# **International Day for Street Children 2021: Workshops for Children**

**Background**

For this year's International Day for Street Children (IDSC) campaign, we will be focusing on the need for street-connected children to have access to basic services - services they are often denied and that have been even less available during the pandemic.

As a way to engage the children and young people that you work with on this topic, we’re pleased to share with you two workshop outlines, designed to facilitate a discussion on what they want or need so they can realise their rights and achieve their goals, and to support them to write letters to decision-makers this IDSC.

This workshop guidance has been developed by CSC and StreetInvest based on the [CSC Advocacy and Action Guide](https://www.streetchildren.org/resources/advocacy-action-guide/) and StreetInvest’s [Knowledge Exchange Approach](https://streetinvest.org/resource/knowledge-exchange-pack/).

**Before you get started**

Before making plans to conduct these workshops, we recommended that staff involved take time to discuss and decide if and how it will be appropriate to deliver the workshops. Please note that workshop 1 can be delivered without delivering workshop 2, but workshop 2 cannot be delivered without delivering workshop 1.

Discussions on whether it is appropriate to deliver workshop 1 or both workshops should include:

1. Do we understand the issues they face in accessing services and can we explain the rights they have? (see information below for an explanation of this)
2. Do we have the knowledge, capacity and resources to deliver a child-centred workshop that empowers the children and young people?
3. Do we have appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures in place? How will we ensure that the workshop (and letters) do not cause any unintended harm to those taking part?
4. Are we able to manage the expectations of participants, and ensure that they have a realistic understanding of what the possible outcomes of their inputs and letter-writing might be?
5. Are we able to use the information and ideas shared by the children in other ways? For instance, to inform our interventions or on-going advocacy work.
6. If delivering workshop 2, are we prepared to submit letters that contain children’s views that may differ from our own views and priorities?
7. If delivering workshop 2, are we in a position to submit the letters the children write in Workshop 2 to key government officials of their choice? Do we have the information we need to share the letters with them? Have we thought about how we will deliver the letters? (for example, if participants wish to write to the local mayor, could you organise to walk together to the office to hand-deliver them on IDSC?)

**Choosing the right facilitators**

You should carefully consider who is most appropriate to facilitate these sessions. It is important that the facilitators are skilled and experienced in one-to-one and group work with street-connected children and young people. It is recommended that at least one facilitator has an established relationship of trust with participants (for example, a street worker).

We recommend 2 facilitators for a group of up to 10 participants, and at least one additional facilitator for every additional 5-10 participants. It can be useful to have extra support staff on hand, particularly if you are working with under-12s or participants with additional needs or disabilities. Remember that one staff member should be present as nominated Safeguarding ‘Point Person’ or Safeguarding Lead. This person should not be a lead facilitator as they may need to leave the session to respond to a safeguarding concern or incident.

Before delivering the workshop activities, facilitators should read the workshop guidance and instructions and ensure they have all the information and resources they need and feel confident in facilitating the session.

**Selection and working with participants**

These workshops are generally recommended for street-connected children and young people from the age of 11, though workshop 1 can be conducted with younger children from the age of 8 as well if sufficient support is available for them.

Children and young people participating do not have to be literate or able to write. The activities can be adapted for illiterate children and young people, and facilitator notes are included in the instructions on how you can support illiterate children and young people. Ensure someone is available in each group (or breakout groups) to read materials aloud, or repeat key points and questions.

Give thought to how many girls and young women are participating and how to ensure their voices are heard if the group is male dominated. Depending on the context or topic of the discussion, it may be appropriate to make sub-groups male or female only.

**Obtaining informed consent**

It is very important to obtain informed consent from participants before they take part in these Workshops. You can find an example of a Consent Form, and checklist for a child-friendly consent process, in Annexe 1 & 2 of this Guide.

**BACKGROUND TO RIGHTS AND PARTICIPATION**

Please review the following information, as it will be helpful children to be able to refer to concepts of ‘human rights’, and ‘participation’, and documents like UN CRC General Comment No. 21 when writing their letters.

**Human Rights:** Human rights are entitlements every human being has, simply for being human. Every person has these rights regardless of race, colour, status, ability, gender or other differences. No one can be deprived of their human rights in any circumstances. The [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/) (UDHR), adopted after World War II by the General Assembly of the United Nations, states that all human beings have rights that their governments have to respect, protect and fulfil. You might like to make use of [this child-friendly version of the UDHR.](http://www.eycb.coe.int/compasito/chapter_6/pdf/1.pdf)

**Child Rights:** Child rights aim to protect all human beings younger than 18 years. The rights detailed in the UDHR all apply to children but, because of their position in society, children also have specific additional rights that afford them special protection.

