

# *Young People*

*A review on how young people are addressed within the monitoring process of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*



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Save the Children works for:

- a world which respects and values each child
- a world which listens to children and learns
- a world where all children have hope and opportunity

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# Executive Summary

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) confirms and reinforces the view that human dignity is neither linked to functional capacity, maturity, age or gender. This implies that the importance of paying attention to the needs and rights of children of various ages is recognised. It also means that concepts such as childhood, adolescence and adulthood are recognised as social constructs that vary with their social, cultural and professional contexts.

Traditionally, most child programmes have been directed towards younger children without paying enough attention to the specific situation of older children, i.e. adolescents and young persons. Save the Children Sweden (SCS) is currently making efforts to change this situation and intends to include a youth perspective in an increasing number of programmes. In order to achieve such a shift in emphasis there is a need for knowledge concerning how the rights of adolescents and young persons are addressed in various contexts.

Consequently, SCS decided to examine a number of reports included in the CRC monitoring process. Nine national reports, nine NGO reports and corresponding concluding observations by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child were selected and constituted the basis of a desk study.

The overall conclusion of the study is that there is no single, universal “adolescence approach” prevailing in most reports. Each report contains a specific set of issues. Taken together, the reports can therefore function as a bank of ideas and experiences.

Another conclusion is that the positive sides of adolescence, the openness towards new ideas, the interest in the environment and political and societal matters appear to be fairly invisible in the reports. Some countries report on participation by, and the influence of, young persons. Others report on how youth organisations and networks are encouraged and supported. Yet, these cases constitute exceptions.

Most reports emphasise risks rather than opportunities for progress and development. The right to protection from abuse and exploitation is highlighted in several reports, and sexual exploitation and sexual abuse are more frequently mentioned than general issues related to sexual and reproductive health. It seems easier to address sexual abuse than to create opportunities for young people to develop a “healthy sexual life”. Sexual health is obviously still a taboo and difficult to tackle in many countries.

There are several reasons for the ad hoc information on issues of special relevance to young persons. One obvious reason is that young girls and boys are only exceptionally invited to participate in the very process of monitoring. Another reason is connected to the reporting guidelines, which only suggest aged-based information within two areas (“the definition of the child” and “family environment and alternative care”).

If the UN monitoring process is to function as an efficient tool in the realisation of the rights of the young persons there is a need for age-based data and analyses. Another must is to let young persons express their own views on matters

that concern them, which in turn requires analyses of obstacles to this, for example prevailing adult attitudes.

# Introduction

## **The rights of all children**

With the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) came a new normative instrument with roots in international law. The Convention stems from each individual's very existence. It reflects a view of the child as a member of society and opens up for new perspectives. The young should not be seen as passive recipients of influence from parents or other adults. They are not exclusively family members but unique individuals with their own needs, interests and rights.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child confirms and reinforces the view that human dignity is neither linked to functional capacity, nor to maturity, gender or age. Thus, there is a strong recognition of the importance of paying attention to the needs and rights of children of various ages.

Traditionally, most child programmes have been directed towards small children, but lately programmes including *all* girls and boys below 18 years have become more and more common. Yet, apprehensions are often expressed that also these programmes tend to discriminate against the upper age groups, and that insufficient attention is paid to the specific situations of older children.

Save the Children Sweden (SCS) decided to examine these problems more closely. An overview of the work of the organisation was made, but provided no clear answers, as it was seldom possible to distinguish various age groups. This outcome raised further questions, such as how young persons are generally perceived and described when reporting to the UN monitoring Committee on the Rights of the Child. Improved general knowledge would be valuable for the programme development that is now ongoing within SCS.

SCS therefore instigated a systematic review of national and alternative reports<sup>1</sup> to the UN CRC Monitoring Committee and the corresponding observations and conclusions made by the Committee. That review has now been carried out and resulted in the present report.

## **Aims of the review**

The overall objective of the review is consequently to deepen knowledge concerning how the rights of adolescents and young persons are addressed in the international monitoring process.

By defining urgent issues for young girls and boys the review can also provide relevant knowledge for the development of a youth perspective in SCS programmes.

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1. The national reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child are intended to become the main instruments for monitoring how the Convention is realised, but the Committee also welcomes written information from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which the Committee makes observational remarks on.

## **Review questions and methodology**

The report is a desk study of nine national reports, nine NGO reports and corresponding concluding observations made by the UN CRC monitoring committee. The main criteria for the selection of countries were:

- a) geographical spread and
- b) relative modernity of reports, preferably the second report of the country.

With these criteria as points of departure the following countries were chosen: Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Guatemala, India, Lebanon, Mozambique, South Africa, Sweden and Tanzania.

According to the terms of reference elaborated by SCS the following questions were to be raised and analysed:

- Do the reports contain any specific information about adolescent/young people?
- If so, which are the areas that most commonly include information on young people?
- Which gaps are there in reporting/knowledge/information?
- Do adolescent/young people appear within different groups of children, such as children living on the street, children involved in work, children with disabilities, and children in war or conflict?
- Does the report distinguish children from adolescents within the different areas?
- Does the information about adolescent/young people consider gender roles? For example under education – is there information whether it is possible for “second chance” education for girls/boys?
- Do country reports and the concluding remarks from the Committee ask for specific measures targeting young people such as within education, work and employment, reproductive health, and the judicial system?

Each report was read and reviewed in detail with these questions in mind. In order to obtain an overview indicating general trends and patterns, comparisons were made both by country and by context. The context was categorised into the eight areas that the national reports are to follow according to UN reporting guidelines, i.e.

- General measures
- Definition of the child
- General principles
- Civil rights and freedom
- Family environment and alternative care
- Basic health and welfare
- Education, leisure, and cultural activities
- Special protection measures.

These areas are also the basis for the presentation of review results.



## Conceptual and theoretical framework

### Childhood, adolescence, adult life – social constructs

Concepts such as childhood, adolescence and adulthood are social constructs. They may reflect social and cultural variations between societies, but also differences between professional views. Consequently there is no global unanimity on how to define or describe these phenomena. This is also true for practically all concepts related to older children, something that has to be considered in every effort to make generalisations. Yet, it seems necessary to try to place the concrete results from the reports into a conceptual framework.

In the industrialised world concepts such as adolescents, young persons, and teenagers have most often been used to describe a certain developmental stage. Many of these descriptions have their roots in the classic works of the psychiatrist Erik Homburger Erikson. In his work “Childhood and Society” eight developmental life-stages are described. The fifth stage is further analysed in “Identity: Youth and Crises”. According to Erikson this is the stage when worldviews become important. The individual enters a period of exploring different roles, values and skills. It is a time between childhood security and the responsibilities of adulthood. The identity is gradually taking form through affiliation with different groups.

From a medical view sexual changes, and the capability of reproduction are focused, but anthropologists also often state the importance of sexual relations to identity development.

