking an appropriate level of total HIV and AIDS funding for children orphaned and made vulnerable** by HIV and AIDS and implement National Plans of Action
- **delivering on aid pledges** that they have already made
- **adopting and following the International Labor Organisation's Code of Conduct** on HIV and AIDS by 2013
- **adopting legislation to protect HIV-positive people from discrimination**
- **expanding the ABC** (Abstinence, Be Faithful, and Condoms) **strategy to SAVE** (Safer practices, Access to treatment and nutrition, Voluntary counseling and testing and Empowerment) **approach** which is more inclusive and comprehensive.
- **encouraging partner countries to uphold their commitments to dedicate 15 per cent of their national budgets to health**, as pledged in the Abuja declaration, and include maternal and child health in their national poverty reduction strategies.
- **focusing on strengthening community systems** - local faith groups, churches and community health groups - who are able to make sure that health care reaches the communities needs. Sara Ajami, an eighteen year old from Lebanon highlights the need for a community based approach to tackling HIV/AIDS: 'In our society, parents think that when they address sexual issues with their children, they might be giving them ideas and opening their eyes to things that they should not be doing. So to protect us, they keep quiet. But I, as well as many kids of my generation, are now convinced that this particular silence is not a healthy one, and that a sincere and open discussion between parents and their children is the best preventive tool towards HIV and AIDS'.
- **focusing on vulnerable members of society, particularly women and children** - children lag behind adults in access to HIV prevention and treatment, while many women face pregnancy and childbearing without access to ways to protect their babies from HIV

ix) Children who lack proper documentation

It is the children who are unaccounted for that become the most vulnerable to abuse, neglect and the denial of their basic rights. World Vision believes that initiatives that contribute to better protection of the most vulnerable children need to include **Birth Registration**. Through the CRC, the EU should encourage Member States and partner countries to uphold their commitment to develop civil-registrations systems to ensure the registration of every child at, or shortly after birth: to fulfill their obligation to give children their right to a name and a nationality, in accordance with national laws and relevant international instruments. It is the government's responsibility to:

- record every child immediately after birth
- register older children retrospectively to prevent them from falling out of the legal protection net
- register all children, including those who are stateless or children of non-nationals, asylum seekers, or refugees
- ensure that birth and civil registration should be free of charge
- ensure that registration is easy for parents, in terms of physical access and language
- raise awareness among parents of the importance of birth registration and reinforce parental responsibility for protecting their children
- take all necessary measures to prevent children from being without nationality
- provide all children with an ID card containing information relevant for the child's identity

General Recommendations for all vulnerable children

Increase aid and resources for community development in developing countries.

Developing countries and Member States frequently make official statements about the importance of children, but at the same time they continue to reduce the amount of resources available for basic community development. In addition, their representatives in international agencies such as the IMF adopt policies that force fragile countries to divert resources from meeting the basic needs of children in health and education to meeting debt payments. If the EU is serious about protecting the most vulnerable children, it needs to invest more in basic development for children, such as health and education.

Provide additional mechanisms to ensure that the CRC is monitored and implemented.

World Vision recognises that a legal response alone is insufficient to protect children's rights. As such we call recommend that the EU consider additional mechanisms to improve accountability for compliance, especially in cases of serious, massive violations, such as those that occur during armed conflict. In addition to seeking stronger accountability mechanisms under the CRC, the protection strategy proposed in these recommendations is that violations of the rights of children be taken seriously under other international laws that provide stronger enforcement mechanisms.

Meet violations of agreements that protect vulnerable children, especially in situations of conflict or abuse, with international condemnation and an appropriate reciprocal response. The exemption of schools and hospitals from attack and access to humanitarian assistance for vulnerable populations must be upheld. In the case of Sudan, for example, violations of this nature have been documented and reported by both human rights and humanitarian agencies, but very little serious action has been taken.

All Member States, international organisations and CSOs should adopt and implement the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Minimum Standards as a foundational part of their emergency response, ensuring that policies and programming to support education in emergencies are in line with the Minimum Standards. The Minimum Standards provide a global framework for co-ordinated action to enhance the quality of educational preparedness and response, increase access to safe and relevant learning opportunities, and ensure humanitarian accountability in providing these services. Although not binding under international law, the Standards are founded on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other legal instruments.

Member States, international agencies and CSOs must prioritise the protection of women and children from all forms of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), during emergencies, in communities, and especially in school settings. International commitments must be translated into local efforts to reduce SGBV and gender inequity through engaging men, women and children in grassroots advocacy.

States should ensure that national curricula provide life skills education relevant to the context of the existing or threatened emergency. Such education might include practical elements such as land mine awareness, health and hygiene, HIV and AIDS awareness, environment education, and longer-term community building skills taught through peace education and projects to address violent and anti-social behaviour.

Member States and partner countries must prioritise the protection and inclusion of all children through training at least two teachers per school on child-centred teaching, the needs and opportunities for disabled children, and how to create and carry out Individual Education Plans. This would allow all children to move towards inclusion in education systems and enable schools to be prepared with the capacity to include all children in emergency response education.

Apply a policy for coherence approach to all Europe Union policy. EU fiscal and trade policies must fully apply the CRC in order to protect the most vulnerable in society.

Violence Against Children

18) Do you have data and figures relating to the situation of violence against children? Do you have data on justice decisions related to violence against children?

World Vision promotes children's participation in addressing issues of violence against children. One example of this can be found in the integral role we played in the UN Study on Violence Against Children. In Latin America and the Caribbean, World Vision, along with UN agencies and various NGOs in the region, formed a partnership to respond to the UN study, and established as its main objective the broad participation of children and adolescents. In Bogota, for example, WV conducted the survey with severely disabled boys and girls. While in Brazil, a focus group was conducted with children of ethnic minorities, contributing to a broader view on how violence is exerted and its effects on children in the region. The consultation process revealed that girls and boys between the ages of nine and 12 have a clear understanding of violence, particularly as to how it is

destroying the society in which they live. They expressed sadness and a lack of desire to continue with life. The children distinguished between physical and emotional aggression, and identified those responsible for perpetrating violence against them.

19) What are the activities of your organisation relating to the protection of children from violence? What are the difficulties and problems that you encounter on the ground while implementing actions to fight violence against children?

Please see also our answers to Question 14 to 17 on vulnerable children where we have listed numerous examples and recommendations for best practice and EU action.

Parents, local communities, governments and the international community all share responsibility to respect, protect and care for children. In keeping with this principle, World Vision seeks to address the problem of violence against children by addressing the problem at all levels. At a national and international level, World Vision joins with other organisation to advocate public policies and practices which respect the right of children to grow up free of the negative impact of armed conflict. World Vision recognises that children who grow up living in violence are more likely to turn to violence themselves as a method of problem-solving. Our belief is that investing in the prevention of violence for children is an investment in human security for everyone.

This investment can be seen in a World Vision initiated project in **Rwanda**: the Promotion of Reconciliation Among the Youths (PRAY). The project encouraged 'reconciliation among the youths through working with youths groups and giving youths opportunity to express their aspirations for peace through a wide range of artistic expressions'. It sought to enable young people to form and express their aspirations for peace and to lead the process of change. Children and youth, aged 13 to 25, from each of the three ethnic groups (Hutu, Tutsi and Twa), represented three groups of youths. By encouraging young people to explore issues of peace and conflict and to express their thoughts at a community and regional level, the project enabled them to have a clear influence on their family and community members. Focus Group Discussions revealed that the positive messages of peace and reconciliation expressed by the young people in different ways, encouraged a wider culture of honesty and forgiveness. An example of this came during one of the meetings held by the Inshuti Nyayo (A Friend Indeed) group when a man stood up and confessed to having killed family members of one of the people in the audience. This began the process of reconciliation between them. Young people were also given an opportunity to influence attitudes within their families and communities. More specifically, some young people were able to participate in Gacaca judicial proceedings (instituted by the Government of Rwanda to address the culture of impunity), providing evidence in cases.

20) Are you aware of good practices, initiatives or programmes that can contribute to a better protection of children from violence? Are you aware of cross border initiatives in this area (e.g. cooperation, or participation in common projects, with organisations in other Member States, exchanges of good practice, exchanges between judges in charge of juvenile justice etc.)?

Please refer to the many good practices listed in our answers to Questions 14 to 17 on vulnerable children.

World Vision considers an integrated, community-based approach to be the best means of helping to prevent violence against children. One important part of protecting children from violence involves the implementation of a **child protection policy**. Child protection refers to a particular group of child rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). This includes protection from all forms of child abuse, neglect, exploitation and cruelty, including the right to special protection in times of war and protection from abuse in the criminal justice system. In light of these rights established in the CRC, World Vision defines child protection as, ‘all measures taken to prevent and respond to exploitation, neglect, abuse, and other forms of violence affecting children’. At an organisational level, World Vision implements the following components of good practice in all our projects to protect children:

- **Awareness raising** about child abuse and the protection of children
- Program planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation focusing on the **participation and protection** of children
- Recruitment and **screening of staff**, volunteers, interns, consultants, board members and visitors
- **Managing visitors** to World Vision projects
- **Behaviour protocols/codes of conduct** for all those linked with World Vision
- **Allegation management**, including the care and support of the affected children in cases of child abuse
- **Advocacy** on child protection and child rights
- **Communications** about children
- **Confidentiality** of all child information

While these good practices shape our work with and behalf of children, we also recognise that far more must be done to protect children - and the European Union has a crucial role to play in this. Based on our experience of working with children affected by violence, we make the following recommendations in regards to child protection to the European Union:

A child protection policy must be in place in all programmes and projects supported by the European Union. Mechanisms for the formal inclusion of child protection policy in programme design needs to be prioritized.

Child protection must be based on a comprehensive context analysis. Efforts must be made to utilize macro context analyses for child protection policies. More analysis of root causes and emerging trends need to be conducted and incorporated into existing context analyses.

To be effective and bring about positive change, child protection policies and their implementation must engage external stakeholders. External engagement happens at local, national and regional levels on a variety of relevant issues, such as emergencies, governance, child rights, child protection and other issues.

All child protection policies must take into account emerging trends that will have a lasting impact on children’s lives. Efforts need to be made to deepen analysis and reflection on trends and their impact on the lives of children in more intentional ways. Planning needs to focus on the future, with efforts being made to prevent the potential future harm to child well-being.

