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Why Children Need to Know Their Rights

By Moira Rayner, Director, London Children's Rights Commissioner

Do Children have rights? Why do children need to know their rights are the key questions posed by Moira Rayner in this speech.

"I conclude that children do possess legal, procedural, social and moral rights even when it's not clear whether or how they can be enforced. The fundamental problem is that they generally rely on adults to claim them for them – and often upon those very adults who might be least able or willing to do so."

Rayner goes on to explore whether using rights language to and teaching children about them any positive use?

"Some argue that it isn't. Children need skills to claim rights effectively, and sensitivity to the rights of others. These can be acquired, and only acquired through practice. Children also need, as adults do, ways of identifying and resolving the conflicts that may arise, between some rights (autonomy/protection from harm) and between a particular child's rights and parents' duties not only to protect their best interests but also the rights of other children in the same family. I dare say that none of us have too high a standard of those. It is precisely these skills in claiming rights and getting what they need that I believe are at the core of my belief that children need to know their rights. I believe that children need to know their rights and develop the skills to claim them, if they are to be resilient."

In her conclusion, Rayner offers six statements that can be supported by research and experience for why children need to know their rights. She points out, "We are rightly concerned at the wrongs that are done to children – their homelessness, poverty, disease, offending, victimhood, abuse and neglect. But there will be no real improvement in the incidence of these until there is an improvement in the status of children: until their human rights are respected. If we were serious in saying that children have rights, no child would go to bed hungry or cold or 'smacked' tonight; no child would sicken or die of preventable diseases, or go to school unprepared or tired, or leave it humiliated, angry and untaught."

"The language of rights has changed the way we talk about children over the last ten years, thanks to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. If 'the other' has rights, our relationships subtly change. Someone who possesses rights has to be taken seriously, and cannot be 'dealt with'. Rights ownership implies respect and equality. In making sure children understand their own rights, we raise their status from a mere human body to a social being, from an object of concern to our fellow citizen."

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By Moira Rayner, Director, London Children's Rights Commissioner

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By Moira Rayner, Director, London Children's Rights Commissioner

Presented in Western Australia on 12th July 2001

INTRODUCTION

This could be a very short talk.

Janusz Korczak best said why children need to know their rights more than 80 years ago:

'Children are not the people of tomorrow, but people today. They are entitled to be taken seriously. They have a right to be treated by adults with courtesy and respect, as equals.'

Korczak is best known, if at all outside Poland, for a simple heroic act. As a famous paediatrician, well-loved writer and public intellectual he could have escaped from the Warsaw Ghetto where he was caring for orphaned and dying children. He refused to leave them. On 6th August 1942 he led a procession of 200 children, marching behind the orphanage flag as if they were going on a picnic, to cattle trucks destined for Treblinka. (Lifton, 1988)

Korczak's example was far more complex and important than this act of self-sacrifice. He was a remarkable advocate of children's rights to be taken seriously. He set up and ran democratic orphanages, making adults as well as children subject to the same rules and to the judgements of courts run by children. He championed an early charter of children's rights. It was in his name that the Polish government urged the UN to establish the International Year Of The Child and start the work that resulted in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, now ratified by every country but the USA and its strange moral partner, Somalia.

The Office of the Children's Rights Commissioner for London ('London Children's Rights Commissioner' for short) is inspired by the vision of Janusz Korczak. It is committed to children being taken seriously and to the implementation of their rights under the UN Convention.

ABOUT US

The Office of London Children's Rights Commissioner was established in 1999 when its advisory board was appointed, and set themselves the task of appointing the staff. We are supported by a consortium of 'big' children's groups; funded by the National Lottery Charities Board and other charities, and it is our job to be, for London, what other countries have established by statute.

In other European countries, independent offices - children's ombudsmen or commissioners - have been established to involve children in government decision-making and to act as watchdogs over children's human rights. Our office fulfils a similar function for the Greater London Authority – to its initial surprise, I might add, since we do not appear in its enabling legislation! Our *raison d'être* is to make the case for a permanent Children's Rights Commissioner with statutory powers for each of the countries of the UK, by doing it for London. If London can get it right, any government can.

We wanted children and young people to be involved in decision-making about the Office from the beginning, because we wished to model the way that children should participate in decision-making. It was they who helped develop the selection criteria and job descriptions, selected the staff and find the premises. They meet at least monthly and are directly involved in all the Office's work.

The 12 young people aged between 10 and 17 now on the Board come from all over London and every ethnic and faith group. They have been trained in the responsibilities and powers of an Advisory Board, children's rights, recruitment, being a consultant, dealing with media, presentation and research techniques. Board meetings are held out of school hours in accessible central London venues.

We have begun some major work; most of it focused on London government and all of it on London children.

Our major consultation with 3,000 children, begun late in 2000, asked them what their priorities were for their London and involved questionnaires, meetings with marginalised and excluded groups, and intensive work with some children on housing estates. The Sort It Out! Report was released on 6th April and will help to shape the Greater London Authority's Children's Strategy, which we are helping the GLA to develop. We have held the first meetings of about 170 groups committed to developing an effective voice for London children with government and children's participation. We are about to publish the first (of what is hoped to be an annual) State of London's Children Report, putting together for the first time the information, research data and demographic information about what it is like to be a child in London. We believe that effective planning and government for children requires an effective model of child impact assessment, and this resource is essential to genuine goal setting and evaluation with children in mind.

We have been engaged by the Mayor to help develop his Children's Strategy, based on his policy to respect children's human rights in all of the GLA's work, and to ensure children's participation in London government.

The Office has a values base: the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and a commitment to children's involvement in the decisions that affect them the most deeply. This was Janusz Korzak's dream: that adults take children seriously.

We believe that children have rights, and that it is important that they know that they do

DO CHILDREN HAVE RIGHTS?

Not everyone agrees that children themselves 'own' rights: adults have aspirations for children's well-being. But in many ways 'children' and 'rights' and some kind of link are explicit.

1. In international treaties

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is just one international instrument that 'grants' rights to children. They are equally 'entitled' to the human rights asserted in generalist human rights instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the UN's 'special' Conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and the European Convention on Human Rights which is now part of the law of the United Kingdom with the full implementation of the Human Rights Act in 2000. They are simply not specifically mentioned, and their unique rights (for example, to play, and to protection from exploitation) are not mentioned.

2. Domestic law

In terms of the criminal and civil law children are entitled to live in a society ruled by law, in a civil society which has rules that govern human behaviour without discrimination. Though that is the principle, there is an exception that undermines the assumption that children are 'equally' protected by the rule of law.