*The following is a quotation from the Medical Encyclopaedia:  
“Puberty refers to the onset of sexual maturation. Puberty is the period when the child experiences physical, hormonal, and sexual changes and becomes capable of reproduction. It is associated with rapid growth and the appearance of secondary sexual characteristics. Adolescence is the period of transition between puberty and adulthood”.*

In traditional societies and groups, rituals frequently formalise the transition from childhood to adulthood. Initiation rites provide guidelines for the young persons to enter into new social adult roles. However, many of the traditional societies are now changing. Urbanization is becoming a global phenomenon. This often means rapid social and cultural changes with less clear boundaries between childhood, adolescence and adult forms of life.

Considering the multi-faceted views of the period that is called adolescence in the industrialised world it is not surprising that a number of concepts exist. In some popular psychological textbooks adolescence is described as the years from 12 onwards, in other books adolescence is used for children from ten years and older. Even in the international community several different definitions are used. UNICEF defines those who are between 15–19 years as *adolescents*. *Young people* can be between 15–24 years but adolescents and *youth* are often used interchangeably. WHO uses adolescents for girls and boys between 10–19, youth for those between 15–24, while *young people* can include both adolescents

and youth. In sum, there are no clear-cut definitions, and in this report all these concepts are used synonymously.

### *Adolescents – no longer children, not yet adults*

Adolescents are receptive to new ideas: they are keen to make the most of their growing capacity for making decisions. Their curiosity and interest provide a tremendous window of opportunity to foster personal responsibility for health. Furthermore, engaging in positive and constructive activities provides occasions to forge relationships with adults and peers as well as acquiring behaviour patterns that are crucial to health (ibid. WHO, 1997).

However the period between childhood and adulthood is defined, it is a period of rapid development. Young persons acquire new capacities and are faced with many new situations. This presents not only opportunities for progress but also risks to their health and well being. As adolescents face the challenges of the second decade of life, a little help can go long way in channelling their energy towards positive and productive paths. Neglect of adolescents can lead to problems, both immediately and in the years ahead, which is further explained by WHO in the action plan elaborated in 1997.

Adolescents (85 % of whom live in developing countries) make up about 20 % of the world's population. More than ever before, adolescents are able to attend school and benefit from technical progress. Yet at the same time, the lives of millions of adolescents are marred by poverty, inadequate education and work opportunities, exploitation, war, civil unrest and ethnic and gender discrimination. Rapid urbanisation, telecommunications, travel and migration bring both new possibilities and new risks to young people. These conditions may directly jeopardise health and may also undermine the traditional social support that helps young people prepare for, negotiate and explore the opportunities and demands of their passage to adulthood. Moreover the societies' expectations of behaviour, roles, access to recourses and prospects for development vary between adolescent boys and girls. (Action for Adolescent Health – Towards a Common Agenda, WHO, 1997).

The decreasing influence of family and culture, earlier puberty and later marriage – all these extend the risks of unprotected sexual activity in unmarried adolescents in many parts of the world. In some countries, early marriage and child bearing lead to high maternal and infant mortality rates. In others, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV/AIDS, pose enormous health risks to adolescents. Potentially harmful substances – tobacco, alcohol and other drugs – are now more readily available to adolescents and threaten their health in both short and long-term. Violence inflicted *by* and *on* young persons is a growing phenomenon. Many young men take part in acts of violence, including wars. Suicide attempts appear to be on the increase among the young and many are the victims of violence, including sexual abuse, often perpetrated by adults.

One of the aims of the study is to review to what extent and how these issues are covered in a selected number of national and NGO reports as well as in the Concluding Observations made by the CRC Monitoring Committee.

# Results of the Review

## Young persons are not invisible

Each report was reviewed with the aim of tracing *all* occasions in which young persons were discussed. The point of departure used was concepts such as *young persons*, *young people*, *youth*, *adolescents*, and *teenagers*.

It turned out that these concepts were often mentioned together with children, e.g. “children and young persons”. In some reports this combination was used throughout. As the aim of the study is to assess how just adolescents are dealt with these and similar occasions referring to all persons below 18 were excluded.

Occasionally one and the same issue is reported two or more times under different titles. Even if efforts were made to take this into account, there are certainly some minor errors. However, these should not distort *general patterns*. And there is no doubt, the number of times the word adolescents occurs is rather impressive. One or other of the above-mentioned concepts were found in 275 paragraphs in national reports, in about 60 paragraphs in the NGO reports and in more than 50 paragraphs of the Concluding Observations of the Monitoring Committee. Thus, altogether special attention is given to young persons on almost 400 occasions in the selected reports, and of course more as many are repeated.

As appears in the table below young persons are mentioned in practically all sections of the reports. One third of the times is under “Special protection”. This is true for all three types of reporting. One interesting observation is the relatively high figure below “Civil rights and freedom” in the NGO reports. Another interesting observation is the focus on education in national reports, while basic health and welfare among adolescents is a more common concern in the concluding observations.

Table I. Frequency and proportional distribution as to titles

Title	National reports		NGO reports		Concluding observations		All reporting	
Definition of child	24	9%	6	10%	12	22%	42	11%
General measures	27	10%	3	5%	6	11%	36	9%
General principles	16	6%	1	2%	2	3%	19	5%
Civil rights and freedom	24	9%	13	20%	3	5%	40	10%
Family environment	14	5%	3	5%	1	2%	18	5%
Basic health and welfare	29	10%	7	11%	10	19%	46	12%
Education etc	48	17%	5	9%	2	3%	55	14%
Special protection	92	34%	17	29%	18	33%	127	33%
Others	1	—	3	5%	—		3	1%
Total	275	100%	58	100%	54	100%	387	100%

## **Definitions of young persons and children**

### ***National reports***

In most reports the concept of *child* in the Convention on the Rights of the Child is taken for granted, but in some cases the vocabulary is problematical. The Lebanon report states for instance that everyone under the age of 18 years cannot be grouped together under one single definition. “On the contrary... adolescents and youngsters flatly reject the notion that they should be referred to as children...”. Children’s development is described with reference to Piaget, and the report suggests adolescence being divided into the early adolescent stage (12–15 years), and the mid-adolescent stage, (the 15–18 year-period). Domestic statistics in Lebanon use a still more specific age categorization.

In the Tanzanian national report, situations are described indicating that the boundary between children and adolescents varies with these situations. Other reports specify the distinction between children and adolescents in terms of two age groups.

In the Ethiopian report, those between 15–18 years are, for instance, referred to as young persons, while the age groups 9–15 years are defined as children. The report from Bangladesh states that girls stop being children at 12 years old and boys at 15-16 years old. In Guatemala an adolescent is a person between 12–18 years. However, the Penal Code distinguishes between 12–14 year-olds and 15–17 year old persons, indicating a difference in responsibility.

In the Indian Census “a child” is defined as a person below 14 years of age. The reason is said to be that most programmes target this age group. Nothing is said about the 14–18 year old young person group.

In the South African national report youth are referred to persons in the age group 16–35 years. In the report “The Measure of a Man” by Anthony Simpson it is stated that the in South African political party terms “youth” are normally described as those under 35 years of age.

### ***Alternative reports***

In some of the alternative reports the lack of convergence between the definition of a child in the Convention, traditional views, legislation and policies is taken up as a problem. The Ethiopian report serves as an illustration. Here it states that the CRC definition is often overlooked in traditional thought and actual practice.

