

THE STREET CHILDREN OF NEPAL

“Anthroposociological Study of Social, Cultural and Communicational Practices”



JEAN-CHRISTOPHE RYCKMANS



CPCS

Forewords by Doctor Baburam Bhattarai, Prime Minister of Nepal,
Didier Reynders, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister of Belgium
And Jean-Charles Demarquis, Ambassador of France in Nepal

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THE STREET CHILDREN OF NEPAL

“Anthroposociological Study of Social, Cultural and Communicational Practices”

Author and Research Director: Jean-Christophe Ryckmans

Research Vice-Director: Arjun Mohan Bhattarai

Research Coordination Committee: Bijesh Shrestha, Himmat Maskey, Inge Bracke

Associate Analysis and editing: Michael Meehan

Statistician: Doctor Ramesh Adhikari

Data and interviews Collectors: Badri Acharya, Bimala Khanal, Ekta Narayan Pradhan, Kalpana Shrestha, Nawaraj Pokharel, Ranju Shrestha, Shyam Krishna Shrestha, Tejendra Karki

Translator (French to English) : Aurélie Kustermans

Research Facilitators: Aita Raj Limbu, Badri N Shrestha, Bhagat Shiwakoti, Bikash Shahi, Bindhya Napit, Bipin KC, Bishnu Charmakar, Bishwa Devi Shrestha, Caroline Diercks, Catherine Peart, Claudette Horge, Dabal Pandey, Deepak Nepal, Devi Sarki, Esthel Davidsen, Ganesh Khatri, Hem Budhathoki, Kailash Rawal, Khadga Bdr. Shrestha, Kishor Lamsal, Krishna Dhital, Jacqueline Cutrera, Lab Kumar Shrestha, Laxman Dahal, Maiya Shrestha, Manju Dhungel, Nabaraj Baniya, Nawaraj Gurung, Netra Bdr Khadka, Pabitra Silwal, Dawa Tamang, Puran Shakya, Rabi Bhandari, Rajendra Rawal, Rajendra Tamang, Raju Dulal, Ram Kumar Shrestha, Raman Bdr Adhikari, Ratna Pokharel, Romain Verbeeren, Salikram Acharya, Samjhana Giri, Sanu Maiya Shrestha, Saroj Suwal, Shobha Ojha, Shree Krishna Thapa, Srijana Giri, Shreejana Sapkota, Shyam Kumar Shrestha, Sita Rai, Suja Dahal, Surendra Niroula, Surya Prakash Shrestha, Sylvie Casiulis, Tanka Prasad Poudel, Tek Bahadur Paudyal, Tirtha Adhikari, Tirtha Raj Tripathi

Illustrator (drawings): Santosh Rai

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FOREWORD

**By the Honourable Doctor Baburam Bhattarai,
Prime Minister of Nepal**



The Prime Minister

KATHMANDU

NEPAL

Message

I am pleased to learn that the “Child Protection Centers and Services” International (CPCS) is going to publish its research publication “The Street Children of Nepal”. Due to various socio-cultural, economical and other reasons the problem of street children is becoming an issue of serious concern for us. Nevertheless, the ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare and as a whole the Government of Nepal has taken several measures in collaboration with various national and international non-governmental organizations to address and alleviate the problems faced by street children and working hard to rehabilitate them.

I hope that this publication will shed light on the problems faced by the street children of Nepal and provide guidelines to policy makers and others concerned with this issue.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Bhattarai'.

(Dr. Baburam Bhattarai)

FOREWORD

By Didier Reynders, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and European Affairs of Belgium

Opening Jean-Christophe Ryckmans' book awoke in me the memory of a moment both very brief and very recent: landing a few weeks ago in Kathmandu for the shortest of stays, 30 minutes to disembark a handful of passengers and load a few others. Then the plane took off again.

But I remember this stop vividly, for it gave me a strange feeling of surprise and curiosity. Behind the bare and sunny peaks of the Himalayas, I had not expected to suddenly discover this multitude of dark, flat roofs, lined up all the way to the nebulous rims of the bowl encircling the capital city. Who lives in these houses? What are the lives, what are the stories unfolding under their frames ?

Beyond these questions, habitual to the air traveler, Mr. Ryckmans also teaches us to ask ourselves who lives “between” these houses, sleeping curled in the cover of their eaves, invisible to the aerial observer. But the author also usefully reminds us that the phenomenon of street children is not limited to homeless youth.

This sense of detail and accuracy is present throughout the book, full of conceptual discipline and statistical precision. But “The Street Children of Nepal” is also humanly rich, with testimonies giving faces and names to the abandonment and the vulnerability: Phurba, Sumit, Kancha, Maikal, Chhitij S, Ram Baniya, Laxman, Alisha ...

Both rigorous and action-oriented, the book resembles a reflection of its author, a communication student, whom neither his young age nor the distance from his native Belgium could dissuade to embark on the unlikely adventure that sees CPCS employing today more than a hundred people in dozens of communities dotted along the slopes of the Himalayas. My experience as a Minister, and especially as a Foreign Minister, has convinced me that the refusal of resignation and fatalism is one of the most accurate definitions of courage... and that courage is a most contagious virtue. I have therefore no doubt that this book will attract to CPCS more of the support this organization needs in its fight for the endangered children of Nepal.

Didier Reynders

FOREWORD

By Jean-Charles DEMARQUIS, French Ambassador to Nepal

The daily struggle that Jean-Christophe Ryckmans and his NGO Child Protection Centers and Services (CPCS) undertake in favor of street children in Nepal in general but principally in Kathmandu seeks to break the infernal cycle of violence and abuse that is the unfortunate every day existence of these children.

For these children, this social and societal problem is about their stolen childhoods, the confiscation of their dreams and the exposure to dangers that no child on this planet should have to endure!

The publication of the study on “The Street Children of Nepal” is an eye-opener which should increase awareness of this global problem and pilot research for a durable solution so that the title of Jean-Christophe’s book (2007) “L’Espoir Au Bout De La Rue”¹ will one day soon become a reality.

Jean-Charles DEMARQUIS
French Ambassador to Nepal
Kathmandu

¹ English translation (literal): “Hope at the end of the street”

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ARTICLE 1 (of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) ratified by Nepal on September 14, 1990) : “A child means every human being below the age of 18 years”



Street Children are supposed to be human beings like everyone else. Unfortunately, in Nepal, as in many other countries, they are far from enjoying even basic human and child rights.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

This study is based on ten years of observation and intervention with the street children and youth who are “isolated” on the street and excluded from all parental or family support.

They are either plastic pickers, thieves, beggars or money collectors in public transportation means. These youth, these children are living on the fringes of the Nepalese society with their own habits, dreams and perspectives...

In this publication we will approach the subject of these children and try to better understand their situation.

Of course, this study is not the end taken into account the scope of the subject and the multiplicity of the contexts in which the concerned “children and youth” are evolving.

The purpose of this work is to be found in the questions it raises and in the questioning, criticism and opinions it will confirm, refute, or simply and often arouse in the mind of the reader, be he an observer, a grassroots actor, a financing entity, a politician, a journalist or a mere citizen who is concerned with these little lives he one day may meet on the streets of Kathmandu and of Nepal.

In Nepal, as in the rest of the world, the term and the concept of “street children” echoes each day and for dozens of local, national or international causes or consequences. Each month we see the birth of dozens of projects, which are more or less well-thought-out, more or less “haphazard”, and each day dozens of youths, professionals, activists and dreamers decide to “help” the “street children” of Kathmandu, Biratnagar or Nepalganj.

The challenge was huge, sometimes maybe too huge. How can we face, from the start, the differences in conception, of opinion and in reality? How can we talk about their lives, what they have been through, with on the one hand enough respect and an open-mind to avoid any stigmatization and on the other hand enough realism and actual facts to remain useful and efficient?

Opening up new paths, arousing some thinking, explaining some routes... These are our objectives, which we will try to reach in a humble way and ready to admit the huge limitations of this book.

Each child, each youth whom we met on the streets of Nepal is a life and a story. To try and understand or even back him on his way, to hope and generate a “better-being” in his everyday life or a breaking-off with the street, what matters is to respect him for what he is, for what he wears and, above all, for what he dreams of.

Let us finish this preface with a little sentence to ponder on:

“There is no truth about street children in Nepal... Since “they” don’t exist... But “He/She” does!”

Jean-Christophe Ryckmans



ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This study is the result of the relationship of respect and trust that the whole CPCS team has been able to establish with the children over many years.

We would like to thank all the social workers, street workers, psychologists, youth workers and the others from many organizations who, in Nepal, struggle every day to guarantee the concerned children and youth certain minimum rights and an access to socialization and rehabilitation programs.

We are very grateful to all our partners who support the initiation and the publication of this large-scale project.

We sincerely thank the Honourable Prime Minister of Nepal, Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and European Affairs of Belgium, Mr. Didier Reynders and His Excellency, Jean-Charles Demarquis, Ambassador of France in Nepal for their support and participation.

We extend our gratitude to all the national and international professionals who shared their valuable views and thoughts with us.

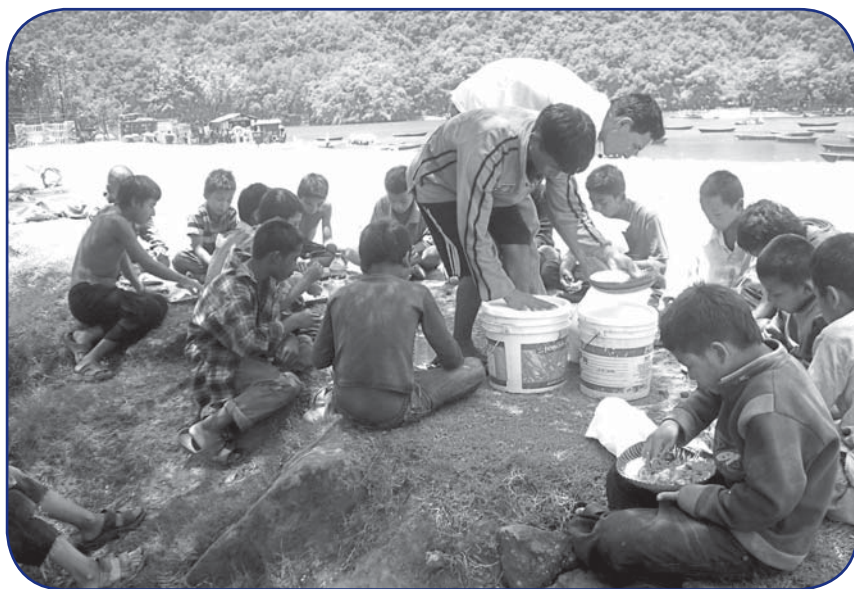
Most importantly, special thanks must be given to all the children who collaborated on this book. We sincerely hope it will bring about improvements in their daily lives.

Thanks are also due to the following individuals and organizations for their participation, advice and support regarding this research and CPCS in general: (the) American Himalayan Foundation, Anne Petry, Ariane Angenot, Aurélie Kustermans, Brihaspati, Lila and Kyran Ryckmans (the author's family), Child Workers in Nepal (CWIN), Claudette Horge, Douglas Maclagan, Dynamo International, Ecpat-Luxembourg, Esthel Davidsen, Jean-François Meyer, Jeremy Southon, La Chaîne de l'espoir, La Commune de Somme-Leuze (Belgium), La Fondation Vieujant, Les amis de Soeur Emmanuelle, (the) ECPAT (Luxembourg), (the) French Embassy in

Nepal, Madav Pradhan, Marc Nuytemans, Michael Mehan, Michel Verhulst, Olivier Lejeune, Philippe Deharre, Raymond Ryckmans, Romane Lejeune, Sylvie Casiulis, (the) Simons Foundation, (the) Social Welfare Council (Népal), (the) Université Catholique de Louvain, Vanessa De Roeck, Willy Borsus, etc.

Last but not least, this book could not have been realized without the academic supervision of Mr. Alain Reyniers and the support of Messrs. Guyot, Grévisse, Derèze, Lits, Marion, Mrs. Volckrick and the whole teaching and administrative team of the Communication School of the UCL University. (Université Catholique de Louvain – Belgium) We would like to thank you for allowing us to combine our academic research with our daily concerns, i.e. these youth and children.

This book is dedicated to all those – children and youth – who didn't survive the street sufferings. Their memory lives throughout this book and in the hearts of all the people who took part in it.



INTRODUCTION

BASIC PROFILE OF STREET CHILDREN AND STREET YOUTH IN NEPAL



CPCS

ARTICLE 2 (CRC) : “Children must be treated ... without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of ... race, colour, sex, language, religion ... or other status”



Street Children are discriminated against by individuals from other social classes because they are different; they don't live in a house, they don't enjoy family protection, and they have to work and survive in dire conditions.

Introduction

In this moment, Dinesh and others are warming up their frozen hands on a makeshift fire in the cold dawn air. Manish and Meena are singing in the dark night and the empty alleys, seeking for the most profitable rubbish. Sanam or Shiva are wandering about in a park or pestering a passer-by to scrape together some money. Sushita is happy over a glue pack or a good meal. Surya is sad for a trinket she lost and Aashish is having fun with the city's delights. Parvati and Som are crying over yesterday or today's pains. In this moment, others are now protective, now raped, now playful, now battered, now good Samaritan, now driven out, now alive, now dead...

This book has been structured in the following way: first, this introduction which explains the general situation of the street childhood in Nepal and, paradoxically, the huge difficulty to "theorize" or generalize it.

This introduction will open up new paths that the following chapters will take. It will set out different points of view (seven) which we considered useful to understand the street child in the complexity of his identity and of his everyday life. Thus, seven chapters which will deal with several different ways of looking at the street child, at a street group or, in a utopian way, at the street childhood in Nepal.

So who are these lives, these children and these youth exactly?

In this introduction, we will first apply ourselves to deconstructing these rich and vague "categories" which, depending on the trends and times, have been used to describe, classify and identify so many little lives: "street children", "children in a street situation", "children on the street", "children at risk"...

We will start with a few definitions, comments or thoughts on the "street children" and their contexts... but we will quickly go on with the different views we collected during our observations and which we find useful to understand what they are and what they have to go through.

“Street children”: limitations and risks of such a definition

The European federation of street children defines the street children concept as such: “an extremely vulnerable group of children, living in most severe situations well beyond the usual notion of ‘poverty’. They face a gross violation of their human rights, such as violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, chemical addictions and numerous other human rights violations.”²

As for UNICEF, they make a distinction between two significant categories:

1. Children on the street:

Children who are on the street and who are engaged in an activity of an economic character, from begging to sale. Most of them go back home at the end of the day and share their earnings with their close relatives. They can go to school and keep a feeling of belonging to their family. As a result of the fragile economic environment of their family, they can progressively choose to permanently live on the street.

2. Children of the street:

Children who live on the street (and outside their normal family environment). They can keep some family ties, but these are “occasional”.³



² European Commission's Communication on the Rights of the Child (2011-2014), page 7

³ http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/files/ZIM_01-805.pdf

On the “popular” “Wikipedia”, we can find the following observations: ‘Street children’ are increasingly recognized by sociologists and anthropologists to be a socially-built category that in reality does not form a clearly defined, homogeneous population or phenomenon (Glauser, 1990; Ennew, 2000; Moura, 2002).⁴

The term ‘street children’ covers children in such a wide variety of circumstances and characteristics that policy-makers and service providers find it difficult to describe and target them. By removing the ‘street children’ label, we can find individual girls and boys of all ages who live and work in public spaces, and who are visible in the vast majority of the world’s urban centres. If this difficulty in conceptualizing seems obvious, more and more actors are highlighting the risk of stigmatizing, by a “confining” definition, so complex a world as the one of the street and the children who live in it, as street childhood then risks to be reduced to a “disease” which has to be treated.

“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.”⁵

The International Network of the Street Workers supports this opinion and even goes further by recommending to abandon the “street children concept” and to replace it by “children in a street situation” or even to broaden it to “street population”.⁶

In the end, the question about the “street child” definition thus appears to be daring and almost embarrassing. There is indeed a risk that “too specific or unique a definition” for so manifold a phenomenon will further increase the “stigmatization” of the concerned children.

That is why, in Nepal, children in a street situation are often identified by the general public as what people call “Khate” – a word which once described plastic pickers only but which is now used for all the children who work, live and sleep on the street. “Khate” is a very negative term and children refuse to be called that way. Anyway, this term describes the often negative public opinion toward street children quite well.

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Street_child

⁵ Tobias Hecht, *At Home in the Street* (Cambridge, 1998)

⁶ *International Guide on the methodology of street work throughout the world* (Dynamo international, 2008) - <http://www.street-work.net/files/files/Guide2008AN.pdf>

They are considered to be social parasites, petty criminals, drug abusers and thieves. Their dirty language, shabby clothes and refusal to follow any social constraint makes the general public think that “street children” are basically and internally unsociable. But if you swap roles for a minute, you can see that the children feel as if they had no other choice but to behave that way. Feeling unaccepted, they decide in turn not to accept society and its rules.

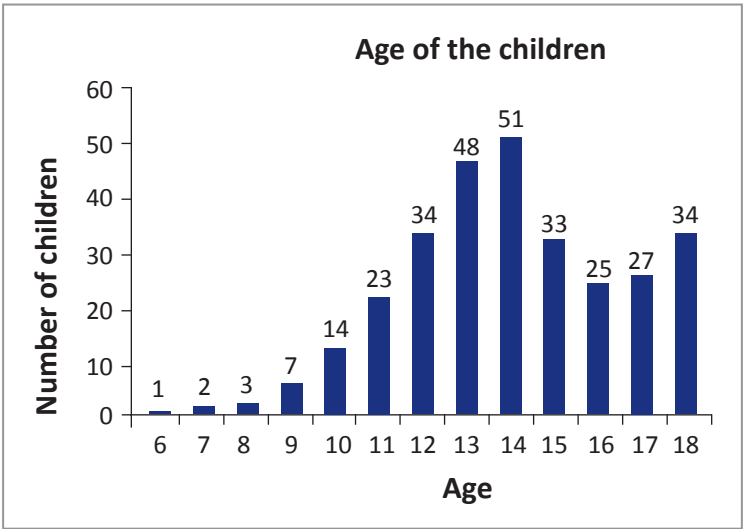
Thus, the expression “street child” can and must be the subject of many debates or strongly criticised. “Street children” are not automatically “on the street”, and vice versa. The term “street” designates much more than a road space. It is a life environment or even a position or a way of being... The relationship between the children and the street varies. A child who evolves in a street context mustn’t automatically be called a street child. It is the same for the children called “children at risk”. Moreover, those who are called “street children” and who thus mostly live on the street can be approached in different situations: a street situation, a shantytown situation, or even a family situation for it is not because they live with their family that they are not, sometimes, under the influence of the street mechanisms.

Could a child who works and earns a living still match a tight definition? But if he/she sleeps on the ground on the street, does he/she become a street child again in people’s eyes? The children who spend most of their time on the street can either have a home or not, sleep in a shelter or on the street, work or go to school. If a child, for example, takes part in a rehabilitation process, can we then consider that they are not a street child anymore? And do all these children identify with this term?

Quantitative approach: analysis of the statistical data and basic profile of the research respondents:

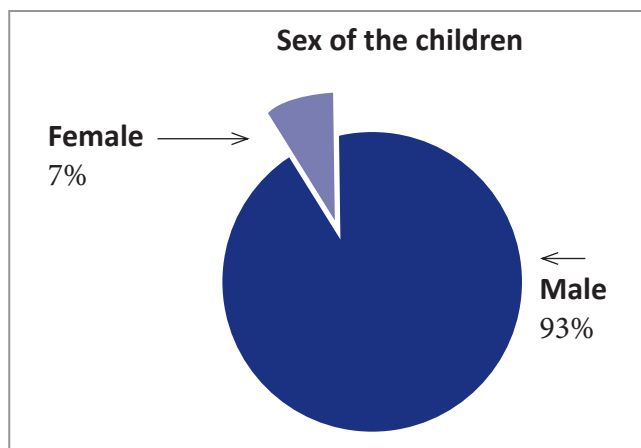
Age and Sex

A total of 302 street children were interviewed in this study. The mean (average) age of the children was 13.9 years. More than two-thirds of the children (67% of sample) were aged between 11 and 16 years old while 4% of the children were less than 10 years old. 20% of the children were aged between 17 and 18 years old.



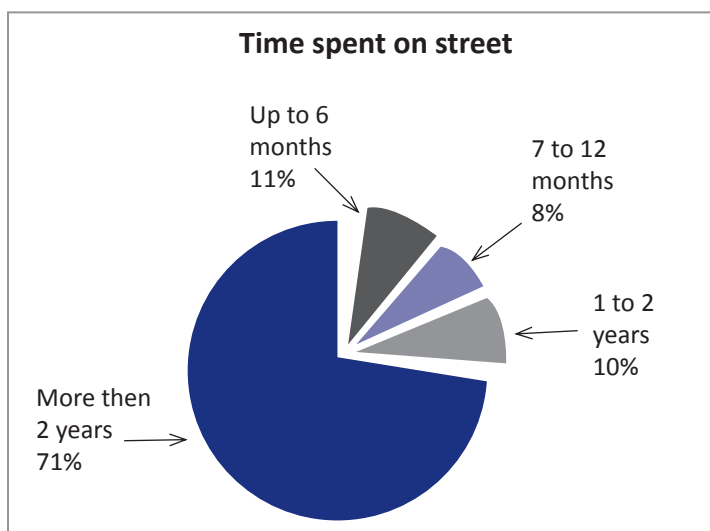
In regard to the sex of the children, an overwhelming majority of the children covered in this study (93%) were male while remaining 20 children (7%) were female.

Because of this factor, this book will refer to the child in a street situation as the male “he”. This is done purely as a matter of expediency. It is in no way stereotyping all street children as males and denigrating females as Others. As discussed further in the book, female street children face far more risks and abuses than male street children. This must never be forgotten or ignored.



Time on street

Almost three in four children (72%) have already spent more than 2 years in the street with 81% of these street children being 13 years or older. Further, 19% of the children spent less than one year in the street and 11% of the children had come to the street within 6 months prior to the survey.

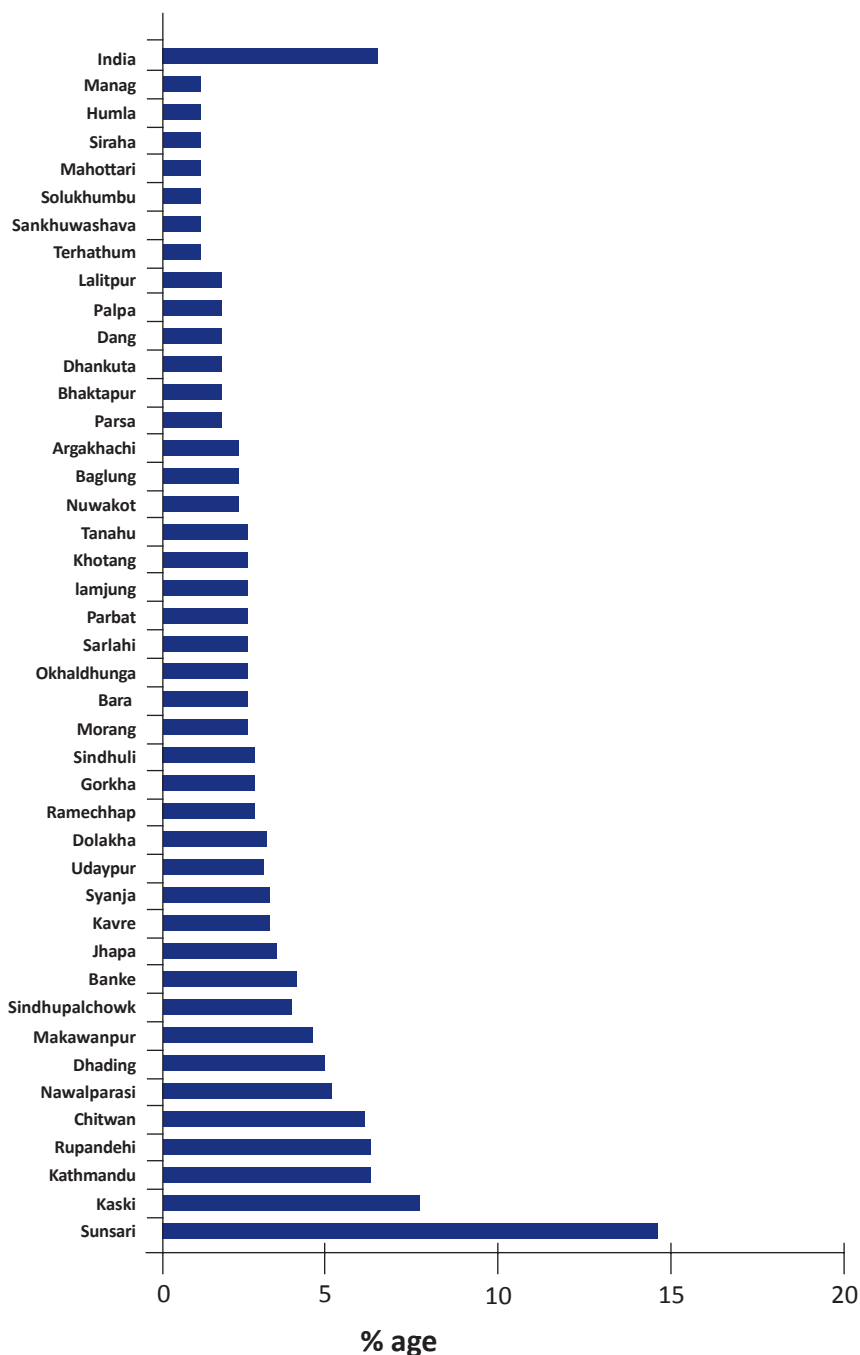


District of origin (of the interviewed children)

Children covered in this study were from many districts. These 302 sampled children were from 42 districts out of 75 districts of the country and from India as well. Strikingly, 15% of all interviewed children reported that their place of origin was the eastern Terai district of Sunsari. This figure might be partly explained by the high presence of children from this district in the areas where the study was conducted.

The next highest district represented was Kaski with almost 7% of the children from there. Kathmandu, Rupandehi and Chitwan followed with approximately 6% of street children from these districts. It is notable that 5.3% of sampled street children were from India.





Qualitative approach: observation and first-hand accounts

The years we spent working with and observing these children left us wondering whether it was really possible to provide a basic profile of them. Of course, it is possible to make a quantitative analysis. That is what we will see in the next paragraph. But each life has its own history and there is no such thing as a street child “prototype”.

Thanks to our observations and on-the-spot knowledge, we are able to estimate that, in Kathmandu alone, the number of children and youth between 6 and 18 who mainly live on the street without any family support amounts to between 338 and 619. Outside the capital city and in 17 of the main cities or little downtown areas, we estimate their number between 350 and 540. This obviously contrasts with the thousands of street children mentioned by some studies which are based on a wider understanding or definition of the concept – which, as we already discussed, is not inappropriate but, in this study, we will only concentrate on the problem of children in a street situation who are isolated from their family.

The following estimate per geographical area was carried out by the CPCS street workers from the Nepali branch of the international network of street workers (<http://www.street-work.net/en>):

S.N	Location	Total Nbr of Street Children (min)	Total Nbr of Street Children (max)
1	Lagankhel	12	15
2	Jaulakhel	3	10
3	Gwarko	5	8
4	Dhobighat	3	5
5	Mahalaxmasthan	5	8
6	Nakhu	3	5
7	Kalanki	20	40
8	Thapathali	5	8
9	Lazimpat	5	6
10	Ekantakuna	3	5

S.N	Location	Total Nbr of Street Children (min)	Total Nbr of Street Children (max)
11	Purano Baneshwor	5	7
12	Sudhara	5	7
13	Kaldhara	8	12
14	Teku	6	10
15	Setopul	5	6
16	Rantnapark	10	15
17	Mahankal	20	30
18	Kalimati	10	25
19	Balkhu	5	10
20	Swayambhu	8	20
21	Basantapur	30	40
22	Thamel	20	30
23	New road	8	10
24	Dallu	10	12
25	Balaju	15	30
26	Jamal	5	8
27	Darbarmarg	9	14
28	Putalisadak	10	25
29	Pashupati	50	65
30	Chabahil	8	15
31	Til Ganga	15	20
32	Kotheshwor	15	20
33	Baudha	8	12
34	Banepa	15	25
35	Kritipur	2	5
36	Pulchok	5	8
37	Sankhamul	5	9

S.N	Location	Total Nbr of Street Children (min)	Total Nbr of Street Children (max)
38	Baneshwor	5	8
39	Batkyapool	2	3
40	Bhaktapur	5	8
Total		388	619
Out-of-Kathmandu Valley Street Children			
1	Biratnagar	10	25
2	Itahari	25	40
3	Dharan	70	90
4	Hetauda	15	20
5	Narayangarh	70	95
6	Butwal	60	90
7	Nepalgunj	5	20
8	Surkhet	5	7
9	Pokhara	60	95
10	Birtamod	2	4
11	Damauli(tanhun)	3	5
12	Mahendranagar	2	5
13	Birjung	8	10
14	Bairawa	5	8
15	Munglin	3	9
16	Dang	2	5
17	Dhangari	5	12
Total		350	540

These children and youth sleep, work and live outside, usually in a gang/group. They work as “khalasis” (money collectors in local public transport), plastic pickers, beggars, sellers of bottles of water, of newspapers, etc. In this street setting and even if they are young, they have to face social exclusion day by day and become easy preys for some of the most basic forms of exploitation.

Because of their weakness, they become first-rate targets for the local mafias who use them in all kinds of traffics. Life on the streets includes myriads of dangers and risks such as physical and mental violence, drug dependence, threats from the gangs, diseases, crime, alcoholism, starvation, lack of self-esteem, etc.

The image of street children in the general public's eye is not very positive. They are considered to be social parasites, petty criminals and drug abusers. A lot of people consider that them wearing shabby clothes, using a dirty language and being likely to refuse most of the social constraints further proves that they are in a marginal and harmful position.

As for the children, they feel as if they had no other choice but to behave that way. Feeling socially unaccepted, they decide in turn not to accept society and its rules. "Why should we respect a society which rejects us?"

The paradox is indeed terrible: society rejects street children because they are unsociable, and the children are unsociable because society rejects them. They are still children, but they have had to adopt some adult behavior in order to face their difficult environment. Feeling unaccepted by society, they form a parallel society with its own codes, its language features and its own rituals, which includes sniffing glue and taking drugs. The groups of street children in Kathmandu are not



really gangs organized into a hierarchy. They rather form a flexible relationship network in which exchanges and movements happen frequently. Each group has its rules and its territorial position (Ganga Bu, Thamel, Kalanki, Bir Hospital, etc.).

The group offers the child protection, concern, confidence and solidarity. Its values and its system become the basis upon which the child develops his identity, which will also be strongly linked to the survival conditions of the street. On the one hand, they see themselves as unsociable people, as washouts or as lower people because of the way society looks at them. On the other hand, within their gang, they see themselves as a leader, a free individual who has his own role to play.

Each group has its own leader who stands out among the others for different reasons: intelligence, physical force, age, etc. We will dwell upon this notion of “group” and “gang” in chapter 5.



Let us not forget that there are also several gangs made up of young adults who have a certain grip on, who exercise a certain authority over the children. To the very young, the leaders and members of these gangs are successful role models, examples to follow. They try to impress the children in every possible way and are completely unscrupulous about manipulating and using them. It is not unusual

for children to be taken on as prostitutes or as minions for thefts, drug sales or fights against other gangs. When they pass the 16-17 year-old mark, they either sink into crime and/or drugs or end their life in prison or even die.

The reasons for them arriving on the streets are numerous and complex – the main ones being the socio-economic conditions in the villages, splitting of the family group, domestic violence – often linked to alcohol – urbanization and city attraction, as well as political instability. From our perspective, it is important to understand and respect them. In the Nepali culture, a lot of families let their children go on the street, hoping that they will earn some money for the family.

First-hand accounts:

Dhiraj (13 years):

I come from Ramechhap. I came to Kathmandu by bus. After my arrival in Kathmandu, I had to spend the night on the street. I didn't know where to go. It was very difficult. I made some friends who gave me food and who also taught me how to live on the street. They taught me how to beg and I've earned more and more money because I slowly got to know how to get it. I spend the money I earn on food, but also on cigarettes. From time to time I go back home and bring some friends from my neighbourhood and my brothers too. We all collect money at the same time and use it to go to the cinema and to buy clothes. Sometimes we collect money in a hotel and then we eat there.

Phurba (17 years):

I was very small when I ended up on the street. I only know that my family is from Tibet. I don't know anything else about my background. I don't know where my family and relatives are now.

I have a lot of friends on the street and I've lived in different gangs. I've done a lot of bad things and bad works. I've been on the street since I was 10. I spend all the money I earn on drugs and entertainment. I don't care about saving.

Chhabilal (18 years):

I am from Nepalgunj and was very small when I started living on the street. In the beginning, everybody loved me and gave me money or food. Some people told me that I could stay in their home.

I've stayed in many houses where they loved me too. But I couldn't manage to stay for a long time. I moved between jobs and then, after a while, I decided to stay constantly on the street. At first, the other youth from the street loved and protected us, but then they sent us to work. We shared the money we earned with each other. We spent our money on glue, drugs, food, etc.

I went to an organization but couldn't stay there for a long time because of my old street friends.

Now I am sick and weak. Nobody respects me and nobody cares about me anymore. I'm over 16 and the organizations don't care about me anymore either. It is very difficult to survive on the street. I give suggestions and advice to small children on the streets. I have a lot of regrets but it is too late now.

Bisal Gurung (12 years):

I come from a good family in Dhulikhel. I went to the English school there and was a student in class 6. I was a good student. My teachers and family loved me a lot. One day I came to Kathmandu and made a friend on the street. He taught me how to smoke cigarettes and slowly I started sniffing glue too. I enjoy it more with my friends. Because of the friendship and the freedom, it was impossible for me to leave the street and I didn't go back home.

I know this is bad but I couldn't leave the street life. Sometimes I try to go away from those friends and go back home. I go to the organization and start school again but I still remember my friends and the streets' freedom. I'm addicted to glue and it is pulling me back to the street where I then feel happy and enjoy the street life again.

Case-by-case “visions” instead of a general definition

Given the impossibility, for practical reasons, of defining and categorizing in an accurate way the “child in a street situation” and given the risk of stigmatization in relation to such an attempt, we will keep in mind that we should identify each child's or group's situation clearly and on a case-by-case basis. What we suggest here is a way to understand the street child or group in a systemic and dynamic approach.

In fact, and whether we have to describe a child, a group or, ambitiously, a general situation such as in this study (street childhood in Nepal), we find it useful to dwell on the seven following angles or visions for a while:

Case-by-case “visions” instead of a general definition

1. The background, the past
2. The working conditions and daily activities
3. The use of drugs
4. The sexuality, abuses and other risks
5. The social context, group identity and conflicts
6. The link to the culture, the traditions, the medias and the world
7. The educational context

Why these seven angles? Because it seems to us that these seven alternative visions on a concrete situation are enough to provide a more or less comprehensive general view. This view shall not be confining or fixed. It has to change; the child thinks, changes and evolves on a day-to-day basis, and so does his group.

To cut a long story short, these seven visions ask the following questions and introduce the subsequent chapters:

1. Where does he come from? What is his past?
2. What does he do every day? Does he have a remunerative activity? If so, which type of activity?
3. Which drugs does he use? Why and how?
4. What kinds of abuses and risks did he have – or still does have – to face?
5. What social context does he have to live in and what conflicts does he have to face?
6. What is his link to the culture and traditions, to the medias and to the outside world?
7. What is his educational context? Where and what is he learning? Where could he learn better? How does he foresee his future?

Of course, these seven questions are not independent from one another and could be enriched with a thousand more views. They don't prevent other questions from arising, but rather the opposite, they contribute to creating a debate.

Introduction of the chapters in this study:

The following chapters are built around the seven visions we just suggested:

Chapter 1: “A journey to the street” (where does he come from?)

The child, the youth in a street situation has got a past and one cannot dwell upon his everyday life or even try to build a future for and with him without taking into account what he has been through, why he ended up on the street, his family situation...

Chapter 2: “The working conditions and daily activities”

The child in a street situation, hanging around on it during the day, also keeps himself busy there. In Nepal, some “activities” can clearly be identified as forms of “work” (collection of rubbish, cleaning, sale of newspapers). Others are more “unsettling” or “confusing” (drug sales, prostitution, begging, petty theft...), even if they nevertheless constitute some forms of activities and often are, one way or another, remunerative and necessary.

Chapter 3: “The use of drugs”

At first a consequence, then progressively one of the causes of some unique and psychologically explosive cocktails which combine, for each child in a street situation, different factors such as memories of past suffering, complex current realities and an uncertain future, the use of more or less hallucinatory, more or less dangerous drugs cannot be ignored.

Chapter 4: “Sexuality, vulnerability to abuses and other risks”

Before we start any working process with a child in a street situation, we have to analyze and be aware of the risks and abuses inherent in his everyday life in such a context. The child, on his own and partly or completely isolated from his family context, is vulnerable and there are a lot of predators: adults, teenagers, other children...

Chapter 5: “Social context, group identity and conflicts”

It is obvious that the child in a street situation is not an isolated being. He is often a member of a group which reacts against other groups in a specific social context. Of course, the child, such as any individual, builds an “image” of what surrounds him, assigning different roles to everyone. Opponent, foil, prey, daily quest... Social context also implies conflicts.

Chapter 6: “Belief, cultural practices, awareness of one’s class and national pride”

Very closely tied to the previous chapter, this one focuses on the link between the child and his culture, his traditions and his feeling of belonging to a social class or to a nation. Living on the street also means belonging to something, but what is the link to society? What are the borrowings?

Chapter 7: “Education, future perspectives, dreams and convictions”

This is a key point, should we consider that the transition from childhood to adolescence, then to adulthood involves a whole range of acquisitions. It is the same for the fact of being socially integrated and integrable. And yet, the child in a street situation is – a priori – in difficulty or completely excluded from two basic agents involved in these acquisitions: school and family. What, however, is the reality?

Finally, in chapter 8, we will get the opportunity to set to music these different visions in order to make a specific analysis: the one concerning the special relationship which, within the **tourist Thamel area**, binds street children and travelers from all around the world together.



National perspective

By Madhav Pradhan

CWIN President (Nepal)

With street children in Nepal

The issue of street children is not a new phenomenon in Nepal. It is a reality of all urban cities and Kathmandu Valley is not remote of the problem of street children. Child Workers in Nepal (CWIN) estimate the number of street children to 1500 in the Kathmandu Valley. Lack of awareness among parents; family disintegration; domestic violence; poor economic conditions; lack of proper child-centred interventions in rural areas; a weak education system; insensitive traditions that discourage children; existing exploitative social relations; unsafe migration; growing attraction towards urban cities; and peer influence are main reasons for children to come to the streets for their survival.

Once on the streets, the children get absorbed in the big bad world of the urban streets; they get introduced to substance use; start getting engaged in delinquent behaviors, and get pushed by their peers or experience pressure from the gangs to get involved in criminal activities. While they are perceived as ‘rowdy’ or ‘bad’, they are actually victims of many kinds of abuse and exploitation such as sexual abuse, cheating, beating and torture by police; use by drug peddlers; etc. They are much more vulnerable to HIV infection as they live in groups and share syringes, have unsafe sexual relations and experience increasing sexual abuse from outsiders and from their own peers.

There are some nine organizations working directly with street children in the valley. They are in a network called National Alliance of Organizations Working with Street Children (NAOSC) initiated by CWIN in 2004. Member organizations of the NAOSC are carrying out different interventions such as drop in centres, health services, educational and vocational support, residential centres, field works and awareness activities.

However, there are some gaps in the interventions. There are some interventions which are purely welfare based that provide on the street services and encourage street children to remain on the streets. Unless there is a realization among the stakeholders to address the issue of street children with rights based approach, street children’s problems will become more challenging.

CWIN's direct work with street children since 1989 has proved that socialization, social reintegration and empowerment of street children are possible, provided they receive respect, concerted attention and continual follow-ups. CWIN has number of success stories to be inspired to continue its work with street children.

Street Children are a unique group of children who are basically deprived of parental love, care and understanding. From a very young age, these children are abandoned and thrown out on the street; therefore they need special attention and care for their overall development. Experience has proven that institutional care or forceful reunifications with their family are not practical solutions to their problem. Without first motivating and healing their socio-psychological problems for them and identifying their problems, no program can properly respond to their needs. For this, not only resources, but a commitment on the part of the social workers and enough resources are required.

Working with street children is not an easy task. It is not a problem that can be solved by a simple mathematical formula. On the contrary, it requires the dedication, attention, passion and commitment of the society and state. This is not unlike other socio-economic problems that increase with the urbanization of the country and globalization of the international market. Therefore, one should think about this problem before it takes an even more serious turn.

The NGOs which are working on this issue should consider a social mobilization program in order to make people aware of the extent of the problem. They have taken initiatives in highlighting the issues and advocating the rights of the street children. However, there has been enough barriers, lack of cooperation and inspiration to such initiatives from government departments. Recognizing that such a problem is beyond the capacity of the state alone to solve, the government should extend its support to NGOs work and create an atmosphere of goodwill where they operate their activities without harassment and tension. In a country like ours, where bureaucracy is a serious national problem, sincerity in the social service sector is a tough job for the government machinery. The best ways for the government to help is to identify and recognize the dedicated social action groups and extend support to their activities. The government should coordinate the activities of NGOs and support them in carrying out their activities for the benefit of these children. Similarly, the government should also give more attention to develop integrated child protection programs.

Madhav Pradhan

National perspective

By Krishna Thapa

VOC President (Nepal)

Life of children living in the street without any care !!!

“I wanted to be loved by my parents and have a good education so I would be able to take care of them and educate my siblings but due to their alcoholic habit, now I’m a drug addict and I live in the street”

This is the conclusion of the story of a child living in the street which is representative of many others.

Children in dilapidated conditions running around piles of dirt are a common sight in Kathmandu. These poor human beings, commonly known as “Khaties”, are a shame for the civilized Nepalese society.

These children come from various places in Nepal because of poverty, discrimination, exploitation and/or abuse. Rags picking, street selling and begging are the most important activities of these children. We can put these children in the following categories :

- a. Street-Living
- b. Street-Working
- c. Street family

Street living children are those who are living in the street on their own. They are abandoned or have lost their families. Street working children spend most of their time working on the streets but return home on a regular basis whereas street family children are those who are in this situation with their families.

