

CHAPTER ONE
THE STREET CHILDREN
OF KATHMANDU

(A basic profile of the research respondents)



CPCS
NEPAL 2007



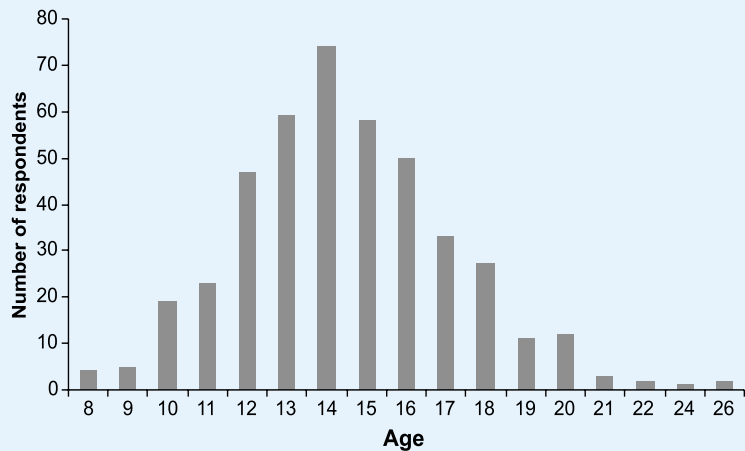


The right to live, the right to be and the right to develop properly are distant dreams for the street children

DATA ANALYSIS

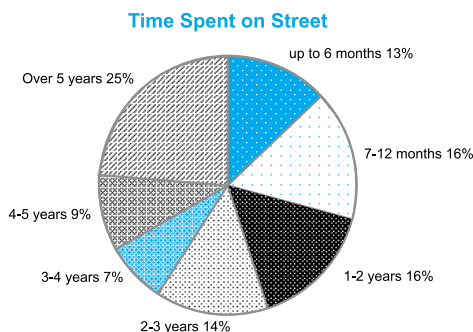
Age and Gender

A total of 430 street children and young people were interviewed for the survey. Only 3 respondents, representing less than 1 per cent of the total sample, were girls. However, this proportion reflects the number of girls that live on the street. The majority of respondents were between the ages of 12 and 16 (67% of sample), with 12% of respondents under 12 years of age and 14% of respondent 17 to 18 years of age.



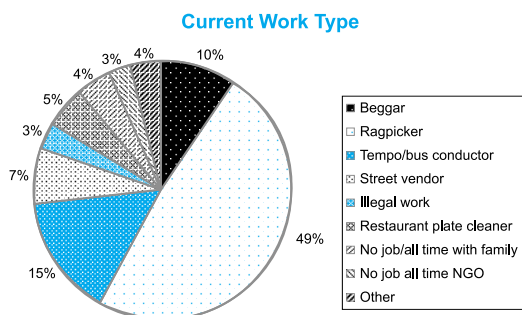
Time on street

There was a wide range distribution of time spent on the street. 29% of respondents has spent less than one year on the street, including 13% who had come to the street in the previous 6 months. 30% of respondents had spent between 1 and 3 years on the street, and the remaining 41% had spent more than 3 years on the street.



Work Type

The primary work type of respondents was as ragpickers (49%), with 15% working as tempo/bus conductors, and 10% as beggars. 7% of respondents were not working at the time of the survey (4% being with family and 3% involved in NGO programmes). 3% of respondents cited that they were involved in illegal work.



NATIONAL EXPERT

Sthaneswor Devkota

Chief District Officer - Kathmandu

Nepal is a small mountainous country with different languages, cultures, climate, caste and religions. Among such diversification, social harmony has strongly been secure due to the historical tradition of unity among diversity. This country is one of the least developed countries of the world. Limited means and resources available here are not adequate to support its increasing population in areas such as education, health, physical infrastructures and drinking water.

Because of its underdeveloped situation, Nepal is unable to provide equal opportunities for living standard to the people of all segments of the society. Among these segments, the problem of the street children stands out.

According to the demographic census of Nepal 2001, the number of children below 15 years is 9.473.533, out of whom 4.830.595 are boys.

Why do the children leave home for street life?

- ▶ They have been regularly beaten at home, perhaps by their drunken father or sometimes by other relatives.
- ▶ Their parents have sent them out to earn money on the streets.
- ▶ They have left home by choice to join friends or find freedom on the streets.
- ▶ Their father divorces and re-marries and the stepmother does not want the children.
- ▶ They have been abandoned by their parents or left in the care of a relative who does not really want them.
- ▶ Their families are dislocated by war and the children have to work in street to sustain their living.

Many children find themselves in dire situations mostly in cities like Kathmandu, Pokhara and Birgunj, either due to coercion or their own will. Street children are mostly engaged in trash-picking, pick pocketing and begging to sustain their lives.

Hunger is not only the problem they suffer from, they are also exposed to the dangers of drugs, prostitution and child trafficking. Glue sniffing is a very common phenomenon seen in street children of Nepal.

Our children of the present time are the key for the future of our nation. The whole responsibility of the nation in coming years falls on the shoulders of children. To create a favorable environment and equal opportunities in all spheres of the children's lives, there must be conducive policies and programs adopted by the nation. The efforts of the government and nongovernmental sectors are equally important. To make a favorable policy in this regard the government's role is highly significant. However, for the implementation of such policies the nongovernmental sector should be encouraged to bring the children into the main stream development, away from the dangers of the street.

INTERNATIONAL EXPERT

Alphonse Tay

Retired Official

UNESCO - UNICEF

To demonstrate our interest for the colossal work that has given birth to this book, we want to evoke briefly some of the remarks and reflections inspired by our experience of more than eighteen years devoted to childhood in general and to street children in the system of the United Nations in particular (1984 – 2002).

To us it seems clear that the street-children phenomenon is a sign of universal crisis encompassing all the values of our civilization.

The basic causes of this crisis should not be sought in ‘hasty analyses of national situations’ aimed at finding soothing solutions very appreciated by financing institutions and persons engaged in the fight against this phenomenon. In fact, the ‘soothing’ actions that either aim at satisfying urgent needs of the street children, or at replying to inherent constraints of the projects or administrative programs elaborated by professionals and engaged institutions in this domain, do not manage to slow down the development of the phenomenon.

The basic causes of the crisis should also not be sought only

- » in individual psychological and/or physical characteristics of the street child
- » in social facts easily perceptible and easily mistaken with primary causes (desirable or unforeseen effects of the economy, legislation, demography, family models, family failures etc.)

Therefore, we are convinced that the phenomenon of street-children constitutes one of the most shocking faces of social exclusion. It is a paradoxical social pathology related to the very reason to exist of every human society: “which direction should be given to the existence

of a society when it is incapable of resisting the dismissal of a considerable amount of its own children who constitute its future?”

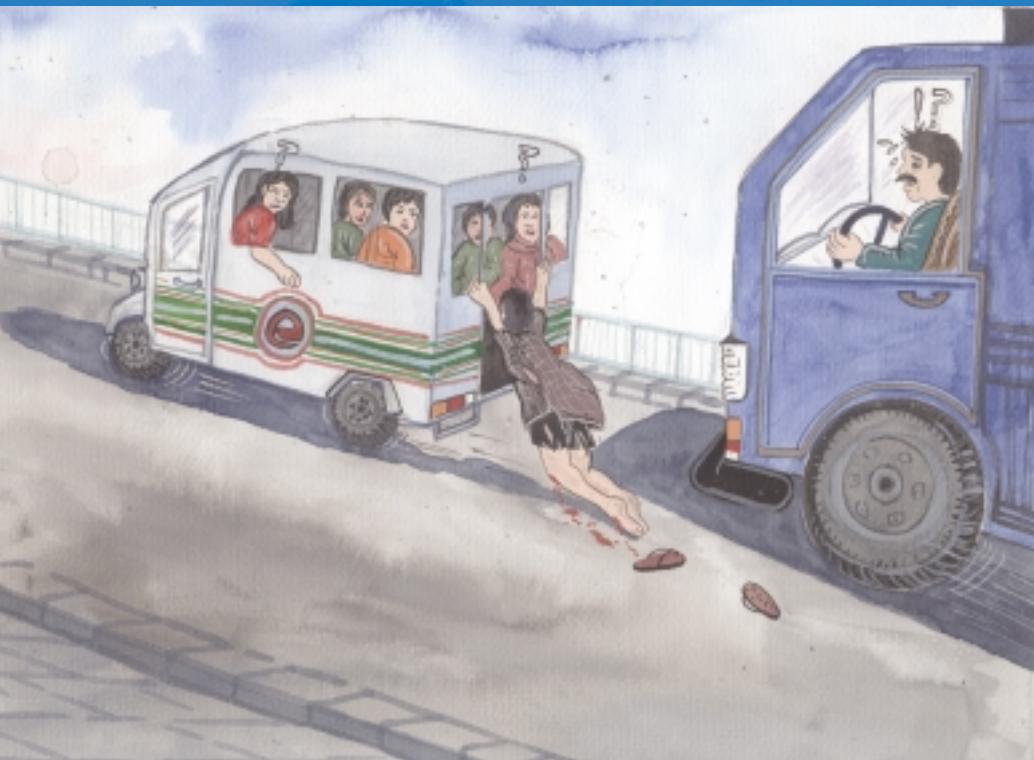
It is also clear that if we wish to eradicate this social pathology in human societies over the world within in a predictable time frame, every nation has to go beyond the remedies with immediate effects in order to identify the essential domains of scientific research and action linked to this phenomenon, oriented towards the research of the fundamental causes.

At last, we think that only a new education based on a theology constantly able to remind the human being that it constitutes an unique value among all that exists in the known universe and that for its survival this value is the first to be sought after, cultivated and constantly defended.

Alphonse Tay

CHAPTER TWO
"JOURNEY TO THE
STREET"





Article 27 (UN convention on the Rights of the Child ratified by Nepal on 14 September 1990):

Every child has “the right to a standard of living adequate for his/ her physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development”.

INTRODUCTION

Street children are the casualties of economic growth, war, poverty, loss of traditional values, domestic violence, physical and mental abuse. Every street child has a reason for being on the streets.

WHO

There are numerous factors which push and pull children to the street. Poverty, abuse, family conflict and a search for freedom are highlighted in numerous studies. In most cases a child arrives to the street as a result of the interaction of many factors.

However, for every child escaping abuse or family conflict, there is a brother or sister who remains in that situation. For every child forced away from his or her family because of poverty there is a brother or sister who remains in that situation. What is important to understand is that there is no simple explanation – every child and their journey is unique.

This is not to suggest that we should not undertake interventions to prevent children coming to the street. On the contrary it means we need to understand more to implement targeted and effective prevention interventions.

In the same way a real understanding of a child's past enables organisations to support them to plan their future away from the street. While we understand the macro factors (social and economic) which push and pull a child to the street, this is often to the detriment of taking into account psychosocial factors and the role of the child's own agency or resilience.

The data from this research does not provide to the answer to these questions – the answer lies with the children themselves. However the data provides indications of the issues that need to be understood by organisations and street workers. These issues have been examined in more detail in the case studies included in this report.

The survey examined different variables for children coming to the street. These are presented in the following data analysis and include district of origin, family size and composition, socio-economic background, way of separation, links to Kathmandu, and cited reasons for coming to the street.

DATA ANALYSIS

District

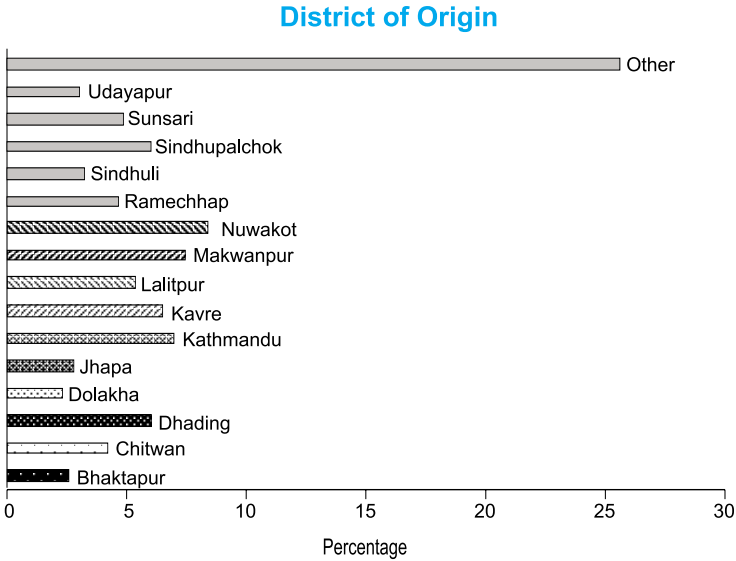


of origin

- = 1-5
- = 6-10
- = 11-15
- = 16-20
- = 21-25
- = 26-30
- = 31-35

The districts of origin of the respondents were spread all over Nepal. However a greater proportion of children came from Kathmandu Valley and the surrounding districts. A total of approximately 15% of respondents came from Kathmandu, Lalitpur or Bhaktapur. Respondents from the districts surrounding Kathmandu Valley made up of Dhading, Dolakha, Kavre, Makwanpur, Nuwakot, Ramechhap and Sindulpalchok represented over 40% of the total sample.

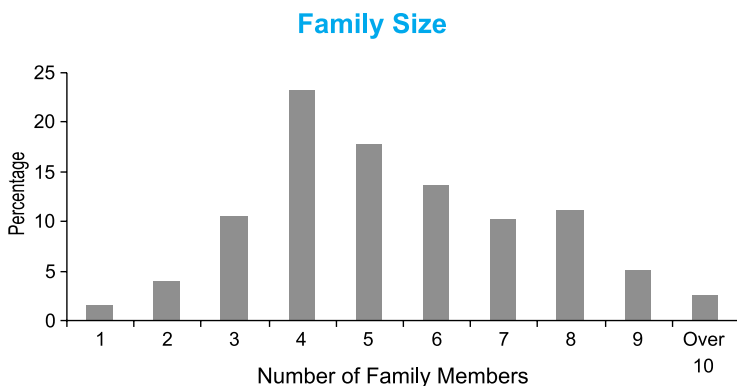
Another trend was that a significant percentage of children came from districts facilitated by good transport infrastructure. Almost 8% of the respondents came from Kaski, Gorkha or Chitwan districts all to the west of Kathmandu. Over 15% of respondents came from Jhapa, Morang, Sindhuli, Sunsari or Udayapur all along the East-West highway. Notably a significant proportion of respondents originated from districts with significant urban centres – Makawanpur (Hetauda) 7%, Sunsari (Dharan, Biratnagar & Itahari) 5%, Kaski (Pokhara) 2%, Chitwan (Narayanghat) 4%.



Family Size and Composition

Number of Family Members

The majority of respondents, a total of 55%, reported 4 to 6 family members. The data indicates that at least 84% of respondents had at least 1 sibling and that at least 60% of respondents had 2 or more siblings. Only 16% of respondents had families with 3 or less members which may be understood to mean the death/loss of a parent or absence of siblings.



Parents

The majority of respondents (63%) had both parents alive while only 6% of respondents had no father or mother alive (i.e. were orphans). 31% of respondents had only one parent alive.

Child with father & mother	Number of respondents	%
Father and mother	269	63
Mother only	60	14
Father only	74	17
No father or mother	26	6
Don't know	1	0
TOTAL	430	100

Name : Pasang, 12 years old
Address: New Baneshwor

Pasang's story: His father and mother both are dead. Having no other relatives to care for him, he ended up living on the street. Pasang is further proof that some street children do not chose to live on the streets and forced to do so because of reasons out of their control.