All child protection policies must put children and youth at the centre, both as players and rights holders. Children’s views must be taken into account. The EU needs

to build capacity amongst staff in order to ensure child participation. This will require staff training and tools. Efforts need to be made to stop interpreting and presenting child data and to encourage children's direct contribution to the issues that affect them.

Child protection must be promoted at a local, national and international level.

Promotion by the European Union of best practices and modeling effective systems can bring about change in both the member states and partner countries. More time and more deliberate monitoring mechanisms are needed to ensure that this occurs.

21) What concrete initiatives would you suggest to better protect children from violence? Do you consider that the EU can contribute to these initiatives and if so how?

The European Union through its aid, internal and external policies, and the actions of its Member State can greatly contribute to better protecting children within both its own borders and beyond. To help enable this happen more effectively, World Vision makes the following recommendations to the European Union:

Strengthen government, NGOs and civil society organisations to better coordinate activities, increase the focus on child rights and respond to children and violence issues and maximise effectiveness of child-focused programmes. Addressing violence against children requires a coordinated response. Church leaders and groups must be an integral part of this. The impact of any community development or infrastructure programme on children should be considered. Committees established for other community development activities should include children and young people's participation to ensure that the potential for violence is diminished. Programmes should seek not simply to do things for children and youth but to actively engage them in finding solutions. The CRC is an excellent starting point for this but should not be used as a threat. Education around the principles of the CRC should be interactive, promoting debate, discussion and problem solving rather than absolutes and enforcement of what can easily be dismissed as an imposition from outside and contradictory to custom and tradition.

Enact the CRC into domestic legislation. The enactment of the CRC into domestic legislation must be finalised and necessary resources to support this must be ensured. This should include:

- a sustained political commitment to the CRC
- considerable resourcing for a mechanism that will solely focus on children (such as a children's minister or a 'children's chief')
- domestic legislation in all sectors should be brought into harmony with the CRC and domestic children's laws. This mechanism should be accessible to children. It should also take into account the importance of ensuring isolated communities, particularly in rural areas, have access to and involvement in processes and services as they are developed. Access to centralised documentation about child rights is key.

Adopt national plans of action to be implemented within a framework of the CRC

and should be finalised to provide comprehensive protection to children from all forms of violence. In addition to the immediate development of services that respond to the needs of children affected by violence, these plans should seek to address the underlying causes of violence against children which are often related. The EU and Member States need to increase their investment in preventive peacebuilding activities, incorporate these activities into sustainable community development programmes, and encourage active participation

of children in preventive peacebuilding. More applied research is needed to teach conflict resolution skills effectively to young people in conflict-prone situations.

Raise awareness amongst the EU institutions and Member States about violence against children and how to respond. The EU's responses should be well considered and not simply 'knee jerk' reactions, as the determinants of violence against children are complex and defy simplistic solutions. Any response needs to have a long-term capacity-building approach but also should seek to address immediate priorities such as the commercial sexual exploitation of children and out-of-school and unemployed youth. All engagement at a programmatic level should seek to have an impact statement on children.

Tackle violence against children through international cooperation, legislation and prosecution. International cooperation and diplomatic initiatives are crucial to strengthening early-warning systems and to monitoring the situation of children at risk. Diplomatic initiatives could help provide for the basic needs of children by their role in helping to ensure cease-fires. Use of child-focused humanitarian cease-fires and similar strategies should be promoted and implemented at the earliest possible stage in specific conflicts, based on the concept of children as 'zones of peace', even in times of conflict. Furthermore, the EU should support initiatives to encourage UN agencies to establish well-trained early intervention teams to focus exclusively on child protection through aggressive monitoring and appropriate reporting of violations of child-rights in conflict-prone situations. The EU can play a pivotal role in calling for an International Child Protection Force.

Establish a sub-committee of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to hear and act immediately on complaints of violations of the rights of children, especially violations that threaten their survival prospects in situations of armed conflict. Steps should be taken to prosecute serious violations of the rights of children under other human rights legislation in addition to the CRC.

Take the lead in the international community in calling for the prosecution of those responsible for the serious violation of the rights of children under other existing conventions which have stronger enforcement measures. This includes enforcing the Geneva Convention prohibitions against attacks on schools, hospitals and places where children congregate, and actively protecting children's right of access to humanitarian assistance.

Focus special attention on providing child protection training programmes for peacekeepers from Member States in partner countries. This training needs to include mechanisms for disciplining soldiers who violate the rights of children themselves.

Support child protection networks. EU support is necessary for both existing child protection networks and for the development of new ones, especially in conflict-prone countries. These networks need to include the active participation of young people themselves, and the local media, to make young people aware of the risks and consequences of involvement in armed conflict and violence.

Focus on families. Families are essential to the protection of children from violence but are also, arguably, the prime instigators of violence. Therefore, they should be a primary point of intervention. The situation of families in times of economic change, shifting values and the increasing presence of violence in everyday life needs to be better understood. Public forums with wide representation needs to be held around issues of violence. Opportunities for positive engagement and role modelling between parent/caregiver and

child need to be encouraged and should include opportunity to play and pass on traditional customs/traditions. Parents must have access to services and information about parenting and child protection. National Action Plans, and other initiatives organised by government and civil society, need to address ways in which families can be encouraged and supported. In the context of family and community, greater priority in country assistance strategies need to be given to the developmental needs of children.

Support initiatives to find creative ways to resolve the growing clash between tradition and modernisation. Developing new traditions to assist people to make sense of their changing social and cultural environment and world around them is an urgent priority. Traditional systems of government must be: made aware of the CRC and the ramifications for ratification for domestic law; and supportive of the enactment of laws and the development of 'new traditions' that reduce the likelihood of all forms of violence towards children. Supporting government legislation and political programmes that strengthen traditional methods for protecting children in a positive way should be developed. Gender issues relating to tradition contribute to violence against children and also need to be addressed. Women, as well as children and youth, need to be given a greater voice in public affairs.

Encourage and financially support forums where the voices of children and youth can be heard and respected. Space needs to be made in society for the voices of children and young people to be heard and for opportunities for their active citizenship and participation. Civil society organisations and partner country governments need to creatively design projects and programmes (whether child-focused or not) that ensure the participation of children and incorporate approaches that actively respect children's rights and decrease all forms of violence against children. Policies and programmes developed on children's issues should be guided by the principle of children as agents of change, not simply victims. Education should be used as a means for training children and youth in issues of citizenship (participatory democracy, peace, violence prevention) giving youth and children skills as participants and contributors to society now, not just in the future.

Support long-term development programmes and initiatives to break the cycle of poverty and injustice that can lead to conflict and violence. We urge the EU, Member States and partner countries to meet their MDG commitments.

Protect against susceptibility to future violent conflict by actively addressing post-conflict recovery. This includes addressing low human development, high indebtedness, and other significant challenges, like disease or poor economic prospects in countries recovering from conflict.

Focus on conflict prevention. This involves a variety of disparate technical specialities: early warning and analysis, participatory peacemaking processes and 'quiet diplomacy', conflict-sensitive relief and development, education to promote peace, control of global small arms flows, enhanced capacities for mediation, and media practices that mitigate tensions. Part of this conflict prevention strategy needs to:

- channel **quality aid** towards conflict prevention
- make **debt forgiveness** a priority for investment in post-conflict countries to remove the constraints of post-conflict economic stagnation without the means to rise to viability - this includes Low Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS). The definition of stress should include indicators such as: any country experiencing 'three strikes' (ie high HIV-AIDS prevalence, low HDI ranking and severe indebtedness) should qualify for highest levels of debt relief. World Vision has consistently called for

poverty reduction strategies that include local ownership and participation and which build local accountability into debt relief.

- make post-conflict **aid predictable and long-term** - particularly in the middle of the post-conflict decade - the time when donor interest has usually reached a low or stopped altogether. International assistance in the form of debt relief, sustainable development, micro-enterprise, security sector reform, human rights education, arms monitoring, and democratic development are most effective in this period.
- **improve rapid response capacity** to help prevent incipient conflicts from escalating into massive violence. Although the most effective measures to mitigate the costs of conflict are long-term 'structural prevention', there is a role for enhanced and rapid-response peacekeeping. Peacekeeping has one of the highest rates of return on investment.
- **control the flow of arms.** Arms embargoes are often poorly monitored but are key to the prevention of future conflict.
- **be an active member of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict.** The Partnership's main goal is to mobilise political will to achieve four main objectives: a transnational network that will promote enhanced, sustainable, practical and streamlined collaboration between international conflict prevention actors; concrete commitments from governments, regional organisations, and UN entities to re-align existing conflict management mechanisms towards prevention; and comprehensive documentation of lessons learned, best practices and opportunities for improvement for civil society organisations, multilateral organisations and governments working to prevent violent conflict.

Focus on appropriate assistance. The EU should:

- **ensure that contributions by Member States towards combating terrorism are not counted toward development assistance.** 0.7% of Gross National Product toward Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) remains a realistic and achievable target; if wealthy countries met their ODA obligations completely, however, that assistance would still only represent a fraction of annual global military spending
- **agree on common frameworks for conflict-sensitive assistance.** To avoid duplication and excessive 'front-loading' of post-conflict assistance, advantage needs to be taken initiatives like the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative to undertake systematic review of assistance to countries under stress and implement coordinated and conflict-sensitive development assistance
- **time its post-conflict assistance to peak at the same time that national and civil society to absorb that assistance peaks.** Too often development assistance is heaped on newly-formed post-conflict governments in the first few years, when in fact it is best for that assistance to arrive in sustainable and transparent tranches several years later, long after the media has moved on
- **act decisively to restrict the flow of small arms to and illegal exploitation of natural resources in countries afflicted by conflict.** The UN Security Council in particular should impose appropriately enforced mechanisms that restrict the flow of guns and ammunition to conflict zones and which prohibit the illegal exploitation of natural resources
- **engage the proposals developed by the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict.** The EU should work to enhance its cooperation with civil society in the prevention of armed conflict by creating transparent mechanisms for the exchange of early warning information, enhancing public participation in peace-making, and other appropriate modes of interaction.

- **establish and support safe, confidential and accessible mechanisms** (such as child helplines) through which children can report abuse, speak to a trained counsellor in confidence and ask for support and advice without fear or reprisals
- **nominate an independent children's ombudsperson** to ensure effective response and follow-up to children's complaints and violations of their rights
- ensure all schools and other children's institutions (including prisons and correctional facilities) have **effective complaints mechanisms for children**
- ensure health services and other government services have **accessible complaints systems for children**
- **define and enforce minimum standards of care and protection of children** in all institutions dealing with children

Child Poverty

25) What are the activities of your organisation relating to child poverty? What are the difficulties and problems that you (or your organisation) encounter on the ground while implementing actions to combat child poverty?

