

# Working With Street Children

## **MODULE 9** **Involving the Community**

**A Training Package on Substance Use, Sexual and Reproductive Health including HIV/AIDS and STDs**



**WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION**

Mental Health Determinants and Populations

Department of Mental Health and Substance Dependence

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## Introduction

Street children live in a community, peopled by other street children, street educators, help agencies, law enforcers, law makers and also law breakers and exploiters. The world of street children is complex. People who are supposed to protect them (law enforcers) may at times mistreat them because they might rightly or wrongly think that the street children are involved in criminal activities. On the other hand the law breakers and exploiters may provide the street children with provisions but at the cost of criminality or exploitative sex. You will have to understand the children's and communities' perceptions about each other in order to help the street children.

The community can potentially provide street children with attachments, resources and opportunities to develop skills. The community, which exists as a part-help and part-hindrance at the beginning of street children projects, can be converted into an unambiguous ally of the street children, if it is handled with skill and care.

To be able to involve the community for the betterment of street children, you will have to be clear about what you want from the community, develop the resources to ask the community for help, and then approach the community. An important thing that you want from the community for street children is to secure their rights as members of society. The task of approaching various individuals, organizations and government(s) itself requires some organization on your part. This can be accomplished by the formation of a **Community Advisory Committee (CAC)** and street children networks. The final job of approaching the community for help would require that you sensitize the people about your work and the situation of the street children, involve them in activities and motivate them to participate actively on their own. With their support, you may be able to carry out advocacy at the community or even beyond the community level.

This module introduces you to some aspects of child rights and laws, the need to understand the community, the need for the CAC and street children networks, and issues related to community mobilization.

### Learning objectives

After reading the information and participating in the learning activities in this module you should be able to:

- ✓ Describe the relevance of involving the community in street work.
- ✓ List the rights of a child.
- ✓ Identify specific rights and laws pertaining to sexual and reproductive health and substance use among street children.
- ✓ Describe the process of the formation of a Community Advisory Committee.
- ✓ Describe what a street children network means.
- ✓ Develop a directory of community resources.
- ✓ Describe ways of mobilizing and motivating the community.
- ✓ Develop an outline of a project on advocacy for street children in the areas of substance use, sexual and reproductive health including HIV/AIDS and STDs.



## **Lesson 1 - Importance of community involvement**

### **1.1 Community involvement.**

When a community is involved in street children projects, it comes to realize that the problem of street children is a problem for the whole community. It also comes to understand that problems of street children have multiple causes and need multiple responses.

Community involvement gives the people a feeling that they 'own' responsibility for the problems of street children, the project, and the future of their children. Resource persons emerge and the community permits its resources to be utilized for the betterment of the street children. A system or structure for collective action is developed or activated within the community which leads to the improvement in the lives of street children. Some examples of ways in which community involvement benefits street children are given below:

- The stigma, discrimination, and human rights abuse that street children face are lessened.
- Street children get greater access to services as people become more sensitive to their needs.
- Introduction of services, which may otherwise have been rejected, is facilitated, e.g. drug treatment facilities.
- The issue of street children becomes politically sensitive. This provides an opportunity to influence government policy.
- Prospects for better funding, resources, and services improve when the people who control funding see that street children have community support.

Community involvement strengthens the ability of people to solve their problems using their own resources and it generates in them a feeling of ownership of the project and the project becomes sustainable.

## 1.2 Understanding the community.

Since most of the issues in substance use, sexual and reproductive health and rights and laws affecting children are sensitive issues, it is important that community leaders are in agreement on their approach otherwise they may undermine the initiative. To be able to engage the community in activities you need to understand the community well, especially how it responds to street children and how it affects their lives. To do this you must:

- Identify opinion leaders and have informal discussions with them and with street children.
- Get to know the profile of the community to identify any special features which will influence their involvement.
- Find out how they feel about the activities you want to introduce.
- Find out if they agree with the proposals.
- Determine any conflicting interests.