It's one of the Common Law's basic rules that nobody is allowed to touch another person without their consent, let alone hurt or hit them. But England has laws that make an exception for children, and enable parents and, sometimes, strangers to inflict pain and humiliation on children in terms of 'reasonable chastisement'. The European Court of Human Rights pointed out at the end of 1998 that this is inadequate to protect children's rights to protection from cruel treatment under the European Convention on Human Rights. (A v.UK).

Children sometimes have specific rights under legislation. For example in Scotland (under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 S.6) parents are required to consult children of 12 or more about major plans to do with their upbringing! Consultation with children, a 'right' specified in Article 12 of the UN Convention, is administratively demanded in government programmes such as Quality Protects. Sometimes children's rights turn up unexpectedly, as our laws develop through the courts.

One such example is the way courts interpret laws after the UK's Human Rights Act was passed. This requires courts to interpret every law so that, if it is possible, it is consistent with the rights protected by the European Convention on Human Rights. In one case decided on 13th February 2001 (Turner J. in the Administrative Division of QBD: R. v. Governor of Dartmoor Prison) the law about a convicted person's right to have 'spent convictions' overlooked was interpreted to give effect to all children's rights to be protected from abuse and harm, and Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Another example is the law of natural justice. A person can challenge a government decision as unfair if a consideration that they 'legitimately expect' will be considered by a government decision-maker is not, and they had no opportunity to argue that it should be. For example, in a 1994 case (Teoh v. Minister for Immigration) the

Australian High Court said it was procedurally unfair for an immigration official who planned to deport the father of dependent, Australian-born children not to tell him, or them, that he did not intend to take into account Australia's promise not to separate a child from their parent without their consent, a Convention right. It was a 'legitimate expectation' that a government decision-maker would consider Australia's international obligations under Convention, and unfair not to tell them he wouldn't.

A third is the development of the Common Law. The House of Lords decided to develop the concept of 'the mature child' in the case of Gillick v West Norfolk and Wisbech Area Health Authority (1986), which expressly recognised an older child's developing 'right' to make binding decisions about their own medical advice and treatment as they became more mature, without parental intervention. It's now part of Australian law, and no more easy to apply in this country!

3. 'Moral' or philosophical rights

Not many people would argue that children should have, in effect, adult freedoms. It would be absurd and dangerous to ignore the fact that children *gradually* develop competence and confidence and judgment, and that they are vulnerable and entitled to special protection while they do. Assuming criminality, even from horrendous acts, leads to policies that are clearly inhumane. Some US state criminal justice systems prosecute and sentence quite young children as though they are as culpable as adults for serious crimes (such as the 14 year old facing life imprisonment for 'murdering' a smaller child when he 'acted out' the WWF wrestling he had seen on TV, in 2000).

The differences between childhood and adulthood are real, and the risks of forcing children into 'adult' roles before they are mature are obvious, too. But there is general agreement now that even quite young children can think and make informed choices, sometimes better than adults, if time and care is taken to explain and enable those options. Though no-one would support excessive and damaging state interference in the parenting role (Goldstein, Freud and Solnit (1970, 1983) it is also an important parental task to ensure that children develop their capacity for decision making, in circumstances where they do not assume full adult responsibilities for the mistakes they make.

4. If they're unenforceable, why tell children they have 'rights' at all?

Do children 'need to know' about rights that are entirely theoretical?

In early 2001 I ran a workshop for children on rights in Melbourne. I was assured by their teachers that knew all about them, but the only 'rights' these young people had even thought about was their 'right to remain silent' when they were questioned by police. The Convention 'rights' were a revelation to them, though one remarked that they were hardly 'rights' really, if they couldn't be enforced.

It used to be argued that unless the 'owner' of a supposed right had the power to choose whether to exercise the right, it wasn't a right at all. On this basis, babies and animals have no rights, though it may still be morally wrong to abuse or maltreat them.

Others argue that, even if the child themselves can't claim or enforce a right, unless someone has a duty to protect that 'right', it doesn't exist. So the Convention right to a decent quality of life in Article 27 is so vague as to be unenforceable and therefore (in Monty Python terms) a 'dead parrot.'

But as MacCormick (1982) has pointed out, sometimes a 'right' is so clearly '*. . . of such importance that it would be wrong to deny it or withhold it from any member*' of our human society – such as the right to life – that it must exist and a remedy must be found, and the person who ought to fulfill the duties attached to it identified.

5. Can children have rights without responsibilities?

There is also a popular and superficial view that children can't possess rights unless they possess a balancing responsibility: that if they are 'not responsible' – in law, or because they are dependent, or because they haven't proved that they are mature – then they can't have rights, either.

This is a very old and rather boring argument based on Hohveld's mechanistic view of rights. It is inconsistent with the MacCormick view, just mentioned, which I obviously prefer, mostly because it imposes a duty on us, who are powerful, to undertake the responsibility of finding a remedy for someone who is powerless. The 'no rights without responsibilities' argument is also logically inconsistent: adults possess moral and human rights even when they are thoroughly irresponsible merely because of their age and status, until they are removed.

6. Can children have 'rights' if their 'best interests' don't allow them to be met?

The rights that cause the greatest worry but which have the greatest capacity to improve the quality of children's lives are children's right to be consulted, included in decision-making and have their views taken seriously. This finds expression in Article 12 of the Convention and can be described as participation, consultation, autonomy, or 'the right to be heard' depending on the circumstances.

This is the one that gets all parents and teachers agitated. The greatest fear is that by telling children that they have rights, and enabling those claims to be made, we undermine the authority we have over children, which we are quite happy to acknowledge is only ours because, as the Convention says, the best interests of our children, or at least those for whom we feel responsible, is our first concern.

But the right to be involved in decisions, and to express a view, has many meanings.

Family lawyers often mean by it only that children can make decisions in very limited circumstances: deciding who they would like to live with when a family breaks up, getting medical advice or consenting to treatment, or in schools. Adults, rarely children, tend to assume that it means children having their decisions – however ‘mad’ - respected and followed. We usually mean something much more limited: the right to be consulted, or to participate is a procedural requirement coupled with a duty to explain or feed back if the child’s views are not implemented.

I conclude that children do possess legal, procedural, social and moral rights even when it’s not clear whether or how they can be enforced. The fundamental problem is that they generally rely on adults to claim them for them – and often upon those very adults who might be least able or willing to do so. For example, only parents have the right to challenge children’s school suspension, but what if the children are neglected or abused, and their problems are directly related to the rights abuse implicit in this situation? What if the parents refuse to challenge the decision? In fact one of the few ‘rights’ of British children that is explicit in the ECHR is the child’s right to education, and it is not at all clear what kind of remedy this may attract. Does this make the right any less a principle that is so important it would be wrong to fail to acknowledge it?

