



# EVERYDAY FEARS

A study of children's perceptions of living in  
the southern border area of Thailand

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children

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the southern border area of Thailand**

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*The peace that I want is for people to love and smile at each other, be cheerful and understanding, and give each other flowers.*

*Living happily together and not hurting, but turning to each other. I don't want my favourite places, where I used to go play and rest, to be dangerous because of the unrest.*

*I want peace to happen everywhere I go – having nice officers who provide security and generosity to children like me. May Allah bring this peace to all.*

*If people who have good ideas and intentions come and help one another, I believe that peace will then come. My family and I want every family to understand this and not hurt each other. This is all I want.*



**15-year-old girl living in the southern border area**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

UNICEF Thailand commissioned this study. Knowing Children, a Thai non-government organization, led, coordinated, compiled and analysed the research and prepared this report with help from three partner organizations in the south of Thailand – Friends of Thai Muslim Women, Luk Riang Group and the Young Muslim Association of Thailand.

The study would not have been possible without the collaboration of the partner organizations. They assisted in designing and developing the *Researchers' Manual*, collected all the data in the South and provided insights and feedback during the analysis phase. Their commitment was remarkable in the face of constant challenges due to the continuing unrest.

Other organizations and individuals, most notably Amnesty International Thailand, Professor Chaiwat Satha-Anand and Muhammadrofeeie Musaw, also contributed invaluable advice, information and support.

This report is indebted to the 2,357 children and 717 adults who generously gave their time and energy to provide information on their lives in the affected provinces, as well as to the 283 children in Kanchanaburi and Bangkok who formed the study control group.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the resurgence of violence in Thailand's southernmost provinces in early 2004, UNICEF has become increasingly concerned with its impact on the lives of children.

Tens of thousands of children have been affected by the unrest in the far south, but there have been few studies of its impact on them. The lives of children living in these provinces have often been peripheral to other concerns. They have usually been referred to in the media mainly as examples of *victims* of the violence, and they have had few opportunities to express their views.

To better understand children's perceptions of the violence and the effect it is having on their lives and their communities, UNICEF Thailand commissioned the Thai NGO Knowing Children and its three partner organizations in the South – Friends of Thai Muslim Women, Luk Riang Group and the Young Muslim Association of Thailand – to conduct this study in 2006-2007.

Responses were collected from 2,357 Muslim and Buddhist children living in the far south, as well as 283 children living in central Thailand who formed a control group for the research. Ten research methods, or tools, were especially designed to elicit responses from the children. A total of 11,444 pieces of data were collected systematically, most of which could be analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

The study found that the children suffer anxiety and stress associated with the ongoing threat and anticipation of violence, as well as their own violent experiences and their proximity to places vulnerable to violent attacks. Their everyday experiences include witnessing attacks and other violent incidents associated with injury and death.

A positive finding of the research is that despite the tension of living daily with the threat of violence, none of the children expressed a biased or negative view of other religions. Nor did any of the children's responses refer to religion as being a cause of the unrest. Another key finding is that few children expressed negative opinions of soldiers and police. Those children who said they were afraid of soldiers and police linked this fear to the perception that a group of men in uniform are an easy target for insurgents, and the children fear being nearby if such an attack were to occur.

The responses from children living in the South attributed a fairly well-defined set of visual characteristics to insurgents – young men, fashionably dressed, carrying weapons and having bad habits such as illicit drug, alcohol and cigarette use. Some of the young respondents also referred to their own illicit drug use or considered it a problem within their own community.

Although more than a third of the child respondents in the South seem to have feelings of revenge and injustice, these feelings were more related to regular childhood experiences than to the unrest itself, and most did not indicate that they were resentful of anyone or any group. This, combined with their expressed visions of peace, indicates that there is a window of opportunity to prevent the vicious cycle of violence becoming inter-generational if timely actions are taken for peace-building efforts directed at children and youth.

This report concludes with the following recommendations for follow-up action:

1. Promote awareness of children's rights and child protection in Pattani-Malay and Thai languages among civil society and all armed groups and forces, including the military, police and Village Security Teams.
2. Focus peace-building education and activities on children in both state schools and religious schools, as well as out-of-school children, through formal and non-formal education programmes.
3. Promote implementation of the Ministry of Education's regulation banning corporal punishment in schools, and support development of alternative disciplinary techniques.
4. Strengthen mechanisms for reporting and responding to violence against children within families, communities and schools.
5. Ensure that child protection services and organisations have appropriate resources to identify and respond to cases, taking into account the unique nature of the situation in the southern border areas.
6. Design programmes to address the emotional stress that children experience living in the provinces affected by the unrest, and ensure these programmes also build upon the children's natural resiliency.
7. Promote drug prevention and rehabilitation programmes on the principles of harm reduction, and strengthen diversion and rehabilitation programmes for children as alternatives to legal proceedings.
8. Ensure that schools and communities are designated as 'zones of peace' by reducing the presence of arms among all parties.

It is important that these recommendations are pursued in the best interests of children, that they are carried out with the full participation of children and are guided by their perceptions and opinions. As this report illustrates, reconciliatory bonds exist among children living in the affected southern provinces. To promote future peace and stability, these bonds must be strengthened as those children grow up.

# 1. BACKGROUND

Since January 2004, escalating violence in four of Thailand's predominantly Muslim southern provinces – Narathiwat, Pattani, and Yala and parts of Songkhla – has resulted in unprecedented levels of brutality in which civilians have been increasingly targeted.

Concerned about the impact of the violence on children, UNICEF commissioned a study to explore the experiences and perceptions of children living in the affected provinces. The study was conducted between August 2006 and July 2007.

## Children and Thailand's southern unrest



The resurgence of violence in the southern provinces of Thailand that began in January 2004 is directly or indirectly affecting the lives of up to a million children living there. The violence includes drive-by shootings of apparently arbitrary victims, decapitations, the torching of bodies and the slaying of ambushed bus passengers, including children. Those responsible for the violence are frequently identified in the media as being 'separatists' or 'insurgents', but they are seldom named, captured or brought to justice. Attacks often occur in the daytime while neighbours, including children, stand by and watch helplessly.

Many schools have been destroyed due to arson, and some children have witnessed the slayings of their own teachers. On 25 July 2006, for example, just before the research for this report began, a primary school teacher in Narathiwat province was shot to death by four gunmen in front of his students.

According to the Ministry of Education, from January 2004 to December 2007, 92 education personnel (including current teachers, retired teachers and school-support staff) were killed and 88 were injured.<sup>1</sup> These attacks have occurred on and off school premises, resulting in some teachers being issued guns for self-protection or having to travel to and from school under armed guard.<sup>2</sup> Many schools are now guarded by armed defence volunteers.

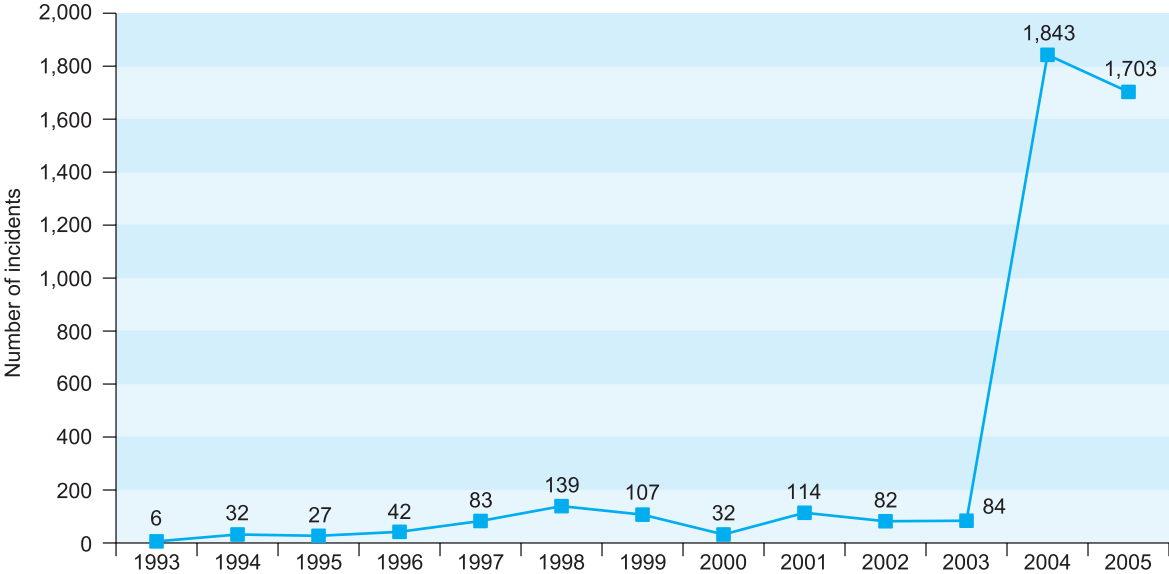
<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Education, Education Coordination Centre in the Southern Provinces, 2008

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/thailand/media\\_6796.html](http://www.unicef.org/thailand/media_6796.html).

In the same period, 297 education facilities were damaged or destroyed, 30 students were killed and 92 were injured. Due to the unrest, schools periodically close for periods ranging from days to weeks and months.

From 1993 to 2003, a total of 748 incidents occurred in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat (including incidents in Songkhla and Satun), an average of 68 incidents per year. In 2004, the rate of violent incidents rose to unprecedented levels.<sup>3</sup> In 2004 and 2005, there were a total of 3,546 incidents, resulting in 1,175 deaths and 1,765 injuries. The frequency of incidents between 2004 and 2005 increased 26-fold compared to the 1993-2003 period.

**Figure 2: The number of annual violent incidents in southern provinces, 1993–2005**



Source: National Reconciliation Commission Report, 2006, p.9

The Report of the National Reconciliation Commission cites a newspaper account from August 2005 which states that 6,020 children had been orphaned in the far south as a result of the killings. In November of the same year, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security reported that 1,100 children had been orphaned by the unrest in that year, which would amount to about 10 per cent of orphans nationally. That is more than twice as high as would be expected since the number of children in the southernmost provinces represent only about 5 per cent of the total Thai child population.<sup>4</sup>

Since the Tak Bai incident in October 2004 children have been increasingly used in women-led demonstrations.<sup>5</sup> On occasion women and children have acted as human shields to prevent authorities from entering villages.