Name: Bikram, 15 years old
Address: Barkati, Chanauti, Dang
Education: Class 2

Bikram's story: Because of a very poor financial situation, the whole family came to Kathmandu to work in a brick factory. Bikram was also forced to work with his family instead of having the option to attend school. His life on the streets began through associations with other street children. Poor finances affect the future of children like Bikram every day. Bikram says he enjoyed going to school in village when he was young.

Stepparents

The majority of respondents (77%) had no stepparent, whereas 22% had either a stepfather or stepmother. Only 1% of respondents had both a stepfather and stepmother.

Child with stepparents	Number of respondents	%
No stepfather or stepmother	333	77
Stepfather and stepmother	3	1
Stepmother only	76	18
Stepfather only	17	4
Don't know	1	0
TOTAL	430	100

Name: Bimal, 17 years old
Address: Sindhu palchowk, 4

Family Composition: father, stepmother, small brother, brother, 2 sisters
Bimal's story: Bimal could no longer endure his stepmother's bad behavior toward him. He ran away from home and has now been living on the street for more than one year.

Name: Arjun, 11 years old
Address: Udayapur
Education: Class 4

Arjun's story: Arjun's has a stepmother who was treating him so badly that his uncle took him from the home and left him at the CPCS gate.

Family Members at Home

Although 80% of children's fathers were alive, only 50% of respondents fathers were at home and only 5% had a stepfather at home. In the same way although 77% of respondents' mothers were alive only 47% had a mother at home and 14% a stepmother.

Response of child	Father	Mother	Step Father
Yes	215 (50%)	202(47%)	20(5%)
No	215 (50%)	228(53%)	410(95%)
Total	430(100%)	430(100%)	430(100%)

Step Mother	Other Relatives	Nobody
62(14%)	357(83%)	25(6%)
368(86%)	73(17%)	405(94%)
430(100%)	430(100%)	430(100%)

Name: Bal, 14 years old
Address: Lamjung, Besi Sahar
Education: Class 3

Family Composition: father, stepmother, small brother, brother, 2 stepsisters
Bal Bahadur's story: After the death of his mother, his father remarried. His stepmother behaved very badly toward him and life at home became unbearable. Feeling he has no other choice he ran away from home to live on the streets of Kathmandu.

Socio-Economic Background

Father's Occupation

The occupation of 28% of respondents' fathers was farming, while 14% of respondents' fathers were working as labourers or other

forms of daily wage work. Another 6% of respondents' fathers were drivers. Interestingly 3% of respondents' fathers were members of security forces.

Father's Occupation	Number of respondents	%
Farmer	111	26
Driver	24	6
Labourer/Daily wage	61	14
Other	148	34
No father	86	20
TOTAL	430	100

Mother's Occupation

25% of respondents' mothers were housewives, while 21% reported their mother's occupation as farming, 7% of respondents' mothers were working as labourers.

Mother's Occupation	Number of respondents	%
Farmer	89	21
Housewife	106	25
Labour	32	7
Other	103	24
No mother	100	23
TOTAL	430	100

Land Ownership

The majority of respondents' families, a total of 74%, owned land. While 26% reported that their families did not own any land.

Land Ownership	Number of respondents	%
Yes	316	74
No	114	26
Total	430	100

Name: Krishna, 12 years old
Address: Rautahat
Education: Class 3

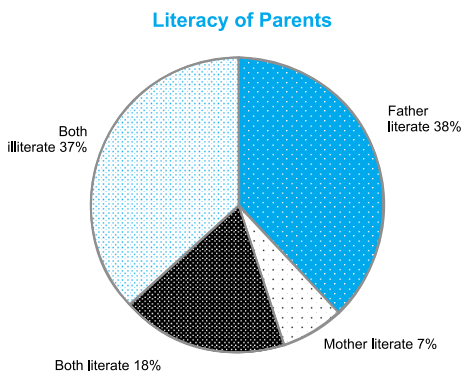
Krishna's story: His family's financial condition is very poor and they were unable to give him any further education. So he came to Kathmandu and was forced to work to support himself. He learned about CPCS and came into the program in order to pursue his dream of attaining a good education.

Name : Ramesh, 14 years old
Address: Chitwan
Education: Class 4

Ramesh's story: His father is an alcoholic and frequently beat him while drunk. His mother told Ramesh to leave home and earn money to support himself so he would not have to live at home and endure any more physical abuse. He then came to Kathmandu and has now been living on the street for one and half years.

Parental Literacy

37% of respondents came from families where both parents were illiterate while only 18% of children came from families where both parents were literate. In 45% of respondents' families either the father or mother was literate.



Name: Santosh, 6 years old
Address: Jhapa
Education: Class L.K.G.

Santosh's story: His father abandoned the family. His mother then brought Santosh to Kathmandu in search of a job and a better life. Unfortunately she did not find work therefore she could no longer care for him. Desperate and unable to care for her young son, she brought him to CPCs

Name : Arjun, 13 years old
Address: Dang

Arjun's story: He came to Butwal with his mother for work. His mother found work as a home servant. She then abandoned him in Butwal so he came to Kathmandu with his friends. Arjun is an example of how frequently street children are abandoned by their parents due to financial troubles.

Family in Kathmandu

Significantly 56% of respondents (240 of 430) reported having a place to live in Kathmandu while it was the case that they remained living on the street. Almost equally, 44% of children had no place to live in Kathmandu.

The survey shows that even with a high percentage of children having other relatives in Kathmandu but they are not living with these family members.

Child's Response	Having a place to live in Kathmandu
Yes	240(55.8%)
No	190(44.2%)
Total	430(100.0%)

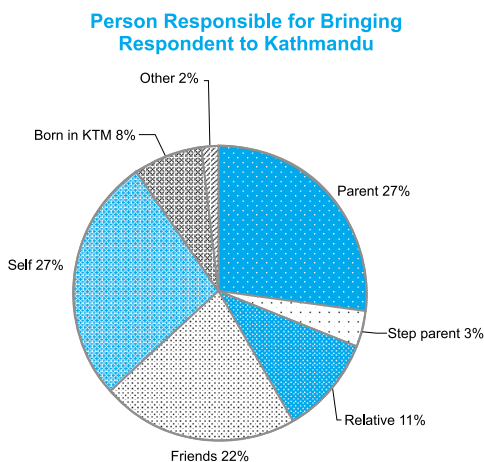
Significantly while only 15% were from Kathmandu Valley, 32% of respondents reported having a father in Kathmandu and 31% having a mother in Kathmandu, while 58% of respondents reported having other relatives in Kathmandu.

Response of child	Father	Mother	Step Father	Step Mother
Yes	137(32%)	133(31%)	21(5%)	33(8%)
No	293(68%)	297(69%)	409(95%)	397(92%)
Total	430(100%)	430(100%)	430(100%)	430(100%)

Other Relatives	Nobody
250(58%)	112(26%)
180(42%)	318(74%)
430(100%)	430(100%)

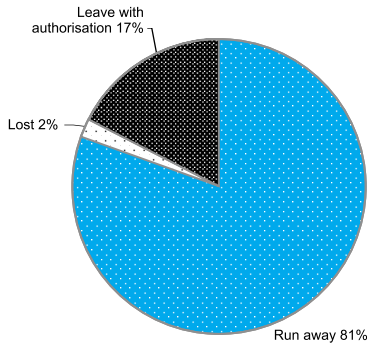
Way of Separation

Almost half of respondents came to Kathmandu independently (27%) or with friends (22%). 41% of respondents came with their parents, stepparent or relatives. 8% of respondents had lived in Kathmandu since they were born.



The majority of respondents ran away from their families or home, while 17% left with authorisation from their parents/guardians and 2% of respondents were lost.

Way of Separation



Reasons for Coming to Live on the Street

Respondents cited a variety of unprompted reasons for coming to the street. 65% of respondents stated that they came to the street to look for a job, 55% stated that they had dreamed of coming to Kathmandu, and 54% came to Kathmandu under the pressure of friends. 51% of respondents cited violence at home as a reason for leaving home. Only 27% of respondents cited lack of food at home as a reason for leaving and only 12% cited the political situation as a reason for coming to the street.

Respondents were also asked whether they were attracted to Kathmandu to stay in an organization. 29% of respondents stated that they came to Kathmandu to stay in an NGO.

Name : Dil, 9 years old
Address: Dolakha 4

Dil's story: He came to Kathmandu with his father and became lost on the journey. He now tries to survive on the streets of Kathmandu. When children are lost, it is very difficult to ascertain whether the child was abandoned or if the parent was unable to find them. He was found in the bus park by a CPCS social worker.

Name: Sagar, 9 years old
Address: Pokhara (old bus park)

Sagar's story: When his father left his family, his mother left him in the Pokhara bus park. There he made friends with other abandoned or homeless children and together they came to Kathmandu. They were lured by the big city and their false hopes of better prospects. He first days on the street with friends he enjoyed. They helped each other and he felt comfortable and easy. He learnt lots of ideas from these friends.

Name : Dillip, 17 years old
Address: Naya Baneshwor

Dillip's story: A year ago, as he was working as a bus conductor, the Maoists took him from his place of work and brought him to receive Maoist army training. Most of the time he had to do hard training. He was beaten during training and faced a lack of food and clothes. He was facing a difficult life moving from one place to another. Because the training was very hard, he ran away from the army camp and went to stay with his uncle in Kathmandu.

The political situation forced Dillip to lose his livelihood and change the life he knew and loved

Name: Sujan, 16 years old
Address: Kathmandu

Sujan's story: When Sujan was a small child, his father married another woman and abandoned his family. Initially things were well, but gradually their financial situation worsened. In desperation his mother started to work in a dance restaurant and she put Sujan into a private school.

Soon his mother's behaviour started to change. She began to neglect him and when she came home late at night, she would scold and beat him. When their finances could no longer cover the school fees, Sujan was moved to a local government school, where he found himself in a class of much younger children.

Feeling victimised and discriminated against because of his age, Sujan left school during 6th grade and stayed at home. Some time later he received sponsorship from a foreign aid agency and returned to school, but his mother's strange behaviour continued and she often disturbed his studies and continued to abuse him both physically and psychologically, so he left home.

He doesn't know what caused this change in his mother and still bears scars on his head and body from her attacks. He also had mental scars; feelings of loneliness, fear without cause, low self-esteem and a constant feeling of never being safe. He underwent counselling and started to feel better. Still in therapy, he is now working as a youth volunteer with an organization caring for street children and wants to go back to school.

NATIONAL EXPERT

Deepak R. Sapkota
Executive Director
Central Child Welfare Board

It is indeed a great pleasure to be invited to share my views of this problem that we all encounter in cities everywhere. It is one of the most discussed issues in meetings related to children's welfare, however a specific conclusion is never reached.

The Central Child Welfare Board (CCWB) conducted a survey in the Kathmandu Valley to identify the exact number of street children, the dimension of the problem and other issues related to them, as well as to develop strategies to bring them off the street and to address the root causes of what brought them there, so they could return to their families and communities. We hope that the conclusion of the survey will be one of the major program priorities of the government of Nepal for the fiscal year 2064/65 (2007/08). The recommendation of this report also will be considered; I would like to assure you in advance.

I went through the report with immense interest, and the same deep feelings of sadness and pessimism appeared in my eyes, heart and mind. All the statistics and findings are genuine and relevant.

I was requested to provide my views on the topic “**journey to the street**” which means to me both how and why the children are ending up on the street.

When we go through the information on **family background** we get quite surprising information that 63% children have their parents (it is commonly believed that children living in the street are children without families!) and only 6 % children do not have both the parents. And most importantly it seems that almost half of the parents are

somehow engaged in some short of income generating works and 73 % families (parents?) owns land.

If we go to the second topic **Places to live in Kathmandu**, 56% children do have a place to live and 73% families of the children do have their land. When we get into the topics **Journey to Kathmandu**, it clearly tells us that almost half of the children came to Kathmandu with their parents / relatives.

After reading all this interesting information we can draw some of the conclusions that parents, families, communities and state under prioritize children and their issues. Many children are on the streets because they are ill treated by families simply because the families are poor and are ignorant of good parenting skills. Peer group pressure, and the attraction of cities with job opportunities are some of the major issues that magnetize them to come to the cities and ultimately sees them end up as street children. There are some more factors as well, which have drawn them into vulnerability.

After articulating my feelings, I would like to raise some issues, which we (including readers, NGO workers and government officials) have to now decide. We all know why their lives end up in the streets.

We also know what they want and we are well aware that how their life should be shaped. I have also observed good intentions among all agencies working for them. We do have moral support of societies and resources available (may be not adequate but...). Then what are the reasons that are obstructing our well-intended efforts? More directly to ask why the number of children in the street is rising and problems are getting severe?

I have come to the conclusion after being involved in child rights sector for more than decade that: 1) the level of commitment is still not strong enough. 2) the coordination among all the players is weak (may be our egos!!!). 3) it is not a priority of the government and lastly 4) the hypocritical way we talk much and do little. Therefore in this very high time where we are struggling to enter a new era to make a new Nepal, I would like to call on all the concerned to join

hands and fight against this social evil and black spot of our days. CCWB in all sense is ready to facilitate the process and take the role we commonly assign to ourselves.

I cannot go without praising the report, which is successful in present the true picture and reality of the situation of children living in street. I would like to thank the team of researchers and the concept developers for their contribution. Lastly please forgive for being generalist rather than focused on the task given to me as I found the report itself is much explained.

Deepak R. Sapkota

INTERNATIONAL EXPERT

Quoc Duy Tran

Field Work Expert

Vietnam

When we have a look at these statistics, we notice that the majority of the youths living in the streets of Kathmandu haven't chosen by themselves to lead this precarious life. Several of them have been led by their parents in an insecure adventure aiming to settle down in the capital. This is in the hope to increase their income. Indeed, poverty is important in their native country and their salary conditions are not secure. The financial situation of the families have a direct impact on the appalling fate of these children and youths.

Another important aspect is the shortage of affection and emotional support. A lot of them leave their homes after the death of one of their relatives, because of a divorce or because of some insupportable relationships with stepparents. The illustrations show that those youths are victims of lack of affection and of physical and moral mistreatments.

The data describing the profession of the parents also proves that an important part of them have to work hard in the fields because they haven't attempted a high level of studies. This implies that they have inevitable difficulties to offer a good education and a rich cultural life to their children.

The situation of these youths is close to the reality of lives of street children from other Asian countries. The percentage of youths who have chosen street life by themselves is closely correlated the those from big cities of the Philippines and Vietnam.

In the Philippines, they are called "hard core street children" or "children of the street" who have adopted the city as their own home. They represent 5-10% whereas the others are looked on as

“children on the street”. During the day, these spend most of their time in the street to find money.

In Vietnam, these youths are called “dust of the street” (Bui Doi). Whatever their motive, the ones who choose by themselves to live in the street are not in the majority.

If we base our observations on the classification made in 2005 by The Vietnam Development Forum about the fundamental reasons of the street children question, we can notice a similarity with those illustrated in this document. There are three levels: Economic migration, broken families and mindset problems. The last one is about the mentality of the youths regarding their life choices (freedom at all costs, material pleasures) or about their parents (wrong attitude in education of the children including the obligation to earn money).

One analogous fact is that these youths are victims from far or near of economic, emotional and educational deficiencies. They left their family homes to lead a life where they are exposed to other risks of danger such as bad health care, destruction of their emotional and moral lives, mistreatments, violence and abuse.

We have to note that the street work aiming to protect the youths in Kathmandu, Hanoi, Manila or elsewhere in other capitals and cities of the world, still has to face the other difficulties of prevention and the first contact with the “high risk” youths.

