

PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF UNGC21

**What Governments need to do for
meaningful implement UNGC21**

*Appendixes: UN Convention on the Rights of The Child,
UN General Comment on Street-Connected Children*



Acknowledgements

Youth homelessness is a global civil rights issue, and lawyers are urgently needed and uniquely equipped to address it – by providing direct legal services, promoting legislative solutions, and enforcing rights. Under the leadership of ABA Past President Hilarie Bass (2017-2018), the ABA Commission on Homelessness & Poverty, Commission on Youth at Risk, and the Section of Litigation Children’s Rights Litigation Committee launched two large-scale initiatives through the Homeless Youth Legal Network (HLYN) – one domestically and one internationally – to organize legal communities to help the more than 1.3 million homeless children and youth in the U.S. and the estimated 100 million street-connected children and youth worldwide.

Domestically, HLYN conducted a mapping of existing legal services across the United States for homeless youth (identifying only 30 programs in 20 states), compiled a directory of legal services and coordinated a model program project to highlight best practices from 12 legal service providers across the country. HLYN continues to provide technical assistance to communities and manages a listserv of over 400 homeless youth advocates across the country, serving as a resource and increasing connectivity.

Building off the success of the first International Summit on the Legal Needs of Street Youth held in London in June 2015, the ABA convened nongovernmental organizations from around the world in partnership with our colleagues at Baker McKenzie at a summit in Sao Paulo, Brazil in November 2017. More than 100 international academics, advocates, funders, lawyers, providers and government officials convened to discuss the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child’s General Comment on Children in Street Situations and develop mechanisms for implementation of the provisions embodied in the Comment. With the guidance of Angela Vigil of Baker McKenzie, we condensed the principles produced during the Summit into implementation mechanisms. Next, a letter was sent in late July to 191 government officials under the signatures of Past President Bass and Angela Vigil; the

message included the UN Comment, the Summit implementation mechanisms, and an offer to support implementation efforts with technical assistance.

Additionally, two ABA policies were developed from the Summit. The first, [Resolution 113](#) states that the ABA supports the development of a systematic approach within all courts to address the special needs of youth and young adults experiencing homelessness. It also encourages lawmakers to work with the legal profession to support youth and young adults through legal services, as well as states the importance of involving youth and young adults in decision making. The second, [Resolution 301](#) states that the ABA endorses the UN General Comment No. 21 on Children in Street Situations and that the ABA urges government, the legal community and the private sector to use the General Comment to develop strategies to promote the rights of children living in street situations. We continue to galvanize the international legal community and our service provider counterparts to foster implementation of these important legal protections.

The ABA is committed to engaging the legal community to work with advocates, educators, policymakers, providers and researchers to promote best practices and systems coordination aimed at improving outcomes for youth experiencing homelessness. Please visit our website at www.ambar.org/homelessyouth or contact Kelly Russo, Director of the [Commission on Homelessness & Poverty](#) at Kelly.Russo@americanbar.org to learn more and collaborate.

A. Overview

Children who rely on the streets used to be called 'street children'. They are visible and vulnerable on street corners around the world. No government willingly abandons a child to that situation and, until recently, the knee-jerk response has been to remove children, forcibly, from the street. But this is not effective for children and is expensive for governments. New guidance confirms that forcible removal also contravenes children's legal rights. As governments strive to improve children's lives, reconciling State legal obligations to children and limited budgets is a challenge. Policy-makers have lacked authoritative guidance and specialist knowledge to develop cost-effective programmes that help children access their rights and improve their livelihoods.

An action taken by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in July 2017 has helped take great strides to reverse that. For the first time, governments now have authoritative legal guidance based on specialist knowledge, in the form of UN General Comment No. 21 (UNGC 21) issued by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in July 2017.