## Learning Activity



### Understanding the community.

#### The lemon game.

With the help of a facilitator or trainer:

- Obtain lemons or any available fruits and put them in a basket.
- Each participant must pick a lemon from the basket and look at it very briefly (first picking).
- Each participant must then put the lemon back into the basket.
- Each participant must try to pick their lemon from the basket and look at it a little longer than the first time (second picking).
- Each participant should put the lemon back into the basket.
- Each participant must pick his/her lemon from the basket (third picking).
- By the 'third picking' each participant must be able to identify his/her lemon.

The facilitator will then ask those who were not able to identify their lemons to explain why they failed to do so. Afterwards, the facilitator will ask those who identified their lemons to explain why it was easier for them to pick out their lemon.

The facilitator or trainer will conclude with an explanation which is offered in the trainer tips regarding the learning points of this game.

***To understand the community you must exercise patience and get to know the community well by making several contacts.***

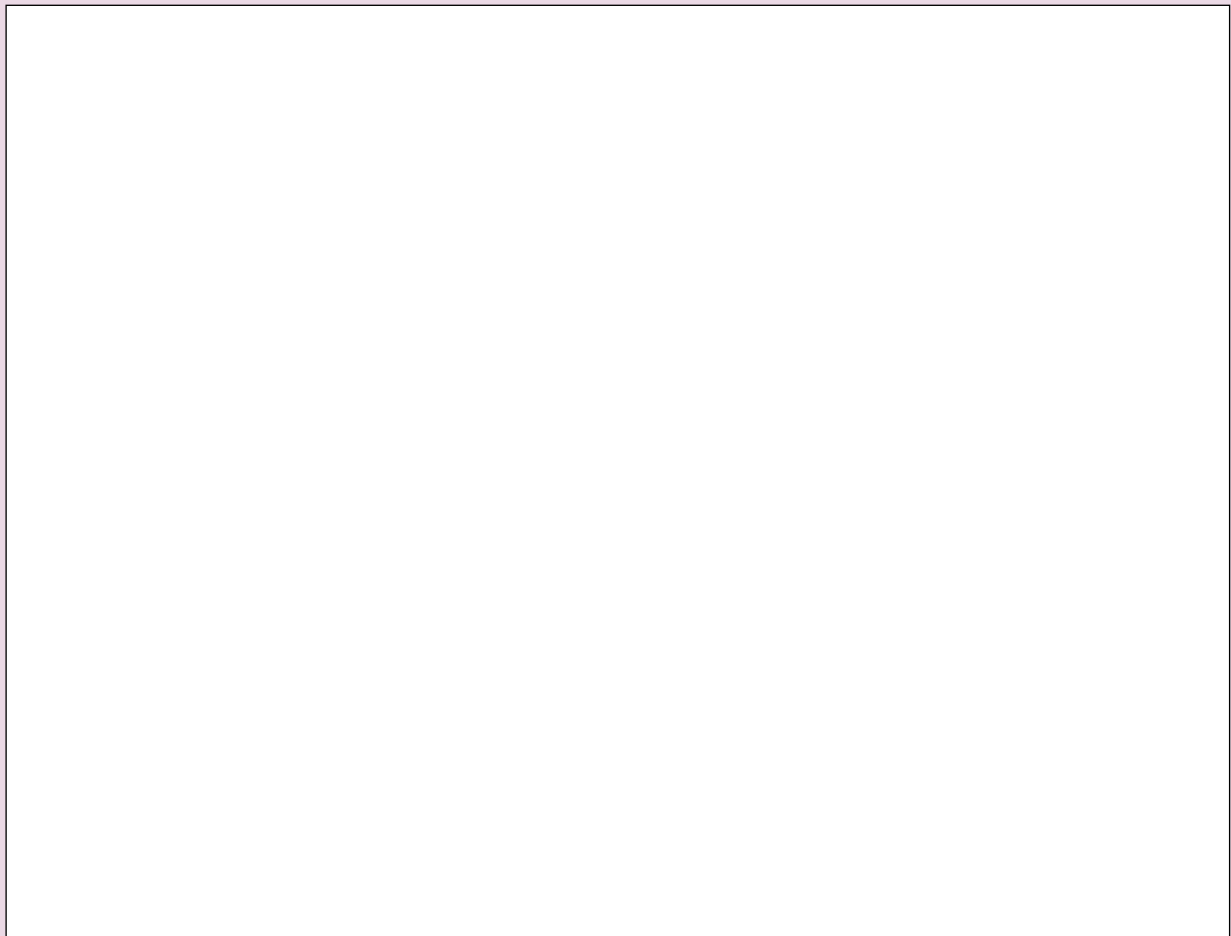
#### Field visit.

