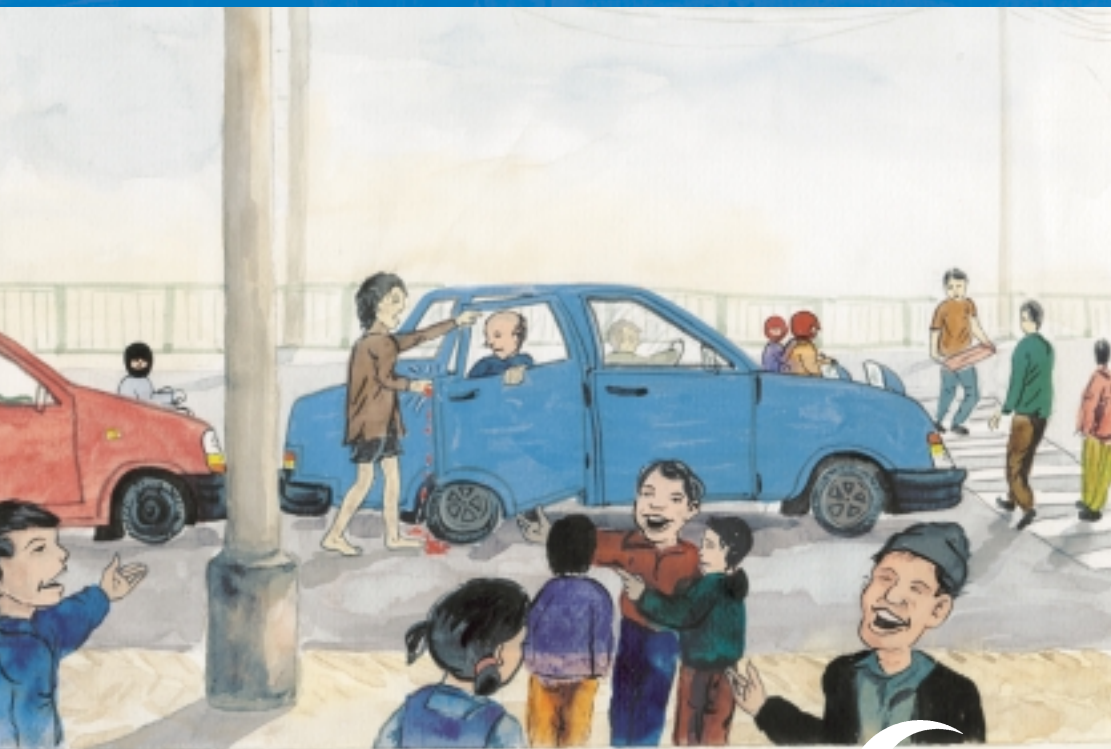


CHAPTER SIX
“SOCIAL CONTEXT AND
CONFLICTS”



CPCS
NEPAL 2007





Street Children are often arrested for no reason and denied access to their legal rights.

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the most important determining factor for the future of children on the street is the environment in which they spend the majority of their time. While they may visit organisations and have contact with social workers, family or other relatives, the reality is that most of their time is spent with peers and with adults in the street environment. For many children this is from an early age.

On the street children are required to develop their own coping and safety strategies and for most this means forming groups for protection. For many children this is their means of reducing risk to physical, sexual and other abuses. However the reality is that many groups or gangs can become the source of these abuses. Furthermore, in protecting themselves from immediate abuse children expose themselves to long-term risks involved with gangs: exposure to substance abuse, exposure to criminal activities, and exposure to high-risk sexual behaviour or sexual abuse.

For children and adolescents, groups and gangs often play the most significant role in their socialization and process of identity formation. At this time children are exposed to many risk behaviours which become normalized for them. While society may look at many issues related to drugs and criminality in terms of a legal framework this often has little relevance for street children. On the margins of society, many children's experience of the state and society is through encounters with the police. Arrested for no reason, without recognition

of their inherent rights, and abused by a state body children are given little motivation to participate in society.

While organisations provide services for street children and work with them in groups, often there is little understanding or appreciation of the importance of the group/gang in the child's life. While working with individuals it is also necessary to work with and target the group, and in particular those individuals that have a significant influence in the child's life – the policeman, the gang leader, or even the drug dealer. Organisations should work with all these actors to improve children's conditions and to support them to move on from the street.

While organisations believe they offer an attractive alternative to a life on the street, they have to look at what they offer through the eyes of their beneficiaries. More needs to be understood about the situation of children and adolescents and the influences of others on their lives as organisations cannot pretend to work with each child in a vacuum. More needs to be understood about the interaction of gangs, drug culture and criminality to be able to make interventions to prevent children become exposed to these risks.

This research provides important insights into many of these issues. This chapter presents the findings in regard to the social context of children. As well as the data from the questionnaire, the voices of the children themselves provide valuable insights into their lives and an indication of what needs to be done to reach them.

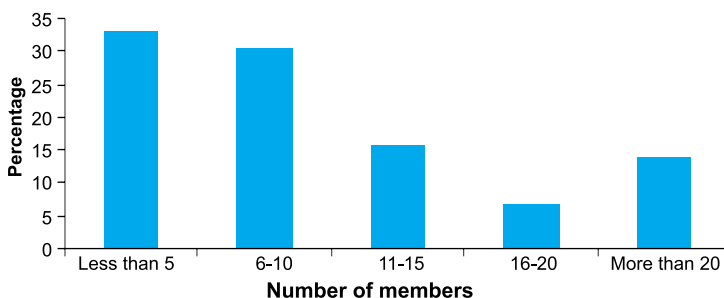
DATA ANALYSIS

Group and Gang Culture

Of all respondents 88% reported being a member of a group or gang, while 6% had been a member previously and 6% had never belonged to any group or gang. The characteristics of these groups/gangs varied.

The majority of those respondents in gangs/groups were members of groups/gangs with up to 10 members (64%). While 23% of

Number of members in gang/group

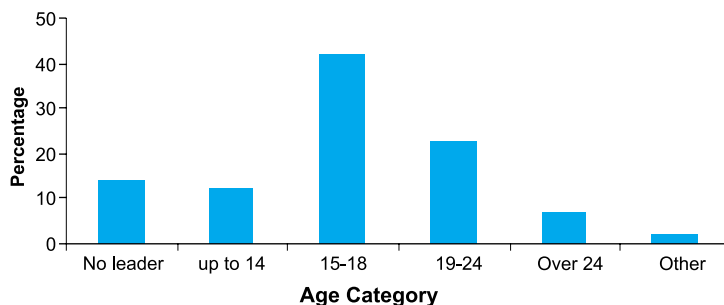


respondents were in groups/gangs with 11 to 20 members, and 14% were members of groups/gangs with over 20 members.

Kale, 11 years old begs in tourist areas. He had enrolled in school but ran away and is now in the street. He says, "I can't stay and go to organization whenever my friends don't go there. We have one gang and it is very hard to leave. If we leave we can't join again we can't join other group so others will dominate us. If we go together it is easy to share pain and gain and safety. If we go alone elder boys from the organization beat us so I don't like to go alone."

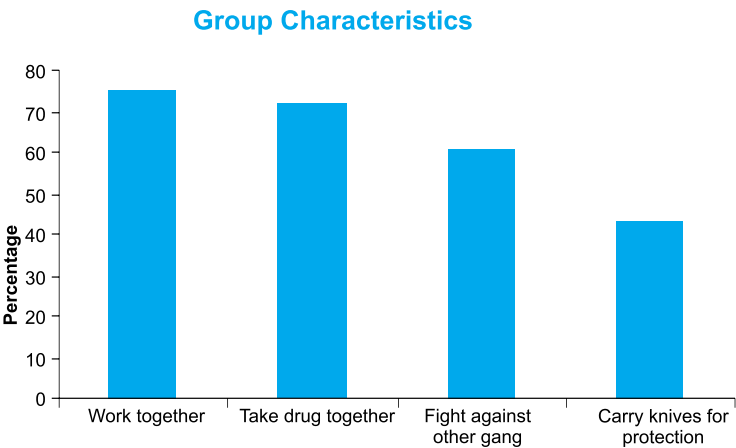
14% reported that their groups did not have a leader. While the mode age of the leader for those groups/gangs with leader was 15 to 18 years (42%). Another 23% of respondent were members of groups/gangs with leaders between the age of 19 and 24, 12% of respondents were members of groups/gangs with leaders below the age of 14 while 7% were members in gangs/groups where the leader was over the age of 24.

