

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR CHILDREN
Qualitative Research

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Summary Report
Based on the findings of 9 individual country reports

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CONTENTS OF THE REPORT

	Page
Background	2
Research objectives	2
Sample and research methodology	2
SUMMARY OF THE KEY FINDINGS	5
The participants	5
Admiration, celebrity and role models	5
Fortunate versus Unfortunate	6
Equality	7
Reaction to the Global Partnership for Children concept	8
Children's rights	10
Community of children	10
Organizations active in promoting children's rights	11
Media and communications	12
Making a difference	13
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	14
APPENDIX	
Discussion Guide	

Background

The Global Partnership for Children is UNICEF's internal working description for a renewed effort to broaden, strengthen and focus the existing movement around a common agenda for children. UNICEF is currently exploring various ideas, which include developing communication strategies that target children with some level of leadership quality, and identifying the most effective media to be used to communicate with the children of the world.

After the research was commissioned, the title was changed to the Global Partnership for Children. All the references in the discussion guide and the individual country reports to the ***Global Movement for Children*** therefore refer to the Global Partnership for Children.

Research Objectives

1. To help guide communications about the Global Partnership for Children - particularly communications directed to children.
2. To better understand how children see the position of children around the world, particularly those who are less well off than themselves.
3. To gain insight into what would motivate children to participate in the Global Partnership for Children.

Sample and Research Methodology

As the budget for this project was limited, one country was chosen from each of UNICEF's seven regions. In addition, two industrialized countries were also included in the research. The nine countries thus included are:

Bangladesh, Cote d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Egypt, Kenya, Romania and Vietnam
Italy and USA

The choice of the countries in each region was made by UNICEF, after taking into consideration such factors as the feasibility and the cost of conducting research in the country.

In Western Europe, Italy was chosen in preference to some other countries on grounds of cost. Scandinavian countries were excluded as it was thought that young people in these countries tend to be more socially aware (and thus more likely to be "activists").

In each country, focus group discussions were conducted, with a sample of young people corresponding to the following criteria:

- ◆ One group of girls, one of boys.
- ◆ All respondents aged between 13 and 14 years.
- ◆ Children of urban, educated, middle-class families that are relatively well off - usually classified as socio-economic groups A and B.
- ◆ All attending school, with the view of progressing to university level education.
- ◆ All respondents use the media regularly (at least once a week)
- ◆ Not currently defined as "activists".
- ◆ All respondents have the capacity to become advocates for children's rights, should they wish to do so. That is, possessing the necessary intellectual capacity, available time and support structures.

The following standard market research exclusions were imposed:

- ◆ Employment of a close relative in related professions (marketing, advertising, social and development work)
- ◆ Recent participation in a market research study (in the last 6 to 12 months)

The focus groups took place during the first half of May 2000. The usual size of each group was eight young people, although a few groups had up to 12 participants.

Except in Vietnam and the USA, the focus groups were held in the capital city. In Vietnam, the research was conducted in Ho Chi Minh City in southern Vietnam. In the USA, the focus groups were held in Stamford, Connecticut.

Discussion Guide

The discussion followed a moderator's guide provided by UNICEF. The discussion centered on the following themes:

- Introduction to the research and of the respondents
- Warm-up section: People who are admired
- Understanding the idea of "fortunate" and "unfortunate" children
- Exploration of "equality"
- Reactions to the Global Partnership for Children concept
- Discussion of children's rights
- Media patterns and communication with young people
- Wrap-up exercise: Most important action for the Global Partnership for Children

Caveats

- ❖ Focus group methodologies are used to develop insight and direction, rather than quantitatively projectable measures.
- ❖ Due to the small sample size, the recruitment methods used and the study's objectives themselves, it is clearly understood that the work under discussion is exploratory in nature. The findings are not, nor were they intended to be, projectable to a larger population.
- ❖ It should also be remembered that the young people who took part in these focus groups come from a financially privileged background. They enjoy living conditions that the majority of children and young people in their country do not.
- ❖ As will be seen, the opinions of the respondents from the United States and Italy differ on some key issues from those expressed by respondents from the developing countries (including Romania).

SUMMARY OF THE KEY FINDINGS

The participants

- Overall, the girls seemed to be more aware, informed, enthusiastic and mature in their thinking. The exceptions were in Egypt and Vietnam.
- The respondents from Italy and the USA appeared to be less enthusiastic and mature than those from the other countries. They also were more skeptical and lacking in empathy with others. They tended to be more inward looking, concentrating on their immediate circle or community.

Admiration, celebrity and role models

- The respondents admire people who possess special qualities that make them stand out, or who have overcome difficulties or challenges. These admired people may be famous, but equally members of their family or other people in their close community.
- Among famous people, past or present, mentioned in more than one country were: Mother Theresa of Calcutta, Martin Luther King, Princess Diana, Bill Gates, Pope John Paul II, Nelson Mandela, Madonna, and Whitney Houston.
- The general notion is that admiration and trust go hand in hand.
- A celebrity's views or actions will be considered if the celebrity is liked and respected. This usually means that the celebrity has given "something back to the society" and has thus shown concern for other, less fortunate, people.
- The content of the message is more positively reinforced by the credibility of the messenger. Issues unrelated to the messenger would not necessarily act as a barrier to accepting the message, as long as the messenger is respected.
- The most effective messages are those based on experience or knowledge, or if the views expressed coincide with the recipient's opinion or demonstrate a recognizable truth.

