

**OHCHR study on**

**The Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Children**

**Working and/or Living on the Street**

**Children's Voices Paper**

***"Nothing about us, without us"*<sup>1</sup>**

*By Anne Louise Meincke<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Quote by former UK street girl in conjunction with the International Day for Street Children 12<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

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Thanks also to the NGOs and individual facilitators who took time out of their hectic schedules to facilitate children’s participation, and also commented and provided suggestions on the participatory methodology: Action for Children in Conflict (Kenya), CHETNA and Hope for Children (India), Juconi (Ecuador), Moroccan’s Children’s Trust, and Retrak (Ethiopia and Uganda) – information about the NGOs can be found in Appendix 1.

Mention must also go to the rest of the Consortium for Street Children (CSC) network who supported the study throughout, and those NGOs who agreed to take part in the study but were unable in the end because of time constraints: Juconi (Mexico) and Maestri de Strada (Italy – member of the European Federation for Street Children).

And last, but not least, a special thank you and gratitude must go to the children who participated in the production of this paper - without their enthusiasm and willingness to share their thoughts and experiences this paper could not have been written - a full list of the participating children is found in Appendix 2.

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<sup>3</sup> All pictures and drawings have been reproduced with permission given from the organisation and children themselves. In some instances personal information has been removed from descriptions relating to the drawings to protect children’s identities.

## **Executive Summary**

This paper's preliminary findings were presented at the Expert Consultation in Geneva on 1-2 November 2011 to stimulate discussion amongst participants, and to inform the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' (OHCHR) report to the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in March 2012 (19<sup>th</sup> session). **Section I** acts as an introduction setting out the background and purpose of this paper, whilst **Section II** highlights advances in child participation under the auspices of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and how this relates to, and impacts on, street connected children. It discusses the numerous complexities which can be encountered whilst facilitating the participation of street connected children, as well as the solutions, and sets out the participatory methodology utilised for the purposes of this paper. **Section III** details the findings from the participation of street connected children in six countries, under the three themes of The Child as Individual, Access to Support, and Access to Rights. **Section IV** sets out elements of a proposed Good Practice Protocol for facilitating the participation of street connected children for relevant stakeholders, and **Section V** concludes with the main findings and recommendations.

## **Section I: Introduction**

In its Resolution 16/12 (2011) the UNHRC reaffirmed that:

it is essential for States to take all appropriate measures to ensure the meaningful participation of children, including children working and/or living on the street, in all matters and decisions affecting their lives through the expression of their views, and that those views be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.

The Resolution also invited the OHCHR to:

conduct a study on challenges, lessons learned and best practices in a holistic, child rights and gender-based approach to protect and promote the rights of children working and/or living on the street, (...) in close collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including (...) children themselves.

In order to bring the voices of children into the study, the OHCHR invited several NGOs<sup>4</sup>, all members of the Consortium for Street Children<sup>5</sup>, to facilitate children's participation and gather their views about their circumstances, experiences and aspirations. This paper complements the Global Research Paper<sup>6</sup> produced as part of the OHCHR Study, and frequent references will be made to this paper throughout.

A total of 123 children - 29 girls and 94 boys, aged between 5 and 18 - were consulted in the following countries: Ecuador, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Morocco and Uganda. Their participation took place between October and November 2011. This is a relatively small number and no claims are made to represent any other than the children consulted. A participatory methodology was designed

<sup>4</sup> Participating NGOs were: Action for Children in Conflict (Kenya), CHETNA and Hope for Children (India), Juconi Ecuador, Moroccan Children's Trust, and Retrak (Ethiopia and Uganda). For more information see Appendix 1: Information about participating NGOs.

<sup>5</sup> For more information about the Consortium for Street Children (CSC) see Appendix 1: Information about participating NGOs.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas de Benitez (2011): <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Children/Studies/Pages/ExpertConsultation.aspx>.

to help facilitate information gathering<sup>7</sup>. This paper also draws on some earlier participatory research conducted with street connected children, but does not give a historical narrative of these studies, nor does it offer an in-depth or exhaustive review. Only earlier research which explicitly upheld the principles of consent and child protection set out in the participatory methodology for the purposes of this paper has been drawn on for additional children's views.

We have used the term 'street connected children', who can be understood as '*children for whom the street has become a central reference point, playing a significant role in their everyday lives and identities*'<sup>8</sup>. This term enabled us to consult both 'children in street situations', as used by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, and also young people who still have strong connections to the street (through work, survival, and/or development) but who are currently not based in the street.

This paper sets out a framework of analysis, discussing the normative development of participatory research with (street connected) children under the auspices of the UNCRC, and outlines the participatory methodology and guidance used for the NGO facilitation. It brings together views of street connected children on the following themes: 'The Child as Individual'; 'Access to Support'; and 'Access to Rights', and puts forward elements of a short protocol of 'good practice' for facilitating the participation of street connected children, drawing on this study's participatory methodology and other reflections. The aim is to help ensure future and continued participation of street connected children in matters affecting them at a policy level.

## **Section II – A Framework of Analysis**

### **Participation and Rights**

Children's participation in matters concerning them is increasingly seen as a vital component of development strategies, stemming from the UNCRC which recognises children as rights-holders. In particular Article 12 and 13 of the UNCRC are relevant in the context of this paper:

States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

The Preamble to the UNCRC recognises that '*in all countries of the world, there are children living in exceptionally difficult conditions, and that such children need special consideration*'. Furthermore, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment No. 12 (2009), 'The right of the child to be heard', refers specifically to the situation of street connected children:

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<sup>7</sup> For further information about the participatory methodology used see Section II, and Appendix 3.

<sup>8</sup> For a further in depth discussion and outline of definitions, terminology and 'street connectedness' see Thomas de Benitez (2011), pp. 20-3:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Children/Studies/Pages/ExpertConsultation.aspx>.

Particular attention needs to be paid to ensuring that marginalized and disadvantaged children, such as (...) street children (...) are not excluded from consultative processes designed to elicit views on relevant legislation and policy processes<sup>9</sup>.

While the UNCRC makes no particular reference to street connected children, all its provisions are applicable to them. For street connected children it can be said that many of their rights are at any given time not being met or fulfilled - the implication being that these right violations (whether incurred actively or inactively) constitute both a variety of 'push' factors propelling children towards street life, whilst also forming part of the experiences they have whilst in the streets.

Understanding children's experiences of multiple deprivations of their rights and their street-connectedness, and how this impact on the realisation of their rights, has critical implications for policy making and practice. It is therefore vital to seek their views on matters concerning them – which is also their right - in particular to inform government policies which aim to protect and promote their ability to claim their rights and reach their full potential. The process for seeking such views should be carried out using a participatory research method which caters to the specific circumstances of street connected children.

#### **Participatory research and street connected children:**

Participatory Research (PR) is understood as the process of sequential reflection and action, where local knowledge and perspectives are key elements. The difference between PR and more conventional research methodologies lies in the perceived location of power in the research process. In PR, emphasis is put on who generates the questions, who evaluates the responses and to what end information gathered will be put; it is a methodology which aims to create spaces of empowerment for the participants<sup>10</sup>.

Street connected children have been the subject of research throughout the decades, and have been 'quoted' over the years in academic studies, policy documents and the media, usually to support messages developed and delivered by adults, based on adult preconceptions about their life and meanings<sup>11</sup>. These preconceptions tend to portray street connected children as victims, as poor and needy, or as criminals and vagrants. Early research and literature about street connected children in the 1970s and 1980s in Latin America has been identified as being *about* rather than *with* street connected children<sup>12</sup>. If children's voices were in evidence at all, they were usually deployed in the form of quotes reinforcing researchers' perspectives of children's neediness, weaknesses and dependency<sup>13</sup>. The consequences of viewing street connected children through the lens of either victim or delinquent can be significant for an individual child's life – children seen as 'victims' are more likely to be treated as passive objects of welfare rather than as rights holders, while children seen as 'delinquents' are more likely to be subjected to violence and end up in the penal system.

More recently though street connected children are increasingly recognised as key informants about their own lives and as active agents of change whose viewpoints are of intrinsic value. Table 1 below sets out this normative paradigm shift:

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<sup>9</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009), General Comment No. 12:  
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/comments.htm>.

<sup>10</sup> Cornwall *et al* (1995)

<sup>11</sup> Thomas de Benitez (2011)

<sup>12</sup> Ennew *et al* (2003), quoted in Thomas de Benitez (2011)

<sup>13</sup> Panter-Brick (2002), quoted in Thomas de Benitez (2011)

**Table 1: Matrix showing the key elements of a paradigm shift in research and work with and for street connected children<sup>14</sup>**

<b>Shifting from ideas that:</b>	<b>Through ideas of:</b>	<b>To the following consequences:</b>		
		<b>Theory</b>	<b>Research</b>	<b>Practice</b>
Street connected children are homeless and abandoned victims	Space	Street connected children create meanings for using street spaces and form supportive networks	A variety of triangulated methods is required to research street connected children's lives	Use the street as a space for programming; build on existing strengths and networks
Street connected children's lives are chaotic; they will become delinquents	Time	Street connected children have changing careers on the street, and their increasing age is an important factor	Longitudinal studies are vital	Age-sensitive, long term programming with follow-up to ensure the development of potential
Adults know best; adult control and supervision is necessary to ensure children's welfare	Social construction of meaning	Children are active agents in their own lives; they construct meanings and are subjects of rights	Children- centered participatory research is not only a necessity, it is also a right for children	Take a rights-based, children-centered approach; children should be involved as partners in all aspects of programming

There are numerous good practice guidelines which promote children's participation in matters affecting them, and ensure their protection whilst taking part in research and public events<sup>15</sup>. It is increasingly recognised that protection for marginalised and excluded children in meaningful participation processes is both critical and complex. Several studies have highlighted these complexities, which can include: children's fluent use of public spaces often hidden from view; drug abuse which may impact on concentration and interest; lack of parental supervision and consequent difficulties around consent; immediate survival needs impacting on time availability; reluctance to be truthful due to lack of trust and/or trauma/distress; illiteracy; and unexpected ethical dilemmas<sup>16</sup>. Unexpected ethical dilemmas can arise in a research process with vulnerable and 'out of place' children, where issues such as sexual and physical abuse come to light, and responses may be further complicated by the fact that abuse and mistreatment have frequently taken place at the hands of those responsible for protecting them<sup>17</sup>. Furthermore, as children's use of space, identities and survival techniques are often of an illegal nature, even anecdotal evidence in research findings have the potential to create a negative backlash against the children themselves:

by identifying the urban niches used by street children to hide after stealing, or to consume drugs, may result in children being 'discovered' and evicted or arrested. This raises crucial ethical questions about the practicalities of disseminating research findings which could 'accidentally' prove very harmful to the children.<sup>18</sup>

