



CRIN

Child Rights Information Network

review

Photo: Bosnia and Herzegovina: Helder Netocny/Panos Pictures

Children's Right to the City

Featuring:

■ Beijing Olympics: no medals for China's record on children's housing rights

■ Hunger in the city: urban children and the food crisis

■ Disability: young people claim their right to Norway's towns

NEW: A Universal Periodic Review toolkit for child rights NGOs

This toolkit* has been produced to:

- help users understand the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), how it works, and why it is important for children
- help users understand how to participate in the UPR, and ensure it is child-focused.

See below for an outline of the toolkit.

Introduction

The UPR is a new mechanism under which the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) will examine the human rights situation in every Member State of the UN.

Each State will be examined every four years.

It is hoped the UPR will become the cornerstone of the Human Rights Council. It represents an excellent opportunity for making children's rights central to its work.

How it will work

The review, carried out by a special Working Group composed of State delegates, will involve information from:

- **State:** Information provided by the State under review (20 pages or an Oral Report)
- **UN human rights system:** Relevant information from treaty bodies, and special rapporteurs compiled by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights – OHCHR (10 pages)
- **Stakeholders:** Summary by the OHCHR of information provided by other relevant stakeholders such as national non-governmental organisations (NGOs), national human rights institutions (NHRIs), and international NGOs (10 pages).

The Universal Periodic Review is an inter-governmental process, which means that States are judging States.

NGO reporting and participation

Note: This information in particular is still subject to change. It is important to keep updated on CRIN's HRC news page: <http://www.crin.org/chr/news/> or on OHCHR's website: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/UPRMain.aspx>.

NGO submissions are at the core of the Universal Periodic Review. There is an opportunity for them to provide honest, unbiased assessments of the human rights situation in all countries.

Therefore, **your reports are critical**. However, it is important to understand that information provided by NGOs is **not confidential**.

Consequently, all NGOs must weigh the benefits and dangers carefully. Co-ordination between smaller and larger international NGOs may be helpful in this respect.

1. Contact NGOs around you that are interested in similar issues. Acquaint them with the UPR process if they have not already heard about it.
2. Discuss the issues that you want reported.
3. Decide whether it would be best for all NGOs to bring up the same issues or split the list of issues between your group of NGOs so that you can cover, in depth, a range of topics.
4. Local and Geneva-based NGOs should co-ordinate in order to decide how best to organise the information and to devise the best advocacy strategies.

How should a report be written?

The OHCHR has produced detailed guidelines for UPR submissions by relevant stakeholders such as NGOs and NHRIs.

The factors to consider are:

1. page limit
2. focus
3. time period
4. deadline
5. language.

Please note that CRIN is extracting the child rights mentions from UPR report submissions. Find them on CRIN's Human Rights Council news page (above).

You can also find all the reports so far submitted for each UPR session on the OHCHR website: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/search.aspx>

Participation beyond submission of reports

- **UPR Working Group** – Influence the questions that might be asked by the HRC Member States by providing their Geneva representatives with written and/or oral information.
- **Participation in the UPR plenary** – During the Human Rights Council plenary session, NGOs can make statements and pose questions to the States under review.
- **Involvement in the follow-up** – Convene a meeting of child rights NGOs to discuss the relevance of the outcome for children's rights. Establish a strategy for your NGOs to monitor the implementation of the final UPR recommendations. Monitor the involvement of a children's ombudsperson in the follow-up, where this is relevant (not all countries have one).

For both complete and summary versions of the toolkit, visit: <http://crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=17366&flag=report>

Read a more complete explanation of the UPR on CRIN's special information page: <http://www.crin.org/HRC/UPR.asp>

* The toolkit has been developed by the Working Group on the Human Rights Council under the umbrella of the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child: www.childrightsnet.org

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Editorial

In 2008, for the first time in history, more than half the world's population will be living in towns or cities. New cities are rising across the globe, from Latin America, Africa and South Asia through to the epicentre of urban growth in China. The face of these new cityscapes is increasingly youthful: according to the UN 60 per cent of children in the developing world will live in urban areas by 2025.

Cities struggle, however, to cope with the number of people attracted to them by the promise of work, better prospects, an urban lifestyle, or the need to escape conflict, rural poverty or environmental destruction. Every day 180,000 more people surge into urban areas from the countryside to swell the growth already underway from the natural increase of the existing urban population. As a result, basic services for children are often under stress or non-existent, air pollution and other forms of environmental damage threaten children's health, and children are often very vulnerable to exploitation and violence.

In the next two decades most of the world's urban growth – 95 per cent – will be absorbed by cities of the developing world.¹

What price are children paying for this rapid rate of urban growth? What can we learn from the experience of the already urbanised world about the fulfilment of children's rights in a city setting? And crucially, what opportunities does this 'second wave' of urban growth present for the protection and fulfilment of children's rights?

This edition of the CRIN Review explores the impact of urbanisation, city size, and growth on children's rights. As noted above, cities can be hubs of risk for children where sprawling slums with inadequate services swallow up green play spaces, where segregation and violence are commonplace and where the world's millions of street and working children eke out a precarious existence. They can, however, also be forces for good with many parents seeing them as places that will give their children improved opportunities and life chances. Easy access to information means children are better able to learn about their rights whilst

basic amenities and support may be more readily available. The numbers of children concentrated in an urban area may also enable children to more easily find ways to organise themselves and claim their rights to services, participation in urban decision-making and to a life free from violence.

"Children's Right to the City" offers an analysis of the challenges posed to children's rights in some of the world's biggest cities. It draws together some creative ways of working, lessons learnt, as well as practical tools, factfiles and case studies to advance children's rights in urban environments.

Exploring child rights issues such as violence, diversity, participation and poverty through the thematic lens of urbanisation, the Review presents another way of thinking about child rights in general and spotlights the need to think ahead about how global processes such as urbanisation will affect child rights locally.

Opening with a topical piece on the Beijing Olympics, Deanna Fowler and Mayra Gómez document the Chinese government's breach of children's housing rights in the lead-up to the Games and urge organisers of such international events to fulfil their obligation to protect human rights and not just stand back as spectators.

Also in the headlines recently, the global food price crisis has triggered riots in cities across the world. While the price rises affect different people in different ways, Michael O'Donnell explains why food price rises are hurting urban children in particular and reflects on how humanitarian response must move with the times to stem the crisis.

Meanwhile, a stealthier global crisis is unfolding: road traffic deaths are now the leading cause of death among 10-19 year olds worldwide. There are ways to halt this trend, say Tamitza Toroyan and Margie Peden, but we need to invest in resources and time to think differently.

'Eco-friendly cities' where cars and pollution are sidelined and people and the natural environment take centre stage have become fashionable among local and national governments in recent times, but what are *child-friendly* cities? Francesca Moneti explains how a growing number of cities are joining the movement to put children at the centre of their city and sets out a good practice checklist.

In his article on southern Africa, Christopher Bjornestad argues that unaccompanied child migrants are often more at-risk in smaller towns and settlements than in big cities. Children who are forcibly displaced share many of these risks. Some recent research by the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children weighs up the pros and cons of living as a young person with a disability in a refugee camp compared to being dispersed in urban areas.

Urbanisation happened some time ago in the richer countries of the world but many challenges to children's rights remain. In Norwegian towns, young people took the rights of children with disabilities into their own hands when they graded shops and restaurants on their accessibility. The grading upset some people, but managers were forced to listen and make lasting changes, explains Mari Sognnæs Andresen.

Alex Gask and Charlotte Stetzel reveal the extent of discrimination faced by young people in public spaces in Britain where

1. UN Habitat: State of the World's Cities 2006/07

Architectural chaos in poverty zones, Caracas, Venezuela.

simply meeting up with friends can be a criminal offence. Satya Panigrahi, one of London's youth mayors, tells an inspiring story of how young people can get involved in local politics, rooting out negative perceptions of young people and starting their own community projects.

Life on the treadmill begins early for children in Japanese cities with the pressure on children to study day and night to meet the expectations of their parents and society. How this cuts into playtime and happiness is described by Noriko Kajiki.

Japan may be home to the world's most populous city, but the Gaza Strip is one of the densest areas of land in the world with 3,117 people per square km. And yet, trapped by Israel's military occupation, its inhabitants are living in the equivalent of a concrete prison. Ahmed Abu Tawahina writes about the effects of living under siege on children's mental health and shares his experience of training communities to mitigate the damage.

Cities in Brazil and Jamaica are notorious for their histories of urban violence. In her article on São Paulo, Paula Miraglia describes how geographic segregation reinforces exclusion and violence against marginalised young men. Rose Robinson Hall, Horace Levy and Peta-Anne Baker reflect on the origins of violence committed by and against children in Jamaica, and how they are working to restore a society based on rights and respect.

Finally, Sharmila Bhagat describes how children in Delhi are turning to writing and new technologies to share their local experiences with global communities.

Jennifer Thomas

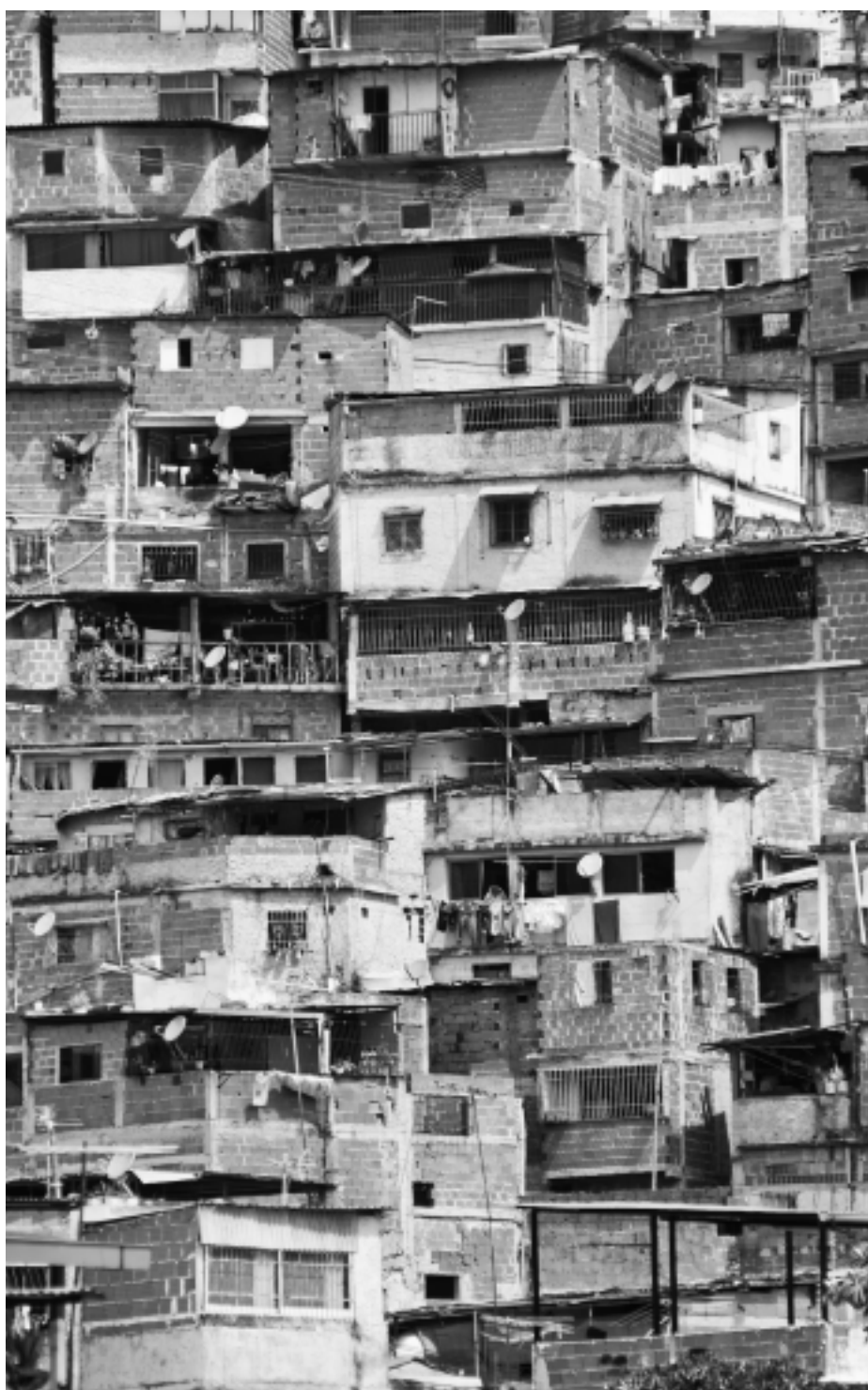


Photo: iStockphoto / Alberto Pomares

Factfile: Cities in numbers

In 2008, for the first time, more than half the world's population is living in cities.

Every day 180,000 more people are moving to cities from the countryside.

World Bank estimates indicate that while rural areas are currently home to a majority of the world's poor, by 2035, cities will become the predominant sites of poverty.

Some 60 per cent of children in the developing world will live in cities by 2025; more than half will live in poverty.

Growth

- Urban growth on a weekly basis is close to one million people – the equivalent of a city the size of Hanoi, Vietnam or Pittsburgh, USA.
- The world's most populous city in 2015 will be Tokyo at 35.5 million people, followed by Mumbai and Mexico City.
- The population of cities in the Russian Federation, which has one of the world's lowest birth rates, is projected to shrink by 6.5 million people by 2015.
- Mega-cities have 10 million or more inhabitants. Lagos, Nigeria is the fastest growing mega-city in the world.

Children and poverty

- Although no one knows how many children are living and working on the street worldwide, estimates reach as high as 150 million.
- One in five developing countries has higher mortality among poor urban children than among rural children.

- More than seven children die each minute as a result of water pollution.
- Child mortality rates in cities with proper sanitation and water supply are generally around 10 per 1,000 live births. In those cities without proper provision, infant mortality rates are 10 to 20 times higher.
- One in five children – approximately 400 million – do not have access to safe drinking water.
- In the UK the average person uses 135 litres of water every day. In the developing world the average person uses 10 litres.
- More than one out of every three children in the developing world – approximately 640 million children – do not live in adequate housing.
- London is the sixth richest city in the world, but 41 per cent of children in inner city London live in poverty.

Density and diversity

- Mumbai, India is the world's densest city with 14,350,000 inhabitants in 484 square kilometres.
- 32 per cent of Londoners belong to a minority ethnic community. Only 0.7 per cent of Shanghai's population was born outside China.

Violence and surveillance

- 498 children were murdered in Guatemala City alone last year.
- Washington DC has the highest reported murder rate of the world's developed countries.
- Globally, road traffic injuries are the leading cause of death among 10-19 year olds.

- Londoners are likely to be caught on camera 300 times a day. Britain is monitored by four million CCTV cameras, making it the most watched nation in the world.

Environment

- Sumgayit in Azerbaijan is the world's most polluted city.
- The global production of motor vehicles is increasing at least four times faster than human numbers in percentage terms.
- We throw away the equivalent of 500,000 trees in newspapers each week. A single Sunday edition of the New York Times uses 75,000 trees.
- In 53 different countries around the world there are 42 million free newspapers being printed every day.
- Less than five per cent of Tokyo's surface is green space.

[Sources: UN Habitat, UNICEF, Consortium for Street Children, Centre for Housing Rights and Evictions, WaterAid, Energie Cites, British Medical Journal, City Mayors, Liberty, World Bank, Tunza for Youth, Youth Xchange, Project Freesheet, World Mapper, Blacksmith Institute]

Beijing Olympics: Fair play for children's housing rights

China systematically violated its citizens' housing rights in the run-up to the Olympics, with devastating consequences for children. Deanna Fowler and Mayra Gomez spell out China's obligations to make amends, and urge future hosts and organisers to play by the rules.



"Beijing Hutong marked for eviction" (a hutong is a narrow street of houses)

Photo: Deanna Fowler, Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions

The Olympic Games and other international mega-events are often touted as forces for good, not merely for international co-operation, but also for the purported economic and social benefits to the residents of the host city and country. While the truth of the latter claim is often debated among residents of host cities, the preparations for the Beijing Olympic Games have elicited an unprecedented level of protest – both within China and internationally.