The youths experience violence and mistreatment in a hidden way, far from the public or collective sight. Because they are afraid of the reprisals, of the arrests and of the offences to some laws imposed by the local policy, the youths hide themselves, accepting appalling lives in their own families, in enterprises or in private hostels where they are still exploited, mistreated and abused.

Let’s keep our mission of vigilance and action to be able to detect this hidden part of them and to hold out our hand to those youths isolated in this iceberg.

Quoc Duy Tran

KEY FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS

Following is presented a short summary of the key findings of the research in relation to the journey of children to the street. Short recommendations are suggested with each finding:

District of Origin

- » Over half of all respondents came from Kathmandu Valley or the surrounding districts (15% and 40%);
- » A further 18% of respondents came from 5 districts alone (Chitwan, Jhapa, Sindhuli, Sunsari, and Udayapur);
- » In total 75% of all respondents came from 15 districts alone.

The most apparent explanation is related to transport infrastructure – the majority of respondents came from districts with good transport infrastructure to Kathmandu. This suggests that as transport infrastructure improves to many districts and the changing political context permits freer travel the number of children coming to Kathmandu will increase.

Experience of field workers also suggest that many children when returning home for reintegration or a festival often may bring siblings or friends back with them to the street. Therefore this may suggest a more significant role of pull factors for children from accessible districts.

For those children who do not come from Kathmandu or the surrounding districts (1 day journey) many originate from districts with significant urban centres, suggesting the role of these towns/cities as ‘stop-over’ points.

Recommendation: *Prevention interventions should be targeted in districts from which children are more prone to come to the street. In particular, major district urban centres should be targeted for both prevention and rehabilitation interventions before children come to Kathmandu.*

Absence of Parents

- » 6% of respondents were orphans (i.e. both mother and father deceased);
- » 63% of respondents had both parents alive;

- 23% of respondents reported having a stepfather or stepmother;
- 50% of respondents had a father at home and only 47% of respondents had a mother at home.

Contrary to popular belief only 6% of respondents were orphans. A large number of respondents reported having a stepfather or stepmother. However more significant was the high percentage of respondents with an absent parent – 50% of respondents had no father at home, and 53% of respondents had no mother at home. The absence of either parent at home can be understood to be a risk factor in children leaving home. Importantly this may also have implications for the type of family reintegration support that should be provided – single parents may find it more difficult to support the child and cope with behavioural problems etc.

Recommendation: *Prevention interventions should particularly target children in homes where the mother or father is absent, or there is a stepfather/stepmother present. In addition programmes aimed at family rehabilitation/reintegration should take into account the needs of the child and a family in a context where either father or mother is absent.*

Literacy and Land

- 74% of respondents reported some family land ownership;
- 37% of respondents came from families where both parents were illiterate;
- 45% where of respondents came from families where only the mother or father was literate;
- In total 56% of fathers and 25% of mothers were reported as literate by their children;
- Only 18% of respondents reported both their parents being literate.

The majority of respondents' families had land although it is not clear whether this was enough to support their needs. More important as a risk factor appears to be parental literacy – 37% of respondents came from families where both parents were illiterate. Only 56% of respondents' fathers and 25% of mothers were literate. These are below the national adult literacy rates – 62.7% adult male literacy

and 34.9% adult female literacy (UNESCO data for period 2000-2004).

Recommendation: *Interventions should take into consideration parental literacy, in particular maternal literacy, in identifying at risk children for targeted prevention.*

Violence at Home

A high percentage of respondents (51%) identified violence at home as a reason for coming to the street. This is clearly an important factor in pushing children to the street.

Recommendation: *More needs to be done to identify children who are victims of domestic violence and interventions made to stop domestic violence or find an alternative for the child before he/she comes to the street.*

Way of Separation

- ▶ Almost half of respondents came to Kathmandu independently (27%) or with friends (22%);
- ▶ 41% of respondents came to Kathmandu with parents, guardians or relatives;
- ▶ 8% of respondents had lived in Kathmandu since birth;
- ▶ 81% of respondents ran away from home;
- ▶ 51% of respondents reported pressure of friends to come to the street;
- ▶ 17% of respondents left home with authorisation;
- ▶ 2% of respondents reported being lost.

In first arriving to Kathmandu almost half of respondents did so independently or with friends. However many respondents came to Kathmandu with family (parents, guardians or relatives) before running away. Although a significant proportion of all respondents (17%) left with the permission or authorisation of their parents, the majority of respondents reported running away from home (81%). In these situations it is more challenging for street workers to identify and understand the real reasons children left home and therefore to support them to return.

Recommendation 1: *Given that the majority of respondents reported running away from home special attention should be given to understanding the real reasons why they left and to examine possibilities for children to return home.*

Recommendation 2: *Given that more than half of respondents reported pressure from friends to come to the street it is important that interventions to support these respondents to move on from the street should work with both the individual and the group to be successful.*

Dreams, Independence and Jobs

- ▶ 65% of respondent reported they had come to the street looking for a job;
- ▶ 55% of respondents stated that they had dreamt of coming to Kathmandu;
- ▶ 29% of respondents reported that they came to Kathmandu to stay in an NGO;
- ▶ 25% of respondents reported coming to Kathmandu to search for education.

The respondents identified factors which encouraged them to come to Kathmandu and to the street. More than half were motivated by looking for a job, although this is not clear whether for purely economic reasons. More than half of respondents had dreamt of coming to Kathmandu, although it is not clear for which reason. While 29% of respondents reported that they came to Kathmandu to stay in an NGO. Although the data shows that pull factors play an important role in attracting children to Kathmandu these need to be understood in more detail. Are push factors, such as abuse, the main reason that children are attracted to stay in an NGO? Is a poor economic situation the main reason respondents come to Kathmandu in search of work, or are respondents attracted by perceived ‘golden opportunities’?

Recommendation: *More needs to be understood about the dynamics of factors attracting children to come to Kathmandu to inform prevention interventions.*

Family in Kathmandu

- » 56% of respondents reported having a place to live in Kathmandu;
- » 32% of respondents reported having a father in Kathmandu;
- » 31% of respondents reported having a mother in Kathmandu;
- » 58% of respondents reported having other relatives in Kathmandu.

Although only 15% of respondents were from the Kathmandu Valley, over half reported having a place they could stay in Kathmandu. More importantly significant numbers of respondents had parents in Kathmandu, and over half of all respondents had some relative in Kathmandu.

Recommendation: *Given the large proportion of respondents with family members in Kathmandu, more needs to be done to work with these family members to understand the situation of the children and to support where possible the reintegration of children with their families.*

CHAPTER THREE

"WORKING CONDITIONS AND FINANCIAL SITUATION"





Working on the street means begging, picking plastic, collecting money in public transportations and washing plates in a restaurant. For a few rupees, without work regulations or rest, they are exploited

INTRODUCTION

*W*ork plays a vital role in street children's lives, enabling them to survive and providing the means for their independence. Work in the street environment clearly poses many hazards and risks to children living on the street. However, the role of the child's own agency in negotiating these risks plays an important part in determining their vulnerability. The assumption that children automatically want to leave the street when offered another option is a mistaken notion.

While organisations offer services for children moving on from the street, an aspect frequently overlooked is the need to work in the street environment to protect children, to motivate them and to prepare them to move on from the street. Most children living on the street work for their own income and enjoy many freedoms because of this. Many may view their current situation in a positive way.

For intervention it is important to understand why many children may choose to remain on the street, while also understanding what can be done to protect children working in the street environment and minimise their vulnerability.

The data from this research provides an insight into children's work on the street – their conditions, their financial situation, and risk factors associated with their work. In particular the following issues are examined: current type of work, reported happiness with work, engagement in other work, frequency of changing work, treatment by employers and public, income, expenditure, savings and debt, and work-related risk factors.

DATA ANALYSIS

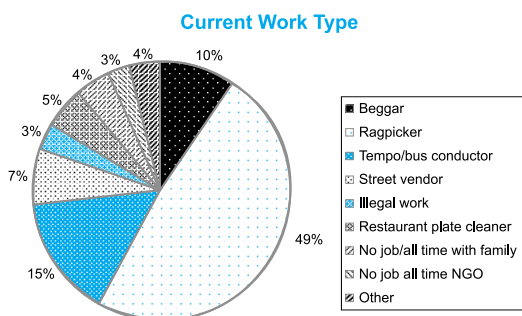
Current Work Type

The primary work type of respondents was as ragpickers (49%), with 15% working as tempo/bus conductors, and 10% as beggars. 7% of respondents were not working at the time of the survey (4% being with family and 3% involved in NGO programmes). 3% of respondents cited that they were involved in illegal work.

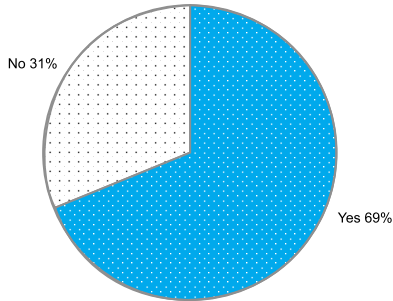
Asked about their happiness in their current work/job, 69% of respondents who had ever worked (284/412) reported being happy. 31% (128 respondents) were not happy with their current or last work/job.

Second Job

67% of respondents reported also having a second type of work in which they were engaged. Out of all respondents 33% had no second



Happy with Current/Last Job

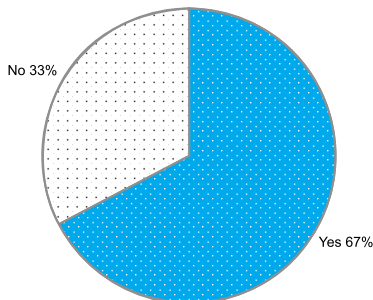


job, 14% worked as restaurant plate cleaners, 13% as tempo/bus conductors, 11% as ragpickers, 9% as beggars, 6% as labourers and 4% as street vendors.

9% were also engaged in illegal activities to earn money.

Changes in Work Type

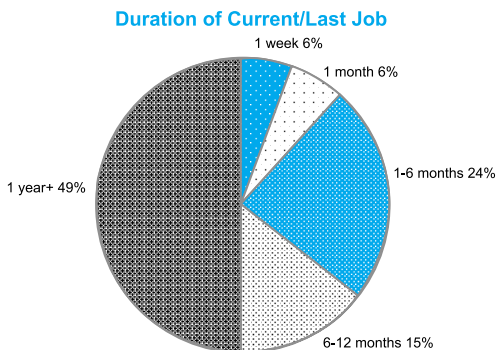
Children with Second Job



A minority of respondents reported usually or often changing the

type of work they were engaged in (12%), while 35% of respondents reported never having changed their work type, and 53% rarely changing their work type.

49% of respondents had been engaged in the same type of work



for more than one year, while 12% had been engaged in that work for one month or less. The remaining 39% had been engaged in the same work between 1 and 12 months.

67% of respondents reported currently having a second work type in which they were also engaged.

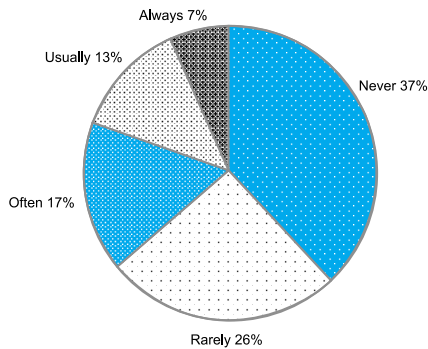
Name: Not known
Address: Jamal

His story: He is an 11 year old boy and working as a passenger caller in the transportation service. He earns Rs 100 to 200 daily but he has to give his earnings to his mother who comes everyday to collect the money. He sometimes goes home but sometimes stays on the street with friends and consumes cigarettes, dendrite etc. He also begs passers-by for money. He likes films with Nepali's Rajesh Hamal and also plays marbles. He has three brothers and no sisters. His mother pressed him to earn more money so he does not want to go home. Sometimes, he also collect plastics with friends.

Frequency of Working at Night

A significant proportion of respondents regularly (often, usually or always) worked at night (37%) placing them at greater risk. 37% reported never working at night, while 26% reported rarely working at night. For respondents working at night this places them at greater risk of abuse and exploitation, while limiting the access of organizations which predominantly work during office hours to work with these children.

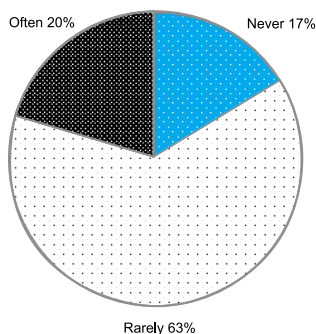
Frequency of Work at Night



Frequency of Day Off

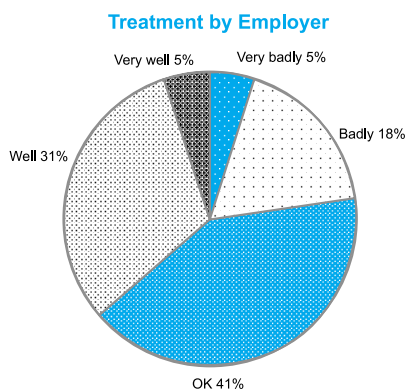
Of all working respondents only 20% reported frequently having a day off, while 63% rarely had a day off and 17% never had a day off. This limits the opportunities of both organizations to engage respondents and therefore limits opportunities for education and recreation activities.

Frequency of Day Off

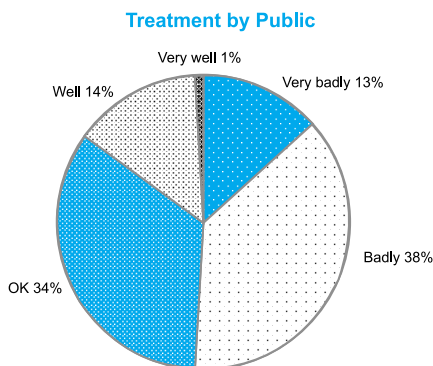


Treatment by Employers and the Public

Respondents were asked about how they were treated by their employers and by the public while working. The majority of respondents reported being treated very well, well or ok by their employers (77%). However, 23% reported being treated badly or very badly by their employer.



More respondents reported being treated badly or very badly by the public while working – a total of 51%. 34% reported they were treated ok, while only 15% reported being treated well or very well by the public.



Name: Basanta
Address: Kalanki

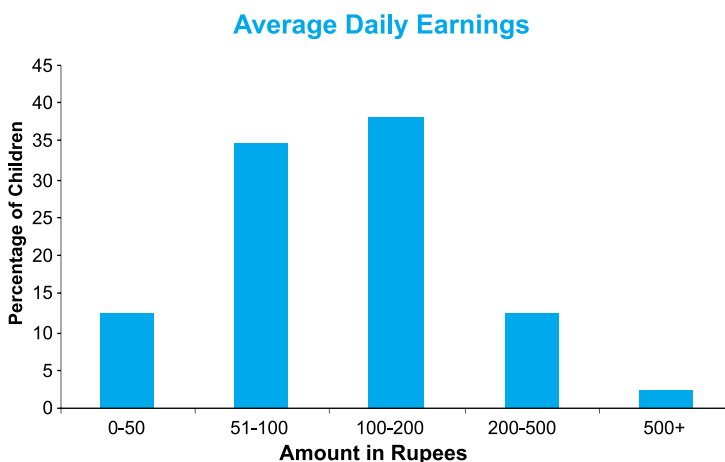
Basanta's story: Basanta lives in Kalanki. He earns Rs 50 per day and uses all this money to buy food. He picks plastic, rags, iron and steel. He doesn't like to play games. His daily life involves only making enough to feed himself. He wants to be a driver but it's complicated. He like to work during the night as there is less public and so he feel less humiliated. "They (the public) are calling us *Kathe*, dogs, I don't like that, this is not fare nor logical as in one way we are doing useful work (recycling)"

Raj K, 15 years old
Location: Kavreplanchwok

Raj's story: He has been living on the street for six or seven years. He searches for gold in the Bagmati river (Aryaghat). He and his friends don't want to go to an organization because they earn a lot doing this type of work and they find it too far from where they usually stay.