Age of Group Leader



Ramesh’s story: Ramesh is 13 years old. He stays in one area where there is a gang leader who is 16 years old. The gang leader sends Ramesh and his friends to beg and if they don’t bring him money he cuts their hands with a razorblade. To add to Ramesh’s abuse, another gang leader in the area beat him once. For children in gangs, the older leaders make it very difficult for them to ever leave the gang. Ramesh says: “We have to follow the gang so we can’t do what we want. We have to use drugs. I don’t know about sexual abuse but we need to by drugs by looting money and drugs trafficking.”

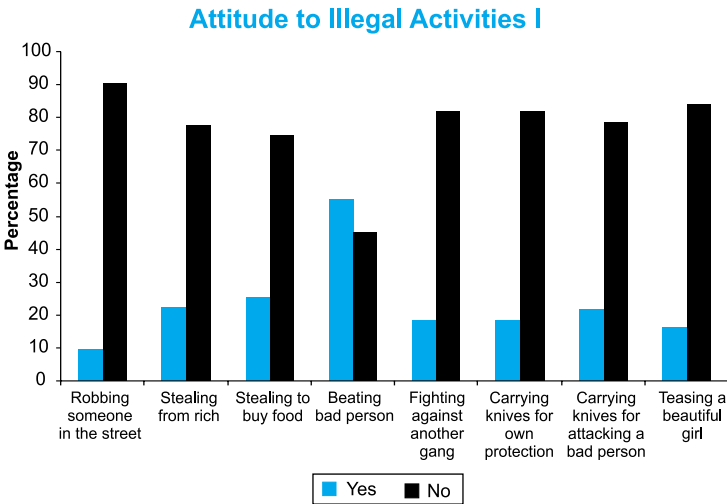
Respondents were prompted to describe the nature of activities undertaken by the group/gang they were a member of. The majority of respondents identified working together (75%), taking drugs together (72%), and fighting against other gangs (61%) as group activities in which they were engaged in. 43% of respondents reported that their gangs carried knives for their own protection.



Mine’s story: Mine is 10 years old and has been living on the street for 4 or 5 years. He belongs to a gang along with about 8 other kids. The gang leader is about 16 years old. He takes the children’s earnings and if they refuse to give it to him he gives an order to have them beaten and their hands cut. Mine says: “If we join gangs all people call us khate chor (street thief). So I am alone. No one does anything. The rules are too strict in organization.”

Attitude to Illegal Activities

Respondents were asked about their attitude towards illegal activities. The majority of respondents believed it was wrong to be involved in illegal activities no matter what the circumstances. However, a minority believed that stealing was not wrong (10%) particular if it was from a rich person (22%) or to buy food (25%). Regarding fighting, 82% reported that fighting against another gang was not right, while 18% of respondents believed it was fine to carry knives for their own protection. The only exception was how respondents believed it was suitable to deal with ‘bad’ people. 55% of respondents believed it was fine to beat a ‘bad’ person and 22% of respondents reported that it was fine to carry knives in order to attack a ‘bad’ person.



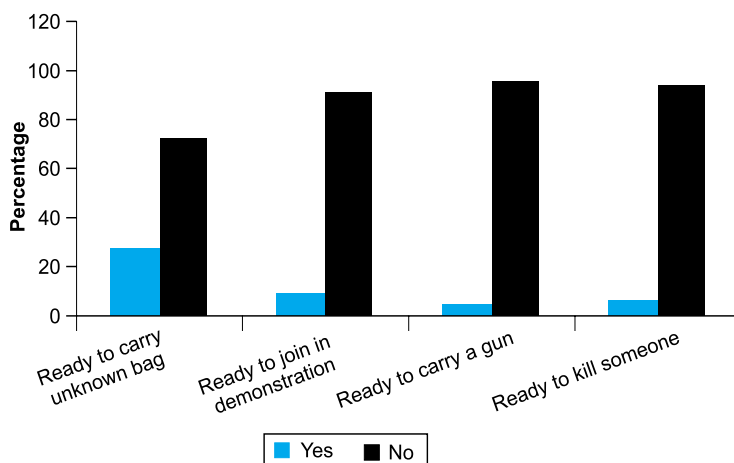
Illegal Works	Responses		Total
	Yes	No	
Robbing someone in the Street	41(9.5%)	389(90.5%)	430(100%)
Stealing from Rich	96(22.3%)	334(77.7%)	430(100%)
Stealing to buy Food	109(25.3%)	321(74.7%)	430(100%)
Beating a Bad person	236(54.9%)	194(45.1%)	430(100%)
Fighting against another Gang	78(18.1%)	352(81.9%)	430(100%)
Carrying Knives for own Protection	79(18.4%)	351(81.6%)	430(100%)
Carrying a Knives for attacking a Bad Person	93(21.6%)	337(78.4%)	430(100%)
Teasing a Beautiful Girl	69(16.0%)	361(84.0%)	430(100%)

Ganesh's story: Ganesh is 21 years old. When he was 10 or 11 years old he was in a gang of 10 to 12 people. One day they robbed about INR 10000 from one visitor and went to Bombay. They spent that money within 3 days and then were caught by Indian police.

Ramu, 15 years old: "Please don't talk like society has a positive attitude towards us and does not look at us negatively. The police dominate and hate us. Why not use drugs? Why not do bad work? If we do good work people don't stop calling us bad things like *Khate* and thieves?"

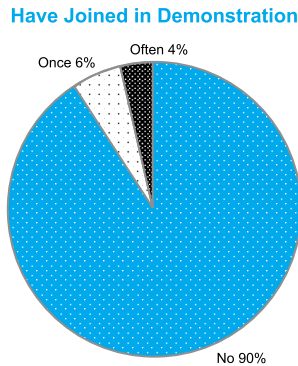
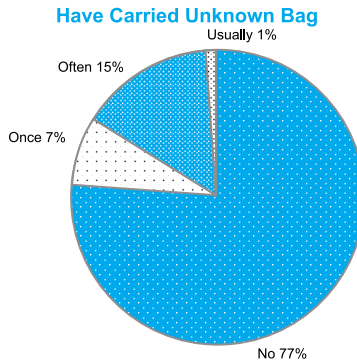
Respondents were then asked what activities they would be ready to undertake in return for food or money. 28% of respondents reported they would be ready to carry an unknown bag in return for food or money. Only 9% of respondents were ready to join in demonstrations. Only 5% (20) of respondents reported they would be prepared to carry a gun, while only 6% (24) reported that they would be ready to kill a person if necessary.

Attitude towards Illegal Activities II



Raju, 12 years: "We need money, while on the street. So some of my friends are ready to do whatever is useful. We don't think badly, but carrying a bag or joining a demonstration is not such bad work... Legal and illegal... It is complicated to know... we just need some ways..."

In reality, 15% of respondents reported that they had often carried an unknown bag in return for food or money, while 7% had done so once. 4% of respondents reported that they had often joined in demonstrations, and 6% had done so once. Out of all respondents 5 reported having killed someone once. 4 respondents reported having carried a gun once and 1 respondent reported carrying a gun often.

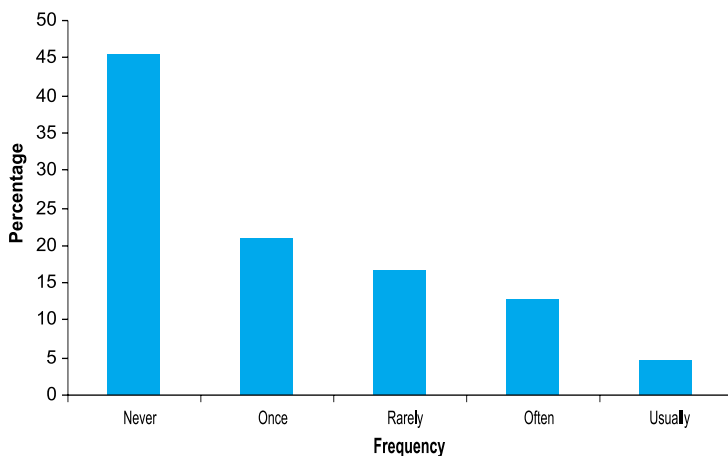


Conflict with Authorities

Over half of all respondents had come into conflict with the law (whether for legitimate reasons or not). 44% of respondents had never been arrested. 38% had been arrested once or rarely. 18% reported being arrested often or usually.