Conduct an informal visit to a potential community that you might work with such as shop owners, government officials and street children. Ask them the following questions:

- Have children lived or worked on the streets during other times in the history of your community?
- At what age does the community believe that children should begin earning? At what age are they expected to live away from their parents? Is the age different for girls and boys?
- What are the major religions in the community? What are their beliefs about children, poverty, suffering, and helping others?
- What religious beliefs do street children in your community hold? Do they participate in religious ceremonies, rituals or festivals?

- What does the community think about substance use? How many adults use substances of some kind?
- What does the community think about sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS/STDs among street children? Do they think street children should be helped?
- What activities do members of the community think are appropriate for boys and girls? Do people in the community feel differently towards street girls and street boys?
- What are the major ethnic groups in the community? What are their views on working children, on families, on substances, and reproductive health?
- How does the community view people who work with street children?
- How does the local government view street children and those who work with them? Do government officials feel any responsibility to become involved with street children?
- Are there laws that prevent children from living or working on the streets? Are there laws that prevent or restrict street educators from working with street children?
- Are there international development agencies in your area? How does the community view these agencies?

Use this information as a basis to approach and work with the community in order to avoid a conflict of interest.







## **Lesson 2 - Rights and laws affecting street children**

### **2.1 Conventions on the rights of the child.**

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989) outlines the basic rights of children and the responsibilities of the governments to protect children. Street children have the same rights as other children and the same laws should apply to them. A summary of the convention is given below:

- A child is defined as being a person under the age of 18 unless laws of a country state that maturity is attained at an earlier age.
- All rights apply to all children without exception. The state must not violate any right, and must take positive action against any violence.
- All actions concerning children should consider their best interests. The state is to provide adequate care when parents or others fail to do so.
- Every child has the inherent right to life, and the state has the obligation to ensure the child's survival and development.
- Every child has the right to the highest level of health possible, and to access health and medical services.
- Every child has a right to education, and the state has the duty to ensure that primary education is made free and compulsory.
- The state should protect children from engaging in work that constitutes a threat to their health, education or development, set minimum wages for employment, and regulate conditions for employment.
- No child should be subjected to torture, cruelty, punishment, life imprisonment or unlawful arrest. The state should lay down the principles for appropriate treatment, separation from detained adults, contact with family and access to legal assistance.
- Every child should be protected from narcotic and psychotropic drug use, and from being involved in its production and distribution.
- The state has the obligation to ensure that the child victims of armed conflicts, torture, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation receive appropriate treatment for their recovery and social reintegration.

**The documents pertaining to this convention can be found at most United Nations agencies such as the UNICEF, UNHCR or from government bodies.**

## 2.2 Why is it important to know about rights and laws?

Street educators should familiarize themselves with rights and laws for the following reasons:

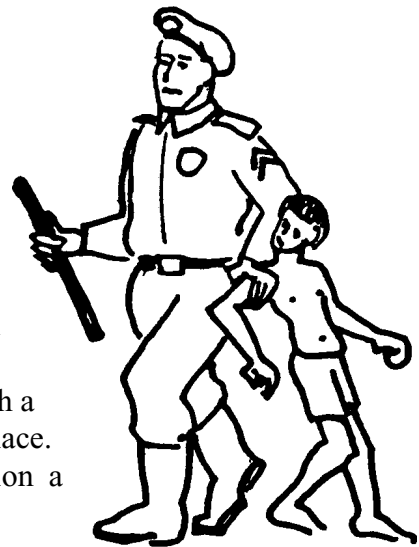
- Street children often get into conflict with legal authorities. Street educators at times need to act as unofficial advocates for them. To carry out this function, street educators need to develop working relationships with the local police, military, court authorities, centres for juvenile offenders and lawyers.
- Sometimes street educators are regarded with suspicion by the authorities because of their close association with street children. At times the authorities might mistake street educators as people who exploit street children. For your own protection, you need to know about your own rights and about laws regarding street education.
- While working on the streets, street educators may find contradiction between local and national/ international rules, or a discrepancy between the written rules and actual practice. On behalf of street children, the street educator might feel the need to bring about changes in laws or in law enforcement.

## 2.3 What you should know about rights and laws in your locality.

You should learn about the following:

### Police powers.

- The circumstances under which the police can stop, search and question a street child or enter the home of an individual or a youth centre; whether they need a warrant (a written document giving them special permission).
- Reasons why a police officer can detain or arrest a street child and the length of time a child can be legally held without being charged with a crime.
- Whether the police have the right to interrupt or interfere with a gathering of street children in a private place or in a public place.
- Under what circumstances can the police stop and question a street educator.



*Reasons when a police officer can detain or arrest a street child.*

### Child protection.

- The age at which children are regarded as adults by the legal system.
- Whether it is permissible for street children to be held in the same detention facilities as adults.
- Existence of sentencing options for children and adults (e.g. group homes or camps).
- Whether juvenile records are destroyed when a child becomes an adult.
- What the street educator can do to obtain the release of a street child in custody.

### Legal aid.

- Existence of free legal aid for children who are arrested or sent before a court, and how you can obtain legal aid for a street child.
- Availability of attorneys who might work on the behalf of street children without a fee, if legal aid is not available.



### Laws regarding street educators.

- Existence of legal protection for street educators.
- Whether there are restrictions against street educators contacting street children or providing support to a street child who goes before a court.



### Confidentiality issues.

- Legal requirements about reporting assault or abuse to authorities e.g. physical or sexual assault by an adult on street children.
- The street educator's legal responsibilities if he or she witnesses a street child committing a petty or serious crime.
- The street educator's legal responsibilities if a street child discloses that he/ she had committed a crime.
- How to respond when a street child is in possession of illegal substances and/ or is using and selling substances.
- Legal requirement about reporting HIV status to a street child's family members.

*Whether there are restrictions against street educators contacting street children.*

Information on rights and laws affecting street children can be obtained from law professionals, governmental bodies and from members of the Community Advisory Committees.

## HIV and children's rights.

Street children are at a high risk of acquiring HIV infection and less capable of coping with the consequences of HIV. An adaptation of relevant human rights for HIV/AIDS patients is given below.

- **The right to education and information:** street children should have access to education and information on HIV prevention.
- **The right to non-discrimination:** a child's HIV status should not lead to discriminatory treatment.
- **The right to health:** street children should not be denied access to health care and prevention services because they are HIV positive, e.g. services for STDs or clean injection equipment.
- **The right to privacy:** street children should be protected against mandatory HIV testing and their HIV status should be kept confidential.
- **The right to liberty:** street children must be protected against imprisonment, segregation or isolation for being HIV positive.
- **The right to education and work:** street children should be given the right to education and work even when they are HIV positive.
- **The right to marry and have a family:** a street child should not to be denied marriage, and a street girl should not be forced to undergo sterilization or abortion if she is pregnant.
- **The right to social security, assistance and welfare:** HIV positive street children should have access to social security, assistance and welfare.
- **The right to freedom of movement:** HIV positive street children need not be subjected to travel restrictions.
- **The right to seek and enjoy asylum:** street children should be permitted to seek asylum even when they are HIV positive.



*Street children have the right to information and education.*

## Learning Activity



### 1. Sharing experiences about children's rights and laws.

In groups discuss your experiences of work that brought about the need to know about the rights of street children.

### 2. Applying the rights and laws of children to substance use:

Using the example of HIV and the rights and laws of children, develop an outline that should relate to substance use.