**United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC):** The UNCRC is the main international instrument for the promotion and protection of the rights of children. Almost every government in the world, except the United States of America, have ratified it, meaning they have agreed to put it into practice for all children in their country. It is unique as the first legally binding instrument to take a holistic approach to children’s rights. It covers civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights; establishes a framework of duties for different actors; and marks a milestone in recognising all children as right holders. It reaffirms the five ‘umbrella rights’ of: the best interests of the child; non-discrimination; participation; implementation (including of economic, social and cultural rights to the maximum extent of available Resources); and life, survival and development. The UNCRC applies to all children – including street-connected children – and also identifies children’s responsibilities, in particular to respect the rights of others, especially their parents (Article 29). The [child-friendly version of the UNCRC](https://www.unicef.org/media/56661/file) is a useful tool to use when working with children on these issues.

**United Nations General Comment 21 on the Rights of Children in Street Situations (UNGC 21**): as explored in Section 1.8,the General Comment on Children in Street Situations provides guidance to governments on how they can ensure that street-connected children can enjoy their rights under the UNCRC. The General Comment does not create new rights but it explains to governments how certain rights in the UNCRC are particularly important to street-connected children and how these should be realised. It provides guidance to governments on developing comprehensive, long-term national strategies for street-connected children, looking both at preventing children from having to depend on the street and responding when children are already on the street. It was developed after worldwide consultations with children in street situations about what was most important to them. CSC developed a child-friendly guide to the UNGC21 in various languages, which you can find [here](https://www.streetchildren.org/csc-publications/" \l "child-friendly-guides).

**Participation:** Participation is the active involvement of street-connected children and youth in decisions that affect their lives. For many street-connected children and young people, the concept of ‘participation’ or even basic ‘rights’ is not known or understood. Ensuring the young street-connected people you work with understand how valuable their role is, and focusing on their personal develop to support them to play it, will make their contributions more effective.

**Focus on Access to Services**

As outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), all children have the right to access basic services, such as education, health care, identity documents and child protection services. However, in reality, many street-connected children face daily challenges in their ability to access these services. For example, children may need ID to enrol in school; they may be turned away from health care services; need specialised child protection support that meets their complex needs.

A lot of the rights in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child outline children’s rights to basic services:

* All children have the right to an identity – an official record of who they are. No one should take this away from them *(Article 8)*
* All children have the right to special care and help if they cannot live with their parents *(Article 20)*
* All children have the right to special education and care if they have a disability *(Article 23)*
* All children have the right to the best health care possible, safe water to drink, nutritious food, a clean and safe environment, and information to help them stay well *(Article 24)*
* All children have the right to help from the government if they are poor or in need *(Article 26)*
* All children have the right to food, clothing, a safe place to live and to have their basic needs met. they should not be disadvantaged so that they can't do many of the things other children can do *(Article 27)*
* All children have the right to a good quality education. They should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level they can *(Article 28)*
* All children’s education should help them use and develop their talents and abilities. It should also help them learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people *(Article 29).*

The General Comment on Children in Street Situations calls for governments to provide access to services. To ensure children can reach their full potential, governments should enable access to the same essential services as every other child, such as hospitals and schools.

* To enable street-connected children to access services, States should ensure that free, accessible, simple and expeditious **birth registration** is available to all children at all ages
* Governments should make sure that street-connected children can access **free basic health-care services** through universal health coverage or social protection schemes. Health education and services should include sexual and reproductive health, and be tailored to the specific needs of street-connected children
* States should make sure that street-connected children can **access free, safe, relevant and quality education**, including second-chance education, catch-up classes, mobile schools, vocational training and pathways into formal education
* Special attention should be paid to **children with disabilities** to ensure they are able to access services, including inclusive education
* Governments should ensure that all children have a **standard of living** adequate for their physical, mental, spiritual and moral development, with special attention to providing access to **adequate housing** and protect children from forced evictions.

The General Comment also calls on governments to create new solutions: to tune into the unique needs and challenges of life for street-connected children, it is important that governments develop and deliver specialized services and opportunities for them.

* To inform such specialised services, states should develop systematic, rights-respecting, participatory mechanisms to **collect and share disaggregated data** on street-connected children periodically
* Based on this data, states should then develop and adopt **holistic and long-term strategies** as well as make the **necessary budget allocations** for street-connected children. These strategies should be developed and implemented with the participation of children themselves, as well as other non-state actors (e.g. NGOs, companies and academia)
* Strategies should include **specialised services on the street** through trained social workers with good knowledge of local street connections who can help children reconnect with family, local community services and wider society
* For children in street situations without caregivers, the State is the de facto caregiver and therefore obliged to ensure **alternative care**. It is important that a child rights approach is applied in developing and implementing alternative care, and that children are not forced to accept placements against their will.

