

Listen to Me

Scripted by Christine Bacon and Sara Masters

Aishe/Actor 1 – Roma, 15

Kwende/ Actor 2 – Malawi, 16

Shuli/Actor 3 – Bangladeshi, 15

Alicia/Actor 4 – Guyanan, 14

Kavitha/Actor 5 – Indian, 14

Steph/Actor 6 – Welsh, 16

Mariya/Actor 7 – Ukrainian, 19

Eduardo/Actor 8 – Colombian, 16

Chea/Actor 9 – Cambodian, 21

Aishe, Kwende, Alicia, Shuli and Mariya are already on stage. Four of them are lying on a bench with their backs to the audience. Kwende lies on the ground in the same way.

Kavitha enters, takes out some rice powder and starts to draw a kolam on the floor (the connecting dots have already been pre-set). As she is doing this, the five others on stage start to 'wake up.'

Aishe: I wake up first thing in the morning and wash my face (*all girls mime washing their faces*).

Kwende: I sweep the house and draw water for the family

Shuli: I wake up at five in the morning, eat something, then I walk 30 minutes to go for coaching. The morning breeze gives me energy to walk faster.

Shuli exits

Alicia: I say my prayers then go wash the dishes after breakfast.

Kwende: We sleep on mats made from reeds. Mattresses are expensive!

Kavitha: There is one room in our house, a small place to put a cot and we keep water pots in our kitchen area.

Kwende: I live in a one bedroom grass thatched house with a mud floor.

Kavitha: During rainy days water drips through the holes on the top of the roof. We can't sleep during those days.

Mariya: In the children's home we were woken up, then we went to eat, made our beds, cleaned up the room. Then everybody did what they want, we were left to ourselves I swear. When we knew the Director was busy in his office, we ran through the corridor, ran quickly up and down the stairs and slid down the banisters.

Kavitha: My mum leaves by five o'clock in the morning and my father at six. After that I sprinkle cow dung mixture on the floor and draw this kolam outside the house. It is supposed to bring good luck.

All on stage come over to watch Kavitha finish the kolam. Mariya takes a photo with her mobile phone - then they walk away.

Steph enters carrying two cushions a duvet and a pillow which she arranges through the next section

Steph: Social services say my brothers aren't allowed to share a room cos they are always beating each other up and giving themselves nose bleeds and broken bones and stuff like that. So because of that I'm sleeping in the lounge.

Aishe and Mariya throw her two more cushions

I put sofa cushions on the floor and make like a double bed. My brother wakes up about half 6 in the morning and he comes down putting the TV on blasting just to wake me up. It does my head in!

Shuli re-enters with Alicia carrying a bench on

Shuli: I have to reach school by ten thirty otherwise they close the gate. I like English classes most. I like my English teacher because his teaching style is different than others, he does not beat children.

Alicia: My favourite subject is science. I love science. And I love French. Je m'appelle Alicia Soloman. That's my name is Alicia Soloman.

Aishe A couple of years ago, I stopped going to school. My mum wouldn't let me go anymore. There was no one else to care for my younger brothers at home. I liked school, I liked learning how to read and write most of all. Now I read the subtitles on the foreign soap operas. I watch them every day for at least two hours in the morning with my friends, when we have electricity. I like what they talk about, when they get divorced and then watching them get back together again.

Kwende: They say people cannot enjoy life in Malawi. Some people migrate to fight poverty. People see that their families are very poor in need of basic things in life so they move out to get what their families are lacking. When people come back they bring blankets, TV screens, radios but we do not even have enough food because my mother is failing to produce enough maize to feed us throughout the year. By September every year our food stocks are finished.

Mariya: For supper they gave us red beetroot. It wasn't salted, and it was cooked without onion. Also boiled fish because they didn't let us eat fried fish. Ugh! And that's all.

Aishe comes in with another bench

Aishe: We have one meal every day. If my father has made some money we go to market to buy vegetables and maybe some eggs. When we don't have enough money we don't eat. It's true that a lot of people here eat from the rubbish bins in town. I've done it too. I'm not ashamed.

Kavitha: Often we don't even have rice to eat at home. Even when I feel hungry, I can't find anything to eat.

Eduardo and Chea come in carrying a bench. By the time they settle each person has their 'space' on the stage.

Eduardo: Before we had to move here to the city, I lived in the countryside in Lopez de Macay which was a really great place in Colombia to grow up.