## Lesson 3 - Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and street children networks

### 3.1 The Community Advisory Committee.

You will need the help of a core group of community representatives to be effective as a community mobilizer and to act as an advocate for street children. This core group of community representatives is referred to as the Community Advisory Committee. A Community Advisory Committee is an essential component of community oriented projects. The main objectives of establishing a CAC are to:

- Share knowledge, responsibilities and resources.
- Support those who are working directly with street children.
- Link street children projects to the community as a whole and to influence the way in which the community acknowledges and responds to street children.

Coordination with appropriate local and national government and examining other projects is a vital part of developing plans for your project. By including a wide range of influential and well-respected members on the committee, the CAC is in a position to significantly change the attitudes of the community, e.g. members with political experience can help in building support for street children projects. By allowing people from different segments of the community to serve as advocates for the project, the CAC promotes a sense of self-help, self-reliance, and community ownership of the strategies developed to support street children. In this way, the CAC advocates for street children and helps them gain access to resources and services.

#### Some specific responsibilities of the CAC:

- Provide advice on how to establish and develop a street children project in the community.
- Provide moral and technical support to projects related to street children.
- Identify the specific needs of street children and coordinate services for them.
- Encourage the assessment of substance use and HIV/AIDS/STDs related problems among local street children.
- Provide, share, and link resources to improve services for street children.
- Educate the local community about the existence and problems of street children.
- Represent the concerns of community residents about street children and communicate with residents about the activities of street educators.
- Mobilize and connect agencies and individuals involved with street children and facilitate the referral of youths between organizations to ensure optimal use of existing services.
- Act as an advocacy group for the needs and rights of street children, especially those who use substances and those at risk of acquiring HIV/AIDS/STDs or those having an unwanted pregnancy.
- Influence decisions that affect the health and well being of street children within their own organizations, other organizations, and the government.
- Identify and seek sources of funding and other resources as needed to support programming for street children.
- Promote community development.

From time to time the CAC might focus on specific issues such as HIV/AIDS, violence against street children, or vocational training.

### **Selecting members of the CAC.**

The effectiveness of the advisory committee depends at least partly on the people who are selected as its members. The advice of the children should be taken when candidates are being short-listed. Focus group discussions with street children could help you in identifying people and organizations that they are in contact with (e.g. religious groups, legal authorities, health services), and in ascertaining their perceptions towards these people and organizations (e.g. police, school). Do not include anyone whom street children do not trust or respect.

In addition you may contact providers of other essential services or families of street children or experienced street educators for advice. The information from varied sources would help you in preparing a list of potential members/ organizations. Invite individuals, who:

- Have the ability to empathize with street children.
- Understand the situation of street children and recognize the need for supportive interventions which emphasize prevention and treatment.
- Have had regular contact with street children, either independently or through an organization.
- Have social, political, and financial power that could be used for the benefit of street children.
- Are well-respected by the local community and influential within their own organization.
- Can provide personal experience through creative thinking and decision-making
- Have different backgrounds, experiences, and opinions.
- Are able to respect one another's opinions and compromise on issues.
- Can think of new ideas, and can conceptualize a problem in different ways.

## Categories of people who can serve on the Community Advisory Committee:

### 1. Health care workers and organizations:

- primary health care doctors, and medical specialists
- community nurses
- other health workers, e.g. nutritionists, psychologists
- health educators

### 2. Welfare workers and organizations:

- youth workers and street educators
- social workers and counsellors
- agencies providing crisis relief, food and clothing
- family support, women's and child protection services
- welfare services run by the Government and charitable organizations

### 3. Accommodation services:

- services offering crisis accommodation, short-term and long-term shelters
- government housing services and providers of private accommodations, e.g. boarding houses and hostels
- youth institutions, e.g. orphanages

### 4. Educational services:

- non-formal education, e.g. street teaching
- local schools
- school counsellors
- universities

### 5. Vocational services:

- career advisers
- vocational and technical facilities
- unemployment services and youth employers
- labour organizations