The President of the Beijing Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (BOCOG), Liu Qi, claimed during the bidding process for the 2008 Olympic Games that the Games "will help promote

all economic and social projects and will also benefit the further development of our human rights cause". And in fact, the Olympics Charter recognises the relevance of human rights, stating: "The practice of sport is a human right." Nevertheless, a range of human rights have been violated in the context of past and upcoming Olympic Games. In June 2007, the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) released the report *Fair Play for Housing Rights: Mega-events, Olympic Games and housing rights*, which found that since 1988 over two million people have been displaced due to the Olympic Games.

In Beijing, in particular, the Games have led to the displacement of over 1.25

million people, as of June 2007. A total of 1.5 million people were expected to be displaced by the time the Games began in August 2008. COHRE found that the Beijing Municipality and BOCOG have destroyed affordable rental housing stock and used tactics of harassment, repression, imprisonment and even violence against residents and activists. The Municipality has also subjected people, including alleged unlicensed taxi operators, street vendors, vagrants and beggars, to 'Re-Education through Labour' – a form of imprisonment without charge. Moreover, demolitions and evictions have often been undertaken without due process, without the provision of adequate compensation sufficient to attain alternative

accommodation, and without access to legal recourse. In some cases, tenants have been given little or no notice of their eviction and have not received the promised compensation. Compensation rates have rarely enabled affected people to relocate while retaining the same standard of living. Instead, residents have been forced to move further from sources of employment, community networks, decent schools and healthcare facilities.

Families uprooted

These events have had particularly harsh effects on vulnerable and marginalised groups such as children. At least 160,500 children between the ages of 0–15 have been displaced.* Families who are forced to move not only face long commutes to work and schools, but are also displaced from social networks that previously provided communal childcare and support. Parents interviewed by COHRE explained that in their previous communities children could walk to school on their own because

schools were not far, and the close-knit community provided security. However, families from such communities have now been dispersed to high-rise apartments on the outskirts of Beijing. Parents explained that the schools in these areas are not very good and those who can afford it continue to send their children to schools in central Beijing. Travel by public transportation can take approximately two hours each way and parents must now accompany children who cannot manoeuvre the bus and subway system without supervision.

Compensation for homeowners is rarely sufficient for a family to purchase another home in the same area. However, education for children is of paramount importance to parents. A number of families reported that in order to keep their children close to good schools, they chose to use their compensation to rent an apartment close by instead of purchasing a more affordable home

further away. This means that in several years time the compensation will have been spent and these families will be vulnerable to further housing insecurity.

Effects of forced evictions 'comparable to war'

Forced eviction is a phenomenon that merits special attention in the context of the Beijing Olympics. The international community has reaffirmed that the practice of forced eviction constitutes a gross violation of a broad range of human rights; in particular, the right to adequate housing. Such evictions are characterised or accompanied by an element of force or coercion, and they are usually related to specific decisions, policies or legislation of States, or their failure to intervene to halt evictions by non-State actors.

While forced evictions take place in diverse contexts, and in diverse ways, their negative effects on children are remarkably similar. In the study *Urban Children and*

Children's housing rights

Today, children's human rights are well protected under international human rights law and related standards, which recognise that all children have a right to adequate housing.

The principle of the best interests of the child is critical for policy-makers and advocates to remember when it comes to children's housing rights and the prohibition against forced evictions. This principle has been central to the development of children's human rights under international law, and was incorporated prominently into the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

China ratified the UNCRC in 1992, thereby legally committing itself to safeguarding the human rights of children.

Article 27 of the Convention clearly protects the housing rights of children:

1. States Parties recognise the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

3. States Parties, in accordance with national conditions and within their means, shall take appropriate measures to assist parents and others responsible for the child to implement this right and shall in case of need provide material assistance and support programmes, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and **housing**.

Besides the UNCRC, there are other international standards for the protection of children's housing rights, notably the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which China ratified in 2001. In its General Comment No. 4, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights identified seven key elements that comprise the right to adequate housing: legal security of tenure; availability of service materials, facilities and infrastructure; affordability; habitability; accessibility; location; and cultural adequacy.

International human rights standards are far more than mere political statements: they invoke concrete legal obligations. Under international human rights law, States like China have duties and obligations to respect, protect and fulfil children's housing rights.

The obligation to *respect* the right of children to adequate housing means that States must refrain from any action, such as forced evictions, that would prevent children and their families from realising this right whenever they themselves are able to do so.

The obligation to *protect* the right of children to adequate housing requires that States effectively prevent violations of that right by non-State actors, such as landlords, corporations or other private sector individuals or bodies.

The obligation to *fulfil* the right of children to adequate housing entails certain positive obligations, and may require public expenditure in respect of appropriate budgetary commitments, State regulations, provision of public services and housing subsidies or social housing, including housing programmes that are sensitive to children's special needs. International law requires that States must take immediate steps to do this, using the maximum available resources to progressively realise children's housing rights – without discrimination on any grounds.



Pakistan

the Physical Environment, Sheridan Bartlett from the City University of New York and the International Institute for Environment and Development in London, found that:

The impacts of eviction for family stability and for children's emotional well-being can be devastating; the experience has been described as comparable to war for children in terms of the developmental consequences. Even when evictions are followed by immediate relocation, the effects on children can be destructive and unsettling.

The Philippines organisation Families and Children for Empowerment and Development (FCED) reported to COHRE in 2005 that children who had experienced eviction from their homes suffered from feelings of helplessness, powerlessness and loss of hope. Other children were reported to have abandoned the hope of continuing their schooling because they had no alternative but to sleep or stay on the streets or vacant lots, potentially even for the long term. Forcibly evicted children exhibited psychological trauma and fear of police and demolition crews. Like their parents, they were confused about what to do, where to go and what might lie ahead.

In the study *The Impact of Evictions on Children: Case studies in Manila, Mumbai and Phnom Penh*, the Philippines-based Urban Poor Associates and the Thailand-based Asian Coalition for Housing Rights emphasised that children are the most vulnerable group during forced evictions. The study found that:

Eviction implies violence. During the event of a demolition, children are exposed to violence and abuse. It is generally recognised that violence breeds violence. Children seeing their families being attacked can be affected in many ways.

This exposure to violence increases children's anxiety levels. As a result, some children show a range of negative emotional consequences. Sadly, forced eviction also increases intra-familial stress and rates of child abuse. Children interviewed by researchers recounted increased incidents of violence within their own homes after a forced eviction had taken place. As a result of losing their home and community, children enter a world of insecurity, in which they tend to be even more vulnerable to those who would abuse them.

Improving the Olympic human rights record

While preparing to host the Olympic Games, China has violated its international legal obligations by failing to ensure that displaced families were provided with adequate notice and compensation, failing to ensure that no children were made homeless or vulnerable to other rights violations, and failing to ensure that families had access to legal recourse and due process.

To address these violations, China should immediately provide opportunities for redress for affected families. It must immediately halt planned evictions until a fair and systematic method of determining compensation is established to replace the current system of negotiating with harassment. China should also ensure redress through an independent judiciary for all who have been threatened, harassed and imprisoned for resisting forced evictions and for speaking out against housing rights violations.

Moreover, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has a responsibility to act decisively not only to use its influence to enact such changes in China, but also to prevent such housing rights abuses from taking place in the context of future Olympic Games. In *Fair Play for Housing Rights*, COHRE recommended that the IOC: fully incorporate housing rights into its guiding values, principles and commitments; evaluate applicant and candidate cities on their compliance with housing rights; introduce specific selection criteria to address housing issues at all stages of the host city selection process; incorporate contractual obligations with host cities to ensure respect for housing rights; and closely monitor compliance with housing rights and intervene in case of any breach.

It is vital for the IOC to undertake such recommendations to protect children's housing rights from being violated in the context of the Olympic Games and to truly live up to its ideals of promoting "friendship, solidarity and fair play".

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* This figure is based on data that 10.7 per cent of the Beijing population are 0–15 years of age, as reported in the *Beijing Statistical Yearbook 2007*.



Photo: Ernst Schade: www.ernstschade.com

Urban hunger – rethinking our response to food crises

Food crises typically unfold in rural areas, but urban children are bearing the brunt of global food price rises. Michael O'Donnell explains why and assesses the implications for future humanitarian relief efforts.

The price of staple foods has been soaring since 2000, and rose sharply in the 12 months to May 2008. Over the last three years, global commodity prices have increased 83 per cent, according to the World Bank. This has created a crisis that has received a lot of publicity in recent months. Images of food riots from countries as diverse as Haiti, Egypt and the Philippines have reached television screens. But why have urban populations been

particularly affected? What do food price rises mean for children? And what can be done about it?

Why urban areas suffer

Ordinarily, when we think of food crises, we think of droughts, failed harvests, livestock dying and children in feeding centres. The crisis with food price hikes is different in that urban populations will be one of the worst affected groups.

This is because price rises hurt those who buy food, rather than those who produce it. Indeed, those who produce surpluses for sale should actually benefit by getting a higher income. Net buyers of food are typically those who rely on gaining an income from various sources like formal employment, unskilled daily labouring and petty trade, and using that income to buy food and all other basic needs. Almost all urban dwellers are in that situation. They



Children parade in the streets of Banaue in Ifugao Province in the north of the Philippines in May 2008. The Imbayah rice festival heralds the bountiful harvest in what is considered to be the 8th wonder of the world. But as the festivities fade, the country faces increases in food prices that will create a domino effect on the prices of basic commodities in the Philippines – prices which are already considered some of the highest in the region.

are not the only ones affected, however. Landless rural dwellers and farmers without enough land or capacity to be self-sufficient in production – who are typically the poorest – and some pastoralist populations who sell some of their livestock to buy grain will also be affected by high food prices. However, the fact that urban populations are one of the most affected groups is different – and poses challenges for humanitarian agencies.

What do price rises mean for urban children?

Many of the poorest people spend up to 80 per cent of their income on food. Rising prices mean that people who buy food need more income to afford the same amount of food. If you already live on a tight budget, your options for coping are limited: you can either spend less on something, or you can try to get more income. Both come with costs for children.

If a family can no longer afford all of their basic needs – including food, healthcare, education, clothes, soap, rent, electricity and other bills – and have to cut back on one of them, it can harm children. Typically, one of the first things to be cut back on is the quality of food purchased. So instead of buying all the fruits, vegetables, meat and dairy products needed for a nutritious diet, the family cuts back to just the staple food and some vegetables or sauce: enough to ease hunger pangs, but not enough to prevent chronic malnutrition. Chronic malnutrition is the underlying cause of almost 1.5 million deaths among children under-five, and can leave children stunted and with impaired mental development, making them more susceptible to illness, less able to perform well in school, and likely to earn a lower income in adulthood.

If spending on food is cut back even further, children may become acutely malnourished, which is what people commonly think of as starvation.

But it is not necessarily spending on food that will be cut when food prices rise. Families may choose instead to stop sending a child to school to save on school fees, or avoid seeking expensive healthcare treatment. These are outcomes that are also damaging for children, and which deserve far more attention than they currently receive in the publicity around the surge in food prices. They are also early warning signs of financial stress in the household, and can be used to trigger earlier interventions by agencies to avoid the situation getting worse.

The options for trying to earn more income are limited too, and often highly unattractive. Poor families rarely have the skills or other resources to easily increase employment, and in urban areas opportunities for employment can be limited. What may be possible is sending a child to work, or taking loans and getting into unsustainable levels of debt.

Another risk that particularly arises in urban areas is civil unrest. Many countries have seen food riots when prices increase, and children can get caught up in the unrest.

What can be done?

In the short term, the most important thing is to get further information on how families are being affected by the price rises. Thereafter, there are interventions that can help families mitigate the problems associated with rising food prices, but they will be challenging for agencies to support.

‘Social protection’ programmes, such as cash transfers or provision of vouchers to families to buy basic needs are the most obvious direct way of helping families. Cash transfers enable families to spend on whatever goods or services they like – food, education and rent, for example – and also give families more dignity and choice than in-kind transfers such as food aid. Urban areas have an advantage for cash programmes because they have more institutions for delivering cash, for example banks and post offices, and so agencies do not have to face the security risks of handling large amounts of cash. Many national governments already have social protection systems in place, and the preference in those cases would be to work with government to expand them.

Experience of urban programming among non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is very limited, however, as these areas are not typically where crises occur. Agencies and governments will have to work closely to share experiences and learning in this new context. Another challenge is likely to be that all urban families will be affected to a greater or lesser extent by food price rises, and so everyone may feel they need support, making targeting of limited resources difficult.

Food price rises will be with us for a number of years, but it is vital that work starts soon to address the impacts on urban children.

Michael O'Donnell was formerly Head of Hunger Reduction, Save the Children UK

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Child deaths on the roads: A public health crisis

Road traffic injuries are a major cause of death among young people worldwide. We must take stock of our approach to road safety and invest in saving lives, argue Tamitza Toroyan and Margie Peden.

Road traffic accidents kill 1.3 million people each year, and injure and disable millions more. Children and young adults under 25 comprise a large proportion of road traffic victims: each year nearly 400,000 people under 25 die on the world's roads – an average of 1,049 a day. Globally, road traffic injuries are the leading cause of death among young people aged 10–19. But prevention of road traffic injuries is low on the list of public health priorities in many countries, with levels of funding in research and development nowhere near commensurate with the scale of the problem.

In many countries the transport sector, the justice sector, police, or a mix of all three, take responsibility for safety on the roads. Frequently, there is poor awareness of road traffic injuries as a national public health problem, particularly among children and young people, despite the fact that road accidents may be a leading cause of death among the nation's youth. Yet the health sector has a crucial role to play in addressing road safety – not only in the provision of healthcare services to those injured, but in research on risk factors and effective interventions, in data collection to understand the magnitude and distribution of the road traffic injury problem, and in advocacy to move the issue of road safety higher up the political agenda.

The problem is particularly acute in low and middle-income countries. Over 85 per cent of global deaths occur in low and middle-income countries, with vulnerable road users – that is, pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists and those using public transport – bearing the brunt of the burden. Moreover, trends suggest that with rapid motorisation and urbanisation, road traffic deaths will increase from approximately 1.3 million per year now, to 2.1 million a year in 2030, primarily due to increased fatalities associated with economic growth in low and middle-

Did you know?

- **Globally, road traffic injuries are the leading cause of death** among 10–19-year-olds.
- **Each year nearly 400,000 people under 25 die on the world's roads** – an average of 1,049 a day.
- **Road traffic deaths will increase from approximately 1.3 million** per year now, to 2.1 million a year in 2030.
- **Most young people killed or injured in road accidents** in low and middle-income countries are pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists or users of public transport.
- **Correctly used seat-belts reduce the risk of death** in the event of a car accident by up to 61%.
- **Mandatory use of child restraints can reduce child deaths by up to 35%.** Children should be placed in age- and weight-appropriate restraints.

Source: World Health Organisation

income countries. In addition, the poor in low and middle-income countries are more likely to be the victims of a road traffic accident. They are also more vulnerable to increased poverty because they are less able to deal with the financial implications of an accident.

The economic costs of road accidents to developing countries are enormous. Costs in low and middle-income countries are estimated at between US\$65 billion to US\$100 billion – more than the total annual amount received in development

aid – and cost governments about two per cent of their gross national product. In many low and middle-income countries, a large proportion of road traffic casualties are from the younger, wage-earning groups. In Africa, for instance, with 50 per cent of the population below the age of 16 years, road accidents among economically active young people place a huge economic burden on countries, while the costs of importing medicines and providing appropriate care for road traffic victims further strain resources.

Why are young road users more at risk?

Young road users are at risk of road traffic injuries for a number of reasons. Some of the risk factors that apply to adult road users also apply to children and young people: speeding, drink-driving, not using helmets, not wearing seat-belts, not using child restraints and poor visibility all increase the likelihood of incurring a road traffic injury. In addition, there are some risk factors that are specific to (or increased among) young road users. Developmental factors, such as the small size of children, means they are less likely to be seen by drivers, while developmentally it is hard for them to judge the speed of an approaching car. Among adolescents, risk-taking behaviour and peer pressure are also important factors that increase their risk of a road traffic injury. Environmental factors are also important in increasing young road users' risk of a road accident: in many parts of the world children, young adults and other vulnerable road users have been given inadequate consideration when urban planning decisions have been made. As a result, they are often forced to share transport space with motorised vehicles, increasing their chances of being involved in a road traffic crash.

What can be done?