Chea: Before I came here, I had never left my village in Svay Antor district in Cambodia where my family earned their living as rice farmers.

Eduardo: I was born there and my mom and dad were born there, even my grandparents were born there. It was up in the mountains, it was really pretty. We had a nice, wooden house there. My dad built it.

Chea: Each day I would study hard at school and after classes I would help my parents to do work and then went to guard the cattle. I never made them unhappy or upset with me in any way. I'm Chea.

Eduardo: My name is Eduardo Garcia, I'm 16. We were always playing games outside, we would go swimming and have races.

Alicia: In Guyana we often play a lot of games. I live in a community in Georgetown, it is very small and it's like a family because we all play together. Like there is a ball field, sometimes we play basketball, sometimes cricket, mostly football and we play handgames and other stuff.

Kwende: My brother spends most of his time playing football. There is no one to force him to go to school. My mother is on separation with my father. I live in Mzima District, Malawi. My name is Kwende Phiri. I am sixteen years old.

Shuli: I'm 15! My name is Shuli. I live in a border town between Bangladesh and India. A big river flows by my house.

Kavitha: We have a river crossing our village in India. My name is Kavitha and I am 12 years old. I haven't been anywhere except my village.

Mariya: Ukraine is an amazing huge country. I would love to visit Askania Nova Natural Park, I've seen it on TV. It's a natural zoo where the animals are not kept not behind the bars. And just imagine you can feed animals there freely. I heard it participated in the contest for the seven new wonders of the world. For me, Ukraine is my motherland, it's a place where I ran on the grass in my childhood, where I used to sit by the lake and think in winter. I'm Mariya. I'm 19 now. Our people like to sing a lot, they are kind and welcoming, even though we have big problems with poverty.

Steph: Where I grew up in Cardiff was a really rough area and I hated it. The guy over the road was a right bully, he used to threaten to bomb our house and stuff like that. One day, when I was 8, he ended up putting a knife to my throat. Where I live now, I don't really like it cos it reminds me of one of those places, like the ghetto. I try and get to sleep and like 5 o'clock in the morning I'll be waking up to blasting music and some person threatening to bomb their next door neighbour's house. What is it with everyone threatening to bomb houses these days?

Aishe: When I was smaller, like five years old, we lived in Kosovo and we had a big house with four bedrooms. I loved that house. Then I remember gun shots and rockets landing on the house next to ours. I remember leaving our home and my parents thinking we were going to be killed.

Steph: I live in a safe house at the moment. I'm Steph.

Aishe: Aishe.

Steph: I'm 16.

Aishe: 15.

Chea: I have spent the last six years in Prey Veng Provincial prison. I was 14 years old when they sent me here and I have another nine years before I will be released.

Everyone's attention is on Chea.

Chea: I remember well the day the police came for me. I had just returned from school and there were two policemen waiting at my house.

Two actors approach him

Actor 8: You're under arrest. We are taking you away.

Chea: What did I do wrong?

Actor 1: We'll tell you all of this at the police station.

They put Chea on a seat

Actor 1: A young girl in your village has been raped. Did you hear about that?

Chea: No, I didn't

Actor 8: Was it you who raped her?

Chea: No!

Actor 1: We know you're lying to us. You raped that child didn't you?

Chea: I really have no idea what you're talking about.

Actor 1: OK. Write your statement

Chea: I wrote that I was innocent and that I knew nothing of this crime.

Chea is taken to another seat, while two other actors watch him and talk to each other about him. They then move him to another seat where another actor takes some photos of him.

Actor 2: Look, if you just confess and said you raped the girl then you'll be allowed to go home.

Hands him a piece of paper and a pen. Chea smiles and signs a statement. Three actors grab him and make him stand on a bench.

Chea: I spent the next two months in prison. It was so terrifying. I was there with all kinds of criminals of all ages. I felt really homesick. Then I went for my trial and sentencing.

Chea is escorted forward by two actors

There was no lawyer there to represent me just my own family, the girl's family and the judge and police.

Actor 4: Did this boy rape you?

Girl looks at Chea

Actor 5: No.

Chea: But then they asked her grandmother

Actor 4: Was your granddaughter raped by this boy?

Actor 7: Yes, this is the boy responsible.

Actor 4: You are sentenced to 15 years in prison

Chea: On hearing this my father simply left the court and rode away on his bicycle crying.

