

# *"WHO FEELS IT KNOWS IT"*



*Children's Rights in St. Lucia  
Through The Eyes of Children & Youth*

by  
*Road to Geneva Child Rights Research & Advocacy project team  
An Adult+Youth team  
September 2011*

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## **Introduction**

**'WHO FEELS IT KNOWS IT'**, is our work - our first-hand report of what we found out in **'ROAD TO GENEVA'**, a youth-led, action research project on the rights of children and youth in St. Lucia; from September 2009 - December 2011; by an NGO-Youth team: **Youth of St. Lucia - with RISE (St. Lucia) Inc.; AIDS Action Foundation (AAF); National Youth Council (NYC); St. Lucia Planned Parenthood Association (SLPPA); National Council Of/For Persons With Disabilities (NCPD); St. Lucia Blind Welfare Association (SLBWA).**



It feeds the 2011 NGO report on St. Lucia's responses to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC), and is the first one of its kind since our government's acceptance of the UN CRC in 1993, and also the first report of any kind of the experiences of children and youth. It gives the views of this first-of-a-kind team and supports Article 12 of the UN CRC: *children have a right to a say in all matters affecting them.* We found that, while some steps have been taken in recent years, much work remains to be done, to encourage respect for children's views and experiences and to truly involve them in matters of importance to them.

The children, youth and partners who took part in *RTG* and the writing of this report, hope that we offer a fresher look at the problems affecting children in St. Lucia, and new, more useful information to complement the new Government UN CRC report; and we look forward with anticipation to the UN CRC Committee's observations and recommendations. We are also anxious to participate in the expected responses to these recommendations, to truly improve the lives of children. *RTG team*

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## **Background**

*Everyone knows all is not well for children in St. Lucia!*

Just read some well-known international, regional and national reports - e.g. UNICEF's 2005 Child Vulnerability & 2009 Child Sexual Abuse in the Eastern Caribbean studies; Caribbean Development Bank's 2007 Child Development Project & World Bank's 2007 Crime, Violence, & Development reports; RISE 2007 Situational Analysis of Youth. They all say so.

Yet *Child Rights* (what children should get from adults to survive & thrive) is still not well known to the average St. Lucian. And even if a few know, there are new and more complicated rights violations than before - Internet pornography, child prostitution and trafficking. Add the frequent, confusing changes in laws and government policies, and the many, many children's services. You can well imagine the confusion facing the few children and youth who dare to even consider their own human rights. Most have never heard of the 20-year-old landmark document protecting these rights - the 1989 UN CRC - and no-one would know how to check the success of government in keeping its promise to honor it, because no real way exists yet.

The most widely agreed to children's human rights instrument in history is practically unavailable to St. Lucian children and youth, except in theory. The UN adopted the CRC on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1989. It has been signed and ratified (legally endorsed) by 192 countries (except USA and Somalia) more quickly and by more governments than any other human rights treaty. It represents international, shared standards for all children's well-being. It has the same meaning for children everywhere. While having common standards, it takes into account the different cultural, social, economic and political realities of individual countries so that each may seek its own way to honor it. It has 54 Articles and 4 guiding principles meant to help us understand it and guide implementation - Non-discrimination (*Article 2*); Best interests of the child (*Article 3*); Right to life, survival and development (*Article 6*); Views of the child (*Article 12*).

Countries should report every 5 years to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child that checks how well their promises are kept, and says how to improve laws and policies for kids. St. Lucia signed in 1991 and ratified in 1993. The 1<sup>st</sup> report was sent in October 2004 and the interview and the following recommendations are on the UN website. The Committee also invites youth and NGO's to report, but children and youth were not involved.

Despite talk of youth participation, there are only few opportunities for youth to be meaningfully involved in decisions that impact them. Most efforts are very superficial - children quickly gathered together to give the appearance only. Children are being noticed but not necessarily listened to. Education and public awareness on children's rights is very patchy. Research on their experiences and their own awareness is poor. We are changing this. There is a space where children's voices can be heard. The 2011 NGO report was prepared by Youth and NGO's concerned with some aspect of care and protection of children. This is a summary of it.



## How Was RTG Research Done?

It was an action-filled project with *RTG* team meetings; training in research; focus groups; field trips to gather info from: policymakers, practitioners, the public, children/youth in primary, secondary, special education schools; youth groups (Babonneau, Soufriere, Bellevue, Vieux Fort); Sir Arthur Lewis Community College; CARE; Upton Gardens' Girls Centre; Boys Training Center; Community Child Health service

### **I. Information-gathering methods:**

#### **A. Review of child-related policies, practices, laws, human rights treaties and literature**

#### **B. Youth-led Interviews (Government, Community, School):**

- Practice/ Policy-focused interviews e.g. teachers, social workers, nurses, Drs, NGO & government staff; other professionals in Ministries
- Focus Group Community & School interviews with adults, children in care; children in conflict with the Law; children affected by violence, abuse; teen parents; the disabled
- Field Trips - BTC; Upton Girls Centre; Community clinics; Bellevue youth group

**C. Youth Survey** (see later) - Questions about children's rights and government's track record in protecting them; designed with input from the youth, using themes: *respect, freedom and civil rights, family and friends, health and safety, education, free time, and crime* and UNCRC rights clusters: *general measures of implementation; definition of child; general principles; civil rights & freedoms; family & alternative care; basic health & welfare; education, leisure & cultural activities; special protection measures.*