Tens of thousands of children have been affected by the unrest in the far south, but there have been few studies of its impact on them. The lives of children in these provinces have often been peripheral to other

<sup>3</sup> National Reconciliation Commission Report, 2006, p. 9

<sup>4</sup> Endnote 2 in National Reconciliation Commission, p. 111

<sup>5</sup> International Crisis Group, 2007, p. 10

concerns. They have been referred to in the media mainly as examples of *victims* of the violence, and they have had few opportunities to express their views.

## Study methods and terminology

The research for the study used a methodology in which qualitative data was collected with and from children (younger than 18 years) and adults (717 respondents aged 18 and older), and the results were subjected to a quantitative analysis.

In total, 2,357 children living in the southernmost provinces participated in the research, and 283 children living in central Thailand formed a control group for the research. Ten research methods, or tools, were especially designed for eliciting responses from the children (explained in Chapter 7 and Annex 2), although not every child gave responses to all of these research tools, which are listed below:

- Drawings of 'good' and 'bad' people and good/bad experiences
- Visual stimulus pictures (a series of six) with associated questions
- Neighbourhood map of safe and unsafe places
- Attitude survey with statements that children respond to
- Listing responses to a particular phrase
- Sentence completion, which requires finishing a sentence that starts with a specific phrase
- Network interview, which involves questions to identify support sources
- Drawing and/or essay on 'my school' and 'my vision of peace'
- Flower of peace (a protection tool that allows respondents to finish on a positive note)

Where proportions are given in the findings, the number of respondents for that particular study method is provided. Single quote marks appearing throughout this report indicate terms from the research tools or special references; double quote marks refer to actual statements made by the respondents.

The study attempted to include boys and girls aged 7–17 years from a variety of settings, including rural and urban, the designated Red Zones and areas affected by varying levels of violence.

The provinces of Narathiwat, Pattani and Yala, together with four districts of Songkhla (Cha Na, Thae Pa, Na Ta Wee and Saba Yoi) in which the research was carried out, are termed the 'southern border area' in this report.

The language spoken in the southern border area is referred to as 'Pattani-Malay' throughout the report and the related script referred to as 'Jawi', even though these two terms are used interchangeably in everyday speech.

This report refers to 'unrest' in the southern border area, although this is also commonly called 'conflict', 'violence', 'insurgency' and 'separatism'.

The translation 'insurgent' is used for the people that children in the southern border area provinces designated as violent in both Pattani-Malay and Thai languages, while 'criminal' is used to translate the word used by the children in the control group.

In 2005, a 'zoning' system was established as a guide to the economic policy designed to combat the violence in the south. Red Zones are regarded as areas of particular insurgent activity. Designated Red Zones may also be villages characterized by internal conflict over resources rather than rebel strongholds.<sup>6</sup>

Most field workers were between 18 and 25 years of age and familiar with the communities in which the data were collected. They used the *Researchers' Manual*, which contained the ten tools (in Thai language), other relevant material and an ethical strategy for conducting the research carried out within the southern border area. However, the field workers in the southern border area encountered considerable difficulties carrying out their tasks because of risks caused by the unrest. In addition, many child respondents were not confident writing in Thai, which affected their responses to some of the research tools. Moreover, field workers who could not read Jawi script were sometimes obliged to administer the study tools in Pattani-Malay language using the Thai-language tools and recording the data in Thai. Special attention was given to minimise the impact of these issues on the quality of data collected.

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<sup>6</sup> National Reconciliation Commission Report, 2006

**Table 1: Data collected using each method, by province**

Tool	Yala	Pattani	Narathiwat	Songkla	Bangkok	Kanchanaburi	Total
Good/ bad							
<i>People</i>	392	274	253	135	29	32	1,115
<i>experience</i>	354	171	217	117	23	35	917
Visual stimulus	193	88	95	80	12	7	475
Neighbourhood map	188	118	69	61	8	9	453
Attitude survey							
<i>Children</i>	382	280	217	142	40	23	1,084
<i>Adults</i>	185	121	80	89	0	0	475
Wants/ Hopes/ Fears	381	274	254	147	19	16	1,091
Sentence completion							
<i>Children</i>	381	352	262	184	45	35	1,259
<i>Adults</i>	191	21	19	19	0	0	250
Network interview	198	128	119	75	4	15	539
My school	193	126	84	88	31	23	545
<i>Drawing only</i>	18	39	5	40	23	6	
<i>Essay only</i>	3	9	4	6	2	9	
<i>Drawing + essay</i>	172	78	75	42	6	8	
My vision of 'Peace'	185	90	63	64	38	24	464
<i>Drawing only</i>	7	33	2	14	34	3	
<i>Essay only</i>	5	22	3	24	0	8	
<i>Drawing + essay</i>	173	35	58	26	4	13	
Flower of Peace	775	590	593	282	147	93	2,480
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3,998</b>	<b>2,633</b>	<b>2,325</b>	<b>1,483</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>11,147</b>

## 2. FINDINGS: CHILDREN'S EVERYDAY LIVES

The everyday lives of children in the southern border area communities where the study was carried out are inevitably affected by the violence or the threat of it, which has become associated with such everyday activities as going to school, shopping, travelling by bus or by car, or going to a tea shop. These daily activities now have the potential to place children into sudden contact with bloodshed, death, injury, fear and grief.

This chapter examines the reported experiences and views of children and their views of everyday life in their family, community, religious practice and school. It ends with a summary of the fears and anxieties described by the child respondents.

### Family

In responses to the different research tools, children emphasized the special importance of parents in their lives. In the network interviews, one third of the children responding (34 per cent of 539 responses) mentioned a parent (or parents) as the person they most admire. Through the flower of peace exercise, an overwhelming majority of children (95 per cent of 2,480 responses) identified a nuclear family member as 'the person who loves me most'.

Similarly, according to the network interview responses, children said they would seek support in a variety of situations from nuclear family members, especially mothers and fathers. Mothers were mentioned three times more often than fathers as the person who is 'always nice to you' as well as 'whom you trust the most'. Although other relatives were mentioned, these were most often siblings who are part of the nuclear family rather than extended family members such as grandparents, uncles and aunts.

The exceptions to this pattern of overwhelming reliance on parents were certain emotional needs in which friends figured significantly – although not as frequently – as parents.

The attitude survey responses also indicated a strong positive appreciation of families. Four out of five children (80 per cent of 1,018 responses) agreed with the statement, 'My family takes good care of me'.

The strong positive identification with their nuclear families that children expressed through the various research tools does not give the full picture. A majority of children said in the network interviews that they feel safe with parents (88 per cent 520 responses). In addition, if severely punished by one parent, two thirds would seek out the other parent. Yet violence at home featured consistently in the context of the drawings of bad people and bad experiences.



**Figure 3: A visual stimulus drawing of home-based punishment**



This is echoed in the direct information provided on punishment in homes through the visual stimulus and attitude survey methods. One of the visual stimulus pictures showed a child being beaten by his 'mother', who is using a stick and scolding the child while the 'father' stands by armed with a long belt. The child is weeping and has apparently urinated out of the fear (Figure 3). Among the 475 respondents in the visual stimulus sample, 38 per cent said they had direct experience of this kind of punishment, 8 per cent said it happens often and 6 per cent said it happens sometimes. Twenty per cent of the 475 stated that it is correct for this kind of punishment to be used, while 29 per cent said it should not be used.

Attitudes to corporal punishment were further tested through responses to the statement, 'When I do wrong I deserve violent punishment'. Among the 1,010 respondents, 35 per cent agreed and 50 per cent disagreed. In contrast, only 20 per cent (12 out of 61) in the control group disagreed. Adults in the South apparently disagreed more heartily than children: of 469 respondents, 73 per cent disagreed.

Of the 1,012 child respondents to the statement 'The unrest has caused violence in my family', 33 per cent agreed and 49 per cent disagreed, with 18 per cent giving no opinion. Among adults, the responses were almost identical to children's attitudes – 29 per cent agreed and 51 per cent disagreed. While violence in communities does not seem to have necessarily affected the environment surrounding children in all families, a substantial number of children seem to have experienced a greater level of violence at home since the escalation of the unrest.

## **Community, people and religion**

In southern Muslim villages, the mosque is said to be the centre of community management and the place for meetings to solve community problems.<sup>7</sup> Children often marked mosques and houses of religious leaders as 'safe and reliable' places on neighbourhood maps, alongside those of secular leaders, such as the houses of village or subdistrict headmen.

Children often referred to both secular and religious leaders by name, as if their feelings of security were based on personal knowledge of the individuals rather than any position of authority. In replies to the attitude survey statement, 'Community leaders take good care of children', just over half (57 per cent) of 1,074 child respondents agreed while almost a quarter disagreed and a fifth had no opinion. Sometimes a child's view of a specific community leader was highly uncomplimentary. For example, a 13-year old

<sup>7</sup> Duzza, 2006

wrote: “My community leader knows nothing. He finished only fourth grade and cares only for the houses close to him (I hate people like him)”. Adult respondents seemed to have less confidence than children in community leaders’ ability or commitment to look after children well; only 42 per cent of 476 adults agreed with this statement.

Respect for religion and religious differences was evident. There was not a single case of a child respondent making any negative depictions or descriptions of another religion. Indeed, the vision of peace drawings sometimes showed the opposite. For example, one drawing showed people of obviously different religions standing side by side in front of mosques and temples.

When ‘good’ and ‘bad’ were associated with religious attributes in the 1,067 drawings, the pictures differentiated between good and bad behaviour in terms of keeping or violating Muslim rules of dress and custom. This is not particularly surprising, since in the overall sample, 91 per cent of the 2,640 children identified themselves as Muslims. Although it has been claimed that there is no generally accepted view in the southern border area of what constitutes a ‘good Muslim’,<sup>8</sup> children participating in this study seemed to have very definite ideas related to fairly traditional prescriptions about correct dress, behaviours and practices. In their drawings, the younger children concentrated on observance to Muslim rules, while older children tended to make less mention of this.