### 6. Law enforcement and human rights services:

- police or military
- youth detention institutions
- legal aid services
- human rights agencies
- street children and youth organizations

### 7. Recreation and sporting services:

- youth, sporting and social clubs, athletes and local sports trainers and coaches
- entertainment businesses, e.g. pinball parlours, hotels, music venues and local entertainers

### 8. Community Members and groups:

- organizations involved in community service
- community advocacy groups
- women's associations
- religious organizations
- parents associations
- business community, including industry and local companies and chambers of commerce
- community leaders

### 9. Media:

- newspapers and associations of journalists
- TV and radio representatives
- theatre and arts groups

### 10. Street children:

Invite a few responsible, older street children to work on the committee if it appears to be feasible. The presence of street children at meetings helps in focusing the group on the most important current problems facing street children. It demonstrates to the participants (children and other members) that street children have the power to improve their own lives.



### 3.2 Guidelines for the functioning of a CAC.

Guidelines for the functioning of a CAC are listed below. They may need to be modified to suit the local situation, e.g. for practical reasons, one may split the CAC into two groups, one dealing more with local issues (a group comprising street children, parents of street children, those providing direct services to street children) and another dealing with the responsibility of improving access to services and advocacy. Coordination between the two groups is essential. Apart from this, there is a need to increase the participation of street girls on CAC and ‘councils’.

- One or two individuals assume the responsibility for organizing the advisory committee. They arrange the initial focus groups with street children and select individuals or organizations from the community as potential members and invite them to join the CAC.
- The committee elects a chairperson to run committee meetings. One of the organizers usually takes the role of secretary during meetings. The secretary takes down the notes and circulates it among the participants, and keeps a record of all the activities of the committee.
- At the first meeting, the organizers explain that the committee has an advisory role, and members get to know each other (skills and resourcefulness).
- Soon after the first meeting, a workshop may be held for the committee (questions and the focus group method are discussed in **Module 5: Determining the needs and problems of street children**). This is an occasion to present new information to members who may not be informed, and to collect information from members who may already know quite a lot about various issues relevant to the life and health of street children.
- The committee decides on the location and the frequency of meetings. Monthly meetings are recommended, but more may be necessary at the beginning of the project.
- During regular meetings, the committee is informed about any new developments. The committee then interprets this information and recommends appropriate responses. It takes an active role in the development and on-going review of the strategic plan (described in **Module 10: Implementing a street children project**).
- The committee may also decide to monitor all local projects concerning street children. This helps the committee in identifying gaps in services, preventing duplication of services, facilitating the sharing of resources, and in starting collection of information on the effectiveness of various projects.

## Example

### Uganda.

A youth advisory committee called the street children 'forum' has been established in a street children project in Uganda. The ten members, made up of street boys and girls, meet regularly (monthly or bi-monthly) to discuss topics of concern including substance use issues, work as peer leaders, and recommendations made by fellow street children. Adult guidance is provided in setting up the meeting; however, the street children run the meeting. The forum is held just before the full CAC meeting. Representatives of the forum participate in the CAC meeting and provide the direct link between the two groups. Street children coming to the advisory committees report on activities and advise on possible interventions.

Before street children began to participate directly in the Ugandan CAC meetings, training was held with the adult members to discuss why the participation of street children was important and what role the street children could play in the work of the committee. The training emphasized the role of street children as partners. This sensitization training helped the adults to accept and value the involvement of street children.



### 3.3 Street children network.

An important lesson that WHO has learned through its work on substance use with street children is that a network of local people who care about street children is needed, as it may not be feasible to keep the whole community motivated and active. A street children network is a group of people who agree to communicate among themselves about issues relevant to street children. Members can share ideas, information and resources. Such a network responds swiftly to the needs and problems of these children. Once the network gets large enough, someone in the network can answer almost any question about street children. The advantages of a street children network include:

- It has a positive influence on the community perception of street children.
- It helps street children to move from the edge of society and become full members of the community.
- It brings different groups of people and organizations together to collectively advocate for specific policies, attitudes and practices in support of the health and well being of street children.
- It influences policies and attitudes to a greater extent as compared to isolated efforts by individual organizations and people.