It is reported that the traditionally recognised minimum age for girls to marry is well below 18 in many rural areas of the country. According to one survey, the end of childhood in some parts of the country may be below 15 years of age, depending on the ethnic affiliation of the community.

The authors of the NGO report conclude that in this way a female child may be deprived of the rights guaranteed by the Convention in connection with marriage. They say that in many rural communities girls are often engaged to be married at a young age and married in their early teens. The report also refers to the Ethiopian Civil Code, which prescribes the minimum age for marriage for

males and females to be 18 and 15 years respectively, and concludes that the provision reflects gender bias in social and civil rights and is in conflict with article 2 of the Convention.

The Penal Code is also discussed and criticised. The Code recognises children between 15 and 18 years of age as young persons who shall be treated under the ordinary provisions of the Code in similar fashion to the way adults are treated. This is considered a violation of the Convention in the same way, as is the treatment of young persons between 9–15 years who are kept in prison.

The same report states that the Ethiopian Labour Proclamation recognises children between the age of 14 and 18 as young workers. Employment is allowed as long as the children are not exposed to working conditions that endanger their well being and development. However, in this case possible problems and consequences for adolescent boys and girls are not discussed.

### ***Concluding remarks***

Often the Committee is concerned that the various age limits set by the law do not correspond to the rights expressed in the Convention. Such a concern is particularly common in connection with criminal responsibility, when adolescents are considered on an equal footing with adults.

Age of marriage is another “adolescent question” taken up by the Committee when relevant. This is for instance the case in Mozambique, where the minimum age of marriage is 14 for girls and 16 for boys. In the case of Lebanon, the Committee is concerned that there are many different minimum ages for marriage owing to the existence of 15 personal status laws administered by different confessional groups, and above all that some confessional groups permit marriage to be entered into by boys as young as 14 and girls as young as 9. The Committee is particularly concerned that its previous recommendations to review the minimum age for marriage and to adopt legislative measures with a view to ensuring respect for the rights of girls, especially as concerns preventing early marriage, have not been followed up.

The disparity between the minimum legal age for admission to employment and the age for the end of compulsory education is another common observation. Such a disparity most often concerns adolescents.

In some cases the Committee recommends data collection on all children up to the age of 18, indicating that there may be a certain lack of information concerning adolescents.

### ***General measures of implementation and general principles***

Under the title of “General measures of implementation” States are requested to provide relevant information pursuant to Article 4 of the Convention, including information on (a) the measures taken to harmonise national law and policy with the provisions of the CRC and (b) existing or planned mechanisms at national or local level for coordinating policies relating to children and for monitoring the implementation of the Convention.

State Parties are also requested to describe the measures that have been taken to make the principles and provisions of the CRC widely known, and available to adults and children alike.

Under “General principles”, State Parties are to provide relevant information, including the principal legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures in force or foreseen, factors and difficulties encountered and progress achieved in implementing the provisions of the Convention. Priorities and specific goals for the future should be provided in respect of the four principles of CRC.<sup>2</sup>

### *National reports*

Some countries report measures that promote cultural, scientific and recreational activities for children as well as young persons. Educational TV and radio programmes, cultural and leisure centres for youth are such examples. Others report establishment of institutions, legal aid offices for young persons, specific juvenile courts, or measures taken for children and young refugees. Sweden reports on the State Youth Council (See further below “Education, free time and cultural activities”).

Several countries report that young persons, youth organisations and sport clubs have participated in the preparation of the report. Workshops, seminars, drawing and essay competitions have been arranged to reach students and young persons.

In the Swedish report it is for instance stated that Children’s Ombudsman (BO) makes efforts to disseminate the Convention to young people:

*“BO, which has been commissioned by the Government to supply information about the Convention in the course of its activities, has attached great importance to making the Convention known to young people and has therefore approached educational publishers and educational authors to draw their attention to the necessity of information about the Convention regularly, including in school textbooks... The intention is for young persons to find out more about their rights, the Convention and BO, and to develop a dialogue on various questions”.*

Under “General principles” young persons’ right to participate is taken up in the Guatemalan report: “One significant achievement of the new Children and Adolescents Code, which will ensure children’s right to participate in decision-making on matters concerning them, is the inclusion as members of the National Children’s Council of two representatives, one male and one female, elected by the student organizations ... a delegate, preferably aged 14–18, to be elected by the country’s trade union federations”.

Gender issues among adolescents are approached more or less explicitly as a question related to article 2. Tanzania states for instance that distinction should

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2 As State Parties are also encouraged to provide relevant information on the application of the principles in connection with articles listed elsewhere, the information provided below under this title is often also found somewhere else. Moreover, it is mainly in national reports that there is a section with the title “General principles”.



neither be made between the treatment of boys and girls in secondary education, nor as to the protection of young persons against sexual assaults.

*“Section 50 of the Education Act (act No. 6 of 1982, as amended) clearly states that basic primary and junior secondary education is the right of every child aged between 7 and 17 in Zanzibar and that the Government is bound to provide education to every child. Also Islamic law seems to be extraneously supportive of child education and equally requires that no distinction should be made between the treatment of boys and girls”.*

*“In the case of prostitution and other unlawful sexual activities there are a number of provisions aimed at protecting girls under 16 (sect. 12, Penal Code). There are no provisions aimed at protecting boys and only limited protection of boys under 14 against sexual assault is provided”.*

The report also raises questions about marriage ages, and the authors are particularly concerned about the situation in Zanzibar:

*“Islamic law seems to permit the marriage of individuals who have reached puberty, at which point they are considered adults. However, Islamic law in Zanzibar also seems to recognise the possibility that girl children may be married before they reach puberty and without their consent. It is possible for a girl who is married to apply to repudiate the marriage when she reaches adulthood, that is, puberty.*

*The Zanzibar Penal Code also recognises the possibility of marriage before 15. One defence to the charge of “carnal knowledge” with a girl who is under 14 is if a man is married to the girl, and she has attained puberty and is over 13. As a consequence of this interaction of laws, early girl child marriage is legally possible in Zanzibar. These laws could be described discriminatory in that they deny such girls the opportunity of education and health development”.*

Measures to prevent early marriages is a theme that is reiterated in several reports. Other issues taken up under “General principles” are specific health and education schemes for adolescent girls, or efforts to prevent clandestine abortions among young mothers, with the aim of reducing maternal mortality, and participation in politics.

### **Alternative reports**

Most NGO reports stress the importance of undertaking necessary actions to strengthen the authorities and organisations responsible for young persons. Such organisations are often responsible *both* for children and adolescents. Issues that are of particular importance to youth are therefore not treated separately.

One exception is the Swedish alternative report, which contains an interesting analysis. In the report, the question of lack of preventive measures in early childhood and adolescent criminal behaviour is discussed. The costs for child care and

school are compared with the costs of young offenders. It is stated that the criminal career of one single young person costs society between one and a half and two million USD. According to the report's authors these costs could be reduced considerably if more resources were used for investments already in early childhood. Increased investment in day-care centres and schools today would counterbalance costs of social welfare service, policy, courts and prisons later on.