Launch of a rights-based approach for children in street situations constitutes a clear statement of national and international leadership on childhood and commitment to the most vulnerable. It also contributes to achieving targets in priority areas such as poverty reduction, universal education and healthcare, and to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) commitment

to leave no child behind. There is a new approach with international momentum and support behind it. Examples include:

- ▶ Uruguay - first **country government** to declare as an 'Early Adopter' of UNGC 21
- ▶ Consortium for Street Children – first **network** to publish a child-friendly version of UNGC 21
- ▶ Baker McKenzie – first **corporate** to consult experts and children for UNGC 21
- ▶ American Bar Association – first **legal association** to champion UNGC21

The Principles and Strategies presented here are the result of the first **International Summit on the Legal Rights of Street Children** in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in November 2017, led by the American Bar Association (ABA) and hosted by the law firm of Baker McKenzie (International Summit). They aim to be the best thinking of this unique collection of international experts from every continent active in over 100 nations and they are planned to be what policy-makers and planners need to know:

- ▶ **NEW** paradigm, approach and options in UNGC21 PAGE 2 - 5
- ▶ **NEW** evidence on children in street situations PAGE 6
- ▶ **NEW** practice-based pioneering ideas for action PAGE 7 - 9

B. Who is the Child?

The new UNGC 21 (paragraph 1) recognises children as being 'in street situations' and explains that they comprise (para 4): *Children who depend on the streets to live and/or work, whether alone, with peers or with family; and a wider population of children who have formed strong connections with public spaces and for whom the street plays a vital role in their everyday lives and identities.*

This reflects a true understanding of the challenges facing these children. 'Street child' is a demeaning and inaccurate label. It is unhelpful for policy-making, public education and social work. This view, which has gathered momentum as empirical evidence has mounted, was decisively confirmed by leading practitioners, researchers and lawyers at the recent International Summit in November 2017. Young people asked in that year expressed their discomfort with the ugly perceptions and discrimination 'street child' has created for them, with appeals like: *"Respect us as human beings", "I would like for people who have never lived on the streets to see us as persons with pride, like normal*

people" and "Give us the opportunity to change our story".

We encourage Governments to:

- ▶ **Reject** the stereotype of 'street child' and to actively promote language and understandings that recognise children's agency, rights, connections and potential.
- ▶ **Use** up-to-date international evidence about structural causes, barriers to inclusion and rights-based interventions that demonstrate positive outcomes for children with strong connections to public space.
- ▶ **Listen closely** to street-connected children, as experts on their own lives (para 13), about their challenges, relationships and aspirations. UNGC 21 says: *"Children in street situations face particular barriers in being heard, and the Committee encourages States to make proactive efforts to overcome those barriers"* (para 33).

C. What is the Strategy?

State signatories are legally obliged to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC). UNGC 21 is the authoritative interpretation of what is expected of State parties with respect to children in street situations. There is a Child-Friendly version: *"How Governments Can Keep Their Promises to Children in Street Situations"*. States are encouraged to include information on children in street situations in their reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (para 62). Children in street situations have the right to effective remedies,

including legal representation. When domestic remedies are exhausted, access to international human rights mechanisms includes the communications procedure set up by Optional Protocol 3 to the CRC (para 22).

UNGC21 explains that welfare and repressive approaches are incompatible with the UNCRC:

- ▶ **A welfare approach** involves ‘rescue’ of children from the street, in which children are perceived as victims and decisions are made without serious consideration of their views.
- ▶ **A repressive approach** involves taking children off the street to incarcerate or ‘reform’ them; in this approach children are perceived as problems or delinquents.

UNGC21 clarifies that use of either approach *“further violates their rights. Indeed, claiming that welfare and repressive approaches are in the best interests of the child does not make them rights based. To apply the Convention, it is essential to use a child rights approach”* (para 5).