Sometimes, it is advantageous to link specific problems with specific organizations, e.g. street girls with women's organizations; HIV infection with Health Care; delinquent children with lawyers.

## Learning Activity



### 1. Sharing experiences.

Discuss in groups your experiences on establishing the CAC (if any).

- How was it established? Who were selected as members and why?
- What were their functions?
- Did you experience any problems in working with the CAC? What kind of problems did you experience?
- How did you solve these problems? Would you do it differently now?

### 2. Membership of the CAC.

- Based on ideas from this lesson and the experience of your colleagues, draw up a list of potential members for a CAC that you believe will be functional and effective.

- What can you do to help street children prepare for a role on the Committee?

- What can you do to increase the confidence of adult CAC members towards involvement of street children in the committee?

- Write or discuss specific things that a CAC can do to support street educators and street children in your community?

**3. A Directory of Resources.**

During a field visit like the one mentioned in the learning exercise in Lesson 1, establish a directory of resources. A directory of resources can help you make and strengthen a network of people and organizations which want to support street children. During your visit to the community, document information on at least 4 organizations. You may use the following format as a guideline for making the directory.

Name of organization:
Address:
Contact person:
Telephone/Telefax no:
Geographic area of facility:
Services or information available:
How to access services/information (referral required, appointment or walk-in, etc)

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## Lesson 4 - Community mobilization and advocacy

### 4.1 How to mobilize and motivate the community.

Mobilizing the community begins with providing information on substance use, sexual and reproductive health among street children and children's rights and laws. Once aware of or sensitized about these issues, the community is likely to support proposed activities and to become actively involved.

To mobilize and motivate the community you should:

- Encourage participation through the Community Advisory Committee.
- Avoid prejudice. Make it clear that anybody can play a role in alleviating the situation of street children.
- Approach the community with great respect and humility. There is always something to learn from the community and its culture about the way the work can be done.
- Establish good relationships. Work hard at establishing good relationships. This may be difficult in the beginning but once you know how the community functions, you may find it easy and fulfilling.



*Establish good relationships with community members including health workers.*

## 4.2 Building community support for street children project activities.

Street children project staff and volunteers, members of the Community Advisory Committee and street children have used many strategies successfully to promote awareness and support for the needs of street children and related project activities. Such strategies have included newspaper and radio interviews, talks with community leaders and community groups, presentations at schools, workplaces, at sports events, in the street and market places and in religious settings. Many street children projects have found that it is very beneficial to join a network of organizations concerned with promoting the rights and well being of street children. Projects have found that the collective actions of as many groups as possible are needed to advocate successfully for particular issues related to the rights and entitlement of street children.

### Example

#### **Brasilia, Brazil.**

The National Movement for Street Boys and Girls (Movimento Nacional de Meninos e Meninas de Rua MNMMR) in Brasilia, was created to detect, document and denounce widespread and often fatal violence committed against street children. This project also provides street educators with professional training in child psychology and family counselling. The programme emphasises the importance of youth involvement in decision-making. Sessions are designed to promote networking and the exchange of ideas between street educators and others who work with street children.

To encourage strong local support, their outreach work is implemented through small local committees which hold weekly meetings for group discussion, problem solving and other activities.

Through dissemination of materials, public awareness campaigns, and monitoring legislation, MNMMR is able to monitor and educate people on public policy affecting street children. A book has been launched by a nationally known investigative reporter on the nature of violence against street children in Brazil's cities with the help of MNMMR.

### 4.3 Advocacy for street children.

Communicating with other members of the community on behalf of street children may also be an important part of your work as a street educator. This type of work is called advocacy. The goal of advocacy is to eliminate some of the causes of the problems of street children by persuading individuals, organizations, and governments to change policies and practices. An example of advocacy would be encouraging health officials to change policies that prevent children and youths from receiving health care without the presence of their parents or guardians.