Road traffic injuries can be prevented. Most of the interventions that reduce the



Photo: Veronica Yates, CRIN

risk of road traffic injuries among the general population will also reduce the occurrence among young people. For example, implementing and enforcing legislation on risk factors have been shown to be effective in a wide range of settings around the world. In addition, however, experience from high-income countries shows that sustained efforts to implement appropriate interventions targeted specifically at children and young adults can lead to great success in reducing the number of deaths and injuries among this population group.

The World Health Organisation advocates a systems approach to the prevention of road traffic injuries. This means that governments or policy-makers who aim to make the roads less hazardous need to understand the system as a whole and the interaction between its elements, in order to identify where there is potential to intervene. In particular, this approach means recognising that humans make mistakes and are highly vulnerable, and accommodating this vulnerability and fallibility in the road system. This places less responsibility on the victim and more on the architects of the transportation system. In the case of children, this means recognising children's vulnerability and their limitations in making 'sensible'

The case of India: Highest number of road deaths

The BBC reported in June that India has the highest rate of road traffic deaths anywhere in the world. In 2006, 100,000 people died and an estimated 2,000,000 were seriously injured – more victims than from AIDS, TB and malaria combined.

In spite of the human and financial costs involved (some three per cent of India's gross domestic product every year), very little has been invested in improving the situation.

It is possible to buy a driving license without ever taking a test.

Legislation is now being reviewed which would introduce road safety agencies at state and national levels to bring more attention to the issue, but how this will be implemented remains to be seen.

[Source: BBC]

decisions on the road, and then modifying the environment in which children operate and the actions of other road users who might pose a risk to them.

Interventions

Changing road user behaviour

Effective interventions among the general population include:

- reducing speed through the introduction and implementation of speed limits
- reducing drink-driving through setting and enforcing limits for blood alcohol concentration
- increasing the use of helmets on motorcycles through legislation, enforcement and raising public awareness
- increasing the use of seatbelts and child restraints (infant seats, child restraints and booster seats) for car occupants through legislation and enforcement of mandatory laws.

It is important that legislation and enforcement is accompanied by increased public awareness of tried and tested interventions. However, there is a lack of evidence that interventions aimed solely at educating children on how to be safe on the roads have any effect on reducing traffic-related injuries.

Adapting the environment

Governments and policy-makers aiming for a sustainable transport system are faced with a complex task, and the needs of various groups of road users may conflict. In their decision-making, urban and road planners should consciously consider the needs of all road users. However, in many countries, the planning of road transport systems and urban development has prioritised the needs of motorised road users over those of non-motorised users.

Reassess the priority that has been given to motorised transport. This may require that new infrastructure be built, or that road space between non-motorised and motorised traffic is segregated, so that each group has enough space on the transport network.

Direct more resources towards improving pedestrian and cyclist safety.

Modifying the road environment to accommodate pedestrian needs would also have health benefits other than injury prevention, such as increased physical activity and reduced pollution.

Make infrastructural interventions, including safe crossings – zebra crossings or raised crossings – near school areas, and the availability of foot and bicycle paths. Such interventions can also be used to prevent children from crossing motorised traffic, through the provision, for instance, of well-lit footbridges and tunnels. Restricting or calming traffic on roads that children use as play areas is another effective intervention.

Consider the specific needs of children: if walking and cycling were made safer, and public transport modes were accessible and affordable, fewer children would need to travel to school in their parents' vehicles.

Children have a need and a right to play: their play spaces should be contained in a safe manner – for instance, with fencing – and with safe access, such as from footpaths or bridges. Alternatively, play spaces should be set far enough away from areas where there is high-speed traffic, so that if children suddenly run into the road – when chasing a ball, for instance – they will not be at risk from moving traffic.

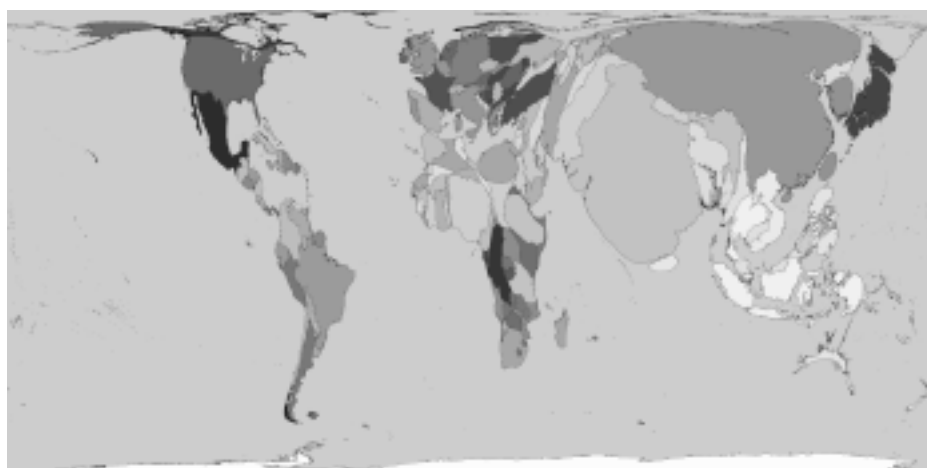
Investment in road safety will reap wider health benefits

Road traffic injuries among children and young people are a serious public health problem in many countries, particularly in low and middle-income countries, with the poor and vulnerable most at risk. Despite the fact that this issue places a huge strain on economies and healthcare systems, in most countries the issue has yet to be placed high on the political agenda and receive funding and attention proportional to the scale of the problem.

Fortunately, the political will to take on this issue is increasing in a number of countries. It is important to highlight the synergies between road traffic injuries and other important challenges facing policy-makers today. With growing recognition of the contribution of motorised transport to pollution and global warming, and concern over rising obesity rates, investment in road safety at national and international levels has the potential to impact on the broader health and welfare of individuals and communities.

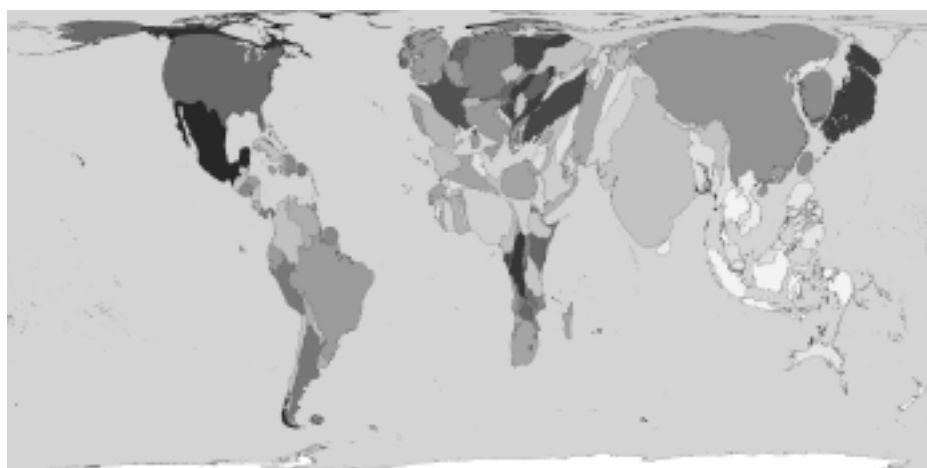
World map of city living

Territory size shows the proportion of all people living in urban areas in the world, that live in that territory.



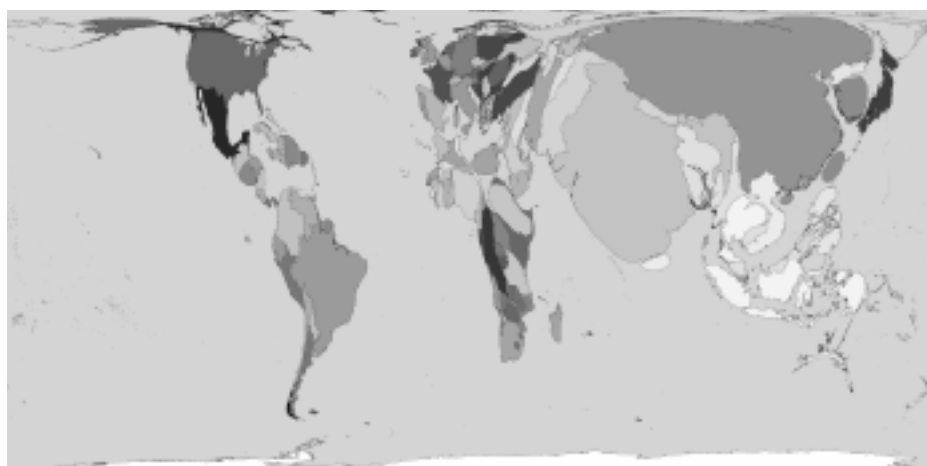
World population map

The size of each territory shows the relative proportion of the world's population living there.



World map of road deaths

Territory size shows the proportion of all road traffic accident deaths worldwide that occurred there.



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The authors are staff members of the World Health Organisation. The authors alone are responsible for the views expressed in this publication, which do not necessarily represent the decisions or policies of the World Health Organisation.

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What makes a city child friendly?

Francesca Moneti gives some pointers on implementing child rights at the city level.

Poverty and exclusion among urban children testify to a lack of commitment to guaranteeing children's rights. In poor urban areas, many children spend their days on the streets engaging in different activities to earn money for themselves or to bring back to their families. Many are exposed to violence and exploitation. They lack a secure home, have little or no access to health and education services, and have little space or opportunity to play. While this reality is most evident in large urban areas in the developing world, it is also an increasingly recognised challenge in affluent cities in Europe and other parts of the industrialised world where various forms of exclusion, abuse and exploitation threaten children and young people.

The Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) is a worldwide partnership of stakeholders, including governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) at international, national and local levels, working to implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) at sub-national level. The aim of the movement, which emerged from the City Summit held in Istanbul in 1996, is to engage and support local governments in promoting children's rights.

CFCI helps to develop municipal plans of action for children, set up legal and institutional frameworks based on the UNCRC, make budgetary arrangements for children and monitor the progress made in guaranteeing child rights. In a child-friendly city (CFC), children are not beneficiaries but active citizens who contribute ideas, opinions and expertise in developing policies and practical solutions to their problems. This means regularly assessing and analysing the situation of children and refining policies, laws, regulations and budgets, with children's participation, to better address their needs.

Working at local level, it is feasible to seriously engage adolescents and younger children as well as their parents and caregivers. This can generate perspectives



“A child-friendly city is a city, or any local system of governance, committed to fulfilling children’s rights. It is a city where the voices, needs, priorities and rights of children are an integral part of public policies, programmes and decisions. It is, as a result, a city that is fit for all.”

Child Friendly Cities Framework for Action



Photo: Havana, Cuba. Mark Wilshin

and ideas that may be different from those of administrators or service providers. It can also stimulate co-operation among those who are responsible for the provision of services and those who often do not have access to them.

Between 2000 and 2005, the CFCI Secretariat compiled experiences of child-friendly cities worldwide and developed the CFC Framework for Action and Toolkit.

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The international agenda

A number of international agreements require action at local level, including the Millennium Declaration and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Follow-up reports to the Millennium Declaration note strategies such as "supporting government efforts to strengthen local governance in urban and rural areas". They stress that goals should be "localised" or translated into practical objectives for local government.

In the outcome document of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children (May 2002), Member States declare that, "Local governments and authorities can ensure that children are at the centre of development agendas. By building on ongoing initiatives, such as child-friendly communities and cities without slums, mayors and local leaders can significantly improve the lives of children.

The Framework for Action identifies nine building blocks and corresponding checklists to promote discussion and guide action toward developing a child-friendly city.



Agbogbloshi: Accra, Ghana

1. Promoting children's active participation:

inform and involve children and reflect their views and experiences as individual human beings, rights holders and equal, active citizens. Child participation is fundamental to the whole process of building a child-friendly city. The participation of children in decision-making processes makes them partners in the city's governance system. The unique perspective of children has to be taken into account in the decisions made by the city.

2. A child-friendly legal framework:

ensure that legislation, regulatory frameworks and procedures consistently promote and protect the rights of all children.

3. A city-wide children's rights strategy:

develop a detailed, comprehensive strategy or agenda for building a child-friendly city, based on the UNCRC. A city-wide strategy ensures that provisions made under the law are converted into coherent policies and actions. Local plans of action for children will set goals and targets for the city.

4. A children's rights unit or co-ordinating mechanism:

develop permanent structures in local government to ensure that children's perspectives are prioritised. Make special institutional arrangements to ensure the plan of action is implemented and that policy and practice are rooted in the system.

5. Child impact assessment and evaluation:

ensure that there is a systematic process to assess the impact of law, policy and practice on children – in advance, during and after implementation.

6. A children's budget:

ensure adequate resource commitment and budget analysis for children.

7. A regular state of the city's children report:

ensure there is sufficient monitoring and data collection on the state of children and their rights. Regular analysis of data on the status of the city's children is a prerequisite for planning and informs decisions on setting priorities and goals.

8. Making children's rights known:

raise awareness of children's rights among adults and children. Appreciating and becoming aware of their rights in the local context allows children to relate ethical and philosophical principles to the reality they experience in everyday life and their surrounding environment.

9. Independent advocacy for children:

support non-governmental organisations and develop independent human rights institutions – children's ombudspersons – to promote children's rights. There is scope for involving children in creating such institutions.

Child friendly cities: Best practice examples



Photo: © Jeff Black/IRIN. A view of Manshiet Nasser, an informal settlement on the edge of Cairo, Egypt

Tracking children's use of the environment

Urban planning can have serious consequences for children's safety on the roads and change how and where they play. Consulting with children as part of the planning process can counter these dangers and affect how and where supermarkets, roads and other urban developments are built.

In Norway every municipality must by law appoint someone to represent children in urban planning processes. To strengthen this role, a creative new project has been designed to deepen understanding about how children use their environment through the use of interactive digitalised maps. The project can also be adapted using hard copy maps or Google Earth and for municipal planning outside urban areas.

"Tracking Children", launched by the Norsk Form and the Norwegian Mapping Authority, with the participation of the Norwegian Ombudsperson's Office for Children, has become a systematic way of consulting with children in a number of municipalities whenever a planning proposal is underway.

Children describe how they use the area marked for development by zooming in or drawing on the maps and responding to questions. If a car park is planned, for example, children will be asked how they use the space where the car park would be – do they use it as a playground? Is there a nearby lake where they go fishing or swimming? If a bridge or pedestrian crossing is planned, planners need to find out what

children consider to be the most dangerous parts of the road. By drawing the route they take to school and highlighting the areas where they feel unsafe, children can influence where a crossing is built. It is important to understand this from a child's perspective because they will have a different view of the traffic; their view could be obscured by a bush for example that would not affect an adult's vision of the road.

Information gleaned from asking children about planning initiatives is fed back to the planners as part of the planning process and has influenced how urban plans have been implemented.

For more information, contact the Norwegian Ombudsperson for Children's Office at: post@barneombudet.no

Middle East and North Africa: hope for a child friendly city?

The Amman Declaration, which is the outcome document of a the 'Children and the City Conference' held in Jordan in 2002, sets out a vision for child friendly cities in the MENA region.

The Child Protection Initiative (CPI) was launched in response to the Amman declaration. It aims to strengthen the capacities of local authorities to improve the well being of children; enhance knowledge of effective policies and programmes; build a knowledge base on key issues; share best practice; and establish a funding mechanism to deal with risks that children face at the local level.

Studies on the situation of children and agencies responsible for their welfare and protection were carried out during the first phase of the initiative in the cities of Riyadh, Amman, Khartoum, Alexandria, Sana'a, Beirut, Casa Blanca, and Medina Munawara, Kuwait City, Gaza, Algiers and Tehran.

The next phase will involve providing programmes for institutional capacity building and technical and material assistance.

The CPI's study on Gaza led to a consultation in December 2007 on CFC principles and strategies and regional and international experiences. Recommendations were made on eight themes: children's participation, awareness raising in communities and in the city, assessing local needs, developing a city-wide children's strategy, institutionalising children's budgets, forming partnerships, building capacities and promoting a regional child-friendly cities initiatives in MENA.

Recommendations were also made to establish a number of bodies to run and support the regional CFC network. This would include establishing a regional network of child-friendly mayors; creating a secretariat in the region to support the development of an independent unit to monitor children's rights in the region (proposed in Tehran for the first two years); and launching a regional resource guide and pilot programmes in certain cities.

