INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT ON THE LEGAL NEEDS OF STREET YOUTH

PLENARY OPENING SESSION
We feel unsafe while going to school as we have to leave early and have no company of other girls. At that hour the roads are empty.

Adolescent girl, Delhi (India)

THE PROBLEM: ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN CITIES
For the first time in history, there are more people living in cities than in rural areas. Each month, 5 million people move to cities in developing countries. Girls in cities contend with the duality of increased risks and increased opportunities. On the one hand, girls face sexual harassment, exploitation, and insecurity as they navigate the urban environment, while on the other hand they are more likely to be educated and politically active and less likely to be married at an early age.

WHAT DOES RESEARCH TELL US?
Based on research conducted by Plan, we found that adolescent girls seldom feel safe in cities, they experience physical and sexual violence, and they are often excluded from decision-making processes that impact their safety.

We also found that there is a major gap in programming and research pertaining to adolescent girls’ safety and inclusion in cities. For example, many urban safety and crime prevention initiatives target young men, and many women’s safety initiatives focus only on adult women. With rising levels of gender-based violence and urban insecurity around the world, the programme is being implemented at a crucial time.

PLAN’S RESEARCH FINDINGS

In Kampala, 45% of girls reported sexual harassment when using public transportation services.

In Delhi, 96% of adolescent girls do not feel safe in the city.

In Lima, only 2.2% of girls reported always feeling safe when walking in public spaces.

In Hanoi, 36% of girls reported that they seldom had access to emergency services – notably the police.

In Cairo, 32% of girls felt that they never could talk to anyone about their safety concerns.

By 2030, approximately 1.5 billion girls will live in urban areas.

“...We feel unsafe while going to school as we have to leave early and [have] no company of other girls. At that hour the roads are empty.”

Adolescent girl, Delhi (India)
5 cities
(approx. 50 million people in total)

15,000 adolescent girls are directly participating in the programme

We are working directly with 9,000 government stakeholders and transportation staff

750,000 community members, including girls and boys, will be reached through the programme

OUR SOLUTION
The Because I am a Girl Urban Programme was developed by Plan, together with UN-HABITAT and Women in Cities International, as part of the Global Girls Innovation Programme. The Urban Programme is a ground-breaking initiative that seeks to close existing gaps between urban programming targeting either ‘youth’ or ‘women’ by focusing on adolescent girls who are often the most vulnerable and excluded population in a city. This initiative is a globally united and locally implemented programme that brings partners together for achieving a common goal: putting adolescent girls at the centre of transforming cities into places of inclusion, tolerance, and opportunity for everyone.

“I want to give my opinion to make changes in the future.”
Adolescent girl, Cairo (Egypt)

URBAN PROGRAMME’S APPROACH
The programme works to:

1. Influence governments and policy makers to make laws and city services more receptive and inclusive to girls’ safety.

2. Influence families and communities to promote a supportive social environment that promotes girls’ safety and inclusion in cities.

3. Engage adolescent girls to be active citizens and agents of change by building capacities, strengthening assets, and creating opportunities for meaningful participation.

URBAN PROGRAMME’S POTENTIAL: Scalable Model
We are introducing and implementing new innovative and participatory methodologies and resources, and gender transformative approaches for working in urban contexts. The programme has intentionally been created to be replicated in other cities and countries around the world at a lower start-up cost. The programme is a globally united, locally implemented programme, wherein the activities and resources developed are easily adapted to fit different contexts.

WHY IS THE URBAN PROGRAMME INNOVATIVE AND TRANSFORMATIVE?
This innovative programme strives to create sustainable change by working across three levels of change: with governments and institutions, communities and families, and girls and boys. The Urban Programme is seeking to fill the gap in programming and research pertaining to adolescent girls’ safety and inclusion in cities. Moreover, the programme provides girls with a space to discuss the issues they are facing and to offer their own ideas for developing their cities.

In addition, the Urban Programme uses innovative engagement modalities, gender transformative approaches, and unique feedback and participatory research tools that include training curriculums for girls and stakeholders, community scorecards, awareness raising campaigns, development of IEC materials, and capacity building workshops. These features, together with a rigorous monitoring and evaluation framework, give the Urban Programme’s model the potential for replication and scale-up.