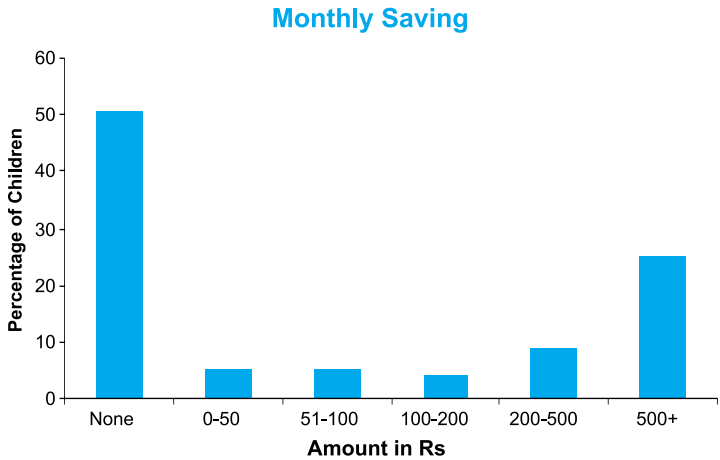
Daily Earnings

The average daily earnings of respondents varied from less than 50 rupees per day to over 500 rupees per day. The average amount earned by respondents was 100-200 rupees per day (38%), followed by 50-100 rupees (35%). 12% of respondents reported earning less than 50 rupees per day, while 14% reported earning over 200 rupees per day.



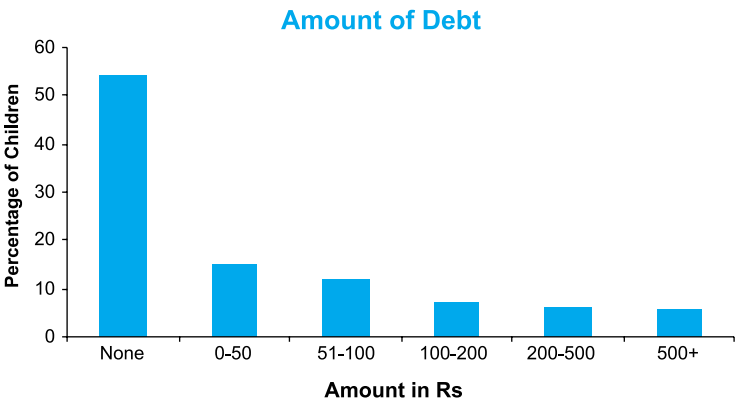
Savings

Over half of respondents did not report being able to save any money (51%). 23% of respondents reported saving between 0 and 500 rupees per month, while 25% of respondents reported saving over 500 rupees per month.



Debt

Just under half of all respondents (46%) had debt. 34% had a debt of between 0 and 200 rupees, while 12% had debt of over 200 rupees. The primary debt was owed to garbage/recycling centres, (44%) followed by friends (39%). 11% of respondents had debt in



a shop and 3% in organizations. Of those in debt, most of the money (45%) was owed to the garbage place owner for credit they had received. A large respondent sample owed money to friends (38.6%) with a smaller sample owing to shopkeepers (10.6%) then organizations (2.6%).

Ways of Spending Money

Of those respondents who worked, the majority (96%) reported spending money to buy food. After food the next priority was drugs, with 67% reporting spending income on drugs. 60% reported giving money to friends. 38% of these respondents reported giving money to their family while 11% reported spending money on their education.

Name: Bibek

Bibek's story: Bibek is 10 years old. He is a street beggar in the Thamel, a tourist area. He earns Rs 200 to 250 daily begging from tourists and locals. At 10 years old, he relies on the kindness of others to survive and lives in fear of the older children or gangs stealing his money and sometimes beating him up. He is also acting as a guide for local and foreign tourist.

Name: Pradip

Pradip's story: Pradip is from Tanahun. He searches for goods (plastics, other recycling items) in the streets, sells them and earns Rs 100 - 200 daily. Even with his poor prospects his goal is to save Rs 100 - 200 per month.

The rest of his earnings are spent on dendrite, cigarettes and wine. When he earns extra money he spends it partying with friends. He also likes to watch Nepali movies. Pradip is a good example of street children living from day to day. He saves money to go for movie, buy clothes or visiting somewhere.

NATIONAL EXPERT

Laxman Basnet

Chairman

Nepal Trade Union Congress

Central Office Kuponjol, Lalitpur Nepal

It is unfortunate that young children of schooling age in any country are deprived of their rights. Increased trends of child labour in developing countries has become a concern and worry for everyone of us. It is natural that everyone, not only the government but also human right activists, non-governmental organizations, pressure groups, users groups and international organizations are focusing on the sensitive sector of child labour. Unlike in the past, the immediacy of productivity today is not limited to labour nor the entrepreneur, but the scope of productivity has become broader and more responsible. Its social aspect has also been increased. Trade union cannot remain untouched from this trend.

There have been important multi-sector efforts including the efforts made by the Trade Unions to eliminate child labour. Public awareness has been raised that using child labour is taken as a social and legal crime. There is no argument that our efforts should continue towards entire elimination. Therefore, in eliminating child labour, the responsible role of every concerned organization including the Trade Union is important.

Child labour deprives children of their fundamental rights such as rights to life, growth and development, right to protection and right to participation including rights to education and health. On the other hand, practice of child labour displaces adults from their right to employment. In Nepal, child labour is mostly used in agriculture, industrial factories, transport, construction work and informal sectors in the urban area according to data on child labour use. The internal armed conflict that continued for eleven years in the country has

further increased child labour. The use and nature of child labour has been changing and it has become more complicated. Studies show that the situation of street children has worsened in Nepal.

In this regard, the study made by CPCS of street children is very much commendable. I do believe and I wish that the organization would work objectively in eliminating child labour in the days to come.

Laxman Basnet

INTERNATIONAL EXPERT

By Jean-Robert Chéry

Centre d'éducation Populaire - Coordinator

Haiti

Haiti shares the Hispaniola Island with the Dominican Republic. It is situated on the west and its area is 27000 km². Its population is around 8.5 million. According to a UNICEF report, 61% of them are under 18. Haiti has even signed the 1994 convention on the rights of a child.. However only 31.5% of school age children attended school.

There are more or less 700,000 children facing dangers concerning health, education, security and their morals.

In regards to street children, we have stereotypes. For some they are nobody's child; for others, it's a social evil, the result of the socio-economic situation of the country since its independence. There are 5 to 6 thousands children in the capital, Port au Prince. 90% of them are farmer's children. They are living by begging, prostitution, by washing feet and cleaning cars. All this are the characteristics of street children in Haiti.

Meanwhile, they just have one right. The one to be on the street.

Jean-Robert Chéry

KEY FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS

Following is presented a short summary of the key findings of the research in relation to substance use and abuse. Short recommendations are suggested with each finding.

» Content in Current Job

Respondents reported being generally content with their present choice of work. 69% of respondents reported that they were happy in their current or last work. 88% of respondents reported rarely or never changing their work. In terms of treatment by employers, most respondents (77%) reported they were treated ok or better. The problem lay more with the public – 51% reporting being treated badly or very badly.

Recommendation: *More needs to be done to motivate children to move on from the street and street-based work, in particular facilitating a realisation of the negative aspects of the lifestyle and long-term disadvantages. This means more creative work with children in the street environment.*

» Earning but Spending

38% of respondents were earning between Rs.100 and Rs.200 per day – enough to meet their daily needs. 35% of respondents earned between Rs.50 and Rs.100 per day which would meet their survival needs. However, 46% of respondents reported being in debt suggesting that the majority of respondents used most of their income for their daily expenses.

96% spent money on food while also 67% reported spending income on drugs and 60% giving their income to friends.

Recommendation: *Although street children are earning their lifestyle encourages them to spend all they have. It is important to encourage children to save from an early age and to understand the advantages and disadvantages of different types of work for their futures.*

» Lack of Opportunities for the Future.

Although the respondents were in general addressing their own daily needs this appears to be at the expense of long-term

development. Only 49% of respondents were saving any money, although 67% also reported having a second job/form of income. 80% of respondents rarely or never had a day off, therefore limiting their ability to engage in developmental activities. The majority of respondents were engaged in begging or ragpicking (59%) which provide few opportunities when the respondents get older.

Recommendation: *Interventions need to be made to encourage children to access developmental services, such as education or recreation. Although children are surviving they have few opportunities for their future in their present situation.*

» **At Risk through Work**

37% of respondents reported regularly working at night therefore placing themselves at greater risk of abuse and exploitation. This is also a time where children are more at risk to become involved in high risk sexual behaviour, substance abuse and be exposed to criminal activities. It is also a time when organisations have least support – although emergency services exist, few social workers are present on the street at night.

Recommendation: *The reality is that many children work at night placing them at huge risk. Effort should be made to encourage children not to work at night, while at the same time organisations should work to have a presence on the street at night both for protection and to reduce the risk of children becoming involved in substance use, criminal activities or high risk sexual behaviour.*

CHAPTER FOUR
"SUBSTANCE USE AND
ABUSE"





Street children are consuming glue, prescription drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and sometimes injecting. Nothing is done to prevent them from doing it...

INTRODUCTION

Psychoactive substance use is a widely practiced and normalised activity among adolescents in society and in particular among street children. Many of these children and young people are involved in harmful use (abuse) of substances – i.e. use which results in social, psychological or physical problems. These effects can emerge immediately and/or in the long-term.

The key for interventions to prevention is an understanding of why street children commonly abuse substances in spite of the risks involved. Substances are often used to replace something missing in the children's lives or to 'solve' problems, albeit temporarily. It is also important to understand the meaning of the use and abuse of different types of substances and the implications of this on effective interventions.

A useful framework in which to analyse these issues is the Modified Social Stress Model. It helps to identify the risk and protective factors which influence children's decisions with regard to risk behaviours. From this an organisation can develop a strategy to help the individual and the group most effectively (see WHO Training Package).

Five of the key components are:

▶ *Stress*

Life events, enduring strains, everyday problems, life transition, adolescent changes

▶ *Normalisation of behaviour and situations*

Availability of substance, price of substance, advertising/media

» *The effect of behaviour and situation*

Understanding of the reasons for and effect of substance use in short- and long-term

» *Attachments*

Positive meaningful relationships and role models

» *Skills*

» Skills not to engage in risk-taking behaviour

An additional component to consider is the role of substance use and abuse in the individual and group identities of street children. As well as experiencing the developmental changes of adolescence, street children are negotiating identities from their marginalised position in society. The role of substances in children's evolving identities and social interactions is significant.

The data from this research does not answer all these questions. However it gives an important indication of which issues need to be addressed. It provides a framework from which social workers can analyse and therefore make strategies to address the problems of substance abuse among street children and young people in their working areas.

DATA ANALYSIS

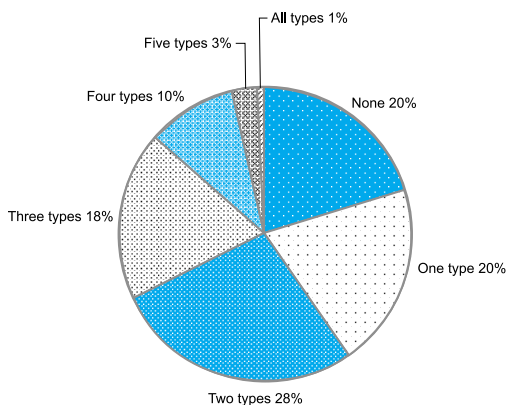
Use of Substances

The survey examined the use of the following substances by respondents: cigarettes, alcohol, hash/marijuana, glue, tabs/pills, and injected substances (IDU).

Number of Substances Currently Used

60% of respondents were using more than one type of substance at the time of the survey. Over 30% were using three or more types of substance, and only 20% were using no substances.

Number of Substances Currently Used



Arjun, 20 years old.

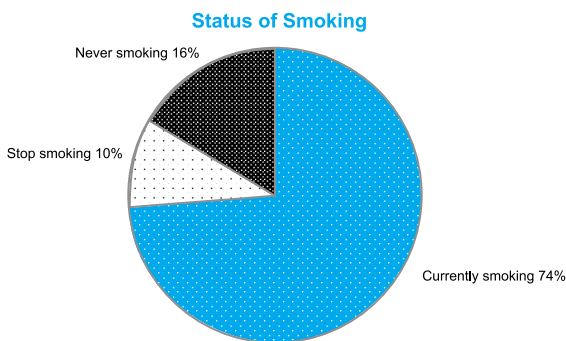
Arjun used to smoke only cigarettes and hashish. Then, slowly he started injecting drugs. He thinks and says that one day everybody has to leave the world. "I sometimes want to give up but I could not do it. I want to go into a rehab program." Marijuana doesn't give a good trip, so we take TT (injection) it is helpful to encourages us to work. It will cost between 100 and 170 rupees." Arjun wants to leave drugs but it's very hard because of the physical addiction. "It's very hard to sleep if we haven't taken our dose. We need youth programs, rehabilitation centres and jobs"

Cigarettes

The most common form of substance used by children was cigarettes. 74% of respondents were currently smoking, with 10% having stopped smoking and only 16% of respondents having never smoked at all.

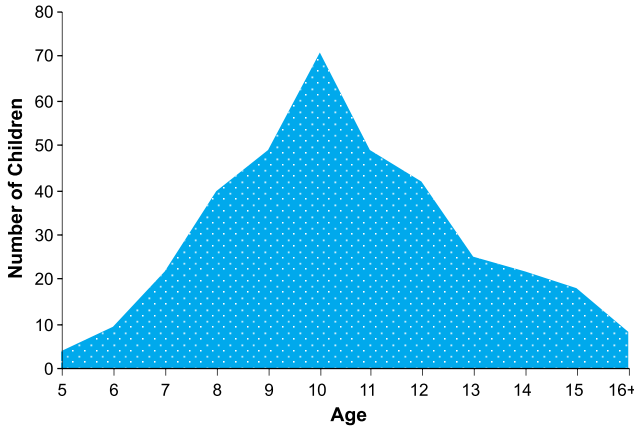
Of those who had ever smoked, over half (56%) smoked 5 cigarettes or less per day, while 18% smoked over ten cigarettes per day.

The majority of respondents (85%), recognised smoking as bad for their health, with 31% reporting having become sick because of smoking. 83% of respondents wished to stop smoking.



Most respondents (78%) cited *habit* as a reason for smoking, while 35% of respondents cited *peer pressure* and 34% of respondents cited *pleasure* as a frequent motivation for smoking. The majority of respondents (71%) began smoking with friends on the street, while 17% began smoking with friends at home and 8% on their own.

Age of starting smoking



Respondents started smoking from the age of 5 years upwards. By the age of 7 years, 10% of those who had ever smoked (360) had started smoking. However, the key age range for respondents to start smoking was between the age of 8 and 12. 71% of respondents started smoking during this time.

“If I smoke cigarettes, I feel sick” says Rhabi, 13 years old. He never smokes or consumes substances. “I have to control myself as it’s hard to say “I don’t like” as smoking among my friends is so common. Almost all my street friends are smoking...”

