



The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC Committee) is preparing a General Comment on Access to Justice and Remedies (GC27). Consultations with different stakeholders, including children, take place across the world.



A group of children and youth, 13 to 19 years of age, with different identities and backgrounds from around Cambodia gathered to support this work by responding to the Committee's questions. In total, 12 girls and 15 boys took part in the consultations in November 2024. Ten of them participated in the validation workshop in December 2024.



Child Rights Coalition Cambodia (CRC-Cambodia) with partners organized the consultations with children in Cambodia, based on this methodology and using this child friendly information. Key results from the consultations are collected in this report.



PLEASE NOTE - statements in speech bubbles are not direct quotes from children but paraphrases developed based on children's opinions and views collected in consultations.

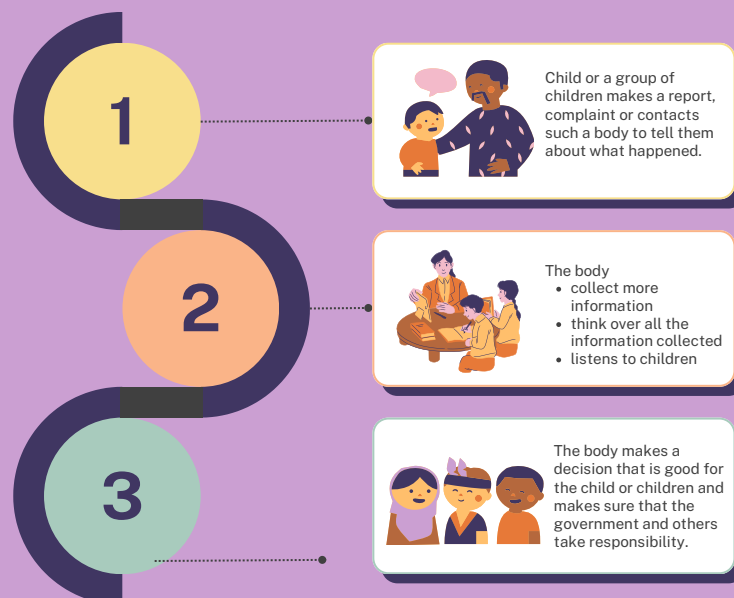




## Access to Justice and Effective Remedies

- When children's rights are violated, children should have a possibility to go to bodies/institutions delivering justice and ask for support and to fix this situation - this is called access to justice.
- Effective remedy is when these bodies make decisions that make a positive change for children on time. This decision includes: identifying rights that were violated, who did it, and what should happen next to fix the situation, repair the harm, and make sure it doesn't happen again.