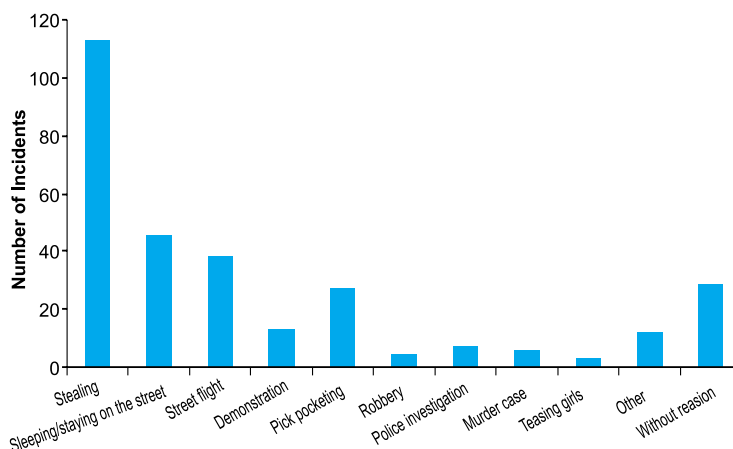
Of those arrested 31% reported spending 1 day or less in police custody upon their last arrest, 39% between 2 and 7 days, and 31% reported spending over 8 days in police custody. 7 respondents (3% of those who had been arrested) reported being in custody for over 120 days.

Arrest by Authorities



The primary reason for getting arrested was for stealing (including pick pocketing) which represented 47% of incidents. 28% of incidents were related to the respondent's situation on the street – 15% of arrest incidents were for sleeping or staying on the street and 13% of incidents from involvement in street fights. 4% of incidents were related to demonstrations while 1% for teasing girls. 2% (6/235) of incidents were related to murder charges.

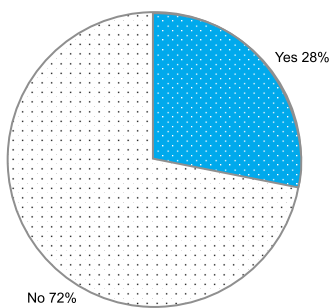
Reasons for Arrest



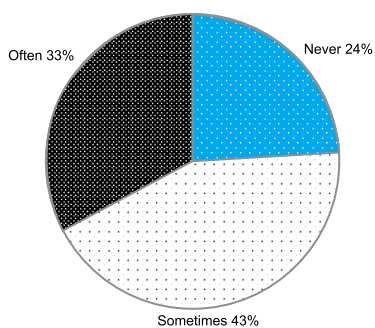
A Street Story: Three street children were walking in the Kalanki chowk. Often they collect rags and sometimes they beg or worked in a tempo. They were 8, 10 & 12 years old. They had a good link with CPCS and so often stayed here at night. One day at 6.00 pm they were collecting and walking in the area nearby the police beat. Suddenly four police personnel came and threatened them. They saw the fear of the children and charged at them with their batons. They beat the children, kicked them and verbally abused them. One of the police tortured one of the boys and as a result the 10 year old boy suffered injuries to his genitals. The boy was unconscious so police sent him in Bir hospital for his treatment. After treatment he came to CPCS. The children have many physical and psychological problems. They have scars on their bodies and still they felt unsafe. They feared the police would follow them so for many days they did not go outside.

Of those arrested (235), 28% reported being treated well by the police, but only 24% reported never having been beaten by the police. 33% of respondents who had been arrested reported being often beaten by the police. In half of cases, the respondents reported not being provided with any food while in custody.

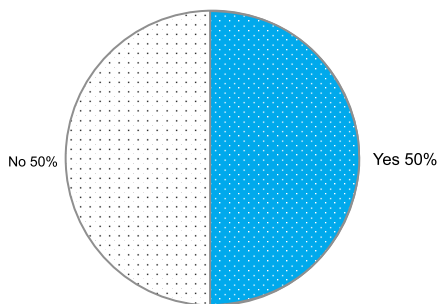
Treated Well by Police



Beaten by Police after Arrest



Food Provided by Police

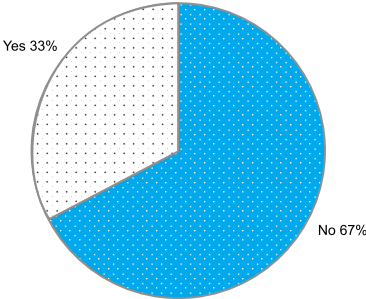


While in police custody a representative of an NGO visited 33% of respondents but only 8% were provided with access to a lawyer. Of the 235 respondents who had been arrested, 16% received permission to use the phone. While in custody 31% of respondents were visited by a friend and 11% by a family member.

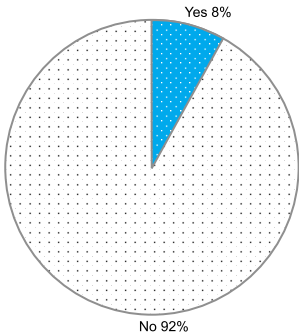
It is important to note that an NGO representative was the most frequent visitor for incarcerated street children even over family members.

Also notable, is the infrequent access the children had to a lawyer at only 8%.

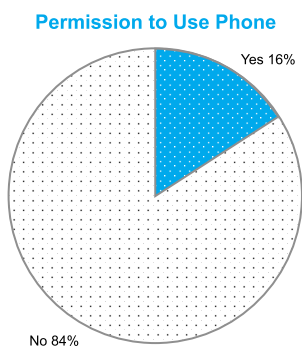
NGO person visited whilst in custody



Access to Lawyer



Visit by person from NGO in police custody	Number of Children	Percent
No	158	67.2
Once	46	19.6
A few times	26	11.1
Often	5	2.1
Total	235	100.0



While in police custody, 27% of respondents reported being given a punishment, which humiliated them. These included cleaning the police station toilet, and being made to stand naked. The following cases are examples of reported humiliation or torture:

- » Arrest without reason
- » Beaten harshly
- » Beaten with pipe
- » Verbally abused
- » Accused as thief/pickpocket
- » Clean grounds/toilet
- » Wash clothes

- » Polish shoes
- » Kicked and beaten
- » Made to stand naked in front of police
- » Made to be naked and urinate in heater
- » No answer for arrest
- » Made naked and beaten
- » Made to sleep in cold with no clothes
- » Forced confession

Attitudes of Children never Arrested by Police

Respondents who had never been arrested were asked about their attitudes in relation to police and army. 68% reported being afraid of police while 59% reported being afraid of army or armed police. 58% of respondents believed the police could easily arrest them, while 27% felt they could be arrested without reason.

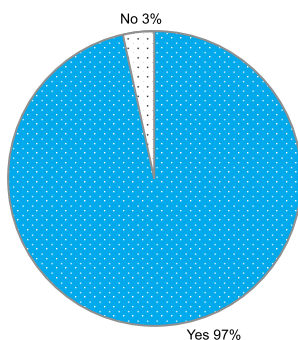
Attitude of Children never Arrested by Police

Attitudes	Responses		Total
	Yes	No	
Afraid of Police	132(67.7%)	63(32.3%)	195(100.0%)
Afraid of Army/Armed Police	115(59.0%)	80(41.0%)	195(100.0%)
Police can easily arrest him/her	113(57.9%)	82(42.1%)	195(100.0%)
Police can arrest Without Reason	52(26.7%)	143(73.3%)	195(100.0%)

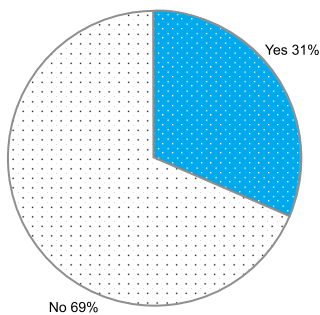
Access to Services

Only 18% of respondents had visited only one NGO. Whereas 58% of respondents had visited between 2 and 4 organizations. A further 24% of respondents had visited 5 or more organizations. Almost all respondents (97%) cited that NGOs were useful to them. 31% of respondents reported that if there were no NGOs they would return home. For 69% of respondents the presence or absence of NGOs would not affect their decision to be on the street.