Actor 4: I am sorry for giving you such a long sentence, you are only a child. But I have no choice, Cambodian law does not allow for children to be treated differently from adults.

Chea is escorted back to his mat/cell

Chea: At first my mother visited me every couple of months. Visits are supposed to be free but the guards in this prison made my mother pay them a bribe, even to just see me through the prison gate. She had to pay \$ US 1 for a brief visit at the gates and \$ US 5 to come inside and spend a couple of hours with me. This is a lot of money for my mother and over the past few years she comes less and less. It is six months since I last saw her. No one writes to me either.

Being here has made me lose my education and time. My parents were heartbroken at what happened and now they have divorced so I can never go back home as it was before.

Kwende brings her mat over to sit with Chea

Kwende: My father went to South Africa to get work in 1998. He has never come back. He left when I was very young and I cannot remember his face. I don't know why he doesn't come back. He has not sent any money to us since he left. I have heard a lot about South Africa. People say most men get married and have other children there. This makes them forget us in Malawi. People say that 8 out of 10 of our men are in South Africa.

I miss my father very much. In 2006, he wrote a letter to me. He wrote that he was still alive and that one day he would come to see me. He also encouraged me to take good care of myself. I replied the letter immediately but from that time he has never written me again. I have been writing him letters but I don't get responses. He included his mobile phone number so I phoned and managed to talk to him at one point. He couldn't believe it was me talking to him. I have been trying for several times to call him again but there is a lady who answers his phone. I feel really hurt to see my mother overworking herself to provide for

our needs while my father is running away from responsibility. My mother cannot provide all what I need in life

Steph goes and comforts Kwende

Steph: I'm the one everyone comes crying to. Everyone's got depression in my family, my Nan if she's got something on her mind she'll just start crying in front of me, and I'll be like 'come on Nan stop crying, please.' Then my sister when she had depression she'd be crying every day and I'd be like 'come on now everything will be fine, you know it'll be fine, you just need to pick yourself up.'

My dad ended up going on drugs and stuff like that and he turned into a totally different person. He went through different stages like, he was always out of money. I remember on my tenth birthday I ended up giving him money for petrol to take me to my friends. And money for food and stuff like that. He'd be upstairs for hours on end, so I'd go up and see things you don't want to see basically. He was taking Class A and stuff like that, most drugs really, everything. He had two overdoses and like both times he nearly died or whatever.

Alicia: There was one time when my grandfather, he was so outraged about something he lift the table up and lashed it down on the floor, picked up the wood and hit my mother. I went up to him and I was like "grandfather how you can do that?" He was like "I'm drunk, I'm drunk, I don't really care." In my village there's a *whole* lot of rum shops so most of the men, they normally drink for leisure time and when they come home and something goes wrong, the only method they know is to hit – they hit their own wives and children. Not very many of them run away because they are so accustomed to it. To that kind of life.

Mariya: I was two months old when my mother was deprived of parental rights, she was a heavy drinker. So I was brought to my grandma, then to my sister, then to my grandma again, then after the death of my grandma to the children's home. I clearly remember what I was wearing on that day, a sarafan and a violet blouse. I had long hair in a plait. They brought me to the hall, placed in the center and said: "This is Mariya. She will live with us.' The youngest girl there, Tanya, she was a chronic alcoholic. Can you imagine that? It was a child of seven! Her mother was a drug addict and a boozer. She would put vodka in the child's milk, so that she would constantly sleep and wouldn't cry. She used to sway like this as she walked around.

Mariya gets up and demonstrates

Steph: According to my mum my dad was threatening to kill her and stuff, and kidnap me and my brother. So we ended up going into a B&B, but he wasn't allowed to know where we lived. It was hard, but it was ok like. The worst part of that situation was going to school, cos um I went to three different schools in year 6 and four in year 9. And each one I wasn't allowed to tell no one where I lived cos of the threats my dad was making -

Actor 7: So, where do you live?

Steph I can't remember the name of the street.

Actor 4: Well, is it near the shops?

Steph Yeah, you go past the shops, then turn left and keep going for a while ... you know
(to audience) I would hide when I was walking home in case they followed me and figured out I was making up the wrong directions. It was manic! People say I'm strong, I guess I can be strong at times, but then at times I can be really weak. But I deal with loads, I can adapt to any situation. I've witnessed quite a lot alcoholism, drug use, been homeless and I don't know, you just learn to deal with things better.