To read the Amman Declaration, visit: <http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=17855&flag=report>

Factfile: A guide to strategic litigation

CRIN recently produced a guide to strategic litigation. The guide aims to help those working for children's rights to understand what strategic litigation is and consider it as an option for effecting change for children. The report includes sections on each of the following:

WHAT is strategic litigation?

Strategic litigation, sometimes called impact litigation, involves selecting and bringing a case to the courtroom with the goal of creating broad change in society. People who bring strategic litigation want to use the law to leave a lasting mark beyond just winning the matter at hand. This means that strategic litigation cases are as much concerned with the effects that they will have on larger populations and governments as they are with the end result of the cases themselves.

WHEN should strategic litigation be considered? When would it make sense to bring a case? What factors influence this decision? When can you expect to get results? What sort of timeline will you operate on?

WHO can bring strategic litigation? Who are the key players? How can people or organisations get involved?

WHERE would you bring strategic litigation? How would you choose where to file a case and where would it most make sense to file your case?

HOW would you bring strategic litigation? As it can be a complicated process, how would you go about finding a lawyer, proving the case and following up?

WHY should you consider bringing strategic litigation and what can strategic litigation do?

Remember – the child applicant's rights must be fully respected

If a child is technically the person taking the legal action, or using a human rights mechanism, then of course their informed consent must be gained and they must be consulted and their instructions followed at all stages. If you are acting on behalf of a child who is judged not to have the capacity to give an informed consent, then you must still keep them informed as far as possible, and in all decisions about the action,

their best interests must be the paramount consideration.

Strategic litigation is a creative and powerful advocacy tool, but it may not always be the best or most appropriate option. A number of questions should be answered before pursuing it, including:

- what could strategic litigation do for your cause?
- what difficulties are you likely to encounter?
- would there be other ways to achieve the same result?

What can it do?

- **Rule of law:** the clearest goal is to alter existing laws, whether by enforcing or clarifying them, challenging or building a body of new laws.
- **Advocacy:** it can be an excellent tool for advocacy and advancing your cause or goal, and a single case can have a dramatic impact. Advocacy inside the courtroom is only a part of a much greater mission, and your case gives you an opportunity to send your message out to the media, the public and the governing forces.
- **Awareness:** it can bring a cause or issue into the limelight, sometimes at far less expense than an extensive media campaign. This attention can raise general awareness and foster public discussion and debate.
- **Education:** it can educate the courts and legal professionals about your cause and the way that laws have brought about or failed to remedy the problem.
- **Reform:** it can serve as a way for people to organise and bring pressure on a government for social change or legal reform. Strategic lawsuits can hold governments accountable for their actions, mobilise communities, change public attitudes and empower people whose rights have been violated.

Is strategic litigation the right decision? What are the difficulties with strategic litigation?

A few issues to think about:

- **Cost.** Strategic litigation can be an incredibly expensive undertaking and a costly way of launching an advocacy campaign or bringing attention to an issue.
- **Control.** Strategic litigation can be very difficult to control as you are bringing in both plaintiffs and lawyers to your campaign.
- **Lack of impartiality.** When the courts are not truly independent from the government, it may not be worthwhile to bring strategic litigation in an effort to change the way the law works.
- **Impact.** As is the risk with any lawsuit, the outcome cannot be guaranteed. Even if you win in the courtroom, your case may have little impact on the ground if there is no system in place to enforce new rights, laws, practices or policies.

Strategic litigation is but one of many strategies to advocate your cause. When considering whether to bring strategic litigation, you should look at all of the other ways you might be able to use your resources to further your goal. For instance, you may be able to achieve similar results of a trial through awareness campaigns, lobbying efforts, community outreach programmes or other forms of advocacy.

The full report is available on the CRIN website in html format at:
<http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=17127>

In word format:
http://www.crin.org/docs/Guide_to_Strategic_Litigation.doc

The report was written by Patrick Geary, Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP for CRIN

Strategic litigation: protecting children's right to a habitable environment

New York City: Williamsburg around the Bridge Association vs Giuliani

New York City's sandblasting on bridges running through poor neighbourhoods have caused lead dust to rain down on communities of colour, raised soil lead levels well above safe levels, and doubled the already elevated blood lead levels in children.

The widespread lead contamination has driven communities to seek testing and treatment of their children and measures to prevent future contamination under the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act. In Williamsburg, the Community Alliance for the Environment was formed, bringing together Hispanic and Hasidic communities – groups that have often been in conflict over scarce housing and other resources.

New York City/ Giuliani lost the case and are required to develop an Environmental Impact Statement before creating an environmental hazard in New York state.

In 1991, among children in families with incomes below \$6,000 living in larger cities (over one million), 80.4 per cent of white and 96.5 per cent of African-American children were projected to be affected with elevated blood levels.

[Source: Race, Poverty and the Environment, Matthew J. Chachere: <http://www.urbanhabitat.org/node/949>

Read the judgment: <http://www.crin.org/Law/instrument.asp?InstID=1354>

South Africa: Children's housing rights

A community of squatters evicted from an informal settlement in Wallacedene had set up minimal shelters of plastic and other materials at a sports centre adjacent to Wallacedene community centre. The shelters lacked basic sanitation or electricity. The group brought an action under sections 26 (the right of access to adequate housing) and 28 (children's right

to basic shelter) of the South African Constitution.

The High Court found that the respondents had taken "reasonable measures within available resources to achieve the progressive realisation of the right to have access to adequate housing" – as required by section 26(2) of the Constitution. However, because the right of children to shelter in section 28 was not subject to available resources, the High Court held that the applicants were entitled to be provided with basic shelter. In an appeal to the Constitutional Court, the Court found no violation of section 28 but found instead a violation of the right to adequate housing in section 26. The Court held that section 26 obliges the State to devise and implement a coherent, co-ordinated housing programme and that, in failing to provide for those in most desperate need, the government had failed to take reasonable measures to progressively realise the right to housing. The Court ordered that the government "devise, fund, implement and supervise measures to provide relief to those in desperate need". The South African Human Rights Commission agreed to monitor and if necessary report on the government's implementation of this order.

The decision had a major impact on housing policy in South Africa. Most municipalities allocated funds in their budgets to address the needs of those in desperate need.

[Source: ESCR-Net]

Read the judgment: <http://www.crin.org/Law/instrument.asp?InstID=1353>

Peru: Lead poisoning

La Oroya, which lies 175 kilometres north of Lima, is considered the fifth most polluted city in the world. Ninety-nine per cent of the 12,000 children who live there have elevated levels of lead in their blood. Ninety-seven per cent of the infant population suffers physical or mental impairments such as deformities or blindness as a result of air pollution; others have died.

The population has been a victim of pollution since mining in the area began in 1922.

However, since 1997, when US firm Doe Run began its operations, pollution levels

have risen, with daily emissions of a ton of sulphur dioxide, lead and arsenic. Although the operation was due to end in 2006, Doe Run persuaded the Peruvian government to delay the deadline a number of times, leading the local inhabitants to sue the Peruvian State.

The case was won in the Peruvian Constitutional Court, which ruled that the State had reneged on its responsibilities, thus affecting the human right to health.

However, the Peruvian State did not comply with the judgment. Sixty-five residents of La Oroya pursued the case at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which also ruled in their favour.

Read the judgment: <http://www.cidh.org/medidas/2007.sp.htm>

Nigeria: Niger Delta youth movement vs oil companies

The Niger Delta youth movement has taken six oil companies and the federal government to a Federal High Court in Abuja.

Onengiye Elekima, the President of the Movement, is suing five major oil companies and the federal government for allegedly flaring gas and pumping noxious chemical substances into the atmosphere in the Niger Delta region over a 50-year period.

The Niger Delta youth movement is demanding financial damages, arguing that their rights to life and dignity, and to acquire and own immovable property within the region are being breached. The substances are said to cause asthma, chronic bronchitis, leukaemia and cancer. They have led to acid rain and soot, resulting in massive damage to the roofs of their buildings and to plants.

The companies being sued are Shell Petroleum Development Company, Total FinaElf Ltd, ExxonMobil Unltd, Chevron Texaco Ltd, Nigeria Agip Oil Company Ltd, Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation and the Nigerian federal government.

Read more: <http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=16913&flag=news>

Falling through the cracks: Child migrants in Southern Africa

Children leaving their homes in search of work are often more vulnerable in small towns and settlements than in big cities. Christopher Bjornestad explains how to help child migrants better prepare for the risks ahead.

More often than not, the migration of unaccompanied children looking for work is viewed through the lens of rural to urban movements. This is understandable, since children who leave their homes for 'greener pastures' often travel to urban centres, which offer more work opportunities, social services, support from relatives and nationals, and excitement. However, focusing almost all of our attention on the care and protection of poor, vulnerable young people who migrate from rural areas to large cities is a miscalculation. Programmes created to provide support to migrant children in urban centres do not take into account large numbers of them living and working in small towns and settlements along transport corridors, border areas and farming communities. This is particularly true in southern Africa.

Over the past three years, Save the Children in Mozambique has conducted research which reveals that significant numbers of children, some as young as ten, migrate alone or with other young people over long distances within their own countries. They also cross borders into neighbouring countries without ever reaching major destinations such as Johannesburg or Pretoria, Maputo or Beira. Through in-depth interviews, we have observed that migrant children, who are often orphans, in these locations are susceptible to various forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation, and are in need of support and protection.

Mozambican children – both boys and girls – from all over the country, often from over a thousand kilometres away, are found eking out a meagre existence in border towns such as Ressano Garcia and Komatipoort along the Mozambique-South African frontier. Since the turn of the century, as the economy in Zimbabwe has deteriorated, thousands of children

Map: Microsoft Virtual Earth/ Reuters AlertNet



known as 'border jumpers' are increasingly found in Musina in the northern Limpopo Province of South Africa, and in Machipanda and Inchope along the Beira Corridor in Mozambique.

In fact, there is evidence to suggest that children in Mozambique will actually leave their homes in cities to find opportunities in much less densely populated areas, which in some cases hardly appear as specks on a map. Some do not appear on maps at all. Yet these rustic towns and settlements provide children on the move with a means to earn much-needed income for their own survival and to help their struggling families back home. They are also places that have produced an unsafe, unsavoury and dangerous environment for young people.

Calculating the risks

Save the Children carried out research with a view to gaining a better understanding of the risks and vulnerabilities that local children face in Caia and Chimwara, located at a ferry crossing point on the north-south corridor. A subsequent report called *A Bridge Across the Zambezi: What needs to be done for children?* showed that a demand for various goods and services by Mozambican truck drivers and motorists

awaiting the ferry has led to sexual abuse and exploitation in the form of child prostitution, and to widespread child labour and incidents of physical abuse in the area. During the research, Save the Children quickly discovered that it was not just local children involved in these activities. Girls and young women were coming from considerable distances – from cities such as Quelimane, Beira and Nampula, as well as from rural districts such as Mocuba, Gurue, Nicoadala. As we learned, they are young people who came to this area deliberately in search of work, or who stumbled upon the area during their journey, and decided to stay and try to make a living.

One young man who was interviewed explained that some of the girls also came from neighbouring countries:

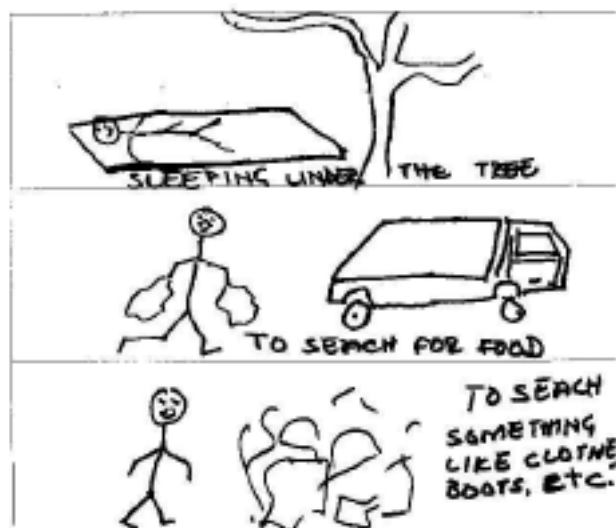
We know these girls who are prostitutes very well. They are 13, 14 and 15 years old. Some girls have come from Zimbabwe and Malawi. That girl there is about 12 years old and comes from Zimbabwe (pointing). She is returning from her night with men. She will sleep with seven men a night sometimes. Her sister is also a prostitute. They work here, but are not from here.

Identifying abuse

Our Broken Dreams: Child migration in southern Africa, a publication released in May of this year, documents interviews carried out in four countries. Save the Children researchers interviewed a large number of unaccompanied migrant children who had crossed the border into neighbouring countries without legal documentation. The majority of children with whom we spoke were not found in cities (though some may have had longer-term plans to travel to them), but in small towns, settlements and farming communities close to borders and along transit routes connecting Harare and Maputo to Johannesburg.

Pictures by Zimbabwean boys at the dump near Musina

"Poverty made this decision for me"



Are weekend days different?
What source of income is there for everyday needs?



Glynis Clacherty and Associates

Boys and girls as young as 12 shared their experiences of sexual abuse, exploitative labour, their difficulties accessing school or healthcare because of a lack of identification, and discrimination and xenophobia. When caught by the authorities, they described severe beatings and rape, having money and possessions confiscated, being imprisoned with adults and then repatriated in shackles by train, even though there are supposed to be laws to protect them in the host countries.

Foreign unaccompanied children, desperate for any kind of work, are often hired as farm hands, maids, kitchen and bar staff, informal traders and construction workers. Their illegal status and the fact that they are often willing to work for less money allows unscrupulous bosses to take unfair advantage. A Zimbabwean boy who we interviewed in Musina explained:

The way people here are treated when you don't have the right documentation, they will be seeing you as an animal. They don't even want to see you walking in their country if you don't have a passport

with a visa or an ID or work permit. They give you really hard work, and they can call the police who will come and pick you up. You can get deported without getting any of the money you agreed on.

Girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation at border crossings at the hands of immigration officials, soldiers, police and criminal gangs which roam these areas. The 'Magumaguma' along the Zimbabwe-South Africa border and 'Mareyanes' along the Mozambique-South Africa border are notorious thugs. Exploitation of children is the least of their crimes: rape, theft and others acts of violence were all reported by children who we interviewed. A Zimbabwean girl who crossed the border into South Africa told us a horrifying story of rape at the hands of the Magumaguma.

When they took my amainini (aunt) I heard her crying and didn't know what it was until they took me. Three boys took me. They took us and went to have sex with us without protection! So this is something that really hurts me.

In one respect, migrant children who travel to small towns and settlements are more vulnerable than children who end up in big cities. In cities such as Johannesburg and Pretoria in South Africa, and Manzini in Swaziland, national groups often provide each other with support. There are networks to help children find work, accommodation and ways of sending money home. A Zimbabwean boy interviewed in Johannesburg explained:

What I like about us Zimbabweans ... is that even if we never knew each other from home, we help each other. Let's say, maybe I get arrested today, I can call a friend and he can come and bribe the policeman for me. We always like holding hands and being there for each other.

In more rural areas, these support networks tend not to exist. This means children are much less likely to be protected by adults from their own countries.

Making an informed choice

Many migrant children explained that they were unaware of the risks that they

would face when travelling without documentation across borders. They talked about the importance of teaching children and their families about the dangerous realities of living alone in another country. In *Our Broken Dreams*, a Mozambican girl interviewed in Naas, a small settlement close to the South African border, offers advice to other children who consider leaving their homes and travelling across the border to other countries:

I will tell them not to come here without having some documents because life here is really difficult and no one will help you if they don't know you. Everything that people say is a lie. When they say there are lots of jobs and ones that are easy to get, that is a lie. You better stay in your country until you grow up and decide for yourself.

In response, Save the Children in Mozambique has produced a children's

magazine which will be distributed to young people in various countries. The magazine was made with a view to informing children about what they can expect if they leave home without proper documentation and parental protection. In particular, the magazines will be distributed to children in and out of school in both urban and rural areas of southern Mozambique. While this might not deter young people from leaving because of their desperate economic situation, it is our hope that they will at least be better prepared for what they might encounter.

Christopher Bjornestad is the Child Migration Specialist at Save the Children UK and Save the Children Norway in Mozambique

For more information or a copy of the magazine, contact:
scuk.documentation@teledata.mz
or Chris Mclvor, Programme Director,
Save the Children UK in Mozambique at
pdirector@scfuk.org.mz

New Research: Young and displaced with a disability – refugee camp or urban community?

