



## Fact Sheet #2

# Preventing Juvenile Delinquency

*On 2 February 2007, the Committee on the Rights of the Child issued General Comment No.10 – Children's Rights in Juvenile Justice (GC 10), providing their interpretation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child's (CRC) provisions for children in conflict with the law. This is one of a series of seven explanatory Fact Sheets highlighting key themes in the GC 10 with the aim of ensuring that it becomes widely known, understood and used by States Parties*

### WHAT IS JUVENILE DELINQUENCY?

The term juvenile delinquency refers to the behaviour of a child or adolescent in actual or perceived conflict with the law, or engaged in 'anti-social' behaviour.

### WHY AND HOW SHOULD JUVENILE DELINQUENCY BE PREVENTED?

According to the Riyadh Guidelines<sup>1</sup>, "the successful prevention of juvenile delinquency requires efforts on the part of the entire society to ensure the harmonious development of adolescents, with respect for and promotion of their personality from early childhood (I:2).

The realisation of the most basic economic, social and cultural rights enshrined in the CRC is deeply linked with the prevention of juvenile delinquency - in the words of the General Comment No 10, "it is obviously not in the best interests of the child if he/she grows up under circumstances that may cause an increased or serious risk of becoming involved in criminal activities" (IV: A16).

Preventing juvenile delinquency refers to the process of discouraging situations which cause children to come into conflict with the law in the first place. An important component of preventing juvenile delinquency is addressing the root causes - such as poverty, neglect, abuse or social isolation - which increase children's chances of participating in 'delinquent' behaviour.

Rather than focusing only on children who have infringed the law, a comprehensive prevention strategy addresses broader social and economic injustices including poverty and discrimination. This may involve providing resources and assistance to children and families, especially those who are experiencing socio-economic difficulties. Early intervention programs which promote early education, poverty reduction, skills and job development and involve families and communities may be used to tackle juvenile delinquency in innovative ways.

### WHAT DOES GC 10 RECOMMEND?

Prevention of juvenile delinquency is given considerable importance in GC 10. It is treated as one of the most important concepts to be addressed while establishing a comprehensive juvenile justice policy. The Committee states that a comprehensive policy without measures aimed at preventing juvenile delinquency is highly lacking and therefore:

- States Parties should adopt and integrate the 1990 UN Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (Riyadh Guidelines) into their national policies;
- Prevention policies should promote social integration through family, community, peer groups, schools, vocational training and employment, as well as voluntary organisations. States Parties must engage with all social actors as the quality of community involvement is a key factor in the success of prevention programmes;
- States Parties should develop and implement prevention programmes which focus on supporting



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#### (WHAT DOES GC 10 RECOMMEND -- CONTINUED)

vulnerable families, involving schools in teaching basic rights and values (including the rights of both child and parent under national law) while extending special attention to children who do not complete their education and other young persons considered 'at risk';

- Articles 18 and 27 of the CRC acknowledge the responsibilities of parents in caring for their children. However, States must support parents, caretakers and families, using family-based prevention programmes such as parent training to enhance parent-child interaction and home visitation programmes;
- States Parties, especially developing countries, can ask for international support in guaranteeing children's economic, social and cultural rights;
- States Parties should seek support and advice from the Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice in their efforts to develop effective prevention programmes

#### **B**EST PRACTICE IN THE PREVENTION OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY:

The Committee advocates the benefits of early childhood education and notes its link to a lower rate of violence and crime in later life. It also reports that at the community level, positive results in preventing delinquency have been achieved through programmes such as Communities that Care (CTC), a community-specific violence prevention strategy which allows communities to evaluate risks and early predictors affecting the healthy development of their communities in order to take effective preventative action.

This is one in a series of 7 Fact Sheets on the GC 10 which includes:

- 1) General Comment No 10: Children's Rights in Juvenile Justice
- 2) Preventing Juvenile Delinquency
- 3) Promoting Diversion
- 4) Ensuring Appropriate Age Limits of Criminal Responsibility
- 5) Guaranteeing a Fair Trial
- 6) Prohibiting the Death Penalty and Life Imprisonment
- 7) Deprivation of Liberty as a Last Resort

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