Of the 2.2 billion children in the world, 1 billion live in poverty.³⁵ Shockingly, this means that half the world's children are poor. To illustrate the difficulties encountered by children with whom World Vision works, we will first provide the findings of a survey, conducted by World Vision's researchers who spent a month visiting and talking with over 400 children from three different areas in Zambia. Nyamphande Project in Petauke District and Kakunka Community in Chibombo District are two rural communities, both heavily dependent on agriculture. Chainda compound is a poor urban community within Zambia's capital city, Lusaka. Many of the children who live in these communities are unlikely to benefit from even the four most basic of children's rights (survival, development, participation and protection). Families in all the communities visited by World Vision consider that their children are suffering today because of a **lack of**:

- **food and water.** Many children only eat one meal a day. Drinking water is unsafe in many areas, and has to be fetched from long distances. One Zambian child noted that, 'Since my parents died I have lived with my grandfather. My dream is to have better food and a good education'. Another noted that, 'If I can get a good job, I will be able to help my family grow better crops and eat better food'.
- **adequate educational facilities.** Classes are too large (up to 60 children per class), there aren't enough teachers, children often don't start school until they are nine or ten and many, girls in particular, drop out very quickly because of arranged marriages. Though the country has a policy of free primary education for all, the cost of books, uniforms and other 'fees' means that many are still unable to afford to go to school. As a Zambian child explained, 'My school only has two classes. The big school is too far away for me to walk, but I would like to go there one day'. Another girl revealed the importance of education to her future: 'Some girls get married too young. They have babies too soon and they die. I wish I could be better educated, because I want to become a nurse'.
- **health care.** The nearest health care facilities are often a long walk away, inadequately staffed and poorly equipped.

³⁵ Source: Poverty Facts and Stats. Anup Shah. Global Issues
<http://www.globalissues.org/article/26/poverty-facts-and-stats>

- **adequate clothes and shelter.** Most households consist of between six and eight members, often sharing one room. The poorest children only have one set of clothes.

When children between the ages of seven and 15 living in Zambia were asked to describe what it means to be rich and poor in their own community, they responded by saying:

‘A few of the people in our village are rich. They have food to eat the whole year round and their children go to school. Their houses have roofs made of iron sheets; their families farm big fields and they own cows, chickens and bicycles. But most of the people in our village are poor. Our families don’t own fields, our houses have grass roofs, which let in the rain, and sometimes we have no food to eat at all. Our clothes have holes in them. Although we are children, we don’t go to school. We have to work instead. We want to make our lives better, but it is difficult’.

This survey from Zambia highlights the reality of life for millions of children around the world. World Vision believes that the best way to help alleviate poverty amongst children is to work with them, together with their families and communities, to help ensure long-lasting change. We do this we focus on the following main areas of poverty alleviation:

Nutrition and Food Security

More than 800 million people around the world are currently unable to access sufficient nutritious food to meet their daily dietary and energy requirements for a health and productive life.³⁶ Almost one-fourth of all children under five years of age living in developing countries are underweight (defined as the intersection of chronically malnourished - low height-for-age or stunting - and acutely malnourished - low weight-for-height or wasting).^{37,38} Child nutrition is a particularly urgent challenge because the physical and developmental damage done by under-nutrition is irreversible and it is the critical link in the chain of individual and national food security. Malnutrition below the age of two irreversibly impairs children’s physical and cognitive development, and increases their risk of developing preventable and chronic disease later in life. Other major childhood killer diseases could be partially prevented by the eradication of child malnutrition. The effects of malnutrition are intergenerational. Malnutrition, especially that of children, puts at risk the gains achieved to date, stagnates growth and increases poverty. Child malnutrition limits a nation’s intellectual potential. Malnutrition creates significant barriers for social and economic development such that it will not be feasible to attain several of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).³⁹ All these factors combined lead to less productive adults and more difficulties obtaining adequate nutrition for oneself and ones children. Chronic malnutrition and food insecurity is on the rise. The coping capacities of poorer households are diminishing. Slowly, their livelihood resources are being eroded and depleted year after year, resulting in increased vulnerability to shocks. In some regions, communities now show a clear inability to restore their livelihood security

³⁶ FANTA, ‘A Review of the Title II Development Food Aid Programme, Technical Note £6’, February 2003

³⁷ Standing Committee on Nutrition, ‘Nutrition for Improved Development Outcomes: Fifth Report on the World Nutrition Situation’, March 2004, p5-10

³⁸ www.wvifood.org/foodmanual/index

³⁹ See WV EULO’s Response to the EC Food Security Consultation

and even merely to provide adequately for their own consumption, before the next disaster or conflict hits.

Attention should be given to the particular needs of all the most vulnerable groups, for whom the interrelation of drivers have added weight, for example women, children, victims of HIV & AIDS, refugees and people in fragile states. These causes and barriers are worsened by the lack of disaggregated data (particularly in regards to children), and specific strategies and research targeting the most vulnerable. The lack of access to resources, inputs, education or training is known to be worse for the vulnerable. This is compounded by lack of proper documentation, certification systems or inheritance rights to land. The HIV & AIDS epidemic has a direct impact on food security and agriculture, due to absenteeism, reduction of the area of land under cultivation, loss of knowledge about traditional farming methods, loss of assets, and declines in crop variety and yields. Furthermore, the disease results in an increase in the proportion of non-productive members of households that share the available food stocks. Malnutrition also severely decreases the reaction to and effect of antiretroviral drugs.⁴⁰

World Vision gained valuable experience between 1996 and 2006 implementing the Micro-nutrient and Health (MICA) programme. A large-scale initiative implemented in five countries (Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Tanzania and Senegal), it addressed micro-nutrient malnutrition (which affects around one third of the global population and is a major cause of under-five mortality). Specific actions included advocacy and community-based interventions promoting improved diets, measures to help parents provide nutritious food for their children, fortification of staple foods and provision of micro-nutrient supplements, and targeting of diseases that affect micro-nutrient status. The programme contributed to a significant reduction in overall malnutrition in all five countries, with chronic malnutrition falling from 45% to 31% on average, increased exclusive breastfeeding rates in all countries and reduced vitamin A, iron and iodine deficiencies among children and women.⁴¹

There is mounting evidence to suggest, that investing in early childhood at an individual level through exposure to an Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) intervention, can overcome the cycle of poverty, thus leading to national development (Arnold 2004). WV Lao, along with local communities, identified ECCD as a priority to improve child developmental outcomes in Lao PDR. In January 2010 an ECCD pilot project was implemented in 2 rural villages in Xonnabuly District, Savannakhet Province. Targeting prenatal women, caregivers and children under five (CU5), the community based project which uses IEC (information, education and communication) and a participatory approach to stimulate family conversation around health, nutrition, education and parenting topics. World Vision staff, Government counterparts and village leaders receive training on facilitating the interactive sessions, which are delivered to pregnant women, lactating mothers, mothers with CU5, fathers, caregivers, Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) and Village Health Workers (VHWs). Approximately 20 adults from each village will be exposed to eight sessions in total over a period of eight months, which aims to raise awareness and motivate behaviour change to ultimately improve child developmental outcomes.⁴²

⁴⁰ See World Vision EULO's Response to the EU Consultation on Food Security

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² <https://www.wvcentral.org/cop/cwbr/Documents/Forms>, 'ECCD in Laos'

World Vision believes that adherence to the following principles of development are essential for food security and the prevention of malnutrition:

- **Participation of stakeholders**, particularly beneficiaries and communities
- **Capacity building of communities**, beneficiaries, and government and non-governmental partners
- **Gender equity** in programme planning and implementation
- **Proper targeting of potential beneficiaries**
- **Identification of appropriate and accurate goals**, objectives and quantifiable indicators to monitor the impacts of the food programme
- **Integration/mainstreaming of all food programmes**⁴³
- **An increase of aid to address child malnutrition.** Child malnutrition remains one of the most under funded areas of global development, and is still not adequately addressed by global or EU initiatives or specific strategies. ODA to agriculture declined from 18% in 1979, to about 3% in 2008. This trend must be reversed. The trend is repeated at regional and national levels. Only seven of 53 African countries have implemented the commitment to dedicate 10% GDP to agriculture. Consequently, agriculture and animal production have drastically decreased in the developing world. In Uganda, World Vision research shows that agricultural productivity was halved in the past 20 years. If key issues are not addressed, it could decline even more. We would encourage the EU to work with other donors and governments to research and analyse possibilities for scaling up support to national food fortification programs when appropriate. National and targeted school feeding programmes using locally produced food and providing full coverage of micro-nutrients, will address prevention and also provide specific responses for the most vulnerable. In addition, social safety nets are important, given the links with overall poverty and the challenges of access to food. Cash Transfers programmes have shown to be effective, and should be scaled up. The EU should increase its support significantly.⁴⁴

Water and Sanitation

A child dies every twenty seconds from a preventable sanitation-related disease⁴⁵. Furthermore, almost one in five deaths of children under five are caused by diarrhoea. Millions of others suffer chronic and debilitating ill health. Yet, simple solutions like improved water, sanitation and hygiene can help reduce these diarrhoeal disease by 65 per cent. Sanitation is also a good economic investment - for every dollar spent on improving sanitation, an average economic benefit of \$9.10 is generated⁴⁶. Providing safe water and sanitation facilities leads to social development. The MDG 7 target of halving the number of people without access to water and basic sanitation by 2015 is critical to reaching all the other MDGs.