### ***Concluding remarks***

Sometimes the Committee concludes that a country has made progress as concerns the adjustment of laws in accordance with the Convention, benefitting young persons. At other times countries are recommended to adjust their laws to protect children of 16–18 years of age. Recommendations may concern teenagers at school, adolescents in conflict with the law, in prostitution, or those living in the streets.

The most common recommendation (under “General measures”) concerning adolescents is to gather all the necessary information on the situation of children in various areas, and that national policies are adjusted in order to cover all children, including teenagers.

### ***Civil rights and freedoms***

Under this section, State Parties are requested to provide relevant information, including the principal, legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures in force; factors and difficulties encountered and progress achieved in implementing the relevant provisions of the Convention, and implementation priorities and specific goals for the future in respect of; name and nationality, preservation of identity, freedom of expression, access to appropriate information, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of association and of peaceful assembly, protection of privacy, and the right not to be tortured or subject to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

### ***National reports***

Practically all the specific rights mentioned above are represented in the reports. Guatemala reports a number of measures directed towards young persons. It is stated that the new social and political situation needs organisations in all social groups, including young persons. Therefore, civic and political training and training in social preparation is provided.

India refers to the child's right to privacy, which “implies that the child should be able to aspire to a decent living environment to meet his or her needs. This right is especially important for girl children, adolescent girls and children living in urban slums, who often have to share a one room hut with siblings and parents”.

Mozambique mentions the establishment of youth organisations in relation to freedom of association, and several examples are given about ill treatment of young persons.



Sweden emphasises the necessity of undertaking measures in consensus with the children and young individual and her/his custodian. Furthermore, the importance of supporting the youth organisations of religious denominations is stressed.

Tanzania reports “corporal punishment is still incorporated in our laws as a punishment that can be given to children and young offenders”.

Thus, many kinds of civil rights for adolescents and young persons are highlighted, reflecting a large variation of economic, social and cultural circumstances.

### **Alternative reports**

Civil rights and freedom for adolescents is a central issue in many of the alternative reports. As appeared in Table 1, approximately 20% of all the times that adolescents are mentioned is in connection with civil rights.

One example taken up is the restriction on adolescents becoming members of working organisations. Another issue is the lack of relevant information and sexual education for children at puberty. The NGOs recommend that such education be provided for at school.

Some of the reports indicate lack of knowledge about the rights of young offenders and suggests training of legal authorities, police, personnel at institutions and other staff categories involved.

Privacy can mean many things. The South African NGO report takes up the right to privacy with reference to the unacceptable situation of teenagers who have to share sleeping quarters with parents or other family members.

The NGO report from Mozambique uses another perspective:

*“Regarding the protection of privacy the situation is still alarming when we are talking about how media are using young people in different ways. There are constantly examples in the national TV and in the daily or weekly newspapers of young people that are suspected for criminal activities that are shown with their faces and names, guilty or not guilty, directly on the TV screen or at the front pages of the papers”.*

### **Concluding remarks**

Civil rights are taken up relatively seldom in the concluding remarks of the CRC Monitoring Committee, and to a much less extent than is the case for the NGO reports.

Most remarks concern the rights of young persons in conflict with the law. They can include the failure to separate young persons from adults in prison, the use of corporal punishment or other ill treatment, and even torture of children of 15 years of age.

In some cases the right to express opinions concerns adolescents more than younger children. One example is a recommendation to realise the right to peaceful demonstration. However, as a rule, adolescents and children are mentioned together.

### ***Family environment and alternative care***

Under this section, States Parties are requested to provide relevant information, including the principal legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures in force, particularly on how the principles of the “best interests of the child” and “respect for the view of the child” are reflected therein; factors and difficulties encountered and progress achieved in implementing the relevant provisions of the Convention; and implementation priorities and specific goals for the future in respect of ten specific issues. Questions that may be of particular importance for this review are those concerning homeless, abused, and neglected adolescents and adolescents placed in institutional care.

### ***National reports***

Generally, there is not very much information specifically concerning young persons. In fact, “family environment” is the area where adolescents are least visible.

However, the Guatemalan report is interesting. It concludes, “The State shall support programmes to locate the parents or relatives of any child or adolescent and gather information that might facilitate family reunification”. In this way, it becomes clear that also older children are entitled to a family.

Concerning adoptions, the report from Guatemala states that attention should be drawn to recent studies that include a historical, social and legal analysis of the types and incidence of abuse by region, gender and age. These charts show that the commonest forms of maltreatment are physical abuse and sexual abuse, particularly of girls aged between 13 and 18 years.

The Swedish national report is also interesting as it pays attention both to younger and older children. In the report it is argued that institutional care can have different effects, depending on the age: “It may sometimes be better for young persons to be given the opportunity of meeting other youngsters with similar problems and adults who figure more as examples than as adjuncts to their parents. Children and young persons with certain serious injuries cannot be looked after in family homes either but have to be given more professional treatment”.

The description of the history of youth reception centres in Sweden is also of interest:

*"In many places there are special youth reception centres to which young persons have easy access. When these reception centres began to be set up in the 1970s and 1980s, the principal aim of their activity was to prevent abortions among teenage girls. The overriding aim of youth reception centres today is the prevention of physical and mental illness. Other aims are to strengthen young persons in the management of their sexuality and in respect for themselves and their surroundings.*

*The reception centres devote a great deal of work to the prevention of unwanted pregnancies among young people and sexually transferable infections, but also to psychosocial treatment. Youth reception centres should have both medical and psychosocial competence. Most often, in addition to reception activities, they also have outreach activities in the form of participation in school instruction concerning sexual and personal relations and attendance at parents' meetings. Young persons turn to the centres not only with questions about sexuality and personal relations but also with psychosocial, medical and psychosomatic problems. Many of them find it easier to go to a youth reception centre than to an outpatient psychiatric child and youth facility or the social services. Roughly a quarter of the young persons turning to the youth reception centres state that they have come because of psychosocial problems."*

As regards the situation for asylum-seeking children and young persons in refugee reception centres, Sweden reports that an action programme has been developed with a view to making better provision for the children's needs and improving their situation within the reception system.

### **Alternative reports**

Only a couple of the alternative reports refer to the youth in the family section. The Ethiopian NGO report takes up the increased migration to cities and that more and more young persons leave their villages in search of a better life, which weakens the traditional extended family.

The South African report states that traditional systems to prepare the young for adulthood have been eroded, leaving many children forced to assume the parenting role while they are ill prepared for the responsibilities that come with parenthood. Families, church and community organisations should therefore be encouraged to guide and counsel young persons and new parents. Furthermore, child and youth care staff need more training and education.

### **Concluding remarks**

The same pattern as for NGO reports is true for the comments of the Monitoring Committee. Only exceptionally are adolescents referred to concerning family matters.

One example is a recommendation that the actual minimum age for marriage should be 18 years both for boys and girls in order to prevent forced marriages.

A general conclusion is thus that information is meagre in all three types of reports.