As outlined above, it is important to remember that all children have the right to participate in making decisions on where they live. The General Comment outlines that *“interventions that do not respect children as active agents in the process of moving off the street into alternative care do not work: children often end up back on the streets when they run away or when placements break down”.* One of the most dangerous and damaging actions can be to return a child to their family without: (1) understanding why the child has left the home; (2) current risk factors and strengths in the home; (3) supporting the child through any trauma experienced – both before going onto the streets and during their time on the streets; (4) working with the family unit and wider community to strengthen relationships; and (5) giving on-going assessment and support of the family once the child has returned home to ensure they are safe and well, including an easy way for a child to contact the organisation for help and support. For many children, it is not safe or possible to return home; they need services that support them whilst on the street; give them workable solutions that enable them to realise their rights there; and explore alternative care solutions.

# **WORKSHOP 1**

# ***ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES***

1. **Introduction and preparation**

As a way to engage the children and young people that you work with on this year’s IDSC theme of access to services, we’re pleased to share with you a workshop outline designed to facilitate a discussion on what they want or need so they can realise their rights and achieve their goals. This workshop will use a series of engaging exercises to help participants reflect on how access to services impacts their own lives, and what solutions they would like to see. We would then love to share the images and views of the children who have engaged in the workshops, with their permission, as part of this year's IDSC campaign.

**Time needed:**3 hours dependent on the group size; the amount of participation in activities; and number of breaks/energisers added

**What you will need:** photo camera, flipchart papers, paper (coloured if available), coloured pens.

**Be aware:** This theme is quite broad; as a facilitator it may be useful to focus on one or two basic services instead – or decide with the participants at the end of the activity ‘About today’s workshop’ which services you want to focus on. For example: access to education, health care or identity documents. Additionally, many participants will not have access to basic services and may feel upset or frustrated that they do not. Give them the support and time to talk through this, both during and after the workshop.

1. **Workshop outline**

**Introduction: about this workshop *(time: 10 minutes)***

Remind participants:

* + To only share what they feel comfortable sharing
  + To keep themselves and others safe, and who they can talk to if they have any concerns
  + That they can stop participating or leave the workshop at any point, but are requested to talk to an adult before they leave so they can access the support they need
  + That this activity is part of the International Day for Street Children campaign, and other children and young people from around the world will be doing the same workshop and sharing their views and experiences.
  + With their permission, the images they produce will be shared as part of an online campaign to raise awareness of street-connected children’s rights.

**About today’s workshop *(time: 15 minutes)***

1. Show a video explaining access to basic services. For example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UaL1lwaVNAQ>. *If the participants do not speak or read English, the facilitator can translate as the video is shown, or show a similar video about basic services in the local context and in the participants’ language*.
2. Have a brief brainstorm with participants to agree what we mean by access to basic services and which services are most important for them to access. You may at this point decide with the children which services you want to focus on during this workshop. Write down what participants say on a board or flipchart.
3. Explain what we mean by the right to access basic services. You may at this point choose to only focus on one or two basic services as this can enable you to go into more depth, and for participants to get a better understanding of a particular basic service.

*For example:*

#### **The General Comment says that all governments should provide access to basic services to all children. To ensure children can reach their full potential, governments should enable access to the same essential services as every other child, such as identity documents, hospitals and schools. Today we will be focusing on [………talk about your choice here, e.g. access to education/identity documents/ medical help].**

**Activity 1: Why this right / service is important to us – creating our flower *(time: 1 - 1 ½ hour)***

**Materials:** Flip chart paper and pens

**Aim:** think about why certain rights and access to certain services is important to participants

**Facilitator notes:** This activity should be positive and engage with the particular right/service that young people feel is most important to them.  You should invite each group to choose a service to focus on, if not already decided on in the previous activity. Make sure each group is clear about the meaning of the theme they are exploring before you start. It is vital that participants are given time and a safe environment in which to share and discuss – as well as to create their flower - and that the full time allocation for this activity is given.

**Instructions:**

1. Divide the participants in 2 – 3 sub-groups and give each group some flipchart paper and pens. Ask the groups to draw a flower – including its roots (see diagram) on the paper. In the centre of the flower they can write their country or a group name they come up with. At the roots of the flower they should write the right/service they are looking at. This can be the focus you have decided on at the start of the workshop, or if you leave it open, you can let the children choose the service they want to focus on.

Diagram

Description automatically generated

1. Explain that in this session we are thinking about why this right/service is important to them – what does it or would it mean if they could access this service? Ask them to spend a few minutes thinking about this then invite them to share their thoughts with the group. Encourage them to think about whether they agree or disagree with what others are saying.  After each example and discussion, ask the participant who shared their thoughts initially to write / represent this in a petal on the flower.  NB:  more petals can be added if necessary.
2. When the participants are ready, remind them that children – just like the flower – need a nurturing environment in which to grow and thrive. For example:  a flower needs water and sunshine.  Ask them to think about what else they need, in addition to the right/theme they are exploring, to enjoy the benefits they have shown in the petals.  They can write these around the picture e.g. ‘we need the public/government to respect us’; ‘we need adults to listen to us’.
3. When you are ready, thank the groups and explain that in the next session you will be revisiting the flowers. Take photos of the flowers the groups have created.