The Sao Paulo Summit confirmed, drawing on empirical cases and research from all regions that, despite strong beliefs and good intentions by policy-makers, a welfare approach which forcibly takes children off the streets ends in failure for children, making them into passive victims or persistent runaways. Care homes have proved expensive options because they have side lined family responsibilities and created long-term dependency on the State. Policymakers have found it difficult to resist public calls for action

to ‘save’ children from the street, but planners have been unable to convert responses into effective programmes. UNGC21 provides the legal and moral case for using a rights-based approach instead.

Sao Paulo Summit experts roundly condemned the repressive approach. They confirm there is no justification for police or local authorities to round children up in the streets or scare them away from public spaces. There is no justification for treating children as delinquents because they are trying to survive using the streets. Empirical cases and research show that when children are scared away from public spaces, they become more vulnerable to abuse. Incarceration has been convincingly shown not to ‘reform’ children and carries high security costs. Policymakers have sometimes responded to calls for action to ‘clean’ the streets, but UNGC21 provides the strong legal and moral case for using a rights-based approach instead.

We encourage Governments to:

- ▶ **Reject** calls for a repressive approach that criminalises children in street situations
- ▶ **Resist** calls for a welfare approach that seeks to place street-connected children in care homes
- ▶ **Use** the UNGC21 and up-to-date resource materials, get linked in to supportive rights-based networks, and focus on introducing rights-based thinking into policy-design for children in street situations

D. What about the Street?

UNGC21 provides the authoritative interpretation of children's right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly (CRC Art. 15). UNGC21 confirms children in street situations should be allowed to associate freely and assemble peacefully in public spaces (para. 36-40). Children in street situations 'have a unique relationship to public spaces' (36). They gather together - to satisfy survival and development rights; for rest, play and leisure; and to network - as part of everyday life.

UNGC21 confirms these actions by States contravene the CRC:

- ▶ **Harassment, extortion, targeted violence, round-ups, street sweeps or other arbitrary removal** of children in street situations from public spaces, at any time.
- ▶ **Restrictions or interference** with their rights to association and peaceful assembly
- ▶ **Discrimination** by not recognizing legally constituted working children's unions and organizations led by children in street situations, and/or requiring licences for organizations to which children in street situations do not have reasonable access.
- ▶ **Discrimination** by repressive efforts to prevent begging, loitering, vagrancy, running away or survival behaviours, including the criminalization of status offences.

Young people in street situations said: *"It's not about getting us off the streets and into shelters. It's about giving us a status", "Governments should not say we should not be on the streets. They should not harass us if on the streets. We should be accepted" and "Living on the street does not mean that we cannot have rights"*

The International Summit leaders concluded that State-sponsored discrimination, harassment, violence and forcible removal of children in street situations from public spaces continues, shockingly, to take place. Sometimes governments do not believe that children make the best decisions for themselves by remaining on public spaces – but the evidence does not support this and UNGC21 gives clear direction to States to align laws, policies and practice with children's rights to freedom in public spaces. Sometimes, there is evidence of decreased tolerance by law enforcement of young people on the streets - even zero tolerance policies - in the name of public safety and order. This is unjustifiable at the expense of children's rights in public spaces. Law enforcers need direction, information and training, supported by street-based social work and sanctions, to fulfil children's rights in public spaces.

The International Summit condemned State violations of children's rights in public spaces, because they damage children, families and society. At the same time, participants cautioned that time spent on the streets can increase children's vulnerability to violence, ill-health, exploitation and trafficking. States

need to take rights-based actions quickly and responsibly. The Summit signposted street-based strategies, action-led partnerships and available resource materials, to enable States to prevent violations, improve policies and introduce field-tested practices. Strategies include but are not limited to: provision of safe spaces, on-street access to information and basic services, and specialised training for police and social workers; review of government by-laws to ensure compliance; enabling street-based families to stay together; re-connecting children with families; trauma therapy for children and families; pathways out of sexual exploitation and substance misuse; training children for advocacy, public speaking and media; anti-discrimination practices for schools and health facilities; transitions and community integration mechanisms for children ready to choose off-street options.

