

Lebanon, 17 November 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 in Geneva, Switzerland on Wednesday. Several of the recommendations made were based on a report prepared by four World Vision Children's Councils 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."

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."

World Vision presented the children's report to the UPR last year, 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. "For example, none of the adult-led processes ever acknowledged violence against children as a priority area. But all of the Children's Councils identified it as a major problem."

Other concerns included child labour, children without documentation, and unexploded bombs left over from war (although victims of these weapons are few, fear of them is widespread and

children feel great solidarity with those affected).

“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 better 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.”

He’s keeping his expectations reasonable, though. “The government made a lot of promises, and we hope that they will follow up on them. We wish that these things will be done quickly, but we expect that they will take a long time. Why? Because we’re in Lebanon.”

Source: [World Vision](#)