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children recently researched how displaced persons with disabilities access their rights differently in refugee camps compared with those who are dispersed in urban areas. Below are some key findings from the research.

The research found that in all cases, services are better in refugee camps than in refugee-impacted urban areas.

- **Access to services:** It is easier to identify refugees with disabilities through standard registration and census operations in camps than in urban areas. The presence of a range of humanitarian agencies with technical expertise makes it easier to set up specialised programmes for persons with disabilities.
- **Legal status:** Urban communities are more dispersed which makes it harder to identify refugees with disabilities. Urban refugees are often undocumented and lack any legal status as refugees or asylum seekers. Their irregular status may mean that they do not wish to be identified and prefer to remain "hidden" from the

authorities. In Ecuador for example, many Colombian refugees do not register with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or apply for asylum as they fear making themselves known to the armed groups in the border area. They are excluded from public services due to their lack of legal status, government restrictions, discrimination and lack of access to information. These difficulties are multiplied for urban refugees with disabilities, who face physical, social and attitudinal barriers.

- **Education:** One of the most positive examples found in some camps was in access to inclusive education with special needs teaching assistants and instruction in Braille and sign language. While in none of the settings surveyed were children with disabilities directly excluded from education, in many they were indirectly discriminated against because of a lack of special needs teachers, teaching aids and accessible schools which made attendance for many difficult and drop-out rates high.
- **Few services for children with disabilities** existed besides education and where services were available, they tended to focus on those with physical and sensory disabilities rather than mental disabilities.

- **Information dissemination:** Difficulties in information dissemination in urban areas mean that urban refugees with disabilities often have no information about national services or facilities for persons with disabilities available locally, or about their rights.
- **Physical accessibility:** Problems of physical accessibility are often worse for refugees living in urban areas. It is easier for site planners to take into account the needs of refugees with disabilities when planning camp layout and infrastructure. Such changes are not possible in urban areas, unless urban infrastructure for the population in general is made more accessible. Urban refugees usually have little choice when looking for housing and must take what they can find.
- **Protection:** In refugee camp settings there are more formal avenues for refugees with disabilities to report protection incidents than in urban areas.

Dale Buscher is Director of Protection at the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children.

Download: "Disabilities among refugees and conflicted-affected populations" at: <http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=17730&flag=report>

Making accessibility a reality on the streets of Norway

Mari Sognnæs Andresen describes how young people graded shops and restaurants in Norwegian towns to show there is no such thing as a disability, only a disabling environment.

Photo: PRESS, Save the Children Youth, Norway



"Disabled is not something that we are, but something that we become as a result of society's lack of respect for diversity." *Norwegian Association of the Disabled (NAD)*

Norway might be one of the richest countries in the world, but we have not managed to create an inclusive society for children with disabilities. Norway has the capacity to do this: we know what needs to be done, but we need to make it happen.

An ill-adjusted society

Urban areas in Norway are full of barriers for children with disabilities. A survey from 2005 undertaken by the Norwegian Association of People with Disabilities revealed that only seven out of 160 Norwegian high schools complied with accessibility regulations for young people with disabilities. This means many young people with disabilities have to go to school outside their local community, which makes it more difficult to integrate properly into their own society.

In other social arenas the situation is even worse. Shops, restaurants, cafes, cinemas and public transport are like an obstacle course: stairs up to cafes are inaccessible to wheelchairs; shops aisles are too

narrow to squeeze through; and many public buildings do not have lifts. Even in places that are built with accessibility in mind there are challenges: lifts are made to transport people with disabilities, but instead they are often used as storage rooms. Restaurants that have a specially adjusted toilet sometimes have stairs up to that toilet. This goes to show that accessibility is just a distant concern of managers.

Public transport in Oslo is advertised as accessible, but that is only true if you are getting on and off at the few designated bus stops. It sounds unbelievable, but this is the reality. All these obstacles make everyday life harder. How can people expect children with disabilities to be well integrated into society when they can only go out with their friends if they get off the tram at a certain stop?

"If I could decide in this world, I would want more ramps – not only stairs; that way I could go out with the others," said a 16-year-old Norwegian girl. In Norway we have a saying that goes: "There is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing." The same saying should apply to children with disabilities in urban areas: "There is no such thing as a disability, only a disabling environment."

Advocacy in a wheelchair

The fact that children with disabilities are unable to participate in social activities motivated PRESS – Save the Children Youth to start a national campaign. We had a theory that while there are many rules and regulations that encourage accessibility for people with disabilities in restaurants, cafes, cinemas and other public places, when it actually comes to building them, these things are often forgotten. PRESS wanted to give people a reminder. Seventeen of our local groups in cities and some smaller towns rented wheelchairs and got going. We wanted to check if shops and restaurants could be accessed easily by people with disabilities. If a place passed the test, we posted a sticker on the door that said "accessible"; if a place failed, we posted a sticker on the door that said "inaccessible". We also gave a letter to the manager which set out what they needed to change. The response to the campaign was pretty positive. Most of the managers and other employees were responsive and wanted to do better in this area. However, some got angry and demanded to know who had given us the authority to carry out this check. We told them the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) gave us the right.

Making urban areas accessible for children with disabilities is an issue that needs constant attention. What many shopkeepers do not see or cannot read in numbers, they do not care about. It is therefore crucial that young people and children without disabilities also help to tackle the problem. It is not the children who are disabled; it is society's failure to adjust that makes them disabled. By ratifying the UNCRC, States have agreed to take responsibility for making their communities fit for children – this includes children with disabilities. It is time for action!

Mari Sognnæs Andresen was formerly president of PRESS – Save the Children Youth, Norway

For more information, contact Kirsten Kvalø, current president of PRESS, at kirsten@press.no

Freedom of association? Not if you're young and living in the UK

It's about time the UK showed its children some respect and allowed them to be seen in public, say Alex Gask and Charlotte Stetzel.

On 16 December 1991, the government of the United Kingdom (UK) ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the UNCRC). In so doing, the UK agreed that all children should be "brought up in the spirit of the ideals proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, and in particular in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity".

Its obligation under the UNCRC is to "respect and ensure the rights set forth in the Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind".

While many of these rights are protective and uncontroversial, such as the right to life (Article 6), the right not to be trafficked (Article 11) and the right not to be separated from one's parents unless it is in the child's best interests (Article 9), the UNCRC also provides rights that respect a child's individuality and freedom. Article 15 is one such example and provides that:

"States Parties recognise the rights of the child to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly."

This means that, along with the right to freely express their views, the right to "receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds" and the right to "engage in play and recreational activities," the UK has agreed to protect the rights of children to associate freely with one another. While Article 15 allows for restrictions on this right where necessary, a commonsense approach would suggest that in a developed society like the UK, there should be little reason to restrict children associating with each other. However, in practice, since the ratification of the Convention, the UK has not only failed to take positive steps to encourage free association but has also introduced measure after measure that deliberately

and/or inevitably undermines Article 15 and other provisions of the UNCRC.

In 1998 the UK government introduced the Anti-social Behaviour Order (commonly known as an 'ASBO'). This is a non-criminal court order that prohibits any activities and behaviour named within it. Breach of an ASBO is a criminal offence punishable with imprisonment. Children as young as ten years old can be subjected to ASBOs, as long as the court considers that the child has behaved in a manner "that caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress" and that the ASBO is necessary. Crucially, since ASBOs are civil orders, hearsay evidence (even anonymous hearsay evidence) often forms the backbone of the police or local authority's evidence. Once imposed, ASBOs last for a minimum of two years, but often for far longer. Standard terms of ASBOs include prohibitions on using particular streets or parts of town and from associating with named individuals, but orders have been known to include bans on simply being in public places in groups of more than three or four people. Such terms not only make free association (not to mention a friendly football game) nearly impossible, they are also exceedingly easy to breach. Some might even say that the recipients are being set up to fail. This means that children are being given criminal punishments, including in some cases custodial sentences, for committing acts which are not in themselves illegal.

Anti-social behaviour legislation does not begin and end with the ASBO itself. The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 saw police officers, and 'three-weeks trained' Community Support Officers, given the power to disperse groups of people whose behaviour or mere presence they deem likely to cause others to feel harassed, alarmed or distressed, and also the power to take home under-16s who are out past

9pm without an adult (with no behavioural trigger needed at all). While these powers can only be exercised in certain areas, the deliberate targeting of young people and the potential for abuse are very apparent. Since the word 'group' is defined as meaning just two or more people, any gathering of under-18s in public places could be liable to dispersal if a passing pedestrian feels intimidated. Happily, legal challenges have effectively limited the trigger for the dispersal power to behaviour rather than mere presence, and the use of the curfew power to incidents where the under-16 is either causing or is in trouble. Nevertheless, these powers remain and are a strong indicator of the legislative attitude towards young people and their association in public spaces.

'Unwanted pests'

Perhaps the greatest barometer of the UK's sad attitude towards its own children is the invention and proliferation of the 'Mosquito' device. An ultrasonic speaker emitting an intensely uncomfortable sound that can only be heard by those under the age of 25, the Mosquito sounds like science fiction. Unfortunately, however, it is not; its discriminatory effect is explained by the natural deterioration of human hearing over time. While a person in their thirties may hear nothing, under-18s have described the noise emitted as making them feel like their "ears were going to pop", as "like a grinding in your ears, the worst sound ever" and as "incredibly loud and incredibly painful". The device is freely available to anyone with £500 to spare and thousands are now used across the country to deter young people from 'hanging around' near homes, businesses and even churches and community centres. Where once children might have been welcomed, or at least engaged with, they are now forced away by a device modelled on those used to keep away unwanted animal pests. Obviously, the



Mosquito can be heard by all people under 25 regardless of their behaviour – and, with no minimum age for those affected, regardless of whether they are an aggressive teen or a wide-eyed toddler.

Perhaps most disturbingly, the government refuses to condemn the Mosquito. A

number of police forces and local authorities have enthusiastically backed it as a crime prevention tool – even going so far as to use public funds to purchase devices for private businesses to use. Surely only science fiction could come up with any more degrading a device and any more blatant a way of ignoring the obligations owed to children under the UNCRC.

The widespread use of ASBOs against children, the dispersal and curfew powers given to the police and the disturbing popularity of the Mosquito device each indicate the troubled relationship that adults in the UK have with children. While there is no doubt that society desperately wants to protect the ‘good children’, it is equally clear that ‘bad children’ are despised and feared. And yet where is this bright line between the good and bad kids, the angels and devils? When it is *your* child being dragged home by the police after popping out to

buy some milk at 9:30 pm, or being prevented from buying that milk because the intense noise of the Mosquito prevents them even getting to the shop’s door, or receiving an ASBO for raucous behaviour while experimenting with cider, have they crossed the Rubicon and become the devil who should be feared and punished? Or are they perhaps just another child, with good habits and bad, who could do with some support while they grow and learn? The government needs to remember what it is to be young, and to pay a little more respect, if adults want to get respect back. It could make a start by ensuring that the rights to which it already subscribes within the UNCRC are given genuine protection.

Alex Gask is a solicitor at Liberty

Charlotte Stetzel is a trainee solicitor at Liberty.

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An interview with Satya Panigrahi – one of London’s youth mayors

Lambeth is one of four London boroughs to appoint a youth mayor. Youth mayors promote the views and interests of young people in local decision-making and have a fund they can use to launch projects for young people in the area. CRIN spoke to Satya Panigrahi (15) who was voted youth mayor of Lambeth in November 2007.



I wanted to become youth mayor to help young people. I had been researching facilities for young people in the area but all I found was the odd arts project. Then a councillor came to my school and told us about the chance to become youth mayor.

It’s like a presidential election!

To put ourselves forward we needed to get a certain number of votes and then,

for the second round, we had to draw up a manifesto so that all the young people in Lambeth could vote. There were about 25 candidates and our manifestos were all posted on the Youth Council website. Every school had ballot boxes and copies of our manifestos. There was also an online voting system.

By the time I leave I want every young person in Lambeth to know there is a youth mayor they can come to who can help them access facilities in their community. My manifesto was based on safety, security and sports, but because this is the first year that the role of youth mayor has existed, I have had to change my objectives. The main task for me this year is to raise the profile of the youth mayor. The term of office lasts for only one year. I am here to listen to all young people and take their voices to officials at a higher level.

When they found out I was youth

mayor, my friends said, “Yeah! You can do something for us; you can get us a skate

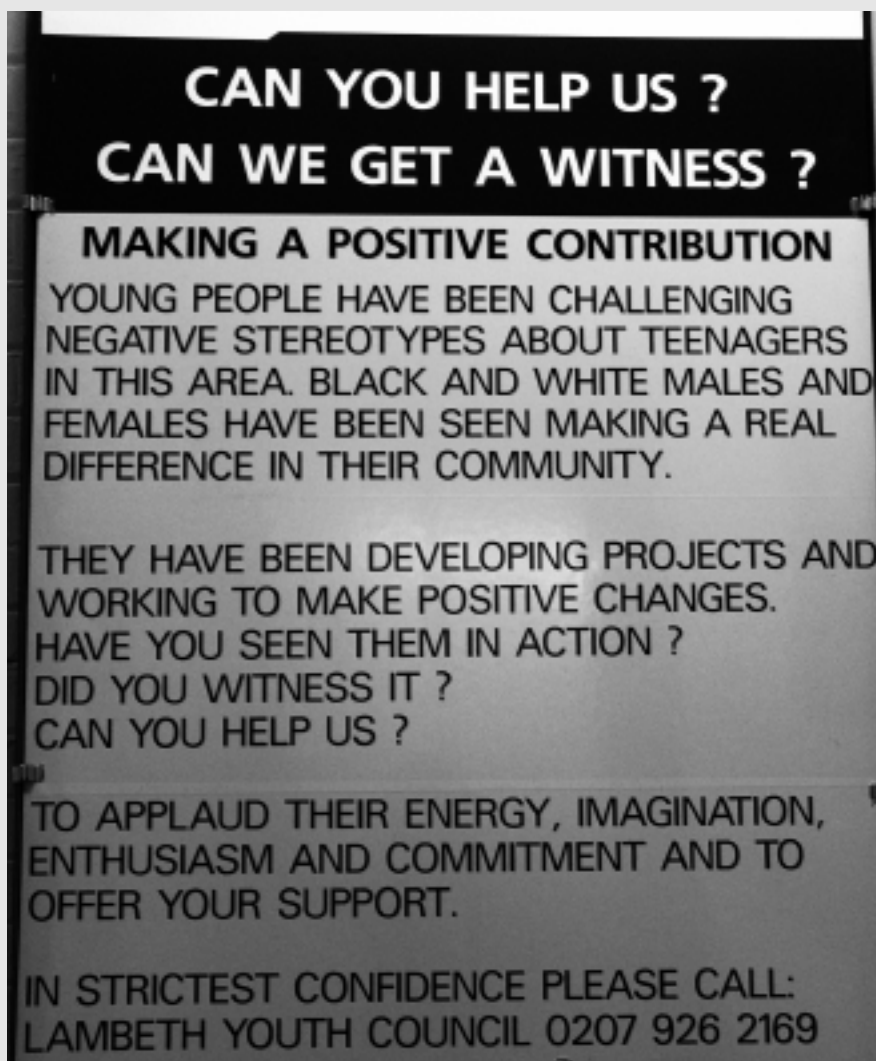
park!” And my teacher joked, “Hail to the youth mayor!” Some people think it’s neeky [nerdy], but I just think it’s up to them if that’s what they want to think. I think I was elected because I was confident in what I was going to provide and my friends and schoolmates believed in me.

I think the main problem facing young people in Lambeth is awareness.

They don’t know much about things that are going on around them: sports, facilities, media and stuff. Lambeth is the most multi-cultural part of London but young people don’t really care about ethnicity.

The first thing I did as youth mayor was to set up an advisory panel

of 21 young people throughout Lambeth from different backgrounds who all volunteer with different projects. They are able to advise me because they already have experience in working on projects for young people.



Lambeth. I have only lived in the UK for three years – before that I was living in India. I would like to keep doing this kind of work – this sort of opportunity doesn't exist in India. The UK gives everyone a chance.

Lots of adults think young people are all the same. The way a few young people are reported on in the media creates a negative impression of all young people. But there are lots of youth councils that have encouraged adults to listen to young people, and lately things have been changing a lot.

I can't really think of anything bad about my work – just that it takes time out of my personal life.