Nevertheless, there were some interesting comparisons made that transcended religious affiliation. Broadly speaking, ‘good people’, according to both the Muslim and Buddhist child respondents, are those who follow religious rules and contribute positively to family and community, while ‘bad people’ are associated with violence, discourteous community habits, illicit drug use, smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol. This contrast is well illustrated in the lively drawings of a 9-year-old boy from a rural, low-violence community in Songkhla that is not a designated Red Zone<sup>9</sup> (Figure 4) and a 12-year-old girl in Narathiwat living in an urban, high-violence community (Figure 5). The boy’s picture of a ‘good person’ shows a man picking up litter and placing it in a basket. His drawing of a ‘bad person’ depicts two men fighting with long knives. The girl drew a ‘correctly’ dressed Muslim woman contrasted with a casually dressed man smoking a very large cigarette.

**Figure 4: ‘Good’ person picks up litter, ‘bad’ people fight each other, according to a 9-year-old boy in a rural low-violence community in Songkhla**



<sup>8</sup> UNICEF, 2005

<sup>9</sup> Red Zones are considered areas of insurgent activity.

**Figure 5: 'Good' person drawn as a 'correctly' dressed Muslim woman and 'bad' person depicted smoking, by a 12-year-old Muslim girl in a high-violence, urban community in Narathiwat**



Good community and environmental habits formed the largest proportion of 'good-people' characteristics: good people find things and return them to the owner, share things, pick up litter, plant trees, belong to the helping professions or help others, and work hard – including in the home and for their families (44 per cent of 1,067 responses). They follow religious rules, including in matters of dress, or are teachers in Muslim schools.

In Yala province, men acting out violently appeared in 38 per cent of the 392 'bad-person' drawings.

With the exception of drawings by children living in Yala, the pictures of 'bad' people in the southern border provinces concentrated on cigarette smokers (28 per cent of the total 392 depictions), although this was closely followed by violent people (21 per cent of the drawings, including violence in the family and school) and bad community habits (20 per cent). People who engage in illegal acts, such as gambling, illicit drug use and drinking alcohol, were also mentioned. Twelve children (3 per cent) drew people transgressing Muslim norms, such as women who do not wear a scarf or who wear revealing clothes.

## Schooling

Five-hundred and sixteen children in the southern border area group responded to the issue of 'my school' in a drawing, essay or both. The scenes that appeared in their drawings were largely what might be expected from children anywhere: pictures of buildings featured predominately, along with the surrounding natural environment. Only one or two pictures showed soldiers or unrest incidents, and similar themes appeared in other study methods. For example, of 389 children in the southern border area that wrote essays about school, 38 children (10 per cent) wrote in their essays about the lack of security in school, and 35 (8 per cent) wrote about the impact of the unrest; nine mentioned soldiers and two wrote about the police. No children in the central Thailand control group drew or mentioned any of these topics.

Among the 453 neighbourhood maps, government schools (15 per cent) and *tadikas* (20 per cent) accounted for over a third of the marks for safe places. But government schools also represented 5 per cent of the unsafe places in the child respondents' neighbourhoods.

In the essays, references to the unrest and its effects on schools were vivid and disturbing, as were the comments children wrote when explaining their drawings of good and bad experiences. For example, a 7-year-old Buddhist boy from a village in Yala that was neither a Red Zone nor associated with a high rate of violence, wrote:

“I want soldiers and police officers to come take care of my school so that we can study without worrying about when the insurgents will show up and hurt us. When there are soldiers around, there's more peace and security. Then both teachers and students won't have to fear so much.”

Similarly, a 15-year-old girl from the same province wrote:

“My school used to have many beautiful things and also kind teachers. It is also a big school and I am glad to study here. But my school was burned down and I helped put out the fire.”

And a 10-year-old Buddhist boy, also from Yala, gave a detailed description of the way his education was being disrupted:

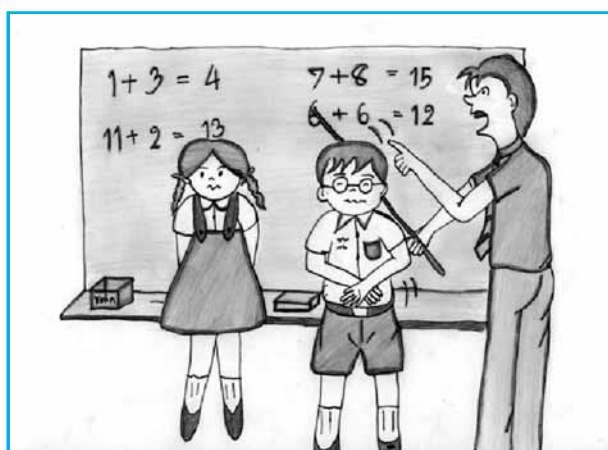
“My school is full of terror. The insurgents come to agitate and threaten us often. My parents say that they want to create a situation so that everyone's scared. They want us to be so scared that we stop going to school. They cut down all the trees in my school so there is no more shade. I'm jumpy on my way to school because I don't know when they might come and really hurt us. The teachers ask to close the school often because the insurgents create the situation. Both teachers and parents are worried about the safety of teachers and pupils. This happens very often.”

In talking about his drawing of bad experiences, a 9-year-old boy told the field workers that on school days he would sometimes arrive to find the school closed. Many other children mentioned school closures. Others told of their schools being burned down and teachers shot. As a 14-year-old boy bluntly explained: “Before, my school was a comfortable place. But now the evil insurgents have completely burned it down so I have to study in a tent.”

In addition to the effects of unrest on their schooling, 4 per cent of 545 children drew or wrote about violence occurring within schools, including bullying, although this topic lagged behind concerns about smoking and substance abuse in schools. The study specifically sought information about the extent to which children experience violent punishment from teachers and children's perspectives on teachers. In the essays, dissatisfaction with teachers was mentioned by only five children out of 406 responses (1 per cent), whereas more than half the children (59 per cent) wrote complimentary remarks about teachers.

In relation to violence in schools, 28 per cent of the children who responded (392) to a visual stimulus

**Figure 6: Visual stimulus picture of punishment in school**



picture of punishment by a teacher (Figure 6) said they agreed with this form of discipline, compared to 67 per cent of the responses (18) in the control group. But almost the same proportion (28 per cent) of children living in the southern border area said they disagreed. Nine per cent of children in the southern border area said the picture made them feel hurt and sad, and six per cent said they had direct experience of this kind of punishment in school. Thirty per cent mentioned other forms of physical punishment. Corporal punishment in schools appears to continue despite a national ban on its use.

### Everyday fears

The unrest has clearly left some children in fear of carrying out daily activities in their communities. In the attitude survey, an 8-year-old Muslim boy explained the extent to which his life had been disrupted:

“The insurgents come and shoot at the people. It makes me feel unsafe.” He told field workers that he is unable to go to school as usual “because the bad people are going to bomb, so I go to school carefully.” He cannot play outside “because there will be violence so my friends and I can’t go out every day.”

In the attitude survey, some 58 per cent of 1,018 children in the southern border area agreed with the statement, ‘I can go and play outside my house’. Adults in the southern border area were more equivocal about the extent to which they could leave their homes for leisure activities or meetings. In response to the statement ‘I can still go out in the evenings’, 39 per cent of the 476 adults that responded agreed and 44 per cent disagreed. ‘No opinion’ responses were relatively high – and often explained with ‘it depends’ remarks.

Where the sex of the children responding was known, 58 per cent of boys and 57 per cent of girls agreed that they could go out to play, indicating that girls are no more likely than boys to be kept at home.

The large proportion of children responding in the attitude survey who do not feel constrained to remain at home is echoed in the analysis of the neighbourhood maps. Children from both the southern border area and control groups marked more ‘safe’ than ‘unsafe’ places on the maps they drew of their communities. However, differences between the southern and control groups were notable. Whereas children living in the southern border areas marked almost twice as many safe as unsafe places,

the control group marked 25 times more safe places. Three reasons given by children in the South for marking places as unsafe – ‘where there has been violence’ (12 per cent), ‘where police are’ (4 per cent) and ‘where soldiers are’ (2 per cent) – did not appear at all on the control group’s neighbourhood maps. In discussions with the field workers, some children explained that places where soldiers are (such as checkpoints) were marked because they perceived them as targets for the insurgents rather than as sources of violent behaviour.

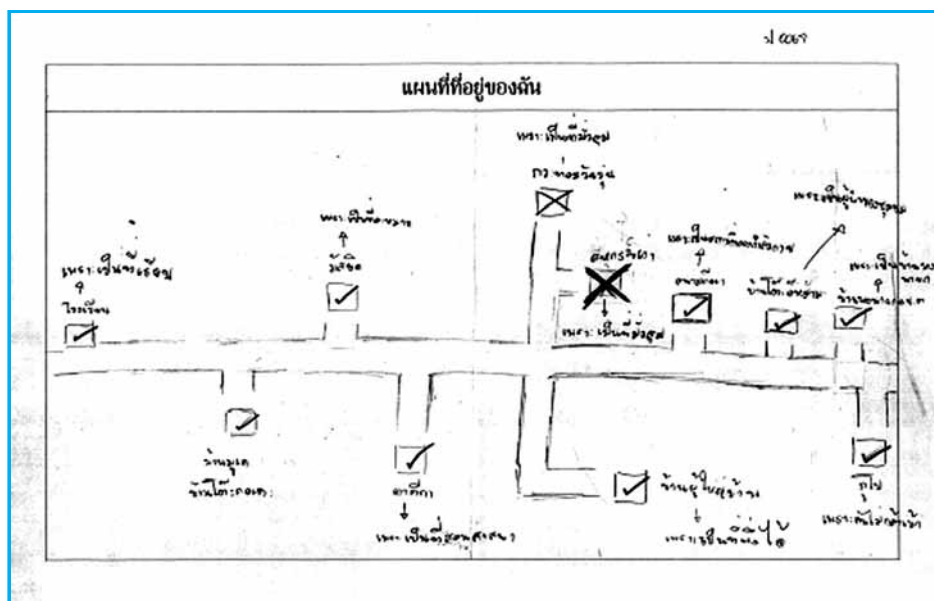
Topping the list of safe places were children’s own homes: 34 per cent of 436 children in the southern border area identified home as the safest place they know. In general, houses (those of relatives and other people as well as their own) were regarded as safe (37 per cent of 453).