USING RIGHTS LANGUAGE

But is using rights language to and teaching children about them any positive use?

Some argue that it isn’t.

They say that rights rhetoric may be useful for oppressed minorities – victims of apartheid or religious persecution, for instance - but will hardly empower children (by their very nature they ‘grow out’ of their incompetence) and will certainly not help a child if, for example, they are demanded vis a vis police involved in an apparently lawful “stop and search” activity. To encourage children to claim ‘rights’ in such circumstances might result in greater deprivation of liberty and choice, in part through children’s lack of experience and judgement as well as their relative powerlessness.

This relates to what I have already said about demanding ‘rights’ when a parent also has a responsibility to protect the child’s rights. We are not very good at dealing with the conflicts that arise because rights are not simple, never entirely self-sufficient, often contingent, and their expression often affects others’ rights, and even other rights (such as the right to be ‘safe’ and protected from the consequences of immature or unwise self-determination rights.)

It is obvious that children making direct challenges to parental authority might evoke a similarly negative response to their claims as those of the teenager telling a policeman that he’s got rights when he’s stopped and searched because he’s out at

night.

But neither is an argument against children knowing what their rights are. Children need skills to claim rights effectively, and sensitivity to the rights of others. These can be acquired, and only acquired through practice. Children also need, as adults do, ways of identifying and resolving the conflicts that may arise, between some rights (autonomy/protection from harm) and between a particular child's rights and parents' duties not only to protect their best interests but also the rights of other children in the same family. I dare say that none of us have too high a standard of those.

It is precisely these skills in claiming rights and getting what they need that I believe are at the core of my belief that children need to know their rights.

I believe that children need to know their rights and develop the skills to claim them, if they are to be resilient.

There is a large body of research into why some vulnerable children exposed to tremendous risks, stress, maltreatment or deprivation, survive and even thrive. The key question is how to develop and enhance resilience. Because resilient children are *competent*, able to seek out and take comfort, support and resources from other people — parents, friends, teachers and other supportive adults. They have

- high self esteem
- an internal locus of control – a sense of personal power, and the perception of being able to control or direct events (realistic, or not)
- optimism and clear aspirations (not depressed or fatalist)
- achievement- and goal-orientation
- reflectiveness and problem-solving capacity
- respect for the autonomy of themselves and others and
- healthy communication patterns (Rayner and Montague, 1999)

Seligman (1995) described resilient children as thoughtful, optimistic, *capable* children: Goleman (1995) calls them 'emotionally intelligent.' It is my argument that such children have, in one way or another, experienced what it is to be recognised as the possessor of rights.

Attitudes can be encouraged and grow out of experience. The key factor appears to be a child's sense that they can take control over their own destiny. This arises not from exhortation or praise, but real experiences to allow young people to make realistic judgments of their own skills; to be confronted by situations in which they

can control events or outcomes and develop the confidence for future challenges.

An awareness of rights also equips children with survival skills. Let me give you an example. The Protective Behaviours programme, designed to equip children to resist sexual exploitation, teaches children that they have the right to bodily integrity; enables them to identify and validate their own sense of danger and to act on it; gives them the right and the confidence to say 'no', even to an authority figure, and (if the worst happens) the skills, knowledge and confidence to tell another adult and to believe that appropriate protective action will be taken.

Children and young people learn these attitudes from growing up in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Being taken seriously, and participating in family, school and community decisions are all sources of the positive experiences that teach self-respect, confidence; give children an internal locus of control, and establish trusting relationships with others.

It also builds social capital and civil society. Robert Putnam (1993) found that 'good' government — stable, innovative, efficient and relatively affluent — was to be found in political communities where ordinary people participated in public affairs, not through formal political means such as voting at elections, but through strong networks of voluntary community associations, the kinds of activity that encourage cooperation, trust and a sense of shared responsibility, and in fundamentally egalitarian societies.

CONCLUSION

We are rightly concerned at the wrongs that are done to children — their homelessness, poverty, disease, offending, victimhood, abuse and neglect. But there will be no real improvement in the incidence of these until there is an improvement in the status of children: until their human rights are respected.

I don't mean by this, as some assert claim, that this means respecting as holy an older child's 'right' to maintain a filthy room, stay out all night or give lip to their Mum; but that every child of any age must be taken seriously, asked for their opinion and have it treated with the same respect as any citizen, and every child is *entitled* to have a decent quality of life and their special needs as children addressed. Protection is what is required only when we forget to provide for children, and to include them in our lives.

If we were serious in saying that children have rights, no child would go to bed hungry or cold or 'smacked' tonight; no child would sicken or die of preventable diseases, or go to school unprepared or tired, or leave it humiliated, angry and untaught.

In teaching children about their rights, we teach ourselves that children and their

rights are important, too.

My argument that children need to know their rights comes down to six statements that can be supported by research and experience:

- Children do have rights – internationally guaranteed human rights, specific rights under domestic legislation, within the Common Law tradition, including the influence of international human rights principles on the ways judges interpret and develop the law, and morally. The fact that many of these rights are effectively unenforceable by the children themselves does not affect the validity of these rights. What this does is emphasize the need for a children's champion at government level to ensure those rights are not neglected or denied.
- Adults are most concerned about children's 'autonomy' rights, largely because of lack of clarity about what 'consultation' with a child, children's participation and the 'right to be heard' means. Exercising autonomy rights and making choices develops children's maturity and their capacity to make responsible choices. Both children and adults need to learn how to identify potential conflicts of rights claims and conflicts of interests and the skill of dealing with these.
- It has become axiomatic that involving the users of services, including children, in their development and evaluation leads to better management and quality assurance. It is also generally agreed that good parents grasp their responsibility to enable children to develop decision-making capacity, by expecting them to while protecting them from the consequences of mistakes.
- Understanding their rights helps develop children's sense of connection, coherence and values. It gives them a framework for evaluating their own relationships with others. It may give them positive experiences and the confidence to seek to influence their own circumstances. It appears to be related to the development of 'emotional intelligence' and skills enabling children to get the resources they need: competent children.
- Children who know their rights are more likely to understand their circumstances; to accept that they have a valued place in their environment and to acquire a set of personal values. Children who have experienced being taken seriously are more likely to be resilient children.
- Making sure that children know about their rights focuses adult attention on children as moral equals, not the subjects of research, pests to be controlled or possessions to be exploited, pathetically dependent on our goodwill for survival because we hold in our discretion what they need. It acknowledges that we have a shared status, and includes children within the sphere of moral equality.

