“Health, drug and substance abuse.”

What GENERAL COMMENT Say’s

Articles 24 on health and 33 on drugs and substance abuse

53. The street environment can increase vulnerability regarding physical and mental health issues. Challenges include disproportionately high rates of substance abuse, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy, violence (including by peers), suicidal thoughts and suicide, self-medicating with unregulated medicines and exposure to infectious diseases, pollution and traffic accidents. The Committee emphasizes the need for health education and services, including on sexual and reproductive health, tailored to the specific needs of children in street situations. Such education and services should be friendly and supportive, comprehensive, accessible, free, confidential, non-judgmental, non-discriminatory, respectful of autonomous decision by the children, and without the requirement for parental consent. Health services should be made accessible regardless of physical location or social status. Children in street situations should have access to free basic health-care services through universal health coverage and social protection schemes. States should increase the availability of prevention, treatment and rehabilitation services for substance abuse, including harm-reduction services, and trauma therapy and mental health services for children in street situations. These services should be staffed by professionals trained on child rights and the particular circumstances of children in street situations. States can promote properly supported peer education that can be especially effective in combating substance abuse, sexually transmitted infections and HIV. Particular attention is needed to protect children in street situations from involvement in the drug trade.

Proposed Principles

To bring about successful implementation of the UN General Comment on Street Children in each country, states must function based on the following principles to deal with the issue of substance abuse:

1. State must ensure formation of a dedicated official government lead committee including the relevant stakeholders to undertake the task to prevent and rehabilitate street connected children and youth from substance abuse is essential

Question: What are the relevant government departments and stakeholders in your country?

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1 General comment No. 15 (2013) on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health.
2 See general comment No. 4, para. 34.
3 See general comment No. 3, para. 30.
4 Ibid., paras. 20-21; general comments No. 4, paras. 11 and 26; and No. 15, particularly paras. 8, 11 and 28.
2. State must conduct a detailed official survey and census of status of children/youth into substance abuse must be carried out.

Question: How can the census of street connected children be made a part of official census in your country?

3. State must ensured that sale of substance is strictly for the purpose they meant for, or if sold otherwise, provision of strict legal action, imprisonment and penalty.

Question: Do you have sufficient laws to tackle the issue?

4. State should built rehabilitation centers which are fully equipped for health checkup, counseling, and mental health must be set up

Question: How can rehabilitation centers be made a part of your country’s existing health programs?

5. State must ensure that an ethical committee is formed, process of consent and protection of informants, and is intact.

Question: Who can endorse this ethical committee? What is the process of consent in your country?

6. State to ensure that treatment must be street connected child/youth specific and must address family, peer and psychological vulnerability.

Question: Who in your country can assist government in making street connected child/youth specific programs?

7. State should have provision so that children/youth should have access to grievance redressal mechanisms to ensure their issues are resolved.

Question: What system would you like to ensure or advocate for grievance redressal in your country?

8. States should utilize trained social workers with a good knowledge of local street connections and who can assist these children with in reconnecting with their family, their local community and the wider global community.

Question: What mechanism do you propose to have cadre of trained social worker, and how NGOs can help in this?

9. States should take a cross sectional approach to understand how policy in one area, for example finance, affects policy in another area, such as education.

Question: What kind of cross sectional approach is available in your country, which can be used to influence issue of children into substance?