The community itself also apparently provides security for both southern (23 per cent of 436) and control group (50 per cent of 17) children. The largest category of ‘unsafe’ places was wild, remote or agricultural areas. However, the control group respondents were twice as likely to perceive their community as safe than children in the southern border area group (50 per cent compared to 23 per cent). The frequent ambushes on roads between communities almost certainly account for the 23 per cent of maps with roads marked as unsafe by southern children. Crowded places, such as shops, appeared almost equally as unsafe as lonely, unsupervised locations.

Within their own communities, some children (9 per cent) also noted specific houses with ‘unpleasant inhabitants’ as ‘unsafe’ and showed concern about places in their communities where ‘unlawful’ groups are known to gather. For example, a 13-year-old Muslim girl from Pattani marked a “teenager’s hut” and the “old co-op” as unsafe (Figure 7). A 17-year-old Muslim girl in Narathiwat said that ‘bad’ people are “people who betray others who live in the same village” – implicitly breaching community harmony. Likewise, a 16-year-old Muslim boy from Yala referred to “people in my village who are spies for the insurgents” as ‘bad’ people. After drawing his neighbourhood map, an 18-year-old said:

“The village isn’t safe any more because there are bad events every day. There are many soldiers and people shooting each other. Teenagers kill each other.”

Figure 7: Neighbourhood map with reasons why places are marked as 'safe' (✓) or 'unsafe' (✗), drawn by a 13-year-old Muslim girl from Pattani



#### Safe

- School because it's a place to study.
- Mosque because it's a place to worship Allah.
- Sports stadium because it's a place to exercise.
- Imam's house because he's the community's leader.
- The deputy chief of the Subdistrict Administration Organization's house because it is his house.
- Muu-dae's house, To-Ko-Tae's house
- *Tadika* school because it's a place to teach religion.
- Headman's house because it's safe and reliable.
- Ku-Bo because people are too scared to enter.

#### Unsafe

- Teenager's house (small x) because it's a place for unlawful purposes.
- The old co-op (large X) because it's the place for unlawful purposes.

Children's identification of safe and unsafe places on their neighbourhood maps was clearly not arbitrary. They gave specific reasons for choosing to use a tick (for safe) or a cross (for unsafe). Sometimes the explanations had nothing to do with the unrest. For example, a 16-year-old Muslim boy from Songkhla pinpointed traffic lights as unsafe "because there are often accidents." At other times there were direct links to the unrest; the same 16-year-old boy marked as unsafe:

- His school, "because I am afraid they'll burn it down"
- The hospital, "because someone threatened to bomb it before"
- A specific district, "because it is the insurgents' target for bombs"



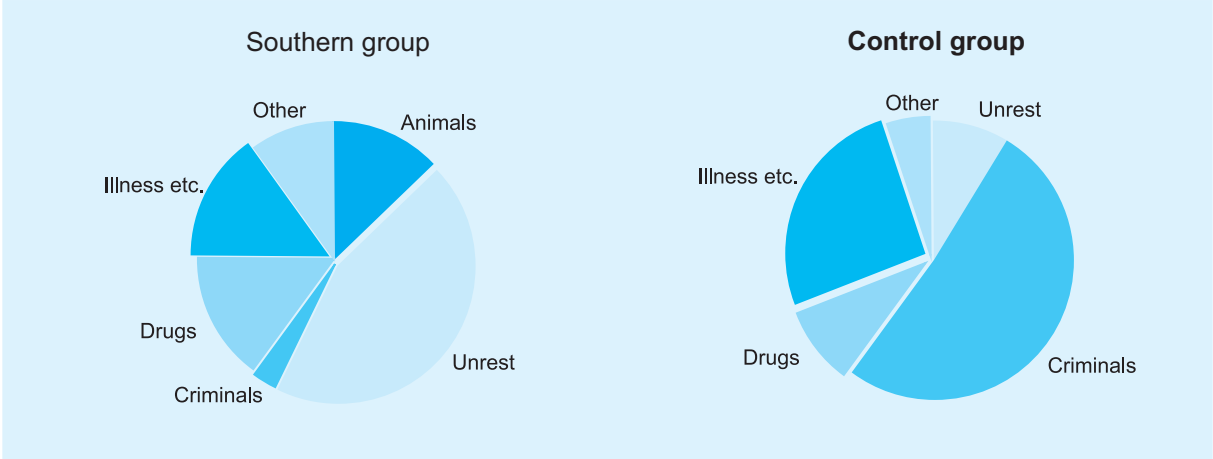
This blend of fear of what *might* happen and of what *has* happened is clear in most of the neighbourhood maps from the South. Children fear insurgents both as people who inhabit the spaces between communities and the enemy within communities, as well as associating danger with places, people and situations in which they may become vulnerable to attacks.

Some of the safest places for children in the southern border area, besides the home, were very frequently associated with religion: the Imam’s house, the Koranic school, the mosque, the temple – “Safe and peaceful” wrote the 16-year-old boy from Songkhla cited above. “Because it is a place to worship Allah,” said a 13-year-old girl from Pattani (Figure 7).

The three greatest dangers cited by all children in the southern border area did not vary. At the top of the list was unrest (44 per cent overall), followed by illicit drugs and accidents/illness (15 per cent each).

Oddly, twice as many boys proportionately were afraid of drugs as girls (22 per cent compared to 10 per cent of 1,091 respondents).

**Figure 8: ‘The most dangerous thing for me’: Comparison of listed responses from children in the southern border area and control groups**

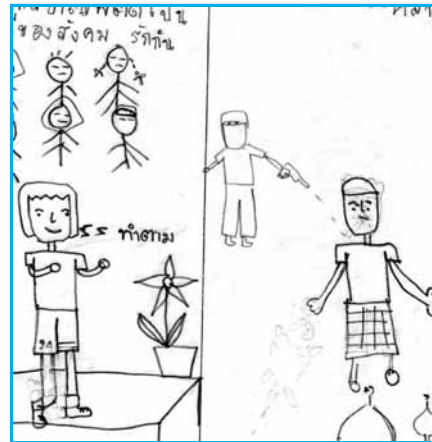


Comparing responses on ‘fear of unrest’ from 1,056 children living in Red Zones and non-Red Zones showed almost no differences. But the pattern was by no means the same in different provinces. When responses to the statement ‘Greatest danger’ were cross-tabulated according to province, fear of unrest in Yala was the highest, and more than two times higher than in Pattani and six times higher than in Songkhla.

What then, according to the children’s own descriptions, is childhood like in Yala? Three good/bad experience drawings and accompanying comments (Figures 9–11) provide some insight. In the first case, a 10-year-old Buddhist girl living in a rural, low-violence, non-Red Zone community showed in her drawing of a good experience that she is acutely aware of the unrest and its effects on physical and emotional well-being: she described the experience of her older brother who escaped danger by moving away and becoming an aerobics teacher so that he can help “young people to be healthy.” In contrast, the bad experience she described and drew was the shooting of the father of her Muslim friend “on his way to worship Allah.” What is particularly interesting is that the experiences she described were not her own, and that she provides evidence of friendship and sympathy between two children from different religions (Figure 9).



**Figure 9: Good and bad experiences drawn by a 10-year-old Buddhist girl from a village in Yala:**  
 In the good picture, her brother is teaching aerobics “far from the unrest”;  
 in the bad picture, the father of her Muslim friend is shot on his way to prayer



**Figure 10: Good and bad experiences drawn by a 13-year-old Muslim boy from a village in Yala:**  
 a family visit to the zoo contrasts with death by gunfire in tea shop



**Figure 11: A 17-year-old Muslim boy in rural Yala chose to illustrate helping his parents cut rubber trees as his good experience, and the destruction of his school as his bad experience**



In the second case, a 13-year-old boy from a similar village drew a good experience illustrating non-violent family life – a trip to the zoo in which he depicted himself holding hands with his parents while they gaze at a peacock. The bad experience depicted a violent incident that he had apparently witnessed in which “three innocent people” in a tea shop were killed by “insurgent” gunfire (Figure 10).

In the final example, a 17-year-old Muslim boy from a middle-violence, Red Zone village depicted his good experience as helping his parents when cutting rubber trees. He told researchers that his pleasure comes from helping “because the situation now is frightening.” He wrote that he wants to help his parents by taking on “half their chores, so that they can be more rested.” The bad experience he drew was the destruction of his school by fire (Figure 11).

The sentence completion exercise that 1,179 children in the southern border area responded to complements the three previous drawing examples. For instance, a 13-year-old Muslim girl from Pattani finished the sentence beginning ‘I am afraid...’ with “when strangers knock on the door.” For the sentence beginning with ‘Life is...’ she wrote: “fighting for your own life.” A 22-year-old Muslim youth in Yala wrote almost the same thing: life is “fighting to survive the unrest.” A 10-year-old Buddhist boy in the same province was of the same opinion: Life is “running away from the insurgents.”

## Summary

Despite the tension of living with both actual violent incidents and threats of violence, there was not a single example among all types of responses of children expressing negative views about other religions. Muslim children were frequently critical of behaviour and appearance that breaches Islamic norms, and such self-criticism was also prominent in the responses from the smaller group of Buddhist children in the study. In their responses, both Muslim and Buddhist children expressed the respect they feel for other religious beliefs and the existence of friendships across religions.

For children in the southern border area, nuclear families seem to be the core of security in their lives, even though their own homes are not always regarded as safe places. Corporal punishment in school and in homes was expressed as a widespread feature of childhood, and one-third of both child and adult respondents in the South agreed that the unrest has increased violence within their families.

The children’s responses indicate that despite attempting to continue with ‘normal’ activities such as attending school or going out to play, almost every aspect of life carries risks and there are restrictions on their lives. Houses can be the source of security, but if inhabited by bad people or are places where insurgents gather, they may also be a source of danger – the enemy within threatening community harmony. Danger lurks everywhere: in crowds as well as lonely places; in villages and on the roads between communities; and in schools, which are both safe places and the location of harrowing experiences.