## **Basic health and welfare**

Under this section States Parties are requested to provide relevant information, including the principal legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures in force; the institutional infrastructure for implementing policy in this area, particularly monitoring strategies and mechanisms; and factors and difficulties encountered and progress achieved in implementing the relevant provisions of the Convention in respect of survival and development, disabled children, health and health services, social security and child care services and facilities and standard of living.

Furthermore, the nations are requested to specify the nature and extent of cooperation with local and national organisations concerning this implementation. They are also encouraged to provide relevant statistical information and indicators.

## **National reports**

Adolescents are often mentioned in connection with sexual and reproductive health, and problems; sexually transmitted infections such as HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancies and abortions, substance abuse, violence, female genital mutilation, and violence. In some reports suicide is also mentioned as a teenage problem.

Several countries report special information campaigns and health care for adolescents in order to avoid HIV/AIDS. The report from Guatemala may function as an example.

Examples from the Guatemalan report:

**Prevention:** a project on the prevention of STDs and HIV/AIDS for young men and women in marginal districts of the city, run jointly by AGPCS, Doctors without Borders, neighbourhood associations and health centres;

**Training:** workshops were run by the organization Comunidades Responsables frente al SIDA (CRESIDA) for adolescents of both sexes, to prepare them to work as facilitators and community educators in the area of the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS. These facilitators had more than 10,000 consultations and have distributed more than 20,000 sets of information leaflets to the general public in the metropolitan area;

**Direct care:** the Luis Angel García Family Clinic has been opened, under the supervision of AGPCS, to provide direct care and comprehensive support to people (including young people) living with HIV/AIDS;

**Research activities:** to ascertain the situation of adolescents, with regard to such factors as family circumstances, drug addiction, sexuality and reproductive health;

**Social mobilization activities:** such as the meeting of adolescent mothers and fathers and the national forum of young people to promote their vision of a peaceful future, attended by 28 leaders from 14 departments, representing different social and cultural groups.

In some reports adolescents' misconceptions and misinformation about transmission and prevention of STDs are seen as major risks. Other reports undertake deeper analyses.

One example is the report from Guatemala. In this, low educational levels, a patriarchal culture, limited access to health services and to sex information and education are identified as causes. It is also stated that the persons least well informed about AIDS are young indigenous women (15 to 19 years old) in the rural areas with low educational levels.

In the report from Tanzania it is stated that adolescents are particularly vulnerable to HIV infection because of the deteriorating social and economic situation, which places girl children at high risk of agreeing to have sexual relations with individuals sometimes not even known to them.

The Tanzanian report states that adolescents have limited access to confidential sexual and reproductive health information, services and counselling because of various obstacles which are deeply rooted in culture and lack of education, such as the fact that parents and children do not discuss issues pertaining to sexual and reproductive health, as this would violate cultural values and norms. That girls tend to have more problems than boys is due to an early start in their reproductive role, which leads to unplanned and unwanted pregnancies and risky abortion practices.<sup>3</sup>

The report also concludes that adolescents face major problems from violence, such as sexual harassment, corporal punishment, female genital mutilation, and violence against girl domestic workers. Efforts to minimise the occurrence of these conditions include the strengthening of the School Health programme to improve services to schoolchildren and adolescents, for instance by information on reproductive health. Topics on family life skills have now been introduced into the curricula of primary and secondary schools, and for out-of-school children.

Adolescent pregnancies and young mothers is another problem taken up in several reports. Both Mozambique and Guatemala have started education programmes to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies.

According to the guidelines the situation for children with disabilities is to be reported. In the national reports from Lebanon, Mozambique and Sweden adolescents with disabilities are covered. In some cases there is statistical information, in other cases various kinds of programmes for or with adolescents are presented.

### *Alternative reports*

The Bangladeshi report expresses concern about the common phenomena of early marriages and early pregnancies, and the authors criticise the government about this situation. Despite a high rate of early marriages, where girls can be in the early teens, there is no adolescent family life education programme.

The Ethiopian NGO report takes up the need for training of youth to take care of their own health and to contribute to health services in the community, without mentioning sexual and reproductive health particularly.

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3 From "Poor Urban Children at Risk in Dar es Salaam" – a study by Save the Children Fund, 1997.

The NGO report from South Africa refers to a study showing that one out of every five children and adolescents in informal settlements have diagnosable psychiatric disorders related to HIV/AIDS. The study also shows that the pandemic is escalating among children and adolescents. Consequently, it is concluded that it is necessary to embark on programmes and awareness campaigns on sexual health, and that the youth must be helped by all concerned to understand sexual health risks and to take responsibility for their own sexuality.

### *Concluding remarks*

Health is an area that is often taken up by the CRC Monitoring Committee. In the remarks to the Ethiopian national report the Committee is concerned by the insufficient provision for adolescent health care, the high incidence of early pregnancies and of sexually transmitted diseases. The Committee therefore recommends the government take measures to improve reproductive health education and initiate child-friendly counselling services. Whether this includes sex education at school is not very clearly expressed.

Also in the concluding remarks of the Guatemalan national report, high rates of early pregnancies and STDs are taken up as problems. HIV/AIDS and young persons using drugs are other concerns. The Committee recommends the government to increase its efforts to promote adolescent health, including mental health, particularly with respect to reproductive health and substance abuse. Health education at school should be strengthened. Furthermore, a comprehensive and multidisciplinary study should be undertaken to understand the scope of adolescent health problems, including the negative impact of STDs and HIV/AIDS. Such knowledge is necessary to develop adequate policies and youth-sensitive programmes. These should include confidential counselling, care and rehabilitation facilities accessible without parental consent when this is in the best interests of the child.

Also in the concluding remarks to the Indian national report, adolescent health is a major concern with particular focus on girls. It is stated that early marriages can have a negative impact on adolescents. Suicide among teenage girls and HIV/AIDS are other concerns of the Committee. The government is recommended to strengthen the existing National Reproductive and Child Health Programme, targeting the most vulnerable groups of the population.

One comment to the South African report is that there is a lack of programmes, services and data in the area of adolescent health, including teenage pregnancies, abortions, drugs and substance abuse, accidents, violence and suicide. The Committee therefore recommends the government to reinforce adolescent health policies and to undertake a study to assess the situation. Furthermore, youth friendly counselling, care and rehabilitation facilities for adolescents should be available without parental consent.

Lack of data and lack of adolescent health programmes are also identified as shortcomings in the remarks to the Tanzanian national report. More specifically the following areas are mentioned: Early marriage and pregnancies, HIV/AIDS and STDs, abortion, violence, suicides, mental health and alcohol,

drug and substance abuse, i.e. more or less the same adolescent health problems as are identified in the neighbouring countries. Consequently, the recommendations are also similar; studies should be made, financial resources should be increased as well as social workers and psychologists, youth-sensitive care, counselling and rehabilitation facilities for adolescents should be developed.

### ***Education, free time and cultural activities***

Under this section, States Parties are requested to provide relevant information, including the principal legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures in force; the institutional infrastructure for implementing policy in this area, particularly monitoring strategies and mechanisms; and factors and difficulties encountered and progress achieved in implementing the relevant provisions of the Convention in respect of education, including vocational training and guidance, aims of education, leisure, recreation and cultural activities.