The language of rights has changed the way we talk about children over the last ten years, thanks to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. If 'the other' has rights, our relationships subtly change. Someone who possesses

rights has to be taken seriously, and cannot be 'dealt with'. Rights ownership implies respect and equality. In making sure children understand their own rights, we raise their status from a mere human body to a social being, from an object of concern to our fellow citizen.

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Beyond Child Survival: UNICEF's State of World's Children Report 2001 says Key To Progress Lies With Very Youngest

In its annual assessment of the well-being of children - [The State of The World's Children 2001](#) - UNICEF said that far too many political and economic leaders fail to grasp the essential truths about human development.

"The greatest tragedy is that many decision-makers simply don't know how crucial those first three years of life are," Bellamy said. "But we have made great strides in understanding human development, and we are now certain that those years are vital to everything that comes later. Investments made today will yield high returns to children and society in the future." Bellamy argued that investing in children aged 0-3 is the only way to ensure that every child has the opportunity to reach his or her full potential. She said investment in early childhood development is also essential to making any real gains in education, economic development, crime reduction and debt reduction.

The UNICEF chief noted that nearly 11 million children die every year from preventable diseases, 170 million children are malnourished, over 100 million never see the inside of a school and that one out of 10 children have disabilities. In addition to these tangible measures of the ways the world fails children, UNICEF argued that almost beyond measure is the lost human capacity that results from poor early childhood care. The State of the World's Children 2001 rallies individuals, governments, international agencies and donors to fully fund early childhood care, with a particular emphasis on ages 0 to 3. UNICEF says \$80 billion per year is needed to give every new-born in the world a good start in life.

The report makes four key points:

1) Early childhood care is a human rights issue.

As a birthright, all children are entitled to registration at birth, sound nutrition, health care, clean water, adequate sanitation, basic education, cognitive stimulation and an opportunity to reach their full potential. Nations must strive to provide optimum care for all their children.

2) Early childhood care is grounded in sound science and practical experience.

Research in neuroscience and field experience point to critical windows of opportunity for the development of language, motor skills, personality, social behaviour and resiliency. Comprehensive early care provides the building blocks for social and intellectual competence that allow children to reach their full potential.

3) Early childhood care is a solid investment.

For every \$1 spent on early childhood care there is a \$7 return through cost savings. This figure is derived from studies showing that participants in pre-school and day care are less likely to suffer illnesses, repeat grades, drop out of school, or require remedial services later in life. Moreover, by shifting money within budgets, nations

can create comprehensive programmes for their youngest citizens without adding large sums of money or further depleting their budgets.

4) Three major challenges loom : poverty, conflict and HIV/AIDS.

These three plagues remain the most pressing challenges for the world and compete with early childhood care for funding. In the poorest nations, scarce resources are used to pay loans. By investing in destructive war machines, many countries steal food, clean water, health care and schooling from their citizens. And in some countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, the HIV/AIDS pandemic has stripped health and education budgets to the bone.

The State of the World's Children implores the global community to invest in its children as the best hope for overcoming these scourges. Poor, malnourished and weak children make for a poor and powerless state. By investing in children and families, a nation ultimately invests in its own sustained development. Saying that "poverty reduction starts with children," Bellamy urged donor nations to shift aid allotments to reflect a commitment to early childhood development.

"The state of the world's youngest children, citizens with the same rights as all others, is not nearly as good as it should be," Bellamy concluded. "It will only get better when we alter current priorities and accept the sound economic, social and political sense it makes to prioritise the world's youngest."

Source: UNICEF Press Release



The Global Child

There are 2.1 billion children in the world, accounting for 35% of the world's population.

Some 129 million children are born each year.

Globally, 1 in 4 children lives in abject poverty - in families with income lower than \$1 a day. In developing countries, 1 in 3 children lives in abject poverty.

One of every 12 children dies before they reach five, mostly from preventable causes.

Of every 100 children in the world:

55 are born in Asia (19 in India, 18 China)

16 are born in sub-Saharan Africa

8 are born in Latin America and the Caribbean

7 are born in the Middle East and North Africa

6 are born in the Eastern Europe, CIS and Baltic States

8 are born in industrialized countries (Western Europe, USA, Canada, Israel, Japan, Australia, New Zealand)

Birth registration

The births of 33 are not registered. These children have no official existence or recognition of nationality.

Immunization

27 are not immunized against any disease.

Nutrition

32 suffer from malnutrition in their first five years of life.

Only 44 are exclusively breastfed for the first three months of life.

Water and Sanitation

18 have no access to clean drinking water.

39 live without adequate sanitation.

Schooling

18 of the children never go to school. Of these, 11 are girls.

25 of every 100 who begin 1st grade do not reach the 5th grade.

Literacy

17 out of every 100 children never learn how to read. 11 are girls.

Child labour

1 of every 4 children between the ages of 5 and 14 in the developing world work.

Half of those who work do so full time.

8 of the 21 children born in Africa work.

12 of the 55 children born in Asia work.

1 of the 8 born in Latin America work.

Life expectancy

Globally, children born today are expected to live 64 years.

In the industrialized world, they will live 78 years.

In the 45 countries most affected by HIV/AIDS, average life expectancy is 58 years.

In Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe - countries heavily affected by HIV/AIDS - life expectancy is less than 43 years.

Sources: ILO Child Labor Statistics; UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children Report* (2001 and 2002); UNICEF, *Facts and Figures*

ABC Interview with QC Geoffrey Robertson - USA Retaliation and Justice

The deepening anger over the terrorist attacks has led to many assessments of the eventual scale and moral right of the world's only superpower to avenge itself. Just how US military forces and those of its allies will be deployed and the eventual legal justification for the promised retaliation is still unclear. Prominent international QC Geoffrey Robertson who recently wrote the book, *Crimes Against Humanity*, throws light on what is allowable under international law. (ABC Lateline)

Robertson emphatically says, "What happened last Tuesday was not a war in any meaningful sense, it was a crime against humanity, a crime so black that we're all diminished as humans by the idea that other people can commit it. It was a systematic attack by use of multiple murder. Now, that, it seems to me, should be treated as an international crime.

We have an international court, an international criminal court, in The Hague and America and its allies can be justified so long as the use of force and threats are directed to bringing Bin Laden, the prime suspect - there is a good deal of evidence against him - before that criminal court. "

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ABC Interview with QC Geoffrey Robertson

ABC Interview with QC Geoffrey Robertson - USA Retaliation and Justice

The following is a transcript of an interview with international human rights lawyer QC Geoffrey Robertson about US retaliation following the terrorist attacks on the USA. The interview compered by LATELINE host Tony Jones and was broadcast on Australian Broadcasting Corporation Television on 17 September 01

Comperer: Tony Jones

Reporter: Tony Jones

TONY JONES: Geoffrey Robertson, you've written over the past few days that the Western alliance is facing a stark choice between revenge and justice. How can we make sure that justice prevails?