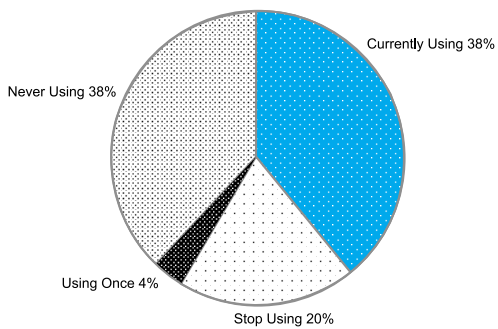
Alcohol and Other Substances

Status of Use of Substance

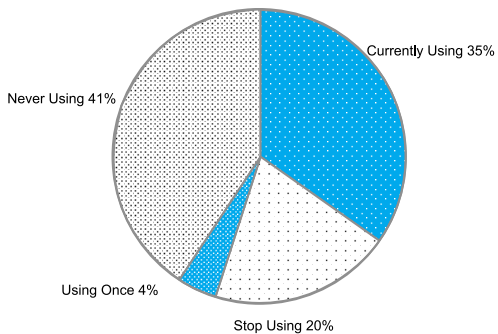
It can be seen that levels of use of *alcohol*, *hashish* and *glue* are similar, with the proportion of those currently using each substance (31-38%), those stopped using the substance (20-25%), and those having never used the substance (38-42%). These three substances are the most common used by respondents.

The proportion of respondents using or having used *tabs/pills* or *injecting* drugs was much lower. 7% of respondents were currently using tabs/pills and 4% currently injecting drugs. 84% of respondents had never taken tabs/pills and 93% had never injected drugs.

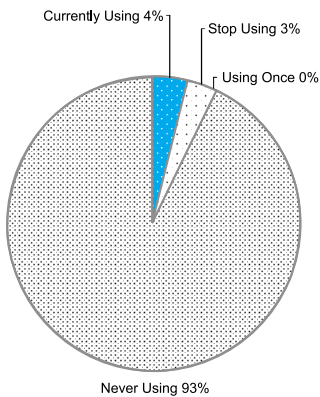
Alcohol

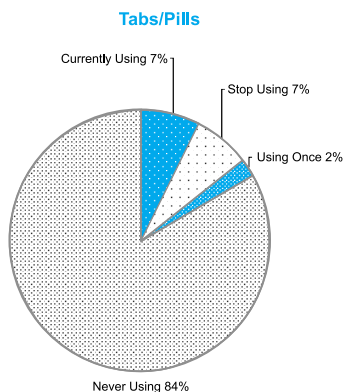
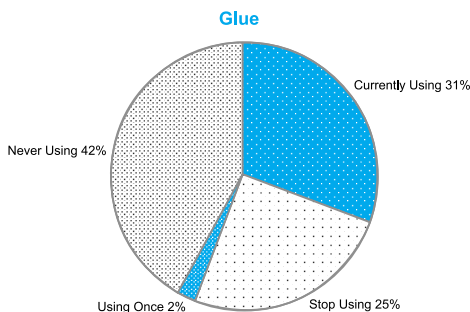


Hashish



IDU





Name: Unknown

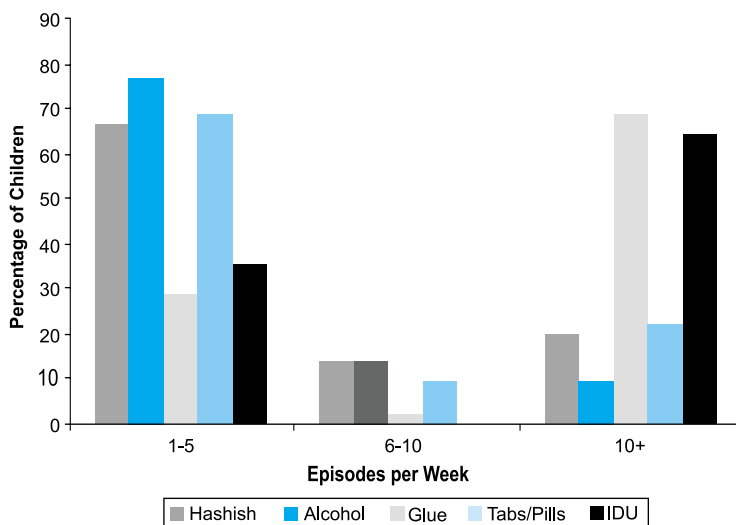
His story: He is 22yrs old and has been on the street for many years. He is engaged in pick pocketing and sometimes he earns 3000 - 4000. He spends all his money on drugs. He lives from day to day, virtually penniless. He lives in the Jamal public garden. He does not like movies, does not play sports or have any pastimes. His life revolves around getting enough money to feed his drug habit. He is not alone - there are many just like him. He plans to die from drugs.

Frequency of Use and Perceived Addiction to Substance

For those using or having used each substance frequency of use is represented in the table below according to the number of episodes of use per week.

An important observation is that for hashish, alcohol and tabs/pills the majority of respondents were using 5 times or less per week.

Frequency of Substance Use by Type

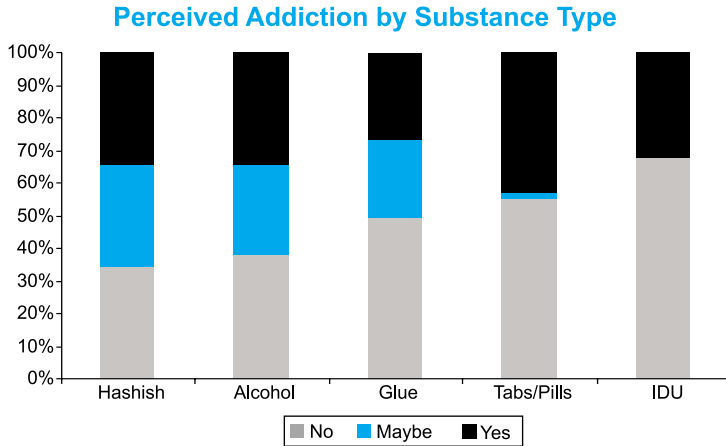


For glue and injecting drugs the majority of users were using more than 10 episodes per week – only 29% of glue users and 35% of injecting drug users reported 5 episodes of use or less per week.

This highlights more continuous type of use or addiction of users to glue and injecting drugs.

The proportion of respondents reporting addiction to each drug type was as follows: hashish (34%), alcohol (38%), glue (49%), tabs/pills (56%), and IDU (68%).

It should be noted the difference between reported frequency of use for glue and tabs/pills and the perception of addiction. Although the majority of respondents of those having used tabs/pills (68%) reported use of five episodes or less per week, 56% of these respondents perceived that they were addicted to the substance.



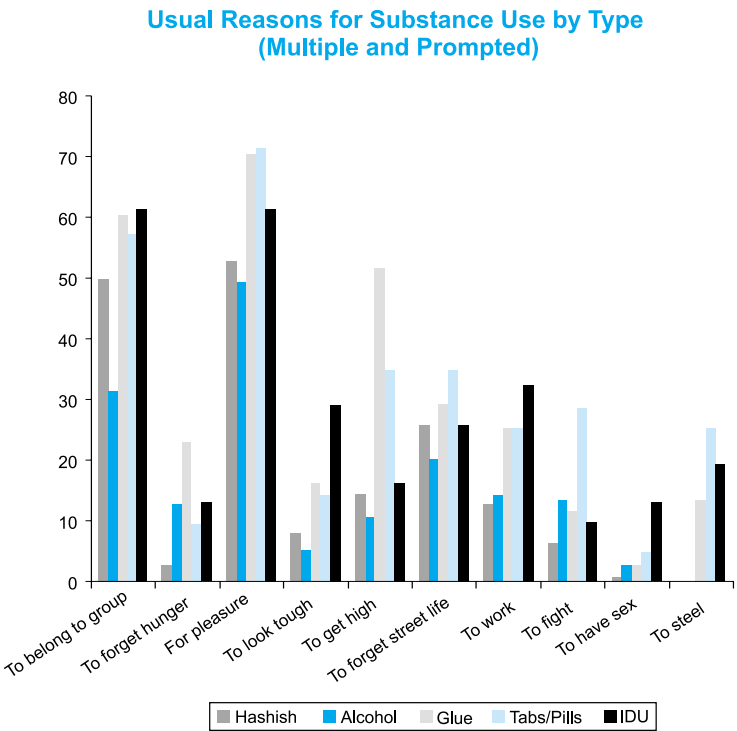
With regard to tabs/pills this information suggests a different type of use from the other substances, limiting the number of episodes per week, or a different perception of addiction from other substances. Also for glue, for which the majority of respondents reported more frequent use than cigarettes, the information suggests a different type of use or a different perception of addiction in comparison with other substances.

Reasons for Substance Use

Respondents were asked prompted questions to identify reasons for use of each substance. These varied according to each substance type and are detailed in the chart below. For all substance types the highest proportion of respondents cited pleasure as a motivation for substance use. In particular, for glue, tabs/pills and IDU the proportion of respondents citing pleasure was 70%, 71% and 61% respectively. The second most significant reason for use was to belong to a group. This was especially in relation to hashish (50%), glue (61%), tabs/pills (57%) and IDU (61%).

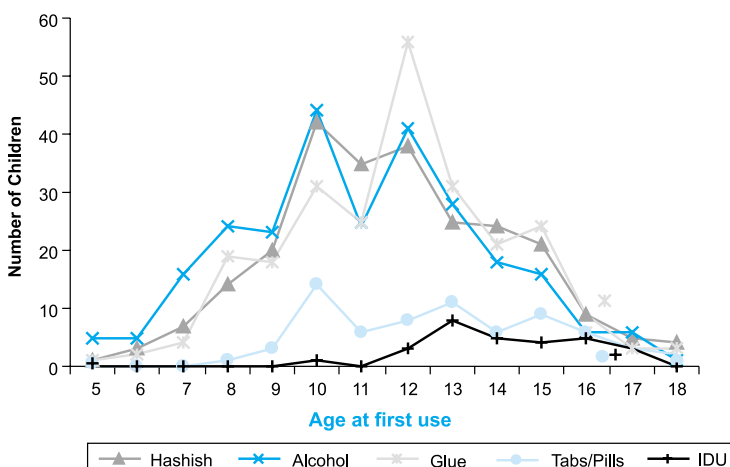
With regard to physical effects, 52% of respondents reported use of glue ‘to get high’ while this was 35% for tabs/pills. For other substances this was not a significant factor. For all substance types there 20-35% of respondents reported ‘to forget street life’ as a motivation for substance use. In addition, 23% of glue users identified ‘forgetting hunger’ as a reason for use.

In comparison to other substances more respondents reported the use of tabs/pills to fight (29%) and to steal (25%), while more IDUs reported use of the drug for having sex (17%). Over a quarter of respondents reported use of glue (25%), tabs/pills (25%) and injecting drugs (32%) for working.



Age at First Substance Use

Age at first substance use



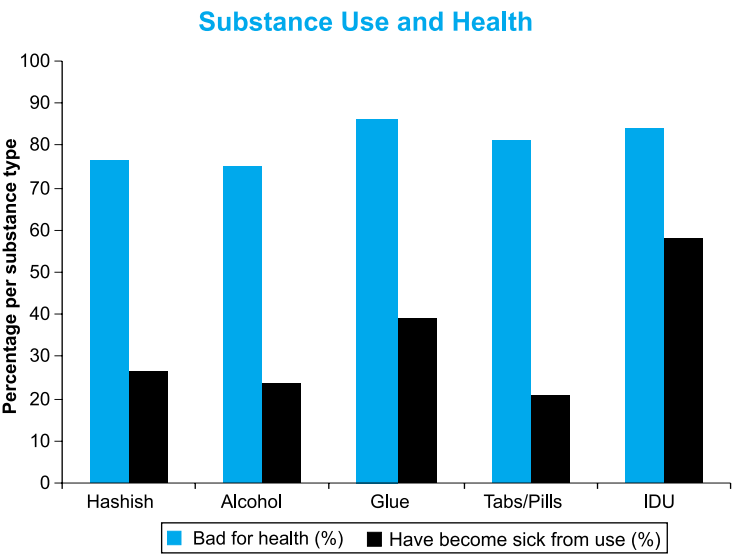
Respondents reported use of hashish, alcohol and glue from the age of 5. For tabs/pills the first reported age of use was 8 years and for IDU 10 years. Hashish and glue showed similar patterns for the age of first use – the majority of users starting between the ages of 10 and 13 – hashish (55%), alcohol (50%), and glue (56%). It should however be noted that a significant proportion of users had started to use each substance before the age of ten – hashish (17%), alcohol (28%), and glue (18%).

The age of first use of tabs/pills was spread more evenly than that of other substances. 5% of those having used tabs/pills had done so before the age of 10 years. Age of first use was then spread between the ages of 10 and 15 (74%).

The age of first episode of injecting was more delayed than other substance types. Only 3% of IDUs reported doing so before the age of 12 years. The highest proportion of those injecting for the first time can be observed between the ages of 13 and 16 years (71%).

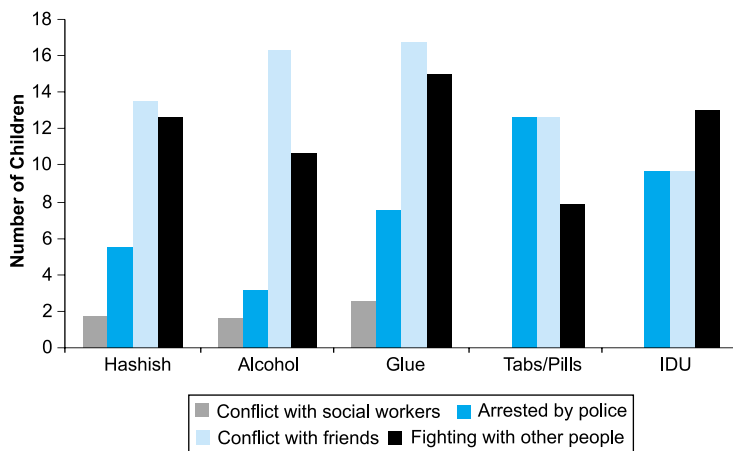
The median age of first use by substance type was as follows: alcohol (11 years), hashish (12 years), glue (12 years), tabs/pills (13 years), and IDU (14 years).

The majority of all users (over 75%) for each substance type recognised the substance as bad for their health. Between 21% and 27% of users reported having become sick from use of hashish, alcohol and tabs/pills. While for glue and IDU, 39% and 58% of users respectively reported having become sick from use of the substance.



Problems Experienced due to Substance Use

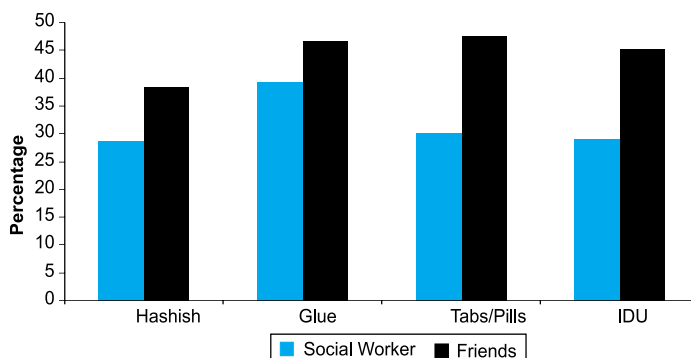
Problems Experienced due to Substance Use



Respondents were asked what type of problems they faced due to substance use according to each substance type. Respondents reported similar number of problems resulting from hashish, alcohol and glue use – conflict with friends (14-17 incidents), fighting with other people (13-15 incidents), and arrest by police (6-8 cases). For tabs/pills the primary problems faced were arrest by police and conflict with friends (13 incidents each). For IDU the primary problem was fighting with other people (13 incidents) followed by conflict with friends and arrest by police (10 incidents each). A few incidents of conflict with social workers were identified resulting from use of hashish, alcohol and glue, while there were no incidents identified resulting from use of tabs/pills or intravenous drugs.