I would say to anyone who is thinking about being a youth mayor that it is an opportunity to help young people. It gives you the power to really change something and it's great work experience.

The one piece of advice I would give would be to listen to all young people around you.

Contact the youth mayor of Lambeth at: youthmayor@lambeth.gov.uk

We get a lot of projects presented to us, so sometimes it's hard to decide which ones to fund. We [Satya and the Youth Mayor Advisory Panel] have £25,000 to spend on projects for young people in Lambeth. We hold an open panel meeting every month and sometimes more often. Young people come and present proposals for project funding and we vote on them. Anyone can come and listen. We had an application the other day from primary school pupils who wanted their playground to be the best in Lambeth and they drew pictures of what they wanted it to look like.

Sometimes it's hard. I went to an event on housing strategy the other day and lots of adults were sitting around talking and then they ask my opinion and, although I get a briefing beforehand, it isn't always easy to understand. As I am promoting the role of the youth mayor, I mainly go to launch events and do a lot of interviews.

Tonight, for example, I am going to an event about housing and next week I am going to the launch of an arts programme for young people at the University of Surrey.

Some adults talk to me properly and understand and accept my ideas, but not everyone.

It's up to me when I want to come in to the office. I need to be in for three hours a week, but I often don't get home until 9:30. I normally come after school and then try to keep Friday nights and weekends free so I can play football, cricket and racquet sports and do my IT course on Saturdays. Being youth mayor isn't supposed to interfere with school and if I have exams I just tell the Youth Council a few months beforehand, although occasionally I have been to events during school time.

The best thing about being youth mayor is that I always get to meet new people and get to know more about

Extract from the Youth Mayor's manifesto:

Crime is one of the most important issues in our society. We all are directly or indirectly victims of the same. It is our moral duty to root out this evil from society. This we could achieve by encouraging competitive education among youth. We know health is wealth. Sound health provides sound thoughts to help society to prosper. By providing healthy life to our youth through sports and other cultural activities, we can reduce crimes in society to a great extent. My intention is to put the above ideas into action to eliminate crime from our borough.

I, if elected, would be a connection between young people and could provide the platform for exchange of thoughts and ideas through a youth club. Our youth club would have the facilities to organise competitions, sports, health camps, etc.

Cramming in childhood: Why Japan's children need a break

Fierce academic competition fuelled by demanding parents is leaving children with no free time and pushing them to breaking point, explains Noriko Kajiki.

Outdoor play for children in urban Japan has become extraordinary. Changes to play environments are partly responsible, as children's safety and security are prioritised over their need to discover and interact with other children. News of crimes against children and accidents involving them has become a media staple. The police force in the Japanese prefecture of Hyogo even has a rapid alert system that informs parents by mobile phone of 'suspicious individuals' and other risks to their children in play areas.

Children in urban areas are particularly restricted because their play spaces are artificial and constructed by adults. Children can make choices about which clubs to join, but they select from options imposed by adults instead of enjoying leisure time to do as they please.

However, the main barrier to recreation is that children simply have no spare time. Their schedules are organised and managed by adults. Most children are not allowed to grow and mature at their own pace: every bit of their time is accounted for.

The 'cram school' phenomenon

The results of a survey of second and fifth grade students (7-8 and 10-11 year olds respectively) at a school in Kobe city in 2006 shed light on the relationship between children's limited free time and outdoor play.

Cram schools are a common phenomenon in Japan. They aim to improve students' academic performance and prepare them intensively for exams. Cram schools for 12-year-old students typically finish at around 9:30 pm; for 10-year-olds they end at around 7 pm. Many students also go to cram schools at the weekend.

A minority of both year groups questioned – 16.5 per cent of Year 2 students and 19.5 per cent of Year 5 students – responded that they did not attend either cram schools or other after-school lessons. A total of 83.5

per cent of Year 2 and 80.5 per cent of Year 5 students said they attended one or both kinds of class. When asked how many times a week they attended, more than 50 per cent of Year 2 students responded one to three times; while 25 per cent of Year 5 students answered four times or more.

Activities for Year 2 students attending cram schools or after-school lessons include swimming, writing, piano lessons and sports. Year 5 students at Kumon – a well-known group of cram schools – reported that research was their most common activity, particularly in studying for junior high school entrance examinations.

The students were asked if they would like to play outdoors but did not have the opportunity to do so. A majority – 70.5 per cent of Year 2 students and 60.5 per cent of Year 5 students – answered 'yes'. The overwhelming reason given was that cram schools and after-school lessons left them with no free time (57.8 per cent of Year 2 students and 61.1 per cent of Year 5 students). Other reasons included because "it is dangerous", "I have homework or study to do", and "I have to stay at home".

A generation under pressure

Why are cram schools so popular? In recent years, income inequalities have become more visible as a result of Japan's economic recession. Bankruptcy is becoming more common, particularly among young people who are finding it harder to get a foothold in a good company. Parents have turned to spending more than one million yen a year (approximately \$10,000) on fees for their children's cram school to ensure their child will do well and end up on the right side of an ever-widening income gap.

In 1992, a new set of study guidelines, *Education free from pressure*, were promoted for children's education. They reduced the content of the curriculum and established a five-day school week. Prior to 1992 many children studied more than five

days a week. However, the new guidelines were seen by many as detrimental to children's academic performance. Parents who wanted their child to 'reach the top' worried that their future would be put at risk; they saw doing well at school as the key to being able to attend a good university and secure a job in a good company. Some parents send their children to study lessons or cram schools from infancy onwards.

Time to change

It is very positive for children to study hard if they are eager to do so. However, many children in Japan are pressured to study to this level by adults. Once children are accustomed to being controlled in this way, it is hard for them to think freely about what they want to do in the future. It is really important that adults should trust children's ability to decide for themselves. Parents may think they are pushing their children out of love, and tell themselves that they are doing it to give them a chance in life, but is it really in their children's best interests? Or are they playing out their own dreams through their children? They are moulding children into 'miniature adults': it is adults who are taking away children's time and opportunities for play, and society is indulging them in doing so. Many parents were themselves unable to play freely as they were growing up and therefore do not understand the powerful need for play time. At this juncture in Japan's social development, it is necessary to seriously promote children's right to play. There is a need for the next generation of parents to experience free and spontaneous play to create a society of happy, well-adjusted children.

Noriko Kajiki is an Associate Professor of the Division of Home Economics at Kobe Women's University in Japan.

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Brazil's young: On the margins of the city, at the centre of the violence

High rates of violence in São Paulo, fuelled by urban segregation, are predominantly affecting young males already on the fringes of society. The city must re-connect to stem the tide of violence, warns Paula Miraglia.

In a number of Latin American countries, the worst forms of violence have for many years taken the form of urban criminality – crimes against property, kidnapping, robbery, assault and homicide.

Brazil tops the rankings for the world's most violent countries. While in the United Kingdom the homicide rate hovers at around two for every 100,000 inhabitants – in the United States the rate is 5.9 per 100,000 and in Mexico it is 13 – in Brazil the rate is approximately 30 for every 100,000 inhabitants. This staggering number cannot be understood as an isolated phenomenon; it is part of a picture of urban violence that has built up over decades, especially in the largest urban centres. Criminality and violence can be linked to the broader background of public health, economics, justice, governance and urbanism. In Brazil, they have become a filter through which the 'the city' is understood in general.

In this context, new patterns of social interaction have developed, creating a special dynamic in the metropolis, its public spaces and architecture, and a framework in which the opposition between centre and periphery must be understood.

The case of São Paulo

In São Paulo in particular, the concept of periphery refers to the poorest and most vulnerable areas of the city, its geographical fringes, which are – not by coincidence – the areas with the highest homicide rates. Consequently, crime, violence and fear of

both have become constitutive characteristics of the city, feeding fear and prejudice, changing and directing the everyday life of citizens, and guiding their safety strategies. Today, despite a decrease in homicide rates in the past five years, the death rate is still alarming. According to UNESCO, while the homicide rate for the entire population was stable between 1980 and 2002 (rising from 21.3 to just 21.7), for young people aged 15 to 24 years old, it rocketed from 30 to 54.5.

It is possible to point to a protagonist in this picture: young black men – inhabitants of the city's fringes – are the main victims of violence.

Elevated levels of violence cannot, however, be understood in terms of fragile social ties, but as a constant social construction process of which violence is a part – influenced by factors such as organised crime and the absence of justice, and fuelled by the wide availability of illegal firearms and alcohol.

The consequences of this construction can be perceived in multiple ways. This pattern, which can also be defined as communitarian violence, has victimised young men and children in particular. It allows violence to move along many symbolic and concrete spaces such as schools, streets and households, having repercussions even where it presents itself solely as a threat of violence. Children and young people have become not only part of the most vulnerable group, they

are also caught up in this perverse cycle of violence.

A divided city

Patterns of urbanisation also have a role to play. Inequality in São Paulo, for instance, which has a population of approximately 20 million people, is one of the city's most prominent features. As a result, the limits of the city are completely dissociated from its centre, both in symbolic and physical terms. Different social classes do not share the same spaces, and although the metropolis has witnessed an accelerated and intense urbanisation process, segregation is emphasised by the absence of public equipment, services and goods at the fringes of the city. Geography becomes a determining element in defining opportunity in the lives of every inhabitant.

Crime and fear of crime have led to a shift in the city's landscape: gated communities, high fences and walls, and a concentration of private security services and apparatus contribute to a divided city.

As a result, spaces that cannot be reached by justice are created in the peripheries, where interpersonal violence is confined. This reveals the inequality of the risks and distribution of victimisation in the city and in Brazilian society, trapping young men and children in a network of illegality that is very hard to break.

Children and young people have easy access to firearms and are subjected to the

social dynamics imposed by organised crime. This conspires with patterns of urban segregation in São Paulo to prevent children and young people from enjoying their rights and contributes to an environment in which engagement in illegal activities is widespread.

Social dynamics involving crimes that lead to death are not the same in every city. Considering the context is fundamental to understanding local conditions, as well as the material, social and political basis of violence.

Local prevention policies that aim to break these networks and present alternatives must prioritise children and young people. They must also rethink urban design in order to create spaces that are conducive to socialising, restore public areas, introduce street lighting, and guarantee mobility and accessibility so that children and young people enjoy their right to the city as a whole.

Rebuilding citizenship

Today in some Brazilian cities, young people are leading urban intervention projects. Some examples can be found in São Paulo, for example the Sou da Paz Institute (I'm for Peace Institute – www.soudapaz.org.br). By renewing squares or other public spaces that are used by local people, young inhabitants of some of the most violent and vulnerable districts of the city are finding ways to mobilise the community. In promoting social activities like concerts and sports events, they are simultaneously changing the landscape of their neighbourhoods, and promoting an inclusive and peace-based society.

Urbanism can play a very positive role in violence prevention. While the landscapes of the city's fringes must change through efforts to guarantee better living conditions for a greater slice of the population, the city must re-connect and allow people to live in the metropolis as a whole. The right to safety cannot be dissociated from the right to the city.

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Brazilian Youth in Movement

A project by the Instituto Promundo and partners

The Jovem em Movimento project (Youth in Movement) empowers young people from low-income communities in Brazil to access their right to a life free from violence, as set out in the national Children and Adolescents' Statute.

The project, which operates in four regions, organises young people locally and engages them in a national youth network. It trains participants:

- to promote peer education to help others tackle violence at the interpersonal, family, community, institutional and society levels and advocate for these rights locally and nationally;
- to work with policy makers at the Ministry of Health to bring about a rights-based approach to violence prevention.

The project has enabled young people marked by physical and psychological violence to reflect on the cultural history of family violence. This has changed attitudes and behaviour and improved dialogue within families and communities. Youth participation and representation in public policy debate has had a positive effect on participants' self-esteem and helped to counter institutional violence.

The project faced a number of challenges which had to be overcome:

- Some of the local goals conflicted with broader national goals because groups held differing political affiliations, for example the Brazilian Landless Movement. Youth citizenship processes in Brazil have historically been dominated by young people affiliated to political parties. Promundo works with partners to strengthen civil society movements motivated by causes and issues without party ties.
- Drug trafficking and the geography of armed conflict in Rio has impeded young people from moving freely in their communities. General prejudice against young people also hampered



Photo: Instituto Promundo

their research so technical staff had to be hired to do this.

- The four project cities are geographically far apart and the monitoring process requires close communications. To overcome the obstacle of distance, participants use Skype, email, telephone and organise regular meetings.

The Youth in Movement project is part of a wider initiative to strengthen community and family-based supports for children and adolescents. Rather than being "problem focused" – seeing children as "risks" or at-risk – the programme identifies their fundamental rights. This initiative is counter-cultural because it goes against the nature of how programmes for children seek funding, which is generally a competition for resources in a one or two year project cycle. Instead, it aims for long-term systemic change.

For more information about the community-based support programme, contact the Instituto Promundo at: promundo@promundo.org.br or the International Centre for Research and Policy on Childhood (CIESPI) ciespi@ciespi.org.br



Photo: The Gleaner Company Limited, 2006

Inner-city Jamaica: A history of violence

Violence committed by and against children is costing Jamaica dearly in lives and wealth. Rose Robinson Hall, Horace Levy and Peta-Anne Baker describe some rights-based ways of tackling the island's culture of violence.

Children have the right to live in a place where they can grow, play, learn, make friends and explore their environment with confidence. It should also be a place where they feel safe and where adults will look after them. Unfortunately, prevailing conditions in several districts of Jamaica's capital, Kingston, have created toxic social environments that greatly impair the development of many of the children who live there.

Kingston is characterised by what are locally called 'garrison communities'. These are communities originally organised to ensure power for a political party,

employing intimidation and violence to ensure the party's candidate is elected. The formation of the first garrison in the 1960s led over the years to the creation of a dozen more. With their proliferation came the spread of gang violence, initially to achieve political goals, then to defend 'turf', and in some cases to generate wealth by criminal means, especially extortion and drug dealing.

Garrisons were only possible in the first place because of social exclusion, the marginalisation of an entire group of people and their being denied the opportunities enjoyed by the rest of

society. This inequality left people feeling shamed and disrespected, and their response was a hypersensitivity to insult and violent retaliation.

The garrison, in its exclusive dedication to one party or one 'don', perverts our idea of a community as an inclusive, open and democratic social group. Garrison military organisation has killed civil society and levelled many inner-city communities. It has encouraged lawlessness and spread violence like a cancer across the entire country. High and rising levels of homicide, extra-judicial killings by police, lawlessness in many forms, road rage, incitement to

violence in some dancehall music, school homicides and the prevalence of an eye-for-an-eye mentality – all reflect a growing culture of violence that threatens to get even worse. An entire generation has emerged that is unable to conceive of an existence that does not include acts of interpersonal and/or community violence.

Violent trends

Those most affected by the explosion of violence have been children and young people. Since January 2004, approximately one in every 300 children attending the accident and emergency department at the island's only paediatric hospital (which serves children up to 12 years of age) did so for treatment of a violence-related injury, five per cent of which were gun shot wounds.

One common characteristic of these children is that they live in high-risk, under-served urban settings where both frequent, random acts of violence and intra-family violence are common. Twenty-two per cent of this population were reportedly injured by someone within a five-year age difference to the victim. In many cases (17 per cent), the offender was a 'friend' who used a blunt or a sharp object, or bodily force, to cause harm, to get what they wanted, to settle a conflict or because they saw it as a justifiable way to deal with perceived disrespect. In addition, 52 per cent of the children seen in this period were not performing well academically. Case reports show poor attendance, interruptions to schooling due to episodic violence, poverty, poor concentration, inattentiveness, aggression and weak community support for children and families.

Major crimes committed in 2006 against children and young people aged 24 and under accounted for 39 per cent of the total. Of these, 61.5 per cent were female and 41.1 per cent were children under 14 years old. Young people aged 15 to 24, almost exclusively male, were responsible for 35 per cent of major crimes.¹ In 2007, 65 children were among the more than 1,000 people killed,² and seven children were murdered between January and May 2008. Children also die because of parental neglect. In the past six months, six children have died in fires that destroyed their homes. The children had been left at home while their parent or parents had gone to a grocery shop or sometimes to a dance. The fires were

often caused by an overturned candle or kerosene lamp.

A rights-based approach to tackling violence

In recent years there has been an increase in the number and types of initiatives to address the problem of violence against children. There is a network of 11 child guidance clinics across the island that deal with child and adolescent mental health issues. Though limited in material and human resources, efforts are made to create links with schools for individual and group therapy sessions, sensitisation and education of guidance counsellors.