The issue of trust is paramount when researching with street connected children. If research is to be conducted by external researchers, they should spend considerable time earning children's trust and confidence. Such researchers have to show great flexibility and commitment to learn and understand so-called 'life worlds' of street connected children, without passing judgement or making assumptions. In essence they have to become 'street researchers' and allow themselves to be

<sup>14</sup> Reproduced from Thomas de Benitez (2011), p.17, originally in Ennew *et al* (2003)

<sup>15</sup> See for example the Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation (2007) and Save the Children (2005)

<sup>16</sup> See for example Young *et al* (2001)

<sup>17</sup> See for example Human Rights Watch (2006 and 2006a) and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2000)

<sup>18</sup> Young *et al* (2001)

guided by children in the ways of the street and for cultural interpretation<sup>19</sup>. Other participatory research has recognised the limitations of ‘outside’ researchers and promoted the use of experienced street educators and outreach workers. For example, one research unit<sup>20</sup> when deciding how best to gather information from street connected children, devised a procedure and then consulted with the children indirectly through the organisations working with them. The dialogue was started not directly with the children, but with those they believed were in constant dialogue with them – those who better understood the complexities of children’s lives and their sources of knowledge.

#### **Facilitating the participation of street connected children:**

As part of the process of facilitating the participation of street connected children a participatory methodology was put together with input from the selected NGOs (see Appendix 3), which looked to address and mitigate the concerns raised in the section above, and ensure that the participatory methodology adhered to the approach discussed.

The benefit of utilising NGOs to facilitate the participation is that they work directly on the ground with children, building relationships of trust through their street outreach work, and are firmly rooted in the local environment. The drawback to this approach is that these street educators have often only been trained on the job and can lack official qualifications. Some of them may even be former street connected children themselves, and can therefore lack credibility with decision makers. Other areas of disadvantage are that there are often constraints on their time and capacity due to the nature of their work and funding situation.

Of absolute importance for this study was that children’s participation was facilitated only by selected NGOs with clear child protection and safeguarding policies and practices in place. As part of their membership of the CSC all NGOs need to prove an organisational commitment to protecting the rights of street connected children and young people, and as part of the participatory methodology a lead facilitator was identified by each of the selected NGOs, who were required to familiarise themselves with CSC’s Child Safeguarding Policy and sign the accompanying Statement of Commitment<sup>21</sup>. The facilitators had to be confident that they were able to deal with ethical dilemmas arising during consultations with children.

Previous research which included facilitating the participation of street connected children has shown good practice by concentrating on qualitative methods of eliciting information, using visual action methods and informal group discussions, as opposed to more quantitative methods using conventional surveys and questionnaires<sup>22</sup>. Drawings, maps and storytelling all have the ability to transcend many of the issues affecting street connected children which address the complexities of their lives as mentioned above<sup>23</sup>. The participatory methodology encouraged the selected NGOs to focus on three overarching themes drawn from the study’s main objectives: ‘The Child as Individual’; ‘Access to Support’; and ‘Access to Rights’. Under each theme suggested areas for questions were

<sup>19</sup> Young *et al* (2001)

<sup>20</sup> The Childhood and Urban Poverty research unit, Institute for Development Research at the University of Amsterdam. Nieuwenhuys (1996)

<sup>21</sup> For more information about CSC’s Child Safeguarding Policy go to [www.streetchildren.org.uk](http://www.streetchildren.org.uk).

<sup>22</sup> Young *et al* (2000)

<sup>23</sup> Young *et al* (2001)

put forward to help guide the discussions, which left space for the facilitators to improvise and conduct the discussion in a way they found most appropriate in their local setting.

To summarise, the constraints and opportunities of facilitating the participation of street connected children in relation to this paper included:

**Table 2: Constraints and Opportunities**

Skills	As children's participation was facilitated by selected NGOs and street outreach workers, we assume that they may not have an academic research background nor specialist training in child protection. This constraint was mitigated by providing a participatory methodology, which ensured that each selected NGO identified one senior member of staff with in-depth child protection knowledge and overall responsibility for the facilitation.
Translation	Children were consulted in their first languages, and then translated into English by the selected NGO facilitators, who were then usually using their own second or third language. These constraints impacted on the transcription and translation of individual children's direct words. In Section III, this paper has tried to differentiate between words which reflect a group of children's voices, and those which are a direct transcript of an opinion expressed by an individual child (through using bold font).
Time	The time frame under which the participation took place was very tight due to the overall study's time constraints. This had the drawback of a few selected NGOs having to pull out even though they had indicated interest in facilitating a consultation with children. This also reduced the geographical representation of participating children. This constraint was mitigated by drawing in children's views expressed in case studies and other earlier participatory research with street connected children in other regions. Furthermore, while the original intention was to share preliminary findings with child participants, in order to gather additional thoughts and comments to form part of this final paper, time constraints caused us to abandon this. To mitigate the effects of this problem, participating children will receive a child-friendly version of this paper for debate and discussion, and the selected NGOs will be encouraged to collect and submit their views to the CSC for posting on their website in 2012.
Comparison	As the facilitation used qualitative research methods to gather information, and was conducted in culturally diverse environments, the aim of the exercise was not to compare the data and experiences collected, but rather to find and put forward unexpected, challenging and revealing reflections by children. Readers may be able to contextualise the wider social, cultural, economic and political environment in which the views and opinions of children have been made, however no attempts has been made by this paper to do so.
Scope	The study did not include the views of street connected children who come into contact with, or are being helped by, state run or private institutions, mainly due to funding and time constraints.

### **Section III: Findings from Consultations with Children**

#### **1. The Child as Individual**

This first section of the participatory methodology aimed to explore the potential, agency, strength and positive contributions street connected children can offer wider society, and the support they feel they need to realise their full potential. In this section the selected NGOs mainly relied on group discussions with the children, supplemented by drawings and role play. In Ecuador the NGO used one to one interviews. The participation around this theme centred on the following questions:

- Who inspires you and why?
- What about yourself are you most proud of, and why?
- What are your strengths? What needs to be in place for you to use these more?
- How do you currently contribute to society (e.g. the work you do, helping others etc)? What support do you need to contribute even more?
- What are your hopes for the future? Who do you see supporting you to make those hopes a reality?

### Who inspires you and why?

In India facilitators noted that most children said they were inspired by teachers, their parents and NGO workers, because ‘they teach them, help them and show them the right path in life’, and that the children themselves wanted to ‘do something in their community, but don’t have the sufficient amount of scope to make their desires complete’.

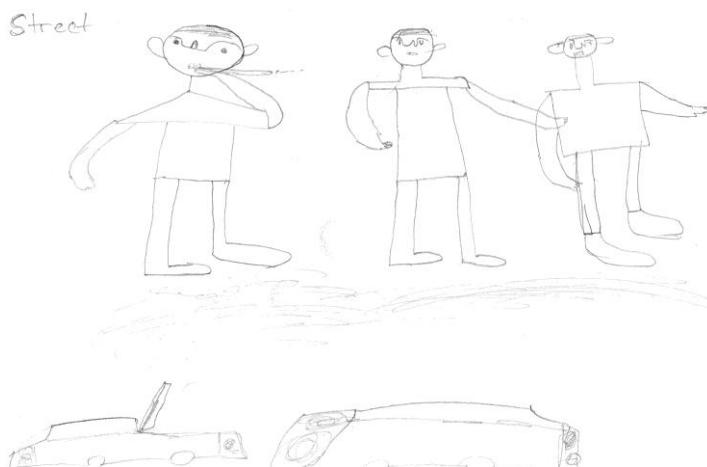
For older street boys In Uganda, celebrity status and commercial success played significant roles. Musicians were inspirational because they ‘dress in funny styles, make their hair with dreadlocks, put on shades’, and ‘all musicians are successful and are celebrities in their own way’, whilst business people ‘have a lot of money and live luxury lives’. Similarly, street connected boys in Kenya said that they were inspired by ‘politicians and business people who are successful’.

When a 16 year old boy in Ecuador was asked if he had someone who inspired him to move forward he answered ***“Not a single person. I am able to move forward because of myself and my own actions and because God is always with me and he wishes the best for me”***. When asked if he saw God as an inspiration he said ***“Yes, because he is the only person who I trust, he is the only person who can tell me if I am doing things well or badly”***.

A group of younger children in Uganda said that a teacher and cook at their residential NGO facility were considered inspirational because the teacher ‘spend most of his time with them and labours to explain and guide one in every possible way on questions asked in class’ and the cook because he ‘gives adequate food to every child’.

#### **Box 1: Drawing – ‘Street’ 1 (Uganda)**

Children in Uganda were encouraged, as part of their group discussions, to draw pictures of key issues affecting them. One boy drew the picture below and added “I was smoking on the street and influenced by my friends”. The drawing highlights how connections to the streets are made and friendships forged which influence children’s identities.



What about yourself are you most proud of, and why?

Many of the children reflected that they were proud to help others. For example, in India children had expressed pride in being able to ‘always offer their services without any expectations to the weaker and desperate people’. In Uganda an older street connected boy said that he was proud of himself because “*I have passion for others*”, while a boy in Morocco said “*I would say that I help people, if someone needs something done or a favour I would do it for them. Like to send me to buy something or to take care of my brother I never say no*”.