*Advisable to hold a break and/or energiser here.*

**Activity 3: Obstacles and Solutions – Pests and bug spray *(time: 1 ½ hours)***

**Materials:** Flower maps from the previous session, sheets of coloured paper, pens, glue/tape

**Aim:** To continue using the flower maps to explore what obstacles prevent participants from enjoying the right/service they are exploring and identify ways in which they have already shown strengths and capabilities in overcoming these.

**Facilitator notes:** It is important as facilitators to be mindful of any trauma that participants may have experienced in relation to the rights/service they are discussing. This activity is designed to look broadly at challenges and specifically at the fact that not only by getting to this workshop and activity but in their own personal journeys they have already found ways to overcome these challenges. The idea is to help clarify some of the calls to action they want to make and should emphasise a solution-focused and future-facing process. It is vital that participants are given time and a safe environment in which to share and discuss – as well as create their bugs and sprays - and that the full time allocation for this activity is given.

**Instructions:**

1. Take some time to reflect on the flower maps from the previous session.  Explain that, just as there are external factors that support their ability to enjoy their rights, there are also external obstacles that they have face. In this session we are first going to think about those ‘pests’:  you could use an analogy to help them understand what you mean e.g. in England, slugs destroy plants so they don’t grow.
2. When you are sure participants understand the purpose of the activity, give each participant in the sub-groups a few sheets of paper and ask them to draw a ‘pest’ on it.  Individually, they should think about the things that get in the way of them enjoying the chosen right/service.  For example: ‘I cannot go to school because I cannot afford a uniform’; ‘I have no legal identity because I do not know who my parents are’.  Invite each participant to explain their ‘pests’. They may have as many ‘pests’ as they want to and, when ready, should stick them around the flower(s):

Diagram

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1. Ask participants if any part of their journey so far has already shown they can overcome these e.g. legal ID – we managed to get a passport / education. Then ask if they have any experiences of overcoming these as a result of their own journeys e.g. education – we go to a street corner school.  ***This aspect of reflection on their own progress is of the utmost importance: they are the experts in their own lives and they have the opportunity to develop not only to call for action, but to demonstrate their part in making that happen.***
2. Explain that the strengths they have and the solutions they have found are like the ‘bug spray’ for fighting the ‘pests’ on their flower. As well as those they have identified already, ask participants to think about what other things would act as ‘bug spray’ to combat the challenges they face in having this right realised. For example, if a pest is violence from the police, a ‘bug spray’ could be training in child rights and protection for local police officers.
3. Using paper and pens, ask participants to draw cans of bug spray and for each pest, to write on the can the things that would help them overcome this challenge. They can then stick these with glue or tape on to their flipchart next to their pests.

A picture containing diagram

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1. Ask groups to nominate a spokesperson to share highlights from their flowers and encourage discussion. What are some of the similarities and differences, across different groups, rights, pests or solutions?
2. Ask for reflections on the activity from the groups.
3. Explain to participants that in this activity, they have done a huge amount of work. They have discussed why a right/service is important to them, what is standing in their way, explored their strengths in overcoming these and developed demands for what they need from others in order to have the right fully realised.

**To wrap up *(time: 15 minutes)***

* Discuss with participants what they liked and did not like about the workshop
* Remind participants that they all have the right to access basic services according to the UNCRC; where they cannot access services that they want or need, it is important they speak to a trusted adult, such as someone in your organisation
* Organisations cannot promise support to access all services, but they can often find alternatives, such as accompanying a young person to a medical appointment, helping them to get an ID card, or access education *(make it clear what your organisation can and cannot support with – and signpost young people to other organisations that can support outside of your organisational remit)*
* Check everyone is ok and remind them who they can speak to if they have any questions or concerns
* Check that participants are happy to share their images, and make a note of anyone who does not want to have their drawings shared. Explain that their names will not be shared, or any other personal information about them. Take photos of the drawings that children are happy to share.

* If you are also conducting workshop 2 with the same group of children, let them know how their thoughts and drawings from this workshop will be used to draft letters they can send to decision-makers of their choice.

## **WORKSHOP 2**

## ***WRITING LETTERS TO DECISION-MAKERS***

**INTRODUCTION**

As part of IDSC 2021, CSC encourages organisations to support children in writing letters to decision-makers about the change they would like to see in their lives. This can complement the template letter that you can access following [this link](https://www.streetchildren.org/idsc2021/demand-change/) that you can use to send as an organisation to your government.