Respondents were also asked with whom they had spoken with about dealing with problems of substance abuse. The main type of person that they had spoken to was friends and social workers. More respondents had spoken with friends about substance abuse – hashish (38%), glue (47%), tabs/pills (48%) and IDU (45%). For social workers the number was as follows – hashish (29%), glue (39%), tabs/pills (30%) and IDU (29%).

Spoken with Someone about Dealing with Substance Abuse



Twelve years ago Arjun started to consume cigarettes in the street with friends. “It is my habit now but the first time I was very curious and enthusiastic to smoke a cigarette. From friends, I also learned to sniff dendrite and it is a great pleasure too. You can see Mahadev and other gods and you can forget all pain.” If Arjun has money he will buy drugs 7-8 tabs daily. It cost around 200-300Rs.

Padam, 15yrs, has lived on the street for 3 years. He came to Kathmandu to get a job as a dishwasher in a restaurant. Once he made a mistake and the owner kicked him out. He found some friends in street and in their company he started to consume marijuana, cigarettes, alcohol and dendrite (glue). “It is very hard to leave dendrite once we got the habit” he said.

When we sniff it, we go to heaven, we can forget cold, hunger, fights... It’s a good trip...

Pradeep, 14 years old, had the same kind of trip... “When taking glue, I feel like in a helicopter trip or going to the nirvana, It’s fun...”

19 years old Deepak consumes local wine to forget the street pain. He says that wine make him brave and courageous. “To make me attentive, to release anger and become cool I use substances like marijuana”, he said

At 10 years Ramesh started to sniff dendrite in Thamel with friends. “When we take glue, we forget pain, hunger and we don’t feel shy to be on the street...”

Raju, 12 years old

Raju’s story: He told us that he earns money and spends it on drugs that he and his friends take together. “At first drugs provided us freedom but then we were forced to continue to buy from the drug dealers.”

NATIONAL EXPERT

Dr Sabitri Sthapit

Central Departement of Psychology

Tribhuvan University

CPCS's study titled "General research among the street children of Kathmandu valley" has provided a comprehensive overview of the current situation of substance use and alcoholism among the street children of Kathmandu. As the research revealed, currently 74 percent of them are cigarettes smokers, and 38 percent are alcoholic drinker,. Sixty percent among them are using two or more types of drugs. A person continues to learn and enhance from his/her experiences throughout life; and social surrounding and environment in which the person lives keep on influencing and molding behaviors and traits through out his/her life. But habits and experiences acquired during the formative period of life greatly influences later life. The person, in the absence of strong motivation to abandon the undesirable behaviors will encounter difficulties in getting rid of them. Habits of smoking, drinking, and drug abuse are detrimental to all, and for children there is no limit to the harm that these habits can bring. This research has brought in front of us that picture of the street children which we otherwise would never be ready to accept. It makes us, the society, and the concerned authorities thinks about what can be done for those children. I highly the appreciate the efforts of CPCS for the completion of the study.

Doctor Sabitri Sthapit

INTERNATIONAL EXPERT

Horge Claudette

CPCS INTERNATIONAL – President

Belgium

The consumption of drugs has been seen in all human societies of all countries and all times. It's however obvious that the motivation of the drugs users is not similar in all cases.

To take drugs (legal or illegal) is trying to respond to a deficiency. This deficiency is found at several levels: physical, societal, familial, psychological, legal, pleasurable, the spiritual and the Secret.

It is the meeting of those levels which specifies the complexity of the subject. The human being likes liberty. He can be drunk on liberty and he can die because of it. In all countries serious injustices have been committed because of the social tradition. By talking about social values, we have created a hypocritical world which crushes the human being. We enforced the law devastating the weakest who can't defend himself. In the streets of our cities, hundred of youths don't have a choice other than to take drugs. Youths believe in liberty and life. However, in front of injustices they lose their trust in tradition, in its conventions and in the authority. They throw back tyranny and arbitrary behaviors.

Here I am not talking about youths who rise up against the law to enjoy their liberty, but I am talking about something deeper.

If we want to help youths, we have to understand that social inclusion, if it's offered like an ultimatum by the "society", can only be rejected. Alternatively, if it's offered like the result of a dialogue and if it shows that they have (without demagogy) only the choice between it (social inclusion) and misfortune, maybe it will be accepted by youth. And they will give up looking for the non-existent Grail.

Above all, each of these youths needs someone who can share these sufferings. He needs someone who can understand him because he believes that he is lost. He needs that people say: “I trust you”. This process can take a lot of time. Youths have been hurt, frustrated and rejected over several years. They will not adjust to the life quickly. They need people who go to them because they have a real value, because they are irreplaceable, because they have to live, because if they don’t live, the world will miss them.

By reading the shocking figures of this report could the society, our leaders, and us wake up? Who among us can say that he had never known this pain: “he left without looking at me”? We often haven’t looked at these youths like we should. They haven’t been seen and they are crying. They are crying with tears from inside, tears of sadness and no-life, tears of violence. That is the addiction in all its revelations.

Claudette Horge

KEY FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS

Following is presented a short summary of the key findings of the research in relation to substance use and abuse. Short recommendations are suggested with each finding.

» Age of First Use

Substance use begins at an early age (Average age: alcohol - 11 years, hashish - 12 years, glue - 12 years, tabs/pills – 13 years and IDU – 14 years).

Recommendation: *Need for prevention interventions for substance abuse to target street children before the age of 10 year and to be intensive between age of 10 and 12 years.*

» Cigarettes as Most Commonly Used Substance

Cigarettes are the most commonly used substance by street children (84% have smoked) and children start use at an early age (average 10 years).

Recommendation: *Young children should be targeted with interventions to prevent smoking and this opportunity should be used for general education on substance abuse.*

» Normalisation of Glue Use

The use of glue is highly normalised among the respondents with over 50% having used glue and 31% currently using glue. Of those using glue only 29% reported using less than 5 times a week. Only 49% reported that they felt addicted to the substance.

Recommendation: *Interventions should address the normalisation and social acceptability of glue use among street children. In particular it is suggested that drugs education should go beyond a focus on issues of legality and illegality of different types of drugs and examine in social, psychosocial, and physical impacts (including exploring the meaning of dependency/addiction). For frequent users of a substance an initial strategy focused on minimising use may be effective.*

» **Addiction to Substances**

A high percentage of users reported addiction to IDU (68%) and reported wanting to quit the substance and needing support for this.

Recommendation: *More provision of drug rehabilitation places specifically targeted at the needs of street children and youth.*

» **Reasons for Substance Use**

Respondents reported varying reasons for drug use: pleasure, group belonging, to forget street life, to forget hunger. Respondents also reported the use of substances to fight, to steal and to have sex, as well as to work.

Recommendation: *Interventions need to take into account the different reasons of individuals and groups for substance use and the type of use. Interventions should address these reasons, reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors. In particular the interactions between drug use and group/ gang identity, violence, crime and sex should be understood.*

» **Access to Prevention Services**

Few respondents reported having spoken to a social worker about dealing with problems of substance abuse – a maximum of 40%. A maximum of 48% had spoken with friends about issues related with substance use.

Recommendation: *More resources and energy need to be placed in substance use/abuse awareness and education interventions, both for children before they have used substances and to support children and young people to stop substance abuse. In particular it would be important to work with individuals and groups and use complimentary approaches including peer education.*

CHAPTER FIVE

“VULNERABILITY TO ABUSE AND OTHER RISKS”





Street children are insulted, morally abused and terrorised by those afraid of them or who don't recognize that they are still children despite their way of life.

Street children are also frequently used and misused by foreign or local predators who believe they are easy prey for their sexual gratifications.

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the greatest risk faced by children living on the street over which they have little or no control is their vulnerability to abuse – sexual abuse, physical abuse and moral and emotional abuse. Interventions to prevent abuse can address three areas: providing a safe environment which prevents abuse; providing accountability and increasing children's skills to protect themselves.

A combination of all three approaches is needed:

1. Given the nature of street life, there is no way to ensure that children will not come into contact with persons ready to physically, sexually or morally abuse a child. However what is possible is to increase the supervision of children on the street through field social workers and a trained police presence on the street;
2. In terms of accountability, it is a sad fact that given the marginalised nature of street children it these children who are most vulnerable to abuse who received the least protection. In particular in terms of accountability, it is too often the case that crimes against and abuses of street children go unnoticed or unpunished. More needs to be done to combat social attitudes which accept abuse of street children as a given;
3. Most importantly children need to be empowered to protect themselves as much as is possible. This means not accepting abuse as normal, being aware of abuse, being aware of risk situations and how to avoid them. Children need to be supported and empowered to ensure that abuses are reported and followed-up.

Perhaps the most pertinent example of the need to use all three approaches is in that of sexual abuse. In the case of sexual abuse of younger children by older street youth many factors allow abuses to occur. On the street, children are unsupervised from a young age and part of groups. Without role models and guidance they can easily be pushed into abusive situations and made to accept these as normal. Rape and sexual abuse usually happens at night when there is no presence of social workers. Children who are victims not only are forced to understand sexual abuse as a normalised part of street life, but are also not empowered to openly discuss taboo issues of sex and sexuality. These issues therefore remain hidden and out of the influence of social workers.

The data from this research highlights the frequency of abuse and the main perpetrators. To people who work with street children this may not be surprising. What should however be surprising is that fact that little has been done to challenge abuse in a practical way which has an impact. The data from the research is presented as well as key findings from qualitative information from children and recommendations.

Other risks faced by children include also health problems, poor hygiene and nutrition, and vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. This report presents data on these issues and recommendations for interventions to reduce the impact of these risks.

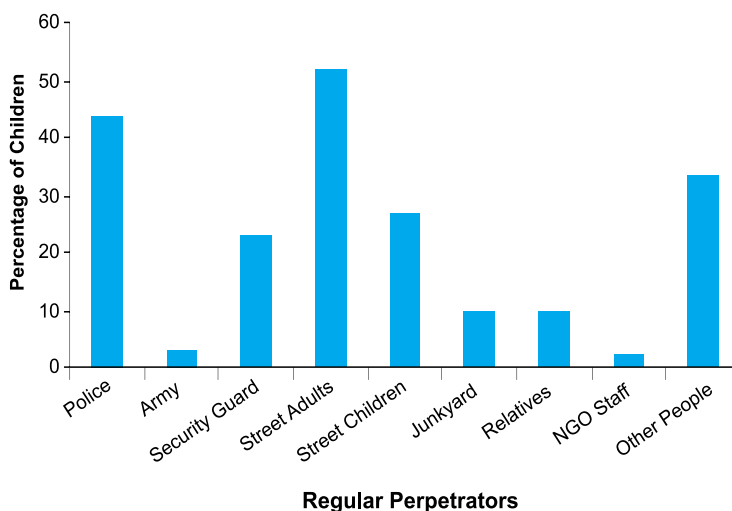
DATA ANALYSIS

Abuse

Perpetrators of Abuse

Respondents reported significant levels of abuse in the street environment. Respondents identified street adults, other street children, police and security guards as perpetrators who would usually or often abuse them.

Perpetrators of Abuse

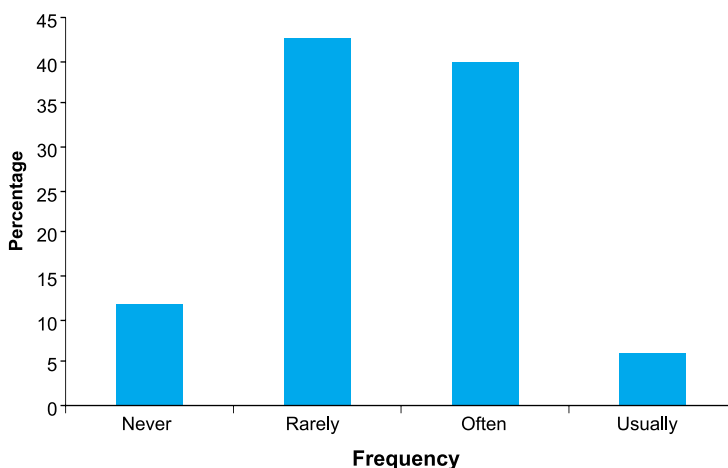


One day, Padam, 15 years old, and one of his friends were attacked by a 23 year old street junky and his gang. They wanted to steal the children's money. Padam tried to run away but the gang caught him and forced him to go to Balkhu area... On the way, both children were beaten and threatened to be killed so they kept quiet. When they reached Balkhu area, there were other old street adults who were high on drugs. For hours, Padam and his friend got beaten and humiliated. The gang leader repeated many times "I am HIV positive so I will inject you with my blood if you don't do what I say..."

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse was experienced by many of the respondents with 46% reporting physical abuse occurring usually or often. 43% reported that physical abuse occurred but that this was rarely. Only 12% of respondents reported never experiencing physical abuse.

Frequency of Physical Abuse



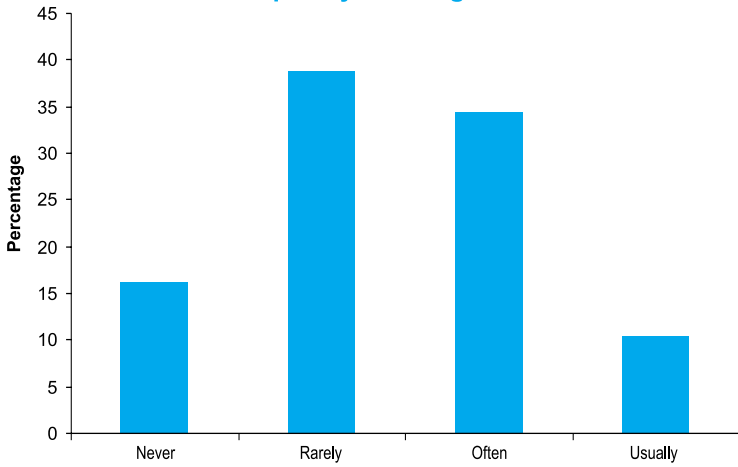
Respondents identified perpetrators who usually or often physically abused them as street adults (39%), police (36%), security guards (17%) and relatives (15%). 12% reported that other street children usually or often beat them and 1% reported NGO staff as perpetrators.

Almost 1 in 3 respondents (29%) reported having been severely beaten whilst on the street with 1 in 10 respondents (9%) reported having been hospitalised as a result of physical abuse.

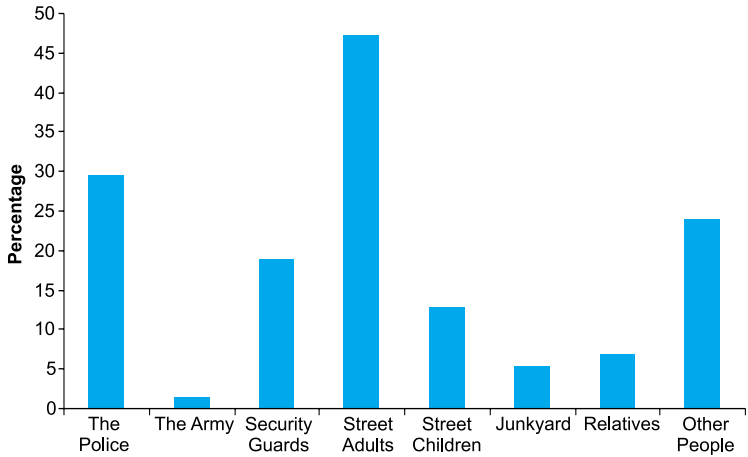
Threats

Respondents were asked how often they felt threatened, scared or terrorised. 45% of respondents reported being often or usually threatened, scared or terrorised. Only 16% of respondents never felt like this. The perpetrators who often or usually threatened the respondents were street adults (identified by 47% of respondents), police (30%), other people (24%), security guards (19%) and street children (13%).