GEOFFREY ROBERTSON QC, INTERNATIONAL LAWYER: Well, let's look at that choice for a moment.

Three months down the track what do we want - Kabul carpet bombed, a refugee crisis more enormous than we've faced before and Jihads galore or do we want Osama bin Laden sharing a cell in The Hague with Slobodan Milosevic?

That's justice and that's the better route that retaliation.

What happened last Tuesday was not a war in any meaningful sense, it was a crime against humanity, a crime so black that we're all diminished as humans by the idea that other people can commit it.

It was a systematic attack by use of multiple murder. Now, that, it seems to me, should be treated as an international crime.

We have an international court, an international criminal court, in The Hague and America and its allies can be justified so long as the use of force and threats are directed to bringing bin Laden, the prime suspect - there is a good deal of evidence against him - before that criminal court.

Not an American court, mind you. This means that there is no - sorry.

TONY JONES: How would you go about arresting him, though? That seems almost impossible without large-scale military force.

GEOFFREY ROBERTSON QC: The first step has been taken. The ultimatum has been given and hopefully that will bear fruit if the Taliban Government has any power over him.

Failing that, then I would expect America to keep within international law to go to the Security Council and support in the Security Council for America at the moment is at its zenith.

Even China, which is obsessively protective of state sovereignty, wouldn't allow anyone into East Timor while the killings were continuing without support.

Even China would approve of the proportionate use of force to arrest bin Laden and to gather evidence against him.

So long as the objective is to put him in the dock and not to put him and thousands of others in a mass grave, I think that is justifiable in international law.

What America must come to terms with is that it, looking down the track, can't be fair for a US jury, understandably, a New York jury, understandably over-emotionally involved in this case to try the man.

He must be tried by an international court where there are some Muslim judges and that court, that criminal court, exists in The Hague at the moment.

For Rwanda and former Yugoslavia.

It only means that the Security Council has to extend its remit to deal with, give it jurisdiction to deal with the crime, the massive crime that was committed in America last week.

TONY JONES: One of the fundamental problems, though, Geoffrey Robertson, is that the US itself has not ratified that international court. It essentially doesn't believe in it.

GEOFFREY ROBERTSON QC: Absolutely.

The irony of this whole affair is that the attempt by the world community, including Britain and Australia, to deal with crimes against humanity by setting up an international criminal court has been, to a large extent, sabotaged by the Pentagon, by the right-wing of the Republican Party, who have unthinkingly seen it as a threat to American sovereignty without realising that it is a way forward in

terms of global justice against this sort of crime.

Now, I hope and pray that the events of last week will have, as it were, the black cloud over New York, will have this silver lining, that it will bring America to realise that the quest for international justice is the way to go rather than war and retaliation.

America does, incidentally, support The Hague tribunal when it deals with Rwanda and when it deals with former Yugoslavia, so I would expect that there would be widespread support in America for The Hague tribunal to deal with this crime, to deal with bin Laden, to give him a fair trial if and when he is apprehended.

TONY JONES: Just going back to what is justifiable under international law, if the Taliban regime refused to cooperate, refused, as seems likely, to hand over Osama bin Laden, is it then justifiable under international law to attack Afghanistan and attack the Taliban regime?

GEOFFREY ROBERTSON QC: It's certainly not justifiable to attack the entire country.

It's certainly not. International law requires first of all, as there was general agreement after the attack on Serbia over Kosovo, that there are a number of limits that international law places on the use of force.

First and foremost it should be approved by the Security Council or at least a majority of the permanent members.

Secondly, there must be clear and persuasive proof that the country is or that the action is going to punish or stop a crime against humanity. Thirdly, the use of force must be carefully tailored to meet that legitimate objective.

It must be proportionate.

So no carpet bombing from 15,000 feet of cities, certainly possible to have incursions on Afghanistan sovereignty, to seek to arrest bin Laden and his supporters, to gather evidence from their camps and from their hideouts.

That is entirely appropriate and legitimate in these circumstances, once we approach this matter as an international crime and not as a war. That's mere rhetoric.

TONY JONES: We've just heard the US Ambassador here in Australia talk about presenting those proofs that you were talking about to the court of public opinion.

Now, you clearly wouldn't want to see that happen as a justification for we've been wrong before, where must these proofs be presented?

GEOFFREY ROBERTSON QC: They've got to be presented to a proper international court with distinguished international judges, including American judges, but including Islamic judges as well.

I don't mind, by all means have an American appointed as special prosecutor, Rudi Giuliani was a great prosecutor of the Mafia.

Even Ken Starr could be brought back to present the case.

Ultimately you can't have Osama bin Laden tried by a New York jury, which is emotionally involved.

In Britain during the IRA atrocities it was accepted as a matter of fairness that bombers or suspected bombers couldn't be tried by juries in the cities that they'd bombed.

So I think that we must accept that international justice, a reasoned verdict at the end of the - of a trial that takes place properly in an international court and not in the understandably emotionally laden courthouses in New York.

TONY JONES: We're already hearing calls in the US for the President to drop the sanction against targeted assassinations of enemies of the state and Vice-President Dick Cheney has specifically warned that the US will have to get mean, dirty and nasty.

Now, many people will be agreeing with those sentiments right now.

GEOFFREY ROBERTSON QC: That is no way forward.

I mean, we owe international justice, we owe Nuremberg to Americans like president Truman and justice Jackson, who said that our grandchildren will not look on us with any kind of pride if we shoot the Nazis, we've got to put them on trial.

It is that heritage I think that we have to build on and understandably emotional demands for assassination, by gosh we know in Britain how we got a lot of the IRA suspects absolutely wrong and innocent men were jailed.

The locker by outrage was thought for months by the security services to be down to the Palestinians. It turned out to be the Libyans. So it's very easy to make mistakes.

History demands as well as justice and as well as the future of the civilised world, demands that we deal with these prime suspects in a civilised and fair way.

The antithesis of their own approach and that we give them a fair trial and that we don't go the appalling and criminal route of assassination. That's their route, not ours.

TONY JONES: We have not so long ago seen united action by NATO in Kosovo and Serbia. What lessons were learnt there about the minimum requirements before one takes this sort of concerted action?

GEOFFREY ROBERTSON QC: A lot of lessons were learnt about the need in order to stop or to punish a crime against humanity. I come back to the importance of declaring that what happened last week was a crime against humanity; that's an important legal step.

Once you make that declaration, people say that, well, crimes against humanity are only committed by states.

They can be committed by organised terrorist groups with their systemic mass murder as of last week.