Advocacy for street children usually works best when it is conducted within the framework of the community's own cultural norms and governing system. Like all parts of street education work, advocacy should always emphasize the strengths and rights of street children.



*Advocacy should always emphasise the strengths and rights of street children.*

#### Example

##### **Manila, Philippines. Guidelines on advocacy with the police.**

In a street children project in Manila the following experiences were documented:

- A face to face meeting is recommended. Set a convenient time to discuss the situation of street children in the area. After the first meeting, visit the police station on a regular basis so that the police can know you before a crisis situation occurs.
- Address the police properly by using correct names and titles. Tell them who you are, the work your agency or project carries out with the street children, and what your role involves. Present an Identity Card (ID) if possible.
- Share information on the problems and needs of street children, and discuss and provide written information (brochure) on local programmes and services for street children, e.g. referral centres that can deal with an intoxicated child.
- Ask about the roles and functions of the police, and its experiences with street children. Share with them what the street children have reported about their positive and negative experiences with the police and the legal system.
- Discuss specific laws relevant to street children, and go over the rights of street children.
- Show a positive attitude towards the police and ask for help to identify ways to work together to improve the situation of street children.



**Other ways to involve the community in advocacy:**

- **Radio/TV programmes and local newspapers:** The community, street children and street educators can use the media to promote the rights of children or other street children related activities. Radio announcers or TV producers can be approached to interview street educators and street children to inform the public about their needs and problems.
- **Specific appeals to prominent lawyers and judges within the community:** An appeal can be made to support the cause and welfare of street children. They could also monitor legislation related to children.
- **Approach NGOs and other organizations:** NGOs and other organizations that deal with the rights of children, substance use, and reproductive health can be encouraged to hold meetings or seminars in order to create awareness about these issues in the local, national and international areas.
- **Fund raising events:** Well publicized fund raising events can be organized at which street educators and street children can appeal for enforcement of laws affecting children and prevention and treatment of substance use and reproductive health problems. Religious leaders, police, sports personalities, local actors and actresses and musicians could be involved in raising awareness about street children.
- **Publish a booklet:** You could write a booklet on what laws the community should adopt or on measures that should be taken to prevent and treat problems related to substance use and reproductive health. The booklet could be distributed in schools, shops, petrol/gas stations, libraries, local churches, restaurants etc.
- **Drama group, writing club, or art club:** These can be used to draw attention of the public to the plight of street children. For example a play could be produced that portrays the homelessness, loneliness, maltreatment of street children by the police, and problems related to substance use and sexual and reproductive health in vivid detail.
- **Information centre:** Have a well publicized information centre where the public can get details on street children and the role the public can play in increasing the awareness regarding the rights and specific problems related to substance use and reproductive health.
- **Functions and meetings:** Invite law enforcers and policy makers to functions or meetings that you hold, and introduce them to some street children. This can influence their perception of street children.

## Learning Activity



### 1. Involving the community.

There has been an increase in HIV infected street children. Although most of them have not yet developed AIDS, you know that this will soon become a reality. Unfortunately, you are aware that discrimination against street children exists in the community and that often appeals for improved access to health services have been met with a lot of resistance. As a street educator, you want to seize this opportunity of high HIV infection among street children to advocate improved access to health services. Talk to a group of community leaders on problems of substance use and HIV. Convince them that you need their support. Offer them options of areas where they can help and ask for their input.

Role play: Group of health workers and social workers and street educator.

## **Bibliography and further reading**

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# Key Messages

- **Collecting information about the community is an important initial step in getting to know the community. This can help minimize conflicts with them.**
- **Knowledge and awareness of information related to rights and laws affecting street work is important to safeguard the interest of the street children and street educators.**
- **Establishing a well functioning Community Advisory Committee is the key to ensure that appropriate resources are sought, and children's needs and problems receive public and community recognition and response.**
- **Forming alliances (networks) among people and organizations concerned about the health and wellbeing of street children can help in community mobilization and strengthen advocacy.**
- **You will have to establish a good relationship with the community to be able to be effective in community work. For this, you should communicate clearly, encourage participation, and avoid prejudice.**



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