Since 2003, there have been significant legislative and institutional changes made to protect the rights of children in Jamaica. The Early Childhood Act was established in 2003, followed by the Early Childhood Regulations of 2005 and the creation of the Early Childhood Commission in that same year. These have brought about regulations and standards for all early childhood institutions. The Commission is also developing a positive agenda for child rights in early childhood, in accordance with General Comment 7 of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The Child Care and Protection Act of 2004 created the office of the Children's Advocate as well as a Children's Registry, which will investigate reports of suspected or confirmed cases of maltreatment. Interventions for child victims of violence improved in 2004, when the Health Promotion and Protection Division of the Ministry of Health established the first hospital-based violence prevention and response unit at the Bustamante Hospital for Children in Kingston – the Child Abuse Mitigation Project.

The Child Abuse Mitigation Project (CAMP Bustamante) uses a rights-based approach to respond to all violence-related injuries that are treated at the facility. Using home visitation as a strategy, the project handles 11 to 39 cases monthly. Three considerations inform the project: promoting the rights set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Jamaican Child Care and Protection Act, especially those rights related to family, protection and healthy development; paying attention to factors in the social and material environment that either put the child at risk or protect

the child; and the assumption that every family has the capacity to support positive change and healing.

High-risk cases are reported to the Children's Registry for action by the police and child care authorities; low-risk cases receive a brief intervention to reduce the likelihood of a recurrence. This intervention can include individual counselling and other therapeutic services. An important component of this strategy is linking the child to social, educational and cultural resources provided by non-governmental organisations in the community.

The Peace Management Initiative (PMI), a joint civil society–State body set up in 2002 by the Ministry of National Security to defuse community violence, employs mediation, counselling and developmental activities to persuade young gang members to reject violence. Homicide levels have dropped sharply in some areas as a result.

Peace councils have been formed, in which 'corner' (informal gangs) leaders, usually young people, replace the 'one-don' rule with collective responsibility and rebuild their communities as civil associations. This initiative is particularly valuable because it seeks to engage young people who have already begun to engage in acts of violence (including murder), and who are the pool from which criminal gangs recruit. Professional counselling for children and young people (as well as adults) traumatised by the violent death of a parent, family member or close friend has played an important part in restoring healthy community relationships. There have also been several initiatives to give children their own voice. These programmes engage children in cultural activities in which they craft plays, songs, poems and dances to bring attention to different issues.

One threat to the sustainability of these initiatives is the availability of funding. Jamaica's high debt burden (less than 40 cents in each dollar earned is available for public social and economic investment) and the high crime rate combine to limit public spending on programmes that require sustained and intensive inputs, and to constrain the prospects for economic growth and development. It is estimated that violence in Jamaica results in annual productivity losses and medical expenses totalling an estimated J\$12million

1. Planning Institute of Jamaica (2006) Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica, p 24.6

2. Robert Buddan (2008) 'The penalty of death', Sunday February 24, The Sunday Gleaner. <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20080224/focus/focus3.html>

(approximately 108,000 EUR). If the cost of the security forces were included, this amount would exceed J\$20 million (approximately 180,000 EUR). As a result, there is a vicious cycle whereby the resources needed to end and prevent the violence are being lost on treating the effects of violence. Child rights and peace activists are working to break this cycle by providing arguments, founded on research, that suggest the costs associated with prevention are far less than those associated with dealing with the multiple impacts of violence, especially when that violence concerns children.

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Factfile: street children and violence

No one knows the exact number of street children in the world today, but estimates reach as high as 150 million. The vast majority have experienced some form of violence.

Street children are mainly an urban phenomenon, as families, or children on their own, migrate to towns and cities in search of employment and opportunities. Many children leave home to escape violence, but find that on the street their rights are violated repeatedly because they are targets of police round-ups, beatings or arbitrary detentions.

As recently as May 2008, Mkombozi, an NGO for street children in Arusha, Tanzania, reported an increase in violence against street children in the lead up to a high-profile event. The street children were the victims of local police brutality as a policy of "cleaning" the streets was enacted. Local government and police cited an out-dated colonial policy, the 1944 Townships Ordinance, to justify the round-ups and arrests of street children for loitering and vagrancy. Mkombozi has been running a campaign called 50 per cent which aims to repeal this legislation and bring attention to the issue of violence against street children. With support from the Consortium for Street Children, Mkombozi has now reported a significant decrease in incidents of violence against street children, has had their petition heard in the High Court, and the Tanzanian Government has expressed a willingness to develop a positive strategy on the issue, including the first ever national survey about street children.

The Consortium for Street Children published the State of the World's Street Children: Violence in November 2007 to draw attention to the alarming fact that violence is a core theme underpinning children's presence on the streets, shaping their experiences in public places and influencing their lives. This is the first global report to explore street children's experiences of violence.



Photo: The Gleaner Company Limited, 2006

The report has five key findings:

- 1.** Street children accumulate many experiences of violence from an early age and in a range of environments. Their high risk of exposure to multiple abuses is consistently overlooked in policy development and service delivery for street children.
- 2.** Street children's experiences in countries across the world are strikingly similar, including those in rich countries with child protection systems alongside children in poorer countries which have weaker support structures.
- 3.** Understanding street children's exposure and responses to violence is key to developing integrated preventive and protective policies and services which nurture children's resilience.
- 4.** Twenty-five years after street children first made the international headlines, governments around the world continue to use violent tactics against street children, which contravene their rights, exacerbate their experiences of violence and scapegoat them and their families.
- 5.** Civil society approaches have matured during this period, introducing inclusive methods of supporting children, families and communities to reduce the risks of violence in street children's inter-connected environments.

The report makes six central recommendations:

- 1. CHILDREN at the centre:** A social protection system must be created with a wide variety of options for supporting street children who have experienced multiple abuses. Services should be personalised, offer protection from violence, counselling to address past violence and strategies to protect themselves from future violence. Communities should work with all stakeholders to encourage an inclusive approach to child protection in the locality.
- 2. Support for FAMILIES:** A culture of violence-free households should be a central goal. Public policies need to prepare and support people for

parenting and ban all violence in the home. Safe houses are needed for victims of home-based violence as are services which help families create supportive home environments. Families and street children should be supported to prepare for and achieve reunification. Communities should facilitate reintegration of street children and promote inclusive practices for those children unable or unwilling to return home.

3. Connected COMMUNITIES:

Investment to develop community-based organisations and linkages between them in poor neighbourhoods is fundamental to reducing local violence. Schools should be inclusive, affordable and violence-free. Community-based organisations should foster neighbourhood social connectedness, working to ensure access to local support services by children and families who do not access them on their own.

- 4. STATE protection:** A culture of respect for children must be introduced and sustained in institutional services and public spaces. Police and staff at all levels of the juvenile justice and welfare systems need adequate training. Sanctions should be imposed against individual officials who infringe children's rights. A national Ombudsperson for children should pursue and publicise reports of State violence against children in detention, care and public spaces. Legal aid should similarly be provided to press successfully for resolution of accusations of violence against street children. Street children should be supported to build positive support networks to reduce their exposure to violence in dynamic and unprotected environments.

- 5. Inclusive SOCIETY:** Poverty and inequality in wider society need to be addressed to reduce violence and prevent children from needing to work or survive on the streets. Integrated schemes involving reallocation of resources from wealthier groups and regions should develop poor neighbourhoods and protect excluded families from external shocks. Community-based organisations and

service providers should be instrumental in supporting families and protecting children, including new arrivals in times of instability in wider society.

- 6. Strengthened RESEARCH:** An international body should be charged with coordinating and improving the availability of data associated with street children and risks of violence. Country-level data collection and analysis should measure outcomes that matter to street children. Service providers should record information about individual children's exposure to and involvement in violence. Mechanisms for hearing children's voices should be resourced to research and make recommendations about street children and violence.

This factfile was prepared by **Louise Meincke**, Advocacy Manager at the Consortium for Street Children. Contact: Louise@streetchildren.org.uk

A copy of the State of the World's Street Children: Violence report can be obtained by emailing Julia@streetchildren.org.uk, or downloaded from www.streetchildren.org.uk.

Closed city: Finding a way out of trauma in Gaza

Trauma has become part of life for children trapped in Gaza by military occupation. Ahmed Abu Tawahina describes how unlocking communities' own resources can help them to cope with, and challenge perceptions of, mental illness.

The Gaza Strip is one of the densest area of land in the world. It is just 40 kilometres long by ten kilometres wide, and yet in 2007 its population density was 3,881 people for every square kilometre, while in neighbouring Israel, there were only 317 people per square kilometre¹. Nearly two thirds of Gaza Strip residents are refugees, 55 per cent of whom live in camps while the remainder live in towns and villages.

The socio-economic situation has deteriorated drastically as a result of Israeli measures during the second Intifada² in 2000 and changes in donor policies since Hamas formed a new government in January 2006. Eighty per cent of Gaza's population now lives below the poverty line of US\$2 per day, compared with 30 per cent in 2000. Unemployment stands at 50 per cent.

Incursions into Gaza occurred on a daily basis until recently when Israel and Hamas agreed a six-month truce. During the incursions, soldiers would raid houses and schools, breaking children's arms to prevent them from throwing stones. In addition, some 344 children are currently being held in Israeli prisons.

The Rafah border crossing is the only link between Gaza and the outside world, but it is only open occasionally and only certain people can go in and out – usually NGO workers and people in urgent need of medical treatment. In practice, even people requiring treatment are refused permission to leave. In the case of children who are granted permission to seek treatment outside Gaza, their parents are denied permits to accompany them.

Everyday trauma

Military occupation in Gaza has caused significant psychological trauma,

particularly to children. Children under 15 make up 45 per cent of the Gaza Strip's population. At least 99 per cent of Palestinian children have experienced a traumatic event, according to research by the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme (GCMHP). Among a sample of 409 children aged 9-18, interviewed by mental health professionals, the average number of traumatic events experienced was 7.7. Boys reported more exposure to Israeli aggression than girls, although there was no apparent difference in exposure to traumatic events between older and younger children. According to the study, 148 children (59 per cent) were in the clinical range for post traumatic stress disorder symptoms; 21.9 per cent experienced anxiety; and 50.6 per cent of children could be described as having depression. This level of exposure to trauma means children have a high risk of developing mental health problems at a young age which are likely to continue into adulthood.

The GCMHP has studied the effects of traumatic experiences and the prevalence of post traumatic stress disorder and anxiety as a result of Israeli aggression. Out of 251 children aged 6-16, interviewed in three Gaza summer camps, the most common traumatic events reported were hearing shelling, jetfighters, shootings, bombing and seeing mutilated bodies on television.

Post traumatic stress disorder symptoms include nightmares, bed wetting, and poor concentration which in turn has a negative impact on children's academic achievement.

I interviewed one child last week who did not want his mother to go to sleep; he did not want her to close her eyes because he associated her with watching

over his safety and security. This is called separation anxiety (which means children get upset when their parents leave them alone).

Traumatic events also lead to certain types of phobia, particularly a phobia of darkness. This is exacerbated by the fact that in Gaza we experience regular power cuts. Sometimes there is no power for at least eight hours a day. On one occasion a couple of years ago, the main power station was bombed and we lived in darkness for more than two months.

Not all children who experience traumatic events develop mental health problems, although more than 50 per cent of the children we surveyed had developed some sort of reaction. Factors which increase the risk of developing a mental illness include the severity and continuity of stress and trauma, parents being unemployed or suffering from mental health problems, restriction of movement, and community violence.

Unlocking the community

The family is one of the resilience factors which can help children to cope with trauma. Through our family programme we have contact with children who have been tortured. Working with families is essential because torture and imprisonment not only affect the individual concerned but the whole family. We are lucky in that Palestinians have very strong family structures which provide social and emotional support. We aim to strengthen family and social networks' capacity to deal with trauma by providing intervention programmes in summer camps and in schools during the academic year. These interventions involve a lot of story-telling where children get the opportunity to share their experiences with other children.



Photo: B'tselem

A family, Jabaliya refugee camp

We experienced some difficulties when we first began working in this area because of the stigma attached to mental illness in the community. When we opened our clinic in April 1990 we had just one client in an entire year. This led us to adopt a community outreach approach so that people suffering trauma would not have to come to us. We trained professionals working directly with children and others in the community to detect cases and gain a better understanding of mental health issues. We began by training and raising awareness among doctors and other medical staff, then school counsellors, teachers, parents, and police officers. We have seen a clear change in attitudes over the last two decades and through our community programme we have now reached 20,000 people.

Human rights and mental health

The relationship between human rights violations and mental health is very clear in our work, particularly in our training with prison officers. Palestinians had to create their own prisons under the terms of the Oslo agreement of 1993¹. Sadly, there are Palestinian interrogators working within these who torture other Palestinians. But we found that they too had been

victims of torture at the hands of Israeli interrogators.

Influencing the political and legal environment in and outside the occupied Palestinian territories is central to our work. We are part of a network to combat torture and have just organised activities for the International Day of Survivors of Torture. We work closely with legislative council members, NGOs – including Israeli NGOs such as Physicians for Human Rights – and many others at the international level to raise awareness about the impact of Israeli aggression on Palestinian children.

Ahmed Abu Tawahina is Director General of the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme (GCMHP). Contact: amal@gcmhp.net

The Gaza Community Mental Health Programme will host a conference on the relationship between siege, mental health, and human rights – “Siege and Mental Health: Walls vs Bridges” in Gaza from 27-29 October 2008. For more information, go to: <http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=17624&flag=event>

Gaza in chains

- Palestinians are prohibited by Israel from operating an airport or seaport in Gaza with severe implications for Gazans' ability to travel abroad or engage in foreign trade.
- Some 30 per cent of the Gaza Strip's residents do not receive water on a regular basis.
- Israel has cut back on issuing permits to enter the country for the hundreds of patients each month who need immediate life-saving treatment and urgent, advanced treatment unavailable in Gaza.
- Travel between the West Bank and Gaza is practically impossible despite the fact that they are recognised as a single territorial unit in many agreements.
- Israel can veto changes of address in the population registry, and refuses to register Gaza residents who move to the West Bank.

Source: B'tselem

1. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics 2. Palestinian uprising which began in September 2000
3. The first face-to-face agreement between Israel and the Palestinians which established a framework for future relations



India's new urban voices: "We will live our lives our way"

Photo: Simon Flacks, CRIN

Young people in Delhi are going beyond the market economy to find ways of plugging into global communities and telling their stories, reveals Sharmila Bhagat.

As the world becomes predominantly urban, we hear stories of the retreat of the State, hiding behind the tattered fig leaf of 'the market will provide'. Indeed, that is our story too.

Delhi, like other cities, presents diametrically opposed realities and visions of the face and direction of development. The picture of urban India illustrated in the dominant narratives of contemporary life in cities celebrates the relatively recent entry of middle-class India into the world of global consumption and the transformation of its urban landscapes which have come to resemble those more commonly associated with places like Shanghai and Singapore. Yet the urban economy in India is largely energised by what is called the informal economy, the vast, decrepit reality of Indian cities, where the majority of citizens are left to their own devices to find shelter and jobs.

Map: Microsoft Virtual Earth/ Reuters AlertNet



Children, especially those from deprived families, continue to be vulnerable. While committed to international Conventions, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, government proclamations remain confined to paper. In an era of jobless growth, the production process has entered the urban household leaving children open to exploitation as labour within the family. Schooling continues to be a neglected part of State

intervention and here too the private sector is seen as the better alternative.

However, we need to understand the importance of processes that nurture children's own creativity and learning so they can look and build from what they have within themselves, in their families and in their immediate environment. In this way, collectives of young people are able to chart their own futures and build possibilities for the community in going beyond the roles the city dictates to them.

Children create their own opportunities

In a situation where the paternalistic role of the State is being withdrawn and, along with it, a top-down approach to social development policies, we see a mixed blessing. The policies of the State target segments of society in terms of what they lack, de-valuing all that people already

hold in their social networks, their stores of knowledge and skills, their dreams and aspirations – their very living spirit, which goes beyond the simple will to survive.