This workshop guidance to support children in writing letters builds upon Workshop 1: Access to Basic Services, by helping participants to use their ideas on access to services and formulating them into a persuasive letter. Please note that this workshop should only be delivered if you have already delivered Workshop 1.

Street children and youth have a right to express their views, and to have their opinions taken into consideration in all matters that affect them. Those in positions of power have an obligation to listen to them. One way for them to do this is to be involved in writing letters to those in positions of power for this year’s IDSC, to share their experiences and requests. This workshop will help participants to understand to develop the message they want to share, and to write their letter.

The power of letter-writing is that it shows decision-makers clearly that a large number of people care about a particular issue, enough to take the time to specifically write a letter about it. Letter writing campaigns can be an extremely effective advocacy tool: for example, Amnesty International’s ‘Write for Rights’ activity which credits the release of two of prisoners of conscience to their 2013 letter-writing campaign.[[1]](#footnote-2) The huge volume of this campaign is credited as being the reason for its success, and so we urge as many organisations as possible to support as many children as possible to write letters this IDSC!

We know that letters alone might not always lead to the change we want to see, and we encourage organisations to see this as part of broader advocacy efforts around IDSC: for many more ideas of how to develop effective advocacy campaigns, see CSC’s [Advocacy and Action Guide](https://www.streetchildren.org/resources/advocacy-action-guide/). It is important to let participants know that this is not a standalone exercise, but part of an ongoing effort to make a change. The issues highlighted by children, and solutions proposed in letters can and should also inform your programmatic interventions.

**FACILITATOR GUIDANCE: WRITING LETTERS TO DECISION-MAKERS**

**Before you get started on Workshop 2**

**Managing expectations and feedback**

It is very important to manage the expectations of the children taking part and to ensure that they are aware from the start of what to expect and are kept updated on how the information that they have shared is being used and any response the government has to their letter(s). Children should be aware of the potential impact of their involvement, including possible risks and should also be honestly informed of the potential for their hard work to result in no (immediate) changes: children should not have unrealistic expectations about what their involvement will create. It is especially important that children are kept informed about any response the letters elicit.

As part of this, we strongly encourage organisations to undertake other activities around IDSC, and to generate interest around the day: some organisations, for example, are recording songs with children to mark the day, booking radio interviews, or distributing leaflets. We also encourage organisations to use the materials developed in this workshop for other future advocacy or programmatic work, for example, participants could develop a campaign based on the issues they identify in their letters, or you can use the information to adapt existing or develop new interventions.

**Time needed**

Approximately 3 hours dependent on the group size, the amount of participation in activities, and number of breaks/energisers added

**Materials needed**

flipchart papers, paper (coloured if available), coloured pens.

**WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES**

**Introduction: about this workshop (10 minutes)**

Remind participants:

* + To only share what they feel comfortable sharing
  + To keep themselves and others safe, and who they can talk to if they have any concerns
  + That they can stop participating or leave the workshop at any point, but are requested to talk to an adult before they leave so they can access the support they need
  + That this activity is part of the International Day for Street Children campaign, and other children and young people from around the world will be doing the same workshop and sharing their views and experiences.
  + With their permission. the images they produce will be shared as part of an online campaign to raise awareness of street-connected children’s rights.

**Activity 1: Storytelling icebreaker (20 minutes)**

**Aim:** To think about both the importance of the stories and experiences we each want to share and how the way we communicate can affect what we say.

**Materials:** none

**Instructions:**

1. Ask the group to sit in a circle and explain that we are going to tell a story as a group. Each participant is going to have a chance to add something to the story we are telling.
2. Ask one participant to start by saying a short sentence to start the story. For example, ‘it is Monday and I am going to town’.
3. Ask the person next to them to say another sentence which builds on the first, for example, ‘in town I am going to meet my friend’.
4. Keep the story going until everyone in the circle has added a sentence.
5. Now ask the group what they thought about the story? Was it what they expected it would be? What messages were conveyed?
6. Now repeat the exercise but this time, participants must not speak but should act out their part of the story.
7. When you have finished, ask the group to think about how it was different: do they think we told the same story? How did we express ourselves?
8. Explain that in lots of ways, writing a good letter is like telling a good story. We are now going to think about the messages we want to convey and different ways we communicate to help ensure we can tell the stories that we want to when we write letters to policy-makers as part of IDSC 2021.

## **Activity 2: Telling Our Stories (40 minutes)**

**Aim**: To help participants to articulate their own experiences and tell their stories in their own words. To help participants to identify which elements of their stories they are comfortable in sharing, and how these can act as a powerful advocacy tool in their letters.