#### **D. Website & Facebook Opinion corners**

### **II. Youth Training workshops:**

- NGO partners background - mandates; activities; membership; youth opportunities
- Child Rights in general; UN CRC principles; optional protocols; state obligations; monitoring/reporting process; St. Lucia's 1<sup>st</sup> report and CRC Committee responses
- Youth as Researchers - designing survey questions and carrying out interviews; ethics of social research; importance of confidentiality; Survey Instrument Design
- Workshop Training in writing, radio, TV productions and techniques, ICT training

### **III. Youth Engagement strategies used to engage/ hold youth interest:**



- **Informality** - youth-centered approach, no formal adult models e.g. long sit-down meetings

- **Flexibility** - allowed youth to opt in or out as available; we used different



venues such as Spinners Sports Bar/Club; schools; RISE office

- **Variety** - widest range of youth - School visits; Focus groups; Questionnaire; Media
- **Equality, Diversity, Inclusion** - as full a range of views as possible; traditionally hard-to-reach youth (e.g. in custody or care) unheard (e.g. very young; disabled) and 'middle of the



road, normal but not normally involved' youth;



- **Reality checks** - e.g. live testimonials from youth in custody and other experiences



- **Action** the last thing young people want is more talk so we aimed to ensure touchable outcomes wherever possible, if not, feedback was given to say why not



- **Use of ICTs & Social networking** - Text messages; meeting youth in their spaces to



enhance our reach - RISE Google page; Facebook pages; website;

RISE

## Who Did RTG reach?

Demographics Age 11-17 (580 respondents)								
Age:	11-15	69% (400)	16-17	31% (180)				
Gender:	Male	37.8% (219)	Female	55.3% (321)	No Response	6.9% (40)		
Community you live in (environs):	Gros Islet	12.6% (73)	Babonneau	7.6% (44)	Castries North	5.3% (31)	Castries East	10.5% (61)
	Castries Central	7.1% (41)	Castries South	6.2% (36)	Castries Southeast	16.7% (97)	Anse La Raye/Canaries	4.8% (28)
	Soufriere	9.8% (57)	Choiseul	3.4% (20)	Laborie	1.2% (7)	Vieux Fort	2.2% (13)
	Micoud	2.9% (17)	Dennerly	6.4% (37)	No Response	3.1% (18)		
Do you have a learning, physical or mental disability?	Yes	7.8% (66)	No	58.9% (501)	No Response	1.5% (13)		
Highest level of education completed so far:	Primary	49.3% (286)	Secondary	45.5% (264)	Tertiary	1.6% (9)	No Response	3.6% (21)
Have you ever been in trouble with the law?	Yes	9.7% (56)	No	89.8% (521)	No Response	0.5% (3)		
Are you a parent?	Yes	2.4% (14)	No	96.2% (558)	No Response	1.4% (8)		
Religious Affiliation:	Catholic	45% (261)	Adventist	12.9% (75)	Pentecostal	7.6% (44)	Christian	5.3% (31)
	Baptist	4.8% (28)	Evangelical	1.2% (7)	Jehovah's Witness	1.0% (6)	Anglican	0.5% (3)
	Rastafarian	0.3% (2)	None	1.7% (10)	Other	3.6% (21)		
Your home at this time is:	With Parents	85.7% (497)	With Other Family	8.8% (51)	Foster Care	0.9% (5)	Children's Home	2.6% (15)
	Hospital	0.2% (1)	Homeless	0.0% (0)	Other	0.9% (5)	No Response	1.9% (11)

## What did they say? Youth Voices

*What would make your life better?* Many youth responded that if they worked hard, got a good education and stayed away from violence, their life would be better. And a few said that they are happy with their lives just as they are. Highlights of the responses include:

*"Stop crime"*

*"that in st.Lucia they would have less violence and more educational opportunities."*

*"My life would be better if I was getting better grades in school."*

*"If there was no crime, no preference and more love in this country."*

*"I think that if my life would be better if St. Lucia was free from violence"*

*"If there were more clubs in my area"*

*"Financial aid to further my education"*

*"More job opportunities"*

*"More extra curricular activities in my community"*

*"To be treated with respect and equality by other people."*

*"Well just entertaining us by having talk shows, activities to enlighten the youth cause being a youth is nice but also frustrating. Thank you."*

*"Finish secondary school with 1's and distinctions and attend "A" level*

*'Things that would make my life better: If my parents were not so financially stressed and it may be easier for me and would have probably done so much better.'*

*"What would make my life better is knowing that I can walk on the street and know I am safe."*

*"I think the life I have now is good, so I am not thinking of a better one more than this."*

*"The thing that would make my life better is for me to get a good education and a good job."*

*"My learning would be better life if there are more learning activities to keep me from trouble."*

*"Nothing"*

*"To make my life better I would read more books to become more knowledgeable"*

*"The thing that will make my life better is to take a good health in my work and take my work seriously."*

*"Build places where we might be occupied like a court, field, tennis court so we could be safe from violence."*

*"Less violence and quarreling"*

*"Knowing that I live in a safe environment and that when I walk on the streets a stray bullet won't knock me down. Or if the flogging of students is banned because some teachers are abusive and harm the youth."*

*"A decrease in discrimination when it comes to skin colours."*

*"My life is already good as is; there is not anything to make my life better."*

*"Staying away from crime and quarreling will make my life better"*

*"Education would make my life a lot better"*

*"Peace in St. Lucia would make my life better."*

*"A change in young people from negative to positive. They make choices and try to run from the consequences"*

