

## National Forum 2000

# Young Canadians

talk about

# war-affected children

**W**hen the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development (CCFPD) invited young Canadians to share their thoughts about war-affected children around the world, hundreds responded enthusiastically.

As part of the National Forum 2000 throughout June and July, CCFPD held day-long workshops in Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montréal and Halifax, where more than 200 young people discussed the effects of war on children. With the help of the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture, they included youths ranging in age from 12 to 20, who could tell about their own experiences of war in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Iraq, Kenya, Kosovo, Liberia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan and other countries.

### Workshop recommendations:

- Arrest and punish all war criminals.
- Help community organizations in war zones.
- Get rid of all landmines.
- Control gun sales and the arms trade to cut off the supply of small arms to war makers.
- Recognize that international economic sanctions harm children, not government leaders.
- Divert money from war to education.
- Use school programs to spread awareness of refugee issues in Canada.
- Create more programs for war-affected children.
- Promote multicultural clubs in Canada.
- Provide more help from Canada for war-affected people abroad, especially children who have lost family and home.

Participants suggested many ways to stop or reduce the impact of war, and in roundtable discussions they offered a wide variety of recommendations. One and all agreed that people need more opportunities for coming together to understand each other better and eradicate the scourge of war.

Attending one of the workshops was Aziza from Somalia. She commented, "I think governments should spend less on the military . . . education should be the priority." Kale from Nigeria recalled, "We stayed in a refugee camp for two years. It was the worst time in my life. It was like hell. . . . The Canadian government can help by supplying education and books." Indira from Kosovo said, "I want to thank the government of Canada and all the people in Canada because we were so welcomed."

The National Forum culminates with a meeting in Winnipeg immediately before the International Conference on War-Affected Children. Some of the young people are participating in that final National Forum event, as well as in the Conference itself. To the foreign ministers and international experts at the Conference, they will present the recommendations and comments from the workshops. And they will tell of their experiences and call for a more peaceful world. ●



photos: CCFPD

Using the latest information technology, the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development has created educational tools accessible via the Internet. To download elementary or high school modules for teaching about war-affected children, visit:  
[www.cfp-pec.gc.ca/NationalForum/nati-e.htm](http://www.cfp-pec.gc.ca/NationalForum/nati-e.htm)



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