## Reporting and Justice Mechanisms - Key Steps



## Justice and effective remedies from the perspective of children and youth in Cambodia

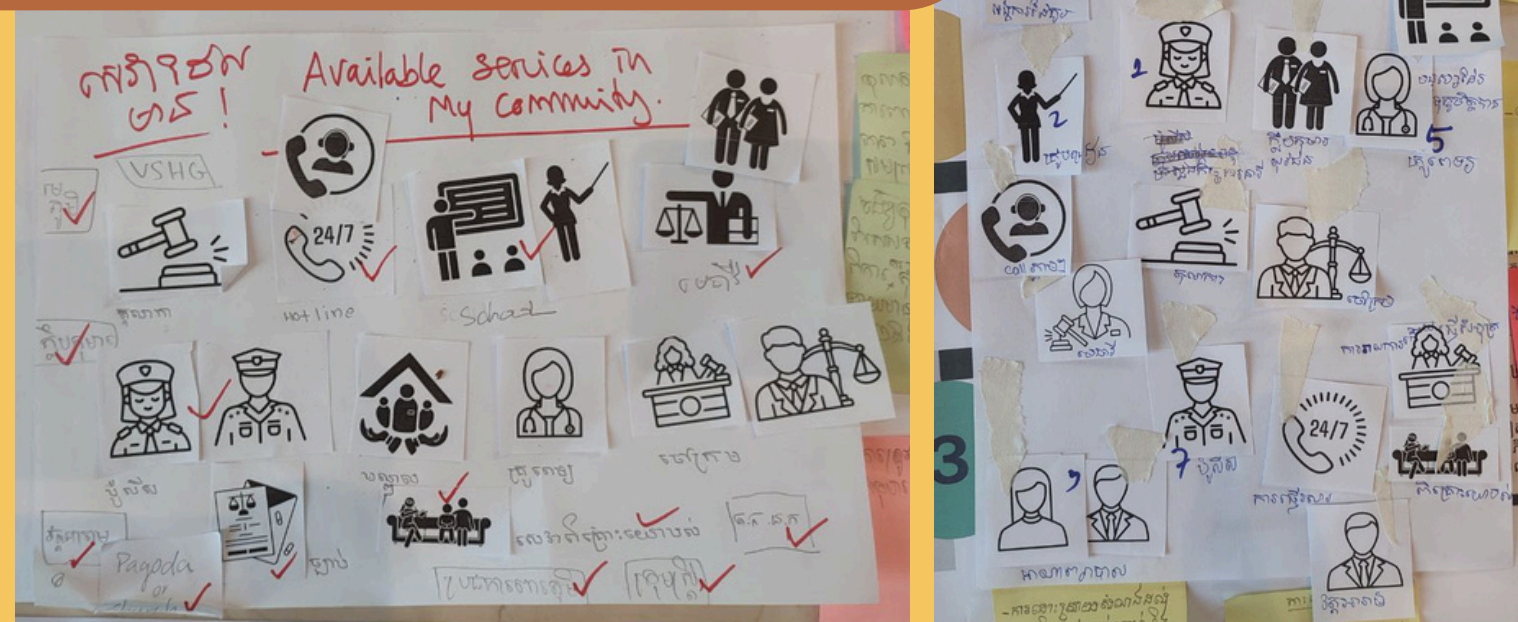
When adults (those in power/decision-makers)

- make laws and decisions that are fair/just/right for all, including children, respect these laws, and follow through decisions and promises they made
- take responsibility and correct mistakes they made
- treat everyone the same way, and are being fair to everyone, including children no matter where they come from
- do not apply special rights for some and do not misuse power, make threats or request informal payments (corruption and bribery)

When children

- are safe, respected, and get support and care they need during the process. When decisions made (remedies/solutions) in this process are suitable/good for children and they are carried out (made happen).

## Services available to children in Cambodia in their communities. Children can go to these places to get advice or to report problems related to their rights:



- There is no Ombudsperson in Cambodia (yet).
- Cambodia has not (yet) agreed with the CRC Optional Protocol 3 that makes it possible to communicate violations of children's rights to the Committee (after all options at the national level did not give results).



What difficulties children face in accessing - finding and speaking to a body delivering justice when their rights have been violated?

Are there groups of children for whom it is even more difficult? If yes, who and why?



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## children are not informed

- Children do not know where and how to report a problem or to file a complaint.
- Children do not learn about this in schools nor are they getting advice from social workers, doctors etc.
- NGOs give legal advice to children when they need it. Information about what to do when rights are violated is not part of the usual information/learning about child rights.
- There is a focal point for child protection in the villages, but children do not know about this.
- When information is given, difficult words are used.

Children find out about a hotline on their own on social media.

This is even more difficult for indigenous children, children with disabilities and young children. They do not get information in the language they can understand well.

Police and others use words that are not easy to understand. Sometimes they use offensive words and yell.

Many children and families are afraid of bribery.

Many children and families are afraid that they will not be treated well and fair, and suffer more instead of getting help.

SOGIESC-diverse, poor and children without parents are even more discouraged.

- Generally, people think/expect that children should be quiet and not speak up or complain to adults.

Children are shy. Some can not even talk about problems with their parents.



# 1

## Access



## court process is not affordable

- Legal procedures are costly. Many children/families do not have money or do not want to risk it.
- Children do not get free legal support
- Unofficial and additional costs are required for some essential services.

Litigation is expensive. Families spend a lot of money, but they don't get any good compensation or help.

Poor children are neglected in hospitals and schools because they can not pay unofficial and/or additional costs.

## physically not accessible

- Rural and especially remote areas have less services, options and support for children and even less for children with disabilities. Many indigenous children live in remote areas.
- Generally available opportunities might be too far or too expensive.
- There are no ramps and equipment for children with physical disabilities and or children with audio-visual impairments.

Children in rural and remote areas do not have access to internet and this means even less options to find information and advice when they need it.