*"My life would be better with a safer St. Lucia, with a St. Lucia where one could feel safe at their house, where one could walk the streets at any time and not have to keep turning back to make sure nobody is following you, when you could trust people to stay at your house and not worry about them stealing your valuables. I want the old St. Lucia back. The Saint Lucia filled with peace, love, cooperation and prayer."*

*"My life would be better if St. Lucia was providing jobs"*

***A Day In The Life Of 17 yr old Sheldon*** *"Upon waking up in the morning, I say my daily prayers to the Lord above. My dad places me on my wheelchair and wheels me to the living room. He feeds me*

*breakfast and brushes my teeth. At 9am he places me on the sofa to watch a television programme or a movie. At approximately 12pm, my dad serves me lunch and I listen to the lunch- time news. Following the news, I watch TV for the rest of the day. I may fall asleep on the sofa or in my room. Then, I have supper and watch the evening news on HTS, since this is the only available channel to me. I may watch a movie or a comedy show and then retire for the night.....I am a 17 year old youth with an active mind, and I will do the very same things tomorrow." S. N*

### **My Story**

*You see me smile  
You see me laugh  
Playing with my friends  
And having lots of fun  
But if you look closer  
You see my tears  
My hunger, my daily fight  
I'm young, but I have needs  
As the days go by, I dream  
That you will wipe my tears and  
Give me reasons to believe  
Don't think I'm too young  
To speak  
Listen to my plight  
And though I am a child  
I have rights*

### **Workshop participant**

### **A poem: MILLET for Keith Nicholas**

*A whole heap of milk  
Flowing through the cover  
Of the book about silk  
Where we then discover  
  
That the teacher was beating  
The children with a belt  
Whenever caught cheating  
That's justice the way he felt.*

*In his hands how he holds  
The world's future sky  
Today he only cuckolds  
To make our children cry.*

*Far from Mummy's breasts  
Enforcing the punishment  
The verdict vivid now rests  
In the arms of Government*

*The postman rang twice  
The TV News was hot  
Police weren't very nice  
The cows had no doubt. G.S.*

**If you could say anything to the adults and leaders of St. Lucia about children, what would it be?**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>No discipline</i></li><li>• <i>Don't abuse the children</i></li><li>• <i>Help children a lot more, be more supportive</i></li><li>• <i>In order to be respected, you must respect children</i></li><li>• <i>Protect your children and treat them with respect</i></li><li>• <i>Provide them with their needs, wants and shelter</i></li><li>• <i>Be kind and faithful, respect others opinions</i></li><li>• <i>Give them enough love so they won't express anger on other children that have enough love</i></li><li>• <i>First help the parents going through problems with their husbands, so that they don't pass the anger onto their children</i></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Stop beating children</i></li><li>• <i>Give the children what they want</i></li><li>• <i>Proper manners</i></li><li>• <i>Food, shelter and clothing</i></li><li>• <i>Care more for themselves</i></li><li>• <i>Treat them good</i></li><li>• <i>More respect</i></li></ul> |
|--|---|



## **Research Findings**

A review of the past 5 years, since St. Lucia's 1<sup>st</sup> UN CRC report, from the perspective of the rights of the child, gives a general impression of poor response to the UN's recommendations. The *RTG* youth researchers learnt from youth:

### ***Some not so good things:***

- 30% said that adults *rarely or never* take young people's opinions into consideration when it comes to youth issues in St. Lucia.
- 38% said that the government of St. Lucia *rarely or never* does things to ensure everyone knows the rights of children.
- Nearly 1/3 said they *don't know* if the government of St. Lucia or another organization will help them if in trouble and their family can't help.
- Nearly 70% feel young people in St. Lucia are *sometimes or always* discriminated against because of lifestyle choices (dress style, religion, other activities or interests).
- 86% said that physical punishment is used on students at their school.
- More than 1 in 5 *don't know* if they are safe from being kidnapped from their home, school or community.
- 66% of youth say they drink alcohol.
- Just over 1 in 4 report they have access to illegal drugs (marijuana, cocaine, etc.).
- 1 in 10 feel they are *never* safe from sexual abuse; 16% *don't know* if they are safe

### ***Some cool things:***

- 69% *sometimes or always* felt safe expressing beliefs and ideas (political, religious, cultural, etc.) through art, speaking, and writing without fear of discrimination.
- 9 in 10 report they can *sometimes or always* participate in clubs, sports, music, drama
- 84% report that they *sometimes or always* have the opportunity to go to school and learn regardless of their physical and mental abilities.

- Over half report that they *sometimes or always* solve conflicts in their school, home, or community *without* violence.
- Over 90% say they can *sometimes or always* get medical care when sick.
- Over 90% *always* have food, clothes and a safe place to live.



### **Sample Focus Group Interviews**

**Lady Gordon Opportunity School—June 18, 2010 (6 males / 5 females; Ages 13-16)**

#### **Which Right is the most important to you?**

- The right to go to school (3)
- Food (2)
- Freedom (2)
- Shelter
- To be loved
- To have a job
- To have a business
- To have a family
- To be respected

#### **What are some of the biggest problems facing youth in St. Lucia?**

- Crime (3)
- Police- some
- Gangs
- Violence
- Expenses
- People are too greedy
- Killings, rapes
- Littering

#### **Tell us some of the activities you are involved in at school and your community.**

- Cricket (2)
- Football (4)
- Cricket and football
- All games
- Sports
- Track and Field
- Running, netball

- Netball

**Think of a person you know that is differently-abled (or has a disability)—is in a wheelchair, is blind, is deaf, or has a learning disability. Does that person have all the same rights as you?**

- All 11 participants say yes.