Neighbourhood work is close to the hearts of our children, as a lot of them come from families who are involved in technical or skilled trades for their survival. By bringing these back into the realm of pedagogy we can re-humanise work and skills that have been devalued by the so-called mainstream and restore dignity to the self-employed, the artisan and the technician – all of whom work with their hands. Children may also learn from the knowledge of neighbourhood artisans such as sculptors, weavers, tailors, cobblers, printers, potters and mechanics – learn from them and establish a rapport and respect for them. This is therefore an opportunity to educate by bringing in the art and craft of everyday economy and work – how it is done, the specific terms and vocabulary of the trade, the networks involved in the demand and supply, the people, the actual work, how the raw material is procured and at what prices, what the profit is, the different negotiations in which the family of the worker is involved, how to negotiate the law and the bazaar, the money-lender and the bank, the customer and the brokers; in short, the whole production process for those involved in technical trades.

The creative works of the children are circulated within the community to help discover children's creative potential. These processes also catalyse the intellectual life of these localities and open new pathways to self-expression.

New technologies and the 'Copyleft' philosophy

In the face of the overwhelming market economy, we should not lose sight of the emergence of new technologies and philosophies that refuse to think only in terms of property and markets. We need to see the radical potential of the free software movement and the 'Copyleft' philosophy, which sees intellectual property as an individual's contribution to the social collective rather than as commercial property to be exploited by big corporations. We need to link our education efforts to these movements to help children and young people engage with larger global communities.

The Cybermohalla programme works with young people living in under-served working-class neighbourhoods in Delhi. It brings together the energies of community-based social intervention, creativity with texts, sounds, images and innovative uses of computers and digital technology, while remaining alert to the imperatives of social and cultural specificity and autonomy. Working with all kinds of new and old technologies, the Cybermohalla programme

helps young people bridge the digital gap and communicate and interact with both local and global communities.

Cybermohalla is an experimental initiative of Ankur and Sarai (CSDS). The word Cybermohalla suggests a hybrid location that has the open-endedness of cyber space and the intimacy of a *mohalla* (a dense urban neighbourhood). Cybermohalla is a network comprising three activity centres fitted with computers, located in three worker settlements and one research and development laboratory in our office. During the last few years, there has been a continuation and development at the labs of the various practices (writing, taking photographs, recording sounds and interviews, making story boards, animations and HTML projects) and forms (wall magazines, booklets, stickers and posters).

When Nanglamachi, a slum next to the River Yamuna, was being demolished, the young practitioners at the activity centre there made a series of recordings – interviewing people, recording sounds as the surroundings rapidly changed, collecting sound as 'evidence' through stories and narratives of people in the settlement, recording moments of transition, and having people listen to the recordings. The practitioners recorded the emergence of Ghewra, where the residents of Nanglamachi and other demolished settlements were resettled, from a barren stretch of land to a living habitat through related images and sounds. Writing from Nanglamachi, and now from Ghewra, continues and blogged to be shared with a wider world. The English blog link is <http://nangla.freeflux.net>.

Practitioners at Cybermohalla have also put together a book in Hindi, *Beharootiya Shahar* (Multi-Faced City), a collection of diary entries, biographies, interviews, short stories and encounters from the city. It has been published by Rajkamal Prakashan, a well-known Hindi publisher, and has received rare critical acclaim by established educationalists, writers, activists and educational institutions. The young practitioners are now busy researching projects that could easily end up as individually authored books tackling different aspects of the city. These are their stories.

Sharmila Bhagat is Director of Ankur
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"Life is lived in ways that are each person's own. At the same time, the scattering, breaking and reformation of our lanes and settlements continue in a vein different from our lives. People live with the stubborn will, "I will live." But the world outside changes unpredictably, with a speed that can be measured in moments. Those who live in the city register this gap between their will to live and the morphing city. As writers, we stand in this gap and write about it. We live with this gap that pushes the limits of our beings and that of others around us."

A young practitioner at Cybermohalla, a joint initiative of Ankur and Sarai (CSDS)

The morphing city talked about by the young writer above is Delhi in the year 2007. It could be any other city in south Asia, in any other developing country or, for that matter, any urban area where people face exclusion.

Factfile: Climate change and urban children

Forthcoming research by the International Institute for the Environment and Development discusses the probable impacts on children of different ages of the increasing risk of storms, flooding, landslides, heat waves, drought and water supply constraints caused by climate change. It also explores the implications for adaptation, with a particular focus on preparedness and response to extreme events and changes in weather patterns. Responses to climate change which fail to take account of the disproportionate risks for children – who make up between a third and a half of the population in the most affected areas – will be less than adequate in facing up to the challenges.

Why children?

- Children, especially young children, are in a stage of rapid development and are less well equipped on many fronts to deal with deprivation and stress.
- Children's rapid metabolisms, immature organs and nervous systems, developing cognition, limited experience and behavioural characteristics are all at issue.
- Their exposure to various risks is also more likely to have long-term repercussions.
- Implications are intensified by poverty and the difficult choices low-income households make as they adapt to more challenging conditions.
- Events that might have little or no effect for children in high-income countries and communities can have critical implications for children in poverty.



Photo: Nara Menezes, Save the Children UK – Brazil



Photo: © Manoocher Deghati/IRIN 2008. Kabul, Afghanistan)

Why urban children?

Urban children are generally better off than their rural counterparts, but this is not true for the hundreds of millions living in urban poverty.

- Without adequate planning and good governance, poor urban areas can be among the world's most life-threatening environments.
- In some informal settlements, a quarter of all children still die before the age of five.
- The "urban advantage" fails to come into play in terms of education and life opportunities for most of those in poverty.
- In many urban areas the risks children face are likely to be intensified by climate change. Most of the people and enterprises at most serious risk from extreme weather events and rising sea levels are located in urban slums in low income countries, where there is a combination of high exposure to hazards and inadequate protective infrastructure and services.

Children as resilient, active agents

Although children are disproportionately at risk on many fronts, it is a mistake to think of them only as victims in the face of climate change. With adequate support and protection, children can also be extraordinarily resilient in the face of stresses and shocks. Moreover, there is ample documentation of the benefits of having children and young people active, informed and involved in responding to the challenges in their lives, not only for their own learning and development, but for the energy, resourcefulness and knowledge that they can bring to local issues.

For more information, email Sheridan Bartlett at Sheridan.bartlett@gmail.com

Child Rights News Desk

CRIN round-up on recent developments in child rights

A complaints procedure for children: support the campaign

There is a strong and growing international campaign for the drafting and adoption of an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to provide a communications procedure. This is supported by NGOs, human rights institutions and other bodies from all regions (see http://www.crin.org/law/CRC_complaints/).

The Convention is the only international human rights treaty with a mandatory reporting procedure which does not have, in addition, an existing or draft communications procedure.

This is a serious matter of discrimination against children and weakens effective implementation of the CRC.

The international protection of children's rights is incomplete without a communications procedure, allowing children and their representatives to pursue breaches of their rights under the Convention. While the mechanisms established under other international instruments can be used to pursue some rights, they do not cover, separately or together, the full range and detail of rights for children in the CRC.

The Convention guarantees many unique and important rights. Furthermore, communications made on behalf of children to the other bodies are not considered by committees with special expertise on children's rights.

The CRC is the most universally ratified of the core human rights instruments, by 193 States. Its two existing Optional Protocols, on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, have each achieved more than 100 ratifications.

By June 2008, more than 400 international and national organisations had signed the petition: "An international call to strengthen the enforcement of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child by the drafting of an Optional Protocol to provide a communications procedure".

To sign the petition, go to:
<http://www.crin.org/petitions/petition.asp?petID=1007>

Violence against children: still waiting for a Special Representative

Last year more than 1,000 organisations from 100 countries petitioned the UN General Assembly to establish a Special Representative on Violence Against Children. In response, the GA passed a Resolution adopted by 183 Member States committing to the creation of such a post. However, there is still no news on who will fill the position or when. Write to the UN Secretary-General at sgcentral@un.org

An international call to end all executions of juvenile offenders

A campaign, coordinated by Human Rights Watch and CRIN, has been launched this month to call on every UN Member State to fully implement the absolute ban on the juvenile death penalty.

Every State in the world has ratified or acceded to treaties obligating them to ensure that juvenile offenders – persons under 18 at the time of the crime – are never sentenced to death. The overwhelming majority of States comply with this obligation: only five States are known to have executed juvenile offenders since 2005.

Yet over the last 3 1/2 years at least 31 people in these five States have been executed for crimes committed while

children, and well over 100 other juvenile offenders are known to be on death row. The true number of executions and death sentences could be much higher, as few countries make public information on death sentences against juvenile offenders.

The petition will be presented to the UN General Assembly in October 2008. For more information, email info@crin.org Sign the petition at www.crin.org

Third World Congress

The Third World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents will be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil from 25-28 November 2008 to review global progress in the fight against commercial exploitation and to identify an agenda for action.

The World Congress is a follow up to the Second World Congress held in 2001 in Yokohama, Japan; the First World Congress took place in Stockholm in 1996.

Read more here:
http://www.ecpat.net/World_Congress/congress/index.php

Universal Declaration of Human Rights turns 60 on 10 December 2008

The UDHR holds the record for the world's most translated document with more than 360 different language versions. The UDHR was the first international pledge to recognise that all human beings have fundamental rights and freedoms, and it continues to be a living and relevant document today.

More information about Human Rights Day 2008 will be available shortly at:
<http://www.crin.org/resources/events/>



CRIN News

Non-discrimination:

CRIN will be launching a new portal in the coming months on non-discrimination. The portal, which starts from the premise that children are discriminated against by virtue of their age, will provide tools to deepen understanding about how discrimination impacts on all rights and will serve as a platform for advocacy. The idea is to encourage child rights advocates to work to remove barriers (e.g. legal, environmental and attitudinal) to all children's inclusion in society. It will include advocacy factsheets, legal tools, a learning forum, best practice examples, will highlight campaigning opportunities and encourage child and youth-led advocacy.

If you have best practice examples of youth-led advocacy on non-discrimination you would like to share, contact info@crin.org

Middle East and North Africa regional desk

CRIN's first regional desk in Cairo is now in full swing. In the last six months, we have created links with several Arab NGOs, mainly from Iraq, Syria, Jordan and Egypt, launched an Arabic language CRINMAIL, made many more news items, reports and events available in Arabic and translated news from the Arab world into English.

For more information, contact Eman Herzallah at crinarabic@googlemail.com

Children and cities: events

Nordic Conference on Children in Urban Areas

Date: 30 – 31 October
Place: Oslo, Norway
Organised by: Norsk Form and the Norwegian Architectural Association (in Norwegian)
Go to: http://www.norskform.no/default.asp?V_ITEM_ID=1442

Child in the City 2008

Date: 3 – 5 November 2008
Place: Rotterdam, Netherlands
Organised by: Child in the City Foundation
Go to: <http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=16189&flag=event>

World Urban Youth Forum 2008 (Fourth session)

Date: 1 – 2 November 2008
Place: Nanjing, China
Organised by: UN HABITAT
Go to: <http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=17803&flag=event>

ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability World Congress

Date: 14 – 18 June 2009
Location: Edmonton, Canada
Organised by: Local Governments for Sustainability
Go to: <http://www.iclei.org/index.php?id=1482>

Resources

Key publications

State of the World's Cities 2006/07,

UN Habitat

ISBN: 92/1/131811-4 (\$35)

Website:

<http://www.unhabitat.org/pmss/getPage.asp?page=bookView&book=2101>

Agenda 21,

United Nations

Agenda 21 is a programme of action launched at the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It relates to every aspect of human development as it impacts on the environment.

<http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=17849&flag=report>

State of the World's Population 2007:

Unleashing the Potential of Urban Growth (UNFPA, June 2007).

<http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=17168&flag=report>

Key websites

Africa Population and Health Research Centre Inc.

APHRC conducts research on population and health issues in sub-Saharan Africa, including in urban areas.

www.aphrc.org

Children's Environments Research Group (CERG)

CERG provides a link between academic research and the development of policies, environments and programmes that fulfil children's rights and improve the quality of their lives. It focuses on planning, design and management of children's physical environments and the fulfilment of children's rights more generally.

<http://web.gc.cuny.edu/che/cerg/>

Child Friendly Cities project

UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre
www.childfriendlycities.org

City Mayors

City Mayors is an international network of professionals working together to promote strong and prosperous cities as well as good local government. It examines how city mayors, and others governing

metropolitan areas, develop innovative solutions to long-standing urban problems
www.citymayors.com/

Consortium for Street Children

CSC consists of 56 UK based organisations, working in 89 countries, dedicated to the welfare and rights of street living and working children, and children at risk of taking to street life.
www.streetchildren.org.uk

European Network Cities for Children

The Network offers European cities the possibility of exchanging and developing progressive concepts across national borders on how to promote the well-being of children, young persons and parents in the urban environment.
www.citiesforchildren.eu

Famine Early Warning System Network (Fewsnet)

Fewsnet collaborates with international, regional and national partners to provide early warning and vulnerability information on emerging and evolving food security issues, including in urban areas.
www.fews.net/Pages/default.aspx

Glocal Forum

Glocal Forum is a network that promotes links between local resources, city leaders and young citizens to global resources and expertise to foster a balance between global growth and local needs.
www.glocalforum.org

Growing up in Cities Project

An international programme to involve children, young people and governments in evaluating and improving local governments
www.unesco.org/most/guic/guicmain.htm

Healthy Environments for Children Alliance

HECA is a world-wide alliance to reduce environmental risks to children's health that arise from the settings where they live, learn, play, and sometimes work, by providing knowledge, increasing political will, mobilising resources, and catalysing intense and urgent action.
www.who.int/heca/en

International Association for Educating Cities (IAEC)

IAEC aims to promote compliance with the Charter of Educating Cities and encourage collaboration and common action among cities
w10.bcn.es/APPS/eduportal/pubPortadaAc.do

International Institute for Environment and Development

An international policy research institute and non governmental body working for more sustainable and equitable global development.
<http://www.iied.org/HS/index.html>

For young people

Tunza for Youth – UN Environment Programme

Tunza aims to develop activities in the areas of capacity building, environmental awareness, and information exchange, with a vision to foster a generation of environmentally conscious citizens, capable of positive action.
www.unep.org/tunza/youth/

Youth Xchange

Youthxchange is designed to help trainers and individuals to understand and communicate on sustainable lifestyles.
www.youthxchange.net/main/home.asp

Information

CRIN is a global network coordinating and promoting information and action on child rights. Almost 2,000 member organisations and tens of thousands more activists from across the world rely on CRIN for research and information.

CRIN presses for rights, not charity, and is guided by a passion for putting children's rights at the top of the global agenda by addressing root causes and promoting systematic change. Its guiding framework is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

CRIN's activities are based on the belief that information is a powerful tool for realising children's rights. CRIN distributes news, events and reports, lobbies, enables advocacy and promotes knowledge sharing and coordination. CRIN participates in international child rights coalitions and advocacy groups, supports campaigns and makes the UN and regional mechanisms more accessible to those lobbying for social change.

A website

Updated regularly, the website contains references to thousands of publications, recent news and forthcoming events as well as details of organisations working worldwide for children. The site also includes reports submitted by NGOs to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. CRIN also offers two thematic websites on rights based programming and violence against children.

CRIN also hosts the websites of: The NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC), the Better Care Network (BCN) and the European Children's Network (EURONET) and World Vision.

An email service

CRIN offers a number of email updates, in English, French, Spanish and Arabic, as well as thematic updates. The main CRINMAIL is sent out twice a week and provides information on the latest news, reports and events on child rights issues. To subscribe or read online, go to: www.crin.org/email.

A review

Published yearly, the Review (formerly the CRIN Newsletter) is a thematic publication that examines a specific issue affecting children.

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Bookmark CRIN's website to learn more, or email us to contribute news or information.

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Previous issues

CRIN Review 21, November 2007: A Generation On: Enforcing children's rights;

CRIN Newsletter 20, February 2007: Child Rights and Emergencies;

CRIN Newsletter 19, May 2006: Children and Violence;

CRIN Newsletter 18, March 2005: Rights Based Programming with Children: an introduction;

CRIN Newsletter 17, May 2003: Children's Rights and the Private Sector;

CRIN Newsletter 16, October 2002: Children and Young People's Participation;

CRIN Newsletter 15, March 2002: Mainstreaming Child Rights;

CRIN Newsletter 14, June 2001: The Special Session on Children;

CRIN Newsletter 13, November 2000: Children and Macroeconomics.

CRIN Newsletter 12, March 2000: Education;