Then I think that the lessons of East Timor, of Kosovo, are that law is permitting the use of focused and proportionate force in order to stop or to punish crimes against humanity, but there must be safeguards.

The first is that there must be Security Council approval. There must be proof clear and convincing.

The force must be focused and proportionate. That's a vital word.

It must be very limited not to punish innocents or not to punish even governments who aren't guilty of harbouring unless they know what the terrorists are up to, but focused on bringing suspects to a fair trial, not to assassinating them or lashing out in righteous anger at those who seem to support them.

Would you support the involvement of Australian armed forces in US military retaliation over the terrorist attacks in America?

Channel Nine's Sunday program is surveying whether Australians support sending retaliatory troops with the USA military. Please register your vote.

On 21 September 01, it stood at No: 37%; Yes: 63%.

To vote, go to: www.ninemsn.com.au/sunday At the right hand side of the page you will see the poll. Click the box to register your vote and you will then see the current figures.

ACTU Study: Fifty Families- What unreasonable hours are doing to Australians, their families and their communities

A Report commissioned by the Australian Council of Trade Unions by Barbara Pocock, Brigid van Wanrooy, Stefani Strazzari, and Ken Bridge was released in July 01. This study, commissioned by the ACTU and conducted by researchers at the Universities of Sydney and Adelaide, makes an analysis of just over 50 families who experience long hours or hours that are 'unreasonable' and describes what these patterns of work are doing to Australians, their families and their communities.

These long hours or hours that are unreasonable include very long hours, changes in time zones, irregular shift work, unpredictable hours, or combinations of these. Our study includes individuals and, in almost two-thirds of cases, their partners. It suggests that the majority of employees and their families are negatively affected by unreasonable hours, and that the individuals who work long hours, or unpredictable long hours and shifts, suffer serious effects from such hours.

To view the Executive Summary click here:

<http://www2.actu.asn.au/campaigns/50FSUMMY.PDF>

Job Security No 1 poll issue for women

Job security, health and education are the top federal election issues for women voters, according to a national survey of more than 1100 women released by the ACTU in September 01.

The ACTU Women's Committee developed a checklist for women voters which was launched on International Women's Day. Women were asked to identify the most

important issues a government could act upon to make it easier to balance paid work and family life.

The list comprised the following issues:

- Family-friendly workplaces
- Job security
- More control over working hours
- Family leave and paid maternity leave
- Affordable and accessible child care
- Equal pay
- Fair workplace laws
- High quality health, housing, aged care and other community services
- Pay increases for low paid workers
- Equal access to quality, fully funded education and training opportunities
- Any other issues:

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[**ACTU finds Job security No 1 poll issue for women**](#)

ACTU finds Job security No 1 poll issue for women

Job security, health and education are the top federal election issues for women voters, according to a national survey of more than 1100 women released by the ACTU in September 01.

The Checklist for Women Voters asked women to nominate the top three priorities that a government could act upon to make it easier to balance paid work and family life. Women were most concerned about job security (45% of respondents), the provision of health, aged care and community services (39%) and quality education (38%). Equal pay for women (32%), family-friendly work policies (28%) and affordable child care (26%) were the next most important election issues.

When asked to nominate any other issues of concern, 24% of women nominated workplace and job security issues including lack of promotion, the need for flexible hours, job sharing, sub-standard casual and part-time employment conditions and inadequate redundancy and superannuation entitlements.

Releasing the survey results in Perth, ACTU President Sharan Burrow said women would judge the major political parties on whether their policies helped balance work and family.

Women have been telling us for some time that they are angry at the impact of the Government's policies on themselves and their families. Full-time jobs are being replaced by part-time and casual work, and women are the great losers. The statistics tell the story for women - 150,000 full-time jobs disappeared in four months recently, and two-thirds of those were women's jobs.

Australia has the highest proportion of women 72 per cent - employed in part-time work of any Western nation except the Netherlands. This not good enough. Women are saying they expect governments to play a role in job creation and job retention. Politicians who do not act on jobs deserve to lose their own jobs.

Life is hard for working women and it doesn't have to be. Most women don't have access to paid maternity leave, a woman's average weekly wage is \$166 lower than a man's, women work high rates of unpaid overtime, and cuts to child care funding have made work and family a real juggling act.

Ms Burrow said she was overwhelmed by the response to the survey, which is the first conducted by the ACTU using a combination of email, fax and website technologies.

We had 400 email responses in one day. These women didn't just answer a telephone call from a paid survey worker, they filled in a form and faxed, posted or emailed it to us. They are concerned enough to take action.

THE ACTU WOMEN VOTERS CHECKLIST SURVEY

The Checklist question is shown below. It was responded to by 1186 women between March and September 01.

The Checklist Question: Later this year Australians will vote for the political party that will govern us for the next three years. Unions want to hear from women about their top priorities for the federal election. The results of this survey will be used to highlight the needs of working women in an election year. The ACTU Women's Committee has developed a checklist for women voters which was launched on International Women's Day. We want women to identify the most important issues a government could act upon to make it easier to balance paid work and family life. To nominate your three priorities please choose from the list of 10 below that you consider the most important for the next federal election:

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

Issue Priority	Issue	Responses
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2	High quality health, housing, aged care and other community services	460
3	Equal access to quality, fully funded education and training opportunities	446
4	Equal Pay	375
5	Family friendly workplaces	331
6	Affordable and accessible child care	306
7	Fair workplace laws	303
8	More control over working hours	299
9	Pay increases for low-paid workers	247

Labour Market Outcomes for Young People Report

A Report by ANTA (Australian National Training Authority) Centre for Post-Compulsory Education and Training (CPET) examines labour market outcomes, job search experiences, training strategies and expectations of work of young people who leave school early. Concerned with both VET and non-VET groups, the Report aims to relate various measures of employment success and failure to the whole platform of education and training from which young people launch their employment strategies.

This report represents a first phase of reporting the cohort in a longitudinal study which will involve a number of recontacts. It aims to demonstrate how young people orient themselves towards the labour market, the range of their experiences, their readiness to engage with work and training at their point of exit from school, the nature of interventions over time, and the shifts in direction and strategies as they try to make their experiences and training work for them. One of the strengths of this research is the robustness of the national recontact data base, allowing for continuing contact with these young people and a chance to follow their movements over time into different areas of work, training and higher education. The bulk of this report deals with the experiences of young people who have effectively terminated their schooling before reaching Year 12, with particular emphases on the differences in experience, outcomes and attitudes of those who are currently undertaking VET study as opposed to those who are not.

Retention rates for the different States and Territories suggest that between 53% (Northern Territory) and 78% (Queensland) of young people complete secondary school. The national figure of about 72% has been fairly stable over the last decade (retention rates peaked during the 1990-91 recession).