**Think of that same young person. Are they treated the same?** All 11 participants say sometimes.

**How is that person treated in St. Lucia?**

- Some of the time they're treated the same; some persons treat them badly. They don't respect them, ignore them, try to rob them, keep them out of activities,
- Some of them call us gor-gors
- Try to rob them
- Called bad names
- Persons don't want to sit next to them

**Do you feel safe at school? Why or why not?**

- Yes: 5 (all the girls). **Why?** Teachers, God, friends (2), myself, the principal
- No: 0
- Sometimes: 6 (all the boys). **Why?** Anything can happen, a shooter could come to the school
- "Someone could decide to shoot up the whole school." 15yr male

**Do you feel safe at home? Why or why not?**

- Yes: 0
- Sometimes: 10. **Why?** You never know what can happen, gunshots, persons in the community- you never know what that person can do.
- No: 1 **Why?** Gunshots, mistreatment or abuse by family, mistaken identity; then you are shot.

**Do you feel safe in your community? Why or why not?**

- Yes: 0
- Sometimes: 9 **Why?** "You never know what can happen." 13yr female
- "Sometimes they can take you for the wrong person and shoot you." 15yr male
- No: 2 **Why?** Some persons in communities are dangerous, persons walk outside with guns
- "I don't feel safe in my community. People walk outside with guns in the street." 15yr male
- "The communities are dangerous." 13yr male

**If you were the Prime Minister of St. Lucia, what is the first thing you would do for the youth?**

- Licenses for firearms for protection
- Give them motorbikes
- Give them money for school
- Everything would be cheaper- healthcare plan, every week \$200 for every child
- License for everything
- Provide shelter

- Give them the license
- Give the homeless shelter
- Build more schools, and give students books
- More jobs available for young people

**If you could say anything to the adults and leaders of St. Lucia about children, what would it be?**

- No discipline
- Stop beating children
- Give the children what they want
- Don't abuse the children
- Help children a lot more, be more supportive

<b>Ciceron Secondary School—June 18, 2010 (5 Males / 10 Females; Ages 12-14)</b>
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**What Child Rights do you have in St. Lucia?**

- The right to have an education
- The right to shelter
- The right to be loved
- The right to have fun
- The right to live
- The right to be independent
- The right to have a family
- The right to have freedom
- The right to learn

**What are some of the biggest problems facing youth in St. Lucia?**

- Crime: Shooting, murder, war, gang war,
- Drugs, Drug Trafficking
- Littering
- Violence
- Vandalising
- Suicide
- Child Abuse
- Sexual interaction
- Robbery

**Follow up: What are some ways we can solve these problems?**

- More youth programmes
- Life sentencing, hanging (2)
- No walking in strange areas
- More police patrol
- Detectors to check if persons are drug trafficking
- Putting more bins, put one on every street
- Disposal of garbage properly
- Fees for littering (2)
- Put in place a recycling programme

- Police patrol in hotspots
- Posters with faces of criminals in communities
- Cameras around
- More prisons
- Secure the prisons
- Burglar bars; that shock (2)
- Place suicidal persons in a mental hospital
- More counsellors
- Taking care of one's self
- Proper medication to mentally ill people
- Stronger condoms
- Let suicidal persons see a Dr.
- Testing at schools monthly
- Broadview Security
- Dog protection
- Alarms

**Tell us some of the activities you are involved in at your school and in your community?**

- Prayer Group
- Dance
- Volleyball
- Netball
- Choir
- Dance
- Prayer youth group
- Summer Camp
- Netball, Dance
- Cricket and football
- Cricket
- Cricket and Basketball
- Choir and Basketball

**Are youth in your community encouraged/able to participate in decisions affecting them?**

- Yes: 2
- No: 3
- Sometimes/I don't know: 10

**Discrimination (unfair judging on beliefs, activities, characteristics - skin color, dress). Do you know a young person that has been discriminated against in St. Lucia?**

- Albinos are made fun of
- For their characteristics—a girl was wild
- Because of the way they talk
- Because of the way they look
- Because of the way they dress

**Think of a person you know that is differently-abled (or has a disability)— in a wheelchair, blind, deaf, or has a learning disability. Does that person have the same rights as you?**

- Yes: 10
- No: 4
- Sometimes/I don't know: 1

**Think of that same young person. How is that person treated in St. Lucia?**

- Very badly by young persons
- Discouraged
- Treated as if they're not important
- Like a slave
- Are treated in between
- Very badly treated and made fun of
- Made fun of
- Treated like animals
- Want to rob them
- Treated as if they don't exist
- Don't get same resources; when shopping,
- Treated as if they don't belong
- Taken for granted
- Some of them have poor parents
- Treated as if their life has no meaning
- "They don't get certain things that others will get." 13yr female

**Do you feel safe at school?**

- No:10
- **Why?** There are always fights, bullies
- Students rob each other and beat them up, some students attack others, students bring weapons to school If you say something that they don't like they hit you
- Make fun of other students, Steal from other students
- "They have students that will rob you, take your money." 13yr female
- Yes: 3
- **Why?** family members, the principal, the teachers, you can stand up for yourself