NGO is useful for respondent

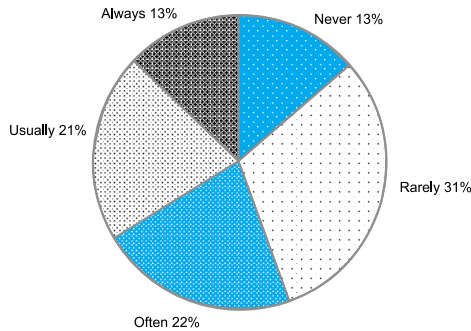


If no NGO would return home



Of the total sample 34% of respondents always or usually slept in CPCS or other NGO. 22% often slept in NGOs and 31% rarely. A total of 13% never slept in the NGO.

Frequency of Children Sleeping in NGO



Most of time **Raju**, 12 years old, lives in Thamel. He told us that they earn more and they respected more by foreigners. So most of time they don't go to organizations. "Foreigners buy for us packets of milk, biscuits and give us money. They offer us pizza, chicken and clothes. We are not involved in sexual abuse. We know it is bad.

Kumar, 13 years old, washes cars and collects parking money. He told us that he doesn't want to go to organizations because there is no freedom and you are not allowed to go there while high on glue. On the street there is danger of people stealing from him but this is nothing because of his freedom and satisfaction. He does not worry about his family. They are fine, he says.

Sabitri, 20 years old: "Leave it! There are no organizations that can do something for us. We are eating with our own money. Do you have any problems with that?"

NATIONAL EXPERT

Gauri Pradhan

President

CWIN (Child Workers in Nepal)

Many people think that poverty is the main cause for children to land on the streets. But research has proven that this is not a whole truth, this is just a part of reality. There are several other reasons which push them out from the “home” and make them live on the streets. One of the main reasons for being a street child is the lack of a proper family environment. Domestic violence, bad relations between parents, alcoholic or drug addicted parents, mal-treatment by step parents, lack of opportunities and lack of love and care in the family are the contributing factors for children to be on the streets.

The next common reasons are poverty and hunger. Delinquency, the attraction of the city, peer influence and experience of violent behaviour and exploitation are other persisting reasons.

If poverty had been the main reason for children to be on the streets, there might have been tens of thousands of children in the streets of Kathmandu. But many children despite absolute poverty are working and living with their parents because of their love and care. Therefore, if there is a good family environment, no child would want to go to the street, living away from home and face life-threatening risks.

We all know the fact that the street is not a safe place to live, particularly for the children. Different kinds of risks are prevalent on the street. Traffic accidents, violence, crime, gang fights and

demonstrations are very common such incidents. Further, there are increasing numbers of crimes against children such as sexual abuse, commercial sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, and use of children in criminal activities. Likewise, exposure to drug use, alcoholism and unsafe sexual activities have put their survival at risk.

All these things have made the life of children who are living and working in the street very challenging. If a child is living on the street, it is quite natural for him or her to be in contact with the criminal world. In the streets of Kathmandu, there are very few girls and an overwhelming majority of boys. Statistics in this research also reveal the fact that many of them are involved in different types of delinquent behaviour, especially stealing, pick pocketing, street begging and shop lifting.

Some have even been involved in violent crimes like robbery, gang fights, and sexual abuse. Some street children have even accepted such behaviours as part of a daily survival strategy. If children in the street continue to be involved in such criminal activities, the situation in the future will be detrimental not only for children but for the society as a whole. Therefore it is high time to seriously think and act upon steps to prevent children from becoming involved in criminal activities and help them to re-socialize, reform, have hope and reintegrate with the family and society.

No child develops delinquent behaviour by itself. It is a reflection of the society where he or she lives. He or she learns every thing good or bad from society itself. In a certain phase of childhood, children might develop one or other kinds of delinquent behaviour and most of them are corrected through proper socialization over the course of time. But if children do not have a good family environment, proper education and socialization, they might develop such behaviour as part of their personal character. There are many examples of street children who once were in the criminal world but nor are reformed through proper socialization and guidance. Some of them are also working as peer educators, social workers, teachers and entrepreneurs in different fields.

If we build a good social atmosphere, socialization and education programmes, and child-friendly justice systems, we can prevent child delinquency and socialise children involved in crime for a better future. For this we need a visionary, coordinated and child-friendly action. Police, child rights defenders, child care organisations and society need to work hand in hand to help protect these children at risk. Physical punishment or torture or imprisonment will never solve this problem. And such actions also violate the fundamental rights of children.

Every child has potentiality. If he or she gets proper space and an environment to develop his or her talent the situation will be far different from what it is today. Among the street children many have wonderful skills and talent. They develop their own kind of survival strategy in the street. They can become good members of society provided they have proper socialization and opportunities. Over the years, thousands of children have been brought out of the crime world through socialization and correction programmes. Such programmes can be strengthened through family counselling, parental education, peer education and promoting children's participation in action.

For many years, child rights organizations have been advocating that "jail is not a right place for children." Despite many initiatives, children involved in delinquency are treated as adult criminals. There exists laws and policies in the country that treat them according to the principle of juvenile justice. However, many children who are arrested and imprisoned by police go through very inhuman treatment.

This imparts them with a revenge psychology and they become reactive to the whole society. Therefore we sincerely need a child-friendly justice system and law enforcing agencies should be sensitized towards this. Besides, those organizations working for the protection and best interest of children also need to be guided by the rights based action rather than charity alone.

These children need to be empowered to gain dignity and respect for themselves and also for the society. In the past, the government

has made so many promises for the protection of the rights of children, but without effective action. Now, it's high time to act and portray a better picture of children, if we wish to build a new Nepal in a real sense.

I think that the findings of this research study will be an eye opener to all of us. I am sure that this will help all those concerned who are working for the rights, welfare and dignity of children on the street to review and revisit their work and make changes accordingly for the best interest of children at risk. I appreciate this good work of CPCS. I wish you all the best.

Gauri Pradhan

INTERNATIONAL EXPERT

Annie Fontaine

Social Work Teacher

University of Quebec – Montreal (Canada)

Even if the context varies greatly between street children's realities in Northern and Southern countries, associations that work for this population seem to be facing similar challenges. In fact, even if the situation of street children in developing countries is more extreme, (younger age, homelessness, malnutrition, etc.) all the resources offering services to street children have as a target to win credibility with this population which is often very distrustful towards institutions.

Caught between public authorities, which sometimes abuse their power towards the street children, and gangs that close in around themselves for protection against the outside world, the communities, organizations, associations and NGO's which intervene with them have a small working margin (range of action) to establish a relationship based on trust which is elementary to change their living conditions. We notice in most countries how stigmatization contributes to maintaining the uncertain situation of street children and to get them trapped in their marginality. Even if they are more radical in some countries, coercive methods are used in a majority of countries. In Quebec, for example, an association called "Droits devant" was created to denounce the discrimination by public security against marginalized individuals who endure excessive laws because of their way of life. Intimidation, infringements, arrests, harassment, and territorial exclusion are in fact usual practices of police to limit the presence and gathering of children in public areas.

Not only are their illegal practices (prostitution, drug dealing, stealing etc.) targeted but also their way of life, qualified as “uncivil”: strolling, begging, “squeeze” (window cleaning), and urinating and defecating in public places. Racial profiling is also noticed in some districts where children of immigrant origin and minorities see themselves particularly targeted by public security. These same groups are indeed over-represented in the centers for social re-adaptation (for minors) or in the prisons (for majors). The marginalized children are in this way caught in a perverted circle (or a spiral) because they have to use illegal methods to pay back their debt (fines for example) and/or to hide even deeper in the aim not to be found by the policemen.