Alicia There are many forms of abuse in my town. I can remember there was a time when there was a big massacre. Like two streets away from my home. My mother she went and she saw a man's head on the road. It was like so terrible. I didn't see but just picturing it in my mind: the man's head here and his body there and the blood all over. I cried a lot. And I was **very** fearful to go to the shop, go to school. I was even fearful to come down in my own yard. I was like, what if I walk down the road and the people come back again. What would happen? Once, my friends, they were on the neighbours' bridge playing dominoes, it was late at night. The people came with these shining cutlass – you know, like kitchen knives but a lot bigger, and they beat my friends and cut them.

Eduardo and Aishe sit on a bench together on other side of stage

Aishe When the guns and rockets started, we had to leave our house in Kosovo.

Eduardo: We had to leave because the guerrillas would come around. I got real scared when I saw them. They had a lot of guns and they wouldn't put them over their shoulders, they carried them in their hands and they used them to knock on the peoples' doors. They would ask everybody a lot of questions, what they were up to. To see if they were involved in something. One man, they didn't like what he said so they made him stand facing the river, made everyone come out of their houses and then they shot him right in front of all of us.

Aishe: We were rescued by soldiers in a tank. My little brother was really small and I remember one soldier saying

Actor 6: He's cute, what's his name?

Aishe: Hamik. He's 18 months old

Actor 9: Hey Hamik!

Actor 6: Hey look, you made him laugh!

Actor 9: (to actor 6) Shall we take him with us?

Actor 6: Yeah, OK.

Aishe: So that's how our whole family escaped to the the Konik Refugee Camp in Montenegro. We lived in a tent for a whole year. I've been here now for 11 years.

Eduardo: My uncle Roberto had a boat and they told him to take some guerrillas down the coast to a place called Narjita. So a bunch of guerrillas got in the boat, with their heavy clothes and packs and guns and everything. Then, a current flipped the boat, many of those guerrillas drowned and they said it was my uncle's fault. He tried to get away by throwing himself into the water, and swimming away, but they got him anyway. They killed him in front of his own son.

We fled to the coast. We had to leave in a hurry and we had to leave almost everything we owned there. We had a dog, named Rosa, but we had to leave her behind. When we got into the boat to go down the river she swam after us. She couldn't keep up but I don't think she drowned.

Aishe I don't remember much about that first year apart from when it was raining and we were in the tents they would always collapse and everything we owned would be flooded.

I've lived in the German building for the last five years. It's called that because a German organisation built it for us. They were here for a while, seeing who had the best hygiene and they chose the cleanest families in the camp because they thought they would take best care of their apartments. There was a lot of trouble when we first got moved into this flat. Other people left living in the tents and huts were really mad about it. It was really awkward because many of them were our relatives. My cousin has four kids and she didn't get a flat. Her hut burned down recently and now she lives with her kids in a tent the UN gave her.

Eduardo When we got to the first place we fled to, we didn't have anything. All we had was the clothes we were wearing. A brother from a church there loaned us a house. So we lived there a while and my mom didn't have a stove or a refrigerator or anything but it was a nice house, bigger than this one. My mom started to sell fruit. She bought it in another place and resold it there where we lived. After a while we got enough money to buy a stove and a gas tank to fuel it.

Aishe There's some guy in the camps who acts as a negotiator with the NGOs but he only makes trouble. He interferes and tells charities there's no point in building new houses to replace the ones that burnt down as we'll only set fire to them again, like it's our fault, like we did it on purpose. There was one fire last year when two young kids and a young baby died. I saw it. Their mum and dad weren't there and their grandfather had beaten up one of the kids for some reason and locked them in a chicken coop. The kids were frightened and lit candles. I was the first person to see the flames and I was screaming for help. We called the fire department but they thought it was a joke so they didn't come. By the time they arrived it was too late. I tried to put the fire out. We were throwing stones on the flames but it didn't help. I think about those children all the time.

I like to get out of the camp but when I went out last week, some girl from outside called out

Actor 6: Gypsy! Whore!

Aishe runs to hit her and some of the other actors stop her

Aishe I'll beat you up next time'. (to audience) I will too.

Kavitha and Shuli sit together on a bench.

Kavitha Because of my caste, my fellow classmates ignore me and won't mingle with me or sit with me. Even teachers won't touch me after knowing that I am from an Arunthathiyar community. In some situations I cry and ask, Why has God made me born in this region?