We encourage Governments to:

- ▶ **Halt** State-sponsored violations of children's rights in public spaces, respecting the choice of children in street situations to associate together and assemble peacefully, without threat to public order.
- ▶ **Use** UNGC2, evidence, expertise and available resources to plan rights-based strategies that are appropriate for children in the public spaces within your country.

E. What's the Big Picture?

UNGC21 urges States to *'adopt holistic and long-term strategies and make the necessary budget allocations for children in street situations'* (para 13), to comply with their obligations under CRC. UNGC21 also gives guidance on how to do this (paras 10-23) including: collecting data about, and with, children in street situations, so they become visible to decision-makers (7); making changes to legislation and policy-making (14); assuming State responsibilities toward children in street situations (15); and *'budgeting for, developing and strengthening holistic child protection systems, on the basis of a child rights approach'* (17). UNGC21 reminds States of the minimum core obligation *'to ensure the satisfaction of, at the very least, minimum essential levels of each*

of the social, economic and cultural rights. States should ensure that this applies to children in street situations' (34).

States face temptation to prioritize resolving large-scale socio-economic problems over addressing challenges faced by relatively small numbers of children in street situations. So, it is important to recognise that by making structural changes through legislation or policies – for example: tackling inequalities and discrimination; taxation levels, labour laws, social security terms, housing responsibilities, infrastructure spending, increasing public safety or poverty alleviation – legislators and governments may significantly affect, even if accidentally, numbers and conditions of street-connected children. States have the macro-level tools

they need to make long-term changes for children in street situations and have a duty to take account, from the early stages of planning, potential effects of legislation and policies on street-connected children. The effects may be positive or negative; States must take all reasonable steps to maximise benefits and minimise damage for children in street situations.

The Sao Paulo Summit findings challenges States to review draft legislation, policies and plans that may impinge on children in street situations. Summit experts pointed to barriers that limit or even deny access by children in street situations to their rights to education, healthcare, citizenship, legal aid, court access and police protection, either because children in street situations do not have required documents, or because of discrimination by State personnel. Such barriers may not reflect State intentions and as an unwanted by-product can - and should - be removed as part of changes to national legislation and policies to promote universal access by children, in line with CRC, UNGC21 and commitments to global Sustainability Goals. Representatives of the State of Uruguay, a self-proclaimed 'Early

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product can - and should - be removed as part of changes to national legislation and policies to promote universal access by children, in line with CRC, UNGC21 and commitments to global Sustainability Goals. Representatives of the State of Uruguay, a self-proclaimed 'Early Implementer' of UNGC21, presented Uruguay's first steps taken to introduce UNGC21 guidelines. The Summit welcomed Uruguay's reporting on data collection and national planning, as an example for other States to consider.

The Sao Paulo Summit findings further challenges States to review legislation and policies, to identify directives that criminalise, discriminate against or disproportionately affect children in street situations, such as begging, breach of curfews, loitering, vagrancy, running away from home or being a victim of commercial sexual exploitation (see UNGC21 para 14) and abolish or remove these with immediate effect. Such directives contravene obligations under CRC and children's evidence confirms they place intolerable and unjust burdens on children in street situations.

We encourage Governments to:

- ▶ **Review** national legislation, policies and plans to identify potential benefits and damage for children in street situations, and take action to maximize benefits and minimise such damage.
- ▶ **Remove** discriminatory barriers to access by children in street situations to basic services such as education, health, citizenship and police protection.
- ▶ **Abolish** status offences.

F. Taking Action Now

States are obliged under UNCRC to fulfil the rights of all children and most want to fulfil the mandate. There are good reasons for States to want to help children in street situations including:

- ▶ Street situations do not offer the childhood any government or society wishes for its own children. Children in street situations experience more violations of more of their rights, more brutally and more often than most of their peers.
- ▶ Securitization of public space and criminalisation of children costs money that could be deployed more fairly, efficiently and effectively for all children and society in general.
- ▶ Children excluded from the mainstream today mean marginalised youth and adults tomorrow – an expensive future loss for society.