There are no reliable statistics for the number of street children living in Nepal. They are around 5000 all over Nepal and 1200-1500 in Kathmandu. Another research, done by CCWB coordinating with NAOSC members in 2007, count the number of street children to 796, but the members of CCWB are not convinced by the methodology used in the research. Based on our internal data, we note that the total number of street children surveyed can be split like following :

25% of them are street working and 25% are street family children. The remaining 50% are street living children. Another VOC report indicate that 40% of those children are living in the street without contacting their family for 3 to 5 years.

Street children are around 210 in Pokhara, 40 in Narayanghat, 65 in Hetauda and 100 in Dharan. NAOSC data indicates the number of children coming to the street each year to be equivalent to the number of children rescued and rehabilitated. The neighboring rural area of Kathmandu valley is the major place from which children flock to Kathmandu. The highest number of street children is from the ethnic Tamang community.

The data on street children looks superficial but it can be justified when we take the number of organizations working for street children into consideration and the fact that many of them turn into adults each year.

Who is more likely to become a street child?

- Children affected by armed conflict.
- Children who are separated from their families.
- Children who run away from their families to escape violence and abuse.
- Children employed as workers in restaurants, factories, transportation services, housekeeping, carriers and rag pickers: they are all exposed to exploitation and abuse due to the long working hours, extra workloads, low wages and verbal, physical and mental harassment.

What does it mean to be a child living on the street?

- Lack of self-esteem and respect from others
- Lack of future perspectives
- Lack of confidence and sense of belonging
- Lack of social interaction
- Lack of proper care and fulfilment of basic needs
- Lack of psycho-social/moral support
- Vulnerability to various kinds of abuses, violence, exploitation, stigmatization, malnutrition, diseases, and sexually transmitted diseases
- Lack of sense of obligation/responsibility towards society.

Factors influencing children to leave their families

There are different sets of factors that may prompt a child to leave home. These factors could be grouped into categories like: economic factors such as poverty, a low standard of living, the child being sent to work at an early age; familial factors such as conflicts in the family/domestic violence, having a step-parent who was abusive, lack of love and care; social factors such as pressure from peers to move away from home, attraction of city life as compared to the life of the rural areas; psychological factors such as the need to assert one's independence, the need for more attention, and so on.

There is still a practice of using children for household chores in Nepal. Parents want their children to help them in their daily household works and keep them away from an opportunity to get education. When this situation persists, the child believes that he can be economically independent even if he leaves his home.

Situation of the children in the Street

Difficulties and problems faced on street:

A. Physical Problems :

Lack of Adequate Nutrition: Even though many street children can usually get some amount of food to eat, they do not have nutritious or balanced diets. This deficiency thus manifests itself in the form of anemia, malnutrition, and vitamin deficiencies.

Homelessness: The children who choose the streets as their home face the most acute problems of housing. They are vulnerable to all ranges of weather conditions be it the burning heat of summer, the rainstorms or the chilly winter nights. These children do not suffer merely from physical homelessness, but also from a psychological homelessness since they have 'nowhere to belong'. The homes they leave behind no longer remain their havens; the streets provide no comfort, and society does not accept them.

Health Problems: Street children live in an atmosphere of continued physical and mental strain. Many of them rummage through the garbage to find food, others go hungry for days drinking water or taking drugs to diminish their pangs of hunger. All street children suffer from severe malnutrition and various kinds of deficiencies. The consumption of tobacco, alcohol or drugs retards their growth

at an early age. Due to exposure to dust and other pollutants while they work near traffic junctions and other congested places, they suffer from bronchitis, asthma and even severe tuberculosis. Since they do not have the opportunity to bathe for several days at a time, and because of the unhygienic conditions in which they live, they are prone to skin diseases such as scabies, ulcers and rashes. Many street children have no knowledge / have limited knowledge about hygiene or Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs). As a result, they encounter sexual and reproductive health problems such as STDs, HIV / AIDS (common to street boys and girls), unwanted pregnancies, premature births, and unsafe abortions (specific to street girls). The lack of opportunity to ever visit a doctor further compounds all these health problems.

B. Psychological Problems:

A Stressful Past: The situations and events that lead children to take to the streets may have an on-going impact on their well-being and may deprive them of emotional, economic, and other kinds of support for many successive years. The past also plays a role in predisposing street children to become more vulnerable to emotional, social, and psychological disorders in the future.

A Transitory Lifestyle: Street children frequently move from district to district, town to town, and city to city. In majority of instances, they do this by choice, but at other times, they are forced to keep moving in order to hide from the police, welfare authorities, and gangsters. This evasive lifestyle results in problems of social isolation and loneliness and leads to difficulties in developing emotional attachments to other human beings.

Substance Abuse: Many street children resort to using psychoactive substances (such as alcohol and drugs) in an attempt to escape from the overwhelming pressure of their traumatic past and their daily problems. This, in turn, can lead to medical problems due to overdoses, an increase in the probability of accidents, violence and unprotected sex. Over time, it can lead to complications such as brain and liver damage, and also to diseases like HIV / AIDS.

Unlearning of Learned Behavior: All children learn a set of moral values and moral behavior in their early years of family life. The children who leave home and begin to live on the streets soon realize that the values their family taught them (such as honesty, integrity, etc.) are not conducive to their survival on the streets. At times they are forced to steal food and money because they have none

of their own. They have to swallow their pride in order to beg for food or money. They learn to live without a daily bath, in unhygienic and unsanitary conditions. They learn to let go of their shame when they have no clothes or when they have only an undergarment to wear.

C. Social Problems:

Deprivation of Needs and Lack of Resources and Opportunities: The various needs of street children are rarely met. They frequently get hungry, wear torn, tattered and dirty clothes or sometimes, no clothes at all. They have no permanent place to stay, no educational facilities, no facilities for hygiene and in brief, no facilities at all. Psychologically, they are exploited and abused, thus their basic needs of security and happiness are not met. Socio-culturally, they lack opportunities for healthy recreation and lack social acceptance.

Exploitation: Children on the street have to work to survive. Since they have no skills with which to bargain for fair pay or to fight for their rights, they are very vulnerable to employers who look to make a profit on them. Frequently, they are forced to work for 10-12 hours a day for few rupees or in exchange for just one square meal a day. Besides all this, abuse and harassment - either physical or sexual, by persons in authority, be they police personnel or others is not uncommon. Besides police, street children are frequently used by underworld gangsters or by older street boys bullying them and involving them in illegal works. If the children do not obey, they are threatened, beaten and sometimes, in extreme cases even killed.

Stigmatization: People in society generally perceive street children as difficult children who are out to cause trouble. The general misconception is that street children are addicts, uncontrollable and violent, have no emotions or moral values, and so on. As a result of these misconceptions, people tend to be unsympathetic and indifferent to the actual plight of street children. This lack of social acceptance is what pushes them away from mainstream society and forces them to survive on the fringes of the social system.

It is important to have comprehensive programs which allow and provide opportunities to develop gradually and help their re-socialization in a sustainable way.

Krishna Thapa

International perspective

By Edwin de Boevé

Director/Coordinator

Dynamo International / The International Network of Social Street Workers

On behalf of the whole international network of social street workers which brings together the field workers from about 50 countries, I'm delighted with the publication of this study on the topic of children working and/or living on the street in Nepal.

The approach is all the more important that it tries to link practice to theory which is essential to accurately understand the reality of the street.

It is also an invitation for other colleagues, street workers, members of the international network, to undertake such studies in their own countries.

CPCS is an active member of our network and the work which is done there by street workers deserves our greatest respect. I wanted to particularly congratulate them for the quality of their actions on the field and their abilities to think that field.

The concept of "street children" is beyond a doubt the most global and the most visible, certainly the most used definition, partly thanks to the interest the international organizations, as well as some governments, have in it. However, this concept overshadows the complex social interactions inherent to this phenomenon and reduces it to problems of family abandonment and to lacks of the educational system. It denies the recognition of citizenship through rights, considering this population as "objects of protection" and/or "maladjusted individuals". That is why the initiatives by governments and private institutions which try to help children in a street situation usually have little impact, for they don't take into account participative processes nor social learnings, rather giving priority to institutional imprisonment and/or social cleaning. The other extreme of the vision of charity is the criminalization of poverty as a common answer, by the authorities, to the street phenomenon. In most countries, there is no appropriate public and budget policies specially dedicated to this social group.

Children surviving on the streets are not only a reality in the countries with a low level of development where the disparity in the allocation of wealth is obvious. It is also a reality in Europe and in North America.

The labelling of which a child in a street situation is the object is particularly prejudicial and worrying. Pointed at, being a petty criminal or a drug addict becomes a more enviable position than being nothing.

This labelling is in line with a phenomenon of stigmatization through which a virtual identity bit-by-bit replaces the real identity of the most weakened. Representations and prejudice thus prevail over reality.

And yet, we have to become aware of how much the daily experience of the one who is stigmatized is fraught with consequences for the individual and his circle. Many cases of physical and mental abuses are observed on the field which are linked to this stigmatization.

The gap left by the State and the institutions, which don't take into consideration the needs of the most helpless and excluded people enabled the authorities and/or the associative world to react, creating the street social work, despite the international context in which we are living, which focuses more on the symptoms than on the causes. Through his story and his topicality, street social work is an excellent pointer and analyzer of the social space, of its structure and of the power struggles which cross our societies.

The aim of these field workers is to be approachable, as easily and as simply as possible, by children, youth and adults who live in precarious conditions and suffer from many forms of exclusion.

Because he is close to or integrated into the most excluded environments, the street worker, along with social help desks, is the first and the last link in the educational chain when all the other authorities have failed. He is also a link which enables to mobilize the educational and social authorities to act in order to offer new perspectives to the children in a street situation.

de Boevé, Edwin

CHAPTER ONE

A JOURNEY TO THE STREET



CPCS

ARTICLE 6 (CRC) : “Every child has the inherent right to life ... survival and development”



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

Introduction

In Nepal, as everywhere else, the reasons which lead the child to get to the street are numerous and complex. Poverty, family conflicts and the pursuit of freedom appear to be the most frequently encountered causes.

Of course, a child arrives on the street afterwards and dependent on the interaction of different factors. Each story is different; each child has got his own past.

Usually, in Nepal, a child is not born in a street situation, hence the importance to look into his past, to wonder about the “road” on which the circumstances of life pushed him down.

The child is subjected to a number of cultural, political and social pressures which pass through family and which sometimes lead him to partly or completely try and live on the street.

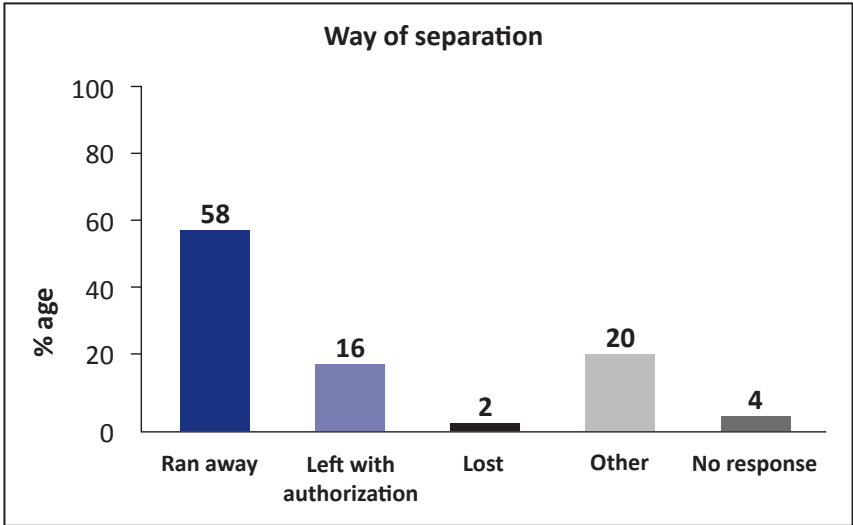
The situation of the family is thus obviously a key factor which has to be taken into account when one tries to encapsulate the child’s past.



Quantitative approach: analysis of the statistical data

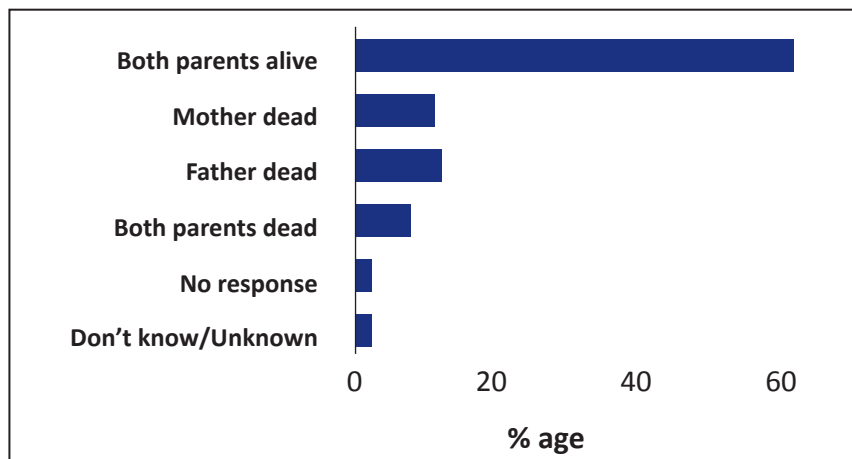
Way of separation

The majority of the street children (58%) ran away from their home or families. One out of six children (16%) left with authorization from their parents/guardians and 20% of the children mentioned that they separated from their family due to other reasons.



Family status

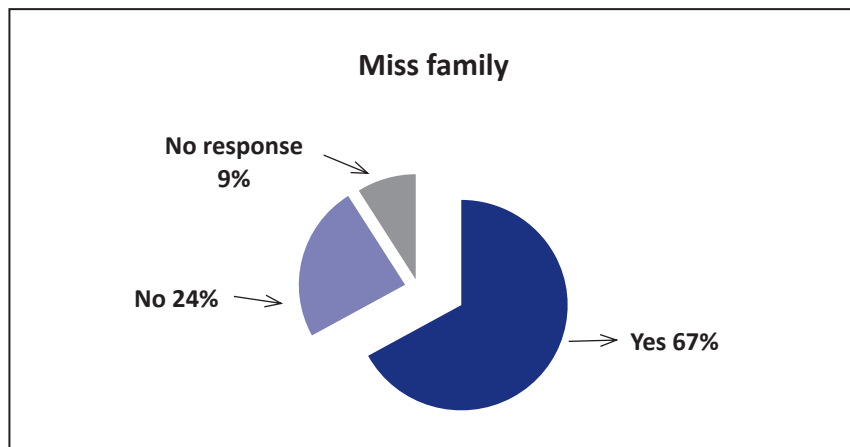
More than three in five children had both parents alive (61%) while almost a third of the children came from a single parent family (father died 16%; mother died 15%). 7% of the children were parentless.



Quantitative approach: analysis of the statistical data

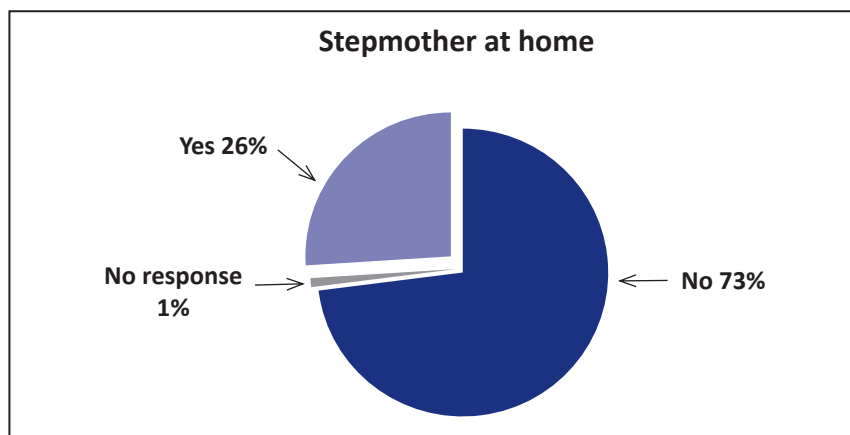
Missing family

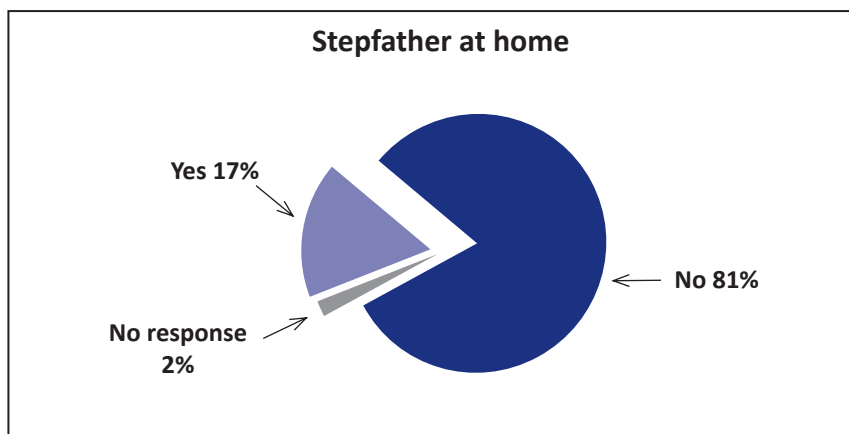
A majority of the children (67%) reported that they missed their family while one fourth of the children (24%) mentioned they did not miss their family.



Stepparents

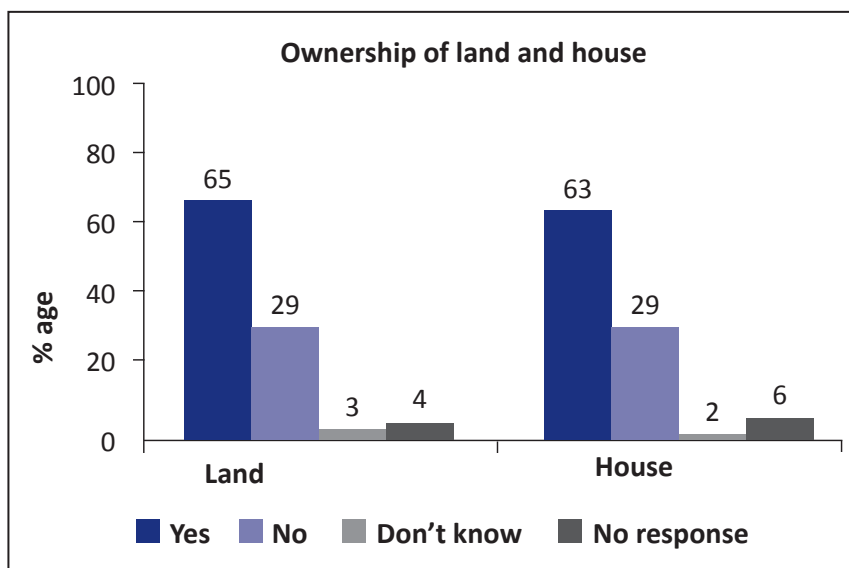
The majority of the children do not have stepparents. However, more than one fourth of the children (26%) had a stepmother at home. Similarly, 17% of the children reported that they had a stepfather at home.





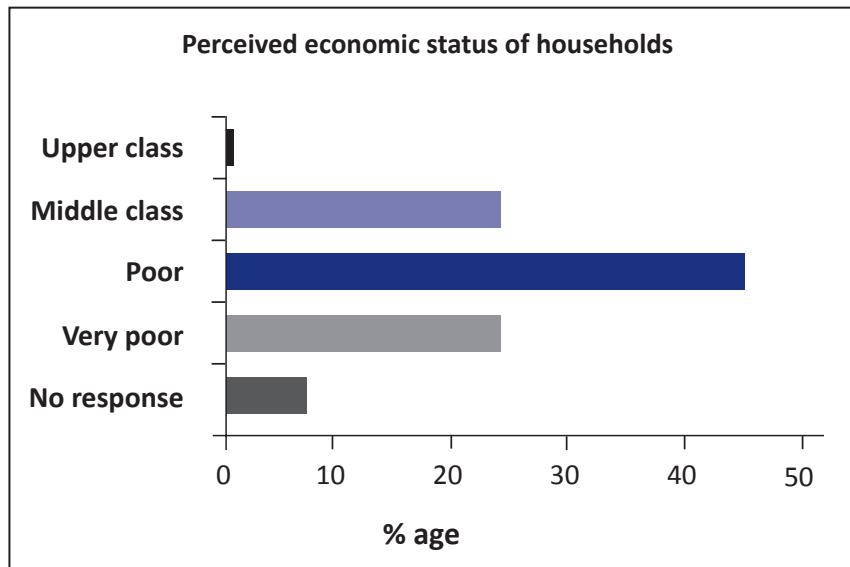
Land and house ownership

The majority of the children's families owned land (65%) and owned a house (63%) while 29% of the respondents reported that their families did not own any land or house.



Perceived economic status of households

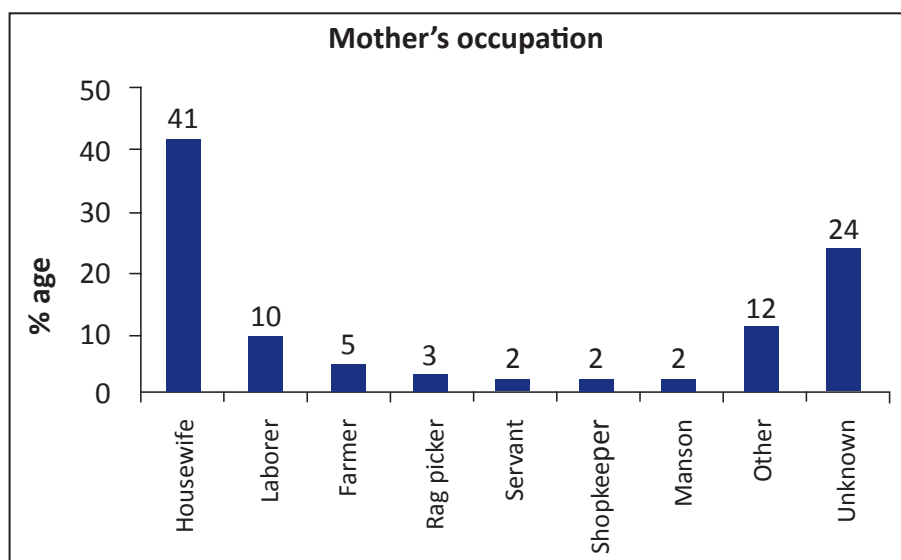
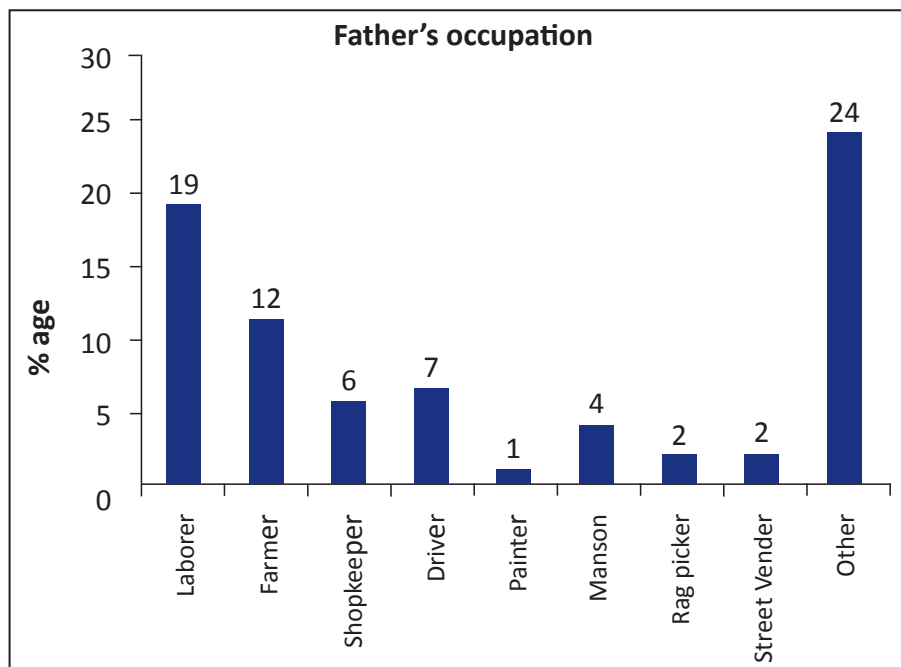
More than two thirds of the children (69%) considered their families to be either very poor or poor while about one fourth of the children (24%) placed their families in the middle class.



Occupational status of parents

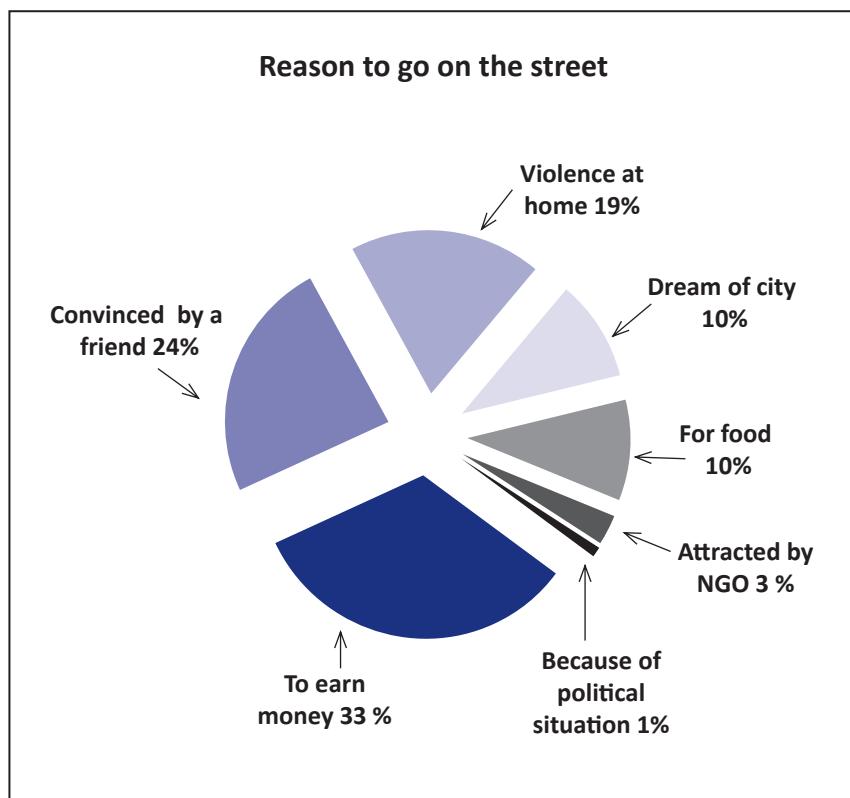
The main occupations of the respondents' fathers was laborer (19%) followed by farmer (12%). 7% of the children's fathers were drivers while 6% of the children reported that their father was shopkeeper.

More than two in five children (41%) reported that their mother worked as a housewife, while 10% were laborers and 5% farmers.



Reasons for coming to live in the Street

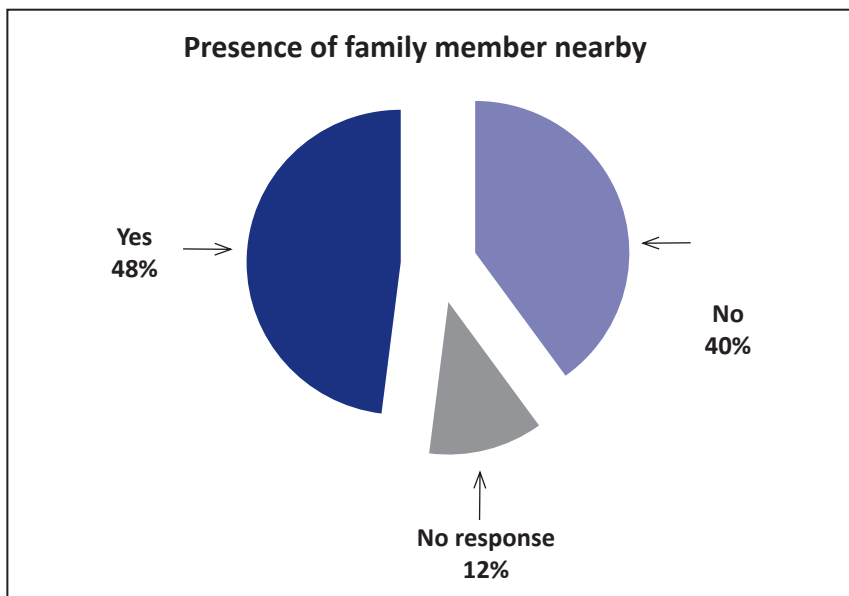
Respondents mentioned many reasons for coming to the street. 'To earn money', 'convinced by a friend' and 'violence at home' were the most commonly cited reasons. One third of the children reported that 'to earn money' was the main reason for coming to live on the street while 24% mentioned 'convinced by their friend' to live on the street as the primary motive. Close to 20% cited violence at home as the reason to leave. A significant proportion of the children also reported 'dream of city' (10%), and 'for food' (10%) as reasons for leaving home and coming to live in the street. Few children reported the reasons for coming to live in the street were 'attracted by NGOs' and 'because of political situation'.



Family nearby

About half of the children (48%) mentioned that they have a family member nearby or in the city where the children are staying. On the other hand, 40% of the children reported that none of their family members are staying in the city where the respondents are staying.

The remaining 12% of the children were either ignorant of or did not reply on the presence of family members nearby.



Qualitative approach: observations and first-hand accounts

The reasons which lead children to the street are multiple and complex: socio-economic conditions in the village, disintegration of the family cell (often associated with alcohol), domestic violence, the attraction of the city, political instability, friend's pressure, etc. It is often within the interaction of all these factors (economic, political and social) that the real reasons are to be found. Each group of people crossing the path of these children is more or less part of one of these causes (departure to the street or willingness to stay there).

Some families send their own children to work in the streets. Parents use children as a means of earning money. At the same time, alcohol consumption among many fathers and the associated violence often results in a child deciding to leave the family, the home and go to the city. Normally, the child lives alone or with another street dweller, experiencing the same situation. They then place all their dreams in the myth of the city.

At home in the village, the child undergoes a number of cultural, political and social pressures that pass through the family. This pressure often pushes the child towards trying the adventure of living in the street. The relationship with the family is therefore a key element in this phenomenon. Unemployment, working conditions and other pitiful economic conditions clearly promote a dislocation of family links. This situation worsens when the family father becomes a drunkard. Often, as long as the father earns the money necessary to run his household, everything is fine. Otherwise, it is the whole family who become potential victims.

There is a misconception that most street children do not have any parents or have been thrown out of their homes. For a large majority, the street children themselves made the decision to leave their household, allowing for time and space for eventual "back to home" perspectives to be formed.

First-hand accounts:

Ashmita:

I used to live with my younger brother and my parents who were laboring. They were alcoholic. They spent the remaining money on food. Me and my brother, we were battered and scolded harshly by our parents. I didn't want to stay at

home any longer so I left. Now I am living in Kathmandu and I manage to get some food by begging beside the temple.

Srijana:

I come from Sindhupalchowk. I am thirteen now. I lost my father when I was young, then I went on living with my mother and my sister. My mother left me alone one night and never came back. I knew that she got married to another man. I went to see my elder sister who'd got married. My brother-in-law treated me well in the beginning but, gradually, he started behaving badly so I left my sister's place and came to Kathmandu by bus. Now I am living in Mitra Park and I beg on the street for survival. I found a group there. We are four girls.

Arjun:

I am from Kapan and I am 12 years old now. I still have my parents and a brother. I went to school until grade 3. My parents used to batter me when I didn't study well. My mother loved me much. I never cared for my studies because of my bad fellows. Then I left home and started living on the street. I use magnets to pull out coins/money from the river and I also rob money and gold from the dead bodies.

Keshawa T:

When I was small my mother got married to another man and then my father married my stepmother. When I was 5 years old, my stepmother stole gold from our neighbor. I ran away from the house by public bus, but I had no money at that time, so I hid at the back of the bus. The bus staff saw me but didn't ask me money. They even gave me a night meal. Later on, I went to school until grade 4 at Shree Bhawanisower Lower secondary school, in Neyaganu. My father was doing witchcraft and fishing in the village.

Then I went to Kathmandu and I started to sleep on the street. In the morning, I used to beg in the Bus Park and collected 70 to 100 rupees a day. At first, I spent it on food and snacks; I didn't use any type of drugs at that time. Then another youth stole a cycle in the Bus Park but I was accused of stealing it and I ended up in Hanuman Dhoka. I wept on the street, but nobody asked me why I was crying. That is when one boy came talking to me. He had cigarettes and a plastic bag in his hands. His name was Arjun Pandey. He gave me a cigarette. When I smoke it, I coughed.

Now, I have many friends on the street. I smoke cigarettes, use dendrite and drink whisky. I know that cigarettes and dendrite aren't good for the health, but I feel cold on the street at night. I also miss my family and I feel lonely on the street. So I take it. When I've got some money, I always spend it.

Raju:

I was seven years old then. My mother got married to another man. My father, my two sisters and I were living in the Kotheshwor area. My father was laboring there. I went to the Sanchetana Lower School until grade 1. I went to my sister's home to look after her baby. She had a young neighbor who was the same age as me and we became friends. Sometimes, we went to visit Bhaktapur place and at other times we went to the movies. When we went to the cinema, we stayed in there the whole night. I also smoked cigarettes with him. I feel dizzy when I smoke too fast, it is fun. Then, I made some friends on the street and I didn't want to go back to my father and sisters, so I started living with my friends all the time. Slowly, I started to take dendrite and to smoke cigarettes and marijuana. At first, it was fun and I enjoyed living on the street. When I was a small boy, I used to beg on the street and to eat some meals and other things. Now, I'm still begging and I collect from 200 to 250 rupees a day, but I spend all my money on dendrite, cigarettes and local beers.

I'm still living on the street, but now I feel unhappy because some street youth always rob the money I collected. Sometimes they also batter me, as well as the police who arrest us too, and who tell us not to sleep on the street. I want to learn to sing and to become a famous singer in Nepal.

Shiva:

I am 12 years old. My family was living in Pokhara. They were compelled to leave because they didn't pay the rent in time. We were 4: my father, my mother, my sister and me, but my mother passed away. My father was fare collector on the bus and my sister worked as a servant. No one cared about me and so I ran away from my family. Now I live in Gongabu with a group of friends. We are 10. Living in a group is pleasant because we can earn more money and we are not to be afraid of being robbed by another group. Once, my friends raped some girls and were arrested by the police.

Deepak:

I've been living on the street since 2010. I come from Majuwa. We are six in our family. My father drives a tricycle for a living and my mother works as a dishwasher. My elder brother went to India to find a job and my elder sister also works as a dishwasher in a hotel in Kathmandu. My younger brother follows the rehab program provided by CPCS in Butwal. I went to school until grade 1 but then I dropped school. My friends from the slums persuaded me to go and earn money on the street. I'm earning 100 rupees a day and we own a house and a small plot of land in the slums. Now I also sniff glue. In the future, I want to be a policeman.

Purna:

I've been living on the street for a year now. I went to school until grade 2 in Butwal. I come from Rupandehi. We are 7 in our family. My father labors. We have our own house. I smoke cigarettes and I sniff glue. I'm sleeping on the street. I work as a rag-picker and I sell my goods to a collector. I earn 50 to 60 rupees a day. I don't want to go back home because my family would force me to continue school.

Chhitij S:

I come from Okhaldunga. My father went abroad for his job. We are now living in Jorpati-Kathmandu. My mother is a laborer and me and my sister, we went to the Binayak Secondary School in Gothatar. One day, we came back from the school to find an empty room. The neighbors told us that our mother moved away, but they didn't know where she went. They gave us food, which we ate, but then we had to leave the room. We had to sleep on the street. It is very difficult to sleep outside at night. We hid our bags and our books inside some huts and we tried to sleep under a roof.

Prakash:

I'm from Illam. I ran away from my house because there was a lot of domestic violence there. My father was an alcoholic and he battered me and my mother every day, without any reason. I don't know what the love of a father is. Our economic status was very low and so we had to face the same routine every day. That is why I went to live in the capital. I spent about 2 or 3 years on the street and survived as a servant. But they were never happy with my work, there was always complaining and I was humiliated in each and every step that I took. I was feeling unhappy and so I left that place.

Ram Baniya (11 years):

I am from Routahat, but now I live in the Pashupati area. I've got 3 brothers, we are all begging on the street at busy intersections and in the temples. We spend the money we collect on food, glue and cigarettes, but we also save a little to give it to our mother. From time to time, I go to our mother's room and sometimes I stay there overnight. But most of the time I sleep on the street. My father died when I was younger and my mother works as a laborer.

If I don't go back to my mother's room, she is searching for me because she relies on us. I don't like going back there because of my friends. I'm also sniffing glue.



National perspective

By Pradeep Parajuli and Wim De Becker

Social Worker and Country Director

Kids Shangrila Home (Nepal)

When you walk the streets of Kathmandu, be it in daytime or during the night, it is hard not to notice the many children and adolescents who are obviously living on those streets. Some of them ended up there due to reasons beyond their will; orphans who are not taken care of by anyone, or children whose parents live on the streets as well. But this is only a minority among the street children. For most of them it was a choice they made.

It is hard to imagine what could possibly drive a child, and often a very young child, to decide to leave his/her home and run off to the big city where they have no security whatsoever and where nobody is waiting for them. Still, for many children in Nepal the choice is obvious because in many cases they have no security, nor is there anybody waiting for them in their homes. The choice is always out of despair, and mostly despair about poverty and everything that is connected with it. Hunger, being deprived of education, being forced to beg or to work, domestic violence and relentless harassment are the main reasons that cause a child to hit the streets.

Poverty doesn't bring out the best in people. Alcoholism is quite common and often causes violence in the underprivileged communities. Many children are victimized by the violence and aggression of their family members and get abused and mistreated.

Husbands abandon their wives and leave them to take care of their children on their own. Wives leave their husbands to marry another man and get a chance to start again or simply to survive, mostly leaving their children behind because the new husband will not accept them. Those who are left alone and cannot cope with raising their children will often marry again. Many children are bullied and harassed by their stepmothers or stepfathers, up to the point that they cannot take it anymore.

And then there is the attraction of the big city, with high hopes of job opportunity, education, adventure, excitement, money... Not all of the children really need to leave their homes. Not all of them were desperate in the sense that they could not have survived in their family environment. Some of them run away because of having made a mistake and being afraid of what the consequences might be when they are discovered. They stole money from their parents or they got caught doing illegal stuff. So they leave and are too scared, or too proud, to go back.

Those who come to the city with great expectations of finding work are easy victims. They are lured into working in carpet factories or brick kilns or stone quarries as cheap laborers, or even as slaves, and they prefer the street life to the horrible conditions in their work places.

So many different stories are heard, so many different reasons why. But the fact is that although most children want to get out of the street life and are ready to accept any chance of rehabilitation into the Nepalese society, there are very few who actually want to go back to their village to live there. If, with the help of an organization, a positive contact can be made between child and family; this will be a very important step in the social rehabilitation process of the child, who experiences this event as a big burden falling off of his shoulders. But still most of them will want to finalize their social rehab program and find a job and a room in the city on whose streets they have lived for so long.

Pradeep Parajuli and Wim De Becker

International perspective

By Flavia Shaw-Jackson

Founder/Executive Director

FACE for Children in Need (Egypt)

Cairo. Egypt. It is 11 pm. Fraise – it is her name – is clapping her hands. Her face is lighting up. She is got a child's smile, as we love it: happy, lively, and irresistible. She has been waiting for that moment for hours. She just turned five. Her dark little curls are tied at the back of her head with a hair tie. She is beautiful. Grubby, but beautiful. Her sister, Banane, is more reserved. She, too, is happy that we finally got there, with games, affection and soothing words. But she holds slightly back. There is something of a mist of sadness in her eyes. This expression that covers the face of the children who already don't expect anything from life anymore. What did life give her so far? Suffering, deprivations, starvation, fear and loneliness.

The economic situation in Egypt is very difficult and the huge growth of the population is a real burden for this country: between 1975 and 2001, the population of Egypt grew by 88%. Even if it is a very dynamic town, Cairo, the capital city, shows real overcrowding and poverty problems, the population attracted by this city (20 million) cannot manage to find a job or an accommodation. The situation of the children is particularly precarious. There is a total amount of eight million children under five. In Cairo, there are between 200,000 and one million abandoned children who are left to their own devices; at the mercy of traffickers and of the police. These children who, before, mostly lived in a house in Cairo ended up on the street because of domestic violence, drugs, alcoholism, death of a parent, family flare-up or simply because of economic collapse. But the result is the same: these youth find themselves forced to survive on the streets of Cairo, either picking rubbish, begging or living on the sly in the slums. They are very vulnerable to abuses, to exploitation or to police violence. Some of them are able to survive through little jobs, selling objects they found or some food. Many others die on the street. Without any help, form of education, love, affection or tenderness, these children have no future and their life expectancy remains appallingly low.

Mangue, the last born girl, is also bound to spend years struggling for survival in this hostile city. She just turned 15 months. She doesn't walk. She is born with

a malformation which keeps her legs tucked under her frail little body. But who, here, is going to care for her, for her health, for her growth curve? Mangué is buried in her mother's arms, Samira, a young 35 year old Egyptian who is sitting on the sidewalk of a noisy Cairo avenue. She has also got three other boys who are older and who try to survive alone in this megalopolis.

Thirty-five years old, six children. And Samira doesn't have anything left. Her husband who is bigamous and preferred to settle in the house with his new young spouse repudiated her. She sleeps on a straw mattress with her children. She has got nothing left. One by one, she sells packs of paper handkerchiefs for a few piasters. She was waiting for us too, for our team of social workers, psychologists and pediatricians who scour the streets of Cairo at night in search of those street children.

These late-night expeditions are one of the activities essential to establish a contact with the Cairo street children. It is useless to open centers to cater for the youth without having previously gained the confidence of these children and teenagers who distrust every organization where they could lose even a bit of freedom – their one and only capital. We thus have to reach out to them.

So, Fraise is the one who longs the most. The members of the team take some games for the children out of their backpacks. Fraise rushes for the jigsaw puzzles. She loves to assemble the pieces and to make Dumbo, Mickey or Donald appear. Then she grabs the colour pencils we hold out to her in her little hand. A real treasure for her. Kneeling, she takes great care not to go beyond the outlines of the character she is colouring red, yellow, blue. She shows us her work. Wonderful! Little Fraise. She then savours the milk box and the cereal bar. A feast. Finally, she throws herself into our arms, making sure that we would come back tomorrow. Yes, we promise you, Fraise.