If we go to the temple for worship, the people and the priests won't allow us inside. We have to offer our worship outside the temple. There is a shop there but the shop keeper won't allow us to come near. Once my father went to buy a cigarette, and since he touched something, they beat him badly and threw stones at him. In the tea shops, they hold the tumbler with a paper and then fill our cups and we have to take the tumblers without touching their hands. If we accidentally touch their hands, they beat us.

My parents borrowed money for my sister Aamani's marriage and to repay those debts they sent my second sister Charu to work. Then, when she got married at 15, they sent me to that work when I was seven and I was in bonded labour for more than five years.

Shuli: I make bidi folds. I make about four thousand per day. My sister and sometimes my mother helps me, but I can do it all by myself. You would not believe that I started this work when I was seven and now I can do it very fast - and I get 3 taka

Actor 8: 2p

Shuli For 1000 bidi folds. They are for putting tobacco in. Imagine, I am holding a 2x3 inch "paper" - I put the roller in a corner of the paper and quickly roll it and pull out the roller and I put the glue in one corner to stick it. It's easy to make few, but when you make a few thousand, you feel pain in waist, sometimes finger cuts, watery eyes that become red and painful, you feel dizziness.

Kavitha: I used to sweep the floor and then do whatever the upper caste landlord ordered me to do. I used to make ropes using rope making machines. I had to stand for long hours and was not allowed to sit or take rests in between. They would export the ropes to distant places and they would send them in big Lorries. I don't know anything about the places where they reached. The landlord used to slap me often, even if I did some small mistake. I used to cry loudly those times. Nobody would be there to share my sufferings. After 12 hours of working, my legs would ache so badly and I had to walk 2 kilometres to get back to my village.

Shuli: There is contract system. The contractor takes the order from the factory, he roams around the community and gives us "paper" to make it and he gives us money when we return the bidis. Most of us do not take money everyday, we save it and we take it when it becomes 40,000 to 50,000 bidi folds and then I get 120 to 150 taka.

Actor 9: About £1

Shuli: It really helps the family. I also get 530 taka from working at the pre-primary school as a monthly salary.

Actor 2: £4.70

Shuli: With this I pay for my school fees, tuition fees, I buy books and stationery. Sometimes I help my second sister to buy school items, I pay rickshaw fare, when required and finally I save 5 taka per month. I used my savings for medical treatment for my father and recently during Eid I bought new clothes for myself and sister.

Kavitha: I got fifteen rupees

Actor 4: 20p

Kavitha: for a day of work. I gave my money to my mother for repaying the debt and sometime she used it to buy groceries. The money lenders use to shout at my mother if she didn't pay the debt on time. They scolded her very badly saying

Actor 6: If you are not able to pay your debt, why you want to live, better to hang yourself.

Kavitha: Then at least twenty people would gather before my house and shout and scold my parents very badly. Because of this situation, my father and mother would fight all the time.

Kwende joins them on the bench

Kwende: I have to work to support my mother to find food, I do not have any option. My mother does casual work to get money, garden work like weeding, tilling gardens, harvesting crops. Employers give me too much work for little pay. I get 200 Malawian Kwacha for working for the whole day.

Actor 7: 85p

Aishe joins the group

Aishe: My Dad makes a bit of money playing this traditional instrument, a wooden flute. He goes back to Kosovo to play at weddings. My brother was working for a cleaning service with around 70 other people from the camp but they all got kicked out recently for not having the right documents. I used to work at the rubbish dump next door to the camp.

We'd pick different types of scrap metal and resell it to the local iron factory. You can get 5 to 10 Euros for two days work.

Shuli: In our area, girls can only work as cow dung collectors for making fuel, housemaids for other houses, folding bidi at home like me and very few jobs in the factory. But boys have much more opportunities – they are involved in welding, carpentry, automobiles, in factories, hotels, fishing, hawking. Girls get lower wages than boys, which I think is not good. It is absolutely unfair. Not only in my area, it is common all over Bangladesh.

Also, many girls of our age married off in Bangladesh. Poverty is the main cause but dowry is another - and social pressure. There is a practice or tradition, if children get married at a very early age then the parents need to pay less dowry and because of that some girls are married at the age of 12, 13, 14.

Kwende: We were 40 in our class last term but most girls are married. Most of them are 15 years old. Some of them come from well to do families but they get married instead of continuing with their education. Most of our relatives encourage me to get married. They say I will not be able to marry after my education. I don't take their advice seriously. I know I have a future to make.