This situation makes it difficult for social resources to connect with these children who sink into the margins as the stigmatism of penalties pile on their backs. In addition to widening their material rupture (impoverishment), this discrimination digs a relational and symbolic rupture with society. In fact, the feeling of being rejected and of injustice contributes to making impossible the aim to stick to social standards and integrate into the community. Moreover, facing the need to collectivize their daily challenges, the children reject the “natural” places of socialization (family, school, leisure centers, etc.) and moreover, penalized by different sanctions (discrimination, repression, etc.), the street children often end up seeking the answers to their primary and secondary needs in a gang.

Whereas belonging to a group of friends is a natural phenomenon during the childhood, particularly with teenagers, the gang sometimes plays a role far beyond socialization for street children (protection, money, drugs, affection, etc.). The particular rules of these gangs (concerning their own relations, relationships with other gangs, towards citizens, public authorities etc.) sometimes installs barriers which drive the children away from resources that could facilitate a change in their living conditions.

Indeed, the gap between the culture of street children and the resources which try to connect to them makes the contact difficult. In testimonies collected by CPCS, we observe how some youths don’t manage to adapt to the standards which form the framework

of helping organisations. In Quebec (and in other places as some authors note), several youths stay far from the institutions which exist for them because they feel stigmatized and the way in which they are looked upon within these institutions is too far from their lifestyle.

The street work then plays an important role. Its intermediate position helps to better understand the culture and the hazards of the street children and build with them a relationship based on trust to better accompany them in progressively gaining control on their lives. In addition, the street work links the youths to NGO's structures which offer them services and give them tools to act on their lifestyles. As it is told by some youths interviewed, their street lives mark them in a considerable way, leading them to break away from the resources which prevent them from living their lives freely. The more there are trustful relations and efforts, the more some of the children find motivation and means to integrate new responsibilities, for example by themselves becoming coordinators. "If there is no work by organizations nobody gets a chance to be change".

The challenge is to look through the suspicion of the youths and to facilitate the link between their cultural universe, which is alimented in their everyday lives by the belonging to their gang (group of like-minded), and the universe of institutions or associations which try to intervene in their lives by offering them several services and activities. Street workers play an important role of presence and of a link with the help resources in addition to being in a delicate position which is essential for mediation between street children and the authorities who summon them in the public space.

Besides, in addition to being a companion to marginalized children and playing a role of mediation, the street workers and other "first line" interveners have to play the role of witness-actor to sensitize the population, the social institutions, the NGO's and public authorities to the role played by everyone in the situation of street children. All of them have to be aware of the fact that their daily attitudes and their interventions' strategies can help either to improve or to worsen the children's living conditions.

Such a reflection forces us to consider that the difficulties of street children can not only be approached in the light of their individual behavior and that all social actors have their part of responsibility in the building of these youths' reality.

Annie Fontaine

KEY FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS

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

» Individuals and Groups

94% of respondents were or had been a member of a group or gang, including 37% of those who were in gangs of more than 10 members. 86% of these children had a gang leader above him/her and in 30% of cases these were people over 18 years of age.

Recommendation: *Organisations need to recognise explicitly in their programming that they need to work both with individuals and groups and that many of these groups will involve young people who are above the age of 18 and therefore in theory outside of their target group.*

» High-Risk Behaviour is Normalised in Gangs

Although the respondents' attitudes to many illegal activities were negative (90% believed stealing was wrong, 82% believed fighting another gang was wrong) within the gang culture on the street it was clear that different rules were applied by respondents. 72% of respondents reported that in their groups/gangs they were involved in taking drugs together. 61% reported being engaged in gang fights. 43% reported carrying knives for their own protection.

Recommendation: *Programmes need to work more to engage in street and gang culture to prevent the easy normalisation of many high-risk and abusive behaviours.*

» **Adopt a Harm-Reduction Approach**

While respondents seem to report positive attitudes against illegal behaviour this was not reflected in reports of their behaviour. This can be partly explained by the nature of the street environment but most also addressed through a more practical approach. The differentiation of illegal and legal activities seemed to have little impact on behaviour.

Recommendation: *Programming against risk-behaviours linked with substance abuse and criminal activities should focus more on a harm reduction approach where children understand the risks to themselves, have motivation to change their behaviour and develop the skills to deal with difficult situations.*

» **Responsible Policing**

56% of respondents had been arrested at least once and of these 32% reported being arrested frequently. 72% of those arrested reported being badly treated by police, and 76% reported being beaten. While in custody few had access to their rights and 27% reported being given an abusive and humiliating punishment. Qualitative data provided a very negative image of police practice.

Recommendation: *Nepal Police must learn to engage constructively with street children with a focus on the rehabilitation and reintegration of young offenders, avoiding a revenge based approach and ending abuse of street children by the police.*

CHAPTER SEVEN

“EDUCATION”





Street children are generally deprived of basic education. They don't have access to school or training center to develop their skills properly.

INTRODUCTION

The government of Nepal and international donors have made a commitment to children's right to education through the framework of the Education for All campaign. In particular steps have been made to promote universal access to free primary education for all children. However it is also recognized that many children are left behind. It was estimated that the net enrolment of children into primary education in 1999 was only 65% (UNESCO website).

Education is not only a vital tool for children's development and for their constructive engagement in society and work, but also the main alternative to children's involvement in exploitative labour situations or recourse to street life. The education system is the main access point of the state to children, a factor that becomes more significant for children in difficult family situations.

With regard to children coming to the street, it is important to understand if this is influenced because they have never been enrolled in school or whether they have dropped-out of education. It is important to understand why they have dropped-out from formal education – is this a financial issue, an issue of school retention, or driven by other factors? In addition it is important to understand how much education children are receiving before coming to the street – have they received basic education, are they literate?

For children who are on the street, are they interested to learn reading and writing? Are they able to access education services – are they

achieving basic literacy through interventions on the street? The data from this research provides indications to answer these questions. These issues have also been examined in more detail in the case studies included in this report.

The survey examined different variables for children's education. Included in this chapter are information on children's education background, reasons for not being in school, literacy rate, and information on children's interest to learn.

DATA ANALYSIS

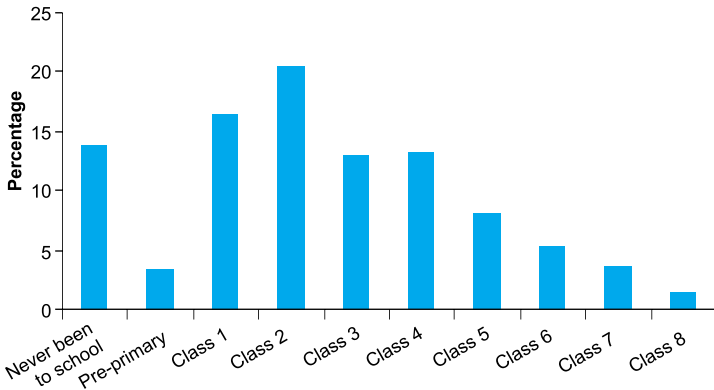
Education background

17% of respondents had never studied in primary school (14% having never attended any formal schooling). Only 10% of respondents had made it beyond primary school (above class 5). The majority of respondents had attended primary school with 63% of respondents having left school between Class 1 and Class 4.

Class	Number of Children	Percent
Pre-primary	15	3.5
Class1	71	16.5
Class 2	88	20.5
Class 3	56	13.0
Class 4	57	13.3
Class 5	35	8.1
Class 6	23	5.3
Class 7	16	3.7
Class 8	6	1.4
Class 9	2	.5
Class 10	1	.2
Never attended	60	14.0
Total	430	100.0

Rajendra, 13 yrs old: "I studied up to class 6 in my village. My parents suffered financial problems and unfortunately could not pay for the school. Now I want to study and become a good person."

Education Background



Ram's story: He told us that even though he wanted to study his father would not send him to school above first class because his step mother did not want to pay for school. His father then banned him from the home so he left to live on the street.

Ram Krishna: "I came from Dhading district, but due to financial problems I could study only up to class six in my village. I decided to go Kathmandu to study by doing a job in someone's house." He came to Kathmandu with his brother.