We thus left Banane, Fraise and Mangué. A few hundred meters farther, it is another group of children who look out for our arrival. These children are older. Youssef gives the signal to his friends who come along, running. Another one, who is sleeping on the ground wrapped in a blanket, wakes up with the others shouting with joy. In the end, they are about ten, gathering together in a circle. Here, our goal is not to play, but to make these young teenagers talk. We hope to squeeze a thought, a feeling or a wish out of their sometimes-stubborn minds. Most of them are blocked off from the outside world, in an "inner prison". They did not

have any semblance of a childhood. They only know the law of the street – the jungle. They have to struggle to live, to eat and to make a name for themselves among the others. They have to escape the police raids, the traffickers and, the latest danger, those sorts of pirates who organize child hunts. Trafficking in human organs is fairly profitable. In early November, two teenagers have been found disemboweled.

The discussion has a somewhat slow start. To provoke a debate, a social worker suggests throwing a ball. The one who gets it can say what his dream is.

Hishman: “I’d like people to stop hitting me...”

Aly: “Me, I’d like to see my mom again. I haven’t seen her for 18 years.”

Said hesitates. He looks me right in the eyes. “Me, I’d like to die... or to go back to your country with you.”

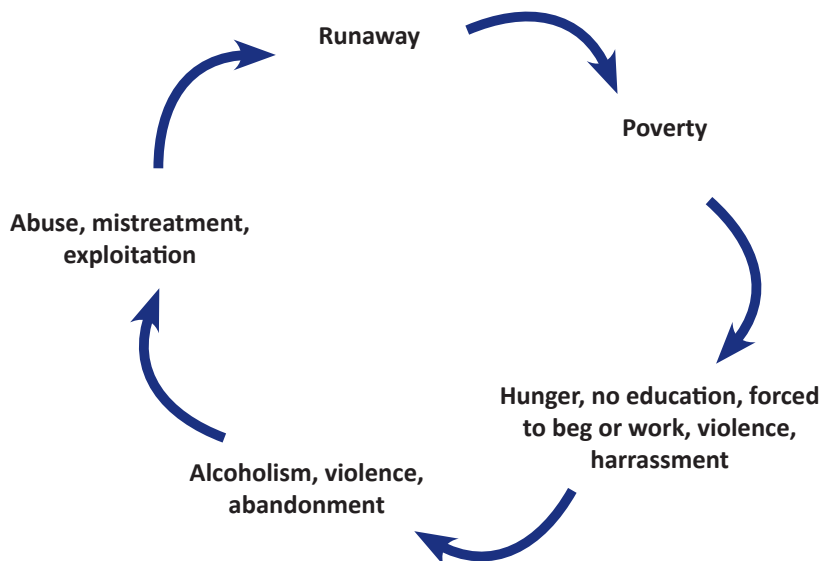
As for Ahmed, he came to the gathering to be healed. His forearm is covered in knife cuts. The last one became infected and the tough skin cannot manage to heal anymore. Why does he inflict injuries on himself? When he is taken in a police raid, he slices through his arm and threatens the policemen by saying that they gave him too much of a beating.

These children and their worn faces alone could justify the creation of FACE. Helping; relieving; giving. Giving, without expecting anything. Giving affection and love. Giving a chance to those who were born on the wrong side...

Flavia Shaw-Jackson

Key Findings

- ✦ Although the story of each child in a street situation is different; the vicious cycle of poverty is a constant.



- ✦ Relationships with the family – past, present and future – are the key to the lives and livelihood of the children.
- ✦ Over 60% of the children still had both parents alive and two thirds missed their families. These statistics may prove a powerful motivation to help reunify a street child with his family.
- ✦ Whilst the majority of the families of street children own land or houses, they are still perceived as poor or very poor. This perception may have initially lead 43% of the children to the street for food or to earn money for themselves and their families.

- ✦ 15% of the children in a street situation were from the eastern Terai district of Sunsari.
- ✦ Gaining the trust of the children in a street situation is paramount. Once you have their trust you can gain their respect. Only then, after gaining their confidence, can one reach out and assist them to their needs.

Loss of freedom is a primary reason why most children do not want to get out of the streets. Fair proportions are ready to accept rehabilitation but very few want to live or return to their village. Their first preference seems to be rehabilitated, get a job and a room, but in their “home” – the city.



CHAPTER TWO

THE WORKING CONDITIONS AND DAILY ACTIVITIES



CPCS

ARTICLE 32 & 36 (CRC) : “Children must be protected from economic exploitation ... from (hazardous) work (and) all other forms of exploitation”



Working on the street means begging, picking plastic items, collecting money in public transport, washing plates, etc. For a few rupees, without any working regulations, any rights or any rest, they are misused.

Introduction

In Nepal as everywhere else, a child in a street situation is, of course, gainfully employed. This activity can be legal, less legal or completely illegal.

Work thus plays a vital role in the street children's lives, enabling them to survive and to be independent. Working in the street environment clearly poses many hazards and risks to the children living on the street.

However, the role of the child's own agency in negotiating these risks plays an important part in determining his vulnerability. The assumption that children automatically want to leave the street when offered another option is a mistaken notion.

While organizations offer services for the children who want to move on from the street, an aspect frequently overlooked is the need to work in the street environment to protect those children, to motivate them and to prepare them



to move on. Most children living on the street work for their own income and enjoy many kinds of freedoms because of this.

Many may see their current situation in a positive way.

Among the various kinds of activities, let us first mention plastic picking. Just to remind you: plastic pickers are the children we may see on the Nepali streets with a big bag and a picking stick. They wander about the streets in search for recyclable rubbish they sell by the kilogram. Some of them enjoy some kind of family life, mostly within the groups of children who come from India or from the Terai Plain. A lot of them are completely left to their own devices. That is why, once they have finished working, they meet again with their clan, their gang or other pickers. And yet, the International Labor Office considers rubbish picking to be one of the worst forms of child labor.

We also meet a lot of “khalasis”, children who are hanging on to the back of public transport, collecting money from the passengers.

Most of them share the same big dream: one day, they want to get their driver’s license, become the driver and have their own vehicle. Only a few of them will manage to reach that goal and a lot will go on with the same khalasi life made up of pollution, glue and contempt. Hanging on to the back of vehicles stuck in traffic jams and fumes all day long, they often suffer from serious pulmonary diseases and respiratory infections. Fortunately, the driver usually treats them well and sometimes even temporarily houses them.

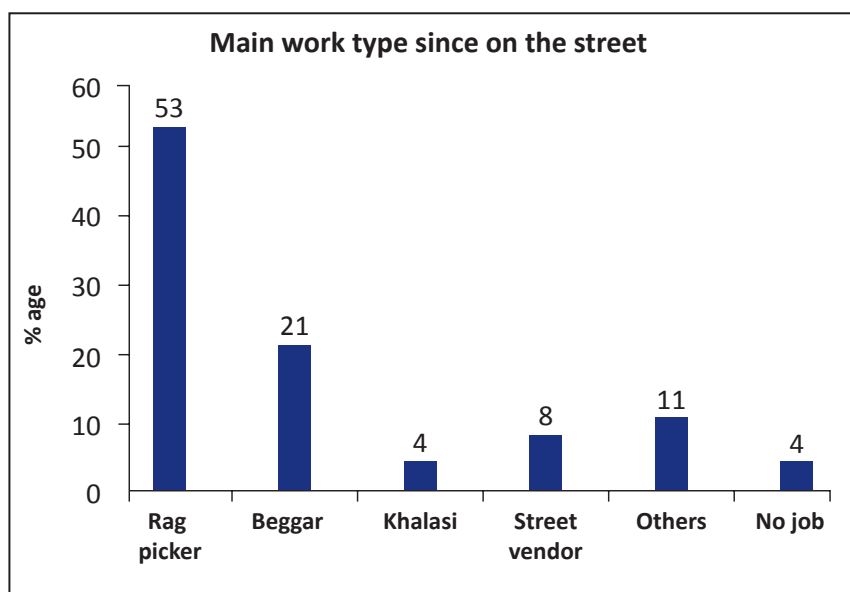
Besides these two (very permeable) “categories”, the children have various “jobs”: theft, drug and newspaper sales, begging, cleaning, etc.

And yet, Nepal is a signatory to most of the international rules forbidding child labor that are supposed to secure their protection and their rights. Of course, in the Nepali society, child labor isn’t traditionally abnormal. The children are quickly called upon the family services, should the family be subjected to economic difficulties and/or they have lands to exploit. Earning a few rupees sometimes allows the child to provide for all his family. If, in theory, child labor remains harmful to him, it is nevertheless understandable and currently inevitable.

Quantitative approach: analysis of the statistical data

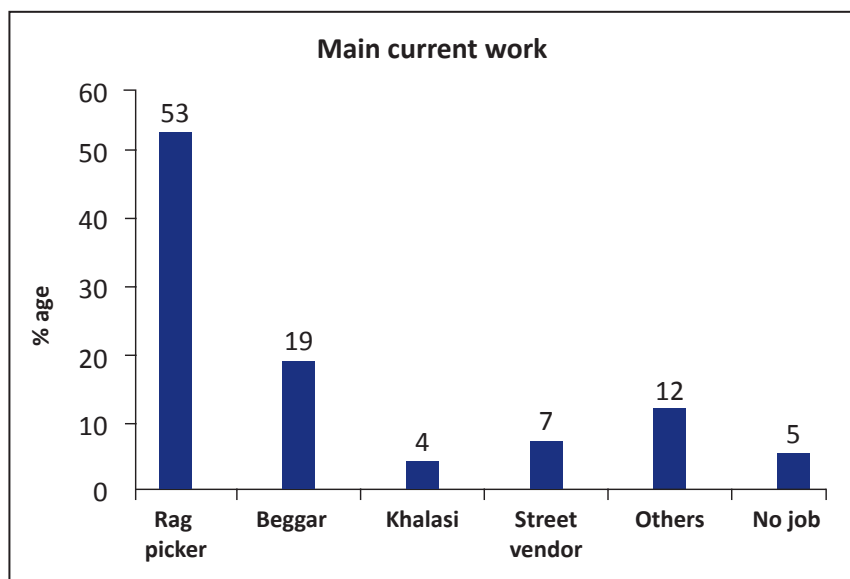
Main work type since in the street

More than half of the children reported that their main work since being on the street was as rag pickers. 21% worked as beggars whilst 8% mentioned being street vendors. Similarly, about 4% of the children worked as Khalasis (helper or conductor of a bus/tempo) while 4% did not have any job.



Current work type

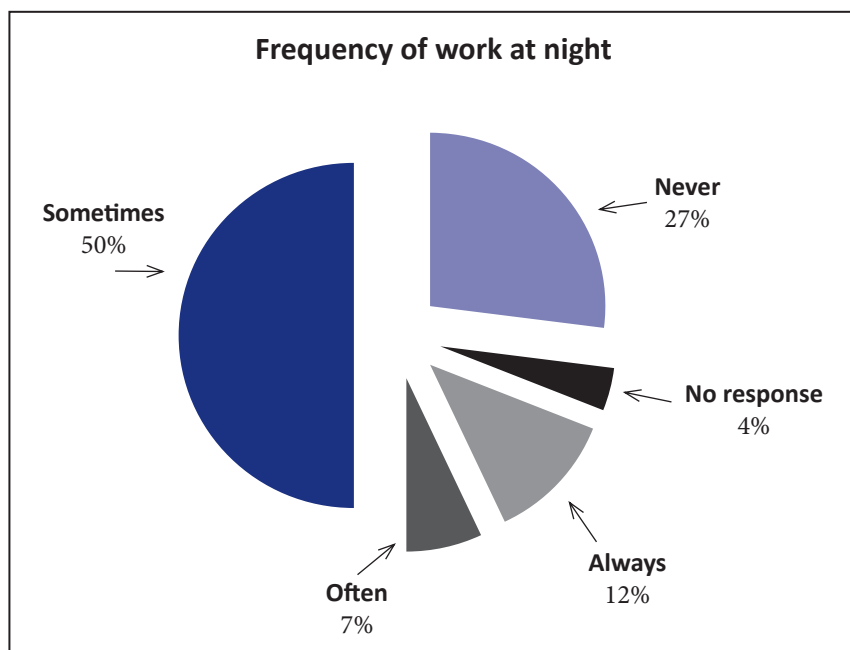
The primary work type of most of the children was as rag picker and beggar. More than half of the children (53%) reported that their main work was as a rag picker at the time of the survey. Similarly, about one in five children (19%) reported that they are beggars and 7% children stated that they are currently street vendors.



Frequency of working at Night

Working at night can place children at greater risk of abuse and exploitation, while limiting the access of organizations which predominantly use office hours to work with these children. A high majority of the children regularly (always, often or sometimes) work at night (69%) placing them at greater risk.

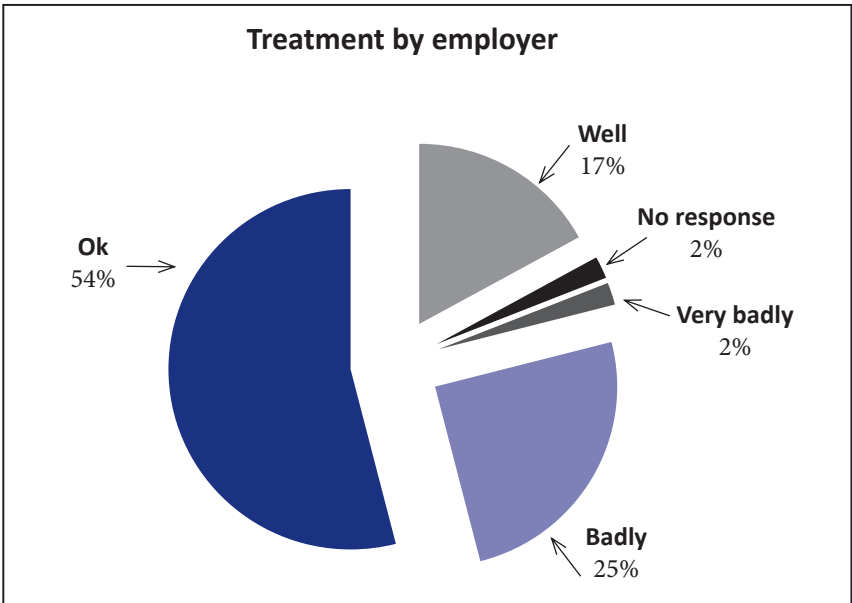
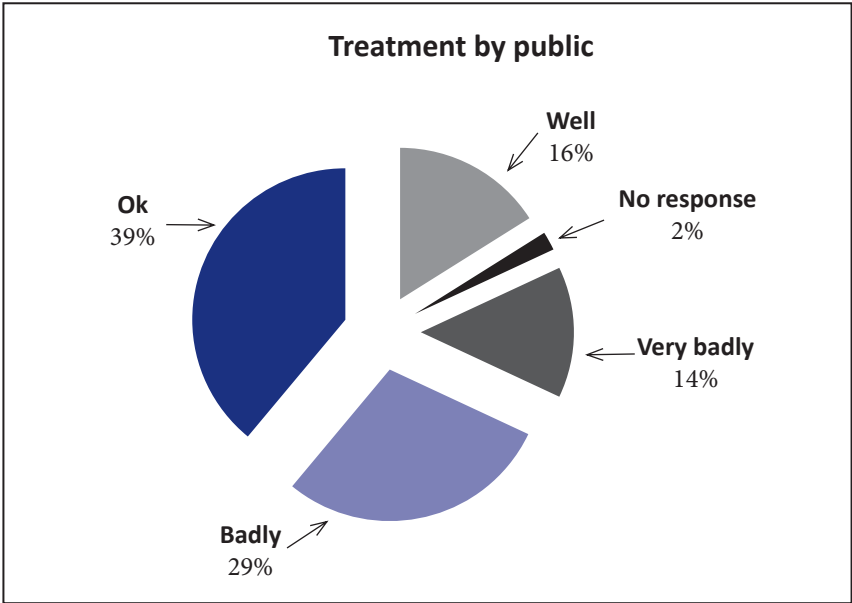
On the other hand, more than a quarter (27%) reported that they never worked at night. Comparing current work to working at night, it is worth noting that 50% of the Khalasi's, 38% of the beggars and 33% of the street vendors never work at night. By comparison, only 14% of rag pickers never work at night.



Treatment by employers and the public

Children were asked about how they were treated by their employers and by the public while working. A substantially high proportion of the children reported being badly or very badly treated (43%) while only 16% of the children reported that they were treated well by the public. Fewer than two in five children (39%) mentioned being treated neither good nor bad by the public.

More than one in four children (27%) reported being treated badly or very badly whereas 18% of the children reported being treated good or very good by the employer while working. More than half of the children (54%) reported that their employer treated them OK.

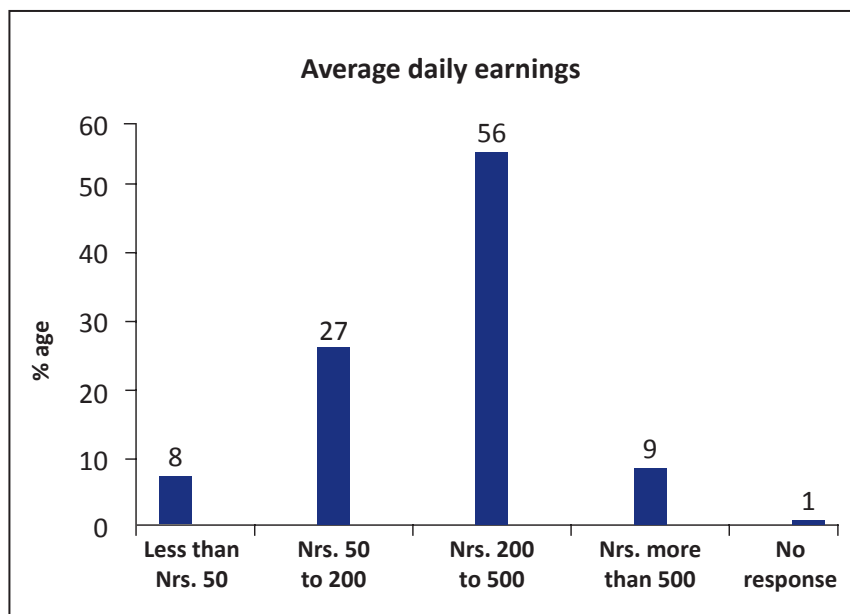


Daily Earnings

The average daily earnings of the respondents range from less than 50 rupees (NRs) per day to over 500 rupees per day. However, the majority of the children earned 200-500 rupees (56%) followed by 50-200 rupees (27%) per day. It is also notable that about one out of ten children (9%) earned more than 500 rupees per day.

As a comparison, the daily wage for an adult industrial worker is 231 rupees (USD2.61) per day (2011 figures).

Over 80% of the children working as conductors and street vendors receive between 200 and 500 rupees per day. By contrast, only 67% of rag pickers receive this amount and a significant number (27%) receive less than 200 rupees per day. Earnings as a beggar can be more of a lottery. Whilst 61% of street children who beg earn less than 200 rupees, 11% earn more than 500 rupees per day. With such fluctuations, and the possibilities of high wages, one can see why a street child may be interested in this occupation.



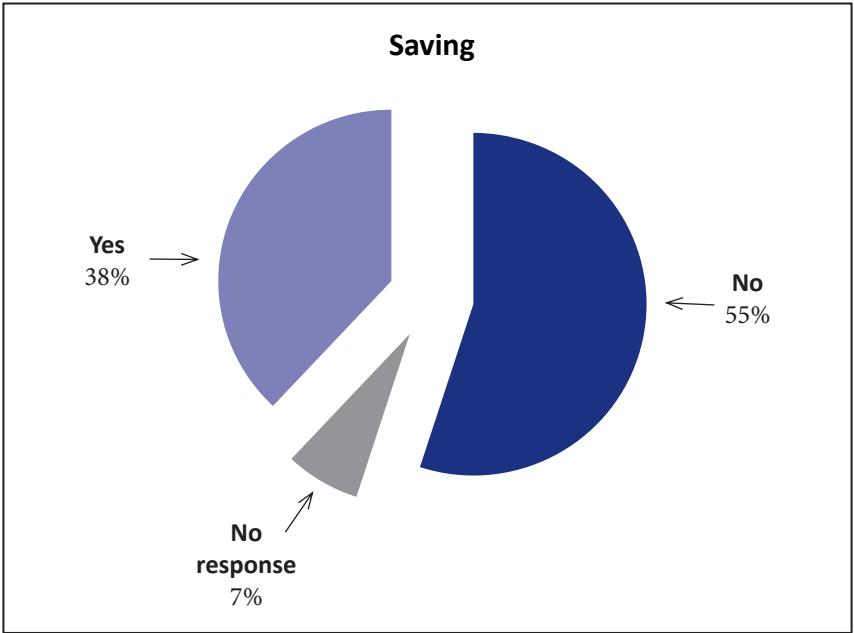
Money sent to family

About one third of the children (35%) reported that they used to send money to their family. The other 60% did not send money to their family while about 6% of the children did not respond on this issue.

Money sent to family	%
Yes	34.8
Not	59.6
No response	5.6
Total	100.0

Savings

About two in five children (38%) save money while 55% of the children were not able to save any money.



First-hand accounts:

Santosh (16 years):

It is been 10 years since I left home. All day long, I'm on the street. When I was small, I survived through begging. As I grew older, I was threatened and battered. People don't easily give money to beggars so I began to pretend I was a disabled boy while begging, so that it was easy for me to survive. To survive in this society, you need to cheat. I still act as if I was a disabled boy while begging on the bus route of Pokhara and Narayangardh. When I'm begging, I say such things as "Please give me some food, I'm hungry, I haven't eaten anything in 2 days". People easily trust me and so they readily give me money.

Rabin:

I carry wood and rice grass (straw) inside the Pashupati temple to fire the dead bodies. I also do it at night and to help my elder brothers who are involved in the cremation of the dead bodies in there. I earn 300 to 400 rupees a day. I can't save any money because I spend it on dendrite (glue), cigarettes and marijuana. Sometimes I also spend it on funny activities such as going to the cinema.

There are many youths older than me who live in Pashupati. They batter us without any reason and steal the money that we earned. Sometimes I beg with the families of the deceased persons at night.

Manoj Thapa:

I come from India. I used to work in a craft factory with my mother-in-law in Bhaktapur. I earned 500 to 1000 rupees a month. One day I accidentally voided in my mother-in-law's room. I was afraid that she would batter me, so I ran away from her room and came to Tilganga Kawa.

Now, I'm picking plastic in the Tilganga area day and night. Sometimes, I work at the airport as a luggage carrier for the visitors. I can speak English so I'm being polite while begging. But I cannot beg on the street. I earn 150 to 200 rupees a day. I'm not saving any money because I spend it on meals, dendrite, alcohol, marijuana and other drugs. Sometimes I'm afraid because many friends died of overdose in the Tilganga area.

Ram (13years):

Everyone in my family is working on the street. I've no idea on when I started living on the street because I was very young when we ended up here. Now, I'm working in the Pashupati area, which is risky. I'm working in the funeral place: I help with the cremation of the dead bodies. I earn 100 to 800 rupees a day. I have to send money to my family and I also have to save some of my earnings for the festival celebrations.

Suraj Nepali:

I am 14 years old and I live in Pashupati. I'm an orphan. I've been living on the street for 5 years. I've tried many different jobs on the street. Sometimes, I work as a conductor. I usually work at night. There are many devotees coming in Pashupati in the morning and so we can earn money by begging, but the police batter us. I earn 300 rupees a day, and I manage to save some of it, but, since I'm an orphan, I've got nobody to send it to and it makes me sad.

Ahish:

I'm 14 now. To earn money, I'm picking plastic and cardboard. Every day, I'm going to sleep around 2-3 in the morning. People approach me in a bad way. I never send money to my family because I spend everything on food. I earn 100 to 150 rupees a day. I have many friends on the street; we compete with one another while searching for goods.

Bikash:

I've been working on the street since 2008. At first, I worked as a dishwasher. Now, I work as a conductor. I have to work until midnight. In my family, there is only my sister and me. She is working in a hotel, so I don't have to give her money. Our mother died of cancer and our father died in an accident. Since I lost both my parents, I don't see the use of saving money.

Som:

I'm begging in Lagankhel. I steal the others' stuff so they treat me badly. They usually abuse me. I earn 200 to 400 rupees a day, but I can't save any money. I also like to beg at night, but no one's there because it is dark.

Akash T:

I'm 12. I'm begging at the cinema hall from 8 am till the evening. Oh, and don't ask me what I do at night. I never send any money to my parents, I'm

begging for one mouth only. I earn 200 to 300 a day. I could go to a more secure place where no one can touch my money, but I would earn less.

Sonam Khadka:

I left my house because of domestic violence. At first I stayed in Kalanki. I work as a khalasi and water seller. I have to earn money to eat. Sometimes, my boss doesn't pay me. There are lots of risks with the khalasi job: you can fall down, your hand can be wedged against the door, etc. I work till the evening. My boss treats me well. Once, a friend of mine was walking while on a dendrite trip and got hit by a bus coming from behind. But fortunately nothing serious happened to him.

Ramesh:

I'm from Dhankuta. At first, I stayed in Putalisadak but now I stay in the Pashupati area. I collect residual firewood from the funeral pyres and sell it. I have a family but I don't know where they are now. Before she died, my mother took me with her to my stepfather's house when my parents got divorced. Two years ago, my father came to Pashupati, searching for me. I met him. At that moment, he tried to convince me to go to a Gulf country to look for a job. Even if some friends of mine died of a drug overdose, I am very addicted to drugs, so I need money to buy it.



National perspective

Himmat Maskey

National Director-CPCS (Nepal)

In my opinion, street life is a last option of surviving and it is difficult for everybody to adjust on the street. Once they are used to the street life it is very difficult to leave the street.

The street has its own system, rules and regulations, code language etc. At the beginning, when they are on the street, the children have to modify their own lives and learn to live in this existing environment. This is not easy and the rules and system are changing all the time. It depends on the location, the gang and the situation.

When the child first arrives on the street, he gets food easily and the street group also provides him food at first for free. This makes him more and more motivated and convinces him that the street is an easy way of life. And he enjoys the freedom. The longer he spends on the street the more he is pushed to adopt the system, rules and regulations. It depends upon the location and the group on how to earn money to survive.

The different types of street work are:

1. Begging
2. Rag picking (collecting plastic)
3. Khalasi (money collector on public transport)
4. Dish washer (work in a small hotel or local restaurant)
5. Street vendor (selling water on bus stops)
6. Involvement in criminal activities (pick pocketing, robbing, stealing...)

Begging: When the children are still small they beg on the street, traffic lights areas, tourist areas, temples and mass density locations (bazaars, markets). Because they are still small, people give them money and provide them food. They earn daily from Rs. 50 up to 4000, 5000 and get expensive, quality packaged food or wasted food from good restaurants.

Rag picking: Some children collect recyclable materials on the street and sell it. They collect materials from garbage that they find outside on the street. They have to do this work late at night and before early morning. This is high risk work. Sometimes they have accidents (bomb blast from chemical cans, chemical infections, wounds, cuts, dog bites, etc.). They earn Rs 200 to 500 for two hours work. Sometimes, they find valuable things too, but it also transpires that they are unnecessarily punished because of what they have found on the street. People accuse them of stealing it.

Khalashi/Dish washer: These jobs have many similarities. They both get a monthly salary between NRs. 500 to 1500. In this work, they get morning and evening meals, but the work conditions are not safe. They have to work very hard and most of the time they are too young for this hard labor. Most of the time they don't get a (rented) place for sleeping as the public doesn't believe or trust them, so they don't stay there long. Khalashi work is more risky and a difficult job. They have to hang outside of the vehicle to announce to the public where the bus is going. And they are humiliated by the public too. They are more exploited by the public and the bus owner in this field of work.

Street Vendor: This is another form of work for the street children. It is very difficult for these children to find initial funds to start a new business. The same difficulty of funding arises when they want to expand their existing business. They earn NRs 100 to 4500 a day and they work in groups.

Involvement in criminal activities: In the street the children are in not stable environments. They are always moving because of different reasons and they easily change their work too. Of course there is freedom but they are against society and society always looks at them in a very negative way. If there is a negative incident, they are the first ones accused by the public, society, police, authorities etc. Because of this, they always have a negative feeling against society.

In the street when they are growing up they are starting to do work on the street or they find alternative work. Some children are treasured leaders and some are doing criminal work due to drug habits. In Nepal, there are less girls than boys on the street but now the number is increasing on the street. In the street, the girls are not normally doing the jobs mentioned above. They get married with youth of the street and live as life partners. Unfortunately the relationship is

never long lasting and separation or divorce happen easily and they get married to another street youth. It is a moving circle.

Some street girls are begging on the street and some prostitute. Some girls rent a room in a lodge and pick up clients from the street. This work is encouraged by the life partner and other street guys too.

Money earned on the street is first spent on entertainment. They go to films, the video parlor, games etc. Then they spend money on drugs – most of the children use glue first; then marijuana, injections and other drugs too. Money is also spent on instruction or training of their leader. Sometimes other groups or gangs rob them.

When they get packaged food, they directly resell it to the supermarket or contact points. They already manage their contact centers for the reselling. Collecting wasted food is always shared with each other and if it is not sweet they directly throw it in the garbage.

Himmat Maskey

International perspective

By Edho Mukendy Kafunda

National Coordinator-CATSR (Congo)

Outline of the daily activities of children from broken homes (Street Children) in the Democratic Republic of Congo

I. BACKGROUND

With the endemic economic crisis in which the DR Congo has been embroiled for decades of poor governance, the family situation in the country has gotten worse and worse over the years with, as a first consequence, the inability of first the parents and then the state to meet the vital needs of the children. Some of the latter, in view of the social and public institutions' decline, decided to go and live outside the paternal roof, with a genuine preference for public places such as the street in urban centers. Hence the group identity called "street children" they have been labelled as.

The situation of the children, already precarious and unfortunate in DR Congo, deteriorated even more with the various armed conflicts currently happening all over the East of the country, especially in the Kivu and Ituri areas. There the children have been enlisted, willingly or not, as soldiers in several rebel movements and armed groups where they are used as guides, porters and economic or sexual slaves by the warlords. With the gradual return to peace, we had to establish a legal framework for the protection and support of child rights. The law on child protection in DR Congo, passed by the Parliament and promulgated in January 2009 by the President of the Republic, constitutes an advanced stage in the struggle against the arbitrary characteristics of life for the children in our country.

II. CHILD LABOR IN THE LIGHT OF THE CONGOLESE LEGISLATION

The law 09/001 of the 10th of January 2009 on child protection in Congo is a legal retort to the arbitrariness and the legal loophole which hardly guaranteed child rights in our country. Vulnerable through their dependence to their environment and through their lack of physical, intellectual and emotional maturity, a lot of

children were mistreated, discriminated against, accused of sorcery, infected or affected by HIV/AIDS or were the object of trafficking. Deprived of their right to inheritance, to healthcare and to education, some of them were the victims of social exclusion and economic or sexual exploitation. By acceding to the Convention Nr. 138 concerning the Minimum Age for Admission for Employment and to the Convention Nr. 182 concerning the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor, DR Congo embarked on the path of making a warhorse out of child protection.

The question about child labor is thus settled under Title III of the law 09/001 of 10 January 2009 on child protection, which deals with the social protection of the child. Under chapter 1, section 2 (articles 50 to 56), the worst forms of child labor are forbidden, especially all forms of slavery, forced or compulsory recruitment, prostitution, illegal activities, nuisance activities, etc.

III. APPRAISAL OF THE DAY-TO-DAY WORK DONE BY CHILDREN FROM BROKEN HOMES IN DR CONGO

Despite the publication of the law on child protection in DR Congo in 2009, the children in general and, more particularly, the “street” children are still forced to do various survival jobs and activities, most of which get on the nerves of the representatives of the legal provisions in force.

As for the whole Congolese population which has to do resourceful activities to survive in a country where jobs have been scarce for several decades, the children from broken homes, either called “phaseurs”, “shegués” or “balados”, aren’t indeed twiddling their thumbs.

On the one hand, a lot of them have a reputation for “pinching” the others’ money and rag-bag in very crowded areas and in trading centers (shops, bars, markets); others, on the other hand, work on the black market.

A survey conducted by the Congolese media revealed that in Kinshasa, for example, the “street” children regularly go to some areas where activities of the informal economy are taking place. On the various beaches and in the ports of Kinshasa, as well as in Bas-Congo, “street” children are employed as day laborers to do several jobs such as loaders and unloaders of parcels, goods and supplies – or other manufactured products from abroad or from the rural provinces. In return, they are given modest sums or food rations.

At the bus stops and on the platforms or docks (railways, private and public ports, airfields), the children become porters and carry bags (cement, corn, manioc, beans, salt, rice...) to the places of loading or of residence. And, in Kinkole for example – which is the administrative center of the Kinshasa district Nsele – the “street” children help the women who buy fish and other fishing products to cut, cook and sell them in outdoor restaurants, called “Malewa” in Kinshasa. They use the occasion to have something to eat in return. It is the same for all the other Malewa which proliferate in the pirate and official markets across the country.

Taking the opportunity of the craze for commercial and travelling activities, the children from broken homes retail plastic bags to the passers-by, customers and travelers or ask for charity to the motorists, supposed to easily give money.

The rogues of them lure the inattentive passers-by to steal their mobile phones. They then sell the phones cheaply or in exchange for meals. And, sometimes, they carry their thefts out with the help of the law enforcement agents.

Until now, the law on child protection has had no effect on all these various and daily survival activities done by the children.

Edho Mukendy Kafunda

Key findings

- ✦ The freedoms of rag picking make it the job of choice for the majority of the street children.
- ✦ A high majority of the children regularly worked at night placing them at greater risk to abuse and exploitation. In particular, 86% of the rag pickers continue to work around the clock. 62% of the beggars work at night.
- ✦ Earnings as a beggar can be a lottery with 61% earning less than 200 rupees, but 11% earn more than 500 rupees per day.
- ✦ Saving money and sending it home has been difficult for children in a street situation.
- ✦ Regardless of any State laws or International conventions, child labor is rising throughout Nepal. More than anything, children are working outside the protection of Employment and Exploitation laws. This makes them extremely vulnerable. Contrary to this, the work carried out by children in a street situation are done out of and for daily survival strategies. Paradoxically, law enforcement agents are frustrated with the children and punish them for their actions, rather than protecting them from exploitation or penalizing the initial lawbreakers.

CHAPTER THREE

THE USE OF DRUGS



CPCS

ARTICLE 33 (CRC) : “Children must be “protected from the illicit use of ... drugs and ... prevent the use of children in (their) production and trafficking.”



Street children are sniffing glue, taking tablets, drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes and sometimes even injecting drugs. Little is done to prevent them from doing it.

Introduction

The use of psychoactive substances is a widely practiced and normalized activity among adolescents in this society, and more particularly among street children. Many of these children and youth are involved in the harmful use (abuse) of drugs – i.e. use which results in social, psychological or physical problems.

Those effects can appear immediately and/or on the long run. The key for the interventions for prevention to succeed is to understand why street children commonly abuse drugs in spite of the risks involved.

Drugs 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 the different types of substances and the implications it can have on the efficiency of the interventions.

As well as experiencing the developmental changes in adolescence, street children are also negotiating identity from their marginalized position in society. The role played by drugs in the children's evolving identities and social interactions is significant.

They often take drugs to make up for an emptiness, a lacking which rose in the form of suffering. These drugs allow the children to feel better; they relieve them from their everyday life, which hammers home its heavy truths and forces them to put up with the present.

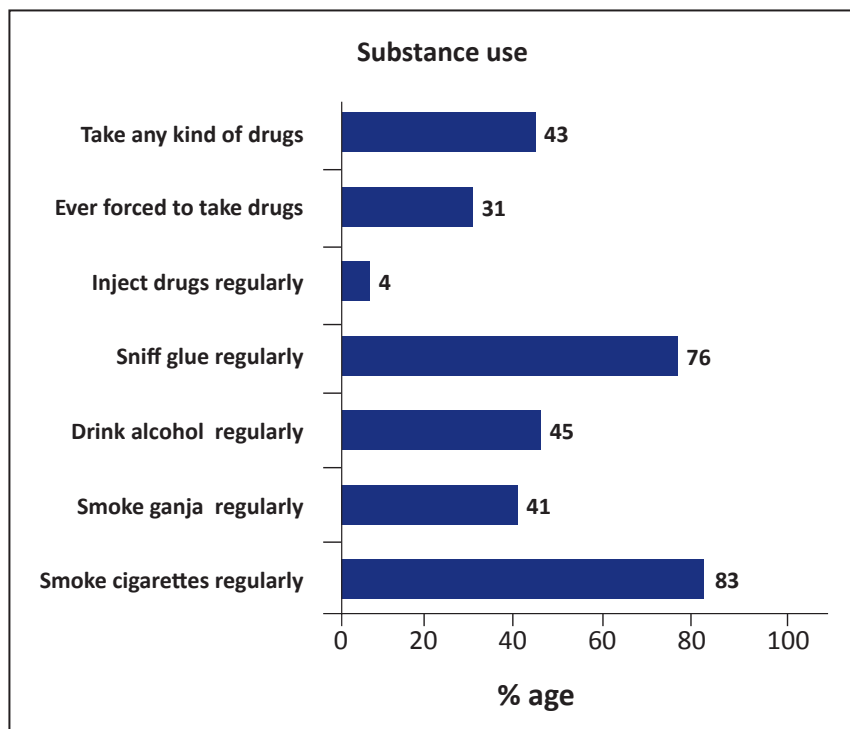
Of course, when mentioning this kind of consumption, one cannot keep silent about all the disastrous effects these drugs have on the children, both psychologically and in terms of physical and mental skills. The first of these effects is the progressive dependence of the consumer. This varies depending upon the type of drug taken. The effects can appear immediately or over time.

The different types of drugs taken vary hugely. Most common are glue, alcohol and marijuana (mainly in the form of Hashish). There is also a social dimension to consider when we look into this phenomenon. When they end up on the street, the children feel obliged to take drugs.

Quantitative approach: analysis of the statistical data

Substance use

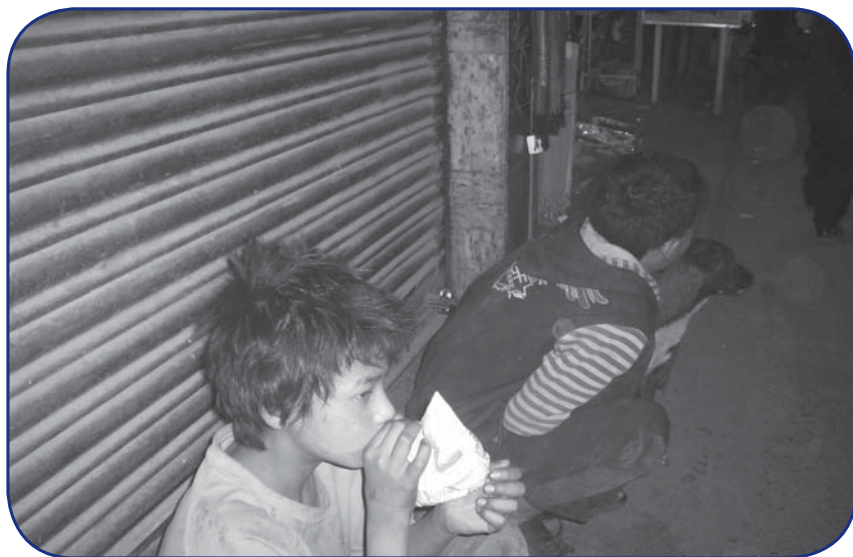
Multiple substance use is common among street children. These children use many kinds of substances. For instance, an overwhelming majority of the children (83%) smoked cigarettes followed by sniffing glue (76%) regularly. Almost half of the children reported that they consumed alcohol (45%) and smoked ganja regularly. More than two in five children (43%) reported that they also consume other kinds of drugs. Additionally, 4% of the children stated that they injected drugs regularly. It is notable that about a third of the children (31%) reported that they were forced to take drugs.



Qualitative approach: observation and first-hand accounts

Feeling rejected by society, street children sometimes shut themselves away in a parallel world with their own habits, including the use of hallucinogenic or calming substances.

One should try to understand the reasons why a child starts to take any kind of drug. There is a whole social dimension to consider when we look into this phenomenon. When they end up on the street, the children feel obliged to take drugs. There is something of a social obligation. They often have to go through such practices to assert themselves.



Let us trace the “typical” route of a child who, for various reasons, has to work on the street:

Very quickly, he will be taken in by other children who will invite him to share their meagre pittance with them. Then, they will explain to him how they survive on the street and how, when this life becomes too difficult to put up with, they, for example, drop some glue in a little bag to sniff its fragrance. Even the newcomers, who may be a little hesitant in the beginning, will not be able to categorically

refuse. Refuse the only people who showed a bit of interest in them, took them in, gave them a place around the fire, shared what little food they had with them, and who are now passing around a little bag with glue? They take a deep breath inside the bag and, almost immediately, they feel happier, more relaxed. The newcomers will then tell themselves: “Why not me? Let’s just give it a try”. And, after a few puffs, they will quickly feel lighter, somewhat as if they had been drinking alcohol. They will then forget hunger, cold and this dreadful feeling of failure which sometimes gnaw at them.

Over time, and as they grow older, they will feel more and more on the margins of society, badly accepted and the substances they took in the beginning won’t be enough anymore to make them forget reality. They will then need to take other drugs.

It will often be medicines, such as amphetamines or pain killers for example, in tablets or by injections. Given that these substances are expensive, they will thus need more money. Their little activities, be they illegal or not, shall not be enough anymore and they then risk to be forced into theft, crime and violence. They will be arrested and, in some countries, risk to get a beating or even to be tortured, which will only increase the resentment and hatred they have towards society. They will become completely unsociable and their behavior will make them take more and more risks. From this moment on, their future is already mapped out: they either end up in jail very young or die... and often of an overdose.

It is a factor that cannot be ignored when we try to understand the street child’s world.

On the street, the children freely cultivate their own way of life made out of wandering, joy and pain. Nothing can stop them from adopting a harmful behavior. They don’t care about the others’ life and happiness. On the street, the children can smoke whatever, wherever and whenever they want.