⁴³ www.wvifood.org/foodmanual/indew.html

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ UN-HABITAT, Addressing the challenge of slums, land, shelter delivery and the provision of and access to basic services for all: Overview, African Ministers' Conference on Housing and Urban Development, 2005, p4, http://www.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/2551_58814_overview.doc

⁴⁶ World Health Organisation and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Economic and health effects of increasing coverage of low-cost household drinking-water supply and sanitation interventions to countries off-track to meet MDG target 10*, p10, http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/2007/WHO_SDE_WSH_07.05_eng.pdf

World Vision recognises the devastating implications of the sanitation crisis on children and is responding to the crisis with life-saving community-oriented initiatives. One such initiative is World Vision's Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programme which empowers communities, including school-aged children, to improve their health through behaviour change and by obtaining necessary facilities, thus improving environmental cleanliness and breaking the cycle of disease. The project sees children as important agents of change within their communities and homes. As twelve-year-old Kaely from Peru, who promotes health habits to her classmates, notes, *'I see my friends getting sick because they do not know what they are supposed to do - but I can help them through the things I teach'*.⁴⁷ Another programme implemented by World Vision in a number of developing countries is one based on the methodology of Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST). The methodology helps communities to improve hygiene behaviour, prevent diarrheal diseases and manage water- and sanitation-related diseases. The underlying basis of PHAST is that 'no lasting change in people's behaviour will occur without understanding and believing'. As a result PHAST uses specific adult learning tools developed in each context to facilitate a process for community groups themselves to discover the fecal-oral contamination routes of disease. The community then analyses their own hygiene behaviour in light of this information and develops their own community plan to block the contamination routes.⁴⁸

A further example of World Vision's work to promote improved sanitation can be found in the Soro district of southern Ethiopia in the Sibiya Spring Development Project (SDP), which is improving water supply and sanitation for eight communities. In total 21,000 people and 10,000 animals are receiving drinking water through a sustainable potable water scheme. To ensure sustainability of the scheme, World Vision has trained community members as water technicians and committees to operate and maintain water supplies, and in financial management.⁴⁹

The global crisis in sanitation and water is one of inequality and poverty. It is crucial that both these issues be addressed in order to reduce child poverty and improve children's basic health. Based on our experience of helping communities and children have clean water and hygienic sanitation, we ask that the European Union⁵⁰:

- **implement one global action plan** for water and sanitation, monitored by a single global task force. The EU should lead the rest of the world in recognising the integral role of sanitation in achieving the economic, health and educational well-being of children. EU support of a global task force to plan, implement and monitor the extraordinary effort that is needed on sanitation and water, is crucial to improving the quality of children's lives.
- **target 70% of aid money** for sanitation and water at the **poorest countries**
- **protect water resources and share it equitably**
- **encourage partner countries to implement one national plan**, one co-ordinating mechanism, and one transparent monitoring and evaluation framework for sanitation
- **encourage partner countries to increase their levels of investment.** This investment needs to be delivered through a specific and transparent budget line that is open to public scrutiny

⁴⁷ Global Future, 'Improving Sanitation for the World's Poor', p9

⁴⁸ Global Future, 'Improving Sanitation for the World's Poor', p13

⁴⁹ Global Future, 'Improving Sanitation for the World's Poor', p10

⁵⁰ Global Future, 'Improving Sanitation for the World's Poor', Number 1, 2008, p21

- **enable the participation of civil society organisations** in the planning and monitoring of sanitation service delivery at the national and sub-national levels.⁵¹

Child Education

When education systems are damaged or fail, children are neglected, often for decades. In April 2000, the World Education Forum, held in Dakar, reiterated the need to focus on access to education - particularly including secondary education - and the inclusion of students of both genders from disadvantaged and marginalised environments. The right to education is enshrined both in international human rights law as well as international humanitarian law. In law, this right does not change or diminish in an emergency or situation of fragility but in practice it is treated as a right which can be suspended or dispensed with entirely. World Vision believes that the right for children to have access to education becomes even more critical at such times, and that minimum standards of safe, inclusive, quality education must be maintained. For World Vision 'education' includes both formal and non-formal systems that bring children and youth to functional levels of literacy, numeracy and essential life skills. However, while the global education community is improving access to and quality of education even in the poorest countries, it does not yet embrace two important groups of children: those who find themselves in the most complicated and hazardous contexts⁵²; and, those who are disabled. It is imperative that this changes.

Education in the midst of an emergency situation is of crucial importance - not only does it give children a sense of stability amidst the chaos, but it also gives them hope of an improved future. To help protect the futures of children by providing children in emergency contexts with education, World Vision asks the European Union to:⁵³

- **Keep its promises.** The Member States must keep deliver on their MDG commitments and aid promises.
- **Allocate resources to where the need is the most acute.** Many donors - notably France, Germany and Italy - need to increase their resources to basic education and pay their fair share of the external financing requirement. A large percentage of new funds should reach children in conflict-affected fragile states, according to need.
- **Promote good governance.** Weak governance and conflict in fragile states seriously undermine educational initiatives. Civil Society organizations are imperative to track and analyse donors budgets for education, research and monitor national policies, while engaging in policy processes and advocating for change.
- **Provide a comprehensive humanitarian response.** The global response needs to be guided by 'solidarity, not charity', and the humanitarian system 'must be the responsibility of all nations and must benefit all nations'
- **Ensure coherent, inter-related donor policies.** Humanitarian policies must include education from the first day of a humanitarian response. Education must be supported in low-income countries, including conflict-affected fragile states.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Global Future, 'Improving Sanitation for the World's Poor', Number 1, 2008, p21

⁵² Global Future, "Can We Close the Education Gap?", Number 2, 2007, p16

⁵³ Global Future, "Can We Close the Education Gap?", Number 2, 2007, p17

⁵⁴ Global Future, "Can We Close the Education Gap?", Number 2, 2007, p17

The second group of children that require greater focus to ensure the protection of their right to education are children who are disabled. This right to education was underpinned on the 13 December 2006, when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, one of the most significant formal events for advocating the right to education of children with disabilities.⁵⁵ World Vision makes the following recommendations to the European Union to safeguard the rights of disabled children:

- **Recognise inclusive education as a right.**
- **Identify common standards** that permit people with disabilities to enjoy an available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable education on an equal footing with others. These must, at a minimum, address physical access, access in communication (sign language and Braille), social access (to classmates) and economic access (affordability of schooling), and provide early identification of special educational needs and intervention in early childhood.
- **Establish minimum standards in relation to the underlying determining factors of the right to education.** Member states and partner countries must ensure that the family, the community and civil society are active participants in inclusive education.
- **Implement a clear action plan** to transition from the special education system to the new culture of inclusive education.
- **Identify and entrust officials and institutions with meeting the state's responsibilities**, and, in particular, designate the Ministry of Education as the state authority responsible for ensuring education for people with disabilities.
- **Provide the financial resources and materials** necessary to implement the policies of inclusive education.
- **Establish mechanisms to monitor** and assess inclusive education.⁵⁶

Alongside providing education to disabled children and children in emergency contexts, World Vision also engages in a number of other educational projects. An example of this can be found in Malawi where our development programmes have: set up or helped fund rural pre-school groups and community childcare centres; promoted formal primary, secondary and tertiary education by improving school equipment and education resources; promoted the quality of education in schools in many part of the country through supplying educational materials, providing merit awards and sports equipment, paying of school fees and providing clothes for those who cannot afford them; and, initiated numerous adult literacy education programmes.⁵⁷

Child Health

While the CRC protects the right of the child to health care, 270 million children have no access to even the most basic health care provision. Twenty four thousand children below the age of five die every day. Of these deaths, almost half of them are caused by three largely preventable illnesses: pneumonia (19% of child deaths); diarrhoea (18%); malaria (8%). However, the vast majority of child deaths are caused by neonatal complications which accounts for 40% of child deaths. Of these child deaths 99% of them take place in developing countries.

⁵⁵ Global Future, "Can We Close the Education Gap?", Number 2, 2007, p3

⁵⁶ Global Future. 'Can We Close the Education Gap?', Number 2, 2007, p3

⁵⁷ Global Future, "Can We Close the Education Gap?", Number 2, 2007, p11

World Vision is committed to improving the health and nutrition of women and children in the areas in which it works, contributing to the global reduction of under-five and maternal mortality. World Vision's health strategy concentrates on three essential outcomes to achieve its goal of contributing to the global reduction of maternal and under-five mortality, these are ensuring that: mothers and children are well nourished; mothers and children are protected from infection and disease; and, that mothers and children access essential health services. In our approach, we seek to:

- Focus on primary health and nutrition education and behaviour change at the household level, empowering caregivers and children to keep themselves health
- Build the capacity of community groups to address and monitor local causes of illness, death and malnutrition; advocate for quality health service delivery; and monitor home-based care services
- Emphasise partnerships with national governments and other stakeholders to strengthen delivery of quality health and nutrition services at the community level.

As the largest development donor in the world, the European Union has a fundamentally important role to play as a significant leader in global development and governance, to ensure that international donor's agreements are upheld and carried out - especially at this important review period of the MDGs. In 2008 the EU Council's Conclusions agreed that the MDGs could still be achieved if all partners 'take immediate and well-targeted steps to accelerate the process'. In the Brussels Declaration in October of that same year, European Parliamentarians underscored their position in regards to the MDGs and health, stating that: 'We, Parliamentarians from European countries and the European Parliament...commit ourselves to provide political leadership on a national, European and international level to Global Health and Development in order to improve the well-being of the millions of people, and to hold ourselves accountable to our commitments in a transparent and responsible manner'. And, two years later in the EC's 12 Point Action Plan in Support of the MDGs, 2010 was identified as a 'year of opportunity and accountability...to make revitalized and concerted effort to achieve the MDGs'. The centrality of health to achieving the MDGs was identified by the EC in this year's Spring Communication, on the EU's Role in Global health. The Communication stated that: 'progress toward health MDGs is uneven and largely off track in most developing countries..The European development consensus recognizes health as an essential objective within the MDG framework.' And, as a result of this, '[t]he EU's leading role in international trade, global environmental governance and in development aid, as well as its values and experience of universal and equitable quality healthcare give it strong legitimacy to act on global health'. It is against this stated legal background that World Vision makes the following recommendations to the European Union to help end child and maternal deaths:

Keep international obligations. Numerous high level declarations and commitments already exist. What is needed is donor commitment to uphold what they have already agreed on. This requires the full implementation of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) commitments, including reaching the agreed target of 0.7% of Gross National Income by 2015.

Increase aid to health. Wealth countries need to increase their commitment to health from the current level of \$16 billion p/a to \$42.5 billion by 2015 - as has been identified by the WHO. Greater priority also needs to be given to health and nutrition in the aid budgets of donor countries. The total aid required for health in 2012 is likely to make up no more than 23% of total global aid in 2012. Furthermore, donors need to lift the proportion of global development assistance to agriculture from around the current 7% of sector-

allocable aid to 14% by 2012. But it is not only donors who need to increase their funding of health. We ask the EU to exercise its political influence to encourage an increase in health funding by developing country governments to at least 15% of national budgets - this broadly agreed target was established by African Union members themselves in 2001 in Abuja.