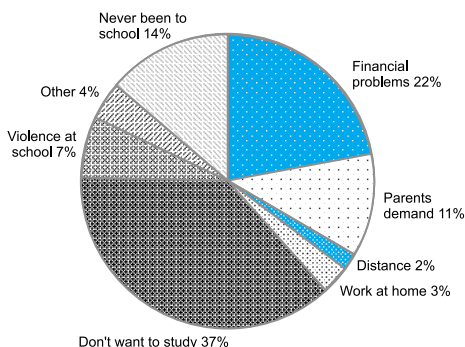
Muna: "In my childhood I didn't want to study. My parents asked me to study but I couldn't study. Now I am a youth, I regret not studying in past. Now I want to study. But as I am 17 yrs, so it is difficult to start. I missed an opportunity to study offered by various organization," she expresses with sadness. She felt old among other students and so hard to go to school as she never been before.

Reason for Not Being in School

When asked to identify the main reason for not attending school, 37% of respondents cited that it was because they did not want to study. A further 22% cited financial problems, 11% parents' demands and 7% violence at school. 14% of respondents had never been enrolled in school.

Lack of motivation together with financial problems seems to be the leading cause of children either not attending school or the reason they left school before finishing their studies.

Main Reason for Leaving School



Yubaraj, 17 years old: “When I was studying in class two, my father used to drink alcohol and scolded and beat me if I didn’t study. But I didn’t want to study. So I left my home and school. Now I can’t read and write. Now I am very sad and ashamed to be with educated people as I am uneducated. Now I am older so I attend informal classes and learn some things.”

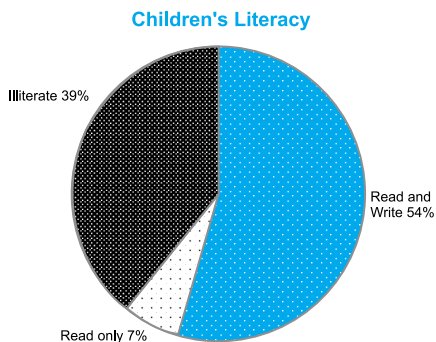
Gopal: “I didn’t want to study in my village. I wanted to earn money so I left the school in Dharan. Now I know the advantage of education. I came to Kathmandu to become a famous person.”

Literacy

Of all respondents only 54% identified themselves as being both able to read and write. 39% of respondents identified that they were illiterate, while 7% reported that they could read but not write.

Interest to Learn

Of those respondents who were illiterate, the majority reported a desire to learn to read and write - 79% of respondents indicating they wished to learn to read and 81% of respondents that they wished to learn to write. However, significantly this means that of 21% of respondents who could not read did not express an interest to learn and 19% of those unable to write did not express an interest to learn.



It is important to note that although 79% of children surveyed wished to learn to read and write, 37% of children had reported that they dropped out of school as they did not want to study.

Roshan's story: He likes to study but in his village there was no school so he never had the chance to study. In Kathmandu he learned some of the English alphabet and says that he can stop living on the street if he learns to count and to read.

NATIONAL EXPERT

Manoj Silwal

Program Coordinator

World Education International

All of us know that street children are vulnerable to so many disasters. They are exposed to sexual exploitation, deadly infections, addiction to alcohol and narcotic substances. Even more, besides their peers and closely netted brotherhood they do not have any perennial support system. The street is the most unsuitable place for a child to live. But they are there in every major urban settlement in every corner of the world. Like the trafficking of children, it is turning out to be another global social problem. They are out of the family, out of the mainstream programs of the government. Virtually they became invisible to most of the social institutions. Only a handful of organizations are working for them. Another interesting thing is, compared to other forms of child labor, the problem of street children in volume is relatively small. Even though, addressing it has been relatively difficult and the success rate is strikingly low. In our experience, while working on child labor issues, we need to focus our programs on both areas of origin and destination – sending and receiving communities. It is rather more complex than the equation of the economic theory of demand and supply. It is beyond that. Children are coming to the street not because there is a demand but, back home they have more complex factors pushing them out of the family, out of the community and out of the schools rather than pulling them to the street. Some of these displaced children embarked to the street being option less and adapted to its conditions gradually.

World Education has been implementing different kinds of educational activities with working children. Looking at the street children after the initial years we realized that if the curriculum does not attract them they will simply not come to the class. Then we started experimenting new concepts with them. We tried an ‘Open Learning Approach’ which is a non-textbook approach and based on their interest. It was a success. The activity was vocational training. In that activity we assessed their interest, employment opportunities and trained them. They are more attracted in earning oriented education than the academics. Since they have a more independent nature, trying to run a class full of these kids at one time did not work. Then we started drop-in-centers where they were free to come anytime. Most of the times they came to the center very hungry and could not concentrate on learning, so we offered them some snacks. Working with street children and children in other forms of child labor, we learnt over the years that there is no single remedy for all working children. Every child is different and their issues are different, therefore we need to address them on a case by case basis. The second lesson we learnt was we need to work on both place of origin with families, communities, schools, and at the destination with the child, employers, trade unions, and organizations for better coordination and support. The third lesson was, to address the working children’s needs we have to develop integrated programs that involve all the actors.

Manoj Silwal

INTERNATIONAL EXPERT

Edho Moukendy Kafuda

“Jeunesse et Avenir” NGO Chairman

Coordinator of the committee for social work

(Democratic Republic of Congo - DRC)

Since many years, my country, the Congolese Democratic Republic, has been suffering from the phenomenon of street children. However this phenomenon has become more pronounced today because of the degradation of the social, professional and scholar situation in the country.

Indeed, according to the statistics published in September 2003 by the British Department for International Development (DFID), we can see easily that in the DRC a humanitarian crises rages due to the lasts wars. However more than 16 million Congolese, the majority children, are touched by a deep shortage of food. Similarly, the majority of Congolese don't have access to basic infrastructure, intensive health care, food hygiene or education. Regarding the education crises, the analysis reveals that the attendance rate for primary school is around 66% for boys and 51% for girls. For the secondary school, the attendance rate is 33% for boys and 19% for the girls. In DRC, 3 million children between six and 11 years old are not in the school system.

Instead of this school system, most of them have taken refuge on the street. There they receive several denominations: “*Phaseurs*” and “*Shègués*” are the most famous in Kinshasa. “*Phaseurs*” call to mind the image of street children asleep on the pavement, by the walls or in the abandoned buildings. Habitants from Kinshasa (the capital of DRC) have thought “Phaseurs” as ostentatious. The word

« Shègués » comes from the French word “échec” (failure), which means they all are supposed to have failed their examinations.

In the everyday life, the situation of the “Phaseurs” and the “Shègués” is not enviable. Suffering from negative prejudices, contempt and sometimes hate, they undergo humiliation, rage, moral and physical tortures and lack of food. That’s why they have to manage by stealing money, clothes and other properties. Because of this, the society and public authorities get angry with them and beat them until they bleed. The society appears violent, repressive and sometimes criminal towards them. Streets children are beaten, mistreated and accused of all evils, in particular witchery. All this has led some Congolese and foreign goodwill organisations to create structures which would take care of these poor unloved children. In my country, social work finds here its justification and its roots.

However the press’ conscious or unconscious lack of interest in social street work contributes to the lack of awareness amongst the majority of Congolese.

For years, Congolese leaders haven’t devoted importance to the question of street children. It’s becoming an unexploded bomb for the country. The government should deal with this situation by introducing policies for funding of the parents. In this way, they would be able to support their children. Beside the government, there are also churches, which are specialized in the denunciation of the witchery phenomenon. Once it is reported, rightly or wrongly, the child is thrown in the street by its parents. Then they become another trouble for society. People who work in the streets with these children are not recognized and not even paid by the government.

My experience in this work has revealed that there are not only bad children on the streets. A lot of them have talent. In this way Zahidi Arthur Ngoma, Professor and previous Vice-President of the Democratic Republic of Congo in charge of the social and cultural commission says **“intelligence is in the street and ignorance is**

somewhere else". When these children return to society, they always contribute.

We have to take notice of the fact that these street children are from families which are torn by divorce, conflict and poverty. In addition, children also suffer psychological pressure from adults, from religious and witchery beliefs, from political conflicts and ethnic wars. The reasons which have led about 25,000 children to the streets of Kinshasa are not only socio-economics but also and above all socio-psychological. This disaster is more and more seen as a "thorn in the political leaders' feet".