That being said, let us always bear in mind the nearness between the child and the drug scene; which is interlocked with all matters concerning crime, the Mafia, violence, abuse, money, etc.

First-hand accounts:

Kanchha:

I am Kanchha and I am 11 years old. I am from Kavre. I've been on the street in the Chabahil area for 1 or 2 years. I love being on the street. Here, I've got many friends and I enjoy playing with them. We get stoned with dendrite, which makes us see what we want to see. Most often, we're flying in the sky, it is so much fun. Sometimes I beg and sometimes I pick garbage and plastic. People hate us begging and street youth steal our money. I don't want to go back home because my parents always scolded and battered me.

Maikal (14 years):

3 years ago, I ran away from home and came to Kathmandu. I was in 3rd grade at that time. Until now, I haven't gone back home yet. It is interesting to stay in groups on the street. The big boys love us. They help us when we are sick. We take dendrite, smoke cigarette and drink alcohol in group. We aren't under any control or pressure when we are on the street. Here, we are free to do whatever we want. We can survive by begging, working or looting and stealing. Gang fights are normal on the street. There are many gangs in many places.

Devi:

I'm 17 years old and I come from Makawanpur. My father got married to another woman and left my mother. I know a bit about drugs. I also take some drugs such as Vat, Foxciban and dendrite, but usually I drink alcohol and smoke ganja. Me and my friends, we take Foxciban mixed with Naitroson.

My friends take tablets and other drugs. If we take the tab with mango juice, it gives us a heavy trip. Foxciban costs 50 rupees, but Vat costs 250 rupees. We make money through pickpocketing.

Bikram Nepali:

I'm 16 years old. I've been living on the street for six years. I come from Sunsari Dharan. At first, I stayed alone in the Kopan area. Now, my mother and my younger brother are also staying here. My mother works as a dishwasher. Then we started to stay on the street.

On the street, I take drugs. Most of the time, I smoke ganja and cigarettes and I drink alcohol. I heard a lot about other drugs, but I don't like to take them. Once,

I ate Dhaturu. It made me totally dull for 3-4 days. Most of my friends take it, but they never force me to.

Bishwo:

I've been living on the street for 8 years now. I'm 17 and I stay in the Pashupati area. I don't know a lot about drugs, but I know about Pani, which I took three times and never tried again after. Now, I'm not interested in taking those kinds of drugs. I felt really good and relaxed when I took drugs, but I don't like to work after taking it. Sometimes, when I feel like taking drugs, my senior fellow convinces me not to do so. I earn money for drugs by collecting firewood at the funeral place. I don't like to have sex, I never feel any emotion.

Sonam:

I come from Dolakha. I have a father, a mother and a younger brother. I left home because of family violence. I've been living on the street for 5-6 years now. At first, I stayed in Kalanki and I worked as a khalasi and a water seller, but now I'm working as a khalasi only. We have to work to buy food. Sometimes, my boss doesn't pay me. There are lots of risks with the khalasi job: you can fall down, your hand can be wedged against the door, etc. I've never been battered by my boss. I have to work late, till 10 pm.

I'm used to take dendrite and I smoke cigarettes. I have to take some drugs to get through the whole day and forget the way people treat me. I'll never forget one event: a friend of mine was walking while on a dendrite trip and got hit by a bus coming from behind. But fortunately nothing serious happened to him.

I'm saving some money from my job as a khalasi. I visit home regularly. I send 2,000 to 3,000 rupees a month to my family. Daily, I can save 200 to 300 rupees and the 50 rupees my boss gives me to buy food is enough for me. I'm also doing seasonal jobs such as corn or water seller, among others. My father is happy that I have this job. When I'm working on a bus, I sleep in that same bus. When I'm doing other works, I have to sleep on the side of the road. But when we spend the night on the street, the police batter us. Once, I was sleeping on the street and a policeman came with a van, forced me into it without any reason, and battered me badly. It was hard for me. They kept me in custody for 2 days and then they let me go.

Ramesh:

I've been on the street for 9-10 years. I'm 19 years old now and my name is Ramesh. In the past, I stayed in Putalisadak, but now I stay in the Pashupati area. I collect the used and remaining funeral firewood and sell it. That is how I make some money. Nobody ever stops me from doing it because people throw all the remaining wood into the Bagmati River where I collect it. I come from Dhankuta. My whole family migrated from the village. I have an older brother and an older sister, as well as a younger brother and a younger sister. My older brother works as a driver. I just heard that my older sister is married. I don't know where my younger sister is, I have no idea. There are things about the divorce of my parents that I can't remember: it happened many years ago. My mother took me with her to my stepfather's house before she died. Two years ago, my father came to Pashupati, searching for me. I met him. At that moment, he tried to convince me to go to a Gulf country to look for a job. After that conversation, my father never came back to Pashupati to meet or see me again. Maybe he went to a foreign country.

I'm used to taking drugs. At first, most of my friends gave it to me for free, but now I have to buy the drugs by myself. Vat, Focxo, Narfim, Dyjipam Opidal, Brown Sugar, Charesh, Naitroson, White, Cronaj and others. I take them all. Most of the time, I take Vat. If I don't take it, I often faint. All these different drugs give various kinds of trips. We usually take 1cc Narfim a day. We use Sugar in two ways: we either sniff it or heat it in the lid of a bottle before injecting it.

I started taking drugs with my friends. At first, it gave me a lot of pleasure. Here's how it started: a street youth forced me to smoke a cigarette with brown sugar. I was really scared, but there was no escaping it, so I smoked and coughed a lot. Then I started taking drugs continuously. Some friends of mine died of an overdose in front of my eyes.

We are a group made up of 6-7 friends. We all buy our drugs in Tilganga or Kalopul. We know all the dealers. As I already said, they don't offer credit, so we pay the price they set. We take the drugs to a very remote place where no one can see or disturb us. We inject ourselves in group: the same injection for two or three people. After having taken drugs, I don't like to have sex.

National perspective

By Rajendra Thapa
Youth Vision (Nepal)

Street children and drug abuse in Nepal

Throughout the walk around Kathmandu and major cities of Nepal we meet and see hundreds of street children abusing various types of drugs orally and intravenously, as well as sniffing dendrite, smoking cigarettes, marijuana and drinking alcohol. These children have also spent their free time watching movies, playing cards, marbles, video games and fighting each other.

Likely or unlikely the majority of the street children were taking drugs because of the peer pressure from their own intimate friends that are either boys or girls. Each street child's drug using experience is different though many start from a cigarette then marijuana, alcohol, tablets, to glue sniffing and injecting drugs. By this naive use of drugs, they are facing different problems like HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B and/or C and STI etc. This means that most of the street children were particularly exposed and extremely vulnerable to drugs and these drugs led to HIV/AIDS and other diseases. As a matter of fact, very few street children were visiting the VCT clinic to undergo HIV and STI diagnosis as well as its associated treatments. We need to extend our prevention activities toward street children, to encourage and refer them to such existing prevention and care activities to save their potential lives.

The children shift to the street after the age of eight. Some are living a long time in the street because they do not have any family members and a home. Other children's transition process may be in and out of the family home and in the street. That means the adjustment to the street will be all the easier because they have already worked on the street and possibly made friends there.

Children leave home to live in the street because they have no other alternative, given the problems at home. They cannot be taken in by a member of the extended family, admittance to a public institution is unlikely, and for foster children a return to their original community is impossible. Many boys and especially girls cannot

be reintegrated into their community because they were discriminated by the community and their family. Most of the street children spent their childhood to teenage years in avenues, under bridges, warehouse underground passages, footpaths, open ground and the Bus Park.

Drug risk factors for street children:

Personal factors

Psychological vulnerability and distress, emotional deprivation, low self-esteem and little value attached to one's person or life is the essential personal factors of risk affecting the drug-using street child. By the cause of isolation and non-supportive attitude from others, they are isolated and as a result, they don't have proper schooling and education. As well as this, the street children are not making any plans for the future and keep little hope of any positive development in their further life.

Regarding personal factors, most of the street children are suffering from day-to-day survival-related stress and anxiety and lack of information on drugs and the risks of using them, so that they are vulnerable to HIV and other harmful diseases.

Family factors

The rights of the children need more attention. This includes the need to receive a better education and making functional relationships with their family. All too common are families that have broken relationships and going through awful times. This leads to a lack of family tutelage and support, proper supervision and appreciation by family members. For children from the lower classes, disbelief forms toward their family members as well as feeling psychologically bankrupt. They begin to mimic the affects felt by the street children and start using drugs.

Social factors

Social exclusion and stigmatization are major factors for taking drugs. Entire groups of street children, fully reactive to peer-group pressure, compel each other to doing any activity during the day and/or during the night.

Environmental factors

No proper parental figures or mentors have been surrounding the street children in their lives. As such, the availability and accessibility to drugs, circulation and

use between them has been freely conducted. The events of sharing needles and unrestricted sexual abuse by peer groups are of concern.

Reasons why children take drugs:

- ✦ To resist and relieve the pain, cold and hunger.
- ✦ To reduce stress, anxiety and fear.
- ✦ To increase physical strength, courage and stamina.
- ✦ To escape from their existing problems.
- ✦ To adopt peer-group practices.
- ✦ To have fun and relax with friends.
- ✦ To experiment with new sensations.
- ✦ Exploitation from senior to junior street children for transference and dependence of drugs.

The responsibilities of existing child welfare organizations, intellectuals and related stakeholders have been towards assisting street children. These include providing innovative prevention activities, such as: offering information, educational communications, meetings, discussions and trainings. Referral to relevant agencies, including drug treatment and rehabilitation centers, has also followed with the view to reduce a child's risk, positively improve the impact of drug use and safety from the hazardous diseases like HIV, STI, and Hepatitis.

Referrals for such children are also to provide shelter for them. This is done to preserve better safety and hygiene, enhance the services for food and nutritional support and to focus on primary health care services and education to the children.

There are numerous organizations that are working for the children such as orphanages; however, there is not even a single organization which is working with drug-affected children. In order to reintegrate street children into the mainstream, we have to address their drug using behavior otherwise it will be a wasted investment.

Rajendra Thapa

International perspective

By Sarah De Meyer

Drug Department Coordinator, Stedelijk Overleg

Drugs Antwerpen (SODA) Belgium

Substance misuse amongst homeless youngsters in Antwerp (Belgium)

The city of Antwerp each year has a qualitative research report done by a university on the use of alcohol and drugs in Antwerp, each time with a focus on a different target group. In 2011 the focus was “drug and alcohol use by youngsters in Antwerp”. An important part of the research dealt with homeless youngsters.

The situation of homeless youngsters comes together with a lot of complex problems. Using drugs is one of them. It is impossible to put a number on the homeless youngsters in Antwerp, since they are quite volatile. In this research we mainly talk about the target group of young people aged between 18 and 25. From 18 onwards, youngsters are no longer obliged to go to school, they are no longer supervised by Youth Services and the parents’ authority diminishes.

Characteristics

Homeless youngsters mainly use the “classical” products: alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, cocaine, and heroin... Marijuana and alcohol are usually not their main products, but are used alongside the others. They often started at an early age: 12 or 13. One could divide the homeless drug using youngsters in three groups. The first is mainly made up of boys who are in touch with an older, marginalized group of drug users. These young people already start at an early age by injecting heroin or snorting or freebasing cocaine. They are very popular among the older users since they usually still have a stable income. In the second group, they mainly use amphetamines: speed, ecstasy and GHB and they have a background in Special Youth Care. The third group consists of young people with a middle class background who still have a social network. Their drug problems are bigger than one would have initially expected. Apart from these three categories, there are also two other specifically vulnerable groups: young people with limited abilities and young people without residence papers.

Using drugs has a huge impact not only on the health, but also on the social life of homeless youngsters. They miss the start of their adult life: they leave school early, don't find a job, have financial debts, lose contact with their family, and so on. A lot of these people come from a multi-problematic, socio-family context where at least one of the parents is absent. Using drugs is a problem that is often passed down over several generations. Some of these youngsters come from a relatively good family, but with one or more members having a psychiatric disorder.

Housing

Some field workers emphasize the importance of harm reduction for those young people who are not ready to change things (yet). Almost all social workers agree on the crucial influence of a stable living situation on the use of addictive substances by youngsters. When they turn to a social service, it is often their practical problems (housing, finances, unemployment...) which are their first concern, and not their addiction. It is important to meet those needs first, to take them by the hand and lead them through all the necessary procedures and waiting lists. When those problems are addressed, there will be an opening to work on the substance dependency. According to social workers in Antwerp, it is important for the youngster to have an individual housing spot at his disposal. Living in a shared space, they might be negatively influenced by other drug users. Moreover, in homeless shelters, having an addiction is often a criterion of exclusion. Some social workers advocate a night shelter, especially for young people, where they are not in contact with the bad influence of older drug users and where they can consult a social worker.

Work

Apart from having a stable housing situation, having a useful occupation is another important factor. Being on the street, they live from social welfare and / or turn to dealing, small criminal activities and even prostitution. A young person needs to have some prospects in his life; otherwise he won't have any motivation to lessen his drug addiction. Employment projects that are easily accessible, offering them the chance to slowly start anew again, are indispensable. They need an intense guidance focused on their qualities and weaknesses.

Health

The influence of the use of addictive substances on the physical health of youngsters is usually relatively limited. There is, however, a big difference between those who still live at home or have a safe and clean place where they can use

drugs and those living on the street. Youngsters who live on the street have more health problems. Some young people, mainly speed users, have already dental problems at the age of 21.

Most of these young people have emotional problems. There is also a group with psychiatric problems, sometimes caused by the use of drugs, often just coexisting with the drug use.

Need for help

A lot of the homeless youngsters have already been in contact with the social work services several times; psychiatry, Special Youth Care and so on. They often have bad memories about these contacts, they need more positive experiences. It is not easy to help them, they often don't want to stop using drugs and they are hard to reach. Services have to be easily accessible, flexible and suitable for their needs. Young people will only ask for help when their problems have already escalated. They often don't consider their drug use as the main problem. Some methods that might work are: case management, strengthening of the social network, housing first, outreach, brief motivational intervention models and free medical consultations.

Sarah De Meyer

International perspective

By Tessa Windelinckx

Coordinator of Needle Exchange, Belgium

Situation of young IDUs in Flanders (Belgium), from Needle exchange's point of view

In Needle exchange (NSP) Flanders, we are aware that there are very young Injecting Drug Users (IDUs), but we have no contact with this group.

We conduct an annual survey which consists of a questionnaire which the IDUs who participate in NSP Flanders are asked to answer. In 2011 we questioned 257 IDUs. Considering the results of this questionnaire, we are able to say that IDUs start injecting at a very early age.

Almost 10% of them were 15 or younger when they had their first injection with an illegal substance.

When further analyzing the results, we can see that young IDUs (in their twenties) started at an earlier age than the older IDUs that we reach.

The reached participants also state that they know other IDUs who do not participate in Needle exchange. 10% of them are under 18.

As a conclusion, we can state that there are young IDUs (probably aged between 15 and 25) who are not reached by drug services, have no contact with prevention, harm reduction and care. We also know that the first years of injecting is a vulnerable period, and almost 50% of the IDUs get a hep C infection in the first two years of injecting.

Most of the time, the young drug users are offered an abstinence-based approach to stop using drugs. This is not always working with this type of drug users: they cannot or simply don't want to stop using drugs at that time. The drug services are not equipped to help these youngsters and thus the latter keep on using drugs, sometimes in very risky situations. Sometimes they do not even want to get in contact with the services that expect them to quit using drugs.

Most low-threshold services are designed to work with adults (+18 or +20). They also do not want to mix youngsters with the older population. So, we can say that there is something of a gap between the drug services and the risky young drug users, preventing the former from reaching the latter.

After having heard about this gap, the NGO Free Clinic started a pilot project in the city of Antwerp: a low-threshold drug service for young drug users. Harm reduction approach is the backbone of this new drug service. With this project, called Plug-Inn, young drug users (between 16 and 25) can visit the service for free and anonymously get information, see a doctor, talk to a counselor, get medical care, get clean syringes and start an OST (opioid-substitution therapy). This pilot project was started in May 2012. In 2011, the University of Ghent conducted a survey – ordered by the city of Antwerp – on the needs of young drug users in the city of Antwerp.

One of the results was that there were young homeless drug users, and another was that there is a need for a low-threshold and harm reduction-based approach for these youth. We hope that the new project will satisfy a need in Antwerp, a need already felt for many years by Needle exchange Flanders, and we hope to reach the youngsters more quickly and to offer them a harm reduction approach.

Tessa Windelinckx

Key findings

- ✦ Substance use is still very common among street children, an endemic common around the globe.
- ✦ Children as young as 9 are smoking ganja; 35% of 13 year olds and 60% of street youth regularly smoke ganja.
- ✦ Street children from the age of 6 are regularly sniffing glue.
- ✦ As long as children perceive no viable alternatives in the “real world”; substances will continue to help children “see what we want to see”. It forms part of a daily resilience concept.
- ✦ The critical ages for many street children to use glue seem to be between 9 and 13. It is here that between 25 and 35% of the children have not tried sniffing glue. The addiction may be circumvented if prevention, intervention and harm reduction services and activities are provided quickly enough.
- ✦ The key for intervention and for prevention to succeed seems to be in understanding why substances are used. As cited here, they are used to both hide and solve problems, as well as replacing something that is missing – an emptiness or longing

CHAPTER FOUR

SEXUALITY, VULNERABILITY TO ABUSES AND OTHER RISKS



ARTICLE 34 (CRC) : “Children must be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse”



Street children are frequently used and misused by local and foreign predators who regard them as easy preys for their sexual needs.

Introduction

In this chapter, we will deal with the sexuality and abuses of which the children and youth in a street situation are the victims.

Their vulnerability to abuses is probably the most important risk street children have to face and upon which they only have little control. Being subjected to daily violence, which is almost “standardized”, the child does not even wonder about this (un)reality anymore and just puts up with it.

Of course, the “violence”, or rather violences, is part of the life on the street. The child endures various types of abuse, which are sexual, physical and psychosocial.

Street children are often insulted, psychologically abused, frightened or terrified by some adults who are afraid of them or who don’t admit that, despite their lifestyle, they still are children.

The child in a street situation has to develop his own strategies to protect himself, hence the street group or street gang gatherings.

But having recourse to this kind of group can also be a vehicle for violence and the gang is a source of abuses too.

Of course, this everyday life filled with violence and abuse mark them deeply and has significant psychological and social consequences.

Quantitative approach: analysis of the statistical data

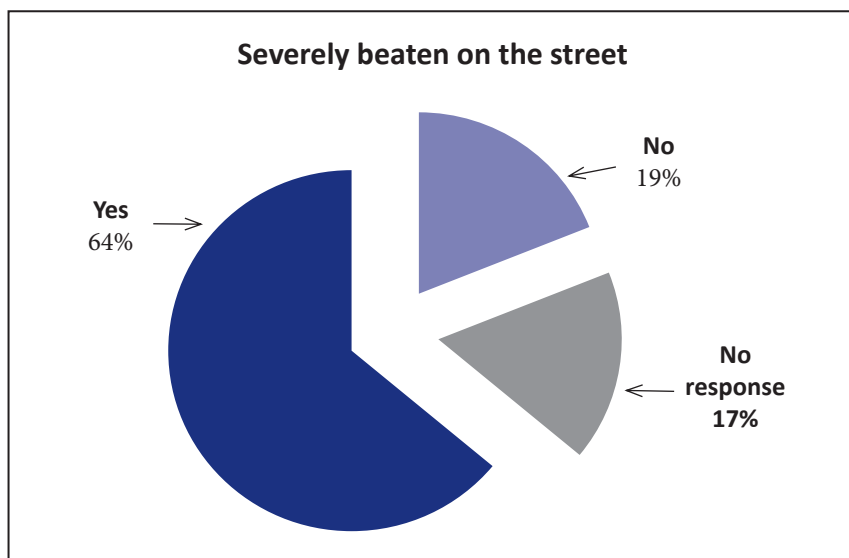
Perpetrators of physical abuse

Children reported high levels of physical abuse in the street environment. The children identified police, street youth, security guards, other street children and bosses at work as the main perpetrators of physical abuse. 63% of the children reported that they were physically abused by the police. Similarly, 59% children reported being physically abused by street youth. More than one third of the children (36%) reported they were physically abused by security guards. Other perpetrators of physical abuse identified by children were other street children (30%), the work boss (11%), relatives (6%) and the army (5%).

Perpetrators of abuse	%
Police	63.2
Street youth	58.9
Security guards	36.1
Other street children	29.5
Work boss	10.9
Relatives	6.3
Army	4.6
NGO's staff	1.3
Others	8.9
Total	100.0

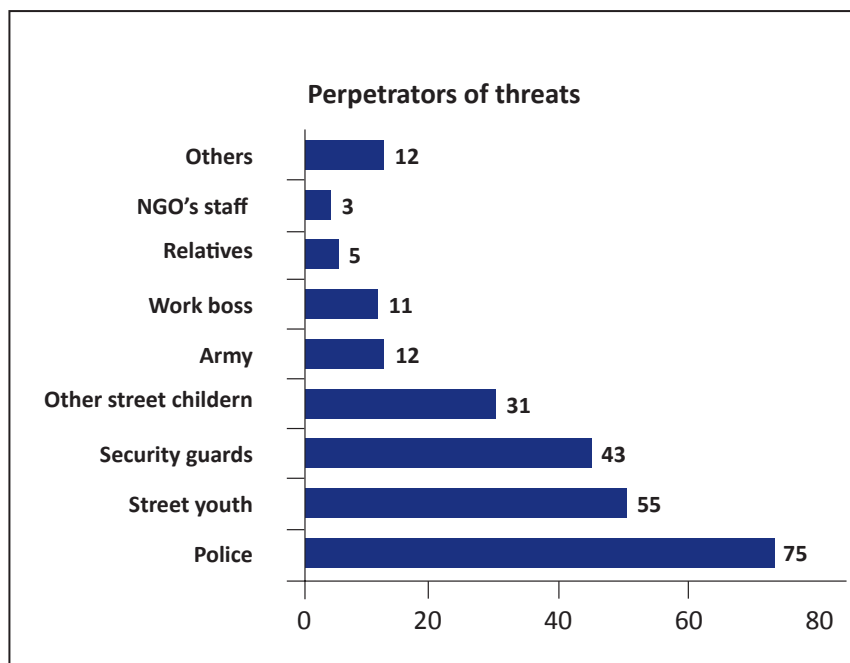
Experience of beating

The experience of a beating in street life is high among the street children. It is found that 64% of the children reported to having been severely beaten in the street. 19% stated they were not beaten but a significant number (17%) of the children did not respond to whether they were beaten or not.



Threats

Children were asked whether or not they were threatened by anyone. It is discouraging to note that three out of four children (75%) reported being threatened by police followed by street youth (55%) and security guards (43%). Similarly, about a third of the children (31%) were threatened by other street children. Other commonly mentioned perpetrators of threats were army (12%), the work boss (11%), relatives (5%) and NGO staff (3%).



Humiliation

Children were also asked whether or not they felt humiliation from anyone. Most of the children reported that they felt humiliated by the police (62%) followed by street youth (49%). The next commonly mentioned perpetrators of humiliation were security guards (34%), and other street children (32%). It is notable that 12% of the children reported being humiliated by their work boss.

Perpetrators of humiliation	%
Police	61.6
Street youth	49.3
Security guards	33.8
Other street children	31.5
Work boss	12.3
Army	5.6
Relatives	5.0
NGO's staff	3.0
Others	9.3
Total	100.0

Sexual habits and abuse

Almost half of the children (47%) reported that they did masturbate. 74% of the respondents have watched a blue (pornographic) movie. 43% reported that they had dated a person from the opposite sex. Similarly, almost half of the children (46%) reported that they have had a sexual relationship without penetration. 39% of the children stated that they have had sexual relations with penetration.

Less than 25% of street children 13 years old or less stated they have had a sexual relationship with penetration compared to over 50% of those 14 and older.

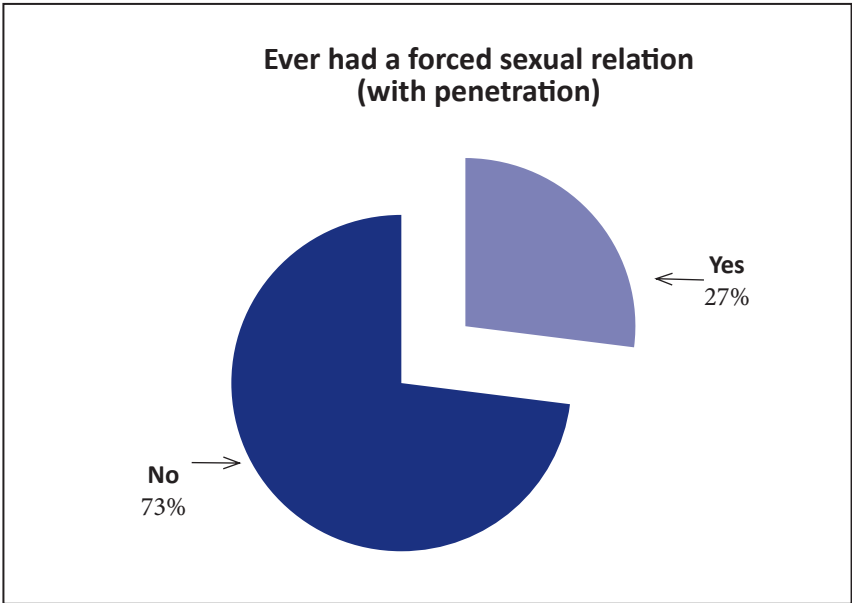
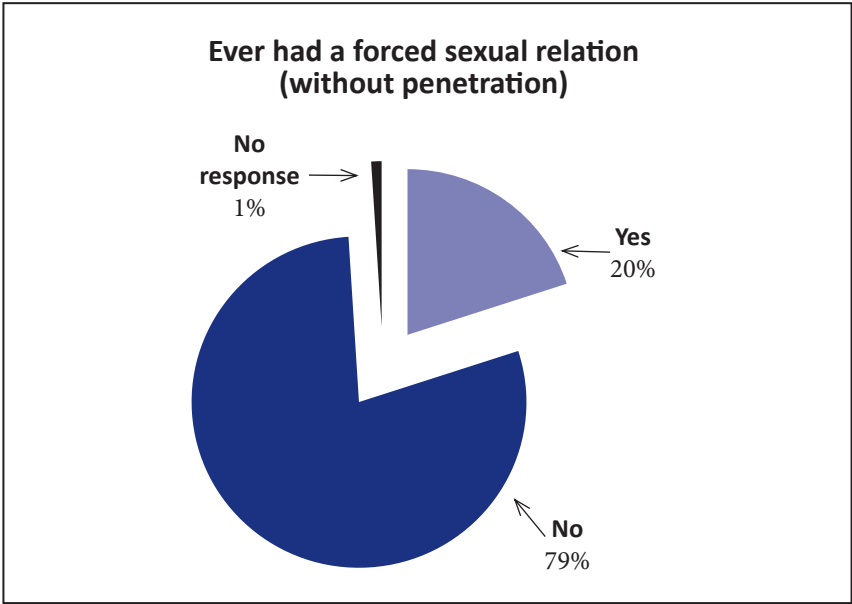
It is noted that there is an anomaly with the statistics here. More children reported having a sexual relationship than those who had dated a person from the opposite sex. Two explanations come to mind. First the respondents see a clear difference between dating and having a sexual relationship (be it casual, forced or for money). The second explanation may be that the children are involved in same sex sexual relationships.

%	
Do you masturbate?	
Yes	47.4
No	51.3
No response	1.3
Have you ever watched a blue movie?	
Yes	74.2
No	25.5
No response	0.3
Have you ever dated a person from the opposite sex?	
Yes	42.7
No	57.3
Have you ever had a sexual relation (without penetration) with anyone?	
Yes	45.7
No	54.0
No response	0.3
Have you ever had a sexual relation (with penetration) with anyone?	
Yes	39.1
No	60.9

Forced sexual relationships

Regarding sexual coercion, one in five children have had a forced sexual relationship without penetration while 27% of the children have had a forced sexual relationship with penetration.

A similar pattern has emerged for street children aged 14 and more who have had forced sexual relationships with penetration. There is a great upward spike of those 14 years and older into these forced acts.



The majority of the children (72%) believe in love. 61% reported they would let their family choose his/her future partner. Similarly, more than three in five children mentioned that they would marry a lower caste person than their own caste.

It is encouraging to note that the majority of the children were aware about STDs (76%). 45% of the children reported that they have spoken about sex with an adult. Moreover, a fifth of the children reported that they would pay to have sex.

%	
Do you believe in love?	
Yes	72.2
No	27.8
Would you let your family choose your future partner?	
Yes	61.3
No	38.7
Would you marry a lower caste person? (than yours)	
Yes	63.2
No	36.4
No response	0.3
Do you know about STD's?	
Yes	76.2
No	23.5
No response	0.3
Have you ever spoken about sex with an adult?	
Yes	45.4
No	54.6
Would you pay for having sex?	
Yes	22.2
No	77.8
Total	100.0

Qualitative approach: observation and first-hand accounts

Physical and psychological abuses

Psychological abuse causes lots of damage. It is present everywhere: throughout the relationship with the general public, with the other street gangs, and sometimes even with the child's own gang.

On the street, insults are erupting, and verbal aggressions as well as disdainful and demeaning looks are omnipresent. The street gangs' world can be considered as a flexible network of contacts. Everything there is organized and structured.

It is the same within a gang, which has got its own rules and codes. Structure also implies hierarchy. The latter is being set up very naturally.

Not through democracy but by force, be it physical, mental or intellectual. To become a leader, some will stop at nothing, elbow their way to it and be completely unscrupulous about being violent in their smallest deeds and gestures. These methods of operation open wide the door to abuses, be they psychological, physical or sexual.



Paradoxically, the most vulnerable and marginalized persons are also the ones who receive the least protection. A lot of crimes or abuses go unnoticed or unpunished just because the prejudices we have of street children encourage us to turn a blind eye on many degrading things.

During our discussions and observations, we were struck by the way children consider these abuses to be “normal”.

The street is an environment of brutality, you have to fight to survive and, conversely, the child becomes violent too. He will re-enact what he has been through on the younger children.

Sexual habits:

Because of his day-to-day life on the street, the child is initiated into sexuality very young, and unfortunately often through the abuses he has had to face.

Many confide that they start masturbating at a very young age (initiated by the oldest ones) and that they use pornographic materials.

Even if it is natural to become interested in sexuality when one reaches adolescence, it is more worrying and difficult to analyse carefully when it comes to pre-pubescent children having sexual behaviors.

Sexual abuses:

There are many different factors that make abuses easier on the street – on the youngest by the oldest. On the street, children are left unsupervised from an early age and are part of a group. Without any specific educational model, they are readily exposed to violence which they trivialize and normalize.

When a child ends up on the street, the possibility for him to be sexually abused significantly increases given the environment. At the first abuse, the child endures a deep emotional hurt. Then, the increase in the number of rapes and abuses forces him to develop mechanisms in order to forget, to be ahead of this daily life (it is this daily resilience concept that we developed previously).

The vast majority of the victims think that it is also their fault and there are various morally harmful consequences: guilty feelings, a feeling of inferiority, depression, loneliness, etc.

The repeated assaults become habits and the child will act out this mechanism on other younger children.

This routine of violence and abuses drive a lot of children to consider a financial gain for the abuse they are subjected to. Instead of searching plastic in the cold for a few rupees, why not agreeing on having a picture taken while naked for the same price?

Besides the tragic moral consequences of sexual abuses, it is obvious that other risks are to be considered: the undressed pictures of Nepali street children feeding pedo-pornographic networks on the Internet and sexually transmitted diseases also pose a real risk.

Dragged into it by their friends, it seems that the children in a street situation discover sexuality and its torments – which is a big social taboo in this country – earlier than the other Nepali children.

The child has dreams, thinks about the girls, dreams about his first date, but reality quickly returns with a vengeance. He is a street child, dirty and despised.

Some girls manage to survive beside them. They usually are the victims of the worst abuses.

In Kathmandu, the street child or youth is subjected to so much violence that, in the end, he himself becomes a violent and aggressive person, as well as a molester. His sexuality isn't well adjusted, nor is it normal for his age, for his sexual habits are precocious and often abusive or violent. Many end up considering sex only as gainful and violent.

Marriage prospects, however, don't seem to change because of the street. The child still conceives of his family choosing a spouse for him one day, true to the traditions. When we asked them about love and feelings, we only got few answers. But is it really possible to talk about love in a life made up of violence?

The needs of all kinds that these children, left to their own devices, have on the street make them very vulnerable to the approaches of any pedophile or predator – be he a foreigner, a Nepali, or even a member of their own

family or gang – because, in such life conditions, everybody can be a predator for everyone. Relational and hierarchical structures which sometimes exist between gangs and within one, open wide the door to abuses, inasmuch as you have to be able to elbow your way and overwhelm the others to become a “leader”.

Violence is there, everywhere and all the time, be it sexual, physical, moral or psychological.

In some areas of Kathmandu or other cities, the number of children who are the victims of sexual abuses is particularly worrying. This phenomenon takes root in a specific social context. Children in a street situation are often rejected by society and considered as potential criminals by the authorities. Their need for money, medical care, attention and food make them very vulnerable to the approaches of any pedophile, be he a foreigner or a Nepali.

First-hand accounts:

Sumit (17 years):

I’m an adopted boy. I went to school until grade 6. Everything was normal when suddenly I found out about my past. Then I started having adjustment problems in my family. I got bad feelings toward my elder brother because I was physically and emotionally abused.

Because of the lack of love and feeling as an unwanted child, I made friends on the street and ran away from home.

Now, I’m a street boy, involved in many sexual activities. I’ve dated many street girls. I was also forced to have sex. Personally, I never paid to have sex with anyone.

Laxman (14 years):

After my mother passed away 6 years ago, my father remarried. I didn't have a good relationship with my stepmother and my father didn't give me much love. He always agreed with my stepmother, so I got totally confused. I started working to be free from any further humiliation.

One day, my neighbor asked me to go with him to Kathmandu where he could make a lot of money. I went with him to capital city, but the big dreams we had never came true. I didn't know anybody in Kathmandu, so I had no other option but to beg to survive. That is how the street became both my new home and family.

I've never experienced any sexual abuse and have never been talking about sex with an adult either.

Hari (17 years):

My name is Hari and I'm 17 years old. I earn 200 rupees a day as a "jami". I spend my money on street life. Before, I was dominated by my family. Now, I have very negative feelings and thoughts about life and society. I've had sexual intercourses with many girls but I don't believe in love because I never experienced true love with anybody.

While I was receiving treatment for tuberculosis, they found out that I was HIV-positive. I was very disappointed and tried to recover soon but I couldn't. My health is getting worse day after day and I have problems breathing. I have very negative thoughts about my life. I also realized what was going wrong in my life and tried to change it.

Now, I'm having regular check-ups and I'm recovering, getting better day by day. Slowly, I can stand on my feet again, my breathing problems are disappearing and I quit smoking. I have regrets about what I did in the past, but I must accept it.

Noraj (15 years):

My house is near Hetauda, in the Makwanpur district. I came to Kathmandu 5 years ago, following my friends. While staying on the street, various illegal and immoral things happened to me. I've also slept with street girls. It is no big deal that boys have sex with a lot of girls and vice versa. Sometimes, people come and take some girls with them. For my first sex experience, I gave money. But

now I have a girlfriend so I don't have to pay anymore. I use condoms every time I have sex. I know about sexual diseases and HIV-AIDS. I was only 12 when I had my first sex experience. My friends also had sex at that age.

Narayan (17 Years):

I've been living on the street since I was 7. I left my home because of a friend. I think the Pashupati area is a good place for me to be. There are many great things here. The police, the Pashupati development fund's security guards and other youth abuse us physically. When the police arrest us, we have to wash their clothes and clean the toilets in the police station.

There are many girls living here. Before, I sometimes had sex with them but now I'm married to a girl who also lives in the Pashupati area.

I am working day and night: I carry wood and straw and I fire the dead bodies with my elder brother. I earn 400-600 rupees a day. I save the money I earn and send it to my family. I also did a blood test, the results are good. I am happy with my family.

Alisha:

I'm 14 years old now. I left home when my mother passed away. My father remarried to another woman who usually batter and scold me. They used to batter me every day for no reasons so I ran away and came to Kathmandu where I started working as a servant. I did for 6 months but I was emotionally and physically abused. Policemen abuse me and force me to have sex with them at night. When I deny them it, they say dirty words, batter me and threaten me too.

I'm in love with a boy from my group. If my boyfriend tries to leave me, I cut my hands myself.

Sushil (14 years):

My permanent address is in Hitudha, but my uncle lives in Banipa. I didn't like my uncle because he is always dominating me, so I ran away from home. I went to Pokhara where I stayed about 4-5 years (on the street). Then I went to the Thamel area where I've been staying for 2-3 years, begging on the street with 5 friends to earn 400-500 rupees a day. But we have to divide that money in 5. I've got no problem to eat in the daytime, because some people give us food every day, but sometimes at night we don't find any food. I'm smoking cigarettes, taking

dendrite and all types of other drugs. I like to masturbate when I watch porn movies. From time to time, I use street girls for sex. I know about condoms, but I don't like to use one. Come what may. Sometimes, we have sex with street girls in group. For me, girls are used only for sex. In a group, I feel safe and I also enjoy life, especially at night. I didn't like to study, but now I'm happy, begging in the Thamel area.

Pradip Dakhal (17 years):

I came here from Bardibas 3 or 4 years ago to find a job, with the permission of my family, because we are poor. Now, I collect wasted paper boxes and sell it in Kalimati Kaward. Before, I worked in a meat shop. I worked hard but after 3 months the shop owner still hadn't pay me my salary, so I decided to stop working there. I've been living for 3-4 years in the Basatapur area, collecting wasted papers. I earn 200-300 rupees a day, but I can't save anything. Now I'm weak and sick, and when it rains I can't find any paper box, so most of the time I sleep in the Basantapur Temple. When I heard that Saroj Pariyar had been killed by Basanta with a knife some weeks ago, and that the police arrested the latter and also Rajes, I began to feel very unsafe on the street. Later, I'd like to be a driver or to undertake a job training in order to find a good job and earn money.

Arjun (17 years):

I've been on the street since I was a child. At the beginning, I begged on the street, then slowly I started picking plastic and selling it. As I'm getting older, it is more and more difficult to work because, slowly, I'm getting weak and sick. Moreover, small children also deny my instructions and orders. Thus, it is compulsory for me to do easier works. Now I'm picking, pick-pocketing, robbing, etc. 6 months ago, I was picking on the 4th floor of a building when the owner woke up and shouted, so I jumped from the 4th floor. When I hit the ground, my head hurt a lot and my face was fully grazed, but I couldn't undergo any treatment nor could I tell anyone else about it.

Abishek Shrestha:

I'm 11 years old. My parents lived in Birgunj. They worked as servants. My father died of TB and my brothers went to India. I've been living in Narayanghat for 3 years. I'm a water seller. Sometimes, the older street fellows steal our money and force us to do bad works. I've already had sex with many girls. I want to be a driver.

Sagar:

I've been to school until grade 2. I've been living on the street for 7 years now. My mother has been working as an overseas employee for 5 years. My father remarried. My stepmother sends me money and calls me on the phone. They have their own hotel, which is run by my father. I'm used to taking glue and Vola and to smoking cigarettes. I don't want to go back home, so I'm not staying there. I work as a rag picker and earn 250 to 500 rupees a day. I'm sniffing glue every day. The police arrested me once for theft and punished me.



National perspective

By Milan Dharel

Director – CWISH (Nepal)

Street Children: Quest of Dignity in light of Human Rights

In the contest of seeking, preserving and fostering human dignity, children are the ones who are left behind in the queue. The adult male leads the social pattern and practices. They foster social norms and values, set the framework of standards and quality of life, rules to obey and follow in life. The formation of such rules frame free and potentially humane living. Ultimately, one grapples with the concept of equity, dignity, freedom and self-worth. The abusive practices of adult males erode the truth of evolving capacity and diversity of nature and freedom of choice. Street children are the witness of suffering of the adult masculine formulation and the imposition of social norms and values about humane life.

Street children have not been accepted by the traditional norms of humane society so they challenge them. Further, the street children have uniquely conceptualized these practices. The framework of family, the societal unit, understanding dignity and foundations of individual protection within a group have been adopted – but in their own way.

Despite mounting threats, risks, fear, suffering and often harm to their body, mind and life, street children have proved that they are the winners. They are winning against those threats and are evolving and possessing abilities to set their own framed society. The dirt and dust of the street has not been able to scare them as it does with other urban people. Rather, they have converted it to be their own mate. On the street they have the strength; they are the capable ones.

Again, the question arises, is the street the right place for such potential human beings? Does the conqueror live in the street? Whose interventions are stigmatizing the winner? Do the street children care again and reclaim their position, as they deserve? Or are they allowed to seek their dignity?

No, the current modernized “liberal” urban society with its fabricated masculine norms and values has set boundaries for the street children to reenter their domain – to attain human dignity with equity and rights. Street Children are discriminated against, but on what basis? Is it caste, class, or sex? Street children are scolded, chased and often beaten, for what? For walking on the street, for glaring at others, for asking for food or for not accepting the modern liberal urban people norms? Moreover, those street children are abused, sexually molested, but by whom? By other street children or by the influential, honoured, powerful, rich, seemingly decent people?

The facts demonstrate that street children don’t care. Not because they don’t want to, but because they see it worthless to call for justice against their perpetrators. Therefore, we do care and we have to care, as a community close to street children, as a community who understands their potential, as a community respecting their dignity and as advocates for their human rights.

We, the civil society, the advocate, the campaigner, the welfare workers have to be together not only among us but also with the street children. We need to reconceptualize the frame of social norms and values not as we experience it in an adult patriarchal masculine guided concept but as a free, independent, co-existing, diversified and dignified community. We have to understand and respect that the worth of life that we possess and that the street children possess are nothing less than the same.

Violence and abuse against street children, the diversion of street children into the current framing of society and family is neither justifiable nor applicable. Street children never accept limitations of freedom, so we need to redesign our programs and interventions that deny all justification on abuse and violence against street children, encroachment on their freedom and lessening their dignity. The intervention we propose, plan or apply should be able to prevent sources (Family/Society) from giving birth to street children, prevent all forms of risk and reduce the harms against street children. They should be able to empower street children to seek support with enabled service providers. This demands the reconstruction of the social concepts about family, respect to the child and consideration of children as subjects of human rights and as individuals.