Fortunate versus Unfortunate

- Having access to basic facilities such as *a home, proper food, education and health care* were widely used as descriptors of being fortunate. At an even more basic level, *being born* and *having survived* was mentioned by some respondents, but not universally. Children who are deprived of the basic facilities were termed as unfortunate.
- In the USA, being fortunate was linked to material needs and money, as well as to emotional needs. Being fortunate is seen as being more a state of mind than a tangible situation. (This view was also echoed in Ecuador.) *Racism* and *prejudice* were seen as aspects of being unfortunate. In Italy, similar sentiments were expressed by the respondents, but the role of the family and a "guide" was also stressed.
- An important describer of being fortunate is *having a family and parental love*. The need to love and to be loved was strongly expressed by respondents in all the countries. Other emotionally based aspects include *to be understood, to fulfil one's potential, to succeed*.
- A key finding to come out of this research is that, in developing countries, **access to education** was considered perhaps the most important issue. The effects were seen on two levels: (a) for the individuals to attain their rights and to improve their position and living conditions, and (b) to help develop the country as a whole. A large, uneducated population was mentioned as a barrier to development and to attaining a more equitable society.
- In Italy and the USA, *access to good education* was seen as important, as it helps to ensure better job opportunities for the individuals. The respondents in these countries also see access to education in developing countries as important.
- Other key describers of being unfortunate include *having to work from an early age* (mentioned in all countries except the USA), *being homeless, being an orphan*, and *emotional or physical abuse*.

- Respondents from Italy and the USA largely believe that unfortunate people themselves bear the responsibility to change their own lives. They have to "help themselves to be helped". This view was also echoed by the respondents in Ecuador.
- All the respondents from developing countries agreed that they are fortunate, contrary to the majority of children in their own country.
- In the USA and Italy, most respondents also saw themselves as being part of a school and a community where most people are fortunate. Children of divorced parents in their school were described as unfortunate.
- It was generally thought that in industrialized countries there are more fortunate than unfortunate children. In all focus groups, it was agreed that there are more unfortunate than fortunate children in Africa. This is largely because of wars and famine. (The other areas mentioned varied to some extent depending on the focus group location.)

Equality

- A world in which there is equality was described as a happy place where everybody is enjoying life and also shows concern for other people. There is an atmosphere of harmony and co-operation. All people have access to the material basics, including education and employment. There is no discrimination on grounds of gender, race, religion, income or social class. There is freedom of expression. It was generally agreed that such a place does not exist in reality.
- At a less emotive level, equality is seen as *equal opportunities* for all.
- In all countries, the respondents agreed that one essential element of a world of equality is that there is *no war, conflict or violence*.
- In the USA, equality was seen as a complex idea, one that is positive in some ways but also stimulates doubts and ambivalence. The respondents in Italy also expressed these sentiments.

- At the moment, equality does not really exist anywhere. A key reason for this is that there are large differences in wealth between people and nations.
- In some countries (such as Romania and Vietnam) the respondents said that people are equal in the eyes of law. However, in Ecuador corruption means that some privileged people are above the law.
- In several countries, respondents expressed the view that if the world were made up of children, it would be a more equal place. It was argued that adults do not understand equality.
- In all focus groups, it was thought that there are differences in the level of equality practice between different countries. Western countries were usually perceived to be better in this respect than developing nations. In Asia, Japan was thought (for cultural reasons) to be ahead of other countries by the Vietnamese groups.
- Some degree of inequality is seen as a fact of life by many respondents, unlikely ever to change. In Vietnam, the respondents argued that equality would never fully exist as competition and disputes are needed to survive and progress.

Reaction to the Global Partnership for Children concept

<p>Within your lifetime, every child will be able to develop his or her talents and full potential, in a climate of peace, equality and respect for human dignity.</p>

- Spontaneous reactions to the concept statement were generally positive. The statement describes an "ideal world" in which children would develop and prosper. However, this was soon tempered with pessimism.
- Among the more positive assessments, the concept was perceived as *achievable but difficult*. Achievable, if everyone pulls together - the children, adults, the governments, non-governmental organizations.