Young people leave school early for two main reasons -- they want work and they are not interested in schoolwork. Other motives are much less important, though

going to TAFE is an important secondary motive for girls and can be viewed as a translation of their desire for work which recognizes the relative weakness of the teenage labour market for girls. Younger boys are also likely to mention TAFE as an alternative to school, regarding aspects of course provision style and content as more suitable to their needs than school. In general, however, going to TAFE is less often nominated by boys as a specific option because it is included in the plan to get an apprenticeship and is not specifically mentioned as such.

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Labour Market Outcomes for Young People

By Merryn Davies, Richard Teese, Kate O'Brien, Anne Walstab

Released October 2000 by Australian National Training Authority

Executive Summary

This report contains findings from a national survey of early leavers conducted by the Centre for Post-Compulsory Education and Training as part of its work program for ANTA. At the time the report was written, survey data were available from New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, and Tasmania, with work in progress in South Australia, the ACT and the Northern Territory.

The survey comprised two different components -- one relating to Year 11 school leavers, who were contacted through Boards of Studies across Australia, and a second survey which related to groups leaving from Year 10 and below, who were contacted through schools or school authorities.

The present report is based on an achieved sample of 2115 young people.

A third survey, this time relating to young people who complete school, is currently under way in selected States and in some cases is complete, though data are not yet processed. Results from this survey will be the subject of a separate report in 2001.

TRAINING OUTCOMES

Demand for work and demand for training amongst early leavers

Participation in VET by young people needs to be seen in the context of economic, social and school-related pressures to leave school in many cases without completing their senior certificate:

- demand for work is the largest single factor behind early leaving (often linked

- to the search for an apprenticeship)
- demand for VET (other than apprenticeship or traineeship) is also an important factor, especially amongst girls
- every fourth early leaver cites "wanting to go to TAFE" as their motive for quitting school
- VET can be regarded as a major economic strategy for young people, either in the form of a work and training arrangement or through campus-based training; the availability of VET in different forms provides major opportunities to build on schooling for students, many of whom have had a satisfactory experience of school
- for other groups, VET is a way of compensating for weaknesses in achievement at school; scholastic failure is frequent amongst early leavers; it fuels the search for work, but at the same time may dampen interest in training or further education
- broadly speaking, the demand for VET amongst young people draws on two kinds of processes -- the economic planning of generally successful students who prefer VET/work to completing an academic program at school, and a negative process of withdrawal from school based on low achievement or poor social integration or both; VET acts as a safety-net for some, but not for many in this second category.

Rates of participation in VET

- every second early leaver enters VET
- participation falls, the earlier a young person quits school, and conversely, participation rises the longer a young person stays on at school
- similarly, early leavers who do not complete the year of study in which they are enrolled (e.g., Year 9 students) are less likely to enter VET than those who do finish the year-level
- boys, who are about twice as likely as girls to leave early, enter VET at much greater rates, a pattern which owes much to the relative availability of apprenticeships

Satisfaction with VET amongst early leavers

- very high proportions of early leavers are positive about their VET courses
- there is a high level of interest; the great majority report good progress; the course is seen as helping get a job and becoming financially independent; VET is viewed as widening options; over 90% are satisfied with the quality of teaching in VET; on the other hand, male students express doubts about improved communication skills through VET

Barriers to training

- low academic self-esteem amongst boys (though not girls) is a significant discriminator between those who enter VET and those who don't
- the key factors viewed as barriers to entering VET are perceived lack of

relevance, lack of available time, and lack of personal readiness

- some groups cite the costs of training (especially important for girls, whose chances of unemployment are quite high and are employed mainly in part-time jobs when they do have work); travel is also a problem in some country regions

LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES

- most early leavers enter the labour force, and the majority find work
- apprenticeships and traineeships are the largest single source of employment amongst teenagers who attempt Year 11 before leaving school; it is mainly boys who get apprenticeships
- full-time work (other than apprenticeship) is also important, though less so than apprenticeships
- part-time work is the largest single source of employment for girls
- unemployment is high amongst early leavers, especially girls, and increases amongst groups with poor progress and interrupted schooling

Links between being in work and being in training

- access to full-time employment through apprenticeships and traineeships is in general conditional on participating in training
- early leavers who are in full-time jobs outside of regulated training arrangements do enter VET, but only in about 1 in 4 cases
- the majority of part-time workers are not in VET (about 60%)
- high proportions of young unemployed workers are not in VET (between 60% and 66%)
- as a general observation, VET tends to compensate for the relative lack of full-time jobs for girls, but to complement relatively high numbers of jobs for boys

Quality of experience in the workplace

- most early leavers who find work report high levels of satisfaction with their progress on the job -- they are getting on well at work and can manage most of the tasks well
- participation in VET is associated with much higher levels of job satisfaction on other criteria --personal interest in the work, awareness that training is important for the job, an interest in continuing in the job
- conversely the view that a job is mainly routine is found much more often amongst young workers who are not in VET (70% VET compared to 53% non-VET among Victorian early leavers)

Barriers to work

- the biggest barriers to finding work as seen by boys who leave school without completing their senior certificate are the need for a good report from school

and the lack of on-the-job experience

- barriers which are also important are the reported preference of employers for young people who have finished school, lack of suitable training, excessive travel, and no vacancies
- for girls, the two most commonly reported problems are the lack of on-the-job experience and the lack of suitable training
- girls do not assign school-related factors the same weight as these two problems, but the need for a good report and employer preference for school completers are important; travel problems are a big factor with girls (whose incomes are lower).

Reasons for Early leaving

Boys are much more likely to leave school early than girls. In all States surveyed and whatever the year levels boys tended to comprise around two-thirds or more of our contact samples (Table 2). Their dominance can be linked directly to their stronger relationship with the labour market and to training. As discussed below, boys who leave early have good prospects of full-time employment (around 70%), whereas girls have very poor chances of full-time work (around 40%) and are nearly twice as likely as boys to be unemployed. Structured work and training opportunities also go mainly to boys – they are nearly three times more likely to have an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Table 2 Early leaving and Gender: Sample

	Boys	Girls	Persons
VIC	723	321	1044
Year 11	400	186	586
Year 9/10			
Tasmania Yr 10	105	52	157
WA Yr 11	132	82	204
NSW			
Total	1360	641	1991

Students leave school for myriad reasons but there can be differences between leaving primarily to escape an increasingly odious situation and moving on to a new phase in education, employment or training.