This echoes findings from earlier research where a child in Los Angeles is recorded as saying “*I try and help at least one person a day (...) just sitting down and talking with them or going up to somebody and asking how they're doing, and I think that has helped me to just be an overall better person, be more positive*”.<sup>24</sup>

Many children expressed pride in being able to support themselves and their families through work on the street, and have developed strong connections to their work. A boy in Ecuador reflected: “*I started working when I was 5 years old and it was really difficult. I didn't know how to sell anything but I had to stay positive whether I managed to sell anything or not because I knew I would have to go out the next day to sell again. But after a little while I learned a bit more about being on the street and I made some friends and they taught me how to sell and stuck with me on the street. To start with they asked me what was my dreams and why I was on the streets and I said I didn't want to be on the streets, I didn't like it, I wanted to be with my family and to be in school but we needed help financially and I knew it wasn't supposed to be that way but if you don't work, things just aren't going to fall out of the sky to feed you. I continue to do it because I like it and not just because we need the money. It is something that I learned to do (...) and I like it a lot and I don't want to give up doing it just for the sake of it*”.

Children in India also highlighted work as something they felt proud of: ‘being strong enough to do work, and not afraid of doing challenging or hard work. They feel proud to earn a livelihood for their family’. Both boys and girls in Morocco agreed that work within the household could be a source of pride. One boy said: “*It's not just working outside, it's also taking care of siblings. Like in my family we are seven, we're like a football team! And I'm the oldest so I have to look after my sisters especially*”.

**Box 2: Picture – Sanjay Colony CHETNA (India)**



<sup>24</sup> Dabir et al (2011), p.226

**What are your strengths? What needs to be in place for you to use these more?**

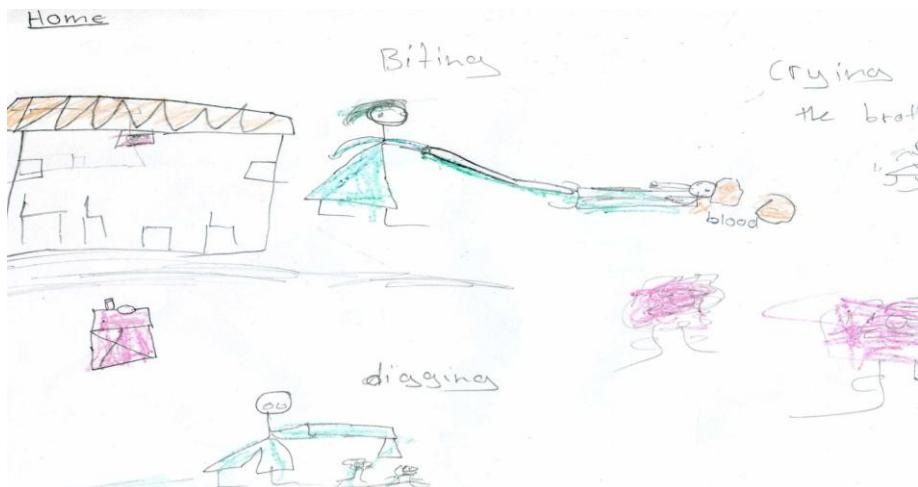
Many children who participated in the consultations spoke to their facilitators about being proud of their educational achievements and saw this as a key strength: “***I am proud that I can score high in exams in spite of my work***” (India), ‘Proud of showing a positive attitude towards education’ (Ethiopia), ‘Working hard in school’ (Uganda).

Other strengths put forward by children ranged from showing leadership skills, being good at extracurricular activities (painting, drawing, kite flying), social interactions and making friends, to being good at digging, looking after goats and domestic animals, and repairing bicycles. One girl in Morocco explained: “***I guess the thing that is positive about me is patience, maybe. Because actually you have to be patient with everything, it's not just when something happens. Like I said before you have problems that you can never find a solution to and you have to live with them, so you must stay patient***”. Another Moroccan girl emphasised: “***For me, it is also patience but also that I still try. Like I try to make my family happy however hard it may be, you know***”.

The children identified several areas which they believed should be in place for them to use their strengths more. For example, children in India said they wanted adults who could train them further to develop their skills. The children also argued that they should be involved in competitions and that their parents should support them in realising their strengths. Boys in Ethiopia explained that they wanted help with business and savings so they could make their own money, while older boys in Uganda expressed a need for ‘more time, patience and a listening ear, a person who will always identify with them, approve of them and guide them’, but stressed that this should not be done through open criticism – they prefer to be called aside individually. They also said they wanted ‘to always be appreciated, encouraged and motivated, especially with gifts and certificates of recognition, awarded in front of fellow students’. In contrast younger boys in Uganda focused on very practical needs, such as seeds to increase their agricultural output, training in modern methods to rear domestic animals, and education to become a mechanic to repair bicycles better.

**Box 3: Drawing – ‘Home’ (Uganda)**

A child, when given the opportunity to draw a key issue affecting him he drew a picture of his home life, adding as a way of explanation: “I was beaten until I bled, that is why I ran away from home. The beatings even scared my sisters. I was given a big piece of land to dig”. The drawing highlights how the problem of violence and exploitation in the home acts as strong ‘push factors’ for children to develop stronger relations with the street.



How do you currently contribute to society (e.g. the work you do, helping others etc.)?

What support do you need to contribute even more?

As before, many children mentioned that they felt proud of contributing to society by helping others. One girl in India mentioned that she helps her neighbours by taking them to the hospital if they are sick, and in many countries children emphasised that they contribute by helping other children by linking them to NGO centres, saving them from addiction, and taking them to the hospital. Children in Ethiopia felt that they contribute to society by showing loyalty, serving others and respecting their elders, and argued that if they got more encouragement from their local society it would inspire them to help others even more. Supporting their teachers in school was also mentioned on several occasions as a way of contributing to society: ‘being leaders in school to help teachers mobilise other children to clean the school, make pupils punctual, get views of other children and take them to school administration’, ‘encourage other children to love school and continue their studies, reporting wrong doings to help others avoid doing bad things, helping teacher organise library and cleaning’ (statements made by both younger and older boys in Uganda).

**Box 4: Picture – Nizamuddin and Okhla Mandi, CHETNA (India)**



What are your hopes for the future? Who do you see supporting you to make those hopes a reality?

***“It’s a bit like this: You have to sacrifice things you want for your future, like study maybe, for the future of your family. But if you ask me, I want to help others. If I am to be asked, what have you done with your life, I want to say that I’ve helped others. The stuff you do, like giving to those who have been deprived of something, giving them some affection, things like that”*** (girl in Morocco).

***“I want to work in France. I want to save up some money here and work when I finish school, then go to France and find myself a small room to rent. Then I’ll work as an electrician or a plumber and get more money you know. Then I’ll buy a house or something and send money back home so I can buy my mother stuff for the house. Then after a while I’ll come back to Morocco and own a shop, like sell and buy stuff. To do that I know I have to work first, work all the time and save up. Right now I work to get money, like last Sunday my boss gave me 50dhs, so I just gave it to my mother. But when I finish school, I’ll work all the time and save up”*** (boy in Morocco).

Many children reflected that they would like to help other street children. One boy in Ecuador said: ***“I would first give them advice, tell them that I am there for them and nothing is going to happen***

**to them".** Children in Ethiopia emphasised that they hoped to be 'successful with good jobs, contribute positively to society, get married and be responsible parents'.

This echoes views found in other research. For example one boy in the Democratic Republic of Congo reflected: "**My dream is to change my current situation, to be a father with a good wife and educate my children in the right way so they can be respected and respectful. I wish to become a normal man**"<sup>25</sup>, whilst a child interviewed in the UK said he wished to "**Get me own place, get a job, a stable place, a driving licence and me own car and to know that me home and job is for life. I want a stable life.**"<sup>26</sup>

#### Box 5: Drawing – 'Life road picture' 1 (Ecuador)

The selected NGO asked each individual child to draw a picture explaining their life story from their point of view. Explaining the drawing she said: "So this is me, X. I am a very studious girl and I am X years old. I study in the X School and I am on the X year of Basic Education".

"Good, that car is going to give me money. Cool! I am doing handstands in front of the cars in order to earn a few coins so that my siblings and I can eat".

"What I like: going to school. I have arrived in the school. Here I am when I go to study, like my auntie does, in order to be better and help my family to succeed. Therefore, studying is very good".

"Here I am with my family. How beautiful it is to be next to my family. We are at home".



<sup>25</sup> Henry et al (2010)

<sup>26</sup> Smeaton (2009)

### Review and interpretation:

Children's responses to the questions asked as part of this theme clearly confronts and challenge some, often deeply held, negative stereotyping of street connected children as either 'victims' or 'delinquents'. Overall, children themselves self-identify as strong, positive and engaged. They are able and willing to make positive contributions within the wider society, and take pride in helping others, including vulnerable members of their communities and other street connected children. It is clear that they also take a great deal of pride in being able to support their families and themselves through earning a living working on the street and carrying out domestic chores. An outcome of this, however, is often that the children develop and maintain strong connections to their street environment, perhaps at the expense of their educational achievements, personal development and well being.

Street connected children are clearly able to give a lot to their communities, despite facing difficult situations. They strive at being good citizens and have hopes of being good parents and leading 'normal' lives. Efforts which encourage and support children to reach their full potential by building their confidence and skills should be promoted by all levels of society.

### **2. Access to Support**

This section aims to understand what safety nets children have found to be available to them (protection and provision of services), and how they have used and accessed them at certain critical points in their lives. These safety nets can be formal, informal and at various different levels (by NGOs, Government service delivery agencies, police, family and friends, schools, drug rehab centres etc). In this section the selected NGOs utilised group discussions, drawings, role playing, and one to one interviews. The participation centred on the following questions.

- Who do you feel you can trust?
- Who has asked you about your life and experiences? (e.g. to find out from their point of view how data and information is being collected about them. This could include academics, the public, Government services, family and friends, NGOs etc)
- Who has helped you? (to see if anyone acts on the information they are given as above or does not take it further)
- Who have you helped? How did you help them?
- What support have you received? Where and how did you receive it?
- What do you need more support with?

#### Who do you feel you can trust?

Trust is a major issue for street connected children, for example one street girl in Morocco reflected: "*I guess all I do is do something else which distracts me, but this doesn't solve the problem. Actually problems are never solved*", while another girl said: "*I don't tell anyone. For me, I get used to it, whatever troubles me. There is no one I can really trust so it just stays inside me, even if it gets worse that way*".

For boys in Morocco the issue of trust and not having someone to confide in is also an issue they highlighted in their discussions: "*I can't think of anyone that I can go and speak to if I have a problem. No way. If I have a problem I just deal with it, I don't tell anyone*", while another boy

reflected: “*You know why I don’t tell anyone, because if I have done something and I tell someone then I know they’ll tell my grandmother and then she’ll beat me, so it’s best if no one knows*”.