In the Congolese Democratic Republic, the history of street children is bound with educational and intellectual prejudice. Originally, street children, called in Kinshasa were seen as bad pupils. They used to run away from school. That's why the habitants of Kinshasa gave them the name of "Shègués".

It is frequently admitted that street children are often those who got bored in the classrooms. While their fellow classmates were studying, they spent all their time resting and playing. The legend says that it is a mental attitude which is born from their desire for the street, especially after punishment and parental repression. They became what we call in Kinshasa "Bana baboyi toil". This is a lingala term meaning "the children who are allergic to advice". This is the first reason explaining the emergence of the streets children phenomenon in DRC, in particular in Kinshasa

This theory, not generated by popular imagination, sticks to the Congolese reality. A survey in 2003 by the association "Observatoire De La Territoriale" on the main reasons for the presence of underage children on the public places of Kinshasa is relevant.

Indeed, according to this Congolese association, street children in the great market of Kinshasa are not necessary orphans. The survey showed that two of them had left their house to avoid physical punishment they undergo in the case of bad scholarly results or absence.

The children contacted asserted having escaped to avoid physical punishment and deprivation of food. The parents or tutors do this as punishment for school infringements like bad revision or long and unjustified absences. In response to it, some children admitted their pleasure to be free from family pressure.

In this way, in DRC street children, or “Shegue”, are looked as illiterate, as children without instruction or basic education, as children without good manners. All this should be acquired through formal education.

IDEAS FOR SOLUTIONS

More and more, in DRC and in partner countries interested by social work, voices start to rise to propose clues for the delicate question of street children. Because of their scholarly backwardness compared to their physical age, it is more and more asked to move towards teaching less theory and more simply. After a first phase devoted to learning reading and counting, street children need technical and practical development. We have to develop their professional abilities allowing them to find an appropriate jobs, as carpenters, mechanics, artists (musicians, sculptors, painters), tailors, or bricklayers. At the same time, they receive civil concepts and good manners, which they otherwise lack.

Along the same lines, in DRC, the country of the song, a music and dance school for children can be another opportunity for their professional integration. In this country, where there are lands, waterways, rivers and lakes full of fishes, agriculture and fishing are also accessible to street children. Thanks to substantial reforms of the unsuitable Congolese education system, we have to wake up the talents which are sleeping into them. As the Professor Arthur Zahidi Ngoman (previous vice-President of the DRC) said: “We have to invest in humanity”.

Edho Mukendi Kafuda

KEY FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS

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

» Enrolled but Dropping-Out

83% of respondents had been enrolled in primary school which is above the estimated national average for primary enrolment of 65% (UNESCO website estimated net enrolment 1999). However 63% of all respondents had dropped-out of school between classes 1 and 4. Only 10% of all respondents progressed beyond primary. This is well below the national estimated survival rate to grade 5 of 61% (UNESCO website data for 2004).

Recommendation: *More needs to be understood about why certain children are more likely to drop-out of primary education than others and to identify risk factors associated with early exit from formal education to inform interventions.*

» Quality of Education

The highest proportion of respondents (43%) cited ‘not wanting to study’ as the reason for dropping out of school. These children had been enrolled in school but dropped-out through lack of interest. Another 26% cited financial reasons and 13% parental demands. This raises issues over the quality of primary education in terms of student retention. Qualitative information from the research indicates truancy as often being the first step towards the street.

Recommendation: *Improve retention in primary schools and in particular provide social interventions to target children before they drop-out or as soon as they have dropped-out. In particular attention should be paid to truancy as a risk factor.*

» Literacy

54% of respondents in the survey identified themselves as fully literate (able to read and write). In comparison the national youth literacy rate is estimated at 70% (UNESCO website, literacy rate for the period 2000-2004 for age group 15-24 – for male youth figure is 81%). 39% of respondents reported themselves as completely illiterate. Although 17% of respondents had not been enrolled in primary school, the data indicates that at least 22% of respondents who had been enrolled in primary school were not literate (including children who had advanced past class 1). The data also suggests that only a very small percentage of children may have developed literacy while on the street.

Recommendation: *Considering the low literacy rate the respondents, more needs to be done to promote this vital basic skill especially to those who remain in the street environment and are not supported by organisations into formal education.*

» Interest to Learn

A high percentage of non-literate respondents reported a wish to learn to read or write (over 79%). Given that non-formal education programmes are provided by organisations and very few children seem to have become literate while on the street, this means that existing approaches have not been effective in reaching these children. Either appropriate services do not exist and/or programmes have been unable to turn interest into motivation and results.

Recommendation: *Basic literacy is a vital tool for anyone in society and more needs to be done to address the educational needs of children on the street, in particular in providing flexible, relevant and effective non-formal education in centres and in the street environment.*

THE WAY FORWARD





Street children are discriminated because they are different; they don't live in a home, they don't enjoy family protection and they must work and survive in critical conditions.

If one's goal in writing about street children is to offer ideas on how to eradicate a problem, one can hardly view those people seen to embody the problem as autonomous beings in a social world. Reduced to something to be cured, street children become objects in a distant debate among adults.

Tobias Hecht, *At Home in the Street* (Cambridge, 1998)

This study provides answers to many questions about street children and their situations. For organisations working with street children much of this information should not be a surprise: every day street workers are in the street. However observation, understanding, and action are different.

More than anything this study raises questions to organisations, government and society about what we are doing:

- » Why are there no street workers on the street at night when children are most vulnerable?
- » Why has education against drugs had little impact?
- » Why do we wait for children to stop drugs before supporting them?
- » Why are we not engaged with gangs of children and youth on the street to support them to live positively?
- » Why have we been unable to stop more and more children coming to the street?
- » Why do many children choose not to participate in what we are providing?
- » Why are children in the worst situations and most in need of support overlooked by our interventions?
- » Why have we not been able to coordinate our interventions to have more impact?

He is the child most rejected and, at the same time, most in need of acceptance; the most difficult for adults to love and the most in need of adult affection; the least trusted and the most in need of trust; the most abandoned and the most in need of family.

P. Tacon, *My Child Minus One* (unpublished UNICEF report)

What do we offer for the 16 year old who wants to learn but can't even read, the 15 year old addicted to injecting drugs, the 13 year old who can't manage to stop taking glue to be able to come to a shelter, the 12 year old boy who accepts it as normal to be used for sex every night?

Most of us are preoccupied trying to categorise these children as victims or deviants, looking to apportion blame, looking to interpret the situation within our moral framework. While we are busy lost in thought there is a fast-changing social reality with which we need to engage. Many fear to recognise this reality and work with it. We prefer to work with individuals and not with groups. We work with the child on our own terms. We wait for the child to come to us, to accept our help, to prove he is a victim. We believe the others only have themselves to blame.

What this study shows is how inappropriate many of our standard interventions are for many children. It highlights the diversity of these children (their situations, their feelings, their capabilities) and that there cannot be one solution or intervention that is suitable for all.

More needs to be done to provide appropriate support for all children and youth on the street. Most importantly we must take into account the context in which these children are living and growing – these children are not inert in some vacuum waiting for our intervention.

Throughout this book there are recommendations made according to the findings of this study. It is hoped these will be taken positively and influence work related to the different issues. Based on the study and our experience of working with street children six key recommendations are presented below:

1. Protect children at night

Children on the street are highly vulnerable to physical, sexual and moral abuse as well as at risk of drug abuse, exposure to criminal activities, and high risk sexual behaviours. Children who sleep on the street at night and who work at night are at highest risk. In particular there are no challenges to what have in many cases become normalized activities: criminal activities, sexual abuse, gang violence etc.

There should be a coordinated response to ensure that there is presence of street workers in high risk areas at night both to provide protection and to challenge the social acceptance of certain high-risk and abusive behaviours which have become normalized in street 'culture'.

2. Engage with youth and gang culture

Gang culture is a reality of life for children on the street and the groups they form are an important part of their identity as well as a major determinant in their development. Presently little is done to engage with gangs and in particular in cases where many of the members are over the age of sixteen.