- The majority of the respondents felt that the aim was *not realistic*, not in their lifetime and not for every child. There is no equality in the world, and there is no peace in many parts of the world.
- The concept statement was considered *too abstract* - almost like an election slogan in the opinion of some respondents. The meaning of some key words or phrases (such as "talent" and "human dignity") was not clearly understood by all. This may have partly been due to translation.
- It is important that any communication about the Global Partnership for Children uses words and concepts that are tangible enough to translate into other languages. (Abstract expressions do not translate well into some languages.)
- In some countries, respondents said that achieving the goal might be possible in the lifetime of their children or grandchildren. If they and their generation bring up their children in the spirit of equality, if it possible for the world to change for future generations. However, some respondents (in Ecuador and Vietnam) opined that even if young people like themselves were keen to change things for the better, their intentions and aspirations might change once they face the realities of the adult world.
- In all countries, the respondents stressed that children are the future of the world, the stakeholders. Most groups agreed that "investing in children is investing in the future of the world". The respondents also argued that as children are less able to defend themselves, they need adults to protect them from anyone who may want to harm them.
- It was usually thought that the government should be playing a leading role in making change happen. However, various non-governmental organizations, such as UNICEF, should also have a key role. The "rich segment" of the society (individuals and businesses) should contribute.
- The participation of ordinary people and the children themselves was thought paramount for the success of the Global Partnership for Children. Children are in the best position to understand the needs of other children.

- In some countries, respondents said that children could play a major role in the process of uniting the adults. This could start from their own homes where they can influence their parents.
- In the developing countries, most respondents were keen to participate in the Global Partnership for Children, even to become "ambassadors" for the cause. Their motives were generally two-fold: (a) to protect children less fortunate than themselves and (b) to help develop their country.
- Among respondents in Italy and the USA, there was little interest in personal participation. In Romania, the respondents were initially very keen, but then felt that they would not be taken any notice of, as adults do not pay attention to what adolescents say.

Children's rights

- Awareness of children's rights varied among the respondents from one country to another. In all focus groups, the participants could think of some basic rights, such as the right to shelter, food, education and health care. The most sophisticated responses came from the respondents in Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya and Romania. (Examples: the right to an identity, to a name and a nationality; the right to protection from harm; the right to an opinion.)
- Another key finding from this research is that most of these privileged young people feel strongly that they do **not** have the *right to express an opinion or to have their opinion listened to and respected*. That is, adults do not generally respect these rights.

Community of children

- There was no clear sense of a worldwide community of children, as opposed to a community of adults. Most respondents said that they live in the world that is controlled by adults, and that they have to live by rules set out by adults.

- Even though the respondents do not feel that they belong to a worldwide community of children, they do think that other children and young people in different parts of the world must have similar experiences and opinions as they do.
- In Kenya, the respondents said that the only way to assert themselves into the adult world is through their unity as children, which will then challenge that adult world to give a listening ear to the views of children. A similar opinion was expressed in the boys' group in Ecuador.
- As was mentioned earlier, respondents in several countries were of the opinion that if the world were made up of children, it would be a more equal place. It is the adults who "teach" - by words or example - prejudice and inequality to the children.

Organizations active in promoting children's rights

- UNICEF was spontaneously mentioned by most groups as an organization that promotes children's rights. The MINA program was mentioned by the girls in Bangladesh.
- There was not a great deal of awareness of other organizations, except for a few local organizations. The Red Cross was mentioned by most groups as benefiting children indirectly.
- Other UN organizations, such as UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNCHCR were mentioned in some groups.
- The majority of the respondents did not have much idea about "other causes" (such as issues relating to the environment) or organizations involved in these causes.

Media and communications

- The media that the respondents use most often is *television*. Most also recommended it as the main means of communication about the Global Partnership for Children. The reason for this is that "most children" watch TV. In a few countries, the respondents suggested special programs made by the children for the children.
- In most developing countries, *radio* and *oral communication* were recommended as the means of communicating to children from poorer families and those living in rural areas. (As they may not have access to a TV set.) However, the majority of the respondents themselves do not listen to the radio much, and usually only to music programs.
- Newspapers, magazines, newsletters and school notice boards were also mentioned to communicate to people from their own socio-economic group. Advertising billboards and banners were also suggested.
- Some respondents use the *Internet* regularly and also surf the net to obtain information. They also find the *e-mail service* a useful way of communicating with other people. However, in many developing countries, access to the Internet is still very limited, even among the upper socio-economic groups.
- The communication should be captivating so as to draw the attention of children and young people. Comic strip cartoons were suggested by some respondents, as long as the messages are easy to understand. In Ecuador some respondents had seen UNICEF cartoons on child rights but had found them difficult to comprehend.
- Workshops, seminars and discussion forums about children's rights and the Global Partnership for Children were also suggested.

Making a difference

- A key way of motivating children and young people is by empowering them by listening to them and by giving them a chance to assert themselves. Many children and young people feel that adults often take their issues for granted and that nobody listens to them. This was evident from all focus group discussions.
- In empowering them, children and young people must be allowed to feel that they can make a difference - ***a difference for the children by the children***. The only way children and young people will be motivated to join the Global Partnership for Children is by the world beginning to acknowledge that children can make a difference, if given a chance.

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Kenya	Research International East Africa
Romania	CSOP (Gallup International Association)
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Vietnam	Consumer Behavior & Insight Ltd.
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