But other children said that they trust doctors, family, NGOs, elderly neighbours, and God. Generally, trust depends on the individual child’s experiences, for example one child in Uganda expressed that he trusted ‘a lady from the public’. Generally though, the feedback from children with regard to public attitudes towards them is largely negative: “*the public does not like to see us. They inform the police to take us away*” (Ethiopia), and one older street boy in Ecuador said: “*Sometimes I felt rejected by other people, they didn’t want to be close to me because they thought that I would hurt them because they think that all people that work on the street steal, murder and smoke drugs*”. A girl in Ecuador stated: “*One or two people would treat you badly. They’d say things like ‘go away’. They would say lots of things, but I don’t want to say what they said. It makes me feel bad because they don’t know how you feel and they don’t care either*”.

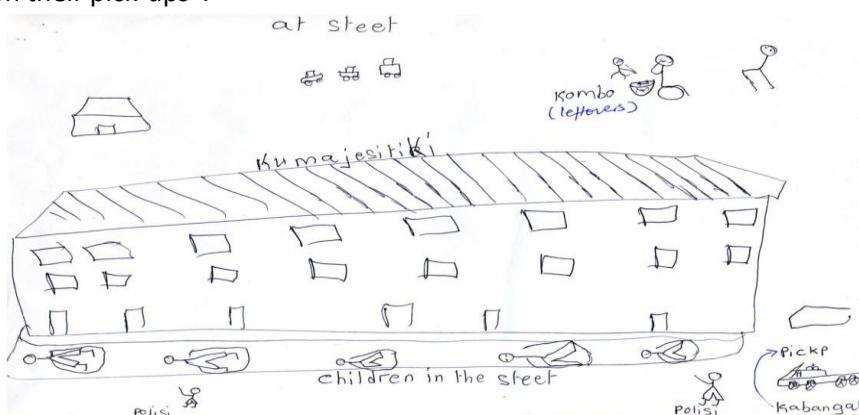
A younger boy in Ecuador emphasised, “*soon this year I won’t put myself at so much risk. It’s hard because in the street they insult you for giving just a small amount of money, and they think we are all delinquents and they have no respect for us. They ignore me, they say I should go to school*”.

The result of public stigmatisation and multiple deprivations often result in children developing strong connections to the streets which significantly influences their identity. The same older boy in Ecuador emphasised: “*I learned a lot from the streets, one thing was to respect and to value myself, to be more independent and responsible, I learned to take care of myself, to know that life has two faces*”.

This seems to be an ongoing problem for street connected children regardless of their geographical location. For example, a study found one child in Los Angeles reflecting: “*As far as feelings go...the biggest ones are remorse and fear...I have a lot of fears...like walking into situations that I haven’t done, going back to school, working again, and a lot of that fear comes from judgment from other people or how are they gonna react to me if they know I’m in recovery (drug and alcohol)*”.<sup>27</sup>

#### **Box 6: Drawing – ‘Life on the streets’ (Uganda)**

In this picture a child drew the reality of street life as he experienced it, highlighting the struggles of daily survival and round ups by police. To explain his drawing he added: I used to eat leftovers daily. Near the big shops of X we used to sleep on the veranda. Police used to come at night and beat us and throw us on their pick-ups”.



<sup>27</sup> Dabir et al (2011), p. 223

Who has asked you about your life and experiences, who has helped you, and what support have you received?

Throughout their discussions children often did not reflect on these questions separately, and often the answers given to the questions were overlapping and similar in scope. Not surprisingly, children often listed NGOs as those who had asked them about their lives and who had helped them: "***They are like my second family because they have always been there for me, to help me. They have helped me understand many things that I needed at a personal level***" (boy in Ecuador).

Children also mentioned the police as having asked them about their lives, including as somebody they had received help from. This indicates clearly that the police are one of the first to come into contact with street connected children and can play a positive role in their lives. However, it does seem that experiences with police vary widely, and unfortunately often have negative connotations. Children in Kenya reported that 'they did not trust the police and had experience with having been arrested or beaten by police. They felt that if they were in trouble, they would rather seek the help of their friends on the street or enlist support from NGOs that they knew worked in their areas rather than reporting to the police. Most children felt that they did not trust the general society in which they lived'. Reflecting on the support he had received a study found one child in Tajikistan saying "***In the beginning I did not believe that the medical check-up, the treatment and the condoms would really be free of charge and anonymous. I thought it was another trap by the police. I agreed to go there with an outreach worker for the first time but now I go there alone and encourage my friends to use the service as well***".<sup>28</sup>

Most interestingly is the large amount of support that the children get from each other. When asked 'who has helped you' many children mentioned that they had been helped by other children by for example being referred to, and put into contact with, NGOs who provide support. Two boys in Uganda said: "***one boy directed me to the club house where I was helped. Now I am ready to go home***", and "***a boy directed me to the club house and advised me not to take drugs***".

**Box 7: Picture – Sanjay Colony, CHETNA (India)**




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<sup>28</sup> UNICEF (2010)

### Who have you helped? How did you help them?

When asked ‘who have you helped and how’ many children talked about the support and advice they had given to other street connected children. In India, they discussed how they had taken other children to the hospital who had been in accidents and informing their families, and saving younger children being beaten by older boys on the street. A boy in Ethiopia reflected “***when my friend was sick, I begged some money and took him to the clinic and he got cured***”.

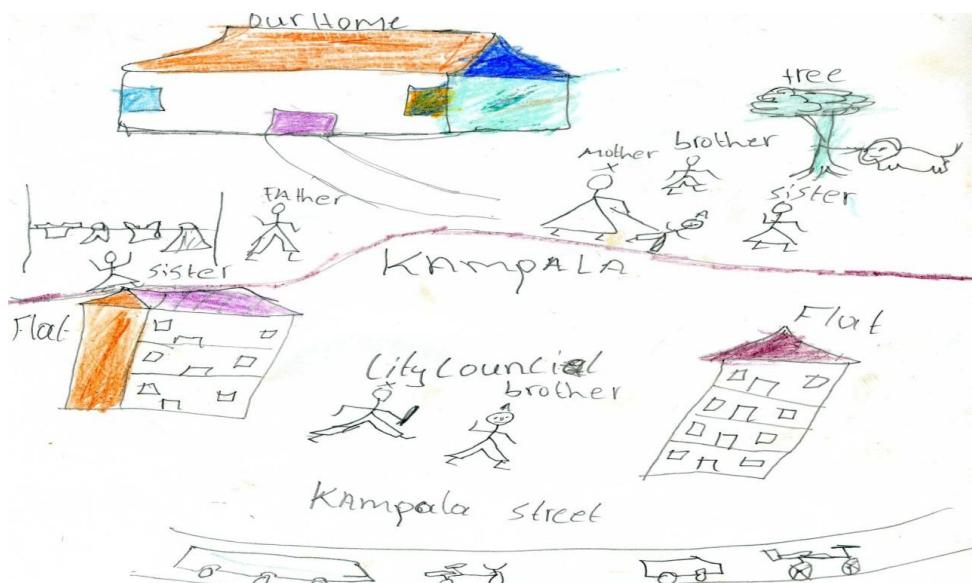
Children in Uganda talked about several ways they have helped other street connected children: “***I shared a plastic sheet with another boy in the street***”, “***I helped one child from the street by giving him money for food***”, “***I directed a child back home***”, “***I shared chips with another hungry boy***”. Street connected children also find safety in being together on the street: “***I could be knocked down, raped, murdered, lots of things could have happened. I didn't have bad luck because I was always with my brothers***”.

Relying on each other for support is clearly a crosscutting theme amongst street connected children. A young person interviewed in the UK said that “***I know more people on the streets in X (name of the town) than I know people who live in houses (...) We all look to each other (...) if one person's got money, we buy everyone food. We share drugs (...) we all get money at different times so share drugs***”.<sup>29</sup>

#### **Box 8: Drawing – ‘Home and streets’ 1 (Uganda)**

In this drawing the movement from home to streets is highlighted, as well as impressions made by the child of street life. To explain his impressions he reflected: “Renting near X, we had a pig and my mother used to beat me a lot. My brother first ran then came for me and both of us came to Kampala. Kampala streets surrounded with Arcades, City Council men chased my brother and from that day I've not seen him”.

“Clothes being dried on wash line and several vehicles on streets”.



<sup>29</sup> Smeaton (2009), p.69

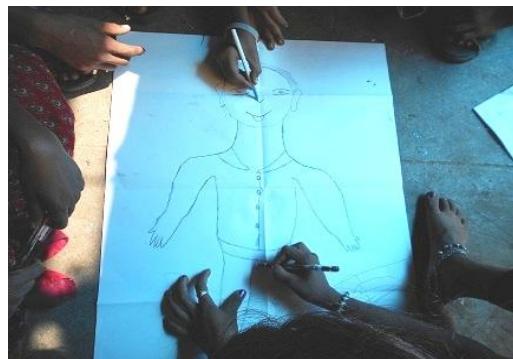
### What do you need more support with?

When asked what they needed more support with children in Uganda related that they wanted someone ‘who will always identify with them, approve of them, and be able to help and guide them’, and ‘more time, patience and a listening ear’. Children in Ethiopia emphasised that ‘we need love’. Other children reflected the need for a trusted adult or confidante – “***what I'd like is someone who can understand me. Someone who can appreciate the work I do, because I do feel alone when no one notices***”, and “***also someone to guide you, someone you can tell your problems to but then tells you what is best to do or what options you have, you know***” (girls in Morocco).

The need for a trusted adult to guide and support shines clearly through the comments made by children. A boy interviewed in the Democratic Republic of Congo, emphasised the importance of the trusted adult on the street: “***I would like to say the people who work (street outreach workers) are very important to us, the areas they cover and the work they do. First they give you good bits of advice, they take out of your head all the bad things like drugs, then they teach you, they give you some instructions and teach you literacy, they help you think about your future life. These are the things I think are special about what they do for us***”.<sup>30</sup>

Other children had more practical suggestions to what they needed support with. One group in India discussed that they wanted the police to deal with conflicts in their area, for doctors to be reached immediately and for parents to be motivated to enrol their children in school, whilst children in in Ethiopia and Uganda said they wanted school and ability to finish education, playtime, reunification support, medical attention, support with behavioural change, and skills development. One boy in Uganda wanted ‘his rights observed’.