Improve aid. Aid that is currently spent on health is often of a low quality, badly coordinated with other donors, unpredictable from the point of view of recipient governments, and is often not aligned with developing countries' own health plans. If aid is to be effective it needs to be targeted, predictable, coordinated, aligned with national priorities and systems, and have an impact on those that need it most. In addition, aid needs to be directed to the countries with the greatest need. Over 7 million child deaths occur in just 30 high burden countries but these same countries receive less than half of global aid commitments for health. India, Nigeria and the DRC together contribute 40% of total child deaths yet receive only 17% of aid for health between 2006 and 2007. Aid that is currently being given to health is not only poorly targeted by country, but it is also insufficiently focused on child and maternal health. In recent years aid for child and maternal health has accounted for only around 3% of overall development assistance. Principal diseases and underlying causes of child death are not receiving the bulk of aid for health. As a result of this we ask that a Comprehensive Monitoring and Accountability Framework be Implemented, which gathers and disseminates data on progress towards achieving child health at a local, national, and international level, and as part of the UN review mechanism. In addition, EU donors must apply the full Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action as they have agreed. In May 2008 the EU Council agreed that to speed up progress towards the MDGs the EU must focus on predictability of aid and mutual accountability. the recent EC Communication re-emphasized this, stating that the 'EU aid for health should offer a predictability of at least three years'. As such World Vision calls on the EU to strengthen EU accountability mechanisms, based on Member States annual action plans with ODA estimates until 2015, and EU peer reviews of the implementation of such plans be undertaken. Furthermore, World Vision believes that the International Health Partnership offers the most efficient mechanism for aid effectiveness, and should now cover all donor countries and all developing countries requiring increased health assistance.

Implement concrete global action plans for child health. If child health is to be achieved it is imperative that concrete global action plans are introduced and implemented. Previous agreements on the Consensus for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health and on the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative must be expanded throughout the EU and operationalised in order to see the necessary improvement of health in mothers and children. Furthermore, the International Health Partnership Principles must be applied. To help end child and maternal deaths the following must be implemented:

- **A single national plan needs to be introduced**, with priority being given to producing plans for those high-burden counties that are currently off track. These plans need to be time-bound, costed, and focussed on tackling the direct and indirect causes of child death and illness in each country.
- **Health care systems need to be strengthened.** This will involve: increasing the number and skills of health care workers in partner countries; promoting the use of family and community-level prevention and treatment interventions; applying a holistic and policy for coherence for development approach; and, focusing on equity and neglected diseases.

Microfinance

World Vision believes that a lack of access to financial services is a barrier that traps people in poverty. To help remove these barriers World Vision provides microfinance, including micro-loans, savings accounts and small-scale insurance services in 41 countries. Microfinance serves as just one part of an overall approach to helping families and communities to help themselves. Most microfinance clients are women that reside in areas where World Vision is already doing other community development work. When a small business flourishes, the additional income helps parents to better the lives of their children.

An example of our work in microfinance can be seen in **Mongolia**. Fifty percent of people earn less than 1.40 Euro and half the population is undernourished. The cost of food, housing and transport rose 5000 per cent when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1990. Since 2005, World Vision has offered micro-finance loans to qualified entrepreneurs who live within development communities. VisionFund Mongolia, a World Vision sister company, offers proven entrepreneurs small loans, which create employment, rebuilding the economic engine, to help lift their community out of poverty.

In 2009, VisionFund International loaned almost 298 million euros in small business loans to over 600,000 hard-working entrepreneurs, sustaining almost 850,000 jobs in developing countries. The ripple effect reaches beyond families, enabling more jobs, eventually sustaining whole communities, and positively changing the lives of 2.2 million children worldwide.

Climate Change

The effects of climate change undermines first, the physical drivers of child well-being - children's water, food, food, health and nutrition, and their physical safety - and, second, the socio-economic drivers.⁵⁸ Harmful land use practices, like forest clearing and burning, are responsible for more than a third of annual global greenhouse gas emissions. About 80 per cent of these emissions from harmful land use practices are from developing countries. The poor are also the most defenceless to the effects of climate change. They are least able to protect themselves and to recover from floods, droughts, typhoons and famines. They often live in the most vulnerable areas, such as low-lying land which floods or marginal agricultural land prone to drought, and are especially susceptible to tropical diseases that spread through migrating mosquitoes. World Vision is therefore convinced that climate has the potential to make poverty much worse. It will be the poor who will suffer the most if issues relating to climate change are not addressed. World Vision's Climate Change Response Initiative strategically links the reduction and offsetting of carbon emissions with poverty alleviation. It is working to implement environment-enhancing development activities such as reforestation, agro-forestry and conservation farming that sequester greenhouse gases and increase communities' ability to adapt. Farmers take part in disaster preparedness training and learn about ways to improve food and water security, helping them to adapt to changing weather patterns. Revenue generated from carbon offset credits (derived from projects that sequester or reduce greenhouse emission gases) can be re-invested in local communities for health and nutrition, education, water and sanitation and economic development. This helps to alleviate poverty, transforms local communities and changes society in a way that fosters

⁵⁸ Global Future 'Improving Sanitation for the World's Poor', p19

development. As bio-carbon markets grow, World Vision intends to help the poor gain a voice in their environmental future and be compensated for fighting the effects of climate change in their own communities.

An example of the work World Vision does to combat climate change can be found in Humbo, Ethiopia, where, under the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), World Vision piloted an innovative forestry project. The CDM allows industrialised countries to invest in projects that reduce emissions in developing countries to supplement their domestic carbon reduction efforts. The Humbo Community-based Natural Regeneration Project was Ethiopia's first Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry carbon trading initiative. The Humbo project involves the regeneration of 2,728 hectares of degraded forests with indigenous, bio-diverse species. These forests act as a 'carbon sink', absorbing and storing greenhouse gases from the atmosphere to mitigate climate change while building environmental, social and economic resilience. Over the 30-year crediting period, it is estimated that over 870,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent will be removed from the atmosphere, making a significant contribution to mitigating climate change. Over 90 per cent of the Humbo project area is being reforested using low-cost Farmer-Managed Natural Forest Regeneration. The regeneration of the Humbo forest is producing tangible benefits for local communities. Forest restoration has resulted in increased production of wood and tree products, including honey, medicine, fibre, fruit and wildlife. Improved land management has stimulated grass growth, providing fodder for livestock that can also be cut and sold as an additional source of income.⁵⁹

To help prevent the risk imposed by climate change on the lives of children, World Vision asks the European Union to implement and uphold the calls for action identified during the second Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. These calls are based on the belief that a systematic application of risk reduction measures can reverse some of the worst vulnerabilities to poor communities and children - especially as disasters become more frequent and severe due to climate change. They are:

- **the application of disaster risk reduction approaches** to immediately get started on adaptation to climate change
- **drastically increased investment in disaster risk reduction**, recognising that risk is reduced at local level by local governments working alongside the communities and civil society
- **full commitment to empowering and resourcing local action**
- **special attention to making schools and hospitals safer** - assessing all facilities in highly risk-prone areas by 2011 followed by a plan of action to improve the buildings by 2015
- a commitment to **stop short-lived pilot projects and instead invest in viable and sustainable programmes.**⁶⁰

26) **Are you aware of good practices, initiatives or programmes that contribute to reducing child poverty? Are you aware of cross border initiatives in this area (e.g. cooperation, or participation in common projects, with organisations in other Member States, exchanges of good practice, etc.)?**

⁵⁹ Global Future 'Improving Sanitation for the World's Poor', p13

⁶⁰ Global Future 'Improving Sanitation for the World's Poor', p20

World Vision believes that without sustainable, pro-poor economic growth, hundreds of millions of children will remain in absolute poverty, living on less than US\$1 a day. Supporting pro-poor growth means ensuring that governments have the resources they need to invest in the realisation of children's rights, including their rights to education and health care. From our experience in working amongst hundreds of communities around the world, we ask the European Union to:

- **increase transparency and accountability in resource allocation; and use and fully ensure implementation of all elements of the Accra Agenda for Action**
 - Increase and de-politicise aid, make it predictable and target the vulnerable
 - Cancel the remaining debts of the poorest countries
- **take a multi-sectorial approach to the identification and use of available resources to benefit children.** This includes the development of indicators to measure progress toward realising children's economic, social and cultural rights
- **assess available resources beyond financial measures** that contribute to the implementation of children's economic, social and cultural rights
- **ensure that international co-operation is guided by the CRC**, and that specific targets are set for the allocation of resources toward children through official development assistance (ODA)
- **support social protection and cash transfers.** Social protection measures, including income transfers, family support services and alternative care, can help mitigate the impact of poverty on children and contribute to better health, education and protection of children. Effective social transfers alleviate income poverty and enable vulnerable households to meet their basic needs. Social transfers can also relieve families of the pressure to place children in institutions, lessen the risk of child labour, and reduce the stress that contributes to domestic violence. Health insurance and pension schemes are a further way of reducing the impact of shocks and crises on families and children.
- **allocate resources to meet the basic needs of the most vulnerable groups.** These programmes should include: strengthening food security to sustainable level; improving/increasing access to primary and secondary education; improving/increasing access to low-cost housing; improving/increasing access to medical care; improving/increasing access to vocational training and small loans for productive activities; and providing childcare centres and other support mechanisms for working mothers. Strategic national-level action plans must be developed to strengthen families and improve their opportunities for development, with the full participation of civil society. Agricultural development should be strengthened and promoted as a way of providing employment in rural zones and to slow migration to already overpopulated cities, fueling crime and violence and contributing to the breakdown of families.
- **ensure adequately funded monitoring and evaluation.** All national and international actors should make use of disaggregated data (by age) to document the particular situation of poverty or abuse of social-economic rights of children.
- **develop and implement effective resource-tracking systems** for the allocation and use of resources that are focused on the needs of children

27) What concrete initiatives would you suggest to reduce child poverty? Do you consider that the EU can contribute to these initiatives and if so how?

World Vision affirms the pivotal role that the European Union can play in helping to reduce child poverty. As such we believe the EU should take the following steps to improve the quality of life for children both within Europe and in the developing communities of EU partner countries:

Support the investment in free education which enables children to attend school full-time - including in fragile situations. Children often engage in work at the expense of an education due to poverty. In a multi-country survey, Ray and Lancaster (2004) conclude that child work, even in limited amounts, does adversely affect the child's learning - as reflected in decreased school attendance rates and in the length of schooling received by the child. They report that work decreases the child's ability to read and write and also increases the number of failures. Even where education is free and compulsory, attending school is not necessarily 'free'. While there may not be fees for school entrance or enrollment, there are other direct and indirect costs that families must consider. Indirect costs may include uniforms, stationery items and text books. If these costs are great, a household may not even be able to weigh the costs against the benefits of education. A family must weigh the opportunity cost of sending the child to school: the loss of the potential wages earned, the time that would be spent caring for siblings, or other contribution to the household that the child may have made had s/he not returned to school.