Everything is even more expensive for children who are far away from centers because they need to pay for travel and accommodation to attend litigations (court cases)..

Conclusion: children have many difficulties to access justice, some groups of children are even more discouraged (more ashamed and less confident to raise concerns)



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### long and complex processes

- The court process takes a long time and is complicated because there are many steps to follow.
- There are no specific and separate avenues/ options for children (like children's or family courts, ombudsperson for children)
- The process is slow, there are not enough officers and some do not react to children's concerns.
- Bribery is another problem. People pay money to delay court cases and try to win unfairly.

In one case police did not take any action for 4 years ... there might be more such cases.

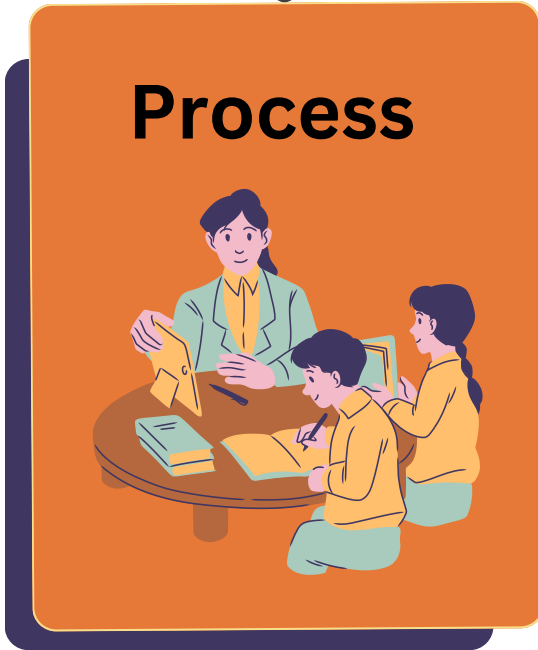


In one case the accused person was invited to the process at the same time as a child.

### children are not safe

- There is no separate room for children to ask for advice, report problems and give testimonies. Testimonies have to be repeated many times. It is very uncomfortable for children to talk about problems in front of all. It is even worse for girls in front of all male officers.
- Information from children is not kept confidential. Children are in constant fear that their information will be leaked and they will be affected by stigmatization/exclusion from school and communities they might suffer because of that.
- Some officers misuse power. Children are sometimes not treated well by police and others involved, for example bad words, yelling, threats are used.
- Children are not protected from threats during or after the process.
- This all affects children's mental health negatively.

Because things are not moving forward, children are scared and worried and their mental health suffer. Children do not see a way out and this can sometimes lead to suicides.



### children are not taken seriously - respected

- Police and others belittle, ridicule or ignore children's concerns - they do not react at all or not on time on children's reports.
- Children from poor families are even less respected and cared for

Many children experience fear toward police officers and teachers, they are afraid that their reports may be ignored or dismissed.

### children are not supported

- Generally, people think/expect children should be quiet and not speak up about problems or complain to adults. This stops children from sharing their concerns and reporting problem. This also makes it very difficult for children to participate in court procedures.
- Children usually do not get the support they need (such as explanations and advice) before, during or after any court process. Most of children do not know where to seek such support.
- Children are not told what is happening during the process, which makes them feel worried and hinders their participation.
- Children do not get psychological support during or after the process.



Children are not allowed by law to initiate court cases on their own, they need support - parent, lawyer.

Some children are accompanied by a person they trust (NGO staff) before, during and after the process.

Conclusion: The way for children to report problems, the response they get, and the court processes are not friendly and effective for children.



## not effective

In one case a child had to wait 3 years for the court decision.

- The court process last long, decisions/remedy is often late. Bribery can make it even worse.
- Remedy is often only on paper. The solutions are just written down and not really followed.
- An apology or agreement might be made, but this does not make any change in children's lives, and children continue to feel scared.
- People who do bad things (wrongdoers/perpetrators/abusers) only get a short punishment, and children still feel scared.
- Children do not get any support after the process. There is nobody to check up on them or provide mental health support and help get back to school.