The children’s responses show that everyday apprehension is a mixture of anticipation of possible perils, experiences of violence in the past and knowledge of places and situations in which danger may be imminent. This surely leads to a heavy burden of everyday anxiety. The greatest fear of the unrest seems to be felt by children from middle-violence communities, in which personal experience of violent incidents may be heightened by rumours of further unknown threats.

## 3. FINDINGS: VIOLENCE IN EVERYDAY LIFE

This chapter looks at child protection issues as well as the children's perceptions of security forces and insurgents.

### Sexual violence

Few examples of sexual violence appeared in the combined responses. However, sexual violence is a particularly difficult area to research, and the small number (5) of cases mentioned in the data may not represent the full picture. In discussions with field workers, the child respondents recounted stories of sexual abuse in their family and community and claimed that 'forced' marriages between young people are used to maintain community norms.

One 13-year-old Muslim girl from Yala wrote in connection with her bad experience drawing that she had been abused by her stepfather. A 10-year-old Buddhist girl also from Yala described her bad experience as being "raped by a neighbour when my parents were away." An 11-year-old Buddhist boy from Yala described and drew as a bad person "the wicked man who raped my friend." Watching teenagers molest girls was depicted as a bad experience by another child respondent. But a 15-year-old Muslim boy, also from Yala, categorized his own escape from a rape attempt ("I was just about to be raped...") as a good experience because "good people" had intervened on his behalf.

### Bad experiences

Many children reported school-based experiences related to the unrest. The number of such bad experiences indicates a profound impact on children. This includes children who have witnessed the killing of their teachers or the burning of their school, those who have experienced harassment by insurgents within school premises, and those who are afraid of the journey to and from school or are never quite sure if school will be open when they arrive there. Bad experiences in the context of the unrest included some very direct involvement, including being shot at, bombed and in the case of one 11-year-old girl in Pattani, shooting someone herself.

Death of a person known to a child as a result of the unrest was mentioned by 17 respondents as a bad experience, the majority of them from Yala province (Table 2). In comparison, no deaths of any kind were reported by children in the control group sample.

The total number of deaths of a person known in the responses from all 2,357 children in the southern border area across all research tools was 21. Eleven were deaths of members of the nuclear family, and four were friends of their own age group (Table 3). There may well have been more, but for ethical reasons (explained in chapter 7) no direct questions about death and injury were asked.

**Table 2: Number of deaths reported by children in ‘bad experience’ drawings, by province.**

Province	Deaths
Songkhla (part)	1
Pattani	1
Narathiwat	1
Yala	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>

**Table 3: Deaths of known persons referred to by children in responses from all the research methods**

Relationship to child	Number of deaths recorded
Both parents	2
Father	6
Mother	2
Sibling	1
Other relative	1
Friends	4
Friend’s parent	1
Teacher	3
Village head	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>

Most of the responses about deaths came about through the good/bad experience drawings. Sometimes a child made a simple statement, such as “I don’t have a family, both my parents were shot in a plantation.” Or, “Now I only have my father to love” because the child’s mother was “shot by insurgents.”

Sometimes a broken sentence disclosed a deeper story. Explaining why she made no response to the sentence completion statement ‘I have fun...’, a 12-year-old Muslim girl from Pattani wrote: “I don’t feel fun. I have no parents.” In another case, an 18-year old Muslim youth from Yala stated that “they” had shot his father, adding “and they will kill me too.”

Direct experiences of unrest appearing in the children’s responses include seeing decapitated corpses, being involved directly in a shooting, a stabbing or bombing incident, witnessing fighting between soldiers and insurgents, and being ambushed by nails strewn across the road to stop cars (Table 4).

Children’s descriptions of violent incidents include small details that illustrate the reality of the interface between childhood experience and adult violence. In one such example, a 9-year-old told researchers that his father’s car had swerved out of control after the wheels were punctured by nails on the road. “I was there too,” the boy said, “and I got a bit injured.” In describing her encounter with violence, an 8-year-old girl from Yala said she was so frightened by “the loud pop of the shooting between cops and insurgents” that “I fell off my swing.”

Children’s familiarity with weapons (guns, bombs and knives) also appeared in the drawings of bad experiences in greatest numbers in Yala province. Overall, guns were depicted more frequently in the drawings than other weapons; but in the other research methods used, bombs were the main weapons mentioned by the southern children – although the number of weapons mentioned overall is relatively limited.

No children in the control group drew weapons in their drawings, but some made reference to weapons in the other research methods (Table 5).

**Table 4: Bad experiences reported orally by children in all the research methods, but mostly through discussion of drawings**

Experience	Number of children reporting verbally
Seeing decapitated corpses (graphically depicted)	2
Seeing/hearing shootings, or sniper fire, or having a member of the family shot	19
Being shot at	2
Seeing stabbings/knifings (many other graphic depictions of knives being used to kill)	2
Seeing buildings burned down or having their school burned	11
Seeing fighting between soldiers/insurgents	5
Involved in bombings or saw bombing	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>

**Table 5: Total references to weapons in data from all the research methods**

	Knives	Guns	Bombs	Multiple	Other (nails, saws)	Total
<b>South</b>	7	16	18	3	2	46
<b>Control</b>	3	4	2 (fear of)	1	0	10

## Images of men of violence

Responses to the visual stimulus pictures, children’s own drawings, the attitude survey and sentence completion exercises allowed some examination of children’s experiences of and attitudes towards the people who are directly involved in the unrest. The research tools sought information about soldiers and police specifically, but the responses also provided information regarding community defence volunteers and insurgents.

### *Soldiers and police*

Regarding responses to the attitude survey statement ‘I like soldiers’ among 1,012 children in the southern border area, 42 per cent agreed that they liked soldiers, 36 per cent disagreed, and 21 per cent recorded a ‘no opinion’ response. The opportunity to explain their response proved particularly interesting, showing that children do not have stereotypical images of soldiers but treat them as individuals. There were some gender differences: 50 per cent of boys and only 38 per cent of girls agreed that they liked soldiers. In the control group, 69 per cent of children said they liked soldiers – certainly a higher proportion than among children in the southern border area who have more direct experience on which to base their attitudes.

Sometimes the reason children gave for liking soldiers was that a member of their family is in the armed forces or (in the case of boys) that their ambition was to become a soldier. Adults proved slightly more likely to disagree with this statement (33 per cent of the 717 adult total agreed, 38 per cent disagreed and

29 per cent recorded no opinion). The reason given by both children and adults for not having an opinion was usually the same – no judgement was being made on soldiers as a group – it depends on the individual soldier.

The responses to ‘I like police’ were very similar. In responses to different exercises, police and soldiers appeared to be associated with both security and danger, depending partly on children’s own experiences. For example, positive appreciation of the role played by both police and soldiers was expressed by a 16-year-old Muslim boy from Yala in his vision of peace essay:

“We want our homes to be at peace, having police officers and soldiers take care of things. No bombing, no cutting throats. I want a peaceful village and us to love one another forever.”

On the other hand, both soldiers and police are feared – less because of what they do to children than the children’s perception that where there are soldiers, there can be violence. Likewise, as already seen, unsafe places are where there are soldiers because soldiers are targets for the insurgents. As an 11-year old Muslim boy from Pattani wrote in the sentence-completion form: the unrest starts “when soldiers gather.”

Misgivings about soldiers were also reflected in responses to the visual stimulus pictures (Figure 12). The responses uncovered differences between some children in the control group, who did not see the soldiers but commented on the other figures in the drawings, and children in the southern border area group, who refused to see the soldiers. Field workers in Narathiwat and Songkhla reported that children’s refusal to see soldiers was expressed in declining to comment at all on this picture by simply turning the page to look at the next picture. In Pattani province, researchers commented that some children seemed to be afraid of the soldiers and always expressed negative feelings about this picture. This ‘refusal’ was evident among 4 per cent of the 456 southern children participating in this exercise.

Fifty-three per cent of children in the southern border area (456) had good things to say about soldiers in response to the picture in Figure 12. Fourteen per cent of the 456 child respondents in the group recalled bad memories or made negative comments about soldiers, whereas no children in the control group did so.

**Figure 12: Visual stimulus picture of soldiers in a neutral setting  
(second in a series of six pictures)**





Children’s responses to statements and pictures of police were mixed. ‘Where police are’ was marked as unsafe on 14 per cent of the neighbourhood maps and safe in only 2 per cent of them. A visual stimulus drawing of police in a neutral setting elicited generally positive remarks. Two thirds (66 per cent) of children in the southern border area and control groups described good memories; only 11 per cent of children in the southern border area, and none from the control group, recalled bad memories.

Responding to the attitude survey statement ‘I like police’, 43 per cent of children in the southern border area (1,010) agreed. Once again, a large proportion of no opinion responses was qualified by ‘it depends’ comments. Adults in the southern area were a little less enthusiastic about the police – only 32 per cent (of the 717) agreed that they liked them, 38 per cent disliked them and 30 per cent did not have an opinion. There appears to be no more automatic dislike of police than there is of soldiers. As the ‘no opinion’ cases show, it clearly ‘depends’.

**Insurgents**

The shadowy figures of insurgents were unexpected features of many drawings that revealed a stereotypical image, sometimes wearing dark glasses or masks to make them unidentifiable and, in the word used by one child, “scary.” Insurgents were sometimes depicted with a cigarette and/or with a gun or knife. The responses contain 161 drawings of insurgents by 60 respondents – almost three quarters of whom were from Yala. The figures were overwhelmingly male (only one female), nearly 74 per cent were young, 65 per cent were wearing clothes identifiable as modern or fashionable, and around 32 per cent had spiky hair. Eighty-four per cent were depicted carrying or using a weapon, 72 per cent of which were guns, with the remainder being knives (although some verbal descriptions of insurgents referred to bombs). Only 16 per cent were identifiable by their clothes as being Muslim.

According to these children’s images – based presumably either on first-hand knowledge or on what adults and other children may have described – a ‘typical’ insurgent is:

A young male, dressed in modern clothes, sometimes hiding his identity, smoking cigarettes or other substances and carrying a weapon of some kind, the most likely being a gun (Figures 13a and b).