Support the use of cash vouchers. Cash vouchers are a very useful tool for social safety nets and social protection, and should be replicated at scale. This enables families to purchase their own food locally, as well as meeting a variety of other needs that directly or indirectly affect their nutrition, livelihood and family food security. An excellent World Vision pilot in Senegal is now being replicated with the EC Food Facility, and should be considered for broader replication. During the food price crisis, World Vision Senegal had a positive experience with community based and managed Grain Banks. This was linked to many activities including income generation and diversification. It was critical to have sound analyses on the ground and to develop context-tailored responses. This was also embedded in a detailed Food Security strategy of World Vision Senegal and closely connected with the Food Security Strategy of the government. Moreover it was implemented together with private economic actors, achieving a win-win situation. World Vision Senegal is presently enlarging these pilot activities with the support of the EC-Food-Facility. Another example can be found in World Vision's response to Lesotho's worst drought in 30 years, by delivering cash transfers or a combination of "cash plus food" to some 30,000 people. The Cash and Food Transfers Pilot Project ran for six months, during an exceptionally severe hunger season. The cash was enough to buy a full food basket for families every month (or a half-basket where the combination transfer was provided). Importantly, the cash also allowed the purchase of non-food essentials. Some bought maize and candles. Others used some of the cash to pay medical bills, pay school fees, buy fertiliser or productive assets like chickens. By the end of World Vision's pilot project in Lesotho, most participants preferred the mixed package of "cash plus food", followed by "cash only", with only a small minority choosing "food only".⁶¹

Apply a multi-sectorial approach combining nutrition, food security, child survival interventions (starting in pregnancy and with a lifecycle approach), health programming and strengthening of health systems to achieve a two-third reduction in child mortality rates, as called for in the high-level meeting on nutrition organized by Europa in November 2009.⁶²

⁶¹ See World Vision's Response to the EC Food Security Consultation

⁶² Ibid.

Support the investment in micro-finance institutions and programmes (MFIs). The core operation of MFIs is providing credit, their target audience being ‘the entrepreneurial poor’. To reach the poor MFIs may use a variety of lending approaches, ranging from individual loans to community banks. For an MFI to be fiscally successful it must address social changes in addition to economic, such as maintaining the poor as a client base and lending to women. Lending predominantly to women has proven to be good way to make positive impacts on families. World Vision, as one of the world’s largest NGOs supporting micro-finance, believes that micro-finance has made a generally positive contribution to the life and welfare of children. In a survey conducted by World Vision in 2006, found that micro-enterprise development (MED) was closely linked to the greater access to education provided by the loans. Furthermore, it found that most clients and their children has a strong sense of hope and optimise for the future. Greater value was placed on education; and most youth were ambitious about future vocations. Households often make choices on the basis of survival. In order to survive more income is needed and therefore the child has no choice but to work or to sink into a deeper level of poverty and devastation. The child’s expected contribution may be the means of providing for the survival of other family members. In a micro-enterprise, it might be that the family’s income increases by having an extra pair of hands to work or having a child run errands, freeing up more time for the adult. Investment in MED allows children to attend school.

Support children’s economic citizenship and ensure their access to resources.

Children have limited control over economic resources and assets, and are denied the economic rights of adults. Children’s economic disempowerment makes them more vulnerable to poverty, exploitation and abuse. We therefore make the following recommendations:

- **Guarantee children’s access to and control over resources and their own income.** This has to be respected and protected in formal legislation and in cultural practices
- **Provide financial education in school** as an essential livelihood skill for children
- **Review legislation regarding children’s access to financial services and resources** and explore ways to overcome the economic marginalization of children who are earning their own living
- **Change banking policies to facilitate access to banking services for children aged 14 years and older.** This should be accompanied by protection under the law from unscrupulous practice on the part of financial service providers
- **Ensure that children-headed households receive the same entitlements to social protection as other households.** Abolish discriminatory legislation that excludes children (especially those heading households) from accessing public services and resource transfers.

Support the emergence of regional policies and strategy frameworks, as well as existing and emerging international agreements for agriculture production and food security. The EU must effectively channel resources, and ensure synergies between bilateral and multilateral initiatives at the national level, with the systematic integration and evaluation of strategies to achieve maximum impact.⁶³

Ensure the full implementation of the Accra Agenda for Action. This includes:

- **the participation of all sectors of society,** including Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and all citizens, especially the most vulnerable who are most in need of aid such as children and youth, women, orphans, persons who are disabled, displaced and

⁶³ See World Vision EULO’s Response to the EC Food Security Consultation

trafficked, and persons with HIV and AIDS. Aid should focus on the capacity of civil society actors and local institutions, not just national government institutions, to effectively assess need, design programmes and work with local communities to implement programmes. The Accra Agenda for Action includes a mechanism to measure “ownership”.

- **mutual accountability which requires transparency and independent monitoring.** Full transparency must be required by all donors and partners. There cannot be accountability and ownership without full transparency. Country-by-country aid agreements must be published and accessible to parliaments, CSOs and citizens. There should be full transparency of all agreements, timetables, conditions and monitoring. Results must be measured in light of the impact on the most vulnerable and those most in need of aid, using disaggregated data (for gender, age, and HIV and AIDS). Donors, as well as governments and other institutional partners, will be evaluated and held accountable with the use of these results and considering the conditions of the most vulnerable. The Accra Agenda for Action should create a system of independent monitoring and evaluation of the Paris Declaration at international, national and local levels that guarantees the participation of parliaments and civil society representatives.
- **predictability of aid.** Aid should be predictable, in country-by-country multi-annual agreements, in order to enable partner country planning and the most effective and efficient use of funds.
- **the adoption of a conflict-sensitive approach in fragile states.** This means working “to do no harm and to guard against unwittingly aggravating existing or potential conflicts” as well as effectively addressing the underlying causes of poverty and conflict. Citizens are key partners and must be included as well as Civil Society Organisations in situations of fragility, in order to have useful multi-sectoral and holistic responses and to move beyond the politicisation of aid. A conflict-sensitive analysis must always occur and influence aid decisions. This analysis must take into account the conditions of the most vulnerable and also the causes of poverty, fragility, vulnerability, barriers to change, and risks of conflict. Situations of fragility require long-term perspectives with multi year funding mechanisms.

Communication

28) What are the ways of communicating effectively with children and adults on children's rights? Are you aware of good practices or initiatives relating to informing and raising awareness of children on their rights? Are you aware of cross border initiatives in this area (e.g. cooperation, or participation in common projects, with organisations in other Member States, exchanges of good practices, etc.)?

As the largest donor in the world the EU has an international responsibility and obligation to demonstrate political will and principled action to the world through its treatment of children and its undeterred commitment to uphold the rights of all children. The first step in effective communication on children's rights is therefore the EU's own credibility: it needs to be seen to be prioritising and fully supporting child rights. To ensure this, efforts need to be taken to improve the visibility of EU action on children's rights and to increase coordination with Member States, donors, partner countries and civil society. We ask the EU to implement the following action:

- hold a **regular EU Forum on children's rights in partner countries** to provide dialogue, debate and follow up on the development and implementation of children's rights by the EU in regards to its policies and actions affecting partner countries
- **support and enable child rights education for children.** This includes the introduction of child-friendly training for both children and those working with children in third countries
- **cooperate with the UN and civil society organisations to ensure that synergy and complementarity** exists between work carried out at different levels and by different stakeholders
- **consult and directly involve children in all decisions** by supporting projects that enable child participation
- **launch a public consultation, which includes children,** to identify those areas that require EU action, and to discuss specific themes affecting children
- strongly **encourage the European Parliament to use its strengthened powers under the Lisbon Treaty to ensure that children's rights are fully considered in EU policy and legislation** - political groups and committees can ensure that children's rights become an integral consideration in debates, reports and decisions⁶⁴

To help children understand their rights, World Vision asks the EU to ensure that the following suggestions are implemented:

- **Information on child rights must be free of charge** and available in variety of formats and mediums to ensure that all children are able to access the information
- **Information needs to be child-friendly, non-discriminatory, creative and diverse.** There is often a shortage of creative reading materials for children of different ages. The formats and channels of information have to be appropriate so that children of all ages and backgrounds are able to access the information they need
- **Child helplines need to be available.** They can be effective sources of information for children's questions about relationships, sexuality, pregnancy, abuse or legal matters. For helplines to be widely accessible, they have to use communication methods that reach all children, such as through telephone, online counseling, radio or peer-outreach networks
- **Children need to be active citizens in the media.** Children in the formal media constitute a very small but highly visible part of efforts to promote children's citizenship and civil rights. To encourage the role of the media in furthering child rights, World Vision recommends the following measures:
 - **Offer training opportunities for children to develop medial skills** and critical media literacy
 - **Encourage partner countries to recognize that independent media are fundamental to the pursuit of democracy and freedom** and that censorship and control are inimical to the best interests of both children and adults, and thus to create an effective and secure environment in which the media can work professionally and independently
 - **Explore ways in which,** without compromising professional independence, **support can be given to media initiatives aimed at providing greater access to children** serving their needs and promoting their rights
 - **Actively involve children in media** to ensure that media content is relevant and appropriate
 - **Increase children's access to and promote safe use of ICTs.**

⁶⁴ See 'Taking Action on Child Rights Under the Lisbon Treaty: Briefing Note for Members of the European Parliament ahead of Commissioner Hearings', p3

- **Children-led associations must be supported.** The CRC affirms children's right to form and join associations (Article 15). Children-led associations can play an important role in developing social awareness, organizational skills and self-confidence of children. They also can help children to protect themselves by seeking strength in numbers and can aid them to achieve social justice. We recommend the following action be taken by the European Union to encourage children-led associations:
 - Support efforts of CSOs to reform legislation to promote children's associations
 - Encourage the provision of legal guarantees and a supportive environment for children's associations and of their right to organize as citizens
 - In relation to working children, help ensure that there are no limits on the right of children to form and join trade unions
 - Support efforts to ensure that membership of any organisation is voluntary
 - Take special measures to promote the freedom of association of children with disabilities

Child Participation

29) Are you aware of good practices or initiatives relating to the participation of children in the development of policies that affect them?