**Box 9: Picture – Nizamuddin and Okhla Mandi, CHETNA (India)**



### Review and interpretation:

What stands out from the responses by children to the questions raised as part of this theme undoubtedly highlights the large extent to which they rely on each other for support and comfort. Public perceptions of them are generally negative, and often they have little support from statutory services. The public persecution and stigmatisation clearly draws the children together for protection purposes and influences their perceived identities. The result being that their connection to the street and each other become more pronounced and with time more intense. Any interventions must recognise and seek to understand the depth and breadth of the children’s

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<sup>30</sup> Henry et al (2010)

connections to the street, and not seek to force children to renounce these connections before they feel ready.

The issue of trust permeates the responses, as well as the desire and hope for a trusted adult in their lives, one who understands, supports and guides them without prejudice. In order to build relationship of trust with street connected children outreach work is crucial. Adults must meet the children where they exist, and interventions must incorporate a dedicated and long-term psychosocial approach. The police clearly also plays a significant role in street connected children's lives, unfortunately often negatively. However, children's responses also highlights that with the right approach and training police can play a crucial role in positive interventions for street connected children aimed at rebuilding their trust and reintegration into communities.

### **3. Access to Rights**

In this section the participation focused on trying to understand what street connected children know about their rights and how able they have been to claim them, including accessing child-friendly reporting mechanisms<sup>31</sup>. The NGOs utilised group discussions, narrative storytelling, drawing activities, role play and one on one interviews. The areas of participation centred on the following questions:

- What do you understand your rights to be?
- Who do you think *should* help you access your rights? Who *does* help you access your rights?
- Have you ever reported any violations of your rights?
- If so how were you able to do this and to whom? If not, then why?

#### **What do you understand your rights to be?**

Children in India overall demonstrated that they clearly understood their rights, as the right to survival, protection, development and participation. However in one group the facilitators remarked that the girls 'looked uncomfortable'. Children in Uganda and Ethiopia emphasised the 'right to love' (to be loved and cared for, and belong to a family) and discussed further their rights to include the right to play and laugh, to have a family, to be free from abuse, and to be able to express ideas and speak freely. An older boy in Ecuador argued: "***for me everyone has rights, children, adolescents, older people, adults. They are rights and obligations everyone has***".

The topic of rights was clearly more comfortably discussed amongst children in some of the selected NGOs than others. Facilitators in Morocco observed that 'when the topic of rights was brought up the participants either had little clue (noticed among the younger participants) or felt uncomfortable discussing this topic, refraining from participating, not wanting to get involved and moving on the next topic of conversation (noticed among the older participants)'.

However, one Moroccan girl said: "***our teacher doesn't tell us about the rights of the child. But I know that a child is not supposed to work, only when he grows up then he can work. Then also his***

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<sup>31</sup> The UN Special Representative on Violence Against Children and the UN Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography jointly presented their report on the importance of safe, well-publicized, confidential and accessible child sensitive counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms in March 2011 (A/HRC/16/56) to the UN Human Rights Council, focusing on children's ability to report incidents of violence, including sexual violence and exploitation (e.g. help lines, Ombudsmen, access to human rights offices, legal advice): <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/16session/A-HRC-16-56.pdf>.

*parents can't hit him. And also he is not supposed to stay in the street, he is supposed to go to school*", while a girl interviewed in Ecuador reflected "**rights are things that children must have and that parents must make sure we have. The right to a family, the right to live and have a community**". Most of the children in Kenya notably had a very explicit knowledge of what their rights were, although they did not seem to have any knowledge of what or how they were supposed to enforce those rights whenever they thought they were being abused.

**Box 10: Drawing – ‘Home and streets’ 2 (Uganda)**

Again in this picture a child was tasked with drawing something which was important to him. In response he drew his story of leaving home for the streets: "We had a house with iron sheet roofing plus cows and chicken. Our family was able to provide meals and beddings. We also had big gardens. I however left home after stealing money from the drawer of my parents. A friend picked me from home. On the street I survived through begging money and collecting scrap from huge rubbish heaps and as in the drawing, I had days collecting and carrying this in a big polythene bag to sell in X. At night I was very tired and sleeping inside the polythene bag. (I am bad boy). There were vehicles on street".



Who do you think should help you access your rights? Who does help you access your rights?

Many children argued that it was their parents and families who should help them access their rights: "**Our parents should help realise our rights. They are not doing what they should because it is the parents who should be working**" (girl in Ecuador), but others also mentioned the Government, NGO, police, and 'children themselves' (Ethiopia). One boy in Uganda related: "**Anybody concerned should help me access and have my rights, but especially my caretakers, NGO, government, police and local councils**".

However, many children only discussed how the selected NGOs had helped them access their rights. In particular children in India, where the local NGO places a lot of emphasis on child rights awareness raising, facilitators remarked that children 'have come to know about their rights through the NGO - right to education, protection, health and play. Before they didn't even know they had rights. Now they have this information they can do something about it'. This was also true for

children in Kenya where they highlighted that the organisations working with children on the street were playing a big role in helping them access their rights.

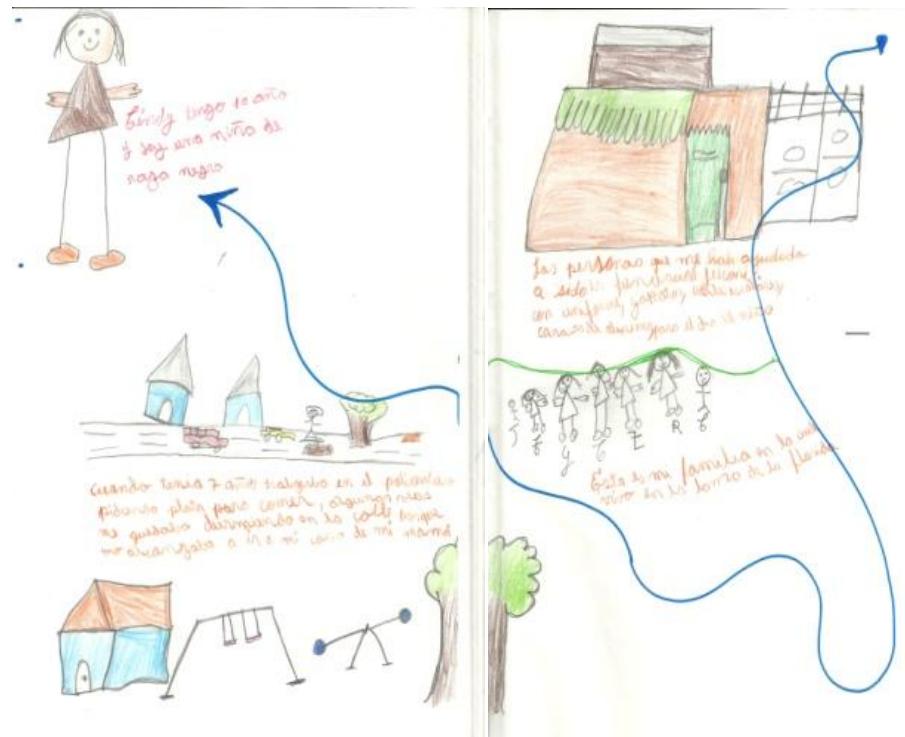
Only an older street boy in Ecuador was able to reflect in more depth about the role of Government in helping street connected children realise their rights: *"The person who has all the authority and must make sure that people are aware of their rights is the President of Ecuador (...) he could make sure that people are aware of their rights, that children know they have real rights. Some of us may know about rights, but may not use them or make the most of them. I think that he is the person who can push this forward and he can demand that children's rights are realised (...) how do these children learn about their rights and how to access them if they are exploited by their own families?"*.

#### **Box 11: Drawing – ‘Life road picture’ 2 (Ecuador)**

The girl was asked by the selected NGO to draw her individual perception of her life so far, trying to explain her connections to the street. The drawings reflect that many street connected children retain family links, but may need support from specialized interventions to continue or access education. She said: "When I was 7 years old I worked in X asking for money. Some nights I stayed to sleep in the street because I didn't have enough money to go back to my mum's home".

"The people who have helped are the Fundacion Juconi, with uniform, shoes, school materials and food basket for the day of the child".

"This is my family. I live with them in X".



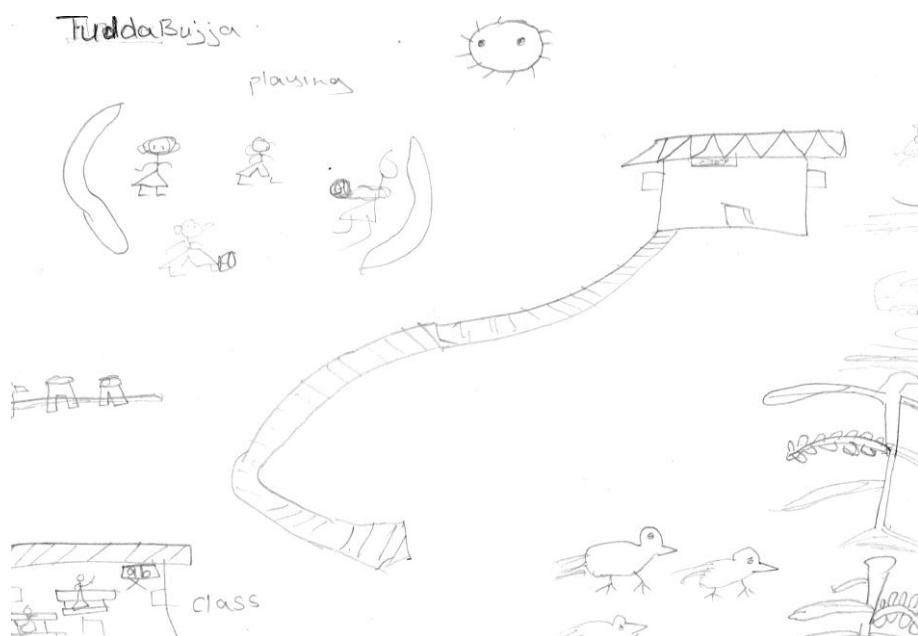
Have you ever reported any violations of your rights? If so how were you able to do this and to whom? If not, then why?

