

World Vision takes child participation further – all the way to the UN

Sixteen-year-old from Lebanon represents his peers before OHCHR and the NGO community

Geneva – November 12th, 2010 – For the first time under the United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, a government is having to respond to human rights recommendations made by children, based on their own experiences.

Lebanon was reviewed at the UPR session on Wednesday. Several of the recommendations made were based on a report prepared by World Vision’s Children’s Council in Lebanon. The UPR process examines the human rights record of every country, and governments must respond officially before the international community to all recommendations presented.

Hassan, a 16-year-old from one of the Children’s Councils that wrote the report, attended the review.

“I’d like this report to be an example for other children to follow,” said Hassan. “And from now on, I hope that any report related to children will be written by children themselves.”



The World Vision delegation observing the Lebanon UPR included (from left) Patricio Cuevas-Parra, WV Lebanon Advocacy Director, Jennifer Philpot-Nissen, Senior Policy Advisor for Human Rights, Hassan, a 16-year-old Children’s Council representative, Mario Stephano, Coordinator of the WV Children’s Council in Lebanon, Olivia Pennikian, WV Lebanon, and Thiago Luchesi from the WV Geneva office.

Kyung-wha Kang, the Deputy High Commissioner of the United Nations Office of the High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR), met Hassan and thanked him and his peers for doing such valuable and “unusual” work. Hassan explained to Kang how the Children’s Councils work, and how they had prepared the report.

“This proves that children can be articulate for their own rights, and I hope that you will further this endeavour,” said Kang. “Children can get involved in human rights work in many ways. Reporting to the UPR and the CRC are key areas, but there are many thematic areas with which the Human Rights Council works which you could be working with. Be assured that you have a partner in OHCHR.”



Kyung-wha Kang, Deputy High Commissioner of the OHCHR, met with Hassan after the UPR meeting. "I am very happy to welcome you as a human rights activist and as one of us," she said.

World Vision presented the children's report to the UPR in March, 2010, and along with the Coalition of Civil Society Organisations in Lebanon (CCSOL) lobbied governments to make recommendations at the review. Of the 17 issues identified by World Vision and CCSOL, all but three were raised by at least one speaker. The Lebanese government will respond to these recommendations in March, 2011

On Thursday, Hassan and three staff from World Vision Lebanon explained the unique and valuable perspective children bring to human rights issues to representatives from the NGO community at a lunch hosted at the World Vision Geneva office.

"Some topics that adults find difficult to talk about, children find easy to talk about," said Patricio Cuevas-Parra, Advocacy Director for World Vision Lebanon.

Cuevas-Parra also pointed out that children prefer finding solutions to dwelling on problems.

The UPR report discussed violence against children, child labour, children without documentation, and unexploded bombs left over from war. Fear of these weapons is widespread and children feel great solidarity with victims.

"This is quite pioneering, because the process was properly child-led," said Carolan Goggin, Programme Assistant, Human Rights and Refugees, with the Quaker UN office. Goggin said she was impressed by the depth of analysis the children were able to produce.

Hassan's message is clear: "Take children seriously, because they will be the leaders in the future. And children who learn to solve problems now will be more able to solve the big problems later."

Hassan said he was happy his government would be responding. "The work we did was not in vain."



At World Vision's Geneva office, Hassan explains to an NGO audience how he and his peers wrote a report used for the UPR review of Lebanon. Mario Stephano, Coordinator of the WV Children's Council in Lebanon, is interpreting for him. The NGOs present, including Save the Children, the Quaker UN Office, SOS Children's Villages and Plan International, all have an interest in increasing child participation.

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