Child participation is one of the four guiding principles of the CRC. Although several articles of the Convention relate to children's participation (namely Articles 12, 13, 14, 15, 17 and 23), Article 12 expresses most clearly the child's 'right to express their opinions freely, and have their opinions taken into account in matters that affect them'. This principle is also reflected in regional rights instruments including the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child which stipulates that 'every child who is capable of communicating his or her own views shall be assured the rights to express his opinions freely in all matters'.⁶⁵ From the perspective of a development agency such as World Vision, the right to participation can be seen in terms of enabling children and young people to have 'an authentic and effective voice in evaluating and improving the conditions of their lives'⁶⁶. Having endorsed the principles and articles of the UNCRC and its two Optional Protocols, World Vision has committed itself to ensuring that 'all girls and boys are able to participate in the development process in an age-appropriate manner, becoming agents of transformation in their families and communities, in the present and future'⁶⁷. By identifying child participation as a key indicator of transformational development, World Vision clearly recognises the importance of engaging children and young people in its work. This has most recently been expressed in a set of 'child well-being outcomes' which stress the importance of children being listened to and having the skills and opportunity to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

⁶⁵ OAU, African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, entered into force in November 1999

⁶⁶ Auriat, N., Miljeteig, P. & Chawla, L. (October 2001) 'Overview - Identifying best practices in children's participation' in UNESCO, PLA Notes 42

⁶⁷ This commitment is expressed as part of the Transformational Development Frame which identifies 'Empowered children to be agents of transformation' as a key 'Domain of Change'. Full details available at www.transformational-development.org

Child participation is invaluable to understand how issues affect children directly. Many states and international bodies have recognized the benefit of incorporating the unique perspective and knowledge that children can provide. Children are not ignorant. They have an understanding of their own situation, of factors that influence them, and of the relative value of various solutions to overcome the most difficult factors. As Mihael Stoican stated: 'Children can be agents of change. They know their own needs and the living conditions they have. Through active participation and communication with their parents, employers and other adults, children can propose the most appropriate solutions.'⁶⁸

Examples of World Vision Initiatives

World Vision believes that consulting with children is pivotal to ensure inclusiveness and ownership, build democratic societies, reduce dependency and achieve a broader impact. Below are examples of World Vision initiatives which empower children to have a voice in decision making:

Children as active participants in international decision-making Lebanon

Earlier this year, over a period of two months, children from Beirut, the Bekaa valley and Marjeyoun, Southern Lebanon, came together to brainstorm, debate and agree on issues that affect children in their communities. Conducted as part of World Vision's project "Children make their voices heard to the United Nations", the initiative aimed to give children the opportunity to write with their own words a **report on child rights** and submit it to the UN. Joelle, 13, explained her group's focus: *"In our Children's Council in Marjeyoun we decided to research about cluster bombs and landmines and how this situation affects the lives of children in Lebanon. We live in fear of cluster bombs and this causes psychological problems and lack of freedom of movement in our villages. This is violence against children"*. The report also highlighted the children's concerns over issues such as child labour, children with no identification/unregistered at birth, children with disabilities and violence against children. The outcome of their discussions will be published as part of a child-led report submitted to the United Nations Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review mechanism. Children are also regularly involved in the drafting of alternative reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Another example of World Vision's work in Lebanon can be seen in the **Child Consultation**: From a Child's Point of View - a consultation aimed at identifying the areas that most affected children. This participatory debate was based on the Child Rights Convention as core intervention model. The purpose was to give children the opportunity to express their beliefs, desires, successes and challenges. The Children Consultation aimed to discover how well children understood their rights, what they thought about them, their positive or negative experiences exercising those rights and to brainstorm the next steps to designing advocacy initiatives that help children develop to their full potential. During the consultation children voted for the most important rights and they voted for boys and girls who will represent them in the Children Council. Sixty children were elected by their peers. This council aimed to involve children in decision-making process about issues that affect them. Children identified violence in the home and punishment in schools as the problem that affected them more severely. The outcome of the children's vote shaped World Vision Lebanon's prioritizes which thereafter put violence against children as the core issue in its advocacy work.

⁶⁸ See 'Child Participation in Upcoming European Conferences'

Children as active participants in social reform

The Philippines

World Vision's belief in the role of children as active participants in social reform can be seen in its support of The Expanding Children's Participation in Social Reform (ECPSR) project - a three-year project in the Philippines implemented by four NGOs (World Vision, Plan International, Christian Children's Fund and Educational Research and Development Assistance). The project aimed to: organise and build capacity of children to participate as active citizens in the public policy arena; create and establish coalitions of NGOs, People's Organisations (POs), Children's Associations (CAs) and Government Organisations (GOs) to collectively address issues and concerns of children; document and research children's issues; and, intensify advocacy efforts for and with children in the legislative process. Children aged 10-17 were organised at the barangay (village), municipal and provincial levels and were provided with capacity building activities to develop their full potential in leadership and advocacy. Annual children's assemblies were held to give children the opportunity to present their issues and ideas to representatives from local government, NGOs, People's Organisations and the media. At community level, theatre and other forums were used to sensitise adults to the value of children's participation and to raise awareness of issues. Children also got involved in poster competitions, street drama, marches and other events to raise awareness. Some were also given media training to take part in radio and tv programmes. Significantly, the children's associations that were formed at barangay, municipal and provincial levels continue to be active and many have been recognised by their respective barangay councils. In most areas children are also represented on the Barangay Council for the Protection of Children (BCPC). There are also cases of children being represented on the Board of Trustees of People's Organisations in World Vision's Area Development Programmes (ADPs) to give them a voice in the management of projects. Many young people who have turned eighteen continue to be involved in activities.

As well as helping children to grow in confidence and self-esteem, children's participation has had an impact on policy at a local, provincial and national level:

- **Local:** laws have been passed at barangay level concerning anti-gambling, curfew hours for children and representation on the BCPC
- **Provincial:** Two provincial governments have passed Codes for children, budgets have been allocated for children's assemblies and laws passed that all barangays appoint child representatives on the BCPC
- **National:** a Child Sectoral Council has been formed with 25 children aged 10-16 years representing the different regions of the country. A National Coalition of Children's Associations in the Philippines has been formed to ensure children are consulted on issues for prioritisation and recommendations for policy reform. The children's sector has been recognised as a distinct sector and has been separated from youth.

Children as active participants in research

Ghana

A World Vision project in Ghana implemented Articles 12 and 13 of the CRC by recruiting children as researchers and given the opportunity to share their findings with their peers and community members. Forty-five girls and boys ranging in age from 15 to 17 participated in the survey as researchers. The adolescents were part of a larger research team comprising community members, the consultant, WV staff, and adult representatives of institutions such as the Ghana Health Service, the Ghana National Commission on Children, the Commission Human Rights and Administrative Justice, the National Commission on Civic Education. Initially the children joined the study as timid observers,

but soon became confident members of the research team. On the first day of a meeting to review the draft questions prepared by the consultant, the children observed that the questions were not suitable for young people, and highlighted those that were adult-specific. They recommended that a separate, child-friendly version of the questionnaire be created. The consultant then redesigned the questionnaire for adults, and produced a different version for children; the final questionnaires reflected the recommendations made by the children. Since the researchers included children who had very limited knowledge of or experience in research, training sessions were organized to introduce them to the fundamental principles and standards of research. The challenge was ensuring that the materials were not overly academic and incomprehensible through role-playing. The children learned quickly and demonstrated the correct techniques for interviewing individuals, facilitating focus group discussions, and building trust for effective communication with interviewees. The findings of the field work indicated that whereas 59 per cent of adults agreed that children do not participate in decision-making, as many as 76 per cent of the children interviewed said they were hardly ever consulted for their input into family or community decisions affecting them. Most of the adults attributed this attitude to their belief that children cannot make meaningful decisions. The children, on the other hand, said their parents know best and can decide for them. In one particular community, more than half (52 per cent) of the adults said they always sought the opinion of their children in making decisions at the household level, whereas only 29 per cent of the children confirmed this claim. The project proved that when space and support are provided, children are not only interested and motivated to participate in research, but are capable of exercising their right to participation a meaningful way as well.

Children as active participants in community development Vietnam

World Vision, in cooperation with Vietnamese Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, UN Children's Fund, Save the Children, Plan International and Childfund organized a National Children's Forum in early August 2009. This was the first time such an event was held for children in Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam. The 126 children were representative children from 21 provinces and cities across the country represented the 24 million children of Vietnam. Under the theme "Children and Objectives for Children", the forum helped the children to raise their concern and voice to the highest Government policy makers who promised to take decisive action for the implementation of National Plan of Action for Children 2001-2010. Healthcare, nutrition, water and sanitation, child participation, leisure activities for children and child protection were main issues that the children raised with the leaders and policy makers.

Children as active participants in communicating and implementing their rights The Philippines

The extent to which children are able to implement their rights can be seen in the example of the Philippines. Sixteen year old Jaylord Lanbayon is the chairperson of the Luzon Coalition of Children's Associations in the Philippines, and he represents his peers in the National Coalition of Children's Associations in the Philippines. He fights against child labour, works to promote child participation in education and challenges ethnic discrimination. *'I know my rights and I often speak about it in public,'* he says, *'Children's voices have to be heard... There is wisdom in our innocence. Given the opportunities to express ourselves and participate on issues that affect us, we can help bring hope and transformation in our communities'*. Seventeen year old Rima Joy agrees, *'We aim to raise children's awareness on their rights... I am pushing for stronger partnership between the local government, the NGOs, schools and churches in initiating projects.... that encourage wider participation of children in their communities'*.

Suggestions for Good Practices for Encouraging Child Participation

World Vision's conviction that child participation is fundamental to effective and sustainable development has led to a number of good practices that the organisation believes produces meaningful participation from children. Adults involved in a consultation process with children play a important role in ensuring that participation is meaningful and the environment in which it takes place is a safe and comforting one. Based on our experience World Vision makes the following recommendations for best practice when facilitating child participation in Member States and partner countries. These practices apply to direct contact with children and should be used by the EU when conducting activities such as needs assessment, surveys and research:

- **Participate in active listening.**
- **Have a designated person whom the children can go to if they have questions or concerns** about the process.
- **Give feedback to the children's suggestions.**
- **Reflect and share.**
- **Designate child-only reflection spaces.**
- **Ensure that all decision-making processes and power relations are transparent.**

If child participation is to be inclusive, adult facilitators need to spend time helping children to understand the processes they will be dealing with. In order to build capacity with children World Vision makes the following practical suggestions to the EU:

- **Begin the consultation process or meeting with an 'expectations' exercise.** The results from this meeting can then be used to create the process or methods for the participation around a set of common expectations
- **Allow plenty of time for discussions.** Discussions will allow children to gain a more thorough understanding of the concepts, and allow the facilitator to ensure the children are grasping them correctly
- **Not all children learn in the same way.** Activities should be designed so that all children can participate.
- **Work in small groups** when possible.
- **Avoid activities where speakers are presenting to the children;** allow the children to be active in their learning.