# 3

## Remedy [Solution]



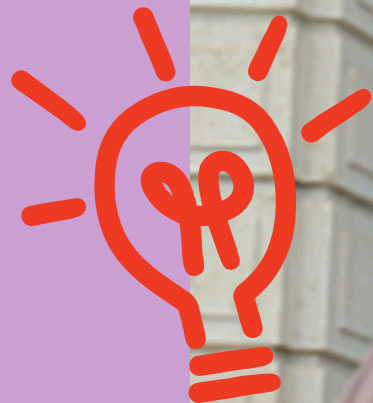
## not fair

- Sometimes there is pressure from powerful people to accept the decision although children and their families disagree, but they do not have means (money and support) to complain.
- Court process is costly and at the end children do not get any compensation (remedy).
- Bribery is another problem. People pay money to delay court cases and try to win unfairly.



How can justice mechanisms be made child friendly - more accessible, safe, effective for children?

How can children's voices be heard in the work of justice mechanisms:  
1) during proceedings  
2) in design of these mechanisms?



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## child friendly justice

Use child friendly words and keep children informed all the time during the process.

- Create a specific law for children with a clear and child friendly mechanism so that every child can report violations of their rights.
- Create a special court (children's or family court) with specialized judge, prosecutor, lawyer, social workers.
- Create effective reporting and response mechanisms to cover all settings for a speedy and effective reaction on children's concerns.
- Make sure reporting procedures are clear/ understandable, confidential and include diverse channels so that they can be used by children in different situations and in remote areas. For example, by writing a letter and giving it through a trusted person to the local authorities.
- Train law enforcement officers at all levels in child friendly justice procedures, including how to communicate effectively with every child no matter their background.
- Provide a free lawyer to children.
- Make sure that children get psychological support before, during and after court procedures.

Provide a person of trust for children during testimony (it could be a teacher).

Keep children safe and their information confidential during and after the process.

Speed up adoption of the Child Protection Law.

Make sure children can report through a phone call to local authorities at all levels (village, commune, district, provincial).

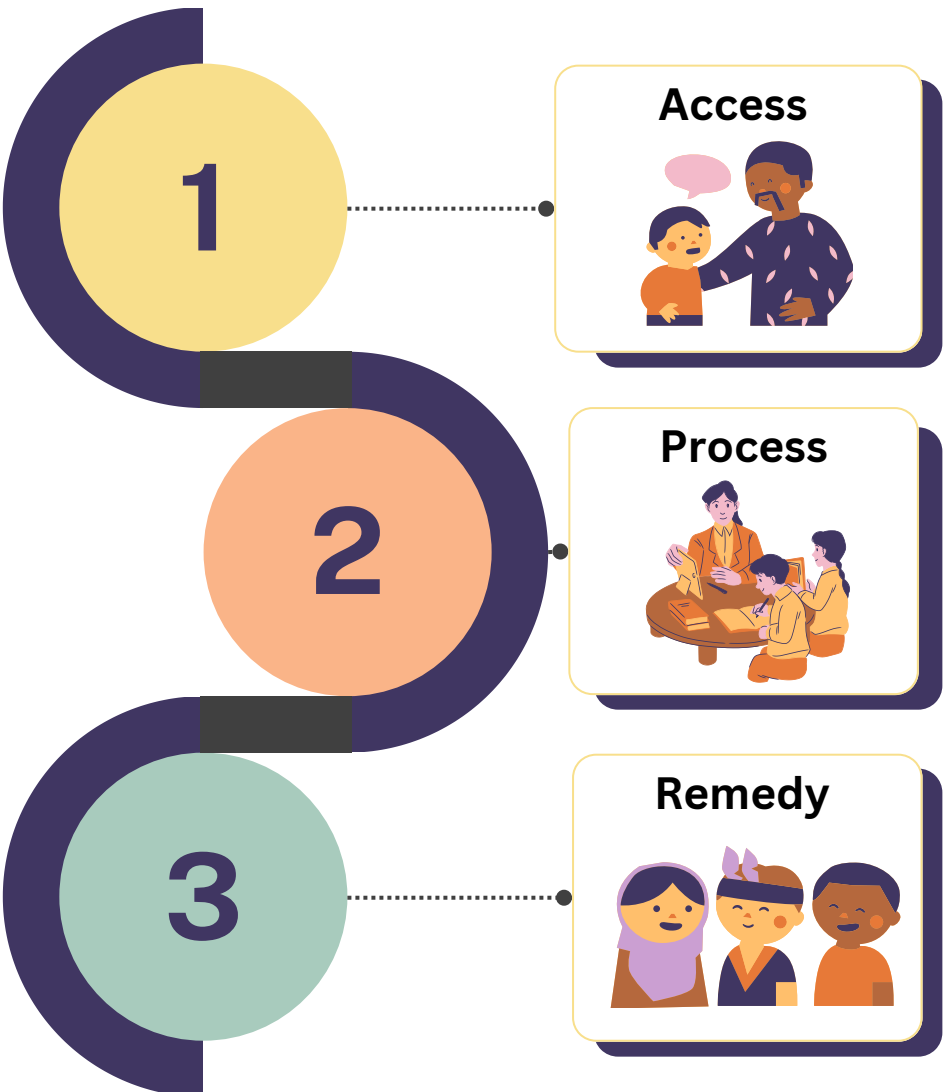
Investigate and respond to reports/ cases raised by children's clubs.