**Do you feel safe at home?**

- No: 4
- **Why?** Robbery, shooting, gunshots, kidnapping, criminals in the community, rape,
- Yes: 11
- **Why?** Persons can stand up for you/ protection,
- Parents
- Nothing ever happened to me
- I live in safe community
- My neighbours, siblings, dogs

**Do you feel safe in your community?**

- Yes: 14

- No: 1
- **Why?** "I don't feel safe in my community because of a lot of drive bys." 14yr male

**If you were the Prime Minister of St. Lucia, what is the first thing you would do for the youth of the nation? (all direct quotes)**

- Build homes for vagrants
- Secure persons in the country
- Try to help the people, and have more youth groups and social groups
- Have more summer schools
- Build more schools
- Help the homeless
- More courts- football courts
- More activities for the school, community, camps at the school
- Put more sports activities all around the island
- Help the homeless children
- Create more sporting grounds
- Arranging summer camps with fun sporting activities; bun eating
- Hire someone to provide food for the young persons in need
- More poverty reduction funds, more activities for youth to get involved in something positive

**If you could say anything to the adults and leaders of St. Lucia about children, what would you say? (Direct quotes)**

- In order to be respected, you must respect children
- Proper manners
- Protect you children and treat them with respect
- Provide them with their needs, wants and shelter
- Food, shelter and clothing
- Care more for themselves
- Give them enough love so they won't express anger on other children that have enough love
- First help the parents going through problems with their husbands, so that they don't pass the anger onto their children
- Treat them good
- Trust
- More respect
- Give them more love
- Be kind and faithful, respect others opinions

**What is the best thing about living in St. Lucia?**

- Climate
- Environment
- Beaches
- Hotels
- Everything except for the crime
- Views

- Pitons
- Sulphur Springs, coconut trees and the different fruits
- Cool Breeze and beautiful girls
- Beach and the way the sun shines on the beach
- Cool breeze and the nice hotels
- Girls and games, beaches, views, fresh air
- Sky rides
- Historical sites
- The people and the beaches

**Is there anything else you would like to tell us?**

- Poor need more help- should not have to pay bus, and the vagrants
- Placing the elderly in homes
- Students should be able to get money from the school
- Help students by giving them food
- More crisis centres for battered women
- Exercising centres for fat persons.

**Sir Arthur Lewis Community College—August 4, 2010** 2 male, 3 female; ages 18-25 yrs

**What is the right to an education and what does it mean to you?**

- I think education is very important and without it one cannot secure a successful life where they can achieve their goals and help the youth. (F 18)
- Education is a very important ingredient for a successful future. Education when applied in the right manner it can move life and standard of living to a higher level. (M 25)
- Education is essential to one having a successful and better future. Education is like brining new life to an individual, without education it's like we're left in the dark, helping you move forward, broadening your intellectual capability in having an ignorant free future. (M 21)
- Everyone should be allowed to gain an education no matter what. (F age unknown)
- There should be no discrimination when it comes to education (F age unknown)

**Going through this (IIT Scholarship) process, has your opinion changed in any way?**

- No (F 18)
- Not really (M 25)
- Well before I just saw it as going back to school, but it's far more than that; it's opening a pipe line for more St. Lucians, doing something new for the country, education the nation with the skills we acquire when we complete our studies. (M 21)
- Sort of, I realised that there's a lot more to it. (F age unknown)
- I have gained more knowledge about my rights. (F age unknown)

**Do you feel supported in pursuing education in St. Lucia?**

- Yes (F 18)
- Now, Yes (M 25)
- Yes (M 21)

- Not really, the financial situation is hard. (F age unknown)
- I feel supported by the people but not so much by the government. They need to step up to assist and represent us as students. (F age unknown)

**What does this scholarship opportunity mean to you?**

- It means a great deal to me. (F 18)
- It means a lot because there are smart and determined individuals out there who do not have the finance needed to further their education. (M 25)
- It's a chance to help those who are not financially able and the country will be of great benefit when these students come back to give what they have learnt. (M 21)
- I can realise my dream of being a biomedical engineer thanks to this. (F age unknown)
- This has paved the road for those to come. (F age unknown)

**How did you find out about this opportunity and other educational opportunities in general?**

- I found out about it when it was announced on television. (F 18)
- By friends and also newspaper. (M 25)
- By friends and talk show "TALK." (M 21)
- By email and working in government (F age unknown)
- Newspaper and friend (F age unknown)

***Some Adult Key Informants said:***

What do you think St. Lucia is doing well:

***...for young children living with HIV? (Pediatrician)***

- Provision of free medications (ARV's) and testing
- Access to free screening
- Education and public awareness as regards prevention
- Some provision of milk substitutes for feeding infants

***...for children with disabilities? (Child Development Specialist)***

- decent access to healthcare in the rural areas once a month, but this is insufficient
- beginning to see the need to support the services
- parents are actively counselled in the therapy sessions with their children, so they feel that their child is special and is being treated in that way

What is St. Lucia not doing well currently:

***...for young children living with HIV? (Pediatrician)***

- no clear continuity or sustainability of HIV driven cure and treatment programmes
- limited access to competent psychosocial services and social support
- Limited continuity of care for youth in custody and adolescent services in general

***...for children with disabilities? (Child Development Specialist)***

- access to healthcare is a major problem, especially ones that are wheelchair bound.
- the government perceives therapy services as 'extra' and not primary/basic healthcare
- still some stigma and discrimination towards disabled persons
- persons often blame the parents for doing something wrong during the pregnancy
- different myths in society like 'he'll grow out of it' also contribute to late identification

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## **CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

*Child Rights* is still a strange concept to the average St. Lucian despite the fact that the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC) is now 22 years old. The most comprehensive, most widely agreed to, child rights protection in history is still practically unavailable to St. Lucian children and youth, except in theory. The major challenges to child rights include: their meaningful participation, protection from abuse, help for those with special needs, respect for children and youth.