Also in this area, the nations are requested to specify the nature and extent of cooperation with local and national organisations concerning implementation, and encouraged to provide relevant statistical information and indicators.

### ***National reports***

With the exception of special protection measures there is no area in which adolescents are mentioned as often as within education, leisure and culture. This is true for most of the national reports, and particularly for Mozambique and Lebanon.

**Education.** Several countries report on non-formal education programmes for adolescents who relapse into illiteracy and for youth who have never benefitted from any schooling. Girls who have had to leave school due to pregnancy are targeted in Tanzania, and similar programmes are reported from Bangladesh, Mozambique, Guatemala, and India.

Guatemala reports on educational radio programmes to give young people vocational guidance and training, and Lebanon supports functional literacy courses at workplaces for young workers.

One weakness of this reporting is that it is difficult to form an idea about the extent of various educational programmes, and the proportion of all adolescents who are embraced by them.

**Culture and leisure.** Several interesting cultural programmes for adolescents have evidently been established. These include a national centre of films for children and young people in India, Lebanese programmes using media for awareness raising, or programmes aiming at reducing the negative effects of war. Drama is often used to address social problems among adolescents, but music and sports activities are also often included.

Activities may be arranged by youth organisations with the aim of preparing adolescents for democracy and participation in civic life. Some of them have the



empowerment of girls as a special goal.

The Swedish report presents several activities conducted within the National Board for Youth Affairs. The aim is to give young persons the opportunity to create a stimulating, activating leisure for themselves and to develop democracy. Some activities are especially directed towards the goal of strengthening girls. Interestingly, a national information system on youth exchange is also under preparation.

*Another Swedish example*

*Since 1993, Sweden has been taking part in the Youth for Europe programme which is concerned with encouraging contacts and travel for young persons through school and university exchanges, and with giving youngsters a European identity. The programme is addressed to young persons between the ages of 7 and 25. Priority is given to young persons who, for economic or geographical reasons, have little chance of taking part in youth exchange programmes in another member country.*

### **Alternative reports**

In the alternative reports it is very seldom that adolescents are mentioned under the title “Education, free time and cultural activities”, and the few problems taken up are of various characters.

The Bangladeshi report takes up the importance of life-oriented vocational training, the motivation being that the country cannot absorb all well-educated young persons. In the South African report one concern is low access to education, especially for young girls in rural areas. This worries the authors, as it creates a fertile ground for teenage pregnancies.

The Swedish alternative report expresses its concern about decreased subsidised cultural activities for children and young persons. It suggests that the government should earmark a certain proportion of the budget appropriation for cultural activities so that all young people have access to cultural activities.

### **Concluding remarks**

Even in the remarks from the Committee only exceptionally are adolescents mentioned under the title “Education, free time and cultural activities”. The Committee comments on the Mozambican and the South African efforts to promote school attendance and the quality of education. But it is still concerned that girls in Mozambique continue to have less access to education than boys above primary school level; literacy levels among girls, particularly those over 15, are extremely low. It is also concerned that compulsory education in South Africa is not free for students between the ages 7–15.

Apart from the national reports, information on education, leisure and cultural activities is very sparse in the alternative reports and in the remarks from the Committee.



## ***Special protection measures***

Under this section State Parties are requested to provide relevant information, including the principal legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures in force; factors and difficulties encountered and progress achieved in implementing the relevant provisions of The Convention; and implementation priorities and specific goals for the future in respect of the four areas; children in situation of emergency, children in conflict with the law, children in situations of exploitation, children belonging to a minority or an indigenous group. Furthermore, State Parties are encouraged to provide specific statistical information and indicators.

As mentioned earlier, adolescents and young persons are particularly visible in connection with special protection measures. This is true for most of the reports, and particularly for the reports from Lebanon, Mozambique and South Africa.

The most common concern is exploitation. About half of all the times adolescents are mentioned in the national reports is either in connection with economic or sexual exploitation. Every fourth time young persons are mentioned it is either in connection with juvenile justice or in emergency situations<sup>4</sup>.

## ***National reports***

**Economic exploitation.** In the area of economic exploitation, the reports from Mozambique, Guatemala and India express concerns that an increasing number of young persons who are not studying or are unable to study, are working under hazardous and difficult conditions. The reports from Mozambique and India describe new legalisation measures<sup>5</sup>, while an interesting innovative educational loan programme is reported from Guatemala.

The aim of the Guatemalan programme is to deal with the problem of the many school dropouts and young persons in hazardous working conditions. Through financial aid in the form of scholarships, young workers are able to attend and remain in school. The programme is still in its first phase, yet, it is an attempt to help guarantee young workers the right to education.

**Sexual exploitation and abuse** is an area of great concern in many of the reports. Mozambique reports that the President of the Republic has become involved and launched a campaign called “Break the silence and end child prostitution”, including several debates with members of youth associations.

The Swedish national report describes which special interventions can be carried out when young persons are engaged in prostitution.

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4 Issues related to juvenile justices are also taken up pretty fairly often below under other titles and a rough estimation is that these two areas on the whole have more or less the same weight.

5 In Mozambique the New Labour Law covers all workers, including minors aged 12–15 to promote justice in labour relations between employers and the workers they employ. It covers permitted working hours per week and payment conditions. Also the Indian report takes up the Indian Factory Act as a tool to eradicate exploitation of working children and youth. It states that penalties have been provided for contraventions of provisions relating to the employment of children and youth.

One problem taken up in the South African report is young persons who receive shelter, food and other necessities in return for sex. For many poor adolescent girls and boys this is the only way of supporting themselves. Therefore, such “survival sex” is often accepted by their families.

**Drug abuse.** This is great concern in several reports, however the problem is approached from different angles. The Guatemalan report focuses on causes. It is argued that the spread of drug use is due to the environment young people experience at home and/or at school. Lack of parental role models and suffering from ill-treatment by parents and other adults encourage lack of moral and social values among children and youth and that in turn leads them to engage in drug use.

Both the Swedish and Lebanese report put emphasis on education and treatment to *prevent* drug use. In Sweden it is of great concern that there is a tendency for young persons to be more open to trying drugs. Therefore Swedish drug policy strongly focuses on preventive work, which is based on cooperation with schools, social services, recreation authorities and the police. The social services run outreach activities among young persons in the risk zone.

The question of drug addiction is taken up in the reports from Lebanon and Mozambique, but from two different aspects. Lebanon places emphasis on the importance of not forcing young drug users to bear the legal consequences of their abuse. Instead, legal and security efforts should be focused on the crime of trafficking. In the report from Mozambique it is stated that there are no specific institutions to treat drug addicts. Therefore, civil society plays an important role in caring for drug-addicted young persons.

**Children in conflict with the law.** Many of the countries reported upon have failed to establish separate justice systems for youth and it is not unusual that they are imprisoned together with adult prisoners.

**The situation of young refugees.** The Ethiopian report states that education at various levels including attendance at higher educational institutions and vocational training centres for school-aged children and young refugees have been arranged.