**Figure 13a: A ‘good’ person neatly dressed and a ‘bad insurgent’, drawn by a 14-year-old Buddhist boy from a rural, low-violence, non-Red Zone community in Yala**



**Figure 13b: ‘Bad’ person insurgent with spiky hair, smoking and carrying a gun, drawn by 16-year-old Buddhist boy from a rural, middle-violence, non-Red Zone community in Yala**



## Drugs and violence

One surprise from the responses was the extent to which children referred to substance abuse – including alcohol and cigarettes. These were apparent in the lists of ‘the greatest danger for me’, as well as in the drawings of bad people and bad experiences.

All the ‘bad’ people depicted smoking cigarettes were male, with one exception. Drawings from children living in Songkhla and Pattani and their associated comments made a connection between smoking cigarettes and not working, and also referred to bad people as those who encourage others to smoke.

Alcohol was also mentioned with respect to bad people and bad experiences as well as to dangers; children’s drawings show empty alcohol bottles and ‘drunken behaviour’ as well as illness (dizziness). One example (from Songkhla) showed a ‘drunken driver’ causing an automobile accident. Overall, there were fewer mentions of alcohol than cigarettes.

### Adults’ views on drugs differ from children’s

In response to the attitude survey statement ‘No one I know uses drugs’ among the 717 adults, 41 per cent disagreed. As a 39-year-old Muslim man from Yala remarked, “Most people in my community are using drugs.” A high proportion of adults (32 per cent of the 717 respondents) declined to give an opinion.

### The drugs identified by children

The most telling information on drug use in their local environments came from the children’s comments on their responses to the statement ‘No one I know uses drugs’. In total, 23 per cent of 1,084 children circled ‘no opinion’. Of the children who expressed an opinion, 58 per cent agreed and 42 per cent disagreed. Even though the proportion of children who disagreed was smaller, the explanations they gave indicate a significant degree of drug use in their communities, often among known people. An 11-year-old Muslim boy from a low- violence, non-Red Zone village in Pattani wrote: “It is very hard to find any teens in my community who do not use drugs.”

**Figure 14: ‘Bad’ people depiction shows a variety of drugs in use, drawn by a 13-year-old Muslim girl from a rural, middle-level violence Red Zone community in Pattani**



**Figure 15: A ‘good’ Muslim shown praying and a ‘bad’ insurgent with drugs, drawn by a 17-year-old Muslim boy in a rural, high-violence Red Zone in Narathiwat**





This response is backed up by data from the other research methods employed in this study, even though direct questions about drugs were not asked. The ‘bad’ person drawn by an 11-year-old Muslim boy was his neighbour, who “steals money in the house to buy weed [marijuana].” The most dangerous thing for a 15-year-old Muslim boy from Songkhla was “drugs in my community, because they are all vices in my community and I will never go near them.”

Children also commented on their own use of drugs, including an 11-year-old Buddhist boy from Yala who told researchers that his bad experience was being forced to use drugs. A 15-year-old Muslim boy said his bad experience was “using drugs too much”, which has had a negative effect on his family.

The drugs identified by children were mostly methamphetamines (*yaba*), marijuana and *krathom* (an herb leaf used as a stimulant). One ‘bad-person’ drawn by a child from Narathiwat showed a spiky-haired young man with tattoos smoking a marijuana cigarette. A drawing from Pattani of a man with spiky hair drinking and presumed to be consuming illicit drugs bore the caption, “Marijuana stops the country from being developed.” A respondent from Pattani made a similar comment: “Smoking pot [marijuana] makes you go crazy and ruins the country.”

Drugs were more commonly mentioned in general or in combination with other substances. Mixtures of drugs were mentioned 40 times in all 1,054 responses (8 per cent). Figure 15 shows the ‘bad-person’ drawing of a teenaged Muslim boy from Narathiwat that includes a knife, along with a *krathom* leaf, and a pile of white powder being smoked or sniffed. The drawing contrasts notably with the corresponding ‘good person’ – a Muslim man standing on a prayer mat.

Most information about drugs appeared in responses from boys rather than from girls. Girls tended to focus on environmental and social issues.

### **Are drugs used to incite young people to violence?**

Although children mentioned drug use through more than one research method (in addition to the specific statement in the attitude survey, ‘No one I know uses drugs’), they did not tend to make a direct connection between drug use and violent incidents.

Far from being mentioned as the source of courage to commit violence, illicit drug use was sometimes mentioned by children as a means of lowering stress caused by the unrest: “My friend was so stressed that he turned to drugs. Because his father was shot dead and he doesn’t know who to live with,” wrote a 15-year-old Muslim girl from a Red Zone in rural Yala in the attitude survey.

## **Summary**

Children’s everyday experiences of the unrest as referred to in the various types of responses include direct exposure to violent incidents and experiences associated with injury, death and fear. Children in the southern border area are also clearly familiar with weapons. Yet their images of police and soldiers do not indicate a stereotypical negative reaction. Few children expressed negative opinions of these agents of government authority.

In so far as the children were afraid of soldiers and police, this was due to the perception that a group of men in uniform presents an easy target for insurgents. Although some children demonstrated fear of

soldiers in the way they reacted to the visual stimulus pictures, 53 per cent of the 1,012 children in the southern border area had good things to say about both soldiers and police, while 43 per cent responded in the attitude survey that they liked police and 42 per cent said they liked soldiers. The reasons for their responses clearly show that children judge police and soldiers on personal characteristics rather than simply reacting to a uniform.

Insurgents, on the other hand, appear to be perceived as having a fairly well-defined set of visual characteristics – they are young men, fashionably dressed, carry weapons and having bad habits such as drug, alcohol and cigarette consumption. The children's views of police and soldiers were deliberately sought through the study, but the insurgent images appeared spontaneously in the children's responses.

A further spontaneous element in the study was information children provided about substance abuse. Children mentioned a variety of drugs in their responses to different research tools, mostly methamphetamines, marijuana and *krathom*.

## 4. FINDINGS: IMAGINING A PEACEFUL FUTURE

One of the objectives of the National Reconciliation Commission's efforts was to "work towards a future where people of diverse cultures, both within the southern border provinces and between the people there and Thai society at large, can live happily together." The Commissioners wrote that this would only be possible if young people from the South could be bound together in hope and harmony.

Findings from this study indicate that this is possible: children do not appear to have formed stereotypes of other religions or even of the forces of government authority and insurgents that are in opposition. Although children's expressions of anger appear in their responses, so too do examples of friendships and sympathy between children of different groups.

Although some children told field workers of their rage against those who had robbed them of fathers or mothers, other children seem to be coping with their grief without passing dire judgements against the killers. In his vision of peace essay, a 10-year-old Buddhist boy from Yala wrote,

"I live with my father because he didn't get shot by the insurgents. But my mother was shot and died at the hospital. So now I have only my father to love."

This chapter looks at how children in the southern border provinces – with appropriate support – can help build and enjoy a peaceful future.

### Injustice

Denial of justice is at the top of the National Reconciliation Commissioners' list of factors leading people in the South to resort to violence.<sup>10</sup> But the children's responses to the attitude survey statement 'These days people cannot expect justice', does not indicate that they feel a widespread sense of injustice. Less than half of the children in the southern border area group agreed with this statement (42 per cent of 475), around a third (31 per cent) disagreed and nearly a quarter (24 per cent) had no opinion.

There were indications among children's responses of certain sensitivities to the situation. In agreeing with the statement on justice, a 9-year-old Buddhist girl from Yala explained that "Even the police can't arrest any insurgents." It is possible that the child respondents may have interpreted the term 'justice' in the Thai language as 'fairness', rather than the administration of formal justice.

Few children seemed to have direct experience of arrest and detention – there were only four examples in the different responses. In finishing the statement 'The things I need to have now', an 11-year-old girl from Yala referred to her lack of friends by writing: "I have no friends because nobody loves me. I am a criminal. My father was arrested."

<sup>10</sup> National Reconciliation Commission, 2006

In the visual stimulus survey, children were shown a picture of a courtroom scene, followed by a picture of two young boys behind bars – one of whom is weeping – only to gauge their awareness of the justice system in general.

Although two-thirds of the 475 child respondents recognized the court scene, around a quarter of them seemed to have no experience of formal justice and did not recognize it as a court scene – they described it with words such as “a meeting.” Only 2 per cent related the scene to their own experience, and another 2 per cent to justice issues linked to the unrest.

Nearly one-third of children commented that the children in the detention picture must have deserved to be behind bars; 7 per cent thought that the child weeping in the picture was feeling shame and repentance for what he had done. Only 5 per cent said that the children in the picture should not be in prison, while 15 per cent also expressed pity for the boys. Some children (12) spoke of their fear that this might happen to them. “It happens often,” said four children.

## Revenge and blame

To explore the extent to which children desire to settle scores with those who had subjected them to violence, injury or bereavement, the attitude survey included the statement ‘Sometimes I feel so angry, I would like to take revenge on someone’. Contrary to expectations, the children’s responses were relatively evenly split: 38 per cent of the 1,084 respondents agreed with the statement, such as the 8-year-old Muslim boy in Yala who stated that his greatest need is money. “I want to save up a lot of money to buy a gun so I can take revenge for my father,” he said. On the other hand, 41 per cent of children disagreed with the revenge statement and 21 per cent had ‘no opinion’. Reasons for having no opinion, like children’s comments about soldiers and police, tended to emphasize that other people are ‘just like us’ and should be judged on their own merits.

These responses are complemented in the references made – in the sentence completion exercise – to the phrase ‘I am angry...’. Only 3 per cent of the 1,259 responses from children in the southern border group referred to the unrest, and only 1 per cent wrote of injustice. Most anger seemed to be directed against friends (36 per cent), as a reaction to physical or emotional abuse (23 per cent) or associated with personal disappointments (18 per cent). The typical ordeals of childhood anywhere in the world seem not to have been driven out of children’s minds by the everyday experiences of violent unrest in their world.