**Materials:** Flipchart and pens, outcomes of Workshop 1.

**Instructions:**

1. Explain that we are going to think back to Workshop 1, and especially the ‘bugs’ and ‘bug sprays’ we identified during that session.
2. Divide the group into two and explain that each group should use the materials they developed in Workshop 1 to think about the questions below.
   1. What is your story? Think about what moments in your life you would like to share with decision-makers. What challenges have you encountered? What have you learned from these experiences? What would you like to tell others so they understand your experiences? [Note to facilitators: participants should refer back to material from Workshop 1 here. Nonetheless, please be prepared that some participants may raise emotionally challenging issues. Participants should be supported to write letters on whatever they feel is important, and given adequate emotional support.]
   2. Write down or draw these key moments / stories, and spend some time thinking about how you would communicate them to others. You can share any experiences you feel comfortable with sharing.
3. Bring the group back together and invite some participants to share their stories. Emphasise the point that their knowledge and experiences – what they have to say – is valuable and should be heard.
4. Conclude the activity by asking the group what they thought about the session then explain we are now going to use their stories as a starting point to write our letters to decision-makers.

## **Activity 3: How to present our message (30 minutes)**

**Aim**: To encourage participants to reflect on how the words we use can affect the way the people reading our letters might feel, react and respond. We can use our experiences, and techniques, to help us to write a persuasive letter.

**Materials**: Flipchart and pens

**Resources:** Resource 1 – Letter Writing Tips

**Instructions:**

1. Explain that you are going to share a quotation from a letter written by Josephine to her local government. Read out the following, without stressing any particular words:

*Dear**Mayor,*

*I am writing because I am very angry. We street children are treated very badly, and we demand you to do something about it.*

*The police abuse us all the time, and you and your colleagues never do anything about it. You shouldn’t sit on your throne and forget about us. We have no education, we have no medicines, and sometimes we have to do dangerous work. Your children have all nice things, but we have nothing.*

*You must do something.*

*Josephine.*

1. Ask the group: How does that sound to you? How do you think the reader will react to Josephine’s words? What other ways do you think her views could be communicated? Invite participants to share their thoughts, summarise these verbally and capture key thoughts on a flipchart.
2. If the children find it difficult to come up with ideas, you can read the letter again with emphasis on the words / phrases in bold, and ask the same questions:

*Dear**Mayor,*

*I am writing because I am* ***very angry****. We street children are treated very badly, and we* ***demand*** *you to do something about it.*

*The police* ***abuse us all the time****, and you and your colleagues* ***never*** *do* ***anything*** *about it. You shouldn’t sit on* ***your throne*** *and* ***forget about us****. We have no education, we have no medicines, and sometimes we have to do dangerous work. Your children have all nice things, but we have nothing.*

*You* ***must*** *do something.*

*Josephine.*

1. When the group has shared their thoughts, emphasise the point that the words we use might make an audience stop reading what we have to say. Remember, we are writing letters to try to persuade decision-makers to make a change, and we hope to challenge any negative perceptions they may have. It is important for the letter to be engaging and persuasive. Letters are most effective when the letter shows that the person, or people, writing it really care about the issue!
2. Explain that Josephine’s letter contains lots of really important issues, but because it is so negative and confrontational, it is unlikely to make the right impression.
3. Ask the group to think of ways that Josephine could re-write her letter in a way that is more persuasive. Summarise verbally and write on a flipchart some of the ideas for positive letter-writing suggested by the group. After the group has shared their ideas, share **Resource 1: letter writing tips** with the group. You can also use these elements guide the discussion if participants find it difficult to come up with their own suggestions.
4. Conclude the session by reminding the group we have important knowledge to share and we can use our skills to help others hear our stories.

## **Activity 4: Writing Our Letters (1h 30 mins)**

**Aim:** For participants to use the skills they have learned, as long as their own knowledge and experiences, to write a letter to a decision-maker for IDSC.

**Materials**: Flipchart and pens, Flowers from the first workshop, above.

**Resources**: Resource 2 - A Suggested Letter Structure

**Instructions:**

1. Copy **Resource 2: A Suggested Letter Structure,** onto a flipchart and go through each part with the group as a guide for structuring what we want to write in our letter. Note that the content will be different for each participant depending on what experience or message they want to communicate.
2. You may choose for all participants to contribute to one letter, or for children to write individual letters or in small groups. Children should be informed that they may write anonymous letters if they wish. Ask children what they would like to do. If you and the children decide that they would like to write individual letters, or write letters in small groups, you can decide that different letters focus on different issues, or are addressed to different audiences: remind participants that different people respond to different kinds of information. The people you might want to write to could include: Prime Minister or President, Members of Parliament, Children’s Minister or Children’s Commissioner, Police Chiefs, local Mayors or other local government officials. Remind participants that people are often more likely to take action on issues that affect them directly, so local figures might be a more suitable audience.