Field and street workers should have training and be supported to engage with gangs of children and youth to support them to live more positively and to prevent abuse of children within these gangs.

3. Target high risk behaviours at an early age

Children on the street develop high-risk behaviours at an early age, whether sexual risk behaviours, drug use, exposure to criminal activities, or normalization of violent behaviour. These high-risk behaviours may start before the child is even ten years of age. More needs to be done to prevent these by providing children with appropriate knowledge, attitude and skills from an early age.

Organisations should develop strategies to provide young children with the knowledge, attitude and skills to prevent them adopting high-risk behaviours before they start.

4. Reach out to children in worst situations

Children in the most difficult situations and most in need of support are often excluded because they are unable to conform to the terms of organisations, for example having to be motivated and able to stop drugs before using certain services. More needs to be done to address the needs of these children in appropriate ways.

Develop interventions to target support for those children in the most difficult situations and in most need of support.

5. Police focus on rehabilitation not retribution

Too often the approach of police to dealing with children in conflict with the law (whether real or not) is to look to punish the children. Abuse only serves to increase children's marginalization from society and increase the likelihood of them offending in the future. In coordination with government agencies and non-governmental organisations police should place priority of the reintegration and rehabilitation of children in conflict with the law.

Police should be trained to work effectively with children and to support the reintegration and rehabilitation of children in conflict with the law.

6. Develop targeted prevention interventions

In many cases it is possible to easily identify those children at risk of coming to the street, both in terms risk factors and in geographical terms. More needs to be done to promote interventions by a wide range of stakeholders to prevent children at risk from coming to the street.

Coordinated and targeted interventions should be developed involving a wide-range of stakeholders including government and district-based agencies to provide interventions to identify and prevent at risk children from coming to the street.

Research Methodology

This book is based on research that was initiated by CPCS in 2005 and continued in 2006 and 2007. It has been motivated and influenced by the years of experience, knowledge and relationships the CPCS team has developed with street children.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were utilized for the study. A structured questionnaire, developed by CPCS, was utilized for quantitative data collection in 2005 and 2006. Informal and semi-structured interviews were used in 2006 and 2007 to collect qualitative and subjective information, as well as observation reports from front-line workers. Experts' points of view and analyses were collected subsequently in February 2007.

The conceptual definition of *street children* adopted for this research is similar to that expressed by the European Network on Street Children Worldwide:

[Street children are] those who for the majority of the time sleep on the street and retain limited or no contact with their family of origin. These are in their majority, “abandoning” rather than abandoned children, who have generally left home for the street as a result of family breakdown and violence almost invariably linked to the stresses of extreme poverty.

Data Collection

A questionnaire designed by the CPCS team was conducted with 491 street children who voluntarily participated at the ‘data collection centre’, established in the CPCS shelter in Dillibazar. Children who already attend the shelter participated as well as children who were motivated by field workers to come to participate in the study. These children came from all around Kathmandu Valley, including the following areas:

Pashupati, Chahabil, Jorpati, Balaju, Kalanki, Ekantakuna, Jawalakhel, Koteswor, Baneswor, Thamel, Jamal, Ratnapark, Dilibazar, Satdobato,...

A prototype questionnaire was developed by the CPCS team and tested with a group of twenty children. Necessary changes were made and training conducted with a team of data-collectors. A total of eighteen data collectors who had worked extensively with street children were divided into three separate groups and conducted the questionnaires over a period of twelve months. Completed questionnaires were continuously reviewed to ensure their consistency.

Interviewers made themselves available from morning to late evening and with the added support of the entire CPCS team as well as monitoring by the Research Director and Research Monitoring Committee ensuring that children participated voluntarily and that data was reliable and valid. Questionnaires were conducted only with those children who were ready to respond and felt a sense of trust with the data collectors.

The structured questionnaire was divided into 9 sections, which were as follows:

1. General Information
2. Substance Use and Abuse
3. Conflicts with Authorities
4. Health and Hygiene
5. Current and past work
6. NGO's
7. Hobbies
8. Gangs
9. Physical and moral abuse

Qualitative information in the form of informal discussions and semi-structure interviews was obtained by the field workers and educators. Observations from these field workers and educators were also documented.

Data Management and Analysis

A pre filtering was done with all collected questionnaires. Any questionnaire that did not match the following three criteria was rejected:

1. Is the child living and working on the street with limited or inexistent contact with his/her family?
2. Is the questionnaire complete?
3. Is the child or youth less than 20 years old?

Twenty participants ranging from 20 years old to 26 years old were considered as valid despite the age of the interviewee. The decision was to accept that the data collected was made according to their past street experience, their continued street-child lifestyle or if they were a leader of a group of street children. It is important to consider doing a separate analysis using the data collected by these individuals. The remaining questionnaires were entered into a database and analysed using the SPSS statistical software system. Univariate and Bivariate Data Analyses were performed. Qualitative information from interviews, case studies and front-line worker observations was analysed and studied manually. Quotations were selected according to their significance in each subject area.

Constraints and Limitations

- » Some gang leaders refused to allow their group to take part in the research
- » The questionnaire was time consuming (120 to 150 minutes) and some children could not remain focused throughout in spite of scheduled breaks
- » As the data collection was performed inside the CPCS shelter and not in the field, an initial bias could have resulted
- » The data collectors' numbers were high and lack of preparation may have caused some misunderstandings despite continuous verification.

- » The close relationship between data collectors (also educators, field workers, and teachers) and the children may have facilitated the gathering of information but it may also have hampered gathering more objective data
- » Distribution of a pair of pants and a t-shirt to all children participating in the research, in addition to their allowance, may have been misinterpreted by some.
- » Reporting of behaviour seen as socially unacceptable may have been hidden by the children in spite of the fact that interviews were conducted in private settings

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CWCN (Child Watabaran Center, Nepal)

Mandikhatar, Kathmandu

Post Box No: 8975, EPC 4194

Kathmandu, Nepal

Tel: 4370598

Email: watabaran@mos.com.np

Website: www.watabaran.com

CWIN

Ravi Bhawan, Kathmandu, Nepal

Tel. 4282255, 4278064

E-mail: info@cwin.org.np

Website: www.cwin.org.np

Help Line: 4271000

Jagaran Forum Nepal (JAFON)

Bangalamukhi, Lalitpur

P.O. Box: 15142, KPC 615, Kathmandu, Nepal

Tel: 9851074587

Email: youthforstreet@yahoo.com

Juvenile Offender Correction Home

Address: Sanathimi, GPO Box: 1286, Ktm

Kathmandu

NEPAL

Phone: 6635135, 6630388

Fax: +977-1-6663129

Kids Shangrila Home

Boudha, Aarubari, Kathmandu

Tel: 4478157

Fax:

Email: shangrila.home@oabdira.be

Website: www.users.pandora.be/shangrila/

National Center For Children at Risk

(Khoj Talas)

Bhrikutimandap, Kathmandu

Tel: 4226006

Nawa Asha Ghriha (NAG)

Bansbari, Kathmandu

Tel: 4372975, 5521238

Email: nag@mos.com.np

Website: www.englishwebservices.ch/NAG/Nag.htm

Saathi

Address: Ekantakun, GPO Box: 7770, Ltp
Kathmandu, Nepal
Phone: 5538344, 5554560
Email: contact@saathi.org.np
Website: www.saathi.org.np

SAHARA Group

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Email: saharagroup@mos.com.np
Website: www.saharagroup.org.np

Sarifa-Nepal (Association for Protection of Children)

Basantapur, Kathmandu
PO Box 13439
Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: 2011007, 9803186965
Email: info@apc-nepal.org
Website: www.apc-nepal.org

Sath Sath

New Baneshwor, Kathmandu
Tel: 4472349
Email: sathsath@wlink.com.np, info@sathsath.org
Website: www.sathsath.org

Voice of Children (VOC)

Ekantakuna, Lalitpur
G.P.O Box: 8975 EPC 1936
Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: 5549318, 5539572
Fax: +977-1-5529153
Email: info@voiceofchildren.org.np
Website: www.voiceofchildren.org.np

Women and Children Service Centers

Control nbr: 100

Email: info@nepalpolice.gov.np

Website: www.nepalpolice.gov.np