Young people in the survey leave school early for two main reasons -- they want work and they are not interested in schoolwork. Other motives are much less important, though going to TAFE is an important secondary motive for girls and can be viewed as a translation of their desire for work which recognizes the relative weakness of the teenage labour market for girls. Going to TAFE is less often nominated by boys because it is included in the plan to get an apprenticeship and is not specifically mentioned as such.

In Western Australia, for example, nearly 63% of students agreed that wanting to work or to undertake an apprenticeship was a major factor in their decision to leave school. 40% also indicated that they wanted to do a course at TAFE in preference to staying at school.

Other factors related to pressures which made school an inappropriate place for students to be -- for example a perception of academic deficiency (whether the perception be the student's or the school's) seems to have prompted the decision to leave in 23% of cases. Possibly related to this factor are reasons which can be summarised as students feeling "at odds" or disengaged from school. Most significant, however, was alienation from the curriculum itself -- over 43% of these young people felt that schoolwork had not interested them in their last years of school. Difficulties with teachers or with classmates were less often cited as instrumental in decisions to leave -- nearly 18% felt that they had not been able to "get on with teachers", and to a much lesser extent there were feelings of "not fitting in" (6.7%).

...the survey evidence indicates that girls, while leaving school only half as often as boys, are more likely than boys to act on feelings of not fitting in; a small group leave because they are pregnant or for other health reasons. It is notable that if girls drop out, they will quit during the year more often than boys and therefore have a more disrupted experience of schooling..

Source: ANTA and Educational Outcomes Research Unity, University of Melbourne

Knowledge economy rocks research foundations too

The knowledge economy demands changes in traditional research methods, just as it is changing the rest of the world, author and academic, Dr Dale Spender told ANTA's (Australian National Training Authority) annual research jamboree earlier this year. Dr Spender, a digital media specialist, was keynote speaker at the two-day event in Brisbane in March.

"For research, the change in mindset is from the analytical to synthesis; from critique and deconstruction to construction," she said. "Check that your research solves a problem and creates new issues." Reflecting on the short lifespan of knowledge, Dr Spender said research had to be more of a "work in progress" in the knowledge economy. "Research has generally been about validation and authentication, about studying records, showing how often, when and where," she said. "Now it has to be

along the lines of a methodology to monitor, to check things out, more of a process than a finding. "The capacity to monitor ongoing change has to be built into the model."

Dr Spender also urged researchers to consider their research skills and work as commercial products.

"One of the big differences between the old economy and the new is that the major needs of the new economy are solutions, methodologies and strategies," she said. "The new information has to fit with a new way of doing something and help make everything faster and better. This becomes a knowledge product that can be sold. "Increasingly researchers will be selling their skills and solutions rather than being commissioned to find out about a problem."

Source: ANTA

How can women be involved in CHOGM?

Hazel Brown, Secretary General, Commonwealth Women's Network invites all Australian women to participate.

CHOGM, The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) is being held in Brisbane from 6-9 October, 2001. Every two years, the Heads of Government of the 54 Commonwealth countries hold their 'official' summit - the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). In the upcoming CHOGM hosted by Australia in Brisbane from 6 to 9 October 2001, the theme is "The Commonwealth in the 21st Century: Continuity and Renewal".

Hazel Brown, Secretary General, Commonwealth Women's Network indicates how women can be involved in CHOGM.

"There will be a very large People's Festival running in Brisbane from 2-8 October. Non-government organisations from many countries that are concerned to influence CHOGM will be attending the People's Festival and accredited NGO's will be participating in CHOGM NGO processes. Input by women in the CHOGM process - both formally and informally is being encouraged and coordinated by the Commonwealth Women's Network. I am the Secretary General of the Network and I am encouraging Australian women's NGO's to strongly participate in the NGO processes and to share information about CHOGM and NGO activities through their networks.

The Commonwealth Women's Network was established in September 1991 by women's NGO's from many Commonwealth countries. The purpose of the Network is to create and strengthen: - relationships among women in the Commonwealth - links with policy-makers in the Commonwealth - links among women NGOs in the Commonwealth. The Network works toward ensuring that governments treat women's issues as priorities on their agendas, and that the needs of grassroots

women in our societies are articulated both nationally and within Commonwealth structure.

The Commonwealth Women's Network will mount a display illustrating activities relating to women's issues, particularly work to increase women's participation in politics. They will be organising women's caucus in the mornings of 4th, 5th, 6th & 8th October for debriefing on the official meeting and networking and running workshops on the 4th, 5th and 6th on the following topics: - Women and Information and Communications Technology - 50/50 by 2005 Campaign, Getting the Balance Right in the Commonwealth - Building a Commonwealth Vision on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

For information about how to participate please see <http://www.tntol.com/cwn/> where you can use the discussion board to share your questions and views.

U21 New Online University

\$US50 Million Joint Venture Between Thomson Learning And 15 Universities Worldwide

Thomson Learning and Universitas21 (U21) today signed a final agreement that forms a joint venture to establish a new online university, U21global. Each partner has pledged \$US25 million in funding. The Asian-based venture will address the estimated \$111 billion global demand for higher education by offering business and technology degrees via the Internet, starting January 2003. Course offerings will receive multi-jurisdictional accreditation from the 15 universities that are participating in U21global.

Mr. Bob Cullen, president and CEO of Thomson Learning's International Group will lead the Thomson' involvement in the joint venture. He welcomed the agreement that has now been reached, saying, "U21global is the embodiment of our learning strategy, which is to deliver tailored, high-quality solutions in support of the learning process anywhere in the world. Combining the different, but complementary expertise of Thomson and Universitas 21 is not only powerful but also crucial to our success."

Professor Alan Gilbert, chair of the Universitas 21 Implementation Committee, said that the participating universities were confident about the academic integrity and commercial viability of U21global because "the fundamental business architecture, brand value and market demand are right, and because Thomson is a superb partner, with the resources, skills, experience, infrastructure and focus in on-line learning necessary to leverage the brand value and accreditation capability of Universitas 21."

Professor Graeme Davies, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Glasgow, Chair of Universitas 21, said that he was delighted that this final stage had been reached in the establishment process. "The challenge will now be to provide relevant,

accessible higher education of a consistently high quality to students who in many cases will have no access to conventional campus-based education," he concluded.

Thomson Learning is a global provider of tailored learning solutions. Thomson Learning serves the needs of individuals, learning institutions and corporations with products and services for both traditional and distributed learning. Headquartered in Stamford, Connecticut with offices worldwide, Thomson Learning is a division of The Thomson Corporation. Universitas 21, incorporated in London, UK, is an international network of 18 research-intensive universities in Europe, North America and East Asia, including South East Asia and Oceania.

Source: EDNA (STAMFORD, Conn., Sept. 5 /PRNewswire/)