WHY INVEST IN GIRLS’ SAFETY?
Adolescent girls are too often underrepresented in current safety policies and excluded from urban development and governance processes. Their voices must be strengthened in order to build safe cities that are inclusive, and respond to the needs and priorities of girls. Investing in the creation of safe and inclusive cities for adolescent girls by bringing relevant actors together contributes to sustainable economic, social, and institutional change within societies that will benefit all citizens.

WANT TO BECOME INVOLVED OR CONTRIBUTE? CONTACT US DIRECTLY!
Alex Munive, Global Girls Innovation Programme Manager: Alexander.Munive@plan-international.org
Alana Livesey, Because I Am A Girl Urban Programme Manager Alana.Livesey@plan-international.org

I am a Girl
Who we are

Consortium for Street Children (CSC) is a global network that raises the voices of young people in street situations, promoting their rights and improving their lives. We represent over 80 network members working across 130 countries worldwide.

Work with us and help transform the lives of young people in street situations

CSC is investing in development and implementation of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child’s General Comment on Children in Street Situations, supported by Aviva plc.

We are looking for new partners to join with us to secure:

1. **Consultation events** to inform development of the General Comment in 3-5 world regions, to listen to the experiences of street-connected young people and adults working with and for them.

2. **State of the World’s Street Children** series, an annual publication to monitor implementation over time of this General Comment by collecting, presenting and interpreting key data relevant to young people in street situations by country and region.

We continue to grow as a network. Join us! If your organisation supports young people in street situations, join the largest global network dedicated to transforming their lives. Visit our website [www.streetchildren.org](http://www.streetchildren.org) for more.

What we do

**Advocacy**
We work to position street children higher on international and national legal and policy agendas in order to improve enforcement of their rights. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child is in the process of developing a new **General Comment on children in street situations** for which Consortium for Street Children is Coordinator of the Advisory Group. To amplify the voices of young people in street situations we coordinate International Day for Street Children. CSC is also Secretariat for the UK’s All Party Parliamentary Group on street children.

**Research**
We work to improve the evidence base in order to better inform policies and programmes for young people in street situations. CSC hosts an [online Global Resource Centre](http://www.streetchildrenresources.org) at [www.streetchildrenresources.org](http://www.streetchildrenresources.org) the largest free-to-access library of literature about street children, including NGO evidence as well as academic materials. We host an annual Research Conference bringing together researchers and practitioners to share expertise around a chosen theme, producing a briefing paper based on the findings.

**Network Development**
We help our members improve the quality of services they deliver to street-connected children by promoting membership collaboration on selected projects such as toolkits and training manuals. Our network comprises small NGOS delivering grassroots work in-country, as well as large international NGOs working across regions. We work cross-sector with practitioners, academics and corporates to support street-connected children and youth to realise their rights.
The United Nations’ General Comment on Children in Street Situations will provide definitive guidance on how States must fulfil street children’s rights. For the first time, Governments’ obligations to street children under international law will be brought together and clearly laid out. The General Comment will be a powerful tool that organisations working for street children and others will be able to use to achieve respect for street children’s rights.

In the 1990s there was a surge of international interest in street children following the Candelária Massacre in Brazil where eight children and teenagers were shot dead by police whilst sleeping on the steps of a church.

Although the massacre generated international outrage for a time, interest in and support for street children soon faded. The reality is that for the last two decades street children have been marginalised and sidelined in international development debates and national plans of action.

Yet every day millions of street-connected children suffer multiple and repeated violations of their rights. Their numbers are likely to be growing worldwide as a result of conflicts in the Middle East, recession in Europe, natural disasters in Asia and Africa and epidemics such as the recent Ebola crisis. In 2014 the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child agreed to develop a General Comment on Children in Street Situations, a process that will happen during the next two years. This is a monumental development at the highest policy level, offering a once in a lifetime opportunity to bring street children and the challenges they face into the global spotlight, promote realistic and practical ways of supporting them and create a framework for Government accountability so that their rights can no longer be ignored.