Provide a separate room for children to report their cases.

Act fast on children's reports.

Use child friendly words and methods when talking and asking questions.

Stop abusive and discriminatory language.



**Access**

**Process**

**Remedy**

Stop bribery and nepotism. Stop additional fees.



## provide training for all

- Train all professionals (including in health) at all levels on children's rights, reporting and justice processes so that they can give this information and advice to children.
- Train all professionals on child friendly and inclusive methods of work with all groups of children, including the most vulnerable.
- Train focal points for child protection and make sure that they are in each village.
- Increase the number of skilled officers working with children.

Make sure that there are also female police officers, lawyers etc to make processes safer and more effective for girls.

Train law enforcement officers at all levels in child friendly justice procedures.

This training should include how to treat every child with respect and equality

Ensure that child protection focal points have stronger connections with children's clubs.

## make remedies fair and effective

- Make sure that remedies are transparent, fair and good and effective for children.
- Make sure that remedies include psychological support, and other support children need.
- Provide budget and follow through the decisions made by courts.
- Increase collaboration between services at local level so that children can get all kind of help and support they need after the process.

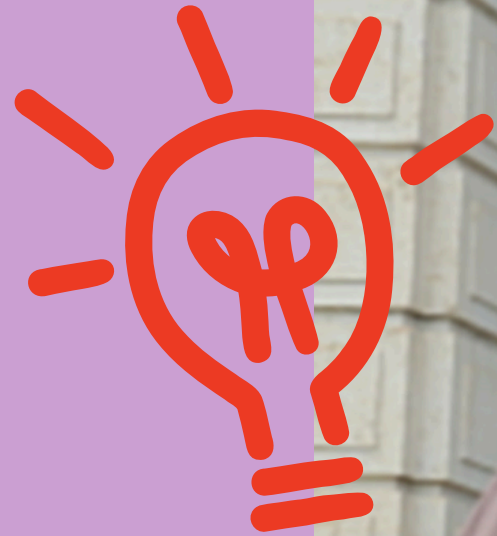
Make sure children can go to the school during and after the process.





What do children need to access justice and effective remedy if their rights got violated?

What do children need to participate in this process?



