

Executive summary: *A Child-Centred Response to the Sexual Exploitation of Children in Street Situations (A/80/113)*

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, Mama Fatima Singhateh

I. Introduction

This summary outlines key observations and recommendations from thematic report [A/80/113](#) which evaluates current responses by States and child protection stakeholders to this issue and outlines recommendations for strengthening the identification and promotion of effective, child-centred solutions.

“Children in street situations” refers to those who depend on the streets to live and/or work, whether alone, with peers or with family members; and those who have formed strong social and economic connections with public spaces. This includes children who may not continuously reside or work in public areas but who are regularly present in locations such as markets, parks and transport hubs.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child provides that all children must be protected from abuse and exploitation, yet children in street situations remain among the most marginalised in the world. They face systemic discrimination, routine exclusion from essential services, and are often invisible within legal, policy, and data systems. Many experience multiple forms of violence, including sexual exploitation, and are especially vulnerable due to structural risks, the lack of shelter, protection, and access to essential services.

II. Response strategies: a child-centred approach

a. Prevention, protection and access to information and services

Effective prevention of the sexual exploitation of children in street situations begins with ensuring their equal and non-discriminatory access to essential services, including education, healthcare, adequate housing or shelter, and legal identity. Yet these children are routinely denied such protections due to a combination of legal and administrative barriers, persistent stigma and the systemic invisibility of their circumstances within national frameworks.

States are recommended to:

- Put in place measures and policies that allows for inclusive access to essential services, such as education, healthcare, housing and social protection, which are age-, gender- and disability-sensitive;
- Put in place measures to guarantee universal access to birth registration and legal identity documents and remove administrative barriers.

b. Justice and accountability

The realization of justice for children in street situations who are victims of sexual exploitation requires the establishment and effective implementation of legal and institutional frameworks that recognize and uphold their rights. The legal system should be accessible, child-friendly and rooted in the principle that children are rights holders entitled

to due process and reparation. Law enforcement authorities play a critical role in both prevention and response, and their practices must be fundamentally reoriented to reflect a victim-centred, non-punitive approach.

States are recommended to:

- Strengthen legal and institutional protections by enforcing laws against sexual exploitation, trafficking and related offences, and ensuring access to child-friendly legal aid, confidential reporting and trauma-informed remedies. Establish specialized, multidisciplinary units trained in rights-based approaches to children in street situations;
- Refrain from criminalizing survival behaviours (e.g. loitering and survival sex) and repeal laws that contribute to the stigmatization, exclusion or detention of children in street situations.

c. Participation, inclusion and empowerment

Children in street situations must be meaningfully involved in all stages of policy development, programme design and implementation. Their involvement is not only a right but also a protective mechanism that strengthens resilience, fosters accountability and leads to more effective responses to sexual exploitation.

States are recommended to:

- Establish safe, accessible and inclusive mechanisms for the meaningful and voluntary participation of children in street situations and survivors in the design, implementation and monitoring of laws, policies and programmes. Ensure ethical safeguards and child protection throughout;
- Put in place measures that would allow for inclusive, flexible and accelerated educational opportunities, including vocational and digital learning, to support reintegration of out-of-school children and improve life outcomes.

d. Data, visibility and research

Children in street situations are often excluded from official data due to systemic underreporting, compounded by social stigma, fear of retaliation and the risks associated with engaging with formal institutions. The absence of a comprehensive and coordinated data system significantly hinders States' ability to assess the true scale and nature of sexual exploitation affecting children in street situations.

States are recommended to:

- Put in place and institutionalize a systematic, disaggregated data collection system and research mechanism to monitor the prevalence, drivers and manifestations of sexual exploitation of children in street situations;
- Ensure that all data collection efforts are guided by ethical, child-sensitive methodologies that prioritize the safety, dignity and voluntary participation of children, giving special consideration to reaching marginalized and hard-to-reach groups, including through inclusive and context-appropriate approaches.