The street has never been a first choice, rather a last option among the worst for children, let us look for an alternative to the street where dignity can be recognized and children’s human rights are respected, protected and fulfilled.

Milan Dharel

National perspective

By Prem Krishna Aryal

Country Learning Coordinator, Plan Nepal

Adolescent Girls locked in Dinings of the Dark

Overview:

Nepal is a developing country where nearly 28 million people (25% of the total population) are living below the poverty line. Nepal is ranked 144 of 182 countries as per the human development index (Human Development Index Report 2010, UNDP). It is estimated that 2.6 million children aged from 5 to 14 years are involved in child labor, usually in the agricultural sector and 12,000 girls were trafficked into the urban centers of Nepal and across the border into India (International Labor Organization Report, 2001).

A decade long political conflict contributed to multiple deprivations by hampering the delivery of basic services, restricting development assistance and causing the breakdown of family and community networks which continue to face discrimination and chronic economic insecurity.

Sexual exploitation is defined as one of the worst forms of child labor (ILO Convention 1999, Article 182). The Supreme Court of Nepal has issued “directives to Control Sexual Harassment towards Working Women in Work-Places such as Dance Restaurants, Dance Bars, 2065” to create a safe working environment. Under this directive, Monitoring Committees for the entertainment industry are to be established through the District Administrative Office to regulate and monitor the night entertainment industry. These monitoring committees are made up of the Chief District Officer, the Chief of the District or Municipality Police Officer, Women and Child Development Officer and invited members, including representatives from the Night Entertainment Entrepreneurs Association, Labor Office and Municipality, Department of Cottage and Small Scale Industries and Internal Revenue. However, the Supreme Court directives have not been fully internalized and brought into practice.

The sex industry constitutes a serious obstacle to the achievement of women’s equal opportunities in the business sector. Women employees have less chance

to create the relationships and opportunities that would enable them to gain promotion and recognition. Many have to suffer indignities visited upon them by male colleagues who return from sex industry venues (Women's Studies International Forum, 2010). Current literature indicates that the situation of women involved as an adult service is a very demeaning occupation with low morale, no social dignity, becoming victims of violence and having little or no family values.

Nepal has developed a supportive legal and policy framework to ensure that children's protection rights are in law. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was ratified in 1990, and various ILO conventions aimed at preventing child labor and other child abuses are in force. These instruments have guided the protection of child rights in the Interim Constitution.

School dropouts, adolescent girls, and cabin restaurants/ bars

In the recent years the sector of small hotels and restaurants in Nepal has emerged as an intermediary supply site in the context of trafficking of girls and young women. Thousands are employed as waitresses, hostesses, dancers, etc throughout the country. A significant number of girls under 18 years old are working in this sector. Many of them have been forced to work in extremely poor health and unsafe conditions, receive very low salaries, are often denied wages or forced into indebtedness to their employers. They are frequently forced to conduct activities that are deleterious to their physical and social wellbeing, in particular, entertaining male customers with the consequence of physical and sexual abuse.

"Once my employer forced me to entertain one Indian client and have sexual relations with him. He was heavily paid for this by the client. While performing sexual activity with the client I fainted and had genital bleeding. After that I was taken to the hospital by the employer. Till now my employer used to deduct my salary mentioning that he had spent a lot for my treatment so he is deducting it to compensate."

18 year old girl

"When you start working as cabin attendant, you have to do whatever you are asked for and live with the problem."

19 year old girl

Nepal, Itahari Municipality is a fast growing city of the eastern part of the country. This has resulted in both positive and negative impacts in women and children's lives. The municipality is located at the main transportation junction of eastern Nepal, and is thus a town of emerging importance. At the bus terminal at Itahari, thousands of passengers are arriving and departing each day. Entrepreneurial skills and its use for economical activities of residents belonging to the municipality have also become more visible. The growing city life is gradually becoming expensive. The girls/women migrated from the hills and other part of the country; refugees and some circus returnees started to live in the city so that they could find earning opportunities but they were unable to find jobs and they have become more vulnerable. In the meantime, numbers of cabin restaurants have been opening in the area. The cabin restaurants attract many girls/ women who were seeking a job to sustain living. In such a situation, the cabin restaurant owners were able to motivate the girls/women to work as a clients/customers service provider in their restaurants. Their main job is to entertain clients and also involve in sexual activities (Plan, 2009). They have to face many kinds of exploitation from clients and owners while working in the restaurants. Initially, they take a little bit of alcohol on the request of the clients which makes them feel free from stress and tension to offer good service to the clients. As a result they gradually become alcoholic and suffer from different kinds of reproductive health problems – unwanted pregnancy, early pregnancy, sexual diseases, psychosocial trauma, HIV positives and in some cases, death.

“I have worked as CA but I hate this job. Many girls join this profession because of their poor economic condition.”

18 year old girl

“Now I came to know that this is not a good job. Now I will advise other also not to enter in this professional.”

19 year old CA girl

A survey done in 38 cabin restaurants of the Itahari Municipality, found 196 adolescent girls and women. 61 of them were aged between 12-18 years (15 were married) were school drop outs, and 118 of them were age between 19-25 years (76 were married). Most of the married girls/women were either pregnant or had a young child but their husbands either disappeared for years or were already married to other women. It was found that the pregnant women or adolescent girls were facing many problems relating to an unwanted pregnancy. The girls/

women were without support or protection – either within the workplace, or from being displaced from their family/community, or due to their poor economic condition. It has been frequently noted that they are at extremely high risk of sexual exploitation and the worst forms of child labor. Similarly, some young aged children, who have given birth at an early age whilst working as a cabin attendant, are deprived to enjoy their early childhoods (UPCA, 2010).

Prem Krishna Aryal

International perspective

By Sheetal Rana

PhD Candidate-School of Social Work-University of Minnesota

Vulnerability to abuse and other risks

Street life increases street children's vulnerability to abuse and exploitation, threatening their wellbeing and healthy development. There are millions of street children and youth across the world and in Nepal living in abject poverty, in violent conditions, subject to harsh and unremitting health, social, and psychological pressures, exploited by adults and older youth, and forced into marginal work. This has been found in many studies of street children from across the globe (Hechts, 1998; Beazley, 2002; Kilbride, Suda & Njeru, 2000) as well as in studies of Nepali street children, including in my study for Frontline youth 'work with street children and youth in Nepal' and the research done for this book.

Nepali street children, ranging from age 6 to 18 years, are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation because of both circumstances and choice. Typically, these young people are from poor, marginal, and often troubled families, and have left their families for nearby to further away towns or cities. Their presence on and use of public spaces make them vulnerable to different kinds of abuses. For example, the need to support themselves and a lack of guidance and protection of responsible adults make these young people easy targets for sexual abuse and exploitation by foreign and Nepali pedophiles. Many of these young people are vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse by their peer group leaders who do so to control and exercise authority over these young people. Additionally, these young people engage in risky behaviors, such as smoking cigarettes, sniffing glue, drinking alcohol, cutting themselves, having sexual relationships with multiple partners, and engaging in survival sex. These activities make them vulnerable to verbal and physical abuse by the general public and local police.

There may be manifold consequences of these activities and abuses. Street activities and abuses put street children at risk of poor mental and physical health, including HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. This is further exacerbated by these young people's limited access to basic services, including access to clean water, nutritious

food, and personal hygiene facilities. Furthermore, many of these young people are not in school and have limited job skills to survive off the streets, which may keep them trapped on the streets and in poverty. A deeper understanding of all these issues is basic to responding more effectively to the needs and problems of street children and youth.

In understanding street children and their vulnerability to abuse and other risks, the focus thus far has been mostly on their victimization. Viewing these young people as victims of abuse and exploitation creates a moral imperative for society to respond to the problems associated with street children. However, this view ignores resiliency of these young people and does not recognize them as active agents of their lives. These young people are not just passive victims; they are also survivors. They learn from their environment and interpret what they learn in different ways to (re)create their childhood that may differ from what is generally seen as a “normal” childhood.

These street children negotiate with their environment and use innovative ways to protect themselves and survive in harsh street environments. Frontline youth workers who work with Nepali street children noted that these young people are observant, alert, critical, and use services provided by NGOs in ways that they see as fulfilling their needs. As a survival strategy, they may conform to the expectations, norms, and values of their peer groups. They may engage in risky behaviors, such as sniffing glue and sex work, to cope with the realities of street life, including hunger, cold and personal problems and troubles (Hecht, 1998; Kudrati, Plummer, Dafaala, & Yousif, 2008; Sherman, Plitt, Hassan, Cheng, & Zafar, 2005). This frame for understanding street children and their everyday lives promotes a child-centered approach.

Broadening our understanding of vulnerabilities from both victim’s and survivor’s perspectives helps us better recognize these young people’s needs as well as their abilities, interests, and aspirations. These in turn strengthen street children’s rights to voice and meaningful participation in programs and services aimed at helping them live healthy lives and become responsible citizens. Such an approach empowers young people to become responsible for their lives on the streets as well as off the streets and in NGOs’ drop-in, transit, and rehabilitation centers, thereby strengthening their motivation to positively change their lives.

In summary, street children are vulnerable to different kinds of abuse and exploitation, and understanding these are essential for addressing the problems

of street children in ways that are appropriate, meaningful, and effective. To do so, we must not only view these young people as victims but also as survivors, who are resilient, resourceful, and active agents of their lives.

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Sheetal Rana

International perspective

By Thomas Kaufmann (Director), Hannah Bristow (Project leader), Deepa Limbu Subba (Nepal office leader)
Ecpat-Luxembourg

Sexual abuse of the children

Commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) constitutes a serious infringement of the fundamental rights of the child. This refers to the sexual abuse of a minor consequently used by an adult as a sexual and commercial object in exchange for a remuneration in kind or in the form of cash and either paid to the child or to one or several third parties. Child pornography, sex trade in children and child prostitution, including sex tourism with minors, account for the majority of commercial sexual exploitation of the children. These three forms are linked together and are thus often to be found together.

Child prostitution, including sex tourism with children

By child prostitution, the Optional Protocol on the CRC refers to “the use of a child in sexual activities for remuneration or any other form of consideration.” This payment could either be food, a shelter or some kind of protection, or else better school grades. Child prostitution very often involves, for an adult, a benefit from a commercial transaction during which the child is put at a third person’s disposal for sexual purposes.

It is important to highlight the fact that a child doesn’t choose to have recourse to prostitution in order to survive or to buy consumer goods. S/he is mostly forced, by some circumstances, values, social norms or abusive people into entering states where adults take advantage of his/her vulnerability to sexually exploit him/her.

Child prostitution doesn’t only exist in South-East Asian countries. There is a significant impact even in Europe. Sex tourism with children is a form of child prostitution. It refers to the commercial sexual exploitation of a child by a person who is travelling outside his province, geographical region or country.

Sex tourists often come from western countries, but can also come from developing countries. In some countries, the prostitution of minors and the local demand already exist, and they can be increased by tourists from other countries.

Trafficking

According to the international texts, trafficking in minors refers to “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt” of persons under 18 for the purpose of exploitation which includes at a minimum the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs .

The number of minors who are the victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation or forced labor is estimated at 1.8 million each year . And yet, given the clandestine nature of this plague, we assume that the total amount of victims widely exceeds this number.

Trafficking is developing within a context of increase in poverty, but also of globalization: the use of the Internet, the growth of organized crime, and the tightening of the migration policy are some of the factors that make it easier for networks of trafficking in human beings to be created. In addition, unlike drugs and weapons, children can be “sold” repeatedly; they are merchandise in a transnational business which generates billions of dollars and is often carried on with complete impunity.

Most of the trafficking cases are not identified and consequently stay “invisible”. Indeed, the victims often don’t search for help because the traffickers use many control mechanisms over them. The victims are indeed in a country they don’t know: they often don’t speak the language and often don’t have any identity papers. This situation allows the exploiters to manipulate them to avoid any escape by using force and violence, having the victims believe that they will turn them in to the police or that they will hurt their family.

Pictures of sexual abuses on children (pornographic depiction of the children)

According to the Optional Protocol on the CRC, child pornography refers to “any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes”. This includes pictures, visual or audio representations and drawings.

The term “child pornography” may be regarded as referring to “traditional” adult pornography but, as it involves children, this term doesn’t describe the real nature

of these pictures in an accurate way. To produce these pictures, the children are forced to take part in sex acts. They are subjected to physical or mental threats and are reduced to the status of sex objects. Moreover, the children are doubly exploited: first during the production of the pornographic material and secondly when it is spread. The victims indeed suffer from the repeated viewing of the pictures on the long run. It is therefore preferable and more accurate to refer to pictures of sexual abuses on children.

Nowadays, there is more than one million pictures of tens of thousands of children who are the victims of abuses and sexual exploitation on the cyberspace. According to the United Nations Human Rights Council from July 21, 2009:

- ✦ There are more than 750,000 sexual predators permanently connected to the Internet all over the world;
- ✦ 200 new pictures are put into circulation every day;
- ✦ The number of “serious child exploitation” pictures increased fourfold between 2003 and 2007.

However, the extent of the problem is probably still much larger, notably because the production and distribution of these abusive pictures of children brings in a lot of money. In fact, this sector is valued at several billions of dollars a year.

Besides, there are many cases in which young minors – feeling protected by the distance induced by the use of technology, and often ignorant about the consequences – photograph themselves on their own. These pictures are then sold and distributed between peers and adults.

Why does this phenomenon exist and which children are affected by it?

There are several factors which facilitate the development of the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). The conditions of extreme poverty in which many communities live and the lack of economic opportunities expose the children from families in a situation of economic precariousness to greater risks of being lured by false employment promises or of being sold by their own family. Forced migrations towards big cities or other countries reinforce this vulnerability. Sex tourism with children is facilitated by the fact that people travel abroad more often as well as by cultural and social prejudice and stereotypes (for example: “it is part of the local traditions”, “youth mature sooner here”).

Nevertheless, each time the CSEC comes forward, it is because there has been a request.

One of the consequences of those conditions which favour the development of CSEC is that this phenomenon exists all over the world. The exploitation of children is an unfortunate reality within the poorest countries of the world, but also within the richest ones where certain sections of the population are being marginalized and the children vulnerable to this scourge. Even if this phenomenon happens on a global scale, its characteristics are different depending on the country, more particularly when it comes to the affected children. The children who are vulnerable to CSEC may come from very poor families, be illegally present, have lost their families, or even be enlisted by force in a conflict.

A category of children who are particularly vulnerable to CSEC is the one of street children. These children either live in a gang on the street, away from their respective families, or stay on the street temporarily (during the day or several days in a row) and go back to their families more or less regularly. There, left to their own devices, they are very vulnerable to exploitation, whatever the form (not only the sexual one). Often connected with this are addictions to drugs and/or alcohol which increase their vulnerability to exploitation. This street children phenomenon also exists all over the world, but is particularly visible in Eastern Europe and in Asia.

Unfortunately, according to what CPCS and other associations on the spot have observed, Nepal is more and more affected by this phenomenon. In this country, street children are not the only population vulnerable to CSEC: the children from rural areas are also the victims of traffickings towards the prostitution areas of the big neighboring countries, but also towards the urban and tourist centers of the country. Moreover, more and more children are employed as “domestic helpers” and are thus vulnerable to different types of abuses from their “employers”. That is why it seems important to us to get involved, since 2007, with CPCS to give these children a chance to be protected and to be able to redevelop within society.

The perpetrators of the abuses – very different profiles

Establishing an accurate profile of the abusers turns out to be very difficult. They come from all the socio-professional backgrounds, from all the countries and have different sexual orientations: heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual. They are, for the most part, men, but some women also take part in this exploitation.

“Pedophilic” behaviors are not “juridic” but well clinical notions. They constitute sexual behaviors that an adult carries out towards prepubescent children.

A distinction has to be made between exclusive pedophiles, the ones who are only attracted by children, and non-exclusive pedophiles who also have sex with adults. These behaviors may vary, from exhibitionism without any physical contact to penetration acts. Some pedophiles never act out, for various reasons: morality, shyness, repression, etc.

A person who sexually exploits children is not necessarily a pedophile and can have sexual relations with a child because the opportunity arises. Thus, beyond preferential abusers, there are also occasional abusers who exploit children sexually without having a sexual preference for them. The perpetrators of such abuses are indeed in a situation where there are some factors which disinhibit the fact of acting out: a child is easily approachable (proposals in bars, night clubs, on the street...), the perceived anonymity of the travel context and the illusion about the children’s consent, etc. The indifference to the partner or the sense of impunity can also facilitate such a sexual abuse on a minor.

Finally, it should be noted that foreigners are not the only ones to exploit children sexually: child prostitution cannot be reduced to the sole sex tourism.

Conclusion

Sexual exploitation of children is not a new phenomenon, it has existed for centuries and within very different cultures. However, it is possible to identify the new directions this plague is currently heading in and which will help us focus the fight against CSEC in the future.

On the one hand, the development of the new technologies contributed to a real boom in pictures and videos of child abuses, particularly – even if not only – on the Internet. On the other hand, the development of mass tourism and the fact that people travel abroad more often also facilitate the “generalization” of sex tourism with children across the world. This phenomenon is therefore not restricted to the sole South Asia countries anymore.

Considering all this, it seems all the more essential to support the children who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation, among which street children can be found.

Hannah Bristow, Project Leader, ECPAT Luxembourg

Thomas Kauffmann, Executive Director, ECPAT Luxembourg

Deepa Limbu Subba, Head of the ECPAT Luxembourg office in Nepal

ECPAT Luxembourg

ECPAT Luxembourg is a non-governmental organization (NGO) established in the form of a not-for-profit association incorporated under Luxembourg law.

Officially approved by the Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1999 and sponsored by the Ministry of the Family and of the Integration, it is a member of the international ECPAT network (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography & Trafficking of children) which groups more than 80 members together in more than 70 countries and which is the prime example concerning the fight against commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) on the international scene.

Key findings

- ✦ To state the obvious, the statistics in this chapter again reinforce the notion that the streets are not a safe environment for children to live in.
- ✦ Street children live under constant fear of emotional abuse (threats and humiliation) but the threats often resulted in severe beatings and physical abuse. The major perpetrators were police, security guards and street youth. To a lesser extent, fellow street children were also involved in abuse.
- ✦ Society has turned a blind eye to the internal abuses that occur within the street gangs/groups. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the general population, for whatever the motivation, prefer not to deal with the injustices displayed in the parallel world or culture of the street.
- ✦ It may appear that the street children have formed clear distinctions between love and sex. More research would need to be done, but one senses there is no union between the two. As expressed by Kaufmann “is it really possible to talk about love in a life made up of violence?”
- ✦ Even with separation from families, the majority of the children hold firm to cultural norms such as family arranged marriages.
- ✦ In contrast, the street children are quite egalitarian in their stance in welcoming marriage to lower castes.
- ✦ Sexual relationships with penetration (forced and own choice) dramatically increases for street children 14 years and older. It is inconclusive which occurs first.
- ✦ Rana reminds us that as well as being victims, children in a street situation are also resilient, resourceful and active agents of their lives and are survivors.
- ✦ Street children use NGOs to fulfill their needs.

CHAPTER FIVE

SOCIAL CONTEXT, GROUP IDENTITY AND CONFLICTS



CPCS

ARTICLE 37 (CRC) : “No child should be subjected to torture ... degrading treatment (nor be) deprived of his or her liberty unlawfully”



Street children are frequently arrested, beaten, morally abused and sometimes tortured by legal or illegal authorities.

Introduction

It is obvious that the child in a street situation is not an isolated being. He is often a member of a group which reacts against other groups in a specific social context. Of course, the child, such as any individual, builds an “image” of what surrounds him, assigning different roles to everyone. Opponent, foil, prey, daily quest...

Social context also implies conflicts. The vision(s) the Other social actors have on the street world and, above all, on street children, cannot be forgotten.

“What is the social context in which the child and the conflicts he has to face exist?”

The years we spent observing the situation confirmed that the child is not isolated on the street. On the contrary, he maintains a whole set of social relationships, is often part of a group, a gang that has got its own habits and informal rules.

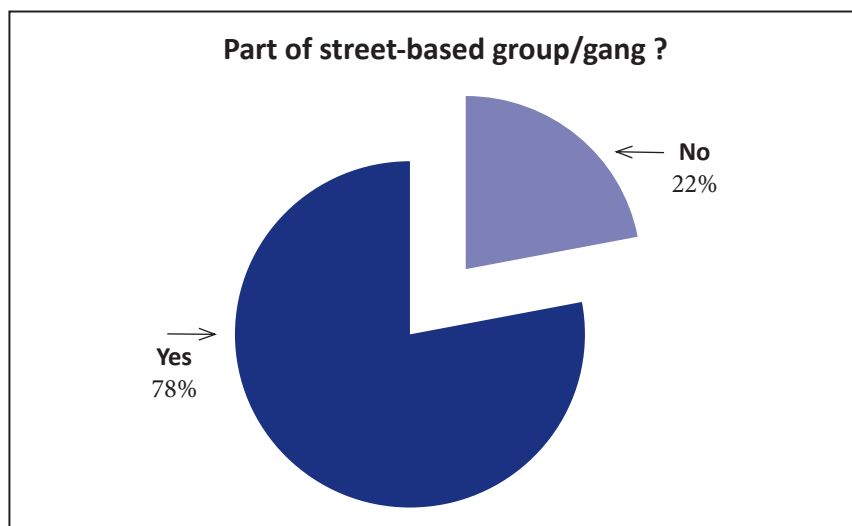
Most children we met are part of a group and confirmed that this affiliation is something of a need. It seems that being isolated on the street is unsustainable – mainly for protective reasons, but also for conviviality issues.



Quantitative approach: analysis of the statistical data

Social Context

The majority of the street children (78%) reported that they were part of a street based group or gang. More than 60% of the street children agreed that being in a group is compulsory to survive while on the street. Having said that, 52% of the children disagreed on 'illegal acts are necessary part of being in a street group', while 35% agreed that violent acts were necessary.



It is notable that about a third (30%) of the street children agreed that 'carrying knives/blades is necessary to protect the group against other'. On the other hand, 54% disagreed and 15% of the children held a neutral view on it.

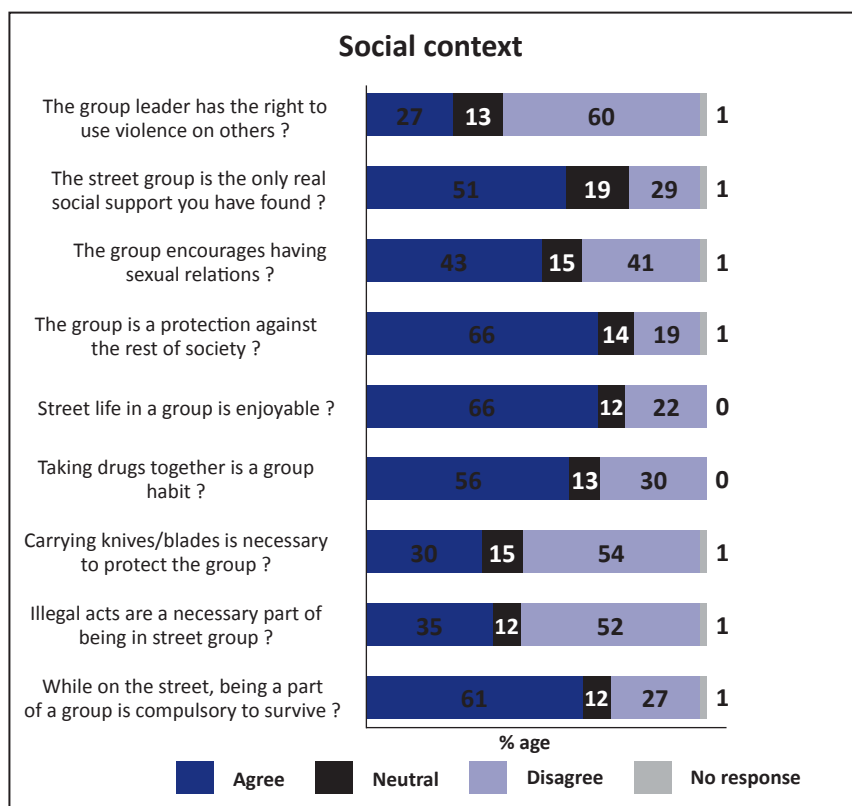
More than half of the street children (56%) agreed that 'taking drugs together is a group habit' while about a third (30%) disagreed and the remaining 13% had a neutral view on it. 66% of the respondents agreed that street life in a group is enjoyable whereas only 22% of the children disagreed.

Two thirds of the children agreed that the group offered protection against the rest of society (against moral and physical abuses) while about a fifth of the children (19%) disagreed.

More than two out of five children (43%) reported that they agreed on the statement ‘the group encourages having sexual relations’ while almost the same percentage of children disagreed (41%) on it.

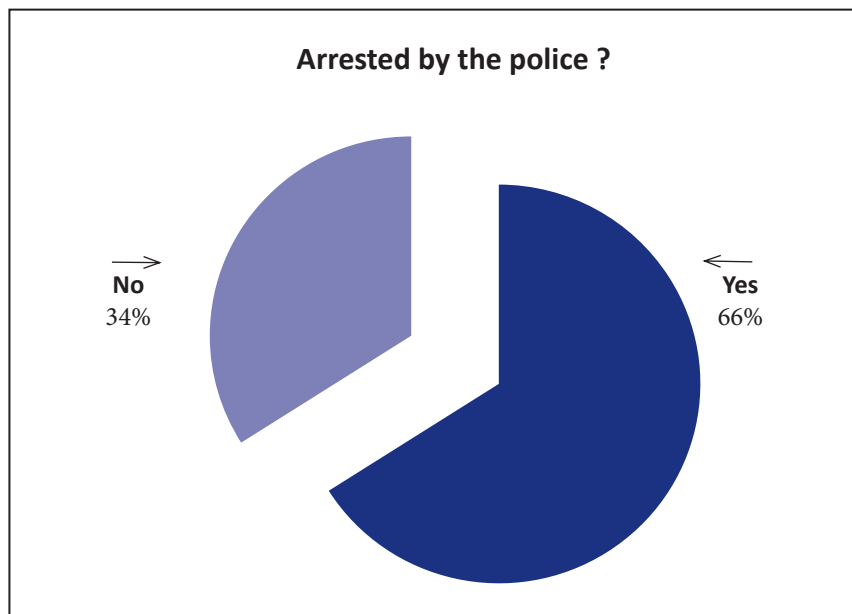
Children were also asked whether they agreed, neutral or disagreed with the statement ‘the street group is the only real social support you have found’. More than half of the children (51%) agreed while about a third of the children (29%) disagreed with this statement.

It is discouraging to note that more than a quarter of the children (27%) agreed to the statement ‘the group leader has the right to use violence on others’ while 13% of the children remained neutral.



Conflict with Authorities

It is notable that two thirds of the children (66%) have been arrested by the police.

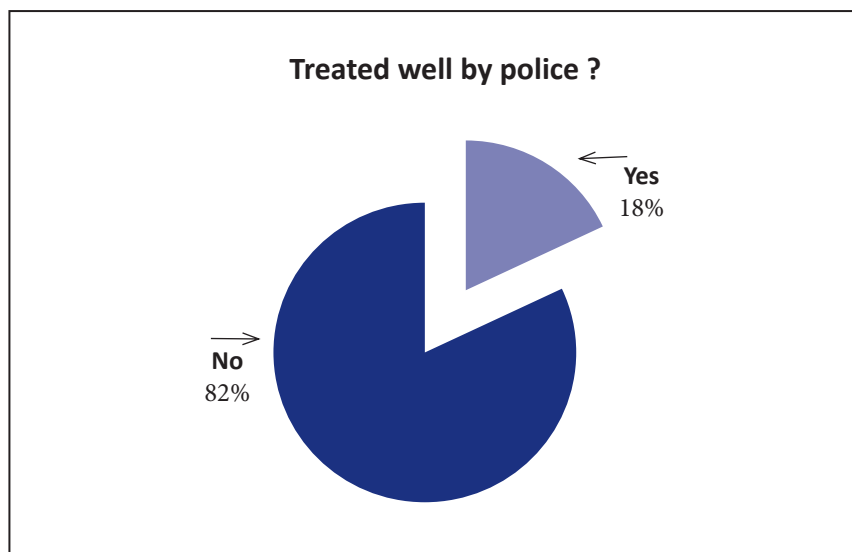


37% of the children have been arrested five or more times. Most of the arrested children reported that the reason for being arrested by the police was for stealing (45%) followed by robbery (16%). 10% of the children reported that they had been arrested without any reason.

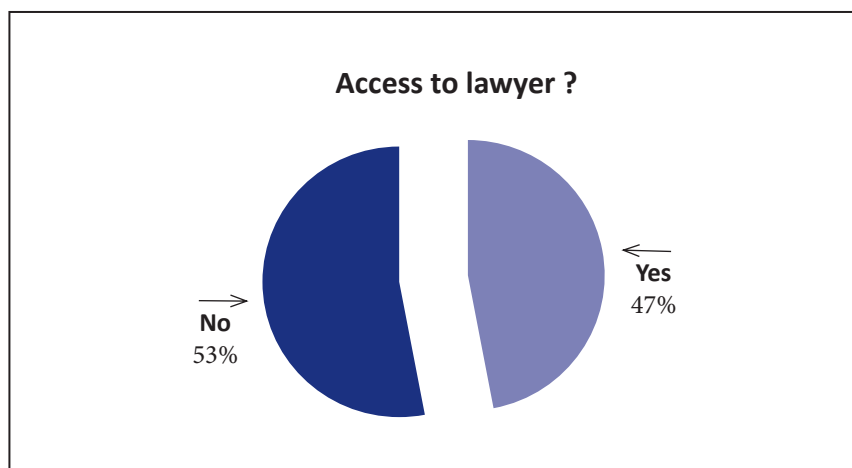
Contrary to earlier statistics, very few street children are arrested for glue sniffing even though 76% of the children stated that they use the substance and they openly sniff glue on the streets. Similarly, whilst there has been a sharp increase in street children begging, there are very few arrests. Is there a reason why different activities are tolerated more than others?

%	
Number of times (arrested by police) ?	
1	22.1
2	17.1
3	14.6
4	9.0
5 or more times	37.0
Total	100.0
For which reason (main) ?	
Stealing	45.2
Robbery	16.1
No reason	9.5
Sleeping on the street	6.5
Fighting	5.0
Drugs	5.0
Working at night	2.5
Pick pocketing	2.0
Sniff glue	1.5
For shelter and education	1.0
Begging in Pashupati area	1.0
Others	4.5
Total	100.0

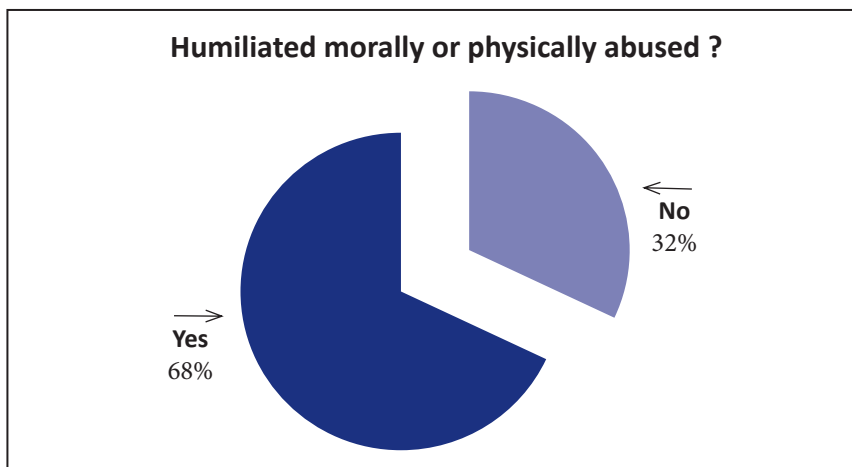
It is discouraging to note that an overwhelming majority of the children (82%) were not treated well by the police while in police custody.



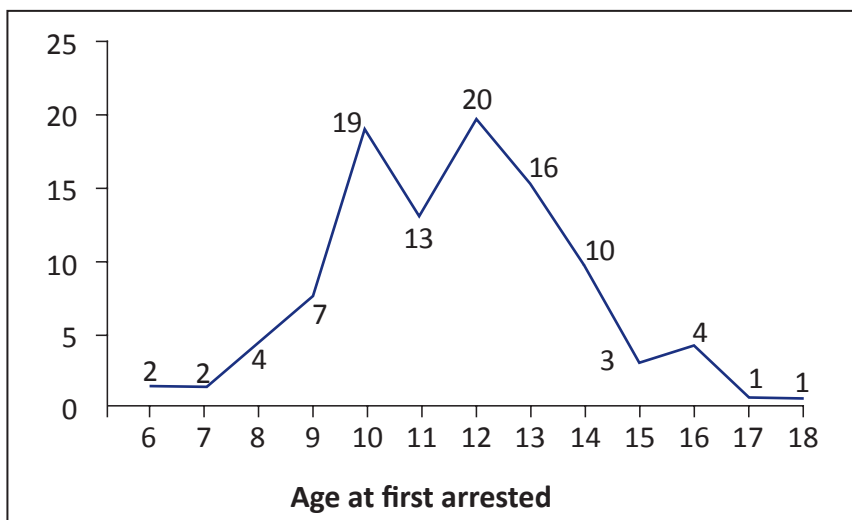
Less than half of the arrested children (47%) reported that a social worker or a lawyer came to visit them in custody while 53% of the children reported that a social worker or lawyer did not visit them at all.



68% of the arrested children stated that they were humiliated morally or physically abused whilst in custody.



It is notable that over a third of the children (34%) were arrested by the police for the first time by the age of 10. Furthermore, the overwhelming majority of the children (92%) were arrested for the first time by the age of 15.



Quantitative approach: analysis of the statistical data

Access to services

87% of the street children had visited Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Similarly, more than three out of four children (78%) often slept at an NGO.

The majority of the children (86%) mentioned that they like NGOs. However, a proportion of the children (12%) reported that they do not like NGOs. Two thirds of the children (66%) reported that they regularly visit different NGOs.

Nearly one out of four street children (23%) perceived that NGOs act like business companies and they misuse the child's image. On the other hand, three quarters of the children (75%) did not think so.

The overwhelming majority of the respondents (89%) think NGOs are helping street children properly.

		%
Have you ever been to an NGO?		
Yes		87.1
No		11.9
No response		1.0
Do you often sleep in an NGO?		
Yes		77.8
No		20.5
No response		1.7
Do you like NGOs?		
Yes		86.4
No		11.9
No response		1.7
Do you go regularly in different NGOs?		
Yes		65.6
No		33.4
No response		1.0

Do you think NGOs act like business companies and misuse your image?	
Yes	23.2
No	74.8
No response	2.0
Do you think NGOs are helping you properly?	
Yes	89.4
No	9.9
No response	0.7
Total	100.0



Quantitative approach: analysis of the statistical data

Qualitative approach: observation and first-hand accounts

What picture does the child get of his environment? Who influences him? What is the nature of the conflicts which set him against others and who are those others? Who or what represents authority for him? What is his link to what represents the “legal authority” in his country (the police, the army, social assistance...)? Those are the questions we asked ourselves during our observations and discussions with the children. Here is what we found out:

On the street, the child adjusts his own behavior according to the “realities” he discovers. He will develop his own defence, prestige and survival strategies.

To protect themselves against the threats coming from everywhere (physical, emotional, sexual abuse) and to be stronger, the children in a street situation will organize themselves in small groups. However, if those groups were initially formed to protect oneself against abuse, we found out that they can also be the root cause of these abuses.

When you live in a group on the street, you also flirt with the drug scene, criminal activities, highly risky sexual behaviors, etc.

It is important to try and understand the street children’s culture, habits and customs. The street gangs’ world can be considered as a flexible network of contacts. Everything is organized and structured. It is the same within a gang, which has got its own rules and codes. Structure also implies hierarchy. The latter is being set up very naturally. Not through democracy but by force; be it physical, mental or intellectual. To become a leader, some will stop at nothing, elbow their way to it and be completely unscrupulous about being violent in their smallest deeds and gestures. These methods of operation open wide the door to abuses, be they psychological, physical or sexual.

The image street children have of themselves can both be positive and negative: on the one hand, they consider themselves as dirt (because they are stigmatized in the general public’s eyes) but, on the other hand, within their group, they can also see themselves as a leader, a free individual who has a role to play. Street groups or gangs play a key role in the socialization

and identity development process of the child. The children will be exposed to many risky behaviors. They will quickly resign and those behaviors will normalize quite rapidly. No child self-develops a delinquent behavior. The legal framework which punishes deviant behaviors (notably linked to drugs and crime) is of very little interest and quite irrelevant for street children. Living on the fringes of society, most children often form a view on society and the role of the State through their own experiences with authorities (policemen, servicemen, etc.).

Often arrested without any reason (because they suffer from their bad reputation), being granted no rights at all (the fundamental rights of children are violated) and being often mistreated, not to say tortured, the children have no motivation to be involved in the way “normal” society goes nor to respect its rules.

Some important data came out while conducting our qualitative analysis of the situation.

Commanding actors, social leaders:

Street children are organized in groups, the hierarchy of which can be compared with a leadership system according to merit. One or several leaders establish themselves as such because of the knowledge they have gained. There is of course an unceasing violence. Similar to a wolf pack, the gang organizes itself to survive under the coordination of the most powerful one.

The latter will receive tributes and will usually be relieved of the hardest tasks, but will see his position challenged should he make even the smallest mistake.

Gangs:

Above the small leaders, there are gangs with older members or mafias that significantly change and affect the group's survival. Often quite powerful in the street world, they have an influential aura because of the "advantages" they provide to the community: police protection, supply of drugs and arms...

They usually are admired because, as they also come from the street, they are examples to be followed in the children's eyes. Their money, clothes, cars and power – everything suggesting to the children that they are important social players.

The use of cigarettes, drugs and alcohol:

Even if it seems astounding, the use of such drugs in groups greatly serves as social cohesion. It binds the group together, while away the evenings, makes them forget their daily life, gives a social prestige to the one who can afford to offer some. It allows them to leave their daily problems behind. For example, cigarettes and glue make them forget hunger when they are starving.

Solidarity in pain:

Even if it seems paradoxical compared with the previous point, it appears that, within a group but even for a risky child coming from another gang, support will be given if one is affected by some difficulties. In fact, feelings of compassion, empathy or pity are commonplace. As much as violence can become considerable in a situation of confrontation, of hierarchical constitution and of internal or external rivalry – from punishment to murder – if somebody cries for help, he will be given a hand for a while.

To be absolutely clear, if the subject is harmless, he will be helped by the children who, given their age and condition, show a great level of altruism.

Altruism, yes. But it is not completely innocent. Being undermined all the time, the street child has to continuously receive, thank, steal and be disregarded. Thus, if he can compensate for this feeling of inferiority within his group by acting, giving and having a role to play, it will allow him to get back on his feet.

First-hand accounts:

Krishna (18 years):

I've been living on the street since I was 12. I come from Hetauda. I left home because of domestic violence. For me, the street feels like heaven, because you can find and see many desirable things here. We live in a small group and we help each other all the time. This group is an important part of our lives. We don't have any leader; we all are leaders. The group can protect you from external violence. We all take drugs; it is a habit in our group.

I've been kept in custody many times for possession of drugs or because I was accused of violence during the political protest, or even without any reason. I've never spent more than 3 days in custody.

Rajip:

I'm a 16-year-old boy from Bara. I studied in a boarding school up to grade 7. Due to a fight with my brother, I left home and ended up on the street one year ago. A street group gave me food and a place to sleep at night. I'm very grateful to this group because before I met them I was roaming around at night on my own. Since the day I met them, I've never wanted to leave them. The group is a part of my life. Now, I smoke cigarettes and take dendrite, which I didn't use before. I didn't turn down my friends' request when they offered me some.

I only want to go to the organization when all my friends are ready to go. I've done some illegal activities under the influence of my friends, but I've never been kept in custody.

Prakash (14 years):

I'm a boy from Bouddha and I've been living on the street since I was 6. I'm part of a 6-member group in the Bouddha area. Deepak is our group leader. He is protecting us from the others and directing our group. He feeds us when we are not able to work. Our group is like our family and Deepak is our guardian. We always keep a knife and a chain for our safety when we go out to work. We must give some money to our leader. But when we don't have any, he is not so cruel, he is not forcing us.

I'm not involved in any illegal activities but sometimes the police arrest us because our leader made a mistake.

Raj:

I'm a 14-year-old boy from Banepa and I've been living on the street since I was 3. I went to a juvenile detention center once, just because I robbed somebody's mobile phone in the Bir Hospital area. I ran away, but unfortunately somebody caught me and the public beat me very badly. They called the police and I was sent to custody first, then to a correction home. I'm part of a big street gang, we are rag-pickers. Our job usually starts in the evening, but sometimes also in the daytime. There are more and more rags, so we can earn more and more money. We have no leader, but we support each other when we are in trouble. I have a very good contact with older gangs and they have a good contact with the police and the authorities. Thus, I can easily go out of custody. I don't do that very often because we have to be careful about it, but sometimes I use it with my friends just for fun.

Pradip:

I'm 17 and I come from Kavre. I've been on the street since I was 6. I'm the leader of my gang and I have 8 to 10 followers. They all obey me, listen to my instructions and respect me. They are all scared of me. I'm very proud to be the leader of this group. Children give me money out of free will, I don't force them. It is risky to protect the members of the group. I frequently have to face gang fights, that is why I always must keep a knife and a chain for my safety. We never work alone because we have too many enemies.

I've spent a lot of time in custody. During that time, my group members helped me. Without a group and some drugs, nobody can survive on the street. These two things play an important part in our lives.

Sabin (14 years):

7 years ago, I came to Kathmandu with my parents. My father worked in a brick factory along with my mother. There were lots of quarrels in my house. My father used to drink a lot so that he died of jaundice (disease). Later, my mother remarried another man. On the street, many social workers – out of many organizations – as well as TV and newspaper reporters come to meet us. They ask many questions about us, take pictures, and then they walk away. I've been to most of the organizations of Kathmandu. Now, I don't want to answer the reporters' and social workers' questions anymore. They only ask one type of questions and then they walk away. I heard that they've raised funds using

our names. Some people are good and behave well, they buy us food. But many people treat us badly.