30) How would you improve child participation in relation to the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child?

The European Commission Communication: 'Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child' (2006) committed to involve children in decision-making processes and to consult them directly. The European Parliament resolution of January 2008 called for the mainstreaming and monitoring of all these child rights and commitments. A workshop of the European Forum on the Rights of the Child of December was solely dedicated to the importance and methods of meaningful child participation. In the European Forum on the Rights of the Child of 2009, Mihail Stoican, gave an address in the name of the upcoming Swedish Presidency and as representative of the special unit in the Swedish government for the 'Coordination of the Policy on the rights of the Child'⁶⁹. He stressed: 'We have to give the child opportunities to exercise his or her right to be heard and be involved in

⁶⁹ See http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/fsj/children/forum/doc/09_06_18_stoican_en.pdf

decision making. Children have the right to have a say. But they have also the concrete experience of their own labour so that they can give us the necessary input for most relevant and appropriate measures'.⁷⁰ The rights to expression opinion and freedom of thought are fundamental civil rights. Articles 12, 13, 14 and parts of 23 of the CRC make this clear. Children have competencies, knowledge and abilities, and are able to contribute these to society and to shape their school, family and community environments. Unfortunately we have been very disappointed with the lack of child participation at EU level. It seems that while the theoretical framework for child participation is present within EU policy, the impetus to act upon it is not. As such we strongly request that the EU involve children in all its internal and external decision-making processes.

To help ensure this happens, World Vision makes the following practical recommendations to help facilitate the participation of children in the development of policies that affect them:

Support partner governments to ensure children's right to express their views freely. This support includes:

- **review legal and administrative procedures** to ensure children's involvement in important decisions (including marriage, custody, adoption, separation, school, juvenile justice, institutional care, and asylum-seeking procedures) is compatible with the CRC and consistent with the child's evolving capabilities
- **raise awareness among adults and children about children's right** to express their opinions and its implications for children to be involved in decisions
- **promote active learning and teaching methods** in education
- **develop the capacities** of teachers, health workers, social workers and other professionals to communicate with children and to involve children in decisions
- **promote respect for children**, listening skills and democratic parenting practices through parenting education and preparation for parenthood
- **develop children's decision-making skills** in schools and in other institutions through management committees and other participatory decision-making structures

Promote awareness-raising on children's rights for parents and other adults to address prejudices toward children, and invest in skills-building for participatory processes, both with adults and children, ensuring that the methods are appropriate for the levels of maturity and capacity of the participants. Article 12 of the CRC states that the child has a right to express his or her views 'in all matters affecting the child'. In order to ensure that Article 12 is upheld, all adults must be made aware of its existence and the obligations it confers on them. Moreover, given the crucial role of NGOs in developing methods to facilitate children's participation, WV recommends that the EC encourage greater cooperation between Member States, partners and civil society to promote the application of this principle in all sectors

Facilitate spaces for children to develop their own ideas and opinions by providing access to appropriate information and forums where they can explore, form, and express their views freely. Structures and processes to capture the views of children must be introduced in all arenas where decision-making processes take place. The effectiveness of children's ideas can be seen in the opinions of seventeen year old Kristina Awom who lives in Indonesia. *'I have actively shared my knowledge about child rights with my [peers] in my village and in other neighbouring areas,'* says Krisitina, *'I tell them that we have the right to develop our potential and we are not inferior to [people] living in big cities. I have helped the establishment of the...children's self-help group in my village. Our team goes*

⁷⁰ See 'Child Participation in Upcoming European Conferences'

form one community group to the other group to create greater awareness among the people about the importance of giving better protection to their children, to improve their nutrition and other children issues. We also warn the people about the threat of HIV and AIDS'.

Ensure that participatory processes for children are inclusive and accessible for all.

The children who participate should be representative of the broader population and should not be discriminated against on any basis. Participatory processes should be designed to accommodate particularly marginalized children; for example, through the use of selection criteria that ensures diverse representation. Moreover, every effort should be made to enable the relaying of children's messages in ways that do not compromise their authenticity. Wherever possible, children should be able to participate in a language or another medium that is most comfortable for them; if translation is required, then translators should be properly trained to accurately convey what the child has expressed.

Incorporate participatory approaches that are child-inclusive in traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms. Children's perspectives should be intrinsic to decision-making and peace-building processes. World Vision recommends that the EC encourage Member States and partner countries to ensure children's participation in conflict-resolution processes as a matter of both policy and practice. Leaders should be targeted to raise their awareness of and change their attitudes about children's rights and participation.

Include children in international conferences. Children and youth can provide meaningful contributions to international conferences and European policy processes. Examples can be seen in the: 14th International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa, Nigeria; 3rd World Congress on Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents; G8 Summit, Gleneagles, Scotland 2005, and L'Alquila, Italy 2009. World Vision understands that for child participation to be effective it must be a) meaningful, and b) safe. Meaningful participation applies to all participants, not just children. Participation should be ethical and non-discriminatory. It's not just a matter of having children or youth present, but actual time to speak, and the opportunity to influence decision making processes. In part, this implies clarity on their role and the potential for influence in order to manage children's expectations. One should also create an environment in which children are able to contribute to the best of their abilities ('child-friendly' in relation to the age and experience of the 'children' attending). In addition, one should create a child-safe environment with recognised rigorous child protection procedures. Further suggestions to ensure the inclusion of children include the following:

- share information with children at all stages
- children should participate in setting of indicators for all of the domains
- receive and incorporate feedback from children in redesign of programmes
- capacity-building targeted at building skills for children
- regularly review with children of various ages through focus groups, role plays, etc (ie use creative methods of evaluation that are appropriate for children of different age groups)
- ensure children learn and understand the implications of the results, through analysing project data in methods and formats that are appropriate for them
- children should be seen in their future life phases, ie as citizens of tomorrow

Set up a means of enabling the systematic review of EU draft legislation and policies so that children's rights are reinforced and any possible negative impact upon these rights are addressed removed. To do this World Vision we ask that the EU:

- set up child-related peer reviews within the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) framework
- ensure child-friendly translations of relevant EU policy
- provide EC support to the development of long-term and sustainable structures and mechanisms for child participation at local, national and regional levels that can directly affect EU policy-making processes and action which impact on children's rights. Such structures must be clearly defined, ensure meaningful, inclusive participation and fair representation of participants from within and, where relevant, outside the EU.⁷¹

Other Issues

31) Which other issues do you think should be addressed in the context of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and why?

When the Commission issued the 2006 Communication 'Toward a Strategy on the Rights of the Child' it promised an ambitious strategy - a strategy intended to increase the 'scale and effectiveness of EU commitments to improve the situation of children globally'. As part of this commitment World Vision was especially pleased with the Communication's inclusion of child participation, a strategic framework for all EU action that affect the rights of children, and, as the Communication emphasised, its 'particular priority' of the 'protection of the rights of children, both against economic exploitation and all forms of abuse, with the Union acting as a beacon to the rest of the world'. However, while the Communication made these very welcome promises in 2006, we cannot help but express our disappointment with the 2010 Consultation issued by the Commission. Not only does the questionnaire not match the commitments made by the EC but it barely takes into account the global dimensions of EU external action. Furthermore, it is limited in its scope and too narrowly focused on the Stockholm Programme priorities. We therefore ask for the following:

A clear and uncompromising rights-based approach to be adopted in all decision-making and implementation of policy. These rights, as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), highlight four main principles that must form the basis for all EU action relating to children's rights, these include: non discrimination; the best interest of the child; the right to life, survival and development; the right of the child to express his/her views freely and to be heard. This child centered approach that promotes the protection of children's rights needs to be consistently coordinated throughout all EU policy - both internal and external. This means that all EU policy needs to be assessed according to its compatibility with children's rights. We call on the EU to sign a unilateral declaration stating its unwavering commitment to the UNCRC.

Firm guidelines on the assessment of child well-being and the implementation thereof both internally and externally. In order to ensure this, we make the following suggestions:

- the development of child well-being indicators

⁷¹ See 'Taking Action on Child Rights Under the Lisbon Treaty: Briefing Note for Members of the European Parliament ahead of Commissioner Hearings', p2

- the collection of data on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and on the participation of children and young people
- the provision of disaggregated data on children (for all EU internal and external funding and actions)
- the provision of more comparable data collection on the most vulnerable children, as indicated in this document
- the facilitation of information gathering on children's views and the views of the general public on children's rights in partner countries
- the organisation of experts on children's rights to collect qualitative data on the development and implementation of child rights strategies in partner countries (this should include the creation of a space for children to share their own experiences and opinions)

An accountability and monitoring framework of child rights. The EC must establish clear responsibilities and structures to ensure implementation and monitor progress. This may include the establishment of a cross-party group on children's rights and a children's rights coordinator in the European Parliament. It may include appointing a Commissioner with competence to coordinate and oversee children's rights action in internal and external affairs respectively. It may also mean appointing children's rights focal points in the Council Secretariat and the EEAS. To this end:

- the EC should produce an **annual report on developments within and the progress of the integration of child rights** into all EU activity and policy. While we ask that this report is produced separately from the Annual Fundamental Rights Report, we are happy for it to accompany this report.
- the EC should produce an **annual report documenting how the EU is implementing its Strategy on the Rights of the Child**
- the EC should introduce a **structured process** that enables Member States to provide updates and progress on the implementation of the Strategy on the Rights of the Child at their national levels

In conclusion, if the European Union is serious about upholding the rights of the child we believe that the recommendations made in this questionnaire, if implemented, can greatly enhance the work that the EU does on behalf of children both within European and in third countries. However, many of these recommendations have already been communicated to the European Commission and have been ignored. Children are not a minority issue as all the data shows.

We therefore urge the European Union to take seriously its Lisbon Treaty commitment to children and give them the attention they deserve. After all, it is their right.