### ***Alternative reports***

Young persons are particularly visible when reporting on child labour, drug abuse, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, but also in connection with juvenile justice, armed conflict and refugee situations. As in the national reports, the picture is multifaceted and difficult to summarise.

**Young ex-soldiers.** The South African alternative report states that there is an emerging need to stabilise young people who were involved in the national liberation struggle and are now aged 16–35. Many of them have lost their confidence and feel displeased and confused since their sacrifices have not been recog-

nised by society. Many of them have not been integrated into the shift to new democratic structures and lack competence for so called “status jobs”.

**Young refugees.** The Lebanon alternative report emphasises the situation of young Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. As the Palestinians in Lebanon cannot benefit from public health services and from social security, NGOs are important actors for these groups<sup>6</sup>.

**Juvenile justice.** The report from Mozambique mentions the high incidence of young prisoners.<sup>7</sup> The authors of the Bangladeshi report express concern that legal authorities, police personnel and others involved are hardly aware of the law and the institutions in existence for protecting the cause of juveniles. The same worry is expressed in the Ethiopian report, stating that there is a need for properly staffed juvenile and family courts to be established as part of the ordinary court system.

**Exploitation at work.** South Africa points at the lack of clear agreements on what constitutes a finite definition of child labour. There is a need to jointly plan and conduct comprehensive national research on child labour, including young refugees.

**Sexual exploitation.** The South African authors of the alternative report express a need for research on the issue of commercial sexual exploitation in the country. Furthermore, they indicate the need to locate sexual abuse support programme in communities, and that such programmes be easily accessible to young people.

The Mozambican report points at the importance of considering the influence of cultural patterns: it is a common understanding that the man is the head of the family which gives him right to practice violence against women and children. Therefore it is practically impossible for a young girl to say no to sexual relations whenever demanded.

The Swedish report authors are concerned about young girl who are exploited for striptease and similar activities in so called sex clubs. The law permits young persons between 15–18 years to participate “voluntarily”, something that the authors of the report wish to change.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the report authors support a Parliamentary Committee, which has proposed that the offence description seduction of youth is altered to, for example, sexual exploitation of youth, which is supported in the alternative report.

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6 The main NGO programs targeting young people are technical and vocational training which includes 6 400 young trainees at 31 centres offering mainly short- term training. In the cultural and recreational activities at least 2000 refugee youth are involved.

7 A study revealed that during the year 2000, 23,4% of the prisoners in Beira City Central Prison were youth in the ages between 16–18 years old and in the prison in the City of Chimoio the same group of age was 24,4% of the prisoners.

8 The provisions in Chapter 6, section 7 in the Penal Code should be altered so that 15 to 18-year-olds obtain the same protection as younger children against being exploited in presentations of pornographic material for sexual posing.

**Drug abuse.** South Africa states that lack of recreational facilities in black communities contributes to substance abuse. They also mention that many young mothers use alcohol throughout their pregnancies. The report authors suggest awareness programmes at local clinics, churches, shebeens, women's society etc.

### *Concluding remarks*

**Juvenile justice.** The most common remarks from the Committee concern young persons in conflict with the law and the most common issue is failure to separate young persons from adults in prison. Other specific comments concern too young an age of criminal responsibility and possibilities of imposing the death penalty, or imprisonment of adolescents in ordinary prisons.<sup>9</sup>

**Economic exploitation.** The committee comments on the large number of children who are still exploited for financial gain, especially in Guatemala and South Africa. The Committee recommends South Africa to improve its monitoring mechanism to ensure the enforcement of labour laws so as to protect young people from economic exploitation.

**Sexual exploitation.** There are few comments on the issue of sexually exploited adolescents. One of these is directed to the Swedish government. In this, the Committee expresses a need to increase protection from sexual exploitation, particularly for adolescents aged between 14 and 18 years.

**Drug abuse.** The Committee recommends India to develop a national drug-controlling plan and rehabilitation service for young persons who are victims of substance abuse. It expresses its worries concerning the increasing number of substance abusers in Sweden and recommends Sweden to undertake systematic efforts to collect data on, and monitor, substance abuse in particular on its impact on more vulnerable groups. The same suggestion is directed to South Africa, where there is a high and increasing rate of drug and substance abuse among youth. It also points at limited psychosocial and medical programme services available in this regard in South Africa. One suggestion is to reinforce programmes within the school environment to educate children/young persons on the harmful effects of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

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9 These recommendations are directed towards Bangladesh. Ethiopia is recommended to amend the Penal Code to include those aged 15–18 to ensure that they cannot be sentenced to the death penalty as they, under the current legislation, can be sentenced to the death penalty or to life imprisonment. The same concern is stated for India where the possibility of the death penalty exists.

# Overall Conclusions

Adolescents are dealt with in many respects in national reports, in NGO reports and in the “Concluding observations” made by the CRC Monitoring Committee. This results in a multifaceted picture. There is no single, “universal adolescence question”, that penetrates all or most reports. Adolescence issues vary not only from country to country, but also between the different reports from one and the same country. It is therefore better to regard the reports as a rich bank of ideas and experiences rather than answers to questions about general adolescence issues.

The positive sides of adolescence, the openness towards new ideas, the interest for the environment, political and societal matters, are rather invisible. In some countries youth organisations and networks are encouraged and supported. In other countries young persons are actively involved concerning youth health. But these examples are exceptions, and information about active participation of young persons in societal issues is rare. This is, for example, valid for physical planning and environmental programmes, two areas that particularly concern young people.

All of the issues formulated in the introductory part of this report which were supposed to be of particular relevance for adolescents, are touched upon in some or several, but never in all reports. The emphasis is on risks, but opportunities for progress and development during the adolescence are also identified.

Several countries mention adolescents particularly when reporting on special protection measures for children in situations of *sexual exploitation* and *sexual abuse*. This problem is often connected to poverty and gender inequality. What measures are suggested or taken depends on how the problem is defined and can either be of general or specific character.

The fact that sexual exploitation is more often reported on than sexual and reproductive health (SRH) in general is rather surprising. At the same time, it is however worth mentioning that questions about *SRH, sex education, HIV/AIDS, and other STDs* are taken up very widely in a couple of reports. Consequently these reports could function as models for others.

*Economic exploitation* is a concern often taken up, reflecting worries about young persons as newcomers or powerless workers on the labour market. Some countries are concerned about not having insight into certain kinds of work, for instance the situation of young female domestic workers. Other times, the concern is connected to structural inequalities or to young persons’ lack of opportunity to join labour unions. In this case also, measures are related to how problems are defined, but judicial changes are often included.

In connection with education *drop out, expulsion of pregnant girls, curricula not adapted to working children and youth* and *lack of gender aspects at school* are problems discussed in the reports. Measures to provide adolescents with another chance in the education system are also reported. One example is to strengthen vocational training.