Manisha (14 years):

I've been living on the street since I was 8. I come from Pokhara, near the Reminder. I left my home because of economic problems. My parents are also living in the Pashupati area. I like it here because everything is available, such as dendrite (glue), cigarettes and other drugs, as well as sex girls. We live in small groups (8 to 9 persons) and we are very helpful to one another. Our leader is Sunil Shrestha. He is 22. He supports us and brings us to different places and different programs in the organizations. We share the money we earn to buy food and to do activities with the group. Sometimes, there is a member who doesn't bring any money. He thus borrows money from the rest of the group and then he has to refund when he earns some. The police arrest us from time to time, but they release us after a day or two. When a member does a big mistake such as pick pocketing or robbing, then the police charge him with 7 or 15 days in custody. Sometimes, they send us to jail too.

Anil (16 years):

I was just 7 when I started living on the street. It is interesting and enjoyable to stay in a group. We've got some girls in our group. I first had sex when I was 10. That is a normal thing on the street. When it comes to the girls, the boys fight and accidents can happen. Some friends of mine work as "agents" to meet the needs, for girls, of others. The older boys dominate and beat the younger ones, but they also help when needed, for example when a kid is sick. I've gone back to my home 3 times already. I brought money to my parents. When I'm home, I lie to my parents, pretending I work as a bus conductor. My parents would hate me if I told them I live on the street and work as a plastic and other garbage picker.

Purna (17 years):

I was born in Lagankhel. I don't know my father and my mother died when I was small. I've been living on the street for 4 years now. Most of the time, I collect wasted materials to sell them and earn money. I spend it on glue, cigarettes and food. I also steal when I lack money. When you don't have enough money, you have to do this kind of illegal stuff. We have to share the money we earn with each other. We are all fine because everybody makes money every day. We have to carry a knife and other blades to be able to cut plastic, shoes, wires, etc.

Sometimes, we have a fight with another group, so we also need the knife and blades for our own safety as well as for the safety of the group.

We take glue, smoke cigarettes and drink alcohol for pleasure and for the entertainment. At first, some friends pushed me to have sex with girls on the street.

I had a best friend before. His name was Surya. He died of electrocution. He had taken drugs and he was barefoot. He and another guy started to cut a wire on the side of the road. He didn't know it was an electric wire. When they had cut half the wire, they suddenly cried very loud. When we heard what had happened, we informed the organization, but he didn't make it.



National perspective

By Shiva Prasad Paudel

Current Ph.D. student, Utrecht University (Netherlands); employed by Pro Public; formerly employed with Save the Children and the Central Child Welfare Board (Nepal)

Supreme Court ruling on street children

Introduction

The Interim Constitution of 2007 provides the judicial power to the courts and other judicial bodies, which are supposed to undertake their job “in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, other laws and recognized principles of justice.” The Supreme Court has an ordinary jurisdiction to hear appeal, review and repeat . Further to this, the Supreme Court has other three important jurisdictions: power of judicial review , power to enforce legal rights having no or effective remedy and power to hear public interest cases .

The public interest jurisdiction of the Supreme Court is widely availed by groups of citizens who would like to get judicial remedy over public concerns. The ‘street children’ case was filed under the public interest category but it also has the element of enforcement of legal right. This case was filed by a group of public interest lawyers but not directly or in consultation with street children. The litigation meant to provide justice for the children as their cases have been the matter of public interest and concern.

Plights of street children

Petitioners and the court largely rely on the research reports published by CPCS, Voice of children, and the Central Child Welfare Board (CCWB). The summary of statistics and situations presented in the courts were as follows:

- ✦ Approximately 5000 children live in the streets of which approximately 1000 in Kathmandu valley.
- ✦ Every year approximately 500 children land on the streets of the Kathmandu valley.
- ✦ Children living in the street face not only neglect but also are victims of sexual, physical, substance and emotional abuse.

- ✦ Children are also exploited for economic gain and are mobilized for criminal purposes.

Legal scheme to protect street children

Petitioners cited two sets of legal provisions and national policy provisions to convince the court that street children have a right and the state has the corresponding duty to respect, protect and fulfill their rights. In the category of international protection, petitioners refer to the provisions of Articles 2, 6, 19, 20, 21, 24, 34, 36 of CRC and Art. 11 of the ICESCR (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights).

In the category of national legislation, petitioners refer to Constitutional protection of right to life, dignity and the specific right of children mentioned in Art. 22. In the category of national policies, the petitioner relied on Art. 34 of the Constitution and three years interim plan (2064-67), which has required to set up a permanent child fund to reach out to vulnerable children.

Petitioner's demand

Petitioners had submitted four-fold categorical demands before the court. The orders were sought in the name of a particular organization, having reviewed their legislative duties. Orders 1 and 3 were sought against CCWB whereas order 2 was sought against the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare. Order 4 was sought against the Ministry of Finance.

- ✦ An order of reintegration and reunification of street children with their respective families, as far as possible after studying their backgrounds.
- ✦ An order of establishment of child welfare homes as mandated by Sect. 34 of the Children's Act to keep street children in these homes.
- ✦ An order to ensure that child welfare homes are equipped with the minimum standards set by the government of Nepal.
- ✦ An order to provide adequate resources to realize the above duties

Response from the parties

The response from the Ministries to the court is often termed as a ritual by the ministry. Since Nepal follows the adversarial court procedure, the government agencies frequently refute the demands made by the petitioners without seriously evaluating the real scenarios. In this case also, the Ministry of Finance submitted

that the Central Child Welfare Committee was getting funding but did not look into the size of the funding in relation to the demands made by the petitioners. Further, the Finance Ministry also ignored whether the money was going for administrative expenses or programmatic expenses. The response from the Finance Ministry surely did not help the court to analyze the government commitments.

The response of the Ministry of Women Children and Social Welfare was full of contradictions and anomalies. The petitioners highlighted the current crisis that street children were facing whereas the Ministry referred to four child welfare homes, which have not taken any new children for at least five years. According to the Ministry, the child welfare homes being run by NGOs are the States' response to the children. The Ministry painted the picture that there are adequate law and structures in place and the efforts made by NGOs are adequately addressing the issues of street children and no more interventions in the area was required. Unfortunately, the Ministry in the response did not differentiate the State Duties under the Act and the work NGOs are carrying out under personal and institutional aid. Despite the nominal capacity of CCWB and DCWB to monitor the child welfare homes, the Ministry claimed that the minimal efforts done by the Boards were adequate enough in relation to the monitoring of child welfare homes. Ironically, the Ministry indicated in its last paragraphs that the resources received from the Ministry of Finance was not adequate for providing services.

The Ministry of Home completely denied that issues of 'street children' fell under their terms of reference. Maintaining its high ritual in providing a response, the Office of the Prime Minister wrongfully stated that the implementation of the Children's Act is not under its jurisdiction but rather that of the parliament (this was mistakenly copied from some other response that the Office of the Prime Minister gave to the parliament). It blamed the petitioners doing an academic exercise by bringing the petition to the court.

The response of CCWB highlighted its efforts to develop a policy for street children and its latest pilot intervention was to provide psychosocial counseling to enroll children in schools and also publish a research report. On the institutional monitoring aspects, it stated its capacity building efforts for the managers of child welfare homes. It also stated that there is an agreement to expand the number of child welfare homes. Interestingly, CCWB highlighted the shared responsibility of everyone to take care of street children and indicated that petitioners are also not free from such duty.

The limitations of institutional care

In the petition, the responses (submitted by the respondents) and in the pleadings, the institutional rehabilitation was prominently highlighted. The petitioners were aware that institutional responses are one of the alternative care methods, but the current legal schemes have not provided other options. The Constitution only provides for protection of ‘vulnerable children’ including street children. It doesn’t further say how such children are taken care of. The Children Act doesn’t have provisions for family preservation, prevention of separation of the children from their family, foster care, or other community based care . The provisions of Muluki Ain have provided scope of in-country adoptions but there are no government mechanisms and programs to promote such options.

The Children’s Act highlights that each child should be raised in his family but does not underline that the State should take any responsibility of assisting families to bring up their children but for providing education and health services .

Hence the petitioners could neither demand the placement of street children into the child welfare homes, nor could the state agencies respond that the best interest of the children would be fulfilled if street children were reintegrated with their family members having provided adequate support. It was very hard to convince judges that they should write an order beyond what is provided by the existing legal framework.

The judicial order

Chief Justice Min Bahadur Raymajhi and Justice Prakash Osti presided over the final hearing. They apprised of the responses of government institutions and noted their critics on the superficial response by the Office of Prime Minister and stated that, though efforts had been done by CCWB, in reality no concrete action had been done in relation to the establishment of child welfare homes (to keep street children) as per the requirement of section 34. The court observed that no responses submitted by the State had categorically dealt with the problems raised by the petitioners. The court interpreted the silence by the government agencies that they accepted these realities.

The Court observed that

- ✦ It is not judicious on behalf of the Government of Nepal to remain indifferent to the rights of street children, which are protected by the Constitution.

- The State has a special obligation towards children living in the street.
- ✦ CCWB is not found acting pro-actively and satisfactorily as desired by the children's regulation in developing long term state policies and plan to protect the rights of the street children; encourage individuals and institutions to establish child welfare homes or build the capacity of child welfare homes and other centers established for similar purposes; collect data of helpless children etc.
 - ✦ The Ministry of Women Children and Social Welfare is not found sensitive and the Office of Prime Minister is not found responsible towards the problem of street children.
 - ✦ The state agencies are not found acting as desired by the Constitution of 2007, the Children's Act 1992 and Regulations from 1995 to protect abandoned children who are living in the streets. Their measures are not satisfactory and there are not even adequate child welfare homes.

Finally the court issued the order of mandamus to the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare as a judicial remedy in this case. The court ordered the Ministry should take necessary initiatives to protect and provide special measures to street children in accordance with the legal provisions under the Constitution, Children's Act and Regulation.

Shiva Prasad Paudel

National perspective

By Pralhad Kumar Dhakal

Country Director-Isis Foundation (Nepal)

Children who are contributing as members of society

After having the experience of being with the children who spent their days and nights in the street, scrap stores and other public and unsafe places of Kathmandu and beyond, I became adverse with the term and ritual notion of ‘Street Children’. It is not just because I do not enjoy playing with words and terms but because of the fact that like other adults, children also migrate to the urban cities in search of a better livelihood. In other words, rural villages of Nepal are systematically ignored by the State; where people can die just because of lack of a medicine tablet. Because of the hardship for survival, people migrate to the urban cities. So do the children. They don’t come to the streets; they come to the urban cities in search of a better life. Streets and other public places, where there is a flow of people and money, become the residence – free of cost – for those who cannot afford rented accommodation. Later, they realize that life in the streets and other public places is difficult but at the same time it also has diverse variety and is infinitely exciting.

Despite the hardship in the streets, I have found that the children living here are significantly contributing as members of their “families”. My conclusion is that they contribute economically and socially on a higher level. They are amply concerned about the contemporary sociopolitical situation of the country. Ramjane, a 12 year old boy from Lamjung, used to tell me frequently that when the armed insurgency was at its peak in Nepal, “I would like to meet Baburam and tell him to stop killing innocent Nepali brothers and sisters”. He was always concerned about the unrest in Nepal, whereas the village children of my age were almost ignorant about the political situation of Nepal.

Another boy, The Commando (his popular name), was determined to join the Nepalese Army and go to the border area to protect the border of the country. Unfortunately he is now working as helper in a truck. When I asked a boy to do/ act in front of my video camera, he picked up some mud from the ground and painted his forehead with the mud and said “merodeshkomatokokassam ... I oath

with this mud of my motherland”. It seems like children are influenced by the movies but it matters little to me, what matters is what influences an individual.

These are just random expressions and sayings. My summary observation is that apart from the high level of coping skills, they have deep love towards their villages, family, relatives, Nepali movie stars, singers, Nepali army and many more things that reflect a patriotic feeling for the country. Apart from that, if I compare with the more lucky children in my family, they reflect a responsibility and they are aware and concerned about what is going on in the political arena of the country. It is oblivious to anyone who knows what type of work children do to survive in the streets, that they are a contributing member of their family and the society too.

I have shared my experiences of being with the ‘children who are compelled to live in the streets’ through two small booklets. These were published after four long years experienced in the streets of Kathmandu. Save the Children UK published the booklets ‘Street Diary’ and ‘A Life without Basic Services’. These booklets were largely about the lives of the children who are compelled to live in the streets. I prefer not to use the term “Street Children”. Rather I prefer to use term “Children Compelled to Live in the Streets”. It is a long term for busy development practitioners but I recommend it because it represents the reality of their lives. Another reason behind it is that I always wanted to respect these citizens of Nepal who are making a significant contribution to our economy and environment by doing jobs that can be untouchable jobs for many.

Kale (13 year old boy) who was a leader of the boys living in New Bus Park in Gongabu, Kathmandu used to earn enough from working to support his family who used to live in a squatter settlement of Dallu, Kathmandu. His whole family (mother and two siblings) were his dependents. He had to earn from the street for the survival of his family. For me this 13 year old boy is indeed a contributing member to our society who runs a family when he himself is in his early teenage years.

Although I have a great level of respect towards Children Compelled to Live in the Street for their contributions and their level of coping skills, there are serious problems as well as there are important factors to consider for the people and organizations who are interested to work with and for Children Compelled to Live in the Street.

Work and income:

As mentioned above, these children are doing jobs such as rag picking, which can be untouchable jobs for many. Apart from that, there are other things that they can do and make money from, but they are also full of hazards and they have been frequently cheated. Having said that, some are supported by scrap vendors (kabad). The main point to consider here is that as these children are earning and mobilizing money and even supporting their families, it is next to impossible to treat these children as passive recipient of NGOs. They may engage with NGOs if they are treated as key contributing members of the initiative.

Informal organizations:

There is strong informal organization amongst children in the streets. They have leadership, unity, teamwork and great strategies that make them survive in such difficult circumstances. It is very important to recognize the fact that they are organized and they have such strength that they are able to bring change to their lives if we work with them, not just for them. These are the children who live in the most difficult circumstances and still have a lot of fun.

Bullying and gangs:

Bullying and gang fights are common phenomenons amongst the children in the street. We can see a child doing very hard work and make 200 rupees. Then immediately after, a bullyboy comes and takes his money. Apart from that, they have their gang and territory. It is very difficult for a child from Thamel to go to Kingsway or elsewhere. I have encountered many territorial clashes between children in Thamel vs Kingsway, Buspark vs Gausahala etc. But we have been able to work together with the children from six different locations in a very cordial manner. Here, I just wanted to indicate that bullying and gangs make a huge impact in the lives of the children and the organization in the streets.

Infatuation and sex:

Like other teenage children they also have sexual infatuations but the fact is that they can easily experiment with sex as they have freedom to do it. I listened to many stories of boys trying sex with a boy. Boys from Buspark write letters with their blood to the girls in Gausahala. I have also heard stories directly from boys who were abused by adults. Pimping is another moneymaking vocation. It is a well-known fact that they are the ones who are at higher risk of catching sexually transmitted diseases and they are sexually exposed in their very early years.

Networks and relationships:

Apart from their own group, children maintain very good networks and relationships with people who can influence their life in the street. They always maintain good relations with local gangsters, local police, hotels/ restaurants, scrap stores (kabad), street vendors, transport workers and in some cases NGOs too. It is basically part of their coping strategy as these people have a direct influence on their life. These people can play a role as effective connectors between organizations and the children in the street.

Common stories:

I interviewed hundreds of children about their family background and heard many stories during my four years of being with them. The majority of the stories are the same: “mother died... father had second marriage... and step mother beats me or father died and mother got married and left home”. Maybe the stories are true but it does not make a significant difference to the work that you intend to do with the children in the street. A boy called Ramjane, when he returned back to Lamjung, confided that he might lose all his property, legally, if he stays away from his home for too long. A good level of trust and a relationship is very important to make them listen to any individual or organization.

Drug abuse:

The most serious problem amongst the children compelled to live in the street is drug abuse. It is really sad and worrisome. Glue sniffing has become a part of the life of the children in the street. I am shocked as to why the supply of dendrite is so easy? Who supplies dendrite to the children? Cannot the administration monitor and stop it? We know all the answers but it is just not happening. Glue sniffing was not part of the lives of the children in the streets in the past history. They used to smoke cigarettes and other things, like ganja (hashish), which was badly damaging their health. Glue sniffing has been devastating to the health condition of the children. I think a strong legal action is the only thing that can stop or minimize it.

I feel lucky enough to see those children who have survived the street life and are now leading a beautiful family life as respected and contributing members of society. I also know many children who did not survive and died. I am always amazed with their high level of capacity and confidence. I always hope these can be utilized more effectively to improve their own lives and ultimately to bring them into the mainstream as a contributing member of our society.

Pralhad Kumar Dhakal

National perspective by Pralhad Kumar Dhakal

International perspective

By Annie Fontaine

Professor, Social Service School-University of Montréal (Canada)

The escalation of children estranged from society

The economic and cultural transformations, which have had an effect on the world for the past few decades, now also affect Western young people. In a situation of social relationships disruption, the youth of today have indeed to face a loss of values and normative bearings, as well as several obstructions of the traditional socialization and social integration processes (family, school, job, housing, etc.) which force them to constantly work on their social links to give meaning to their lives and make a name for themselves in society.

Because society is undergoing radical transformation, the youth stage grows longer and longer. Children begin to experiment adolescent lifestyles and consumption patterns earlier while their transition to adulthood also grows longer. Many facets of their lives are also directly affected by the climate of uncertainty which structures their childhood and adolescence (disintegration and recomposition of the families, professional, economic and residential instability of the parents, etc.) as well as their integration path into the “independent” life (ending their studies, starting a job, moving in, taking on a love commitment, establishing a family, etc.).

To cut a long story short, while those various social phenomena contribute to destroying intergenerational relationships and to dismantling the structure of the “conventional” entry path into adulthood, this period of life is still seen as a quite linear transition, the temporary nature of which would justify the youth to be treated as incomplete and waiting citizens subordinate to the adults. However, given that the traditional integration processes (economic, professional, civic, etc.) are breaking up and that the current situation opens up only a few horizons of getting a full-fledged place as an adult citizen, several youths now mistrust the integration norms they are imposed on, or even sometimes challenge them.

Thus, whereas the previous generations could accept to have a “temporary”

status of minor – which would soon be followed by that of an independent adult – because of the assurance of a future achievement and the sensing of a path which took shape in front of them, the necessity to handle the situation by themselves – in order to have access to a meaningful life and to map out their way in a world marked by individualism – that several youths have to face today endangers the social “contract” on which intergenerational relationships have been based for decades. In such a context, the lack of recognition the youth feel, added to the social strains that weigh them down, undermine their bond to society and increase the antagonistic relationship with the institutions that lay down and enforce the rules.

Admittedly, even in the competition context today’s society lives in, a limited category of young people manage to achieve something thanks to a capital or to cultural, personal or family qualities as well as to various opportunities and protections from which they can benefit because of their social condition. Nevertheless, while others juggle between opportunities and restrictions in this very context, following a more or less meandering path, some young people however accumulate a whole range of obstacles, lacks and misfortunes which get them stuck in a rough and difficult life history.

Thus, under the burden of inequalities and structural instability, a growing part of the young generation has to face various forms of vulnerability, which are in line with a chain of social disruptions marked upstream, and/or downstream by the weakening of the bonds they have with their social networks and, to a larger extent, with the instituted social field. Moreover, aside from the family, academic, socioprofessional... difficulties crossing their path, the accumulation of material, relational, institutional or even symbolic disruptions which sometimes lead them to the street brings new penalties that, through stigmatizations, deprivations and sanctions, will weigh them down even more and jeopardize any hope of social recognition and existence.

Instead of benefiting from a social protection against their lack of resources and support, these more or less marginalized youth come up against a logic of social welfare that defines them as a nuisance and a threat to public health or security. That is how some youth in a situation of vulnerability (family conflicts, school dropout, mental health disorders, drug addiction, runaway, roving, being homeless, malnutrition, etc.) not only find themselves faced with the lack of consideration and of comfort from the adults around them, but are also subjected

to rejection and coercion via various forms of stigmatization, discrimination, intimidation and litigation from social organizations and public authorities.

Even though some of them submit to the expected image of a victim or penitent to try and match the social groups potentially taken into care by the public or charity institutions, others try to move away from the simplistic representations which are made of their situation and get more and more marginalized to meet their primary and secondary needs through various means of smartness. As a consequence, while the gap is widening between their lifestyle and the culture of the institutions responsible for their supervision (housing, health care, social services, education, justice, etc.), these marginalized youth either follow solitary paths which increase their isolation and distress or join gangs within which they seek the protection and solidarity they lack in their family, the community and the social organizations. And yet, even if joining a gang sometimes allows the youth to fulfil their lacks and constitutes a temporary protection while going through a difficult period in their lives, other types of relations within the gang, on the contrary, leads some of them to delinquency and crime (prostitution, drugs sale, theft and concealment, vandalism, violence, etc.), which tend to make them sink even more in a situation of social marginalization.

To sum it up, the combination of various social phenomena today increases the risks for the youth to be faced with situations of uncertainty which weaken their path through adolescence and their transition to adulthood. Moreover, as the accumulation of difficult situations often leads to an escalation of social disruptions which endangers their ties and basic solidarity, a growing number of youth find themselves caught in various vulnerability processes which make their living conditions and their life path insecure. Restricted to a position in which it becomes hardly conceivable to give meaning to their lives and to make a name for themselves in society, several of these youth follow a path which every day moves them further away from social norms and from the possibilities to improve their fate within the existing organizations. From then on, these marginalized youth risk to be more and more embroiled in a destructive isolation – as their fragile mental health status often shows – or are “compelled to choose” to join other youth in order to recreate a shared space which is outside the rules established by society and sometimes even goes against them.

Even if they don’t always have structural solutions to the social difficulties of the youth, street workers play an important role in the daily caring for the marginalized

youth as well as in the mediation between them and the social organizations. The intermediate position street workers enjoy indeed allows them to better understand the culture of the street youth and to establish with them a trust relationship which is favourable for the appropriation of resources and strategies to increase the control they have on their living conditions and their quality of life.

Apart from supporting the marginalized youth and acting as a “bridge” and mediator between them and the social organizations, street workers also play an important “witness-actor” role to increase public, social institutions, NGOs and public authorities awareness of everyone’s role in the situation of the street youth. Considering the impacts each of these actors have in the youth’ lives, the street workers’ point of view should be taken into account in order to be sure that the concerned social actors become fully aware of the way their daily attitudes and intervention strategies can contribute to improve or, on the contrary, to deteriorate the living conditions of these children.

Annie Fontaine

Key findings

- ✦ The gang or group has a great level of importance in the street child's or youth's everyday life. The gang is something of a social support; it replaces the family, the adults and authority, offers rules, structure and, above all, a real protection.
- ✦ 78% of the street children were part of a street based group or gang and more than 60% agreed that being in a group is compulsory for survival on the street. 51% said the street groups were the only real social support they had found.
- ✦ 66% of the respondents agreed that street life in a group is enjoyable.
- ✦ A street child's role and place in a gang significantly contributes to their identity formation. Although some see their self-image in ambiguous ways: considering themselves as dirt but also see themselves as leaders, free individuals and as role players.
- ✦ Being in a group lead to street children being involved in activities that children would not normally do. These included taking drugs together and being involved in sexual relationships. One child reported, "I've done ... under the influence of my friends".
- ✦ 76% of the children openly sniff glue but only 1.5% get arrested for it. 19% of the street children beg but only 1.0% of arrests are for begging. Is there a reason why arrests focus on some activities (stealing and robbery) and not on the arguably more obvious and socially important issues?
- ✦ The police had arrested 66% of the street children, 92% of these by the age of 15. 37% had been arrested five times or more.
- ✦ 87% of the street children had visited Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) often. Similarly, more than three out of four children (78%) often slept at a NGO. 66% reported that they regularly visit different NGOs. 89% think NGOs are helping street children properly.



- ✦ Children claim to accept and understand the gang leader's violence and consider it to be inherent to his function.
- ✦ Even if the children know and admit the illegality of some of their acts; survival and the emulation of the group open wide the door to deviant, delinquent, not to say clearly criminal, practices.
- ✦ The role and relationship that youth workers or social workers play in the field cannot be underestimated. As a "witness-actor" they understand what the children in a street situation are going through and their roles are key to building the bridge between the two worlds the children live in.

The gang or group's solidarity and cohesion is something of a hindrance to the attempts of social rehabilitation of these children. Besides drugs and sex, the group seems to bring some more positive values such as mutual aid and fraternity which overcome the ethnic and caste barriers inherent to the Nepali society.

The group identity – which is shared, carried and spread by the gang – is evolving functions of the street situation and social exclusion its members had to go through. However, we must state here that living on the street in Nepal is less “excluding” than in a more developed country. The street is a full-fledged living space and is attended by many groups, including street children. Nevertheless, the group or gang made up of street children legitimizes and allows some behaviors the other members of society consider to be deviant.

If alone, the street child is a potential victim. In a group he appears to be dreaded. Actually, since we started our active observation, we have noticed many cases of extreme violence perpetrated in-group. In ten years of work, we have frequently witnessed terrible transformations: from the scared little boy who just ended up in the capital city to the violent gang leader, sometimes only a few years have passed... Here is what “street gang” means: violence, friendship, sharing, life...



CHAPTER SIX

BELIEF, CULTURAL PRACTICES, AWARENESS
OF ONE'S CLASS AND NATIONAL PRIDE



ARTICLE 7 & 8 (CRC) : “The child shall ... have the right ... to a name ... a nationality ... and to preserve his or her identity”



Street children don't have identity cards. Their own name, age and address can be changed for any reason and by any authority. They don't have any legal existence.

Introduction

This chapter first deals with culture, religion and tradition. What did the child retain from his past, his family and his father's religion? Does he still follow the customs he learned?

It will then deal with the media consumption of children and youth and the kind of clothes they like. These points may not seem crucial, but they nevertheless reveal a part of the identity the child carries. Finally, we will end this chapter with the vision the children have on national identity, social classes and globalization.

The observations and unstructured discussions we had allowed us to patiently tackle these difficult subjects and to be able to draw some conclusions (even if very cautiously).

Quantitative approach: analysis of the statistical data

Religion / tradition:

The majority of the street children belonged to the Hindu religion (59%) followed by Christianity (27%). 7% of the children believed in Buddhism while 4% of the children reported that they are Muslims.

76% reported that their father believed in the Hindu religion followed by Buddhism (10%). 5% of the children reported that their father is Christian while 4% of the children mentioned their father is a Muslim.

Over a third of the children (34%) reported that they could change their religion while the rest said their religion could not be changed.

80% of the children stated that religion is useful while 18% reported religion is not useful.

The majority of the children (73%) conveyed that they practice religion regularly while 26% mentioned they do not practice religion regularly.

%	
What is your religion if any?	
Hindu	58.9
Christian	26.5
Buddhist	7.3
Muslim	4.0
No religion	3.4
What is the religion of your father?	
Hindu	75.8
Christian	5.3
Buddhist	9.6
Muslim	4.0
No religion	1.3
No response	3.9
Do you think you could change religion?	
Yes	34.1
No	64.9
No response	1.0
Do you think religion is useful?	
Yes	79.5
No	18.2
No response	2.3
Do you practice religion regularly?	
Yes	72.8
No	25.5
No response	1.7
Total	100.0

55% of the respondents did not believe in Nepal's caste system. It is encouraging to note that the majority of the children (71%) reported they would allow a 'lowest caste' person inside their home while a substantial proportion of the children (28%) reported they would not allow a 'lowest caste' person inside their house.

The majority of the children (76%) reported that they would not eat cow meat while 23% of the children mentioned they would eat cow meat. However, about half of the children (49%) reported that they had already eaten meat that was not allowed by their tradition.

		%
Do you believe the caste system fair?		
Yes		43.0
No		55.0
No response		2.0
Would you allow a 'lowest caste' person inside your home?		
Yes		71.2
No		27.8
No response		1.0
Would you eat cow meat?		
Yes		22.8
No		76.2
No response		1.0
Have you already eaten meat not allowed by your tradition?		
Yes		49.3
No		49.7
No response		1.0
Total		100.0

Media consumption and habits:

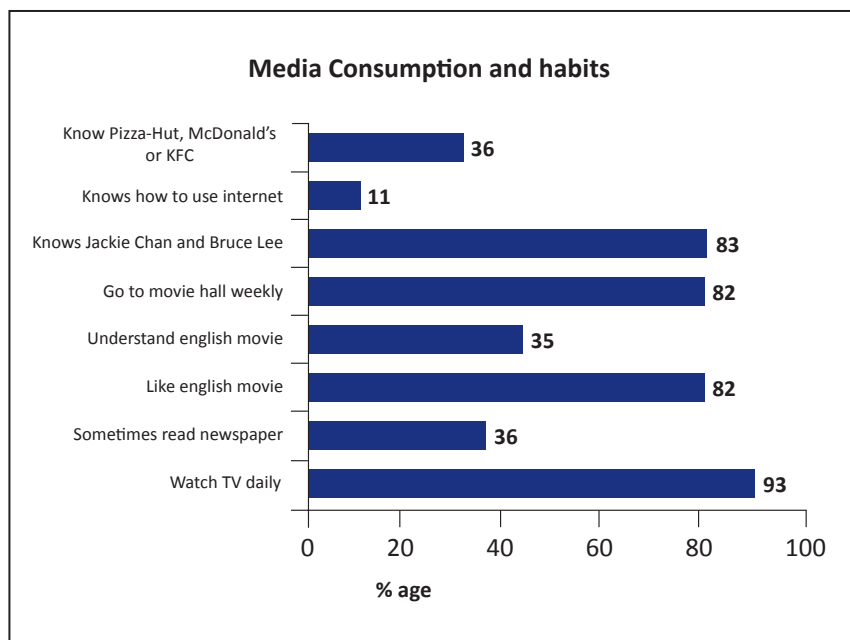
Exposure to mass media, especially exposure to television is very high among the street children. It is found that almost all children (93%) watched television daily. About a third of the children (36%) also reported that they sometimes read the newspaper.

82% of the children like English movies, although only one in three children (35%) reported that they actually understand English movies.

The majority of the children (82%) reported that they used to go to the movie hall weekly. Similarly, the majority of the children (83%) also reported that they knew Jackie Chan and Bruce Lee.

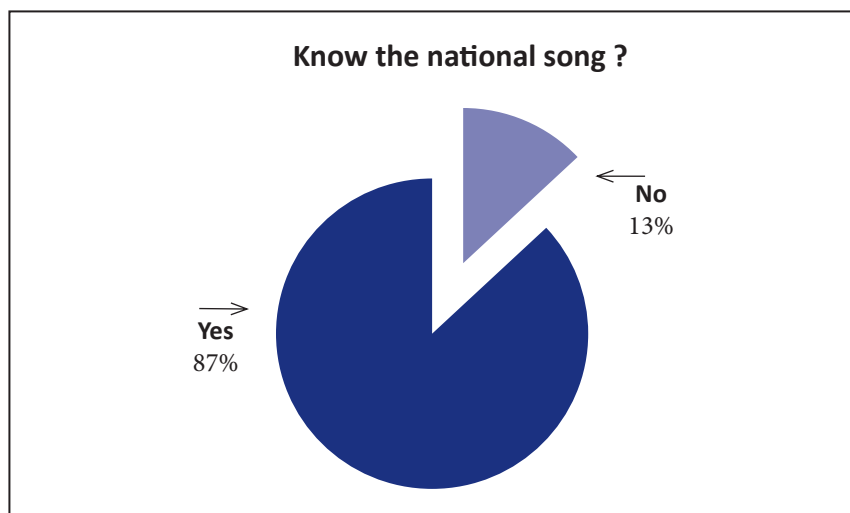
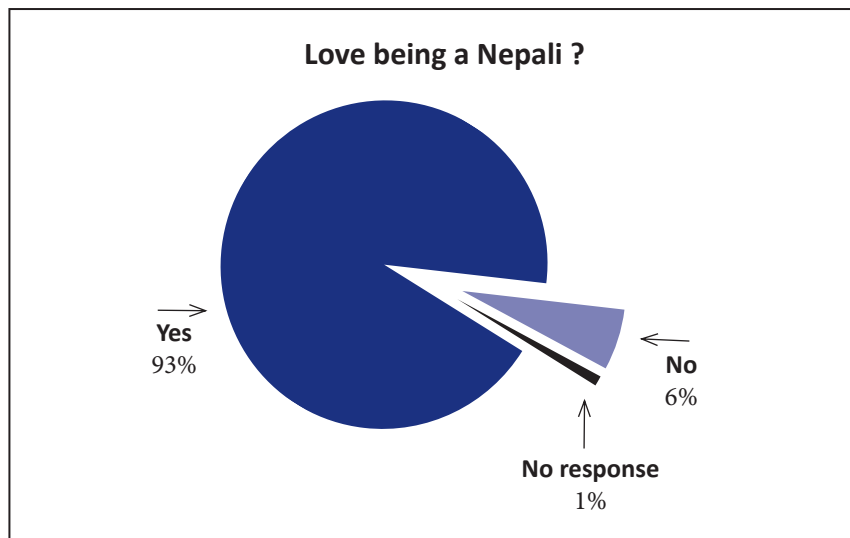
Exposure to the internet is low among street children, only 1 in 10 children reported that they know how to use internet.

Over a third of the children (36%) reported that they know Pizza-hut, McDonald's or KFC.



National and class feelings:

Almost all the street children (93%) reported that they love being a Nepali and 86% knew the national song of Nepal.

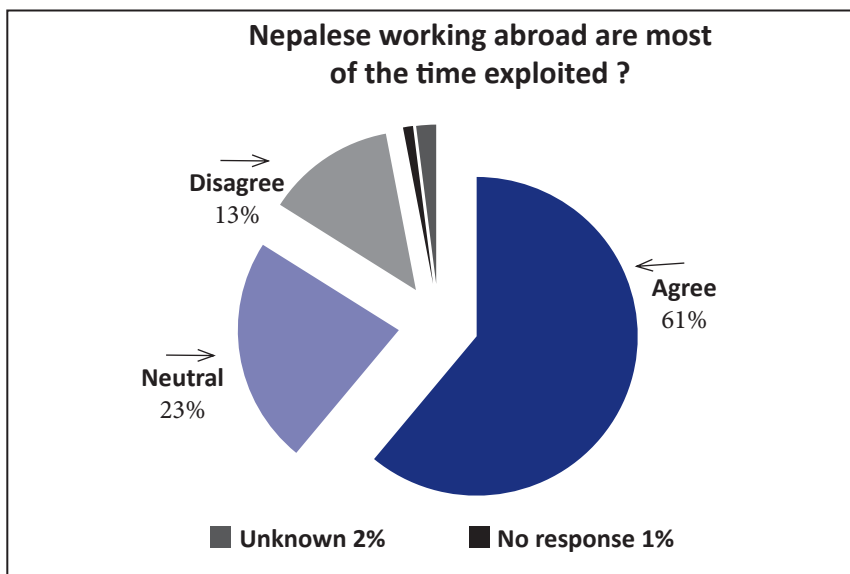


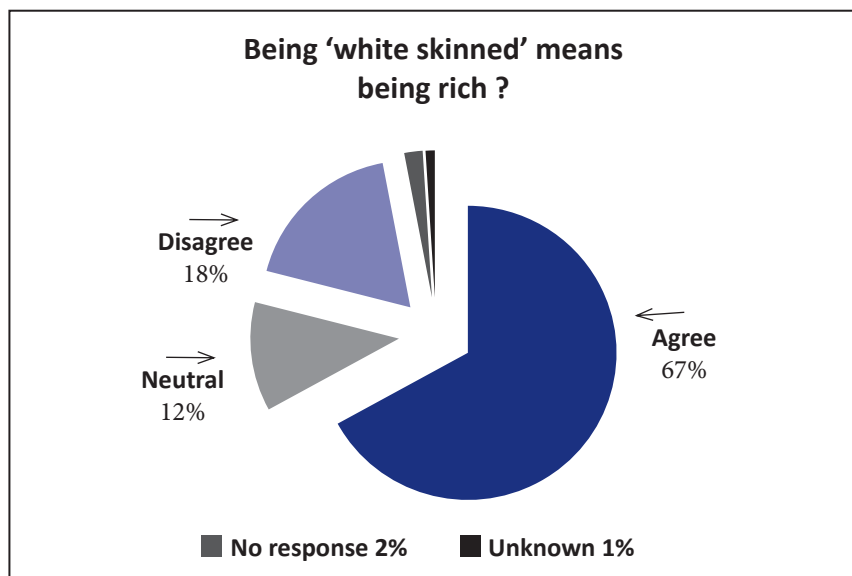
Quantitative approach: analysis of the statistical data

52% reported that they are concerned about what happens in Nepal. On the other hand, less than a fifth of the children reported that they are concerned about what happens outside of Nepal.

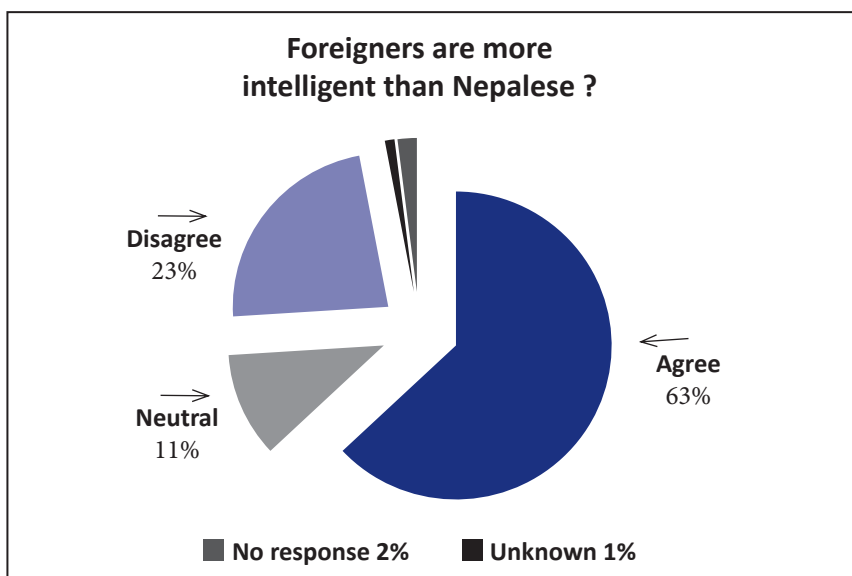
		%
Do you feel concerned by what happens in Nepal?		
Yes		52.0
No		47.0
No response		1.0
Do you feel concerned by what happens outside of Nepal?		
Yes		18.9
No		80.1
No response		1.0
Total		100.0

61% of the children reported that they agreed with the concept that Nepalese working abroad are exploited most of the time. 13% of the children disagreed.





The majority of the street children (63%) agreed that foreigners are more intelligent than Nepalese, but 23% disagreed.



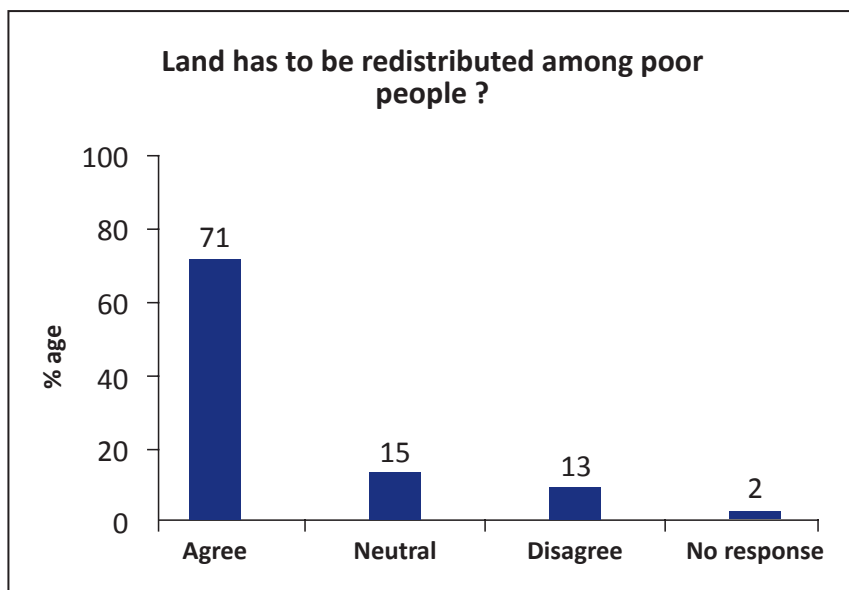
Quantitative approach: analysis of the statistical data

An overwhelming majority of the children (86%) agreed that Nepal is a nice country. 24% of the children agreed that powerful leaders are concerned with the poor people while half of the respondents disagreed.

It is encouraging to note that three quarters of the children believed that they would become a rich person.

		%
Nepal is a nice country?		
Agree		86.4
Neutral		3.6
Disagree		8.3
No response		1.7
Powerful leaders (any) are concerned by the poor people?		
Agree		23.5
Neutral		22.2
Disagree		50.3
Unknown		1.7
No response		2.3
You will become a rich person?		
Agree		74.8
Neutral		9.3
Disagree		13.9
Unknown		0.3
No response		1.7
Total		100.0

It is notable that the majority of the street children (71%) agreed with the statement that 'land has to be redistributed among poor people'.



70% of the children disagreed with the statement that 'it is alright to steal to eat or to survive'. Only 19% agreed with it.

Over half of the children (55%) agreed that criminality is most of the time caused by social injustice. Similarly, more than half of the children believed that poor people drink more than upper class/rich people. Further, more than half of the respondents agreed that education is not available to poor people but 32% disagreed.

	%
It is alright to steal to eat or to survive?	
Agree	18.9
Neutral	8.9
Disagree	70.2
No response	2.0
Criminality is most of the time caused by social injustice?	
Agree	55.3
Neutral	21.5
Disagree	18.9
Unknown	1.3
No response	3.0
Poor people drink more than upper class/rich people?	
Agree	53.6
Neutral	10.9
Disagree	33.8
No response	1.7
Education is not available to poor people?	
Agree	53.3
Neutral	12.9
Disagree	31.8
Unknown	.3
No response	1.7
Total	100.0

Qualitative approach: observation and first-hand accounts

Religion and traditions:

If most of the street children keep the religion of their parents, a minority of them seem to let themselves be tempted by the ways the Christian missionaries (usually the evangelist ones) offer them, and above all, by their gifts (money, food, clothes). But, even if there is still a place for religion, the living conditions in the street change his ways.