Aishe I'm getting married in three months. He was my boyfriend before for around a year when he lived here with his cousins. I think I fell in love immediately. He's good and he's handsome – he's better looking than I am. He works too. He's a builder in Kosovo now and he has his own house there. We got engaged around 10 months ago. He came over with a ring, shoes, presents and some make up for me. I think I am probably a bit young to get married but my parents are the ones who are pushing for it. In my culture, my tradition, you buy brides. That's why my parents are in such a hurry because they'll get money for me. I think they'll get around 2000 Euros, that's standard.

Shuli In Bangladesh, some married girls are tortured by their husbands or in-laws, they are not given food, they are beaten, are sent back to their families. I read in the newspaper that girls commit suicide because they cannot pay dowry, some were even murdered by their husbands because of this.

Aishe I don't know if I'm looking forward to getting married or not. My life will be very different. I'm nervous mostly about leaving my mother. It's just not the same when you're living with your mother and when you're living with your husband. His mother is nice, as far as I can tell. But I am looking forward to getting out of this camp. I don't think I'd have any other way of leaving unless it was by getting married.

Steph and Mariya sit together

Steph With everything what happened with my dad with the drugs and stuff, mum became heavily depressed and she'd be up all night crying and it'd be me sitting up with her and stuff like that. It would end up doing my head in. So the first half of my GCSEs I went to live

with my sister, but she went down a rocky road after her boyfriend split up with her and she had depression. I was the mother in the house, for her and her kids.

Steph shouts

‘Manda how do you feel today?’

Actor 1: Not good

Steph: OK – well I’ll stay home and look after the kids then

I’d know the shopping list off by heart, I’d put on a DVD on for Mellie and I would go out and pay the bills and stuff then go to do the shopping in Iceland. If Mellie was asleep I’d try and do some school stuff like coursework, and stuff like that. Some days before going to the post office I would have to take Rosie to school, I’d give her breakfast first. Then three o’ clock I’d go back and pick her up, then come back to make the tea. Then I’d bath the kids and Mellie hated having her hair washed - she would scream the place down, she sounded like she was being murdered!

Then my sister started going out and getting drunk and falling down the stairs and she took an overdose of paracetamol which made her go into hospital.

Mariya: My favorite child minder at the children’s home was Rita Podolsky. She had something, that she could take the place of a mother for many children, although she was a stranger to us. She loved everybody equally and everyone would agree with me. She was strict, but everyone loved her. During her shift there were no accidents, nobody ran away, and nobody was locked up. The director of the home always shouted at us. Once, we just went out to smoke and he called us prostitutes, like waiting for men on the streets while we were smoking. He always yelled at us: “I will send you to Pryluky, to the penal colony”. I think that this person shouldn’t work there as a director. I think that a person who runs a place like that should love children first of all. For punishment, the staff used to put children into an isolator. I experienced this once. I had to sit totally isolated with bars on the windows. And this room was our little prison.

Chea has brought his mat closer to the girls as they speak

Chea: Conditions in prison are hard. Recently I have been made to share my cell with much older men. We sleep three to a mat on the floor. The guard has put an adult prisoner in the cell in charge of the rest of us. He is ‘the Boss’. He is scary and we are all afraid of him. One time I got very sick. They said I had typhoid. There is a prison nurse who is supposed to look after us when we get sick but she only becomes nice if there is money. I had no money so had to wait for my family to arrive with medicine.

Mariya: When relatives came to see a child, staff would tell them that their child was away but the child was upstairs. Sometimes parents could be a bit drunk. Fine, but if they drink,

they drink in their house, not at the children's home. If they have come to see their child, they should be allowed.

When somebody came from the TV, and wanted to interview children - they would wind the children up for a talk with journalists: they told us to say that we were well fed and everything is so good. They even gave candies for this. They would say: "my dear, my lovely" to a child, who they didn't even look at before. And of course, a little child would say what they wanted. Other children would also obey, as because they wanted to be loved. But they always hid the children who would complain – I was one of those.