Frequency of Being Threatened

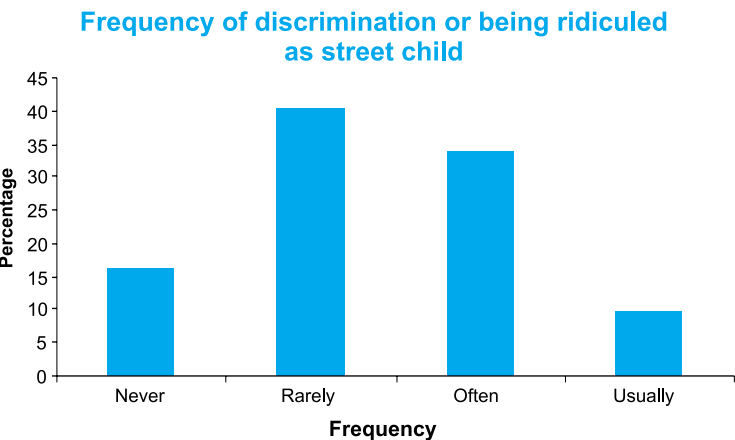


Perpetrators of Threats

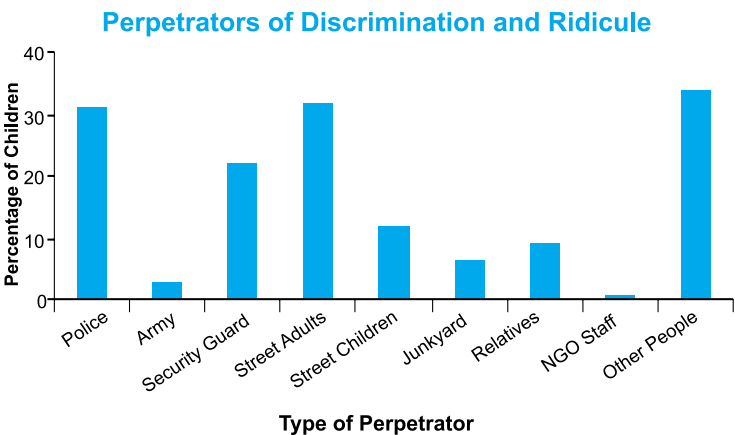


Respect and Dignity

Almost half of respondents (44%) reported usually or often being ridiculed as a street child. 40% reported having been discriminated or ridiculed but rarely. Only 16% reported never having been discriminated or ridiculed as a street child.



Frequent perpetrators of discrimination and ridicule against respondents were street adults, police and security guards identified by 32%, 31% and 22% of respondents respectively. 9% of respondents identified their relatives as discriminating against and ridiculing them.



“While on the street, so many people keep repeating us, *Khate* (negative slang word used against street children), dogs and chase us from many places... We feel so bad against that, they think us as criminal although we are honest... I know that some street children make mistakes, but it's not a reason to humiliate all of us” explained Santosh, 12 years old.

Sexual abuse

This research did not include questions regarding experience of sexual abuse because of the sensitivity of the issue. However CPCS and VOC (Voice of Children) conducted another research in 2006-2007 with 150 children using appropriate tools. The research revealed that 27% of the children had been victim of anal penetration, 29% had been made to perform oral sex, and 40% had been made to touch the genitals of another or masturbate him/her.

The majority of the kids were abused by street males while some of the children got abused by Nepali adults or foreigners. Although less frequently, females were not excluded from acting as sexual abusers...

Abuse occurred in many places. Most prevalent was in the “street”. One alarming statistic to note were the instances where children reported having suffered abuse in institutions, where they are supposedly being protected from the dangers of the street.

Arjun's story: Arjun begs for money from tourists. He sometimes has sex with foreigners and earns Rs. 100 - 500. He spends his earnings buying dendrite, cigarettes and the odd meal. The days he earns extra money he gives it to his didi for safekeeping asks her for it when he needs it. At the beginning, he was abused by some street friends and street youth for few rupees. After, he was taken by tourist who offered him, foods clothes, and bring him in hotel for oral sex and other sexual activities.

Abhinav's story: Abhinav used to beg for money near the Buddhist stupa at Boudhanath. Occasionally a foreigner would give him and his friend food and they grew to like him. One day the foreigner bought them to the guest house where he lived and fed them tasty sweets. While there, the foreigner molested the boys by touching their genitals and requested them to reciprocate. Abhinav started to feel ashamed and both boys ran away.

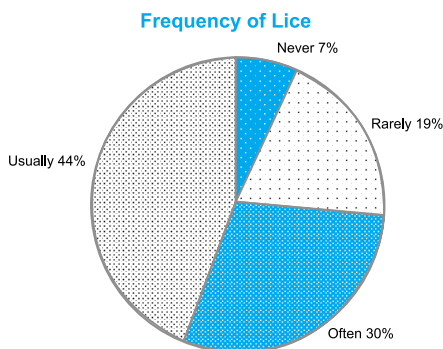
Santosh's story: Santosh was collecting rags with a friend late one evening when a street adult came up to them and demanded their money. He also told them to touch is genitals, so as to masturbate. When he went to rape one of them, they tried to escape, but the adult caught them and slashed them with a sharp blade.

Bijaya's Story: Bijaya was 8 years old that time, One day he was sleeping in the street with his friends that time one young junky came there and threatened him and told him to receive anal sex. He refused but again was threatened so he couldn't say anything and he was silent. His friends told him "please don't say anything happened." After that, slowly the abuses became habitual. Later, he also started to abuse other small street friends in the same way.

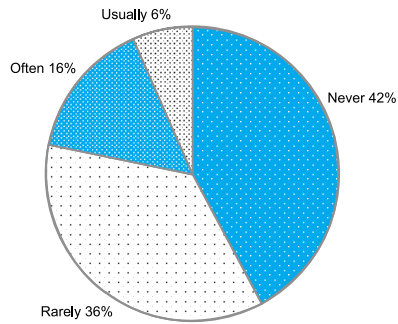
HEALTH, HYGIENE and NUTRITION

Health Problems

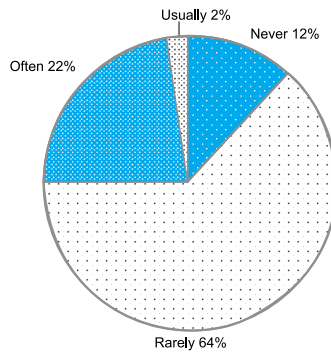
Respondents reported a wide range of health problems. At the basic level were problems related to hygiene or the working/living conditions. 74% of respondents reported usually or often having head lice. 22% reported usually or often having skin infections and 24% reported usually or often experiencing fever. 18% of respondents reported usually or often having worms.



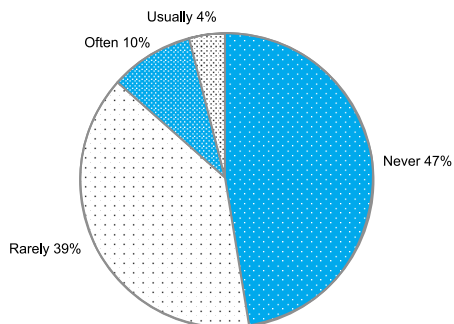
Frequency of Skin Infection



Frequency of Fever

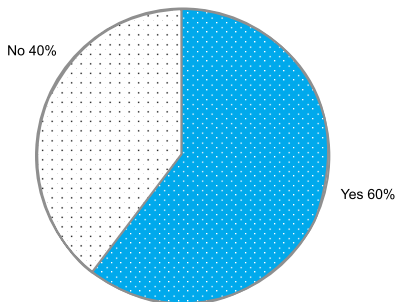


Frequency of Respiratory system problems

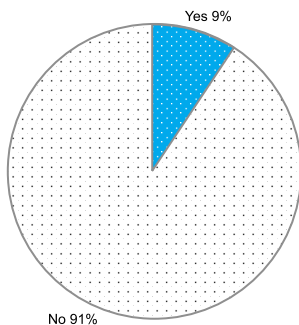


Of all respondents 60% reported having been very ill, while 50% had visited a doctor or a hospital. 9% of respondents had been refused treatment by a medical authority.

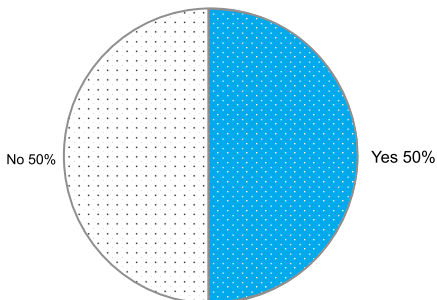
Have been very ill



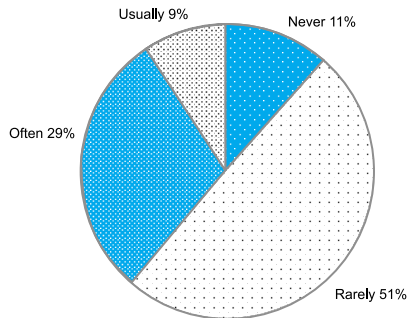
Have been refused treatment by medical authority



Have visited doctor/hospital



Frequency of Foot Infection/Wound



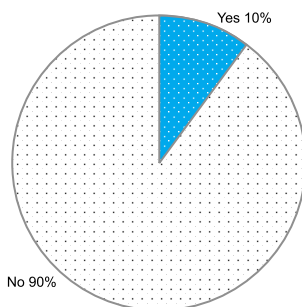
Rupesh's story: Rupesh has lived on the streets for two years and works in a junkyard. He is plagued by injuries and infections and is often turned away from hospitals and clinics because of his scruffy dress and appearance. He tries to keep himself clean, but his 'good' clothes are often stolen from the place he stays while he is at work by other children. He is frustrated at not being able to receive medical treatment.

HIV/AIDS

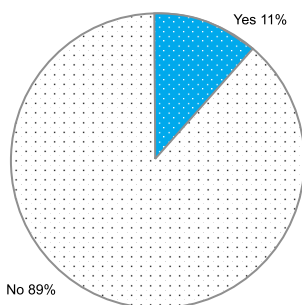
1 in 10 (10%) of respondents reported to know their HIV/AIDS status and similarly 1 in 10 (11%) had been tested for Tuberculosis.

Out of all respondents, 62% (266 respondents) reported they knew about HIV/AIDS, while 38% (164 respondents) reported that they did not know about HIV/AIDS. All respondents were also asked to respond to prompted questions regarding HIV/AIDS. While the majority could correctly identify major means of transmission of HIV/AIDS – having sex with infected person (88%), sharing needles with an infected person (90%) and blood exchange with an infected person (91%) - there was confusion over common misconceptions regarding HIV/AIDS transmission. 45% of respondents believed they could catch HIV/AIDS, 44% by sleeping with an infected person, and even 25% of respondents believed they could be infected by speaking with an infected person.

Know HIV/AIDS Status



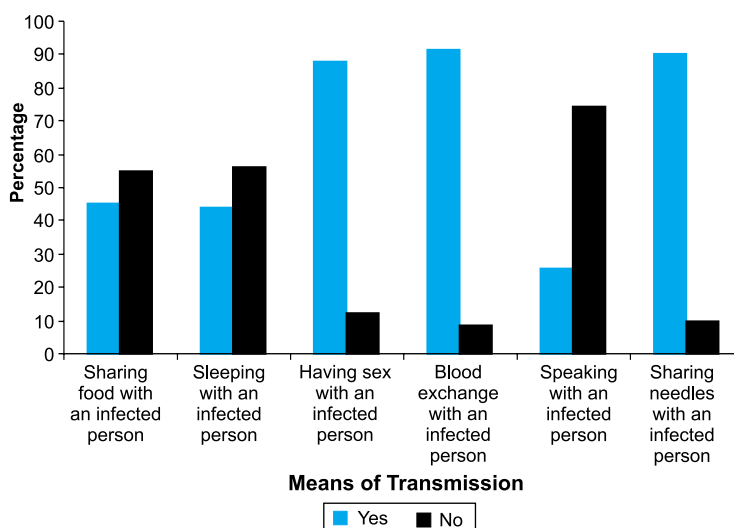
Ever been tested for TB



Knowledge of HIV/AIDS Transmission

Ways of getting Infected	Response		Total
	Yes	No	
Sharing food with an Infected Person	193(44.9%)	237(55.1%)	430(100.0%)
Sleeping with an Infected Person	190(44.2%)	240(55.8%)	430(100.0%)
Having Sex with Infected Person	378(87.9%)	52(12.1%)	430(100.0%)
Blood Exchange with an Infected Person	393(91.4%)	37(8.6%)	430(100.0%)
Speaking with an Infected Person	109(25.3%)	321(74.7%)	430(100.0%)
Sharing needles with an Infected Person	388(90.2%)	42(9.8%)	430(100.0%)

Knowledge on HIV/AIDS transmission



Of the total sample, 27% of respondents reported being sexually active. Of these only 36%, (42/116 respondents) reported having used a condom for sexual intercourse. This demonstrates that the high level of knowledge (i.e. 88% respondents identifying that HIV/AIDS can be transmitted through sexual intercourse) by itself has had little impact on risk-reduced behaviour.

The situation was similar for Injecting Drug Use. 7% of all respondents had reported injecting drugs. Of these 84% were aware that sharing needles could lead to HIV/AIDS infection (26/31 respondents). However, 52% of respondents reported having shared needles with others (16/31 respondents). This again shows that knowledge of risk alone is not enough to reduce risk behaviours.

Instances of Condom Use

Response	Number of Children	Percent
Yes	42	9.8
No	74	17.2
No Sexual Activities	314	73.0
Total	430	100.0

Name: Rajesh, 16 years old
Address: Kathmandu

Rajesh's story: Rajesh has spent the last four years living on the streets of Kathmandu. From the very start he took illicit drugs intravenously. He claims not to have known that HIV/AIDS could be passed through unclean syringes and expects that is how he became infected. Despite his condition, and the advice of the counsellors, he continues to use drugs.

Name: Shyam, 19 years old
Address: Kathmandu

Shyam's story: Shyam broke his leg while jumping of a boundary wall, but refused to go to a hospital because he believed he would be discriminated against. However once his leg began to swell badly, he came to the CPCS clinic. During treatment, it was discovered that Shyam was HIV positive. He recognizes he probably contracted the illness through unprotected sex.

Name: Shyam, 15 years old
Address: Kathmandu

Shyam's story: Shyam worked in a junkyard in Balaju, where he contracted jaundice. A visiting social worker from CPCS suggested he visit the clinic in Dilli Bazaar for treatment, but Shyam said he couldn't - he had to work to pay off a debt to the junkyard owner. After a few days, Shyam became so ill he had to be rescued by the CPCS team and was admitted to hospital. Before he was fully recovered, Shyam discharged himself from the hospital and went back to work, to repay his debt. He soon relapsed and, being still weak from the first attack, died.

Name: Mukesh, 17 years old
Address: Makwanpur

Mukesh's story: Mukesh fell very ill and his friends called the CPCS hotline. One of the medical team collected him and took him to a hospital where he was admitted. However Mukesh discharged himself shortly afterwards as he felt discriminated against by the doctors and nurses because he was HIV positive. He claims they ignored him and was referred to by the hospital staff as 'khate'.