For example, a Brahman child in a street situation will not refuse to eat water buffalo if he is hungry. There is something of a survival instinct which develops, and they have to adapt. Moreover, the caste and ethnic diversity the gang or group impose prevents them from fully respecting traditional rules (not sharing one's unclean food, refusing the water brought by a lower caste, refusing to have any physical contact with a lower caste, etc.).

When we asked them, it was hard for the children to confirm their religion (Hindu, Buddhist or other). But it is not only the case on the street. In Nepal, religion can be shallow. One follows one's father's religion and ask oneself only few practical questions. The Nepali pantheon is made up of thousands of gods, and Buddhism and Hinduism are getting muddled up.

Media uses:

Children confirm that they watch television regularly, especially movies. The Internet is little used and newspapers are rarely read; the illiteracy of most of the street youth must be one of the reasons for this. Another reason may be the typical liking for blockbusters. They usually know Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan and are divided on the different types of cinema. Some like Indian movies, other Nepali movies and a third category has a passion for American movies.

As we have seen in the passage on sexuality, most of them have seen X-rated movies despite their total ban.

It is surprising to see that, despite their life on the street, most of them confirm they watch television every day. They stop in little greasy shops and even go to the cinema. Nowadays, in Kathmandu as in most of the cities and big villages of the country, each little restaurant has access to the cable TV distribution and consequently to more than a thousand of different channels.

The access to American movies (via Star Movie, HBO, Cinemax, etc.) brings other values, other styles and maybe a distorted opinion on the reality in the West.

Clothes:

Most children consider clothes to be very important. They usually have only one pair of trousers and one T-shirt. They do not seem to be especially drawn to “hip-hop” clothes.



The simple fact of enjoying clean clothes is already a luxury for which they yearn. And that is understandable, especially for beggars and plastic pickers.

The beggars one can see in the tourist area usually have beautiful clothes given by tourists, but they only wear them on specific occasions, for logical reasons: “we make more money with dirty clothes than with clean ones!”

Nepal and the global world:

The children seem to take little interest in what happens abroad. They have got their daily life and that is enough.

They like to be Nepali and seem out of the loop concerning globalization and its emblems: they have never heard of McDonald's, which is an uncommon thing in this world. Even if they know Coca-Cola, very few of them know that it is an American drink.

They are drawn to the world, or they find it intriguing, but their concern is more to become rich than anything else. They do not bear a grudge against white people, on the contrary they think they are clever.

For the children, each white person is rich, American, and most likely clever. That is the way it is...

Social classes:

Our observations and discussions with the children leave us wondering about their understanding of the social classes. The child usually only thinks in a binary way – rich and poor people – which is based on whether one owns land, a motorbike and beautiful clothes, or not (mainly external signs of wealth).

They are unaware of the “middle class” concept or idea, which may even be totally “unknown”.

However, they don't feel any anger with the “rich” and powerful people, but rather a kind of resignation, a fatalism. Even if many of them talk elatedly about the idea of a redistribution of the lands or about the legitimate right to steal in order to eat, the sense of exploitation doesn't seem to prevail. Becoming rich on the street and by their own means is also a declared aspiration (we will come back to it in chapter 7 on the educational and future perspectives).

First-hand accounts:

Dinesh (14 years):

My birthplace is Chautara. I've been living on the street for 3 years and I work as a beggar. I'm Hindu because my father is also Hindu but I went many times to the Christian church with my friends. I prefer to stay in Kathmandu rather than in my village because there is a cinema and we can watch television. I can read but I'm not interested in reading newspapers or books. I like being fashionable.

Nobody can recognize us when we are dressed up and nobody can tell us what to do. I don't care about the country's situation, but I've been involved in riots and political demonstrations many times. I like to smash cars', buses' or big houses' windows.

I like Nepal very much, but I don't know how the national anthem goes.

Deepak (15 years):

My home is in Nuwakot. I don't like to be dominated nor considered to be different from the other common boys. That is why I spend all my money on new clothes. I don't care about religion, but I like to celebrate religious festivals. I'm also interested in football and music. The caste system is very bad in our society. Here are the reasons why I don't go back to my village. First, in the city, nobody sees me as a lower caste person. Second, my parents are still dominated by society. I like watching action movies and Nepali films. I frequently go to the cinema to watch a movie. Who cares about what's going on in the country? I just want to have a job and earn money.

Subash:

I'm 14 years old and I'm from Pokhara. I've been living on the street for five years. I have no idea what my father's religion is. However, I became Christian. I go to the church every Sunday. They give us many things we need. I feel happy here. I don't like the discrimination induced by the caste system. I don't care about castes. Whatever their caste, people would be welcome in my house. I love the Christmas celebration. I also like watching English movies even though I don't understand them, but I don't like reading newspapers. I really like wearing hip-hop clothes.

Shanker (15 years):

I've been living on the street for 2 years. I'm from Pokhara. My father is Hindu, but I am a Christian. I go to the church from time to time. I don't like the caste system. It is very difficult to enter higher caste persons' home. I like Christmas, but I also celebrate the Dashain and the Tihar. I'm also interested in wearing good clothes and in eating good food. I only watch Bruce Lee movies, or other Kung Fu films, even if I don't understand the language. I collect newspapers, not in order to read them, but well to sell them. I really like to wear fashionable clothes, but not in the hip-hop style.

Arjun (14 years):

I've been on the street for 3 years. I come from Hetauda. My parents are Hindu, and so am I. I sometimes visit the temple, but I don't go there to worship but to collect money. The temple is a nice place to collect money by begging. If we beg in other places, people don't give us money, but that is not the case in the temple. It is true that the caste system in our country is not nice. Personally, I don't care entering the house of a lower caste person. Most of my friends are from a lower caste, but we share everything with each other. I watch television in the junkyard and I like going to the cinema. I like Nepali movies, not the English or Hindi ones. English movies are vulgar. I sometimes read the newspapers but I prefer to just look at the pictures instead of reading. I like to wear hip-hop clothes and to celebrate the Dashain and the Tihar. I don't know anything about the Internet but I like to play video games on a computer.

Prem (16 years):

We were 9 in our family. Due to the lack of food, I came to Kathmandu 4 years ago. We had a church in our village. They supported me through school up to grade 5. Here, I also go to the church. I like the Christianity. There are prayers every Saturday and they distribute food. I went to different churches, in Khasibazar, Dhungeadda, Kalanki and Sitaipala. Sometimes, the church's staff come and take us. I trust in my religion and in God. My family is also Christian.

Nabin:

I come from Katari Tin Lal Village. I've been on the street for 10-11 months. First, I stayed in the old Bus Park, in Chabahil, the Pashupati area and the Bouddha area. Now, I'm staying in Putalisadhak. As my house is in a rural area, there are still some bad traditions, such as the caste problem. In our village, the majority

of the people are Brahmin and Chhetri, so they treat us badly, as well as other lower caste people. They don't let us in the temple and that is not a good thing, but they do it all the time. I don't like it. I worship all the gods of all the religions. I go to the Pashupati area to worship and also to collect money. I've also been to a church. I can earn 200-300 rupees a day by begging.

Jeevan (12 years):

I've been living on the street since I was eight. I come from Banepa, Kavre. My father is Hindu he worships Ganesh Bhawan. I sometimes visit the Pashupati, Boudanath and Bhaktapur temples, but I don't go there to worship but to collect money. I like those places because I earn a lot of money there. I believe in the Christian religion. Every Friday, I go to the church and pray. I don't believe in the caste system. My family and I are living on the street. I have many friends, and some of them are from a lower caste. I stay and eat with them. I watch Nepali, English and Hindi movies. Every Saturday, we go to the cinema. I like watching television, but I don't like listening to the radio. I once tried to read a newspaper, but I fell asleep, so I never read newspapers. I like having new clothes.



National perspective

By Deepak Raj Sapkota

Country Director-Karuna Foundation (Nepal)

Street children

IN GENERAL:

While roaming the streets of Kathmandu where there is the biggest concentration of tourists, one can easily come face to face with the reality of children living in the streets. Most of the time, the situation one encounters is wretched. They are either sniffing glue or using drugs and alcohol, sleeping in mass and most importantly, fighting. Sex, drugs, alcohol and money matter a lot in their world too. People often use the phrase: “children are the future” but I believe strongly that they are the present too, in which case these children reflects the face of today’s Nepal. The freedom experienced here is considerable. They talk of rebellion, acts of revolution and they challenge everything that comes to them. They are free birds with their own free will but without any destination, without any information that will help them understand the joy of life.

In 2007, I was asked by CPCS to share my views on “Journey to the Street” for the research book the Street Children of Kathmandu. I am pleased to put forward my views once again on the topic tradition, culture, identity, Media, class feeling and globalization. It is quite challenging to write on this subject especially at a time when the Association for Child Rights Education within Academic setting in Nepal for South Asian professionals and practitioners has been inaugurated. It is quite remarkable how academic people consider children’s issues while negotiating with University people on starting the CR education as an academic program. For many of the street children, child protection or girls trafficking is a matter dealt with in a one hour speech! They do not view it as a serious issue that could be formed as an academic subject matter in its own right.

Since the issues of street children is emerging as a Socio-Economic problem which is impacting on society at large, the issue is now global and can be felt in all urban settings. From Rio to Kathmandu, Johannesburg to Melbourne, the magnitude is very strong. Some focused programs and schemes cannot address the issue

as it is deeply rooted with modern day lifestyle and increases gaps between people. It is a political, social and economic issue and specific strategies should be formed to solve the issue.

BACKGROUND:

Nepal's Street Children have been present since 1964/65 and Nepal's Children Organization Board (popularly known as Bal Mandir) set up a facility to help them in the same year. There were many efforts undertaken from then on in order to combat the issues in this area. Nevertheless, the phenomenon is getting more complex and it seems that we have accepted it as one of the realities of our society. It only affects us when we meet the street children and the feeling is gone within a few seconds. When we are going to a restaurant with our family we meet them. We even come across them face to face when we attend meetings to provide the best opportunities to children and their families. We meet them in our professional and personal lives but does it make any differences to us?

SUBJECT MATTER:

I was asked to comment on a very important but also quite a vague topic: tradition, culture, identity, Media, class feeling and globalization. I was thinking about the different angles on the presentation of my feelings and also of my experiences, which was really a challenge. It was provoking and also confronting for me. The survey asks many questions to the children and based on these questions I am trying to formulate my opinions here which I hope will satisfy the interest of the survey (or research).

For me these questions are irrelevant. Those who are not inside the so called "normal frame" of the society why should they bother with all those issues? Why should they have to follow all of them? They do not need to be on the same side of society. Society always has blamed them and it has labeled them all the time as the "unwanted group". This phenomenon indicates clearly what should be the response from them on this subject matter. But anyway, let me put my opinion very briefly on the topic as well.

Most of the street children of Kathmandu are from outside the Kathmandu valley. They must be following some sort of faith during their time with their families and communities and it must have been printed in their mind in an unforgettable manner as I am carrying my childhood from the countryside in

Nepal in a very pleasant way. Unfortunately, they are not lucky like me to explore the opportunities of life which might compel them to be rebellious, resulting them to challenge the faith they were practicing or getting into something new. If the rest of the society or their community doesn't consider them worthy why should they need to follow the footsteps of the same society? What is there for them? It is like an untouchable Hindu, who always believes and follows the religion that even prohibits him to pay a visit to the deities. Practicing religion or anything else in life must be relevant to one's day to day living. If it makes life more complicated than facilitating it, who will adhere?

The same applies to the caste system, it discriminates and dishonours people. These children have left everything for their freedom (in many cases not knowing what the consequences would be) so I do not believe that they have any respect for it. Food and daily practices are important to them but not as a systematic way of thinking.

Identity has double meanings for me: integrity of self as a person, and the identity given by the nation. Both these identities are not respected for these children, to my understanding. It is very much related to Media as well. How media presents them is always negative and they are depicted as antagonistic. They are not valued as human beings in the news. Rather, the reporting is harsh and contains many negative connotations.

One unsolved issue for me is the concentration of these children in nearby tourist areas! Are there any special reasons for this concentration? Yes, Europeans and North Americans are found to be more sympathetic towards these children and they often give them money. Even a dollar is a decent amount of money here which generally answers the question. The freedom enjoyed by tourists, their different styles and behavior towards them, the wealth and most importantly the depiction of white people as super special human beings contributes to them congregating in these areas. But there are illegal things happening as well. The child sex tourism industry and pedophilia cases are increasing significantly. There are regular reports in the media and cases are being filed at police stations more frequently. I strongly recommend carrying out a very well planned and organized survey to identify the reasons behind the concentration of street children in tourist places.

Deepak Raj Sapkota

National perspective

By Pradeep Acharya

Lecturer-Tribhuvan University (Nepal)

Tradition/Culture, National Identity, Media, Class Feelings and Globalization

["kasto khathe jasto" (what a street children like person)]

The statement is a very common utterance among us to express a kind of disgust toward some people. It is the reflection of how we have learned to understand the street children in our everyday life. Despite being a bad and unjust expression, it may be quite obvious, for us who are not in the street, as they look dirty and disorganized. Personally, when I encounter a child in the street, with a dirty outlook, begging for money, mostly small boys and few girls too, what I usually do is to just ignore them by turning my eyes away and sometimes I do drop some coins so as to get rid of them for a moment.

Besides the basic needs of survival, the most important one they are deprived of is the family, which is supposed to provide them not only the basic needs but also the socialization and overall personality development. As a result, their socialization is severely hindered, resulting in what we see as a faulty socialization. The most crucial part of the primary socialization process, in which the internalization of norms and values of society occurs, is held back. Given the circumstances, one obviously falls in to a kind of identity crisis.

Poverty and conflict in the villages of Nepal may be taken as one of the causes for children to come to the street of Kathmandu. Urbanization, the dense population of the capital is also a home for children in the street where they can ask for money from a large number of people. Moreover, the increased garbage stock has become a source of income for them by rag picking and finding leftover food and other stuff.

The capital city is also known as the city of temples. It is full of many temples, monasteries and churches where the children are seen to have access to free food offerings. These are the places where they reside. Besides, other public places

like open spaces in the street and buildings in this concrete park are valuable for them. They eat, drink, sleep, bath, watch TV and even earn in such places. Street children are seen wandering and working around some tourist sites of Kathmandu. It is the places where they can earn a bigger amount of money than in other places for a variety of jobs. Street children, a new socially excluded class, are hated, poor and victims of social injustice. They are like 'untouchables' who are not allowed to travel in public transport, enter in clean and tidy places, and have become freely visible in the streets. Different media report their involvement in political riots and vandalism.

Pradeep Acharya

International perspective

By Jean-Robert Chéry

Scol. PH.D, Université de Montréal; Psychopédagogie et Andragogie (Haiti)

The panic attacks among Haitian children

Most of Haitian children have been psychologically affected by the disaster created by the earthquake on the 12th of January 2010. Since the event, anyone who was already weakened by his own social condition got locked in a mental and physical pain. This confinement has several causes.

First of all, his cognition was already, before the 12th of January, conditioned by a set of social phobias (for example the werewolves, the beard uncles...). The disaster has, among others, resulted in a panic attack on the child. At the same time, it disturbed his system of information processing.

Regarding the disaster, the panic attack was followed by anxious reactions, caused by limited and specific stimulus: the numerous aftershocks, the house rubbles, the reactions of close acquaintances, the social phobias and the magico-religious representations of the society.

How can we describe a panic attack on children?

According to behaviorists, this panic attack can be described as an answer, which is at the same time physiological, psychological as well as behavioral and which started when the disaster of the 12th of January 2010 occurred. It is linked to the activation of the autonomous nervous system and of the noradrenergic central structures of the child.

In this perspective, it would be relevant to conduct a functional analysis of the elements organizing the panic attack on children after the 12th of January 2010. We counted 5 elements:

1. Stimulus
2. Emotion
3. Cognition
4. Behaviors
5. Anticipation

Watson (1920) considers that anxiety is an answer learnt during a traumatic experience where a neutral stimulus (unconscious stimulus linked to a previous experience) is associated to an unconditional aversive stimulus (in this case an earthquake).

The neutral stimulus then becomes a signal, stored in the long-term memory, announcing a return of the aversive event, even though this one disappeared a long time ago and is non-operating in the reality.

The neutral stimulus becomes an anguish signal and will create the emotional answer when there is no unconditional stimulus. Those are the symptoms of post-traumatic stress.

Thus, experiments brought to the Popular Education Centre with street children apparently shocked by the earthquake, show that emotional shocks rarely are the result of the phenomenon itself.

In most of cases, children said they were afraid by the rustles of the evils (neutral stimulus) associated to an unconditional aversive stimulus (the earthquake). Therefore, the neutral stimulus can be an element of the system of Haitian cultural phobias (for example werewolves, ghosts, zombies etc...).

Based on this predicate, we will follow the proposition of Seligman (1971) who presented a division of phobias in two classes in the case of a panic attack:

1. The prepared phobias whose learning occurred based on genetic pre-dispositions. Those are phobias linked to behaviors having a functional value to ensure the survival of the species (avoid animals, unknown places, avoid loneliness, avoid darkness etc...)
2. The non-prepared phobias linked to situations, that had so far never threatened the pre-technological human being (bus, weapons, cars...).

In the case of Haitian children, it seems that the cultural phobias are those playing an important role in the panic attacks after the disaster (the werewolves, the beard uncles etc...). Those phobias are different from prepared and non-prepared phobias. Therefore, we can conclude that there is a third class of phobias: the cultural phobias.

Keeping this perspective in mind, the cognitive approach, in a certain way, helps us to understand the mediator role of thoughts, imaginations and mental images, allowing the child to adapt to internal and external stimuli.

Therefore, the cognitive system does not represent a cause of anxiety in itself in the situation of a panic attack but a mechanism of information processing. When there is a dysfunction, it may result in an interaction between the innate biological vulnerability, the individual history and the actual stimuli actions susceptible to create stress reactions.

Studies on cognitions lie on the postulate that anxiety is associated to a bias in the way to process the information concerning the earthquake of the 12th of January 2010.

This bias constituted in a scheme of danger. This scheme would be activated in certain conditions and could have been acquired during premature experiences (Cottraux 1986b)

Finally, the brain of the Haitian child treats the events of the 12th of January 2010 according to schemes stocked in his long-term memory. Therefore, those schemes are unconscious. They select, filter and interpret the information according to the mental images concerning the danger and result in a narrow view of the child's world.

Jean Robert Chéry

International perspective

By Sylvain Fillion

Director-Team-Monde (Peru)

When children transcend their own culture

How could a culture of children and youth living in a street context since several generations still transform?

The conflict that opposed the Shining Paths funded by Abimaël Guzman and the Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru (MRTA) to the Peruvian State in the 80's and 90's left important scars in the country. From 1980 to 1999, the violence occurred not only in the Peruvian countryside but also in several areas of Lima through massacres, abductions, and a social state of insecurity resulting in a massive exodus from rural areas of the country to the capital city. The exodus, combined to the presidency of Garcia in the 80's, to the Fujimorist politics as early as 1990, as well as to the neoliberal politics became decisive factors for the urban crisis developing in Lima. Since then, the capital could not answer to the important migratory flow, to those uprooted populations, to those children and young orphans coming along with an uncle or one of their grandparent or even on their own by bus. The economical situation is serious, the inflation rate amazingly high and the social and sanitary conditions in the slums pathetic because of the impossibility of the capital city to build structures that could welcome so many persons in such a short period of time. The phenomenon of street children then became a reality in Peru.

A child called Petiso will, through his death, give new breath to this bruised and abandoned childhood in Peru. The child died, electrocuted, in an electric booth in one of the most beautiful parks of Lima (Plaza San Martin). As early as 1992, the local authorities became aware of this new phenomenon and some resources were implemented to deal with this new reality. During this period, a large number of youth met in the street. They used to come from the surrounding rural areas (Huanavelica, Ayacucho, Huánuco, etc.) and from poor or even very poor socio-economical conditions (areas along the Andes). But many used to come from the slums encircling Lima too. At this time, children and youth of all

ages living in extreme poverty as well as total abandonment were occupying parks and streets of different areas of central Lima. Therefore they were living on the edge of the society.

Those are young children, teenagers and some adults living by themselves in the streets. The space they are living in does not take the same dimensions for all of them! Whether you are a boy or a girl, a child or a teenager, becoming safe in this context becomes not only a challenge in itself but a struggle with each instance. It is the daily activities they undertake that determine their belonging to this particular environment and define the new boundaries of their way of life. This is a totally different culture, a parallel world existing for the most helpless, where the rules are only arbitrary and submitted to the strength of each individual as well as to their personal contacts. Different causes are raised regarding the reason of their arrival in the streets: the violence, the rejections, all forms of abuses, and the poverty. All those factors push them to take shelter in this new environment that we call the street.

Regarding their health, illnesses are frequent. All types of skin infections and wounds, caused by fights, tuberculosis and HIV, are unfortunately a part of the daily reality. Due to their age and living conditions, the culture of those children and youth is so particular that it remains itself a real mystery. However, this culture is at the same time of remarkable greatness. We can only be in admiration in front of those children and youth who succeed despite their living conditions and their age to take care of their most basic needs. They have got resilience in its purest form. During this period of time, boys came to those spaces as early as the age of 9 and girls at the age of 14 (this is an average).

Despite their age and their vulnerability, they are big builders of the future. If they are allowed to keep faith in the future, everything can appear as possible, at their level.

We know that the street culture of Lima was characterized by children and youth, who, to identify to this under-culture had to supply to their needs as beggars, stealing and getting involved in all sorts of criminal activities except laboring. To be one of them, the newcomers had to adopt behaviors specific to their environment. Thus, they had to respect its codes to get organized and be part of it. Children and young workers were busy with other occupations (informal

labor). They had contacts and activities with them, but in a very sporadic way. It was more a question of meetings between individuals rather than between formal speaking groups. It was the same situation with pandileros (street gangs) or with barras bravs (groups associated to the different soccer teams in Peru).

It is the street that is the immediate environment of those children and youth who ended up here because they had nothing else. As M. Parazelli quotes 'there are no social links without places, neither there are places without symbolic imprinting' (2). The street is filled with symbols and each child is himself a world to discover.

References:

- (1) Fillion Sylvain, Para ellos, una Quinta Estacion, INPPARES-CUSO-Québec-Terre des Hommes, 1999
- (2) Parazelli Michel, La rue attractive, parcours et pratiques identitaires des jeunes de la rue, 2002, avant-propos.

Sylvain Fillion

Key findings

- ✦ As for traditions and religion, the main point is that they still persist, even in a street context, but that they, like all things in the street situation, are flexible and adaptable. The child still shows some respect for what he received from his parents and keeps in touch with religion, the latter being everywhere in the Nepali social life.
- ✦ 73% of the street children conveyed that they practiced religion regularly.
- ✦ Over a third of the children (34%) reported that they could change religion.
- ✦ 55% of the respondents did not believe in Nepal's caste system. It is encouraging to note that the majority of the children (71%) reported they would allow a 'lowest caste' person inside their home and as reported earlier, 63% would marry a lower caste than their own.
- ✦ 49% reported that they had already eaten meat that was not allowed by their tradition but 76% reported that they would not eat cow meat.
- ✦ Television and going to the movie hall seem to be extremely popular past-times for street children, but only 11% know how to use the internet. Heroes and fighting stories are popular.
- ✦ A street child lives a somewhat oral tradition; there are very few written texts. He does not, or hardly reads.
- ✦ Children, such as youth, seem to be little concerned about world affairs, and even about the political or economic affairs within their own country. Besides, since they are undocumented, most of them don't have any official identity.
- ✦ And yet, as far as nationalism is concerned, the child or youth is still proud of being a Nepali, even if going abroad would be tempting should he have the opportunity. Patriotism is extremely high with 93% of the respondents who love being a Nepali and 86% who think Nepal is a nice country and know the national anthem. On the other hand, just over half feel concerned about what happens in Nepal. Even less (19%) care about what happens globally.

- ✦ Many children changed their identity, because of the caste system or to flee either their family or the authorities. Let us not forget that in Nepal, the caste is mentioned in somebody's last name. Isolated on the street, it is tempting for the child to change his social position.
- ✦ Except for Coca-Cola, wrestling and Bruce Lee, the globalization symbols (McDonald's, Pizza Hut...) remain unknown. Nepal already seems as if at the periphery of the world, not excluded but a little outside, on the fringes of it. This means that the children we talk about here are at the periphery of the periphery of the world... That goes to show how little they are concerned about the global culture.
- ✦ There are strong perceptions that being "white" equates to being richer and smarter than the Nepalese. 54% believe the poor drink more than the rich. Having said that, 75% believe that they will become rich.
- ✦ It should be noted that the children in a street situation are completely unaware of the status or of the existence of a "middle" class (admittedly little are present in Nepal). The child understands the classes as a binary (poor/rich) system.
- ✦ Social injustice is a common theme. Only 23% believe those with power are concerned with the poor and 53% believe that education is not available to the poor. 55% believe that social injustice is the root of criminality. 71% want to see land redistributed to poor people.
- ✦ Acharya refers to street children suffering from an 'identity crisis' by not being part of the "normal" society and what they learn in the street as 'faulty socialization'. Arguably this, as well as the many points above, has helped shape the children's overall identity.
- ✦ The flexibility to identity can also be seen in reports that many children have taken up Christianity. As new (to Nepal) churches attract the poor, hungry, low castes to their flock, one needs to be careful to consider that the street children really "convert" to Christianity or rather use it as a means to an end – to gather food, shelter and/or support as required.

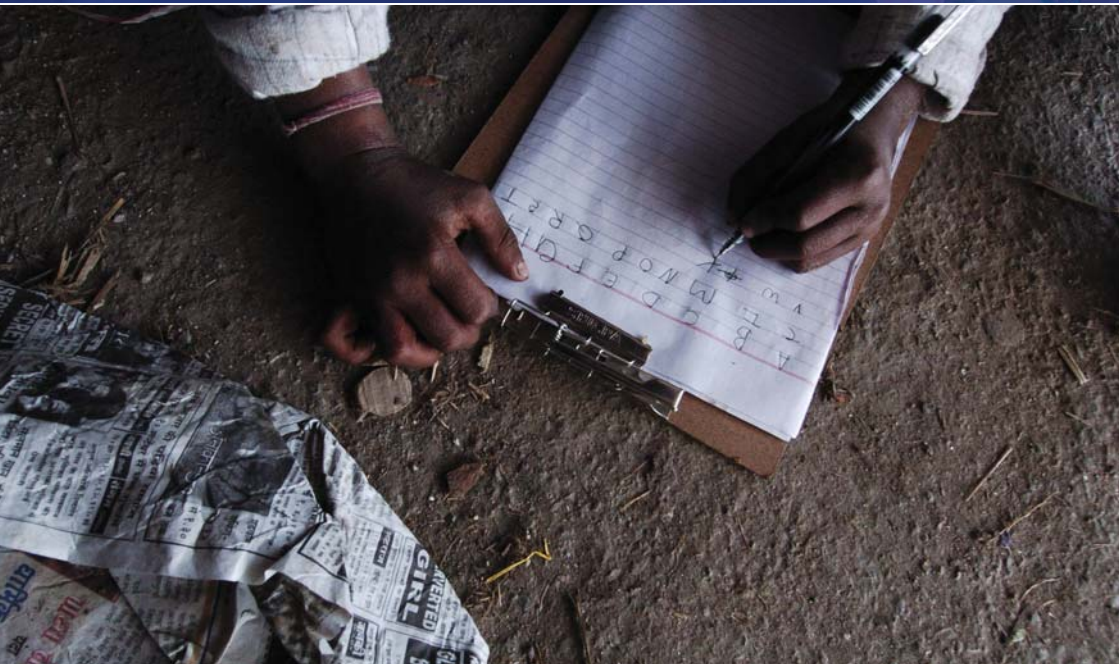
CHAPTER SEVEN

EDUCATION, FUTURE PERSPECTIVES, DREAMS
AND CONVICTIONS



CPCS

ARTICLE 28 & 29 (CRC) : “State Signatories must recognize the right of the child to education ... (that develops) the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities”



Street children are deprived of basic education. They don't have access to schooling to develop their skills properly.

Introduction

We will end this study (before making a start on the specific case of Thamel) with the education, dreams and future perspective of these children and youth whose daily life and home come down to the street.

They are far away from school and from the training centers, they live on the street and learn to survive instead of learning to read and count. Talking about the future with them is not easy. They live one day at a time and are not used to envision a future or to make any plans.

Of course, they are first children and a certain carefreeness is normal, but added to the notion of “survival” which the child experiences every day – which is somewhat paradoxical – it seems to reinforce his inability to imagine any future and to talk about it calmly.

Education not only plays a key role in the development of the child’s identity, and in his constructive involvement in society, it is also one of the main alternatives to the situations of exploitation and violence, and thus to the “street”. What is of interest here is to understand “who” is this child in a street situation we claim to support. The aim of this point on education would then be to try and understand “his” link with the educational system.

If he is excluded (in any way from school) is it really his choice? Many studies put forward the “exclusion from access” to school as an important reason for the arrival of children in the streets of Nepal. However, some children, even if their family supports them, choose to leave their village. The future perspectives, the education or training the big cities offer, especially Kathmandu, attract them. In such contexts, the access to school in remote areas has to be a priority.

As for the children who live on the street, are they interested in learning to read and write? Do they have access to educational services? Could they undergo

basic literacy tuition via the street actors interventions? Education is an almost essential means of reintegrating street children within society because it also gives them socialization perspectives which will allow them to understand why they have to follow some rules to live in society; what are manners, citizen responsibilities and individual rights; and the importance of the family. When they are integrated into a classroom, a small community, children get the urge to take care of their appearance, hygiene, to be methodical and clean. Beyond the knowledge they acquire, they learn to live in society. In Nepal, more and more governmental measures are taken to promote the right to education, more particularly to promote and universalize access to free primary education for each child.

When a child ends up on the street, it is important to know whether he has already been to school or not, whether he has already got a basic education or whether he is illiterate. Some children run off, others come to the street because they have never known any school supervision. If they have never been to school, it is important to know why. Is it for financial reasons? For school retention?

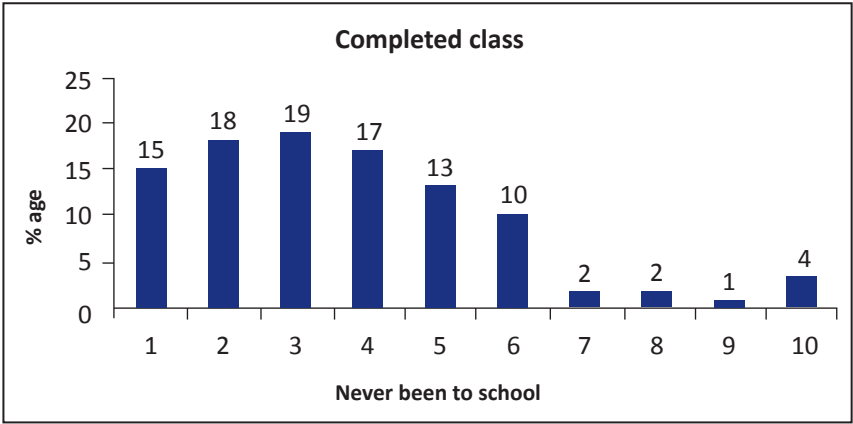


Quantitative approach: analysis of the statistical data

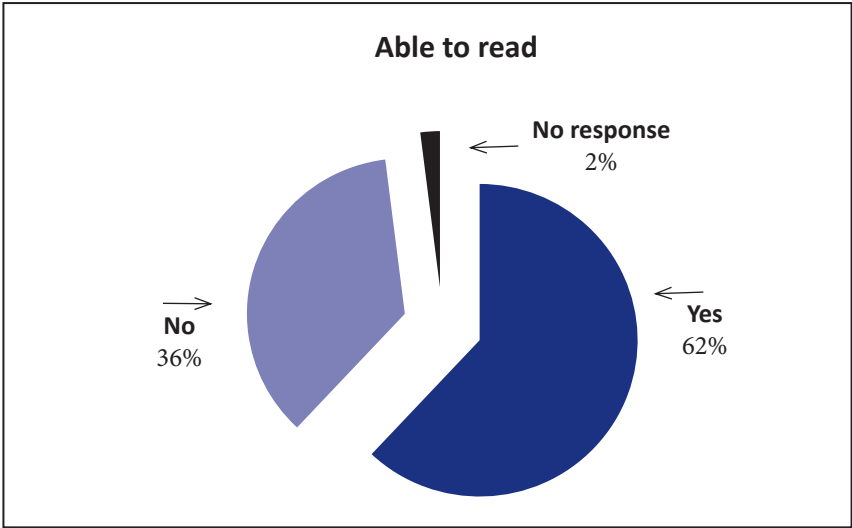
Education background

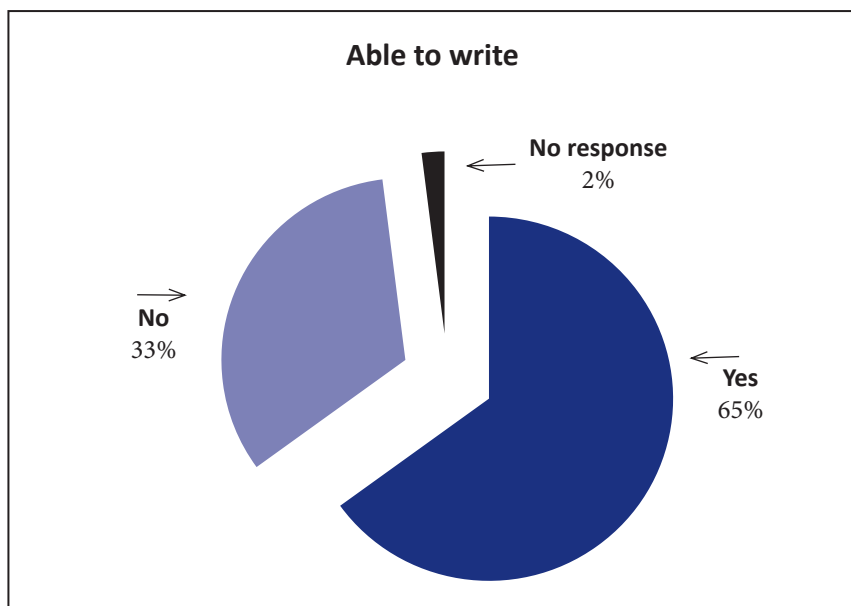
More than one in seven children (15%) have never been to school. This statistic seems to be consistent across all age categories. Further, only 9% of the children have completed primary level education (grade 6 or above).

Looking deeper into the statistics, 40 to 50% of the street children aged between 13 and 16 years old stayed in school until grades 3 to 5. In comparison, only 14 to 30% of the children aged 10 to 12 stayed in school through these grades. Reverting back to the original trend, 41% of 9 year olds have completed grade 4 or 5.



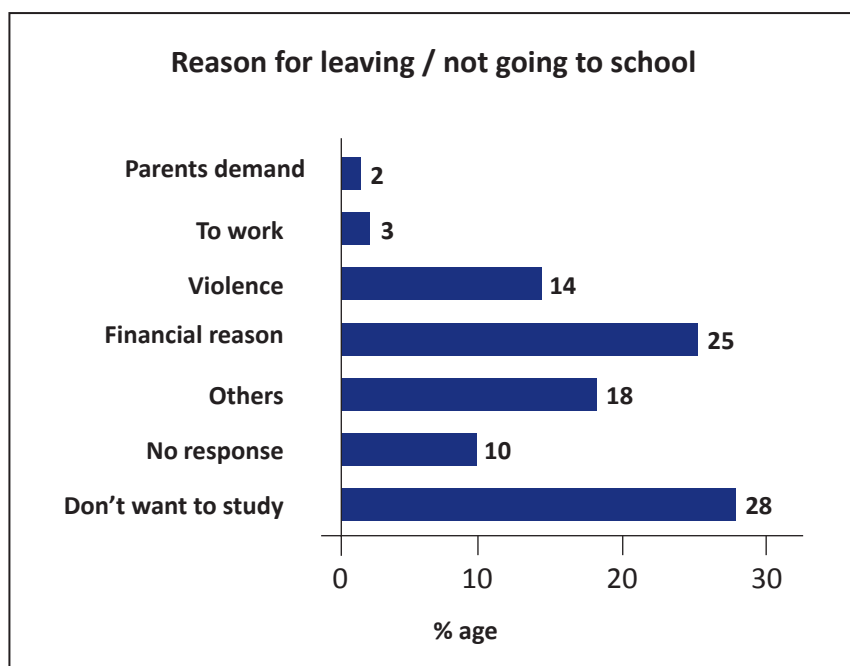
More than three in five children mentioned that they could read (61%) and write (65%). With the exception of 10 year olds, over 50% of the street children 9 years or older can read. Only 21% of 10 year old street children can read. These statistics are also reflected in a street child's ability to write.





Children reported many reasons for discontinuing school. For instance, more than one in four children (28%) reported the reason for discontinuing school was no desire to study. Similarly, one out of four children reported that the reason for leaving school was financial. The other commonly mentioned reason for leaving school was violence (14%).

Looking at specific variations for the 10 to 12 year old cohort, 43% of 10 year old reported that they did not want to study; 35% of 11 year old left for financial reasons; and 24% of 12 year old left for reasons around violence.

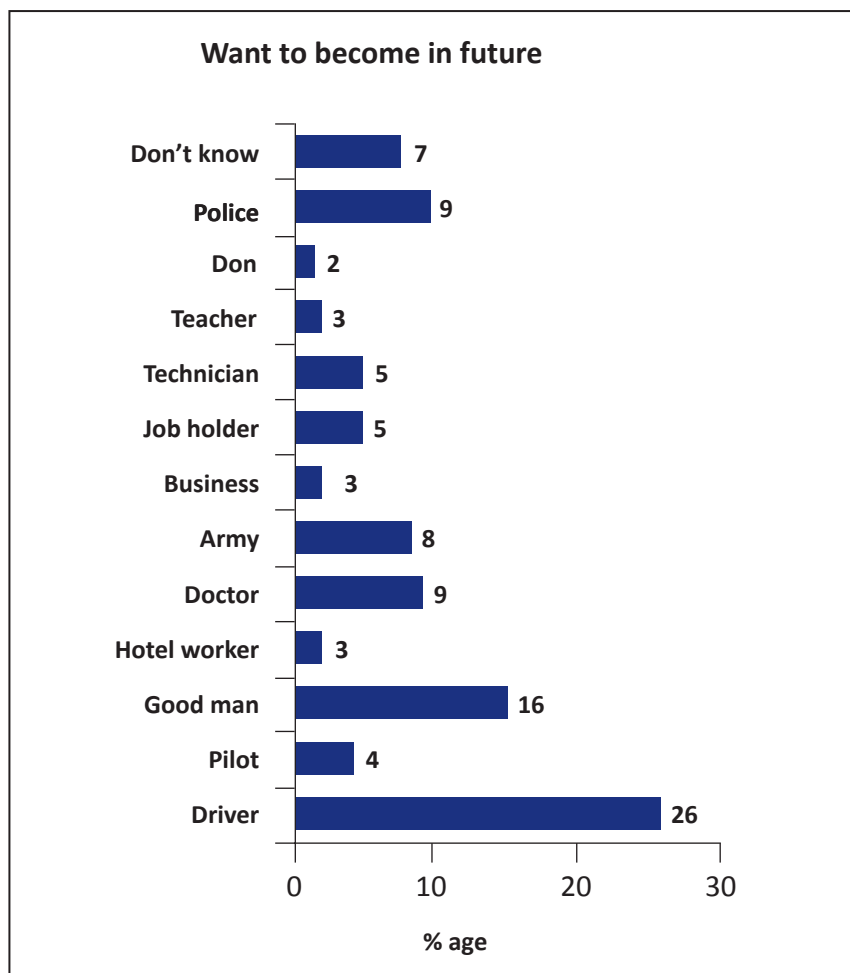


Overall, a high majority of the children (74%) reported that they follow educational classes given by NGOs. The street youth (16 to 18 year old) registered around 60%. 51% stated that they would like to go back to school. Only 18% of 18 year old said they would like to return to school. Similarly, a high majority of the children (82%) mentioned that they would like to learn a skill or to follow a training. For the 17 and 18 year old respondents, over 90% would like to learn a skill or be in training.

	%
Do you follow education classes given by NGO's?	
Yes	73.5
No	24.8
No response	1.7
Would you like to go back to school?	
Yes	51.0
No	34.1
No response	14.9
Would you like to learn a skill or to follow a training?	
Yes	82.1
No	16.2
No response	1.7
Total	100.0

Future perspectives

This study explored future perspectives of the children. More than one in four street children would like to become a driver (26%). 16% of the street children reported that they just wanted to be a good person. Almost one in ten children (mostly 11 to 14 year old) reported that they would like to become a doctor and 8% wanted to join the Army or police. Other replies were that children wanted to become a job holder (5%); technician (5%); pilot (4%); hotel worker (3%); business person (3%); or teacher (3%).



More than half of the children would prefer to live in Kathmandu. About two in five children (38%) reported that they prefer to live in a village while about one in ten children reported that they prefer to live abroad.

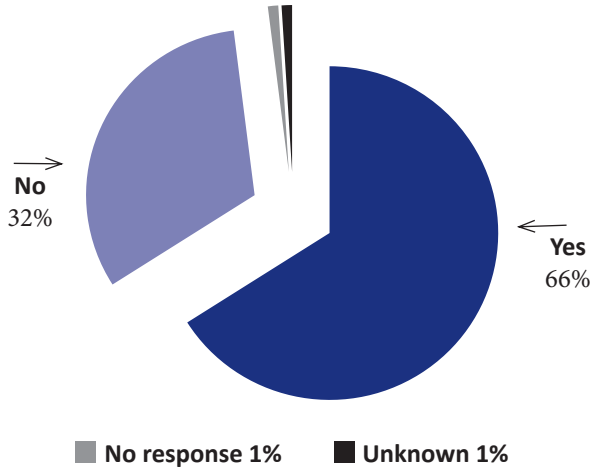
Over three in five children (63%) mentioned that they have a bright future while 36% reported they do not see their bright future. We note that the 15 to 18 year old group recorded lower percentages, but still over 50% believed they had a bright future.

Almost all children (92%) wanted to have a child in the future. Only, 7% of the children reported that they do not want children at all.