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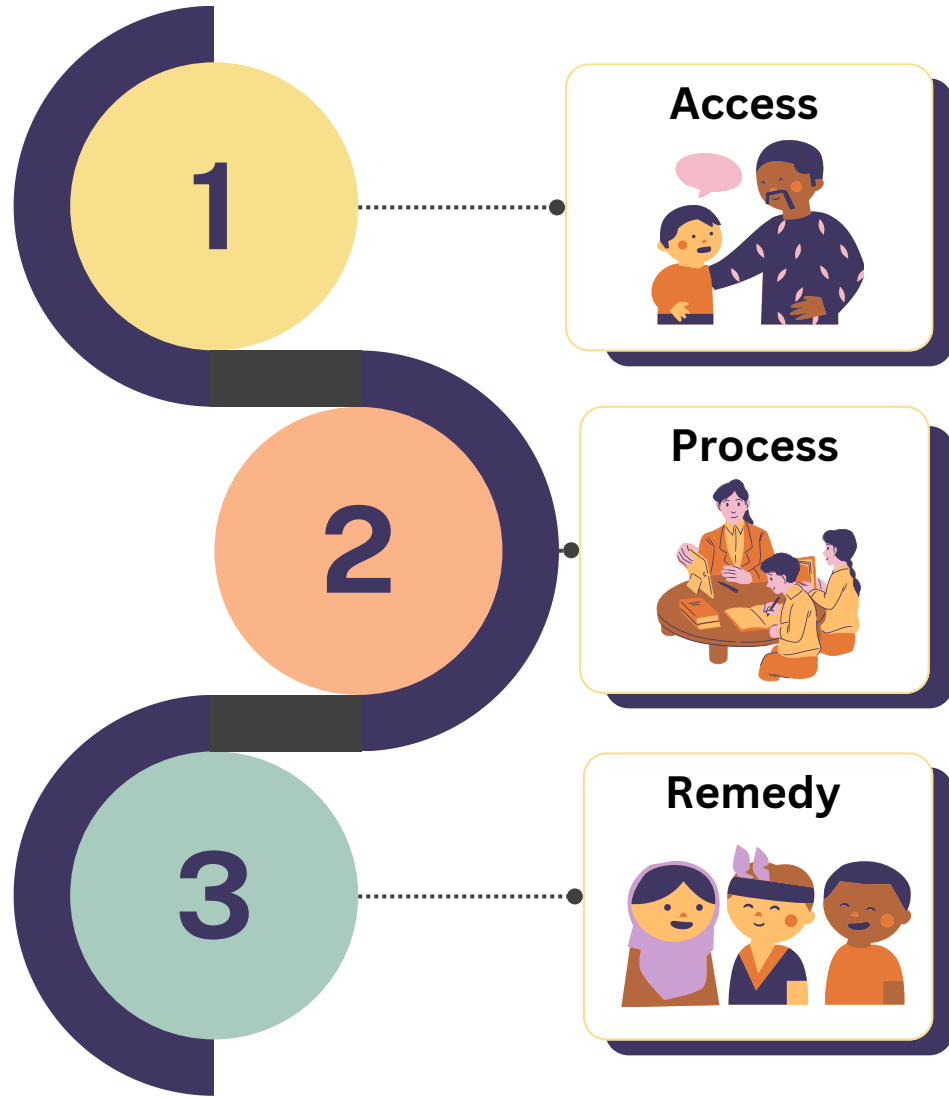


## raise children's awareness

Peer education is important. Support peer education programs around the country. Make sure children with different backgrounds can join.

- Raise children awareness on children's rights, reporting and justice procedures.
- This information should be easy to understand, complete and available everywhere, including online and in different languages and formats.
- All professionals, in schools, in hospitals, police and so on, should inform all children about what can be done when their rights are violated.
- NGOs should provide this information too on a more regular basis as part of general information on children's rights.
- Child rights education in schools or by NGOs should include information about what to do when children's rights are violated

Continue raising awareness about the child protection focal points in the communes, including where and how children can seek support and report cases.



**Access**

**Process**

**Remedy**

Increase opportunities for children to voice their concerns.

## provide support for parents



- Raise awareness and skills of parents to be able to support children in reporting and justice processes.
- Provide support to parents to increase their communication skills and enable them to listen and talk to their children.
- Support parents to be able to solve problems without violence.
- Raise awareness of parents that resorting to bribery and out-of court settlements is harmful to children

Prioritize children's best interests by involving them actively in decisions in different settings - family, school, community and so on.

## consult with children regularly

- Continue consultations with children about the issues they face when accessing justice and remedies and act on their suggestions
- Invite children to the meetings of authorities at local level (commune, province) regularly and ask for feedback about how services work and what can be improved including in respect of reporting and responding to cases.
- Regular meetings with children, for example once a month will help build better relationships, learn from each other and make better decisions that respect the best interests of children.
- Provide regular updates to children regarding the progress and responses to their suggestions, ensuring they are informed about the outcomes.

Make sure that children are safe and supported before, during and after the consultations. Address their needs promptly.

Integrate children's needs and inputs into the Commune Investment/Budgetary Plan through meaningful children's participation.

Provide clear and timely updates on the progress of their cases or reports.





# next steps

- CRC-Cambodia will
  - submit this report to the Committee
  - follow developments related to the General Comment 27
  - keep children informed through NGO-members
  - try to raise funds to organize consultations with children on the first draft of the General Comment



**2025**

- First draft of the General Comment 27
- Second round of consultations.



**2026**

- General Comment 27 finalized and published.