Some governments may find the challenges overwhelming: street-connected children urgently need action, including specialised interventions, to re-connect them to their rights and a rights-based support process takes time. But States that work with other actors find more effective solutions. UNGC21 recommends involving different stakeholders and developing partnerships with other sectors at all levels. For example: Legal and policy reviews should be *'developed in collaboration with key stakeholders, including*

children in street situations' (14); To build capacity, States should *'facilitate sensitization and training for other stakeholders who come into direct or indirect contact with children in street situations, such as transport workers, media representatives, community and spiritual/religious leaders and private sector actors'* (18); *'States should support interventions, coordinated by local governments, that 'encourage and support local-level, partnership-based, specialized interventions on the basis of a child rights approach'* (20); *'In partnership with academia, civil society and the private sector, States should develop systematic, rights-respecting, participatory mechanisms to collect data and share disaggregated information about children in street situations'* (23). UNGC21 insists that States involve children in these processes including: *'empowering children in street situations through child rights education and the development of life skills; preparing stakeholders to accept the views of these children in decision-making as expressed through association and assembly; and promoting the participation of these children in recreation, leisure, sports, artistic and cultural activities alongside other children in the community.'* (40).

The Sao Paulo Summit was not the first multi-sectoral event for street-connected children. Specialists from different sectors (including children as experts on their own lives), bring richer evidence, more diverse skills, more funding and different ideas together, to produce better informed, more realistic

strategies. Summit participants confirmed their interest and willingness to work in State-led partnerships, guided by the UNGC21. The Summit showcased collective capacity in areas including: street-based data collection; street-based social work; street to family interventions; reduction of substance misuse; and training for children as co-researchers to participate in planning, monitoring and accountability.

We encourage Governments to:

- ▶ **Develop national collaboration with key stakeholders** including street-connected children and families - legislation, policies, national plans, programmes, monitoring and accountability mechanisms.
- ▶ **Create local partnerships** – to support specialised interventions for children in street situations that will enable States to meet their legal obligations under the CRC.

G. NEW Evidence on children in street situations - Research + Resources

A – Key Documents:

- UN CRC - <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>
- UN GC 21 - http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2fC%2fGC%2f21&Lang=en
- CSC Child - friendly version of the UNGC 21- www.streetchildrenresources.org/resources/child-friendly-guide-to-the-general-comment-english/

B – Who is the Child?

- OHCHR Global Consultation and Report to UN HRC: <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Children/Study/OHCHRBrochureStreetChildren.pdf>
- CSC Global Report Research and Practice: <https://www.streetchildrenresources.org/resources/state-of-the-worlds-street-children-research/>
- Street Connections: <http://socialwork.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199975839.001.0001/acrefore-9780199975839-e-1044?print=pdf> and https://streetchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/CFSC_Briefing-Paper_April-2016_FINAL-Hi-res.pdf
- General - Consulting Children: <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/so-you->

[want-consult-children-toolkit-good-practice](#)

- Specific - Consulting Children in street situations: <https://www.streetchildrenresources.org/resources/a-passport-to-participatory-planning-2/>
- Specific – Consulting Street-Connected Girls: <https://streetchildren.org/launch-of-street-girls-toolkit/>

C – What is the Strategy?

- General - UNICEF, Child Rights Education Toolkit: https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/UNICEF_CRE_Toolkit_FINAL_web_version170414.pdf
- Street-connected Children – CSC Briefing Paper on Rights-based Approach - <https://www.streetchildrenresources.org/resources/cscs-briefing-paper-2017-the-protection-and-promotion-of-human-rights-for-street-connected-children-legal-policy-and-practical-strategies-for-change/>
- Comparing approaches: Repressive, Welfare and Rights-based: http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:a2hZa3QEnUQJ:www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Children/Study/Consultation_GlobalResearchPaperbySarahThomasdeBenitez.doc+&cd=3&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=tw and Ch.6 of <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/ACF1AEF.pdf>
- UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children - <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4c3acd162.html>

D – What about the Street?