In the introduction section it was stated that *violence* inflicted by and on young persons is a growing phenomenon, and that young men take part in acts

of violence, including wars. These problems are taken up in the reports from countries in ongoing conflicts and from post-war countries. Concerns are expressed on how to integrate former child soldiers and how to prevent young persons from choosing violent solutions. However, in other countries violence towards or by adolescents is not reported on very often. Questions connected to *young persons in conflict with the law* most often concern the separation of justice systems, and failures or efforts to separate adolescent and adult prisoners.

*Drug abuse* is a concern in several of the countries, and it is often preventive measures that are in focus, activities usually based on cooperation with schools, social authorities and NGOs, and with the purpose of attacking causes. As to young drug addicts, concerns are expressed that the countries do not have institutions to treat drug addiction. There are also concerns about current legislation. One country argues, for instance, that young persons should not bear the legal consequences of their drug abuse.

*Early marriage* is touched upon in a few reports. Some reports reveal that deep-rooted traditions are severe obstacles to change. To overcome these, various approaches are used. One common justification used to prevent early marriage is to indicate the risks involved in young girls becoming mothers. In other countries, early marriage is seen from a gender equality perspective. In these, the focus is on legal changes to eliminate the gender differences in marriage age.

*Protection of privacy* for young persons is only mentioned in exceptional cases. But when the issue is taken up it is stated that this right is fundamental, and that it is particularly important for young girls, and for those living in overcrowded dwellings. The risk of sexual abuse by family members is referred to implicitly. Important issues that are absent in the reports are privacy as an important factor in the identity searching process during adolescence and the need for privacy when young persons are studying.

Thus, altogether the reports provide much information about concerns as well as planned and existing programmes aimed at improving the situation for adolescents. The reports constitute an excellent bank for exchange of ideas, and they provide food for thought.

The fact that issues important to young persons are not approached in a systematic manner in the reports is not surprising. Guidelines for report writing are often followed closely, and these guidelines suggest age-based information only under two titles (definition of the child, and family environment and alternative care). To what extent young persons are focused on in other cases depends on the interest, perspective and knowledge of the authors of the report.

To open a discourse on the importance of age-based differentiation may be the next challenge for the improvement of the reporting process. In this case, there is a lot to be learnt from the development of the inclusion of a gender perspective, as such a perspective is considerably more common in these reports than age-differentiation. It is for instance interesting to note that when adolescence issues are taken up they are often discussed from a gender perspective.

## **ANNEX I. Paragraphs addressing adolescents and youth in the national reports**

<b>GENERAL MEASURES OF IMPLEMENTATION (Arts. 4, 42, 44.6)</b>		<b>In sum</b>
Bangladesh	22, 30, 36, 43	4
Ethiopia	8, 15, 23, 24, 26b	5
Guatemala	39	1
India	63	1
Lebanon	6, 36, 45, 48	4
Mozambique	37	1
South Africa	9, 26, 38	3
Sweden	54, 67, 69, 77, 82, 134– 142– 149	9
Tanzania	55	1

<b>II DEFINITION OF THE CHILD (Art.1)</b>		<b>In sum</b>
Bangladesh		–
Ethiopia	28, 30, 31, 32	4
Guatemala	68, 69, 70, 71	4
India	65, 136	1
Lebanon	62, 66–67, 80, 81, 83, 85, 90, 91, 94, 96, 100, 102, 121	13
Mozambique	61, 63	2
South Africa	67	1
Sweden	191	1
Tanzania	86– 110	25

<b>III GENERAL PRINCIPLES</b>		<b>In sum</b>
Bangladesh		–
Ethiopia		–
Guatemala	87	1
India	74, 88, 92	3
Lebanon	180	1
Mozambique	96, 131	2
South Africa	109, 112, 128, 137	4
Sweden	217, 222, 244	3
Tanzania	139, 145, 159– 163	7

<b>IV CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOM</b>		<b>In sum</b>
Bangladesh		–
Ethiopia		–
Guatemala	107, 108, 109, 113, 115, 120	6
India	98, 116, 118	3
Lebanon		–
Mozambique	131, 144, 170, 186, 187, 193	6
South Africa	167, 168, 199, 208, 209, 211	6
Sweden	265, 314, 320–323, 326	6
Tanzania	187	1

<b>V FAMILY, ENVIRONMENT &amp; ALTERNATIVE CARE</b>		<b>In sum</b>
Bangladesh		–
Ethiopia		–
Guatemala	128, 139, 145	3
India	129	1
Lebanon		–
Mozambique	199, 200, 245	3
South Africa	304, 317, 319, 340, 347	5
Sweden	373, 400, 435, 440, 443	5
Tanzania	200, 207	2

<b>VI BASIC HEALTH AND WELL BEING</b>		<b>In sum</b>
Bangladesh		–
Ethiopia	54	1
Guatemala	165, 171, 172, 173, 183, 187	6
India	207	1
Lebanon	374	1
Mozambique	294, 307, 325–326, 330	5
South Africa	228, 250, 251, 254, 258, 287	5
Sweden	475	1
Tanzania	265, 280, 288, 290, 291, 292, 295, 299, 300, 301	10



<b>VII EDUCATION, FREE TIME &amp; CULTURAL ACTIVITY</b>		<b>In sum</b>
Bangladesh	130, 134	2
Ethiopia	62	1
Guatemala	204, 233	2
India	252, 253, 256, 258	4
Lebanon	202, 230–232, 235, 251, 253, 276, 278, 280, 282	11
Mozambique	386, 390, 392, 465, 489–491, 493, 494, 494, 495, 496, 497, 499	14
South Africa	381, 385, 412, 417, 432, 435, 441, 442, 444, 446,	10
Sweden	568, 592, 599, 604, 650, 653, 654, 660, 661	9
Tanzania	320, 332e, 340	3

<b>VIII SPECIAL PROTECTIVE MEASURES</b>		<b>In sum</b>
Bangladesh	Children in conflict with the law: 142, 145	2
Ethiopia	Children in situation of emergency: 70 Children in conflict with the law: 77 Children in situations of exploitation: 84	3
Guatemala	Children in situation of emergency: 251 Children in conflict with the law: 257 Children in situations of exploitation: 267, 270, 271, 279, 280, 283, 285	9
India	Children in situation of emergency: 265 Children facing environmental disasters: 267 Children in conflict with the law: 280 Children in situations of exploitation: 283, 298, 299, 301, 303, 309	12
Lebanon	Children in situation of emergency: 430, 437, 440–441 Children in conflict with the law: 535, 540 Children in situations of exploitation: 391, 393, 395, 396, 398, 401, 402, 405, 406, 408, 411, 415, 489, 501, 514, 515	22
Mozambique	548, 562 Children in situations of exploitation 571, 576, 577, 588, 612–616, 636, 641, 643, 644	15
South Africa	460, 478, 480, 483, 488, 501, 503, 505, 509, 510, 522, 542, 550, 554, 562	15
Sweden	Children in situation of emergency 679 Children in conflict with the law: 702, 703, 713, 714, 717, 718, 729, 741 Children in situations of exploitation, including their physical and psychological 741, 756, 757, 768	12
Tanzania	Children in situations of exploitation: 357, 365, 366	6

## **ANNEX 2. References**

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The reports could be found at [www.crin.org](http://www.crin.org)