The *RTG* group of NGOs - **RISE (St. Lucia) Inc; Aids Action Foundation (AAF) ; National Youth Council (NYC); St. Lucia Planned Parenthood Association (SLPPA; National Council of/for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD); St. Lucia Blind Welfare Association** - all concerned with some aspect of care and protection of children, and recognizing youth participation as their right under the *CRC*, have combined resources and expertise to engage children and youth in this critical process to discover from their peers just how well, or not, children and young people's human rights are being realized in St. Lucia. We anticipate that this youth involvement will be sustained into the future and institutionalized as recommended by the *UN CRC*, and we hope that this NGO-Youth coalition can be formalized into the long-overdue mechanism for monitoring and recording of St. Lucia's *UN CRC* implementation efforts. While the coalition has tried to be independent in our processes and procedures, our ultimate achievement will be measured by the synergy we succeed in creating with the various institutions concerned with children's welfare; thus promoting the long term improvement of child rights protection in St. Lucia.

**We, the Road to Geneva NGO-Youth Child Rights & Advocacy Coalition, recommend that: for a child, think like a child, ACT SIMPLY & NOW!**

**For Child Protection:** Offer better, more easy-to-reach support to ALL children and families and especially those at risk or in trouble:

- \* Ensure social services are adequate to meet the obligations to children by establishing immediately a seven-day, twenty-four hour service for children in crisis
- \* Operate Child Abuse Hotline all the time (24 hrs/7 days) using a cell phone and on-call rota
- \* Increase the #of trained Social Workers in the Division of Human Services & Family Affairs
- \* Open the overdue Transit-home for children
- \* Provide teams of all professionals needed to deliver prevention and therapy services within the existing clinics of the Community Child Health Service, moving away from crisis intervention
- \* Offer greater support to Foster-carers and to the Foster care & Adoption program in general
- \* Advertise and enforce the Mandatory Reporting of child abuse section in new Criminal Code
- \* Ban Corporal Punishment in schools and institutions IMMEDIATELY; and start a Positive Discipline campaign with a view to extending the ban to homes

### **For Child Poverty**

- \* ensure that children in need are rapidly identified; e.g. even from before birth
- \*fast-track the welfare system help for these identified children

### **For Youth Justice**

- \*give children ages 16-18 yrs the same protection and guarantees as younger ones
- \* Establish an independent, national *Guardian ad Litem* service
- \*fast forward Constitutional reform to give express recognition to children's rights

### **For Health**

- \*Develop the Child & Adolescent Mental Health team with a community-based range of prevention, early intervention and treatment supports and services for children and young people with mental health difficulties.
- \* Start the Extended Early Childhood health Outreach program (EECHO)

### **For Education**

- \* Develop an integrated, universal, high-quality Early Childhood care and education system.

### **In General - Respect children and young people more**

The *RTG* Coalition's overall conclusion is that while some positive steps have been taken in the 5 years since the St. Lucia government's 1<sup>st</sup> UN CRC report, much work remains to be done to realize the many promises meant by our signing of the UN CRC. The UN CRC promises children help NOW. Throughout the government's report, we recognize a repeating theme in all the very good government plans for children - the '*adult agenda*'. Thank you, but unfortunately this takes too much time....time during which entire childhoods are lost. **RTG Coalition**

## **SOME USEFUL INFORMATION TO KEEP**

**RTG YOUTH RESEARCHERS:** Josie-ann Alexander; Nathan Alexander; Samantha Alexander; Yannis Alexander; Glenda Allain; Nya Allain; Shyaam Allain; Uriahus Andrew; Courage Aurelien; Nicole Cazaubon; Filamena Day; Ayo Didier-Holstein; Nial Doriney; Kayel Gilbert; Twyla Hippolyte; Jessica Jacobie; Louanna Johnny; Nolassia Joseph; Kurt Jules; Cordavia Julian; Jasia King; Kirhil Lamontagne; Nicolette Louis; Marie-Therese Louis; Martina Lovence; Ferrel Lubrin; Brent Monlouis; Sheldon Nelson; Laverne Simeon; Richie Simeon; Nyron Simon; Staphon Simon; St. Bryanson Soulage; Sherry-ann Wintz; I CAN Youth: Tanzania, Leanne, Sharon, Nayib, Andell, Swithvie, Mia, Sue-Ann, Nyhile, Maxime, Lena, Alex; Upton Gardens Girls Center students; Boys Training Center youth

### **RTG NGOS:**

1. **RISE (St. Lucia) Inc.** - a Non-Profit organization dedicated since 2007 to the healthy development of youth, demonstrates its mission of networking for youth by the sharing of this project's vision with similar partners. Incorporated July '07 under the Companies Act Cap 13.01.
2. **Aids Action Foundation (AAF)** - a Non-Governmental organization, launched in 2000, dedicated to offer care & support to PLWHA's; to help reduce the spread & impact of HIV/AIDS in St. Lucia; to share culturally relevant information to bridge the knowledge gap fuelling the HIV/AIDS epidemic.
3. **National Youth Council (NYC)** - a Non Governmental organization established in 1985 to promote the active participation of Youth in the economic, social, cultural & political life of St. Lucia; through

Leadership & Skills Training, Cultural Development, Environmental Awareness, Women & Development, Economic Projects.