- General - UNICEF - <https://childfriendlycities.org/what-is-a-child-friendly-city/>
- Current research: <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/76139/2/76139.pdf> and <http://www.sustasis.net/Randhawa.pdf>
- Street-connected children and public spaces - <https://www.streetchildrenresources.org/resources/resilience-on-the-streets-street-children-and-youth-in-three-african-citiesbriefing-paper-11-%C2%B7-november-2017/> and <http://www.travailderue.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Toolkit-New-street-workers.pdf> and Network publications: <http://travailderue.org/publications/publicaciones-red/>

E – What’s the Big Picture?

- *General Data* - OHCHR “A Human Rights-Based Approach To Data”, www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/HRIndicators/GuidanceNoteonApproachtoData.pdf
- *Street-connected children Data* - CSC Briefing Paper - https://www.streetchildrenresources.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/CFSC_Briefing-Paper_FINAL-Low-res-for-online-use.pdf
- *Status Offences* - https://www.crin.org/en/docs/Status_Offenses_doc_2_final.pdf
- *General CPS* - <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/our-thematic-areas/child-protection/child-protection-systems> and [https://www.unicef.org/protection/Conceptual_Clarify_Paper_Oct_2010\(4\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/protection/Conceptual_Clarify_Paper_Oct_2010(4).pdf)
- *Bottom-up CPS* - <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0145213415001246>

F – Taking Action Now

- *Partnership example from Uruguay* – General <file:///Users/sarahthomasdebenitez/Downloads/socsci-03-00705.pdf>
- *Partnerships and specialised interventions* – Safe Families Safe Children Coalition: <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/breaking-cycle-violence-building-future-most-excluded>
- *Substance misuse*: <https://www.streetchildrenresources.org/resources/?search=youth+and+substance>
- *Growing Up on the Streets*: <http://www.streetinvest.org/resources>
- *Child-youth transitions*: <http://www.rc21.org/conferences/amsterdam2011/edocs2/Session%2030/30-1-Schernthaler.pdf> and <https://www.streetchildrenresources.org/resources/leaving-the-street-exploring-transition-experiences-of-street-connected-children-and-youth-in-kenya/>

H. Pioneering ideas for action from the Sao Paulo Summit:

B – Who is the Child?

Action Idea 1 Stop using the ‘street child’ label. Promote language that recognises rights, connections, the stories and potential of children in street situations - to treat them first and foremost as children:

- ▶ Publish Government guidance on inclusive language when writing or talking about children in street situations. Promote the guidance across Judiciary, Legislature and Executive, and

through all levels of Government from policy-makers to front-line service providers. Train government spokespeople to use inclusive language in their work with media, and front-line workers from social workers and legal assistants to police officers, to use supportive language with communities, families and children.

Action Idea 2 Listen closely to street-connected children, in all their diversity, as experts on their lives – to improve planning:

- ▶ Legislate for participation by street-connected children and by associations of street-connected children in the design, execution, monitoring and accountability of policies and programmes that affect them. Adults who are known and trusted by participating children can help facilitate their engagement. Representation should respect gender, disability, ethnicity, sexuality and other facets of identity. Provision should be made for: training (public speaking, media interviews); expenses (transport, food, accommodation); facilities (translation, interpretation, sign language, audio and wheelchair facilities); formats (child councils, youth parliaments, focus groups, child-centred spaces - using video, posters and performance); and complaints (access to complaint mechanisms without the requirement of an adult's presence).

C – What is the Strategy?

Action Idea 3 Stop the use of state institutions to detain, hold or 'rescue' children in street situations. Use approaches that respect children's rights and recognise their reality – to comply with legal obligations.