Similarly, children did not lay blame for the unrest at the door of any particular group, defined either by religion or ethnicity or as separatists or insurgents. Forty per cent of children completed the sentence ‘The unrest began...’, with statements expressing a lack of ‘unity’ amongst community members. As for completing the sentence ‘The unrest would stop...’, over half of children referred simply to a future time when unity would be restored, a quarter to when reason prevails, and 2 per cent of children volunteered the view that the unrest will end when the Government wins.

## Imagining a peaceful future

The 464 drawings and essays of children’s ‘vision of peace’ concentrated more on small details than the big picture. A 9-year-old girl from Yala, for example, drew a picture of her community, depicting herself, a clock tower, a temple, a mosque and a Chinese-goddess joss house, and then wrote in her essay:

“I want to have pencils, erasers, pencil sharpeners, colours and kind teachers. I want to live in [my] district because it is a city of haze and beautiful flowers. I want every province

to be like [mine] because there's no violence. I don't want any bad thing to happen in my district. I pray that there's peace. I want Thais to love one another and be united."

Children associated peace with pleasure, family life and people from obviously different groups shaking hands or standing side by side in front of mosques and temples. As in the case of the girl who wrote about the beauty of her community, the main concept evoked in words and pictures was 'unity'. Under her drawing titled "We promise that we will live peacefully," another girl wrote:

"Now that the unrest happens in the three Southern provinces, the peace that used to be there is fading away while the violence is happening. I want the peace again. I want everybody to be united regardless of their religions. I don't want people to kill each other for high positions...all I want is that people love one another. We can survive if we live in peace... If people still shoot at each other like this it means that the peace is going to vanish."

The contrast between unrest and harmony was captured in several essays, including one by a 15-year-old Muslim girl:

*"The peace that I want is for people to love and smile at each other, be cheerful and understanding, and give each other flowers.*

Living happily together and not hurting, but turning to each other. I don't want my favourite places where I used to go play and rest to be dangerous because of the unrest. I want peace to happen everywhere I go – having nice officers who provide security and generosity to children like me. May Allah bring this peace to all.

If people who have good ideas and intentions, come and help one another, I believe the peace will then come. My family and I want every family to understand and not hurt each other. This is all I want."

In their peaceful future, most of the child respondents longed for professional employment, largely in medical or teaching work: one in three child respondents in the southern border area group revealed this as her or his primary hope.

## Summary

Although around a third of the children in the southern border area group seem to have feelings of revenge and injustice, most often associated with normal childhood issues, the visions of peace and apparent lack of resentment of a larger group of children indicate that it is more likely that members of the next generation could live side by side in harmony. This suggests fertile ground for peace-building efforts directed at children and youth who already desire to live in harmony and can provide clear descriptions of what this would be like.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The objective of this study was to elicit the experiences and views of children living in the southern border area. The responses show that children are suffering from the daily stresses of uncertainty and fear linked to the random nature of violence and the negative impact of this violence on the family, community, school and other supportive and secure environments for children.

Perhaps the most positive finding is that most children do not seem to think or act on the basis of stereotypical images of either members of other religious faiths or representatives of government, such as police and soldiers. Children in the southern border area appear willing to interact with other people as individuals and not as representatives of 'the other' religion or group. This would indicate that peace-building education and related activities among children could be effective.

### Children's views of the unrest and its impact

Even when affected by exposure to violence, children, according to their responses, do not automatically react with anger or feelings of revenge. However, their daily lives are almost wholly disrupted:

- Although the nuclear family (especially parents) is the major single source of emotional security, they do not always have a sense that their homes are safe.
- Disruption of schooling – ranging from being afraid to attend school or finding schools closed to the destruction of school to the murder of teachers – is clearly both feared and resented.
- Within their communities children can identify safe places, usually associated with home, religion or local authorities, although community leaders are not universally viewed as protecting children's best interests. The lurking dangers of spies, potential insurgents plotting violence, drug users and others who disrupt community harmony clearly affect children's sense of security.

Children tend to blame the unrest and its results on the unknown figures of insurgents. The Pattani-Malay term used by children in this respect is *yaha*, meaning those who deliberately disturb community harmony. In the absence of information about who exactly is causing violence that appears to be both malicious and arbitrary, children seem to have constructed a vivid stereotype of an insurgent.

### Child protection issues

Based on their responses, the unrest within their immediate environments combined with fear of violence clearly has a daily impact on children's lives. Yet their rights are not being prioritized.

A particular topic of concern is children's knowledge of drugs, primarily methamphetamines, marijuana and *krathom*. This is a problem particularly for boys, many of whom admitted that drugs are 'the greatest danger for me'.

Despite national guidelines prohibiting the use of corporal punishment in schools, and even though children had positive views about their teachers, it is clear that physical punishment in schools, as well as at home, continues to violate children's rights. Non-violent parenting and non-violent methods of school and classroom control are essential elements in promoting peace.

### **Children's views of government and civil society**

Government school teachers in the southern border provinces are the most important state agents encountered by children in their daily lives. As stated above, children's responses show they are generally appreciative of their teachers and tend to agree that they are 'kind' despite the use of corporal punishment.

Children's reactions to police and soldiers depend to a large extent on person-to-person interactions. Children do not appear to apply stereotypes to either of these government agents but did express concern that places where men in uniform gather are easy targets for insurgents, which they feared exposed them to violence as well.

### **Sources of support**

Children appear to base their sense of security on their nuclear families as well as on religious and (some) community leaders. However, any security they feel seems to be under continual threat from dangers and threats based both on experiences and perceptions. Unless children's best interests are taken into account by communities and authorities, there seems to be little possibility that they can enjoy adequate physical and emotional security while the unrest continues.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the study conclusions and children's rights:

1. Promote awareness of children's rights and child protection in Pattani-Malay and Thai languages among civil society and all armed groups and forces, including the military, police and Village Security Teams.
2. Focus peace-building education and activities on children in both state schools and religious schools, as well as out-of-school children, through formal and non-formal education programmes.
3. Promote implementation of the Ministry of Education's regulation banning on corporal punishment in schools, and support development of alternative disciplinary techniques.
4. Strengthen mechanisms for reporting and responding to violence against children within families, communities and schools.
5. Ensure that child protection services and organisations have appropriate resources to identify and respond to cases, taking into account the unique nature of the situation in the southern border areas.
6. Design programmes to address the emotional stress that children experience living in the provinces affected by the unrest, and ensure these programmes also build upon the children's natural resiliency.
7. Promote drug prevention and rehabilitation programmes on the principles of harm reduction, and strengthen diversion and rehabilitation programmes for children as alternatives to legal proceedings.
8. Ensure that schools and communities are designated as 'zones of peace' by reducing the presence of arms among all parties.

It is important that these recommendations are pursued in the best interests of children, that they are carried out with the full participation of children and are guided by their perceptions and opinions. As this report illustrates, reconciliatory bonds exist among children living in the affected southern provinces. To promote future peace and stability, these bonds must be strengthened as those children grow up.

The focus should be on both present and future concerns. There will be no easy or lasting reconciliation in the southern border areas unless children's interests, concerns and perspectives are taken into account and acted upon.



# 7. STUDY METHODOLOGY

## Rights-based

The model employed was developed by Save the Children and UNICEF and first used in Thailand in 2005–2006 for a situation analysis of children’s perceptions of child protection in six Thai provinces affected by the 2004 Asian tsunami.

The methods and procedures used in this study aimed to help children express their perceptions and share their experiences in ways that minimize their lack of power and any verbal inadequacies due to their age and immaturity. An ethical strategy to deal with these issues was incorporated into the *Researchers’ Manual*, which was designed specifically for this study.

## Study process

Study questions were generated through collaboration between UNICEF, the Thai NGO Knowing Children and the three partners based in the south of Thailand – Friends of Thai Muslim Women, Luk Rieng Group and Young Muslim Association of Thailand. A ranking exercise established the key questions, and each partner organization later analysed the ongoing unrest situation together with questions of research ethics to refine the questions. The questions in the *Researchers’ Manual* (see Annex 1) was then finalized and the manual was designed.

## Field workers

Data collection in the southern border areas was carried out largely by local young people, selected by the three southern partner organizations. A total of 52 field workers, aged between 18 and 25 years, made up the southern research teams. The data for the control group, from Bangkok and Kanchanaburi, were collected by Knowing Children field workers (aged between 22 and 32 years), who assisted in the development of the *Researchers’ Manual*, participated in analysis workshops in cooperation with the southern partners, and who were responsible for data / information processing and analysis.

Because of the safety issues, no field workers in the South were younger than 18, although in other situations children younger than 18 would be engaged in this type of research. The field workers were all literate and numerate, confident and known to the recruiting organization, although study coordinators in each area were older. Field workers had to speak both Thai and Pattani-Malay, and team members also needed to have personal contacts in at least one of the areas chosen for data / information collection. The field teams were balanced in ethnic and religious affiliations and, as far as possible, contained equal numbers of males and females. All field workers were trained by the NGO Knowing Children on the use of the *Researchers’ Manual*, which many of them had helped to develop. Each field worker also signed an informed-consent form and a confidentiality agreement.

## Data collection

Throughout the process of designing the *Researchers' Manual*, considerable time was devoted to ensuring the physical safety and emotional well-being of the respondents, communities and the field workers. In different contexts, varied strategies were used to solve specific questions, especially how to access and work with children without putting them or their families and neighbours at risk.

Research methods that did not include direct questions were used. In all four provinces, where people do not trust strangers, only local field workers were used, and each field team contained at least one person with contacts in the community being visited.

The *Researchers' Manual* was field tested for three days and further modified based on feedback. The *Researchers' Manual* had been prepared in both bilingual (English/Thai) and Thai-only formats. It was not translated into Pattani-Malay because most of the southern field workers were unable to read their mother tongue and sometimes had to administer the study tools in Pattani-Malay and record the children's responses in Thai.

Each team was in charge of an area or cluster of areas, dividing tasks and target groups between them and having a feedback meeting at the end of the day to discuss experiences and resolve any problems that had been encountered.

Although informed consent was sought, in some cases fear and suspicion were so great that parents, children and adult participants did not want to sign informed-consent forms, even though they had agreed to take part in the study. This problem was resolved by the field worker signing the form as a proxy for the parent/participant to confirm that oral consent had been sought and given.