**4. St. Lucia Planned Parenthood Association (SLPPA)** - Founded in 1967, the lead agency for family planning services; promoting family welfare and reducing the number of unwanted pregnancies, particularly among youth, through a strengthened family life education program, quality reproductive health care services, a youth outreach and Peer Educator training programs

**5. National Council Of/For Persons With Disabilities** - established in 1981 to commemorate the United Nations International Year of the Disabled with a mission to promote policies, programs, practices and procedures for persons with disabilities and to empower the disabled community to achieve equality, independence and economic self-sufficiency.

**6. St. Lucia Blind Welfare Association (SLBWA)**-Started in 1972, mandated by Parliament("St. Lucia Blind Welfare Association Act number 9 of 1972"; offers integrated education for blind and visually impaired children; computer & employment skills training, rehabilitation services for blind children and adults, Braille and large print production, special therapy for multi-handicapped blind children and a comprehensive Eye Health Programme.

### HELP - Where to go, what to do when you have a problem?

1. Call CHILD LINK hotline 451-7777
2. Go to the nearest doctor, nurse, clinic or hospital if you are hurt or in danger
3. Call or go to the Community Child Health Service (at your nearest health center) and report
4. Call or go to the Division of Human Services (Tel.452-7204)
5. Call or go to Crisis Centre or Women's Shelter (Free call:202)
6. Call or go to the Police 911

### LINKS - Where To find more information?

1. United Nations website [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)
2. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) [www2.ohchr.org/English/bodies/crc](http://www2.ohchr.org/English/bodies/crc)
3. Child Rights Information Network (CRIN): [www.crin.org](http://www.crin.org).
4. Global Initiative to End Corporal Punishment [www.endcorporalpunishment.org](http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org)
5. UNICEF (United Nations Children Fund) [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)
6. RISE (St. Lucia) Inc. [www.risesaintlucia.com](http://www.risesaintlucia.com)



#### Youth Survey on Rights of the Child

The Road to Geneva is a project led by St. Lucian youth with the help of several NGOs interested in Child Rights. This information is being gathered to prepare a report on the status of Child Rights in St. Lucia in relation to the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child. **Your answers will be confidential!** Please do not put your name on this paper.

Thank you for participating! **Demographics (Please mark or write in your answer.)**

Age:  under 11 years  11-15 years  16-18 years  18-35

Gender:  Male  Female

Community you live in: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a learning or physical disability?  Yes  No

Highest level of education you have completed so far:  Primary  Secondary  Tertiary Are you a parent?  Yes  No

Have you ever been in trouble with the law?  Yes  No

Religious affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Your home at this time is:  With Parents  With other Family  Foster Care  Children's Home  Hospital  Homeless

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Survey Questions (Please circle your answer.)**

1. Adults take young people's opinions into consideration when it comes to youth issues in St. Lucia.

Never	Rarely	I Don't Know	Sometimes	Always
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2. The media (television, radio, newspaper) in St. Lucia makes an effort to provide information to young people.

Never	Rarely	I Don't Know	Sometimes	Always
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3. The government of St. Lucia does things to ensure everyone knows the rights of children.

Never	Rarely	I Don't Know	Sometimes	Always
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4. If I get in trouble with the authorities, I can find someone to talk to who can help me with the legal process.

Never	Rarely	I Don't Know	Sometimes	Always
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5. If I am in trouble and my family can't help me, I know the government of St. Lucia and other organizations will help me.

Never	Rarely	I Don't Know	Sometimes	Always
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6. I feel safe expressing my beliefs/ideas (political, religious, cultural) through art, speaking, writing without fear of discrimination.

Never	Rarely	I Don't Know	Sometimes	Always
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7. I can participate in clubs, sports, music and drama activities.

Never	Rarely	I Don't Know	Sometimes	Always
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8. I respect the rights and values of others.

Never	Rarely	I Don't Know	Sometimes	Always
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9. Youth in St. Lucia are discriminated against because of life-style choices (dress style, religious practice, activities or interests)

Never	Rarely	I Don't Know	Sometimes	Always
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10. Physical punishment is used on students at my school.

Never	Rarely	I Don't Know	Sometimes	Always
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11. All students at my school receive equal information and guidance about educational and jobs.

Never	Rarely	I Don't Know	Sometimes	Always
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12. I have the opportunity to go to school and learn regardless of my physical and mental abilities.

Never	Rarely	I Don't Know	Sometimes	Always
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13. My school provides equal resources and activities for all youth, no matter their physical or mental abilities.

Never	Rarely	I Don't Know	Sometimes	Always
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14. In my school, there are activities organized to help me develop my personality and abilities.

Never	Rarely	I Don't Know	Sometimes	Always
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15. When there are conflicts in my school, home, or community, we solve them without violence.

Never	Rarely	I Don't Know	Sometimes	Always
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16. I have to work like an adult or do work that is harmful or dangerous to me.

Never	Rarely	I Don't Know	Sometimes	Always
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17. I am safe from being kidnapped from my home, school and community.

Never	Rarely	I Don't Know	Sometimes	Always
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18. When I am sick, I can get medical care.

Never	Rarely	I Don't Know	Sometimes	Always
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19. I drink alcohol.