- ▶ Legislate in accordance with UNGC21 so that children in street situations are only directed to State residential institutions as a last resort, after a transparent assessment process has been conducted and during which all other avenues have been exhausted. This should apply to temporary arrangements as well as to long-term placements. Legislation, at all levels of State, should create, support and allocate funding for alternatives to prison placement and other forms of detention including institutional care homes for children in street situations. Behaviours that children carry out on the street to survive should be decriminalised. Status offences, which are actions prohibited only for children and may include begging, absence from school, vagrancy, homelessness, loitering and running away, should be abolished. No use of bail, fees or fines should be used against street-connected children, to discourage the use of mechanisms for payment that may be criminal. Children who have been detained or imprisoned in these situations should be freed and their criminal records expunged. Alternative approaches include: Juvenile justice systems focused on prevention, diversion, restorative justice and other alternatives to incarceration and rehabilitation; State support for research to understand gendered and other stereotypes that lead to the unfair criminalization of street-connected children; Care systems focused on fulfilling the rights of all children to a supportive family environment.

Action Idea 4 Enforce guarantees to a rights-based process for children in street situations – to fulfil rights.

- ▶ Empower an independent body to monitor and report to Parliament and the public on State enforcement of rights-based legislation. The body needs to be adequately resourced. It might be: A specialized children's rights unit in a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI); A national children's ombudsman or commissioner. Additional supports for the body might include: A public sector representative for children and other people living in street situations; A technical committee of academics, state professionals and civil society leaders; Child advocates at provincial/local government levels. A complaints system for children that is accessible, equitable, impartial, exhaustive and prompt should be introduced, encouraging children in street situations to report violations of their rights including abuse, discrimination, racism or institutional discrimination in any State body. Complaint systems should be operated by the independent body, which should also introduce incentives to: Celebrate, reward and encourage individual or team innovations in rights-based support for street-connected children at all levels of the State, including city councils and front-line workers across law enforcement, education, health and local community.

D – What about the Street?

Action Idea 5 Safe urban spaces where children in street situations can gather – to make cities for all.

- ▶ Encourage urban design and plans that promote social justice and connections. To support children's right to assemble and freely associate in public spaces, States need to direct public services to be supportive: Police and social workers trained in child development and trauma, mandated and incentivised to protect children in street situations, with opportunities to engage positively; Information on rights, laws and how to access to State services available, in formats children understand and in places they find useful, for example, street posters, community centre billboards, public transport videos, social media, in public-facing facilities and via mobile units; Free access to basic sanitation and protection from weather. A research agenda should include community mapping of services and policing of public spaces, in which street-connected children should be trained and operate as co-researchers. If trafficking and exploitation exist, outreach programs and relevant information should be available in locations where street-connected children are approached by traffickers and exploitative agents. To encourage acceptance of children, States should support media and social media campaigns to educate the public about children's right to assemble and organize themselves on the streets. Campaigns to change perceptions of street-connected children should be co-created with communities to help them recognize people in street situations as citizens, and street-connected children as children.

Action Idea 6 Foster ‘trustworthy adult’ schemes to help children in street situations connect to community and services – to include all children.

- ▶ Children should have regular, supportive access in public spaces to street educators, social workers and other professionals trained in child development and trauma-informed practice. States should have an accreditation process for street workers, aimed at supporting children to build safe, healthy relationships with trustworthy adults. The process should include careful screening of candidates, formal training and recognition of the value of street-based support to children. Trustworthy adults can support children to be safe, help the State eliminate obstacles to children’s access to services like health care, education and housing, without need for ID, and facilitate access, at children’s request, to specialised services like safe houses or substance misuse programs. Attention should be paid to support children with disabilities and other populations experiencing particular discrimination – whether girls, ethnic or religious minorities, LGBTQ young people or other.

E – What’s the Big Picture?

Action Idea 7 Collect, share and use data about children in street situations - to make informed decisions.