Despite precautions and local contacts in every community visited, all field workers reported encountering suspicions towards them in remote locations. Children also asked many questions about the study tools, such as: "Why do you want us to draw?" "Why do you want us to draw *that*?"

## Study groups

The study attempted to include boys and girls aged 7–17 years from a variety of settings: rural and urban, the designated Red Zones and areas with different levels of violence. In all cases, there were more girls than boys among the respondents (Table 6). The field workers found that girls were more interested and willing to collaborate with them. In addition, the southern field workers reported that girls were more likely to be encountered at home during community visits because "boys wander more." They also commented that the gender ratio in school-based data reflected the gender distribution of children in the classrooms they visited.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Confirmed in UNICEF, 2006

**Table 6: Children in the overall sample, by study area and gender, including the control group**

Area	Yala	Pattani	Narathiwat	Songkla	Bangkok	Kanchanaburi	Total
Boys	363	236	263	142	67	47	1118
Girls	459	374	337	170	98	71	1509
Totals	822	623 (including 13 whose sex was not recorded)	600	312	165	118	2,640
	Total sample 2,357				Total control group 283		

In all, 2,640 children took part in the study.

The smaller adult sample of 717 (in southern provinces only, Table 7) consisted largely of young women who were at home during the period the study took place. Due to security concerns, field work could only take place during daylight – mostly working hours – when males were more likely to be working outside the home.

**Table 7: Adult sample, by research area**

Research Area	Yala	Pattani	Narathiwat	Songkla	Bangkok	Kanchanaburi	Total
Totals	377	142	99	99	0	0	717

### **Classifications for communities**

The 56 communities in which the study was carried out (including the control group) were classified according to two categories – urban/rural/metropolitan and Red Zone/non-Red Zone.

As already noted, certain areas in the southern border provinces are officially designated Red Zones, characterized as having high levels of insurgent activity. Red Zones represent 257 (16 per cent) of the 1,638 villages in the three border provinces.<sup>12</sup> Red Zones are disproportionately represented in the responses for this research – almost 50 per cent of the children in the sample lived in areas designated as Red Zone and were selected on the basis that many researchers had access to them through family and community links.

### **Methods used to collect data**

The *Researchers' Manual* contains 10 research tools employed in the study, including a protection tool that helps to minimize any re-traumatizing of respondents as a result of triggered memories. Each research tool was designed to answer specific questions (or parts of research questions) – see Annex 1 – and allow for the triangulating of data from the different methods.

Most of the tools included structured discussions with children, which meant that the field workers could probe on what the drawings meant to them or their reasons for giving a particular response. These

<sup>12</sup> National Reconciliation Commission, 2006

discussions were recorded in writing by the field workers, as accurately as possible. The field teams discussed translations afterward to agree on key terms.

## Language issues

Field workers commented that in different areas, Pattani-Malay speakers use different words to mean the same thing. For example, in Pattani-Malay, *yaha* means both insurgent and criminal. It refers to people who hurt others intentionally – meaning physical injuries that affect the community as a whole (or many people). *Yaha* actions do not include interpersonal violence, such as rape or wife beating. In other words, *yaha* violence is directed towards public or community disruption.

## Summary

Responses were collected from a total of 2,640 children, including a control group, using the ten research tools specially designed for this study. The *Researchers' Manual* contained the tools, other relevant material and an ethical strategy for conducting the research in the southern context. This made it possible for 11,444 pieces of data to be collected systematically, most of which could be analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. Most field workers were between 18 and 25 years of age and were familiar with the communities in which the data were collected.

# ANNEX 1:

## Main and detailed questions addressed in the study

Main questions	Detailed questions	Target group (Who will know?)	Methods (How can we find out?)
1. What are children's views of the impact of the 'unrest' and 'conflict'?	What are children's personal experiences of the 'unrest' and 'conflict'? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bereavement (family, community, friends, teachers)</li> <li>• Injury of self or others</li> <li>• Detention (self or others)</li> <li>• Internal displacement</li> </ul>	Children (5-17 years)  Adults	Attitude survey Sentence completion  Drawings of good and bad: • Experiences • People • Places  Visual stimulus
	What do children feel about the 'unrest' and 'conflict'? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear</li> <li>• Aggression/anger/revenge</li> <li>• Sadness/grief</li> <li>• Depression</li> </ul> <p>How did it start? Why does it continue? What can children do about it?</p> <p>What would a world without 'conflict' be like?</p>	Children (5-17 years)  Adults	Attitude survey Sentence completion Visual stimulus Essay  Drawings of good and bad: • Experiences • People • Places  Sentence completion Attitude survey Discussion material from drawings  Drawing and/or essay
2. What are the protection issues?	Abuse? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical abuse</li> <li>• Sexual abuse</li> <li>• Exploitation</li> <li>• Taking part in 'unrest' and 'conflict'</li> <li>• Work</li> <li>• Sex work</li> </ul> <p>Substance use</p>	Secondary sources Children, youth, adults	Comparison with control group (Bangkok and Kanchanaburi)  Attitude survey  Sentence completion  Key informant (electronic questionnaire)

<b>Main questions</b>	<b>Detailed questions</b>	<b>Target group (Who will know?)</b>	<b>Methods (How can we find out?)</b>
<b>3. What are children's experiences of and opinions about governmental and civil society agents and agencies?</b>	<p>What is children's knowledge of government and civil society activities?</p> <p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health services</li> <li>• Education (of all kinds)</li> <li>• Counselling</li> <li>• Policing</li> <li>• Justice</li> <li>• Detention</li> <li>• Family and child support</li> </ul>	Children          Service providers	<p>Neighbourhood map (individual)</p> <p>Lists</p> <p>School essay</p> <p>Attitude survey</p> <p>Network interview</p> <p>Visual stimulus</p> <p>Attitude survey</p> <p>Sentence completion</p> <p>Drawings of good and bad:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiences</li> <li>• People</li> </ul>
	<p>How are the governmental and civil society agents and agencies responding to children's needs?</p> <p>What do children feel they lack?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of access to/disruption of education</li> <li>• Lack of access to justice</li> <li>• Others</li> </ul>		
<b>4. What supports already exist that could be useful as the basis for programming</b>	What do children think and feel supports and protects them?	Children	Flower of Peace Sentence completion Network interview

Source: Based on *Researchers' Manual* (Knowing Children and UNICEF, 2007.)

# ANNEX 2:

## Description of research tools employed in the study

### *Drawings of 'Good and bad people' and 'Good and bad experiences'*

Children were asked to draw first 'good' and 'bad' people on a prepared form, and then 'good' and 'bad' experiences on another form.

### *Visual Stimulus*

Using prepared booklets, six drawings were shown to children in the same sequence: soldiers in a park, a street scene with police (in both cases the uniformed men were shown in neutral settings and activities); a court scene; a child behind bars in detention; corporal punishment at school; and corporal punishment at home. Children were asked to comment on what they 'saw' in each picture, followed by 'probing' questions such as 'Does this happen often?' or 'Has this happened to you?', with the answers recorded by the researchers.

### *Neighbourhood Map*

The Neighbourhood Map was an adaptation of the more usual neighbourhood-walk method, in which children walk around their village or community, pointing out to researchers places or buildings of importance to them – including, as in this case, safe and unsafe places. Due to security concerns during the research, neighbourhood-walks were not conducted and instead children made maps of their communities, with drawings of important places, later marking the safe (✓) and unsafe (X) places and explaining reasons for these designations.

### *Attitude Survey*

The Attitude Survey consisted of a number of statements (16 for children and 15 for adults). Some of the statements were related to the unrest, such as 'I like soldiers' and 'Sometimes I feel so angry I should like to take revenge on someone'. Others, such as 'My family takes good care of me' might be described as 'unrest-neutral'. For each statement, respondents were asked to record whether they agreed, disagreed or had no opinion. They were also given the opportunity to provide reasons for their responses, if they wished.

### *Lists*

A very quick and simple method consisted of Lists, in which children wrote on prepared schedules what they needed, hoped for in the future and were afraid of.

## *Sentence Completion*

In Sentence Completion, which was used with both children and adults, respondents were asked to complete a series of sentences, such as:

- I have fun...
- I am angry...
- The unrest began...

The instruction was to complete each sentence with 'the first thing that comes to your mind'.

## *Network Interview*

A Network Interview identifies sources of support used by individual children in different situations by asking the question 'Who do you go to...?' for a variety of different situations, such as:

- When you are hungry?
- When you get bad news?
- To share secrets?

## *Drawings and/or Essays*

This method was used to collect data on two themes, 'My school' and 'My vision of peace'. In each case, individual children were provided with a prepared booklet in which they could draw and/or write an essay.

## *Flower of Peace*

The 'Flower of Peace' was a protection tool, included as part of the ethical strategy so that children were reminded of positive elements in their lives at the end of each data collection session. The 'Flower of Peace' was a drawing which children could take home, in which there were spaces on six 'petals' to write responses to:

- My happiest memory...
- The most important thing in my life...
- I am good at...
- If my wish came true...
- I feel safe...
- The person who loves me most...



# GLOSSARY

<b>Child</b>	A human being younger than 18 years.
<b>Children's rights</b>	According to the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have rights to provision of their needs, to be protected from harm and to participate in their families, communities and nations. These are clearly laid out in international law as well as in the domestic law of most countries in the world, including Thailand. This reflects a basic human consensus that a world fit for children is one in which all children are protected.
<b>Child protection</b>	Protection of children from violence, abuse and exploitation.
<b>Jawi</b>	Arabic-based script for writing Pattani-Malay language
<b>krathom</b>	The leaves of this tree have traditionally been used as an herbal drug for a wide variety of unrelated illnesses and are now also used as both a sedative and stimulant drug in leaf, powder and tea forms.
<b>Pattani-Malay</b>	Dialect of Malay language spoken by an estimated 80 per cent of inhabitants of the southern border provinces
<b>tadika</b>	Elementary Koranic school attached to a village mosque, generally for young children
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>yaba</b>	Thai word, meaning 'crazy drug', referring to methamphetamine tablets
<b>yaha</b>	Pattani-Malay word meaning both 'insurgent' and 'criminal'

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