When asked if they had ever reported any violations of their rights, one child in Uganda responded: ***"No, because before I came here I did not know my rights, that I could even report a parent abusing my rights"***. A child in India, reflected that 'their reports are not taken seriously because they are children and don't understand anything'. One boy in Ethiopia narrated that ***"I went to the police but because I feared the person I had to tell them in a secret room"***. In Uganda, one boy said: ***"I reported by grandfather to the police for chasing me away from home"***, and another shared that: ***"I reported my mother for chasing me with a panga and she was arrested by the police for five days"***.

Children in Kenya the children did not express that they would use any form of reporting mechanism if they thought their rights had been violated. Instead 'they would enlist the support of their fellows on the street to get protection from people they thought were exploiting them. Some felt they would resort to violence if they thought someone was exploiting or abusing them, and would use their numbers for security on the street' – emphasising again the importance of their connections and networks on the street, and the support and trust they place in each other.

**Box 12: Drawing – 'Tudabujja' (Uganda)**

When encouraged to describe something which mattered to him a child drew his perception of how the NGO had helped him. The picture clearly reflects the positive impact and influence a dedicated and specialised intervention can have on street connected children's lives. He added: "We play football, learn in a class room, eat fruits, look after chickens and life is good in Tuda".



### Review and interpretation:

The question of rights was seen as the most difficult and problematic area to cover by some of the selected NGOs – the concerns being that it was not suited to the local socio-cultural context and that it might be too theoretical a concept for some children to grasp, in particular the younger ones. Besides these legitimate concerns and insights children's understanding of, and access to, rights seemed to also depend on the use of rights-based support by specialized NGO interventions. Generally, the children had an understanding of their basic rights, but also emphasised that they have a right to love, family, community, play and laughter – in essence to be able to embrace happiness.

However, knowing about their rights is clearly not the same as knowing what to practically do if they find their rights violated. This highlights the need for dedicated child sensitive reporting mechanisms whose presence also needs to be communicated to street connected children, ideally through those with whom they have built relationships of trust. Without such a support mechanism children will seek security amongst themselves, thereby intensifying their connections to the street.

#### **1. Reflections from Facilitators:**

As part of the participatory methodology and guidance the selected NGOs were encouraged to explain in more detail any reflections or comments arising as a result of facilitating the discussions with children. Out of the selected NGOs two - Ecuador and Morocco - offered additional reflections. These highlight the opportunities and limitations they encountered in their own words, and explain in more detail the process on which they decided the most appropriate response to facilitating children's participation. Their reflections offer insights into how the participation was adapted to suit different regional and local contexts, helps break down stereotypes of street connected children as being alienated from their families, and explains how the facilitators addressed any uncomfortable or ethical issues arising as a result of the participation.

#### **Ecuador:**

*We chose to speak to the young people individually as we wanted to protect the children's privacy and not expose them to any risk of feeling under pressure to share information that was uncomfortable to share in a group. For the youngest participants, we provided paper and pen so that she could focus on drawing her experiences as an alternative means of expressing herself.*

*Although the facilitator has a lot of experience in working with young people, she was concerned to follow the exact questions set out in the methodology and this limited the responses somewhat. This may have also been affected by the need to translate ideas from quite English and it may not be the language the children are used to or the way they are used to speaking with adults. The concept of child participation is quite new in Ecuador and the children have limited experience in giving their views on how services should be developed and provided. In some cases, it appeared that the children gave the responses that they felt the adult was looking for. This requires greater involvement of children in the future so that they feel confident in giving their views freely but also in greater training for staff in doing this type of participatory work. The art work was a useful means of helping the younger participants explore experiences in their lives but was limited in terms of providing information about more abstract concepts such as children's rights and prejudices.*

*Although it is something that JUCONI has come across a lot, it may seem surprising that the young people could identify positive about their experiences on the streets. Also, there are lots of preconceptions about "street children" being without families but the responses clearly show that these children see their families as central to achieving their rights and are the source of strength and guidance.*

#### **Morocco:**

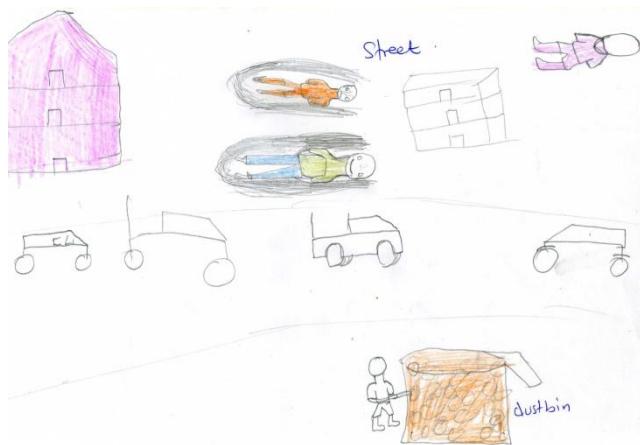
*There were several techniques used for this research. For the older groups we created a relaxed and informal atmosphere, either drinking juice at a quiet café or eating snacks in a comfortable and private room at the centre. The facilitators used this opportunity to get to know the participants even better. The participants are very comfortable around the social workers, and so a friendly atmosphere was easily guaranteed. For the younger children games and a sort of role-play were used, they were able to play with balloons during the sessions making the atmosphere informal. The facilitators actively took part in the process, also sharing some of their problems and hopes, encouraging participants to open-up.*

*Most, from all ages, felt comfortable taking part in the conversations, though some were more forthcoming than others. Some children needed to be asked direct questions, whilst others were able to work from an initial suggestion given by the facilitators. As a whole, all the sessions worked well as a result of the good relationship between the facilitators and the participants.*

*Most of the participants were initially confused about the topic of our conversations. This is because they are not used to speak about their opinions and concerns in groups. In addition, they are not used to think about the future or the environment outside of their small town or even neighbourhood. Others were manifestly grateful for the discussions, as a way of relieving some of their concerns in a trusting environment. A small number of participants were embarrassed to share some of their concerns as they revealed their home-life problems, and also felt embarrassed sharing their hopes for the future, their dreams. In such circumstances, it was emphasised that we were all on an equal footing and the importance of identifying our goals and obstacles to be able to progress.*

#### **Box 13: Drawing – 'Street' 2 (Uganda)**

One boy drew his impression of street life, highlighting the mutual support which street connected children give to each other, and the daily struggle for survival: "Sleeping with a friend uncovered. Walked in the streets scavenging for scrap and empty mineral water bottles to sell for survival. Picked leftovers from dustbins near restaurants and shops. There are several vehicles on Kampala streets".



## **Section IV: Elements Proposed for a Good Practice Protocol**

The constraints and opportunities for facilitating the participation of street connected children for the purposes of this paper was highlighted in Section II, and table 3 below proposes core elements of a Good Practice Protocol, which should help to guide interested stakeholders when seeking to gather and research the voices and opinions of street connected children on matters affecting them, whether it be NGOs, academics or Governments. The proposed elements should be viewed as a work in progress, something to which new elements might be added, and existing elements expanded or refined in light of future good practice. These proposed elements should be seen in conjunction with the ‘criteria for good practices to safeguard the rights of children with street connections’ as discussed in detail in the Global Research Paper<sup>32</sup>, which was put forward to stimulate discussions and deeper consultations with a range of stakeholders aiming to initiate processes for identifying and sharing ‘good practices’ of relevance to street connected children within geographical regions and levels of policy and practice.

In addition, the proposed elements have been drawn from already existing research utilised for the participatory methodology<sup>33</sup>, as well as any lessons learned highlighted by the selected NGOs, the facilitators and the children themselves as part of this paper.

**Table 3: Elements proposed for a Good Practice Protocol for research with street connected children<sup>34</sup>**

Participation	Street connected children must be understood and treated as competent co-researchers and key informants of their own lives through a Participatory Research approach, which includes their involvement in the design phase of the research.
Protection	Strong child protection and safeguarding policies and practices must be in place in organisations undertaking participatory research with street connected children. Furthermore, facilitators must be trained in dealing with the complexities and unexpected ethical dilemmas which may arise as a result of the participation.
Relations	Street connected children must be viewed holistically, and research should seek to understand the child’s connections to the street and their additional networks. Furthermore, it is important that the facilitators already have an established relationship of trust with the children.
Methods	Research with street connected children must take into account, and be flexible around, the complexities of their daily lives. Research methods must be able to adapt and be flexible to accommodate the views of a diverse range of street connected children.
Dissemination	Street connected children must have the possibility of being involved in the analysis and dissemination stage in order to promote their ownership of the research. Dissemination of research must also take into consideration if any anecdotal evidence can have a negative backlash on children involved.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas de Benitez (2011), pp. 35-52. Five cross-cutting rights based criteria were proposed: best interest of the child; non-discrimination; participation, accountability, and sustainability. Furthermore, five normative criteria were proposed: safety; availability; accessibility; quality; and flexibility.

<sup>33</sup> See Annex 3. These include the Inter-Agency Working Group on Children’s Participation (2007), Ennew (1997), Save the Children (2005).

<sup>34</sup> Drawn from Van Blerk (2011)

## **Section V: Conclusions and Recommendations**

This paper draws on views, perceptions and opinions expressed by 123 street connected children – 29 girls and 94 boys, aged between 5 and 18 - in six countries in October and November 2011 on three main themes: ‘The Child as Individual’; ‘Access to Support’; and ‘Access to Rights’. It seeks to complement the Global Research paper for this study<sup>35</sup>, bringing children’s voices to inform the OHCHR report to the UNHRC (March 2012 19<sup>th</sup> session). The paper has highlighted a normative paradigm shift in understandings of street connected children from needy, victims or vagrants to active agents and key informants of their own lives, a shift which has taken place under the developments of the UNCRC. Table 1 showed these key elements of a paradigm shift in research and work with, and for, street connected children. Elements of a Good Practice Protocol were suggested based on, and incorporating, the participatory methodology and findings from participating street connected children. The elements should be considered guidance to relevant and interested stakeholders on areas such as protection, relations, methods, and dissemination of research findings from facilitating the participation of street connected children.