- ▶ For children in street situations to be visible in policy-making and planning, systematic State-led data collection, analysis and interpretation is necessary to make evidence-based, informed decisions about services and budget allocations. Some information may be collectible within the national census (by including public spaces and shelters) or household surveys (by including appropriate questions). Data is also collectible specifically about street-connected children (by using street-based methods and including shelters) in which trustworthy adults and children should be co-researchers. The process from design of methodology to publication of data use should be robust and transparent, involving children, front-line practitioners and academics as well as statisticians. Information should be collected about gender, ethnicity, disability, religion and other relevant characteristics to enable analysis of disaggregated data. Data collection – both quantitative and qualitative information, through observation and interview - should be repeated on a regular basis, to monitor policy impacts, identify trends and design effective prevention programmes and tailored services.

Action Idea 8 Strengthen Child Protection Systems - to explicitly include children in street situations.

- ▶ Child Protection Systems (CPS) exist in most countries. They should be strengthened, by applying the guidance in UNGC 21, to include children in street situations explicitly – so that street-connected children do not inadvertently slip through the CPS. A CPS that works for street-connected children will be child-centred, rights-based and free with no hidden costs.
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It will have an adequate budget and employ an adequate number of social workers, health and other professionals trained in child development and trauma. It will seek to: Remove discriminatory barriers faced by street-connected children (including ID requirements for access to services); Encourage children who feel at risk to access services themselves; Involve children in all decisions that concern them and guarantee their rights to legal representation; Take into account multiple rights violations and potential compounded effects; Recognise that structural inequalities reduce the capacity of fragile families in precarious communities to support their children, so families need support themselves. Street-connected children involved in a CPS may also be involved in the criminal justice and/or health systems, so States should promote coordination, collaboration and interaction across service systems.

F – Taking Action Now

Action Idea 9 Develop partnerships - to be able to provide comprehensive support for children

- ▶ Partnerships across sectors and systems may be the best way to fulfil street-connected children's rights. They are helpful for developing comprehensive prevention strategies and they are helpful in securing children's access to the tailored range of services they are likely to need once they have begun to rely on the streets. Strong coordination is necessary to align policies and practices across systems that affect street-connected children, including labour, housing, child protection, education, health and criminal justice. Good partnerships between levels of State (national to local), private sector (international corporations to local businesses) and civil society (academia to NGOs) contribute resources and knowledge, while also sharing responsibilities appropriately. Partnerships should be an integral part of a national strategy for children in street situations, which should itself be developed in partnership, including with street-connected children, youth and families. Laws and regulations that encourage international organizations and NGOs to participate in design and execution of a national strategy for street-connected children should be welcomed. Partnerships should seek to exploit the advantages of each partner, for example the government has policy reach, academia has theoretical knowledge, NGOs have innovation experience, corporations have technological flexibility, communities have local context, families and children have expert individual knowledge.

Action Idea 10 Collaborate on specialised interventions – to offer innovative services to children

- ▶ To access their rights, children in street situations need tailored services, which respond to specific types of pre-street and street-based experiences, that other children may not need. Some specialised interventions help children prepare themselves for basic services
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such as education. Others provide opportunities to support children as they transition into youth, such as skills training for jobs. Many aim to strengthen connections with families or other trustworthy adults. Most also help children to heal, manage or overcome traumatic abuse, substance misuse or mental illness. Numerous collaborative partnerships have shown benefits for children in specialised interventions: Successful family reunification, foster care or support to keep street-based families together may need NGO care and advocacy, academic theory and testing, government housing and social work, corporate legal support, family changes and child commitment; Child to adult transitions may require State policy and budget alignments between child care and youth services, NGO temporary housing support and financial counselling, community housing and mental health services, private sector apprenticeships and scholarships for academic study; Managing mental ill-health and substance misuse may require State policy changes from a criminal focus to a health care approach, protection from criminal gangs, temporary housing, NGO counselling and trustworthy adult support and private sector job skills and training.