*Facilitator note: Remember to discuss with participants how their letters will be delivered: it is important that they reach the person they are written to, so ensure that you are clear with participants about who you as an organisation can support them in contacting. If participants choose to write to local figures, such as the Mayor, you may wish to hand-deliver the letters on IDSC along with some or all of the participants.*

1. To write their letters, it is important for participants to have completed Workshop 1: Access to Services, outlined above. Therefore, bring out the materials developed during those sessions especially the ‘bugs’ and ‘bug sprays’ they identified.
2. Participants should be divided into groups. Each group should have its own facilitator. In these groups:
   * First, participants should refresh their memories on the key issues and solutions they identified during Workshop 1.
   * Now, reflecting on this previous work as well as thinking about their own stories, and what they would like to share, participants should work either alone or in pairs or small groups, to write a bullet point list of the issue or issues they want their letter to focus on.
   * Once they are happy with the list, they should use the template in Resource 1 to begin to write their letter. In the small groups, participants should share their ‘first draft’ with their teammates for feedback. As facilitators, you should remind participants of the list of features in Exercise 3, if needed. Once every participant has been given some tips, they can write up the final version of their letter.

*Facilitator note: if the children you work with are illiterate or have difficulties writing, make sure you have sufficient facilitators who can help the children write down their thoughts. Some children may wish to draw a picture instead to be included in their letter. If you are doing this, make sure once the letter is written you read it back to the children to check if this is what they wanted to say. It is important the letter is written in their words and accurately reflect their thoughts and views, and not to influence this as adult.*

1. Once participants have written their letters, bring everyone back together to reflect on what they have already achieved in developing their thoughts and writing their letters. Please use this time to explain to participants how their letters will be shared with their intended recipients, and ensure to manage participants’ expectations about the possible outcomes of this exercise. Explain that while change rarely happens over night, they have been part of a really important piece of advocacy, writing letters along with many other street-connected children from all over the world, and that’s something to be proud of!
2. If possible, we encourage you to create as much visibility around your letters as possible, to encourage their recipients to read and take notice of them. One way to do this could be to use social media: take photos of the letters, for example, or just post about them, using the hashtag #IDSC2021 and #AccessForStreetChildren.

Make sure you put mechanisms in place to feedback any outcomes from the letters submitted to the chosen audience to the children. It is important for them to know what happened with their letters and any response the government officials provide.

**RESOURCE 1 – LETTER WRITING TIPS**

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| **Letter Writing Tips**   1. Provide a clear message: try to focus on one or two core issues, rather than including too many issues which might be distracting. 2. Use rhetorical questions to get the reader to reflect on the situation. For example, ‘Can you imagine waking up every day and not knowing where you can find food?’ 3. Use emotive, but not aggressive, vocabulary. For example: ‘Street children like me often feel isolated and sad because of our situation’ 4. If available, use evidence and proof to support an argument: this could be from information you know about street children in your country, the participants in the workshop, information from UN General Comment on children in street situations, or statistics the facilitators can provide. For example, ‘we are entitled to education, and this right is even included in the UN’s General Comment 21 on children in street situations.’ 5. Use techniques like repetition, so restating a point a few times throughout your letter, to make sure your reader remembers it. 6. Include solutions, so that there is something positive the reader can take away and act on! |

**RESOURCE 2 - A SUGGESTED LETTER STRUCTURE**

Dear *[name of minister/official/etc],*

My name is [*your name(s)*], and I am writing to you because 12th April 2021 is the International Day for Street Children.

Begin by clearly stating the main issue or challenge you want to bring to the attention of your audience. Do this in a few sentences, so the person reading it understands your message right away.

Next, share your experience: explain why this is such an important issue to you. Tell your story!

If possible, support your views on the issue using quotes, facts or statistics. For example: *‘Free education is so important because 60% of street children in this city do not got to school, which is against their right to education.’\**

Provide your suggested solution(s) to the issue.

Describe the action(s) you want your audience to take. What do you want your audience to do about the issue? Make sure this is a concrete action that your audience is able to undertake.

Finish by thanking them for taking the time to read your letter, and sign your name.

\* *This may be difficult for participants, so we recommend facilitators make a few facts and figures available for participants to use. You can also do a poll among participants to get informal figures on key issues, e.g., ‘12 out of 15 participants cannot access school as they don’t have a fixed address’.*

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**Annexe 1**

**Checklist for Child-Friendly Consent Processes**

When seeking to obtain consent from children, there a number of important aspects which must be considered and should be incorporated into your organisation's consent process:

All aspects of the activity that the children are consenting too should be explained aloud to children, using child-friendly language. Where children cannot read, the contents of the consent form should also be read aloud to them.

Children must be fully aware of how the information will be used, and what purpose it will be used for.

Children must be fully aware of where this information will be shared including, for example, information about the audience and the media via which it will be shared (print, internet, etc).