The two year countdown to change starts now.
In 1989, Governments worldwide promised all children the same rights by adopting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). These rights describe what a child needs to survive, grow, and reach their potential in life. They apply to every child, no matter who they are or where they come from, but in reality children in street situations do not have access to most of these rights. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child is the highest authority on children’s rights. It protects and upholds children’s rights worldwide by holding Governments to account for their implementation of the UNCRC. General Comments provide an authoritative interpretation of the rights contained in articles and provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The commitment to develop a General Comment on Children in Street Situations is recognition that the UNCRC alone does not protect street children’s rights: street children are a complex group to address at policy levels and need specialised interventions.

**WHAT IS A GENERAL COMMENT AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?**

For more information on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)


For more information on the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

[www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/CRCIndex.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/CRCIndex.aspx)

---

**STORIES**

**CARLOS**

Carlos, 10, shines shoes at the local bus station in the day. At night he sleeps in a covered market with his friends where they sometimes get food in return for guarding market stalls. On Tuesdays Carlos goes to a local NGO drop-in centre where he can wash, change his clothes and get some food. Carlos is exposed to physical and psychological violence almost every day. Sometimes other older youths beat him up for his money and some travellers chase him away and scold him for being out of school. Often the police move him on from sitting outside the bus station, usually with their batons.

**EVA**

Eva, 14, has been living on the streets for 4 years and has been sexually exploited for 2 of them. She is HIV positive and is pregnant. She does not know if her HIV status has passed onto the baby. She only has access to medical care when, once every two weeks, staff from the local NGO drive an ambulance to where she works. She has few friends and is paid very little by her pimp. Customers do not respect Eva, often calling her names, and she regularly experiences physical and psychological violence from customers and from her pimp when she does not make the money he demands. As a result, she feels trapped and worthless and worries about what will happen to her baby.

Neither Eva nor Carlos go to school. They have to fend for themselves to survive.
Once the General Comment is in place, Governments will be under more pressure to enforce measures to stop sexual exploitation of children and to launch public campaigns to protect children from becoming sexually exploited. There will be a growing demand for specialised services for street-connected children like Eva to access medical support, mother-baby services and safe shelters. The cost to society will be small; the effects for Eva will be life-changing: more support, less discrimination, more livelihood choices for her and her baby.

Daily access to tailored services at drop-in centres for street children would make a huge difference to children like Carlos. Such a centre could help Carlos to connect with his family, with health services and with formal education. With the help of a mentor he could make informed and realistic choices about combining school with vocational training support to improve his earnings. With a General Comment in place, Governments will be encouraged to partner with NGOs and community organisations to invest in helping children like Carlos to move from the margins to the mainstream.

States face ongoing difficulties in addressing the situation of street children. Although the causes and prevalence of street children are different from country to country, the General Comment will provide authoritative guidance to States to address a complex issue and work towards developing comprehensive national strategies for street children.

Having a national strategy in place means street children become a priority for a Government and should result in budgets being allocated to supporting street children and realising their rights. This attention will generate investment in the street children sector, allowing programmes to become more supportive and more effective.

Previous General Comments have had a significant impact on national policy and attitudes. For example, General Comment No. 8 on children’s right to protection from corporal punishment makes it clear that States are required to prohibit corporal punishment in all settings of children’s lives including the family home. Since the General Comment was issued in 2006, 29 States have changed their laws to prohibit all corporal punishment, bringing the total number of States in which children are fully protected to 46 – more than a fifth of UN Member States.

The creation of policies and programmes around these rights will mean that children like Eva can access all of their rights.
The development of a General Comment can take up to 2 years, as it is an in-depth technical and consultative process, led by the independent expert members of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Consortium for Street Children is the Coordinator of the Advisory Group to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, on the General Comment.

This is a unique window of opportunity during which the Consortium for Street Children will engage in global consultations with its network, NGOs, street children, academics, independent experts, businesses and Governments to support the development of the General Comment. As part of this, the International Day for Street Children will provide a current focus for awareness-raising, engagement and inclusion.

For more information about Consortium for Street Children and the International Day for Street Children visit: streetchildren.org streetchildrenday.org