Alicia: I love to speak out, like tell people what I feel, because that's a part of me, that's my character to speak out. If I see there is a situation and I think that this is wrong, I won't keep it back. In the past, I used to get a *whole lot* of flogging from my mum but I never used to like see it as something wrong to do to a child, cos I happened to everyone. My skin used to swell and I would get like scars and I would be so *angry*, it really made me want to be violent too. I used to be like 'Oh gosh ... if only I could hit this woman back', but I had to restrain it, I had to calm myself down. Not speak and just keep cool. But then she started going to the EveryChild workshops and she stopped flogging us that frequent.

Many of my friends still go through it, because it's a norm in Guyana to do this to your children. It's very difficult to change it because if you talk to the parent, they say

Actor 6: This is my child and I can do whatever I want with her.

Alicia: The thing that makes me most sad is when children are abused, most of the time it's done by their own relatives. These are people you should look up to but they are the people who turn against you, abuse you and it is soooo devastating to know that the ones you put your trust in, they are going to hurt you, make you feel ashamed, destroy your dignity and everything. I would tell any young person, if you're going through violence, hold on, have faith. Report the matter to someone else, someone that you could trust, someone that you could talk to.

Shuli: When I was ten, I became a member of a local children's forum. We came to know of the Save the Children ten year dream which means that all children in this world will enjoy their rights. I showed my interest and through a long selection process I was selected as one of the Global Children's Panel members along with about 100 children. I participated in the London meeting twice, I really enjoyed it. Basically our main aim is to work for all the children around the world so they don't get deprived from their rights and their basic needs. And I don't want to hear any more the term child labour.

Alicia: I did this speech at the children's conference on the rights of the child – it was on TV! I was telling everybody, including the ministers, the children and the parents about the ways in which child abuse happens, ways you can prevent it and how children feel when they are abused and so forth. I was veeeery nervous – it was my first time doing something like this, but then I was just looking above the crowd because when you stare at people it's like eye to eye so I tried to avoid that and I tried to be bold and say each word properly so they

could actually get the message. I had a chance to speak to the minister after the conference. She was the minister of social security and rights of the child and she was quite impressed. She said, 'Good job. We really got the message.' And that's really what I wanted. I wanted them to know how this kind of abuse can destroy a child's life.

Chea: I know my rights. They include the right to protection, to education, to be with my family. But I have no rights in here. I would like to propose to the Royal Government of Cambodia and those who are hearing my story to consider making changes to the legal system regarding the rights of children who have been accused of breaking the law. I hope that in the future children will never be sent to places like this.

Mariya: I hope that Ukraine finds more families where a child can be placed or adopted. I don't want children to live in the condition where they have 1 child minder for 27 children. I think that the most important right is the right of voice, having my voice heard. And at children's homes that is taken away from us.

Shuli: My ultimate desire is to work with Save the Children, and for that I need my higher education in English. I fear this might only remain as a dream since I am a girl, I am the eldest in the family, which means I have to take responsibility for my family.

Kwende: I want to be a Senior Medical Doctor and manage big hospitals. I want to help my family when they get sick. I feel sorry when I see many sick people waiting for one doctor to treat them.

Alicia: I would love to be a dentist. You know, like most of the times in my home when people's teeth are shaking I am the one to pull them out. With a piece of thread tied to the door, then I slam it out!

Chea: One good thing in here is the motor mechanics course they allow us to attend. I hope very much when I am finally released to become a motor mechanic.

Kavitha I would like to become an engineer. But my mother and father are not helping me in my studies and providing me with supporting material. I want to read properly and become a great person. You only have to help us. The government have to arrest people who make children work and send the children to school and make them learn properly.

Mariya I have now graduated from the children's home and on the 1st of September came to Pereyaslav University. I live independently. It's great. I am in control. I would like to be a psychologist and work with children.

Steph I've been accepted into college to study Health and Social Care. Now I'm living in a safe house as my younger brother whacked me on the head and I was seriously hurt. I'm hoping to get my own flat in the near future. I always wanted to stay in Cardiff but I feel like moving away from the family, far away from them so they can lean on someone else. In the future, doing youth work sounds good, you get to do a lot of things, and you meet people.

Eduardo I want to be a football player. I like it and I am good at it. Football is the only thing that I have really ever been interested in. I know how to move. I like to play forward. But I have to see if I can get into another school with a good football programme. I have the name and telephone number of the football coach there, what I don't have is money to make the call.

Aishe When I leave this place, I'm really going to miss my friends. There's a place we all go in the evening to talk. It's just a big rock but we sit around it, talking and listening to music from eight till about eleven or twelve every night.

Lights down on the group whispering/laughing together