Overall, three major conclusions and recommendations can be drawn from this paper:

1. Street connected children self-identified as strong, positive and engaged; able and willing to make positive contributions within the wider society. They showed pride in helping others, being good citizens and supporting themselves and their families. Children’s views of themselves as active contributors to society are in stark contrast to the often held public perception of them as victims, vagrants or delinquents. This paper recommends that States undertake public sensitisation campaigns to challenge negative stereotyping and its related consequences, such as discrimination, stigma and violence.
2. Street connected children often reflected on the support they received from each other and the NGOs they come into contact with, highlighting the lack of support from other stakeholders through an overall coordinated approach addressing children’s multiple deprivations. This paper recommends that holistic child protection systems are developed and/or strengthened which: Provide early support to prevent children needing to develop strong connections to the street; Include specialised interventions for those children with already established connections to the street, taking into account the depth and breadth of these connections; Recognise NGOs as key players in providing tailored interventions to street connected children through their relationship of trust with them; Undertake dedicated police training in child rights and protection.
3. Street connected children showed uneven and partial understanding of, and access to, their rights in different contexts. This paper recommends that States consider and treat all street connected children as rights holders, including by: Guaranteeing access to legal redress; Creating, strengthening and publicizing child sensitive reporting mechanisms to children in public spaces; Decriminalising survival behaviours; Ending impunity for those who violate the rights of street connected children.

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<sup>35</sup> Thomas de Benitez (2011)

It is clear that more engagement and research with street connected children is needed in the international development debate in order for them to exercise their right to influence matters affecting them at a higher policy level. This paper aims to encourage such engagement further for all stakeholders, whether they be NGOs, academics or Governments. It is vital not to forget to whom we are accountable and responsible. We sincerely hope that this paper goes some way towards that.

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## Appendix 1: Information about selected NGOs<sup>36</sup>

### **Action for Children in Conflict (Kenya)**

AfCiC works to assist and transform the lives of children affected by various forms of conflict or crisis, be it war, extreme poverty, hunger, illness, persecution, or neglect. Our projects focus on helping some of the most disadvantaged, disenfranchised and socially excluded children and young people in Africa.

<http://www.actionchildren.org/>

### **Hope for Children and CHETNA (India)**

Hope for Children's aims and objectives are to help disabled, orphaned poor and exploited children, in particular those living in developing countries. This is achieved through providing, promoting and advancing children's rights to basic necessities, including education and health care, aimed at sustaining their long term development.

<http://www.hope-for-children.org/>

Their local partner, CHETNA, is an NGO working towards the Empowerment of Street and Working Children in a participatory approach. They are given a chance to develop some understanding of their situation, their rights and opportunities. At CHETNA street children are provided with education, counselling, recreational activities, and a framework to get organized.

<http://www.chetna-india.org/>

### **Juconi (Ecuador)**

Juconi's mission is to assist all street-working children, and those at high risk, to find solutions for meeting their needs, in a way that ensures their total healthy development, and allows them to exercise their rights in accordance with the framework of the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

<http://www.juconi.org.ec/>

### **Moroccan Children's Trust**

The Moroccan Children's Trust is a UK registered charity working to achieve sustainable development for young people and their communities in South Morocco. In partnership with Groupe Maroc Horizons, a well-established NGO based in Taroudannt, we run volunteer projects and social and educational development work streams.

<http://www.moroccanchildrenstrust.org/>

### **Retrak (Uganda and Ethiopia)**

Retrak is a UK based charity that works with street children in Africa to give them a real alternative to life on the street. Our primary goal is to enable street children to return to life in a caring and stable family environment, either with their own family, foster family, or by living independently in the community.

<http://www.retrak.org/>

### **Consortium for Street Children**

The Consortium for Street Children (CSC) is the leading international network dedicated to realising the rights of street children. With over 60 members in 130 countries we are committed to creating a better future for some of the most disadvantaged children by working together to share knowledge, conduct research, influence policy and take action. We are Louder Together.

<http://www.streetchildren.org.uk/>

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<sup>36</sup> The information about selected NGOs has been distilled from their websites.

## Appendix 2: Children consulted<sup>37</sup>

NAME/PSEUDONYM	AGE	GENDER	COUNTRY
Cindy	10	F	Ecuador
Dayana	13	F	Ecuador
Jose	14	M	Ecuador
Alexander	16	M	Ecuador
Pablo	18	M	Ecuador
20 children - no names/pseudonyms given	Between 11-15	M	Ethiopia
Aarti	10	F	India
Basanti	10	F	India
Laxmi	11	F	India
Aasha	12	F	India
Bimla	12	F	India
Pooja	13	F	India
Sabiya	13	F	India
Neetu	14	F	India
Poonam	14	F	India
Puja	14	F	India
Reema	14	F	India
Sampa	14	F	India
Pooja	15	F	India
Arshad	11	M	India
Govind	12	M	India
Jahangir	12	M	India
Rahul	12	M	India
Ravi	12	M	India
Sanjeev	12	M	India
Deepak	13	M	India
Dinesh	13	M	India
Gauri Shankar	13	M	India
Imran	13	M	India
Mohammad Mister	13	M	India
Vinod	13	M	India
Vipin	13	M	India
Vijay	14	M	India
Vikash	14	M	India
Salman	15	M	India
Vikas	15	M	India
Irfan	17	M	India
Ann	10	F	Kenya
Agnes	13	F	Kenya
Lucy	15	F	Kenya
Zainabu	15	F	Kenya

<sup>37</sup> All the children, and facilitators, who participated in the discussions were given the option to either use their real name, a pseudonym or no name, depending on what they felt most comfortable with.

Nancy	16	F	Kenya
Mwangi	10	M	Kenya
Alex	11	M	Kenya
Samuel	11	M	Kenya
David	12	M	Kenya
Gerald	12	M	Kenya
Steven	12	M	Kenya
Lawrence	13	M	Kenya
Evans	14	M	Kenya
Joseph	14	M	Kenya
Michael	14	M	Kenya
Francis Kamau	15	M	Kenya
Kevin	15	M	Kenya
Samuel	17	M	Kenya
Jamila	5	F	Morocco
Layla	7	F	Morocco
Ilham	8	F	Morocco
Sara	8	F	Morocco
Wafa	8	F	Morocco
Fatin	12	F	Morocco
Amal	15	F	Morocco
Fouzia	15	F	Morocco
Ikram	17	F	Morocco
Yassine	5	M	Morocco
Abbas	13	M	Morocco
Hasan	14	M	Morocco
Simohamed	15	M	Morocco
Zohair	15	M	Morocco
Jamal	16	M	Morocco
RTK100	10	M	Uganda
RTK106	10	M	Uganda
RTK113	10	M	Uganda
RTK101	11	M	Uganda
RTK102	11	M	Uganda
RTK105	11	M	Uganda
RTK110	11	M	Uganda
RTK111	11	M	Uganda
RTK104	12	M	Uganda
RTK109	12	M	Uganda
RTK112	12	M	Uganda
RTK103	13	M	Uganda
RTK108	13	M	Uganda
RTK107	14	M	Uganda
RTK114	15	M	Uganda
RTK116	15	M	Uganda
RTK117	15	M	Uganda

RTK118	15	M	Uganda
RTK119	15	M	Uganda
RTK121	15	M	Uganda
RTK123	15	M	Uganda
RTK125	15	M	Uganda
RTK115	16	M	Uganda
RTK120	16	M	Uganda
RTK122	16	M	Uganda
RTK124	16	M	Uganda
RTK126	16	M	Uganda
8 children - No names/pseudonyms given	Between 14-19	M	Uganda

## Appendix 3: Participatory Methodology

### **Children's Voices Paper for OHCHR study**

#### **Methodology for the participation of children working and/or living on the street**

**Aim:** To ensure that current views of children working and/or living on the street are represented and form part of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) study. A range of these views will be presented at the Expert Consultation Forum (Geneva 1-2 November) and collated into the concluding Children's Voices Paper, which will inform the final OHCHR report presented to the UN Human Rights Council in March 2012.

**Objectives:**

- To provide opportunities for children with experience of working and/or living on the street to share their experiences and views, contributing to the study's three main focus areas: good practices, lessons learned and challenges encountered;
- To ensure that the process is empowering, fun and flexible enough to meet the constraints of daily life, including for those facilitating the consultation with children and young people;
- To facilitate adequate follow up and promote ownership to children and NGOs of the research findings;
- To promote and strengthen children's future participation in regional, national and global policy fora, to help facilitate a process of including their views and perspectives into social policies and development strategies.

#### **Child protection and safeguarding: Whose views are we seeking?**

For this UN study the OHCHR use the term 'children working and/or living on the street'. For the purposes of this project we understand these 'as children for whom the street is a reference point and has a central role in their lives'<sup>38</sup>.

For child protection purposes<sup>39</sup> we are seeking the views of those children who already have regular contact with experienced and reputable NGOs, all of which have explicit child protection policies and practices, and have established trusted relationships with street outreach workers. We seek the views of both boys and girls, and ask that particular attention is given to encourage children of each gender to speak openly and freely in an environment in which they feel safe and secure. This might necessitate having separate groups for girls and boys.

Recognising that adolescents might have different experiences than younger children we seek the views of both, but ask that consideration is given by separating these into separate groups (for example under 10, 10-14, and 14 and above), no bigger than 6-8 children each. If possible, we also welcome the views and involvement of +18 who have gone through programmes and interventions and are able to look back at their experiences in order to contribute to the three main focus areas of the OHCHR study. We ask that children and adolescents taking part are identified according to gender, age (if known), and ethnicity.

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<sup>38</sup> Rede Rio Criança, *Criança, Rua e ONG's* (Brazil 2007: 18)

<sup>39</sup> We ask that NGOs have read and understood CSC's Child Safeguarding document (a copy accompanies this document), and signed the statement of commitment if not already done so. You may want to conduct a 'risk assessment on child protection' before you facilitate the participation. This means brainstorming on all that could go wrong with the participation and of ways to address each of those problems. It may take some time, but facilitators may find it a helpful investment.