All reasonably foreseeable risks should be explained to the children in a language and terms which they can understand.

All children should understand that they are free to say ‘no’ to giving their consent: the process must be totally voluntary, and the final decision must be theirs.

All children should understand that they can consent to some things without consenting to others, for example, they may be happy sharing written information but not their photos. The consent form must clearly enable children to consent separately to different kinds of information.

Your consent process should explain the concept of anonymity to children, ensuring that they understand how this will work and what it means for them.

All children must understand that they can withdraw their consent and participation at any time and for any reason, without consequences. Relatedly, children must be made aware of who they can contact if they do change their mind after the consent process is completed.

Children should be given some time to reflect on giving their consent after the information is presented to them.

Children should be provided with a range of ways to agree to giving their consent, these might include:

Verbally (via audio recording)

Thumbprints

Writing their name

Providing a signature

Annexe 2 – Example Consent Form

## **Consent Form – Use of Children’s Information and Images[[2]](#footnote-3),[[3]](#footnote-4)**

CSC exists to make street-connected children’s rights a reality around the world. The images and information collected in accordance with the below conditions of use are intended to be used to promote street children’s rights and the work carried out by CSC.

As an organisation, we prioritise the welfare and safety of all children and young people. In accordance with our child protection policy, we will not permit any information, photographs, video or other images of you to be taken without your consent and the consent of your parent/caregiver/supporting organisation.

We will take all steps to keep the images secure and ensure they are used solely for the purposes they are intended for. If you or your parent/caregiver/supporting organisation become aware that these images are being used inappropriately you should inform us immediately.

**Conditions of use by CSC**

1. This form is valid for **five years** from the date you sign it. After five years, **unless we ask you if we can continue to use your data and you agree**, we will delete the personal data from our records (including images/video etc.).
2. We will not use your personal details or your surname in a photographic image or video, on our website, or in any of our printed publications.
3. We will not include personal e-mail addresses, postal addresses, telephone or fax numbers, or any other identifying information that may disclose your specific location on our website or our printed publications.
4. If we use your individual photograph (meaning a photo of you on your own, not in a group), we will not use your name in the text or caption next to the photograph unless we have your explicit agreement to do this – in addition to this consent form.
5. We may use a different name (to ensure your anonymity) when we are publishing your information, photographic image or video, only if you agree to this in option 6 of ‘permission granted’ in this form.
6. If we write your first name in the text of a publication or webpage, we will not use your photograph alongside the text.
7. We may use group photographs or footage with very general labels, such as “an awareness-raising campaign” or “outreach in schools”.
8. We will only use your image if you are suitably dressed, to reduce the risk of such images being used inappropriately.
9. We will ensure that the information we publish about you is accurate and does not put you at risk of harm. We will only collect information about you with your full informed consent and the consent of your parent/caregiver/supporting organisation.
10. You are entitled to ask us what personal information about you we are keeping on our records; request that any description of you is changed, corrected or deleted; and you can tell us to delete any information about you that we hold on our records. You do not have to give a reason for why you are asking us to do this.
11. Your consent to our use of your information can be changed or withdrawn at any time by contacting us at [info@streetchildren.org](about:blank).

**Permissions granted:**

*Please circle your answer*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. May we use your story in printed publications that we produce for promotional purposes? | Yes / No |
| 1. May we use your photograph (unidentified) in printed publications that we produce for promotional purposes? | **Yes / No** |
| 1. May we use your story on the internet? | **Yes / No** |
| 1. May we use your photograph on the internet? | **Yes / No** |
| 1. May we record your image on video or webcam and share this publicly, including on the internet? | **Yes / No** |
| 1. How would you like to be referred to when we use your story, image, or video? (please tick all that apply)    1. Using your first name only    2. Using a different name (‘pseudonym’)    3. Using the first letter of your first name |  |

*I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (****child’s name****) have read and/or had the above conditions explained to me, I understand the conditions and I consent to* ***CSC*** *obtaining my information, image or video in line with these conditions.*

*I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (****parent/caregiver/supporting organisation****), confirm that I understand how* ***CSC*** *intend to use this child’s information, image or video and can confirm that I also consent to their information being obtained and used in this way.*

|  |
| --- |
| **Signed (child):** |
| **Date:** |
| **Signed (parent/caregiver/supporting organisation):** |
| **Date:** |
| **Signed (CSC):** |
| **Date:** |

1. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2014/02/write-rights-prisoners-freed-following-largest-ever-letter-writing-campaign/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Adapted from the consent form of Mercy Corps. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Where children and/or adults are unable to read this form, its contents should be used as the basis for a careful explanation of the consents and permissions it contains. Where a child does not have a parent/ guardian or supporting organisation to provide consent, a judgement should be made regarding their capacity to provide informed consent for use of their images/stories. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)