Never	Rarely	I Don't Know	Sometimes	Always
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20. I have access to illegal drugs (marijuana, cocaine, etc.).

Never	Rarely	I Don't Know	Sometimes	Always
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21. I am safe from sexual abuse.

Never	Rarely	I Don't Know	Sometimes	Always
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22. I have food, clothes and a safe place to live.

Never	Rarely	I Don't Know	Sometimes	Always
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**Open Ended Questions (Please write in your answers.)**

1. What does St. Lucia do well for young people?
2. What is something St. Lucia does not do well for young people?
3. What would make your life better?
4. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

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Responses of Youth Ages 11-17 (580 Responses)								
	CRC Article	Question	Never	Rarely	Don't Know	Sometimes	Always	No Response
1	12	Adults take young people's opinions into consideration when it comes to youth issues in St. Lucia.	12.8% (74)	17.8% (103)	13.1% (76)	51.4% (298)	4.8% (28)	0.2% (1)
2	17	The media (television, radio, newspaper) in St. Lucia makes an effort to provide information to young people.	2.9% (17)	12.9% (75)	5.0% (29)	46.7% (271)	32.1% (186)	0.3% (2)
3	4, 41, 42	The government of St. Lucia does things to ensure everyone knows the rights of children.	15.9% (92)	22.2% (129)	15.2% (88)	26.0% (151)	20.2% (117)	0.5% (3)
4	40	If I get in trouble with the authorities, I can find someone to talk to who can help me with the legal process	7.9% (46)	8.6% (50)	18.4% (107)	31.7% (184)	32.9% (191)	0.3% (2)
5	20, 21, 22, 26, 39, 40	If I am in trouble and my family can't help me, I know the government of St. Lucia and other organizations will help me.	26.2% (152)	13.8% (80)	31.0% (180)	19.3% (112)	9.3% (54)	0.3% (2)
6	13, 14, 30	I feel safe expressing my beliefs and ideas (political, religious, cultural, etc.) through art, speaking, and writing without fear of discrimination.	9.1% (53)	10.2% (59)	11.4% (66)	42.1% (244)	26.7% (155)	0.5% (3)
7	7, 31	I can participate in clubs, sports, music and drama activities.	2.6% (15)	4.1% (24)	1.7% (10)	25.9% (150)	64.8% (376)	0.9% (5)
8	13, 15, 29	I respect the rights and values of others.	1.2% (7)	2.8% (16)	2.2% (13)	44.0% (255)	49.1% (285)	0.7% (4)
9	2, 16	Youth in St. Lucia are discriminated against because of life-style choices like style of dress, religious practices, or other activities or interests.	5.2% (30)	5.7% (33)	18.8% (109)	37.6% (218)	31.7% (184)	1.0% (6)
10	19, 37	Physical punishment is used on students at my school.	7.9% (46)	6.9% (40)	5.2% (30)	40.2% (233)	39.1% (227)	0.7% (4)
11	2	All students at my school receive equal information and guidance about educational and job opportunities.	6.0% (35)	10.7% (62)	12.6% (73)	27.8% (161)	42.8% (248)	0.2% (1)
12	23, 28, 29	I have the opportunity to go to school and learn regardless of my physical and mental abilities.	2.6% (15)	3.6% (21)	7.4% (43)	14.7% (85)	69.8% (405)	1.9% (11)
13	2, 29	My school provides equal resources and activities for all youth, no matter their physical or mental abilities.	6.7% (39)	9.7% (56)	16.6% (96)	27.8% (161)	37.2% (216)	2.1% (12)
14	29	In my school, there are activities organized to help me develop my personality and abilities.	5.2% (30)	9.5% (55)	9.3% (54)	32.6% (189)	42.6% (247)	0.9% (5)
15	3, 6, 37, 38	When there are conflicts in my school, home or community, we solve them without violence.	21.7% (126)	16.7% (97)	4.1% (24)	45.2% (262)	11.4% (66)	0.9% (5)
16	32,36	I have to work like an adult or do work that is harmful or dangerous to me.	60.7% (352)	9.1% (53)	8.3% (48)	14.8% (86)	5.9% (34)	1.2% (7)
17	11, 35	<i>I am safe from being kidnapped from my home, school and community.</i>	14.8% (86)	7.6% (44)	22.8% (132)	16.7% (97)	37.4% (217)	0.7% (4)
18	24	<i>When I am sick, I can get medical care.</i>	1.9% (11)	2.6% (15)	2.4% (14)	19.0% (110)	73.8% (428)	0.3% (2)
19	33	<i>I drink alcohol.</i>	32.1% (186)	12.8% (74)	1.2% (7)	45.0% (261)	8.4% (49)	0.5% (3)
20	33	<i>I have access to illegal drugs (marijuana, cocaine, etc.).</i>	67.1% (389)	4.8% (28)	5.0% (29)	12.6% (73)	9.5% (55)	1.0% (6)
21	34	<i>I am safe from sexual abuse.</i>	10.0% (58)	2.4% (14)	16.2% (94)	8.6% (50)	62.1% (360)	0.7% (4)
22	27	<i>I have food, clothes and a safe place to live.</i>	0.7% (4)	1.2% (7)	1.0% (6)	4.7% (27)	91.9% (533)	



Road  
to  
Geneva

St. Lucia's NGO Coalition on Child Rights

PHOTO SCRAP BOOK



**ROAD TO GENEVA  
FOR ST. LUCIAN YOUTH  
2011**