Hygiene

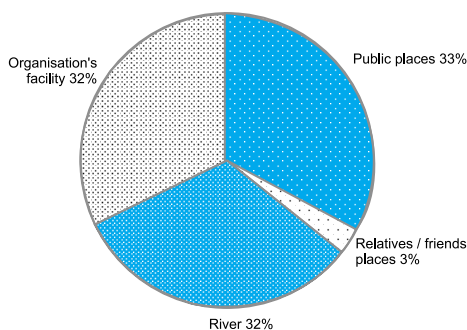
Only 37% of respondents reported having an extra set of clothes and only 45% reported often or usually wearing underwear.

Frequency of underwear use

Wearing Underwear	Number of Children	Percent
Never	107	24.9
Rarely	126	29.3
Often	51	11.9
Usually	146	34.0
Total	430	100.0

43% of respondents showered twice or more per week whereas 12% showered less than once a week. 32% of respondents showered in NGOs, whereas 33% showered in public places and 32% in rivers.

Usual Place for Washing Self



Frequency of personal hygiene activities (on 430 children)

Activity	Never	Once	Twice	3 to 5 times	Daily
Wash him/herself					
Thoroughly	52(12.1%)	195(45.3%)	132(30.7%)	44(10.2%)	7(1.6%)
Washing Clothes	91(21.2%)	187(43.5%)	114(26.6%)	33(7.7%)	5(1.2%)
Brushing Teeth	218(50.7%)	34(7.9%)	31(7.2%)	28(6.5%)	19(27.7%)

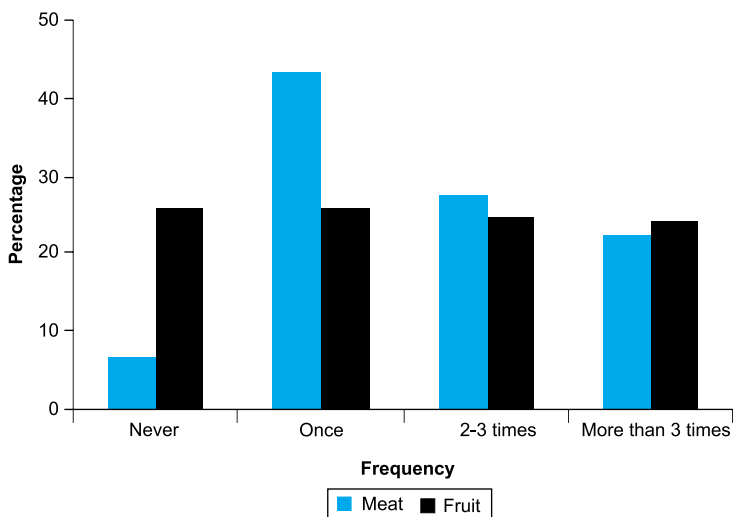
Frequency of bathing by bathing venue (on 430 children)

Places	Never	Rarely	Often	Usually
Public Places	171(39.8%)	150(34.9%)	46(10.7%)	63(14.7%)
Relatives/Friends' Places	308(71.6%)	96(22.3%)	20(4.7%)	6(1.4%)
River	107(24.9%)	128(29.8%)	134(31.2%)	61(14.2%)
Organization's Facility	86(20.0%)	161(37.4%)	121(28.1%)	62(14.4%)
Other	352(81.9%)	43(10.0%)	16(3.7%)	19(4.4%)

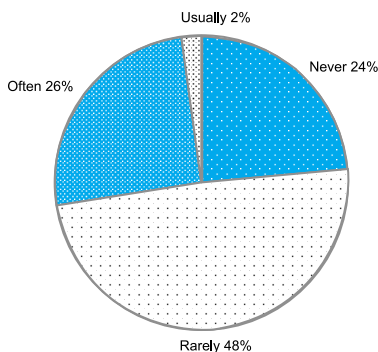
Nutrition

In terms of nutrition, 28% of respondents reported usually or often experiencing hunger, while 25% of respondents consumed fruit less than once a week. However over 20% of respondents reported eating meat more than three times a week and again 20% reported eating fruit more than three times week. 24% of respondents reported that they never went hungry.

Weekly Meat/Fruit Consumption



Frequency of Experiencing Hunger



NATIONAL EXPERT

Agni Kharel

Advocate and legal expert

Different national and international laws associate age factors for defining children. In Nepal, the Children Act, 2048 BS has defined “children” to include those persons who have not concluded their 16th year. This law aims at “protecting child rights and well-being, and make contextual provision for their physical, psychological and mental development”. This law has been ratified under the context where the state has signed the “UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989” and thereby committed at the international level to prohibit actions such as shaving the head (*Mudhyaune*), offering children to gods and goddesses at temples, harsh punishment to children, or involvement in immoral activities or begging.

Likewise, other provisions are made to avoid any punishment to children under 10; to free after persuading, convincing and chiding if they are under 14, and sanction a half of the degree of punishment to an adult in the similar case if they are children between the age bracket of 14-16.

Similarly, provisions have been made for guardianship of children, providing shelter to the children who are without claimant, keeping children that are involved in criminal acts in rehabilitation centres; judicial procedures for children shall be dealt in camera at court, and no investigation in criminal court regarding children shall proceed in the absence of law practitioner.

Although those provisions are good in themselves, experience over the last 15 years has not been satisfactory.

The Interim Constitution of Nepal, 2063 has been promulgated. It has a special provision for the protection of children. It has ensured rights to their identity, name, care, basic health and social security, rights against physical, psychological and other types of abuse. Likewise, the state has been obliged to understand and be sensitive towards the children who are helpless, orphaned, mentally incapacitated, conflict affected, displaced and street children at risk so as to ensure them the right to have special facilities for a better future. There is a new constitutional provision regarding street children. Children are not only prohibited from use in factories and mines but also use of them by the army, police or in the conflict.

Although the special constitutional provision for street children is about the rights of children, provision for special facilities are made on the basis of the nature and depth of the issue for insuring their future. Children in Nepal have been abused in the last 12 years of violence and internal armed conflict. If the data given by the national and international organizations is analyzed, it is clear that children are being terribly victimized. Their innate ignorance has made them more helpless. Therefore, children are prohibited to be used in the conflict.

The Children's Act, 2048 has a mention of "children without claimant" whereas the Interim Constitution of Nepal, 2063 has explicitly addressed those children as "street children". The issue of street children is presently very urgent. This problem is an increasing trend.

Our family relations, economic, social and cultural civilization and values, conflict that the country witnessed over the years are its major causes. To eliminate this problem, it is imperative to apply both preventive and curative measures.

The active role that non-governmental and social organizations, like CPCS have been playing at present are associated more with the curative measures. In order to adopt preventive measures, the state

should activate a mechanism from the policy level. Realizing the principle that street children are pillars of the state, the situations of how a child comes to the street should be eliminated.

Children who used to live with its family has to suffer from obstacles and blows of all kinds. They tend to break contact with, the idea and behavior of their family, and gradually they endeavor to live in a different way. They find themselves being neglected by the society. Their psychology gradually grows strong and cruel. A child falls into a circle of people who have been addicted to misconduct and already involved in the criminal activities, while they have no ability to distinguish good and bad, right and wrong, DOs and DON'Ts.

Therefore, they reach a fragile position to protect themselves from the ill-treatment posed against them. The child who is taking support from the street for food and shelter and life, always falls into vulnerability, of being used for criminal activities by anyone. In general, 46 percent of street children have been sexually abused, and 43 percent of the children have been occasionally abused according to the survey conducted by this organization.

This report clarifies how grave the issue is. Likewise, 39 percent of this kind of criminal activity is perpetrated by street adults and 36 percent by security personnel. Having read this figure, it is evident that the elimination of problem is really challenging. It is urgent to face this challenge. However, it is certain that treatment measures over time will be limited to its name. Therefore, it is urgent to get responsible people of the society, organizations and their representatives come forward for action.

Agni Kharel

NATIONAL EXPERT

Dhruba Nepal

Officiating Secretary / Director

National Human Rights Commission

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) says

“We all believe that children are the future of the nation but we should not forget that until their present is secure, the nation also has no bright future.”

The United Nations Convention Rights of Child (CRC) has emphasized the children's rights as citizens and appeals to recognize their capabilities to enact change in their own lives. The preamble of CRC clearly states that state party has to create an environment for the full and harmonious development of children's personality, they should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding.

However, it is estimated that around 30,000 children are living in the street in Nepal, of whom 3,700 are homeless (UNICEF-NEPAL 1997). Moreover they are deprived from the basic needs and in great risk of physical, sexual and other abuses. This study has also proved that most of the street children are victims of such abuses and living in pathetic conditions.

The state being party to a large number of international human rights conventions and treaties including the CRC, the Nepal government is accountable to make every effort to ensure the rights of the child. However, unclear laws and policies of Nepal impede the address of the problems of street children in Nepal.

Recommendation.

The NHRC is extremely concerned about the increasing level of risk to street children in Nepal. Therefore, the NHRC recommend to the government and civil society to take immediate action to address the problem of street children.

- ▶ The Government has to implement the recommendation forwarded by the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of Child.
- ▶ The Government has to enact clear law to address child sex abuse.
- ▶ The Government has to strengthen its implementation of existing legislation aimed at the protection and promotion of children's rights.
- ▶ A strong networking between government, NGOs and INGOs is needed to address the problem of street children.

Dhruba Nepal

INTERNATIONAL EXPERT

Bruce Moore

Regional Director

American Himalayan Foundation / United States

Reading the stories told by the children and young adults, one particularly stands out in my mind. The story of Shyam, who contracted jaundice while working in a junkyard to pay off a debt to the yard's owner. The story doesn't tell us how or why Shyam ended up at the yard, or what his debt was for, or what possessed him with such concern for the owner to be repaid that he initially refused treatment and then after only partially recovering went back to work. What we do know is that Shyam was 15 years old and died in a junkyard. Ironically, the owner probably didn't get what he was owed. I doubt it comes as a surprise to many people that street children are physically, psychologically and sexually abused and that some live in filthy conditions, face enormous health risks and, when not artificially buoyed through the effects of glue, drugs and alcohol, live a loveless lives of constant fear and degradation. It is also generally accepted that these children are a risk to themselves and others, they are nuisance in many neighborhoods are sometimes involved in petty crime and frequently resort to substance abuse. But what is often forgotten is that these children are still just children.

I can understand why many people simply ignore the children, it is difficult to know where to start, how to help. But what I don't understand is that people from within the society that abandoned many of these children in the first place, have so little compassion that ignoring the children is not enough, they have to be belittled, teased, humiliated, bashed and raped. 40% of children reported being abused in one way or another by police and 20% reported the

perpetrators were private security guards. While I am willing to accept that some of these children may have been up to no good, these numbers reflect more than efficient law enforcement and property protection. Even more disturbing is that over 30% of children have been abused by ‘other people’ – not the police, not other street children or street adults, not their junkyard bosses or relatives, but just ordinary people. The statistics are similar for instances of discrimination and ridicule. In fact in this category, it is the ‘other people’ who are the leading perpetrators.

What does this say about our society?

How much more does it cost, when approached by a ten year old child in the street, to say no with a smile, than it does to speak to them gruffly, or call them *kehate*, chor or worse. If an eight year old boy is asleep on the steps of your office, shop or house, how much more does it cost to wake him up with a cup of tea than it does to wake him up with your boot ? If an injured or sick child comes into your clinic, how much more does it cost for you to call the CPCS hotline and have her collected that it does to march her out of the waiting room – adding humiliation to injury?

As individuals we may not be responsible for the situation these children find themselves in, and, as individuals we may not be able to help get them out of it. But as members of a so-called civilized society, surely we can accept that it is not our place to make their, already difficult lives, even more miserable. Above all we need to remember on simple fact: Street children are still children.

Bruce Moore

KEY FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS

Following is presented a short summary of the key findings of the research in relation to abuse on the street. Short recommendations are suggested with each finding.

» Challenge Normalisation of Abuse

Abuse is so common in the street environment that it has become normalised. 27% of the children surveyed about sexual abuse had been victim of anal penetration, 29% had been made to perform oral sex, and 40% had been made to touch the genitals of another or masturbate him/her. 46% of respondents in this research report being regularly or often a victim of physical abuse. 44% reported usually or often being ridiculed.

Recommendation: *Behavioural change communication interventions should aim to challenge acceptance and normalisation of abuse in the street environment. This should be sensitive in particular with regard to sexual abuse to avoid stigmatisation of victims.*

» Support a Protective Environment

Children are at risk on the street and in their work places and in particular at night. Many of these risk areas are predictable – certain areas on the street, scrap centres, tourist areas etc. In particular children are at risk at night, a time when less people are outside and few or no organisations have a presence.

Recommendation: *Targeted interventions should be made to protect children on the street in specific areas and at night as well as motivating children to leave the street. Organisations should ensure that field workers are also mobilised in night-time hours and contactable. Coordinated efforts should be made by organisations and police to observe high-risk areas.*

» Ending Impunity

Abuse is normalised and interventions are rarely made against abusers/offenders. In particular, among police and street youth there often exists a culture of impunity – respondents clearly identified these groups as most frequent abusers. Victims themselves rarely report incidents out of fear or apathy.

Recommendation: *Organisations and Nepal Police should take action (appropriate and balanced) against abusers and in particular support should be provided for street youth who abuse others to be accountable and change their behaviour. Care should always be given to protecting the victim.*

» **Talk about Sex and Sexuality**

As taboo issues, in particular in relation to children and young people, sex and sexuality are rarely spoken about. More needs to be done to openly discuss these issues with children and young people before they become victims of sexual abuse or become abusers themselves. Children and young people need guidance and role models to understand the changes they go through and the feelings they experience.

This is lacking – demonstrated by the number of older children abusing younger children, the normalisation of this type of sexual behaviour, and by the number of children trapped into sexual abuse from foreign paedophiles in return for ‘love’ and attention. This needs to be done from an early age as children are victims from a young age. The custom to shy away these issues leaves them out of the sphere of influence of organisations.

Recommendation: *Organisations need to be more open and proactive in discussing issues of sex and sexuality with children on the street from a young age.*

» **Health, Hygiene and Nutrition**

Respondents reported a wide range of basic health and hygiene problems – 74% usually or often having lice, 22% skin infections and 18% worms. 60% reported having been seriously ill, while 9% reported having been refused treatment by a medical authority. In terms of hygiene 12% reported washing less than once a week and 55% of respondents never or rarely wore underwear. 28% of respondents reported usually or often experiencing hunger, while in contrast most respondents ate meat at least once a week (93%) and fruit at least once a week (74%). The data overall

indicates a core group of children who do not have access or habit of basic hygiene or nutrition and are prone to basic health problems.

Recommendation: *Concentrated efforts should be made to promote awareness and access of basic health, hygiene and nutrition, in particular targeting groups of children and individuals who have poor basic health and hygiene.*

» **Promote Protective Behaviour against HIV/AIDS**

While only 62% of respondents reported they knew about HIV/AIDS, the majority could identify the major means of transmission – sex with infected person (88%), sharing needles with infected person (90%) and blood exchange with an infected person (91%). There was confusion about common misconceptions regarding transmission suggesting respondents only have basic knowledge. Of much greater concern is the fact that existing knowledge has little impact on risk behaviour. 27% of respondents reported being sexually active and of these only 36% reported ever using a condom for sexual intercourse. The rate of consistent use would be clearly much lower. In the same way of 7% of respondents who reported injecting drugs, 52% reported having shared needles.

Recommendation: *Knowledge on prevention of HIV/AIDS transmission without providing skills and motivation to practice safe behaviour has little impact. Interventions need to address the skills of street children to negotiate and practice safe behaviour but most importantly to have the motivation to do so – i.e. to value their futures.*