No pictures of the participating children will be used, and no child needs to be identified by their real name (pseudonyms can be used), unless explicit approval is given by individual children, in which case only the first name will be used. The same applies to the NGO facilitators if requested. The NGO facilitators will have a solid understanding of child protection and safeguarding issues, and any unforeseen ethical dilemmas arising as a result of the participation should be dealt with according to the NGO's established child protection system and code of conduct practices.

It is vital that each child opts into the process and chooses to be part of it, with the possibility of opting out at any time if they so wish, as well as understanding the reasons why they are being asked to participate, what the information will be used for, and that their expectations are managed with regards to any effect the OHCHR final report may have on their daily lives.

### **A Topic Guide: What do we want to know and why?**

The information elicited from the children will inform the UN OHCHR study's final report to the UNHRC and will therefore focus on the 'challenges encountered, lessons learned and good practices, in using a holistic, child rights and gender-based approach to protect and promote the rights of street children, including (...) experiences on access to child-friendly counseling, complaint and reporting mechanisms<sup>40</sup>'.

We would therefore like to elicit information centred on three overarching areas of interest, divided into five key topics (lettered A to E), as set out below. We ask that all of the five key topics are covered, but note that the questions accompanying the topics are suggestions for informal conversations. The process should pay particular attention to exploring and documenting interesting and unexpected reflections by children.

#### **1. The individual child:**

- A. To highlight the potential, agency, strength and positive contribution these children can offer the wider society and the support they need to realise their full potential. It is part of changing attitudes towards children working and/or living on the street, in particular for national and local policy makers.

Areas of questioning/can you tell us more about:

- Who inspires you and why?
- What about yourself are you most proud of, and why?
- What are your strengths? What needs to be in place for you to use these more?
- How do you currently contribute to society (i.e. the work you do, helping others etc)? What support do you need to contribute even more?
- What are your hopes for the future? Who do you see supporting you to make those hopes a reality?

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<sup>40</sup> The UN Special Representative on Violence Against Children and the UN Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography jointly presented their report on the importance of safe, well-publicized, confidential and accessible child sensitive counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms in March 2011 to the UN Human Rights Council, focusing on children's ability to report incidents of violence, including sexual violence and exploitation (e.g. help lines, Ombudsmen, access to human rights offices, legal advice): [http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/sites/default/files/documents/docs/A-HRC-16-56\\_EN.pdf](http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/sites/default/files/documents/docs/A-HRC-16-56_EN.pdf)

## 2. Systems support:

- B. To understand what safety nets children have found to be available to them (protection and provision of services)
- C. How they have used and accessed them at certain critical points in their lives. These safety nets can be formal, informal and at various different levels (by NGOs, Government service delivery agencies, police, family and friends, schools, drug rehab centres etc).

Areas of questioning/can you tell us more about:

- Who do you feel you can trust?
- Who has asked you about your life and experiences? (e.g. to find out from their point of view how data and information is being collected about them. This could include academics, the public, Government services, family and friends, NGOs etc)
- Who has helped you? (to see if anyone acts on the information they are given as above or does not take it further)
- Who have you helped? How did you help them?
- What support have you received? Where and how did you receive it?
- What do you need more support with?

## 3. Access to rights<sup>41</sup>:

- D. To understand what children know about their rights
- E. To understand how able they have been to claim these rights, including child-friendly reporting mechanisms.

Areas of questioning/can you tell us more about:

- What do you understand your rights to be?
- Who do you think *should* help you access your rights? Who *does* help you access your rights?
- Have you ever reported any violations of your rights?
- If so how were you able to do this and to whom? If not, then why?

### Protocol used: How to go about facilitating the participation?

Children's participation in matters which concern them are a vital component of development strategies, stemming from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which recognise children as rights-holders. In particular Article 12<sup>42</sup> and 13<sup>43</sup> of the UNCRC are relevant in this context.

<sup>41</sup> For a child-friendly version of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child go to:  
<http://www.unicef.org/rightsite/files/uncrcchildfriendlylanguage.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

<sup>43</sup> The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

There are numerous good practice guidelines which exist to promote children's participation in matters affecting them<sup>44</sup>. However, meaningful participation is crucial and it is recognised that for marginalised and excluded children the process becomes not only more urgent but also more complex<sup>45</sup>.

Existing research highlights these complexities, and gives practical examples, of facilitating participation with children working and/or living on the street<sup>46</sup>. This project is guided by Save the Children's *Practice Standards in Child Participation*<sup>47</sup>, which sets out good practices in child participation, facilitation and ethics. We ask that the NGOs familiarise themselves with these standards before organising the participation. For the purposes of this project we define participatory research as 'a process which includes the active involvement of those who are subject of the research'<sup>48</sup>. This definition lays an emphasis on a process of reflection and follow up dialogue, where the importance of local knowledge and perspectives are crucial. The project places emphasis on qualitative, rather than quantitative methods of gathering information, using visual action methods and informal group discussions, as opposed to conventional surveys and questionnaires. We are looking for reflection and depth, as opposed to 'yes' and 'no' answers. We ask NGOs to take into account that particular activities and ways of gathering information for one age group of children may not be appropriate for another. The same is true between boys and girls, between different ethnicities, different levels of trauma and so forth.

Save the Children's briefing on *Children and Participation: Research, monitoring, and evaluation with children and young people*<sup>49</sup> offers practical examples of tools and methods for facilitating participation, which can be adapted for use with street children. This can include use of photography, maps and drawings, role playing and group discussions. However, we aim to leave flexibility in the techniques used as we want NGOs to use the strategies and techniques that have worked well for them in the past and that they have expertise in.

<sup>44</sup> See for example the Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation, *Minimum Standards for Consulting with Children* (2007), and Ennew, J. (et al), 'Children in focus: A manual for participatory research with children' (1997).

<sup>45</sup> Complexities include: the children's fluent use of public space often hidden from view; drug use which may impact on concentration; lack of parental supervision and consent; immediate survival needs impacting on time availability and reluctance to tell the truth; illiteracy; and unexpected ethical dilemmas. See for example Young, L. (et al), 'Ethics and Participation: Reflections on Research with Street Children' (2001).

<sup>46</sup> See for example:

- Young, L (et al), 'Adapting Visual Methods: action research with Kampala street children' (2000), [http://www.streetchildren.org.uk/\\_uploads/Publications/2.Adapting\\_Visual\\_Methods.pdf](http://www.streetchildren.org.uk/_uploads/Publications/2.Adapting_Visual_Methods.pdf)
- Ennew, J., 'Difficult circumstances: Some reflections on 'street children' in Africa' (2003), [http://www.streetchildren.org.uk/\\_uploads/Publications/8.Difficult\\_Circumstances\\_Some\\_Reflection\\_s\\_on\\_%E2%80%9CStreet\\_Children%E2%80%9D\\_in\\_Africa.pdf.pdf](http://www.streetchildren.org.uk/_uploads/Publications/8.Difficult_Circumstances_Some_Reflection_s_on_%E2%80%9CStreet_Children%E2%80%9D_in_Africa.pdf.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> Available at: [http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/docs/practice\\_standards\\_participation.pdf](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/docs/practice_standards_participation.pdf)

<sup>48</sup> Cornwall, A (et al), *What is Participatory Research?*, (1995)

<sup>49</sup> See specifically pages 18-24: [http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/docs/children\\_and\\_participation.pdf](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/docs/children_and_participation.pdf)

**Feedback of information:**

We ask that facilitators of the participation use the template reporting form in the Appendix and ensure that:

- Views, anecdotes, stories and conversations are captured through note taking;
- Drawings, photographs, work sheet papers (along with any comments and explanations that children make about them) are emailed or scanned;
- It is crucial that the NGO facilitators capture exactly what the children are saying and do not offer their own interpretations. If something is unclear for the facilitators then this should be followed up through dialogue and reflection with the child.

**Follow up:**

As part of the process we believe it is important that the children feel ownership of their local process and also its outcomes and longer-term results, as well as understand that they form part of a large group of children in different countries whose views will all inform the final OHCHR report.

The collated findings from all the NGOs taking part will be sent in a child-friendly document to the NGOs, which can be presented and debated by the children. Their additional thoughts and reflections emerging from these discussions should be emailed for inclusion into the concluding Children's Voices Paper. All participating NGOs will receive this paper, which will form part of the OHCHR's final report to be presented to the UN Human Rights Council in March 2012.

**Appendix: Reporting template for NGOs**

For all the questions please continue on a separate piece of paper if needed and feel free to add explanatory comments as and when appropriate.

❖ *Name of organisation:*

❖ *City and country:*

❖ *Information about the facilitators:*

Name/pseudonym (if approval given)	Number of years working at organisation	Number of years working with children and young people	Any training received on facilitation	Experience of facilitating participation

❖ *Date(s) when participation took place:*

❖ *Information about the children:*

First name/ pseudonym <b>(only if approval given)</b>	Age (if known)	Gender	Ethnicity	Disability (if relevant)	Lived on street / worked on street / lived and worked on street?  <b>For how long?</b>

❖ *Information about the groups used for the participation:*

	Individual child	Systems support	Access to rights
How many groups were used?			
Which children were in each group? (e.g. gender, age)			
How many children in each group?			

❖ *Information about the techniques used for the participation:*

	Individual child	Systems support	Access to rights
Maps			
Drawings			
Diagrams			
Role playing			
Group discussions			
Drama and song			
Photography and video			
Other			

❖ *Please describe in detail the techniques used (please also share any guidelines you used on a separate piece of paper):*

❖ *Please describe what, in the facilitators view, worked well and what did not work well, and why:*

❖ Please describe any unexpected and revealing reflections from the children as part of the participation, and how these were followed up:

❖ Check list:

Questions	Yes/No
Are the facilitators aware and trained in the NGOs child protection and safeguarding practices?	
Did the facilitators read and familiarise themselves with CSC's Child Safeguarding document and sign the statement of commitment if not already done so? (if signed, please send a copy of this with the other feedback materials)	
Did a senior member of the NGO read and familiarise themselves with Save the Children's <i>Practice Standards in Child Participation</i> ?	
Do the children participating have established and regular contact with your NGO?	
Were the children made aware of the reason you asked them to participate and did you specify what the information will be used for?	
Did the children voluntarily opt into the consultation and participate willingly throughout?	

**I confirm that the information above is correct to my knowledge.**

**Date:**

**Print and sign name:**

**Role in NGO:**