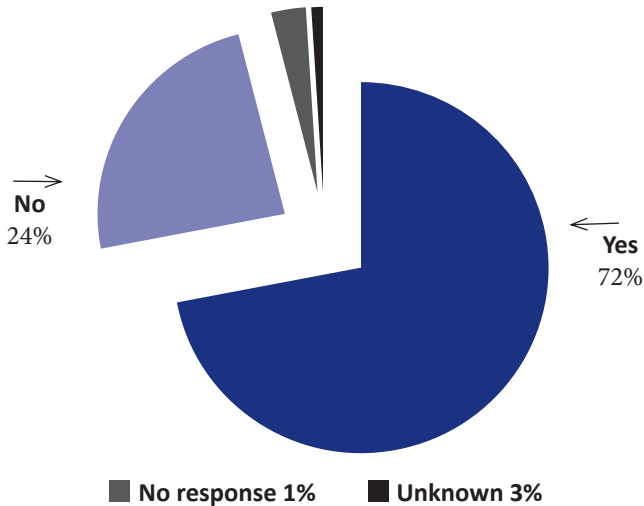
%	
Would you prefer to live in your village, in Kathmandu or abroad?	
Village	37.7
Kathmandu/city	52.3
Abroad	9.9
Do you think you have a bright future?	
Yes	62.9
No	36.1
Do not know	0.3
No response	0.7
Do you want children?	
Yes	92.4
No	6.6
Do not know	0.3
No response	0.7
Total	100.0

67% of the respondents reported that they wanted to work abroad. Similarly, about three in four street children (73%) opined that going to America would be the best opportunity of their life. Markedly more 14 and 15 year old answered “yes” for both questions.

Do you want to work abroad?



Going to America would be the best opportunity of your life



Qualitative approach: observation and first-hand accounts

If some of them dream of becoming a doctor or something like that, most of them are really pessimistic about their situation. Pessimistic or objective? Anyway, very few of them envision a brilliant future and a good job.

Despite their situation and daily difficulties, they remain relatively carefree and the future is not a priority. They see their life one day at a time and are rather surprised when we ask them about their urges, their future adult life.

Some of them are really negative and claim that their life won't last very long. They have already seen many of their peers pass away and consider this extreme to be almost logical. That is something terrifying to hear.

The liking for the city and even for the street remains important, many of them plan to spend their whole life on the street and confirm they don't search for any other solution.

Of course, the urge to become rich is present, but rather as an unattainable dream which thus doesn't require too great an effort.

First-hand accounts:

Subash Rai:

I'm Subash Rai from Okhaldhunga. I'm 11 years old. I've been living on the street in Bouddhanath, Kathmandu, for 2-3 years. When I still lived with my parents, I went to school until grade two. My parents were beating me daily so I couldn't do my homework, neither could I study well. Thus, I got frustrated and I didn't want to go to school anymore. While going to school, I always saw some boys living on the street, sniffing air from a plastic bag. I was curious about it and, one day, I got the chance to try it. Now, I'm addicted to it and I don't want to go back home.

Bimal Magar (14 years old):

In my village, I studied until grade 2 in a government school. One day, my parents came to Kathmandu with me to search for a job. Here, they started to work as labors and I was left alone at home. At first, I frequently asked my parents to go to school, but I didn't get access. Thus, being alone and free, I started to stay

with street children and other friends who didn't go to school. Slowly, I started smoking cigarettes and sniffing glue with friends, leaving home at night and sleeping on the street with my friends. Now, I don't think about the future. I don't want to go to school anymore.

Suman:

I've been living on the street in the Bouddhanath area with my friends for 3-4 years. My parents are living in Jorpati. I went to the Samata School until grade two. We went swimming during lunch break. One day, I lost my school bag while swimming. When I went home, my mother told my father I'd lost my school bag with my books and he battered me and kicked me out. He said: "You can go anywhere, but don't come back home again". My father often battered me but that time he battered me very hard. I've got three sisters and one brother at home. My father scolds and batters them too. That is why I started living on the street. Due to my father's tough behavior, now my brother is also on the street, with me. We enjoy street life. Some people scold and batter us, but that is our fault. We openly live on the street, blow dendrite, smoke cigarettes, make noise, etc. If I had to choose between street life and my family, I would definitely choose street life, because I enjoy and love it.

Deepak:

I've been on the street for 5-6 years, maybe. At current time, I'm staying in the Bagbazar area with my friends. We moved to Kathmandu from Sindhuli six years ago to search for a job. My father started running a street hotel. He spends all the money he earns on alcohol. I wanted to go to school, but my parents couldn't afford the cost, so I never went. 4-5 years ago, my mother stole a mobile phone, a camera and seven thousand rupees from our neighbor room. They all came to our room with the police. They found the mobile and the camera in our room and took it. My mother battered me and asked why I stole it, in front of the police and the public. Everybody trusted my mother and I was taken to the police station. Now, I don't have a family anymore: my father always drinks alcohol and batters me; and my mother betrayed me, sending me to the police station and blaming me for a theft she did. Thus, I started living on the street. Why would I go back home? For whom should I? I'm happy to be on the street, I can earn money and I enjoy my street life.

Diwakar (15 years old):

My mother got married to another man and my father left home. I was alone with my older brother nobody took care of us. My grandfather, grandmother

and maternal uncle thus took us in. I studied until grade three. One day, my elder brother did a small mistake, which I wasn't aware of, but I know that he got severely battered by my maternal uncle. Then, he didn't want to stay there, so we left the house. After leaving, we first lived together, but then we slowly went our separated ways on the street. I also stopped my studies.

I want to continue studying, but I can't because of the street habit and also because I stopped a long time ago. It is difficult to change my habits to start studying again. I don't go to school and I find it difficult to study. How could I? It is too late. I stopped 7 years ago.

I've no idea what my future would be like. Anyway, I'll live one day at a time. I wish to become a money collector in a bus (khalasi). It is the best I could do, since I stopped my studies and don't speak English. How could I get another job?

Soma (16 years):

I'm from Dolakha and I've been living on the street for eight years. I sometimes work as a rag picker or a khalasi, or else I beg.

I prefer to stay in Kathmandu rather than in my village. I want to become a mechanic. I'm very confused about my future. I want to earn money, but I don't want to go abroad.

I cannot leave the street because of my friends. My friends are my life.

Bishal (12 years):

I'm from Kothang and I've been living on the street for five years. I want to become a good man and to study, but I'm not strong enough to take this step, this decision. There is a lot of joy on the street there is freedom and money. I'm very optimistic for my future I want to become a shopkeeper.

If I can't manage this in Nepal, then I will go abroad and make a good life. I see many people coming back from abroad and they are earning a lot of money, getting married and having a good life.

Rabi (18 years):

I don't know where my hometown is and I enjoy Kathmandu a lot. I only know the Pashupati area because I've been here for a long time. I think that I still have

time to become a good man. My dream is to become a driver, although I don't know how to fulfill my dreams. I don't want to leave Kathmandu, whatever the purpose. Everything I need is here: money, friends and freedom. I feel happier when I'm with my street friends.

Bishal (16 years):

I'm from Ramechhap. I've been living on the street for three years. I work as a beggar and as a khalasi. I don't like my village and I'm much happier in Kathmandu. My goal is to become a rich person, but I don't know how to manage to do it. I think that money is everything in life. That is why I must earn money, at any cost, and become rich. The street is the best place to earn money: there are lots of ways to get it and that is why I don't want to leave the street.

Saroj Ale M:

I'm a 14-year-old boy from Palung. I've been living on the street for 4 years. I much more enjoy staying in Kathmandu rather than in my village. I have no idea what my future would be about, but I hope to become a good man. I want to become a driver. Going abroad is the best way to earn money and to become a good person.

I hear lots of news from abroad. I want to leave the street, but I cannot control my feelings. I have a lot of friends on the street and they all are very cooperative and helpful. We love each other very much and street life is really enjoyable.



National perspective

By Kshitij Raj Prasai

Education Coordinator-United Mission to Nepal (Nepal)

Issues of education of street children in Nepal

Article 27 of CRC asserts that States recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. Homelessness denies each one of those rights. Any girl or boy who has not reached adulthood for whom the street has become his or her habitual abode and/or source of livelihood is inadequately protected, directed and supervised by responsible adults.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 has guaranteed the right to education (article 26). The same article has highlighted that: elementary education shall be free and compulsory; education shall be directed towards full development of individual; and education shall be directed towards respecting human rights and fundamental freedom.

Most Nepali street children are working. A common job is rag picking in which boys and girls as young as six years old sift through garbage in order to collect recyclable materials. The children usually rise before dawn and carry their heavy load in large bags over their shoulders. Other common jobs are collecting firewood, tending to animals, street vending, dying cloth, begging, prostitution and domestic labor.

Children that work are not only subject to the strains and hazards of their labor, they are also denied the education or training that could enable them to escape.

UN Aids categorized street children in four types.

1. A child of the street: Children who have no home but the street and no family support. They move from place to place, living in shelters and abandoned buildings.
2. A child in the street: Children who visit their families regularly and might ever return every night to sleep at home but spend most days and nights

on the street because of poverty, overcrowding, sexual or physical abuse at home.

3. Part of a street family: These children live on sidewalks or city squares with the rest of their families. They may be displaced due to poverty, wars, or national disasters. The families live a nomadic life, carrying their possessions with them.
4. Institutional care: Children in this situation come from a situation of homelessness and are at risk of returning to a life on the street.

The standard of living of many urban Nepalese has risen beyond measures, even in the midst of political turmoil. At the same time, many children are struggling to survive on the streets of the big cities of Nepal. According to CWIN, every year around 500 more children are added to the street of Kathmandu from different districts of Nepal. UNICEF has sub-categorized and defined street children into three categories – street living, street working and street family.

Street working children are children who spend most of their time working in the streets and markets of cities but return to their homes or the place they live. Fulfilling their rights is the major concern for the government. Street children are potentially future criminals as they learn many bad habits from their peers in the absence of proper guidance and supervision. Street children's day-to-day life situation is very difficult in absence of proper living conditions. These children mostly come to the street due to poverty, being orphaned, disturbed families and displaced backgrounds. They are denied love and affection and have never experienced healthy social and home environments in their past. Their psychosocial condition is very volatile and vulnerable to addictions. We have seen that no systematic and sustainable plans for integrating these children in society are initiated by the government. Few NGOs seem to have engaged in temporary integration but there is no visible master plan for their sustainable reintegration. Children are the future of any society. Today's investment to them will bring positive returns in the future. Proper psychological development, good culture, nurturing and discipline are some important elements that all children need. They need to be instilled as the foundation stone from the early days of their upbringing. In absence of these elements, a child's growth will be obstructed and there will be negative social impacts for society as a whole.

It seems that without developing some viable programs to retain the poor and displaced children in their origin districts, influx of street children will continue to grow in big cities in Nepal. Nepal will have to witness even far more social problems in the days to come unless it is treated in the early years.

The street children need to be rehabilitated with vocational education. The government, in partnership with NGOs/INGOs, must prepare plans to give these children good life-skills education so that they can easily be integrated into society. The government must open some rehab centers in its development regions. It is estimated that there are 454 childcare centers in Nepal and among them 321 are running with legal permission. There are 11,969 children living in childcare centers and the majority is in Kathmandu (according to Subject wise report, Human Rights Commission Nepal). Other NGO partners also can join in this mission. These children must be provided with basic minimum facilities for living a better life over a certain period of time.

Due to poverty and the lack of awareness, many parents do not have the skills to bring up their children in a proper manner. Child rights and Nepal's commitment towards ensuring CRC and other legal matters are not properly disseminated in the communities. Similarly, corporal punishment at homes and schools is also contributing to making children run away from schools. They are learning violence from the beginnings of their life. However, the Child Welfare Board is already in place and has prepared many frameworks and guidelines to protect child rights and ensure child friendly environments in schools and in homes but in absence of proper monitoring and follow up these regulations seem ineffective. Organizations like UNICEF, Save the Children, CVICT and CWIN have been actively advocating the cause of child rights in Nepal and there has been some significant progress in the formulation of laws and acts at policy level. However, key elements that are needed to be implemented and translated into practice (rehabilitation and integration in society) are yet to be worked out. There are children found in the street who are just five to eight years of age. They are the most vulnerable. They need to be immediately rescued and given proper care. Similarly, there are children of 16-17 years old also in the street. They need to be given skills and training. NGOs/INGOs participation would be the key towards raising advocacy, ensuring awareness and disseminating information sharing among key stakeholders about child rights. The real initiation of protecting child rights must be coming from the government. Government child protection and monitoring units must be

strong so that they immediately report to concerned authorities. There should be proper allocation of child funding at local and central levels so that various programs for children can be developed.

There are some initiatives undertaken by a few organizations to provide education to street children. These include CWIN, Maiti Nepal, ILO, UNICEF, SAVE, CVICT and CIWIS; but it is very difficult to attract the street children to the classroom unless it improves their livelihood and other basic requirements for living. In the absence of fixed residing places, guidance and livelihoods they cannot (maybe will not) attend school. Similarly, a center for psychosocial counseling is equally important, along with other facilities.

There are still significant numbers of children who are out of school and street children are mostly falling into this category. Simply conducting an enrollment drive for these children will not help, unless also managing their residency and other facilities for living. For this purpose, resource mobilization is an important aspect. The government and other organizations must have a proper database and statistics of these children. There are several childcare centers which give shelter to street and displaced children, but the government does not seem to monitor them properly. There are some cases of sexual abuse and exploitation coming to notice from these centers. These things need to be closely monitored. Besides this, there needs to be more and more quality childcare centers and a proper arrangement for providing education.

Some good initiatives by the government and NGO sectors include:

- Establishment of women and children ministry
- Formation of Child Welfare Board at the central level and offices in district level
- Establishment of Human Rights Commission with a child protection cell
- Juvenile justice system
- Childcare and rehab center initiated by the government
- Child help line (toll free phone number)
- Scholarship program for vulnerable children
- Education for all
- Emergency child rescue fund
- Quality childcare centers by NGO initiatives

Kshitij Raj Prasai

International perspective

By Sophie Rollin

Coordinator “Education”-La Chaîne de l’Espoir (France-International)

Education... a matter of great urgency!

Even if education constitutes one of the fundamental rights of the child, it doesn’t always appear as a field of priority intervention, and the percentage of relief work devoted to it remains very low.

Today, dozens of millions of children who live in the poorest countries don’t go to school. However, them being granted access to education could change their future perspectives, as well as the ones of their close relatives, their community and, on a larger scale, their country.

The impact of such an action to promote the education of underprivileged children is huge, for it is measured well beyond the individual who gets it, and its effects have positive consequences on the long run in many fields.

A child who goes to school will be able, when reaching adulthood, to get a more qualified and better paid job. He will thus be in a position to meet his own needs, the ones of his family, and will actively contribute to the economic development of his country. Not only is education essential to enable the individuals to get out of a state of poverty, but it also brings about some changes in the behaviors, mentalities, and improves the health of the individuals. An educated child will become an adult able to keep himself informed, to treat himself and to prevent himself from getting any disease. Once a parent, he will take care of his children and will send them to school when they reach the age.

Beyond quantifiable impacts, the benefits for the child’s circle can take various forms: in Afghanistan, an illiterate mother learns to read and write via her daughter who goes to a school we built in the Panshir... In Thailand, a child who was the beneficiary of our program, once he became a primary school teacher, transferred his first salary to the poor children in his village... The examples are countless!

Finally, for the children whose vulnerability is heightened by their roving on the streets of Nepal, India, Cambodia or elsewhere, the acquisition of a knowledge is particularly important, for it notably enables them to regain a certain sense of self-esteem they lost with the violences and exploitations they suffered from. Thanks to school or to a vocational training, they reconnect with their childhood and make up with the future. They learn again some rules and reference points which will enable them to reintegrate into the society from which they were excluded, and to become one of its full-fledged actors.

We cannot make an exhaustive list of the benefits of the development of access to education for underprivileged children. Even if the obstacles to education are numerous and sometimes complex, it is a matter of great urgency to overcome them. Education has a lasting impact on many individuals, in many fields, and it goes for the lack of it too!

Sophie Rollin

Key findings

- ✦ 15% of the street children have never been to school and only 9% have completed a primary school education.
- ✦ Over 40% of the respondents had stayed in school until grades 3 to 5, except those aged 10 to 12. They were well under 30%.
- ✦ The main reasons cited not to study for this group varied by the age group. For 10 year olds, it was they did not want to study. For 11 year olds, they left for financial reasons. For 12 year olds, violence was the main reason.
- ✦ More than 60% of the street children can read and write. The exception is 10 year olds where only 21% can read and write.
- ✦ Educational classes given by NGOs are very popular and 51% reported that they would like to go back to school. For the street youth (in particular the 17 and 18 year olds) over 90% would prefer to learn a skill or be in training. Most of the children really want to learn a job or go back to school, their personal experiences do not prevent them from being aware of the need, in the long run, to have certain knowledge.
- ✦ The majority of all age groups could foresee a bright future for themselves. There was a wide range of jobs they wanted to pursue with a driver being the most common (26%). 67% said they would like to work abroad at some stage. Most of the children want to live in Kathmandu but 38% still prefer to live in a village. 92% wanted to have their own children.
- ✦ 72% believed going to America would be the best opportunity of their life. In particular, this was highly favored by the 14 and 15 year olds.
- ✦ Most of the children have experienced situations of abuses, crises, violence or extreme poverty in their family. They reach a point where they see their current street situation as a better one and as a perspective which could last (for lack of any other possibility). For this reason, many of them have envisioned a future on the street.

We must also note that the children in a street situation are really disappointed by the organizations which offer training or school alternatives. At the end of the day, the child or youth doesn't really believe in it and focuses on what is possible in his environment. He knows that having a good life on the street is not completely possible, but he has got his habits, his friends, his temptations and he is attached to them.

The dream of going abroad also exists, but it is less strong than the conviction that their future will be on the street. To explain this paradox and this affirmed attraction for a life the child knows to be complicated and dangerous, we will make a comparison with the resiliency concept developed by Boris Cyrulnik about the children who are the victims of war: "All sorrows are bearable if we make a story out of it". This saying indeed seems to work for the street children in Nepal.

Each child has integrated a specific story that can explain his history and allows him to share it. Sometimes, in extreme cases, abandoned children appropriate themselves a story which they didn't really live.

The story romanticizes, trapped between reality and fiction, usually showing a hero, who is often the father or the mother, and an anti-hero, which is either society or a member of the family. A persecution, a danger allows the child to explain the little brilliant attitudes of his family. The story is often very beautiful, but very superficial as far as actual elements are concerned: the names of the parents, of the village, are deliberately omitted. One says "over there" or "far away in the mountains".

The street and its difficulties are also turned into a game, a story. One tells adventures and makes light of the sufferings. One talks about the death of close friends or relatives with the extraordinary detachment a narration allows. It is as if we are in a big game, and one forgets about the everyday life, in an everyday resiliency. Drugs allow them to forget and the child carefreeness remains an important factor of this ability of resiliency. The child thinks positive to get over what he goes through. Some dreams – the ones of becoming rich and powerful, of becoming a doctor – do exist, but the child knows the Nepali upward social mobility is broken down (did it ever exist anyway?) and that he is in the basement of a society which rejects him. Failing a beautiful future, a big plate of meat, a glue bag and a good movie will be enough for a moment of joy. The Nepali street child lives one day at a time, he hardly does make plans. Many of those children who participated here were puzzled at our questions about the future. And all the more so, when we asked them to argue about it.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A SPECIFIC STUDY ON THE THAMEL GROUP
AND ITS RELATION TO TOURISTS



CPCS

ARTICLE 27 (CRC) : “Every child has the right to a standard of living adequate for (his/her) physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development”



Living on the street, children must sleep and live in the garbage, under the open sky and in very dirty areas. The environment for them means violence, abuse, dirtiness, garbage.

Introduction

For this last chapter of our study on the street childhood in Nepal, we chose to focus on a specific situation: the actual case of a group of street children in the very specific context of the Thamel tourist area.

This chapter aims at understanding this strange link, this relationship between the traveler and the street child. The embarrassment, the affection or any other feeling which is generated by an unsettling, disturbing and painful situation are not limited to the Thamel tourist area, which will nevertheless be the core and the outline of our study. Everywhere in the world, travelers come across situations of poverty which affect them, leave them worrying or disturb them. As Westerners, we are not, one assumes, used to seeing a child sleep on the street, without any care, protection or love. However, we are here on holiday and their insistence bothers us.

Humbly, and thanks to our years of observations and the knowledge we have of these children, we will try to understand – or at least to approach – the link which develops, the feelings generated by a forced contact between the tourist and the street child.

We will start with a description of the studied place and the groups which mix there. This is almost impossible, and we will therefore be very careful with the categorizations that we make and leave enough room for the diversity of these groups.

We will then go on with a series of comments on the relationships which develop, on the interaction between the two studied groups – the tourists and the children – in order to find out what brings them together, what they learn from one another, what they bandy about. We will analyze the detected incomprehensions and the problems which are tackled. To avoid ending up with a too vague or too rough draft, we will use the following scheme:

- A. How do the interlocutors interact?
- B. How do the interactions take place on a verbal / non-verbal point of view?
- C. Can we set out rules (regularities) concerning specific interactions?
- D. What are the factors that come into play and regulate communications?
- E. What makes communications easier and what hinders it?

Then, by groups, we will go through the most interesting visions and first-hand accounts met during our discussions.

Finally, we will use these visions to explain some of the consequences of interaction and end with a very open conclusion on this complex subject.



Description of the studied place and groups (children and tourists)

Description of the studied place:

Thamel is the tourist area of Kathmandu, the trendy area where travelers from all over the world find housing, food and are welcomed, whatever their budget. It is located in the centre of Kathmandu and is about one square kilometer. Thamel has an abundance of hotels, guest houses, little stalls or more chic shops. Almost in the geographic centre of Kathmandu, Thamel also hosts trekkers and mountaineers before and after their trips. Most trekking agencies are represented in this area. The economic role of this area is vital for a country in which the generation of foreign currency is mainly based on tourism. Thousands of Nepali, qualified or not, find a job there. There are 2,500 companies. Even if a little shallow, as every tourist area, Thamel however has a specific atmosphere, which has lasted since the hippies of the sixties. These were the first foreign residents of an area which was going to grow and assert itself.

As for diversity, we can count about fifty different culinary specialties offered by the local restaurants. One negative side of Thamel is that it is also a hot spot for prostitution, abuses, the taking of drugs and petty crime. One either loves or hates it, but Thamel leaves no one cold. Noises, smells of spices, crowds, street vendors, street musicians, no one is left to rest in Thamel. It either captivates or irritates, and even if it doesn't represent Nepal, it feels compulsory to transit through it for those who want to enter the country.

Description of the studied “groups”:

The group of the Thamel street children:

We have already widely tackled this difficulty – if not impossibility – of categorization in the “cultural studies” section, and we will not go back to this, but rather apply the conclusions we drew to the “understanding” of this specific group made out of the Thamel street children.

As a reminder, rather than a specific definition of the “street child”, we identified six different visions which allowed us to identify different children and different groups.

Let us briefly go back to them before applying them to the situation of the Thamel group:

A journey to the street (where does he come from?): The child, the youth in a street situation has got a past and one cannot dwell upon his everyday life or even try to build a future for and with him without taking into account what he has been through, why he ended up on the street and his family situation.



In Thamel: There are two categories of street children in Thamel: the ones (children in the street) who still have a family contact in Kathmandu and come to the street from time to time for activities such as prostitution, pickpocketing or drug sales, and the ones who live there permanently and don't have any link with their family anymore (children of the street). They come from villages and arrived in Kathmandu for various reasons (family violence, death, economic situation, etc.). Most of them have been on the street for more than a year and have lived in other areas before getting a taste for Thamel and being accepted by the others.

Vulnerability to abuses and other risks: Before we start any working process with a child in a street situation, we have to analyse and be aware of the risks and abuses inherent to his everyday life in such a context. The child, on his

own and partially or completely isolated from his family context is vulnerable and there are a lot of predators: adults, teenagers, other children...

In Thamel: We talked a lot about it in chapter 4, but let us notice the extreme vulnerability of children at the hands of predatory tourists. Some of them despise other Asian destinations – where the laws are now more punitive, and above all enforced – to take advantage of the apparent “relative impunity” for child abuses in Nepal. This plague is becoming more and more extensive, but is left untreated by the authorities, local contractors and the police, either out of self-interest or out of embarrassment.

The use of drugs: At first a consequence, then progressively one of the causes of some unique and psychologically explosive cocktails which combine, for each child in a street situation, different factors such as memories of past suffering, complex current realities and an uncertain future, the use of more or less hallucinatory, more or less dangerous drugs cannot be ignored.

In Thamel: The Thamel street children all take glue, hashish, alcohol and sometimes even harder drugs. They are in touch with drug dealers who use them to retail and contact the tourists which are potential customers. The use of narcotics increases the risk of abuses even more.

Social context and daily conflicts: It is obvious that the child in a street situation is not an isolated being. He is often a member of a group which reacts against other groups in a specific social context. Of course, the child, such as any individual, builds an “image” of what surrounds him, assigning different roles to everyone.

In Thamel: There are about 16 children between 8 and 20 years old in the main gang of street children in Thamel, which is the group on which we focused our analysis. Depending on the periods, the number of members varies between 15 and 20. This gang has got its own rules and is different from the other groups of street children in Kathmandu. It has got its leaders, its organization, its “consistency”, its rules of life. There is a huge solidarity between the children and they are “protected” by the elders (who, in return, use or exploit them). They avoid contact with NGOs, giving them only a limited role in case of diseases or other health problem.



For the moment, the Thamel Tourism Board (which is in charge of the tourist development in Thamel) is trying to improve the image of the area and is thus cleaning the streets, the children included, for they sometimes bother the tourists or give a bad image. Their daily life has thus gotten a little more complicated and several groups (the police, security guards, etc.) impose daily changes on the gang regarding the way they deal with their needs (where to sleep, where to eat, where to beg, where to sell, etc.).

Education: This is a key point, should we consider that the transition from childhood to adolescence, then to adulthood involves a whole range of acquisitions. It is the same for the fact of being socially integrated and integrable. And yet, the child in a street situation is – a priori – in difficulty or completely excluded from two basic agents involved in these acquisitions: school and family. What, however, is the reality?

In Thamel: The Thamel gang indeed refuses the opportunities of education the NGOs offer them. With tourists, however, they learn geography, English, smartness and many other resources. Some have a little educational background, but all seem

to be clever. The most intellectually limited children don't stay in Thamel for a long time: they get to an NGO or elsewhere. As for the NGOs, the projects inaptly cross and duplicate one another. Sometimes, touched tourists create temporary micro-projects without any legal basis. Often, NGOs launch a project to end it a few months later. The outcome for these children is a real distrust of the social workers from most NGOs, except for two or three which are tolerated but very little listened to.

The working conditions and/or daily activities: The child in a street situation, hanging around on the street during the day, also keeps himself busy there. In Nepal, some "activities" can clearly be identified as forms of "work" (collection of rubbish, cleaning, sale of newspapers). Others are more "unsettling" or "confusing" (drug sales, prostitution, begging, petty theft...), even if they constitute some forms of activities and often are, one way or another, remunerative and necessary.

In Thamel: The children are mostly beggars. It is more difficult for the oldest who make do with drug sales, theft or protection/exploitation of the youngest. Many of them picked plastic and sometimes still do, but not much. Begging is more profitable and easier.

The target group:

The target group we are analyzing is thus a group of 15 to 20 children, isolated from their family and who permanently live in Thamel. 16 of them took an active part in this study. They are as following:

	First name	Age	Origin	Has been in Thamel for
1	Anil T	18	Sarlahi	12 years
2	Ratne T	12	Trisuli	4 years
3	Hari P	20	Dhading	10 years
4	Asish L	18	Samakhushi, Ktm	15 years
5	Asish S	16	Lahan	9 years
6	Bijay B	15	Barabise	5 years
7	Mlan K	17	Biratnagar	1 year
8	Sujan P	15	Gorkha	2 years
9	Bijay D	13	Hetauda	1 year

	First name	Age	Origin	Has been in Thamel for
10	Sankhar B	16	Barabise/ samakhusi	5 years
11	Ganesh P	15	Butwal	1 year
12	Prabin P	16	Dachainkali	3 years
13	Manoj K	13	Sinduplanchowk	2 years
14	Kamal BT	16	Barabise	1 year
15	Kale P	?	?	9 years
16	Biraj R	14	Okhaldhunga	3 years

The “Western” or “Westernized” tourists:

According to the Nepal Tourism Board, more than 600,000 tourists visited Nepal in 2010. Attracted by the mountains, the beauty of the landscapes, Buddhism, etc., most of these travelers stop for a while in the Thamel area.

We will focus on the so called “Westernized” tourists and not on the Indian tourists, on who the Nepali and the children have a different view. Of course, it is very complicated to distinguish the tourist groups in Thamel clearly. This area is a jumble, a hive of activity where all the nationalities come across one another and mix. It is already complicated to talk about Westernized tourists, so what should we do about South American, Arab, Chinese and Japanese tourists?

One can identify an “average tourist” by the way the Nepali look at him. The “typical” tourist is white, rich and “naturally” or anyway “hopefully” tends to be generous. This simplistic interpretation would already deserve a whole new research paper but it is not the object of our study.

It is difficult for us to describe this group more accurately.

We did not pick a specific sample of tourists according to set criteria, we rather communicated with them in an informal way through little indirect discussions with the ones who accepted to express themselves.

To do so and to avoid any hodgepodge, we used some of our Western “volunteers” to establish a link and to build trust.

Chapter 8: A Specific Study on the Thamel Group and its Relation to Tourists

Visions and first-hand accounts

Visions and first-hand accounts from children:

(By current and former Thamel street children)

Kamal B, 17 years (from Barabise, lived in Thamel for 5 years):

I like Thamel because I earn more money here than in any other place. There are many tourists here and I really enjoy talking with them and begging money from them. I earn 500 rupees a day and spend all my money on dendrite. I've never been victimized by any foreigner. Foreigners usually target small children and I wasn't here during my childhood. I understand and I also speak a little English. I easily spot tourists from different countries via their language, appearance and attitude. I know this way of life is not a sustainable one but I won't give up the entertainment and freedom I've got. However, life in Thamel is not a bed of roses; it is also more stressful and we put our life more at risk too. We stay aware of street junkies and of the police who batter us and steal our money.

Bijay B, 15 years (from Panauti, lived in Thamel for 6 years):

I left home due to family violence, but when I arrived here at first, I missed my family all the time, even though I knew they were not kind. Nevertheless, after having made some friends here, I'm never thinking about my family anymore and I don't even care about them. In comparison, Thamel, it is paradise. I earn a lot more money. Sometimes I get more than 3,000 rupees by begging from



tourists. When they see my burned face, their feelings increase in kindness. Previously, I was a little naïve and just thought to make money; during that time I was sexually victimized by Chinese tourists. This made me earn \$100. Like me, many new little boys are still victimized by tourists. That is why living in Thamel has both positive and negative consequences. In Thamel, I learned the English language and so now it is easy to communicate with tourists in order to beg. However, on the other hand, between the easily accessible dendrite, the street junkies and the police, I'm never able to save any money.



Biraj R, 14 years (from Okhaldhunga, has been living in Thamel for 3 years):

Since I was a child, I've always liked listening to music and seeing colorful lights. These are the main reasons of my staying in Thamel. I want to live in the present without caring about the future. Earning 400–500 rupees a day is enough for me to survive and enjoy my life. I beg from 'Khaire' (white-skinned tourists). Sometimes I trick them, pretending I'm starving. Most of the time, I sleep with my other friends inside the Thamel area, but sometimes we all go to the KOPILA house, which is really near. The police, security guards and junkies are our main problem. The police do not allow us staying and begging in Thamel, security guards also torture us, and junkies grab our money and other stuff.

Ashish L, 18 years (Morang):

I first moved from Biratnagar to Kathmandu with my father who is a porter. In the early days after reaching Kathmandu, I've lived in a room with my parents. Then I left and started to live on the street. In the beginning, I used to live in New Buspark and then I came to Thamel. I've been living in Thamel for 13 years. I'm free here and I enjoy living from my own income. I really enjoy the company of my friends, they are more important to me than my family. I earn 200-300 rupees a day. Life in Thamel was hard before, but now it is easier because people are behaving in a more sociable way. I'm starting to think that my life in Thamel will not last long like this. I eat leftovers from restaurants; in return I have to work for them. I realized it won't work for a long time anymore. I take dendrite, usually it is easy to get and cheap. I'm planning to take some training in the future and to work as a driver or something like that. However, I can't leave my friends because the police, junkies and local people put us in trouble and if anything bad happens, they blame us.

Prabin P, 17 years (Kathmandu):

I'm native to Dakshinkali, in Kathmandu. Before coming to Thamel, we used to visit and roam around in the Dakshinkali temple. We (my sister and I) left and started to live on the street together. At first, we lived in Bagbazar, then we moved here and to Kalimati Basantapur. I have been living in Thamel for 2 years. I really like Thamel; my friends are nice and friendly. There is no problem for the meals, but we get problems to sleep at night. We beg, steal and pick-pocket. We use the money we earn to buy dendrite. There is no problem for the food: foreigners offer us meals or sometimes they give us money to buy some food. We ask foreigners for food by saying "I'm hungry". It is nicer than living in an organization. Sometimes we get in trouble with the police and the junkies. We really enjoy the daytime, but in the evening it is hard to sleep. I miss my family, but I don't want to come back empty-handed. I hope that someone helps me by sponsoring me. My sister is also living in the city.

Santosh C, 17 years (from Okhaldhunga, spent 4 years in Thamel):

During my stay in Thamel, I was a guide for tourists and I was earning an average of 500-600 rupees a day. Sometimes, they gave me 1,000-1,500 rupees as tips. I left Thamel because of the police. The tourists gave us lunch and dinner, and money as well. I earned more money even though I spent it buying dendrite and movies the very day I received it. I don't want to go back to Thamel because at

night the police patrolling teams may arrest us, take us to custody and use us for their household chores. In Thamel, we were not put under pressure by the tourists, shopkeepers and others, but were by the police and security guards. We were a big group of about 13-16 boys so the junkies didn't bother us. Sometimes we visited organizations and friends. There was no time to sleep, sometimes, and we stayed awake the whole night, but then we took turns to watch and sleep. Some tourists were also taking ganja with us; they were friendlier with us.

Ravi R, 15 years (from Kavre, spent 2 years in Thamel):

I left Thamel because of the big boys' bad behavior. I like Thamel a lot, it was very interesting to beg from tourists and to earn more money as well. But the youth of Thamel battered me and stole my money, that is why I left the Thamel area. Tourists bought stuff for us and we resold it to the shopkeepers. That was very interesting. When we got the goods, we quickly went to another shop to sell it immediately and again we came back begging in front of the supermarket. We slept in the PF fund office and some tourists came to give us food. I was in a nice group in Thamel; we really cooperated with one another.

Susil S, 14 years (from Baisjagar, Lamjung, spent 4-5 years on the street):

I've been living on the streets for 4-5 years. When my mother passed away, my father remarried another woman, but he also died some time later. After my father's death, my stepmother started battering and scolding me all the time.

Because of my stepmother's torture, I left home and went to live on the street. While I was on the street, I made some friends in Thamel and so I stayed there.

They were begging. There were 4-5 groups in total, with 5-6 people in each one of them, which means 50-55 friends.

Some friends are begging themselves, some are begging together in a partnership and some make others beg for them. Those who make others beg for them don't work themselves.

In the beginning, we didn't rob one another. But later, when Anil came to Thamel, after first slowly adjusting there, he built a gang. Then he started robbing others and threatening us too. He robbed little children and also tourists. If we refused

to give them our money, his gang battered us and cut our hand with a blade. So it is difficult to live there for little boys.

One day, some friends came from Pokhara and told us about this place, which made us curious. Thus, with some friends, we left Thamel and went to Pokhara.



Ram T:

I've been living in Thamel for 4 years, but I've been living on the street for 18 years. I visited my family twice, and I lived in CWIN during 4 years. Sometimes I stay at the CPCS. There were junkies who stole my money so I left Thamel and went to live in Mahankal. I've been brought to custody many times and once I was sent to jail for 13 months because I threw stones on a bus. I'm very friendly so everyone loves me. I regret not having been sheltered by an organization before, because now I'm too old and no one is ready to sponsor me.

Bibek M:

I'm native to Hetauda. I am 18 years old and I have been living on the street since 2005. I spent three years in Thamel and received 1,500 rupees a day, sometimes 2,000, by begging. I spent my money on dendrite and cigarettes. We also went to

the cinema. We went to the village to search for marijuana. In Thamel, we had troubles with the junkies, the police and the security guards. Sometimes the police led us to the middle of the Sankhu forest, so we decided to move to Mahankal.

Sujan Pariyar:

I'm native to Gorkha. I have been living in Mahankal since 2010. I spent 4 years in Thamel. There, I used to rob and pick-pocket. When I beg, my income is very low, but it is nice when pick-pocketing because we sometimes get more money. We stole money from a stranger who was drunk and walking alone on the street. I think that the foreigners who give us money are nice and those who don't call us beggars. I can speak a little English and sometimes I beg in English, using signals while asking for money from foreigners. The organizations must take care of us when we are sick.

I was afraid of the police and the junkies, but here there is nothing like this. In Thamel they battered us. Here, I am doing pick-pocketing. I spend my money on dendrite, marijuana, wine and sometimes, when we earn more money, I enjoy eating meat, delicious food, etc.



Visions and first-hand accounts from tourists:

Dimitri from Ukraine:

It is really very sad to see such young children begging and sniffing drugs, I feel pity for them. But I'm on holiday so what can I do? It is the reality in this kind of country, isn't it?

Mélanie from Canada:

When asked about the children roaming around on the street and begging, she answered:

They don't have much choice... If they don't have any family, where can they go? Nowhere; except coming here. I read many books about street children. I know the situation. Are you working with them? Or else why would you ask me? These children are sniffing glue and roaming on the street, are abused... It is very sad. There are many cities in the world where we can see street children, not only here in Kathmandu. You see, there are children roaming, and at the same time you have to ask yourself "Who's that person, the adult standing there, roaming near them?" (She indicated the person standing in front of Kathmandu's Guest House and who was watching the children.)

What are the programs the NGOs are setting up for them? They are really addicted, even if you take them to an organization, they probably won't be able to stay.

In my view, there are two things at stake here: the first one is begging and the other is abuse. They are sexually abused; there are many people behind the children, people who lead them to abuse and exploitation.

Michael from the USA:

These children are a nuisance. They're roaming everywhere and are very oppressive to get a coin. They're also selling drugs and it is not reasonable. The police should leave them in orphanages' care.

Ghunter from Germany:

Several tourists have already had problems with them (the children). They are stealing. But, on the other side, they are really young to be in such a situation. We talked a little. Some of them speak English, and one of them even knew the capital of Germany. Their stories are touching too and they've got nothing.

Stéphanie from France:

I'd like to do something but I don't know what. I've already talked a lot to them and they've got a lot of stories to tell. They seem to be very clever but this glue they're sniffing must be really harmful. It is difficult to go back to my beautiful hotel room, knowing they are there, small and outside, whatever the weather.

Ariel from Israel:

Yes, it is sad to see children in such a situation. But I'm here after my military service to have a good time with some friends. We've also got a lot of difficulties in Israel and the service wasn't easy, so there is no way I'm going to worry here. When they approach me, I avoid them and turn down the conversation. That is the way it is.

Yuko from Japan:

I'm buying candies and bread for them each time I go past them. They are kind, except for the older ones who sometimes seem to be aggressive. I'd like to take them on a trip into the nature, but I don't know how to go about it. I think this situation is embarrassing.

Yves from Belgium:

It is the government that has to take care of them. Really, they shouldn't be in the tourist area. It is annoying, and I'm sure it is adverse for them too. All the time, I see them talking to tourists, telling their stories. In return, they get money or something else. This can open the door to abuses, among others.

Visions and first-hand accounts from “local” actors:**Prakash Kr (policeman):**

I have been working in Thamel since 2010. I see street children all the time here, roaming, taking drugs, glue and smoking cigarettes. I am busy with my job so I can't do anything for them, even though it is sad and bad. Not only here – in the Thamel junction – are they roaming, but also in other places in Thamel like Paknajol, Sanchya Kosh, Chhetrapati, Jyatha, Sohrekutte, Lainchaur, Kantipath and Annapurna. They are very young, 12-13 years old, something like that. We can't stop them from receiving money from foreigners. The Thamel Tourism Board is also doing something for them, but still they stay here. I see the car from your

organization coming here now and then to support them, but they are addicted to this place and thus they can't leave Thamel. They have bad habits. We tell them not to take glue, but they disagree and never listen to us.

They are all gathering in Thamel, giving us headaches, asking money from tourists. They come from rural areas and even if we try to send them back, they will come back here again.

Deepak K (coffee shop operator):

I see poor children coming here. They take glue and smoke cigarettes. I don't know how to change the situation. I see you coming here every night. They don't leave Thamel, because they are used to that kind of carefree life. I heard that there is a house, purchased by foreigners, for them to stay. These foreigners also give them classes. They are used to eating pizzas, burgers and various types of delicious food, so they don't go back to their villages. I don't know anything about sex abuse and I don't think they are abused by foreigners. We can't stop them from begging here and we can't tell foreigners not to give them money either. You can't change the whole situation overnight; it is going to take time.

Sanu S (local resident):

They are totally trackless and carefree and whatever you do, they can't stay with you. We see you coming every day to help them. They come here to beg for money because of the tourists. Tourists show mercy to the children and give money to them. We don't know anything about child sex abuse and we don't think it happens here. They can't change our life and culture; we have our own culture and traditions. They are begging for money, stealing and teasing and harassing people. What you do is good, but they don't stay with you. You'd better not take them directly to your office, but send them in rehab first, out of the valley, and then, only after 2-3 months of rehab, have them stay in the center. There are many organizations working here, but they don't change their life. To do so, they should be sent to a rehabilitation center first. If they live on the street, they are not safe. Anything could happen at any time. The police arrest them when something bad happens in Thamel.

Neema S (young salesman in a shop inside the Thamel area):

It is sad to see them. They are so young, taking dendrite, smoking cigarettes... I wish they weren't disturbing our customers when they want to enter our shops,

but they gather here all the time, in front of the shops. As a Nepali, what I really feel is sadness, because they don't harm us or anything, they just gather here, in this junction, sniffing glue and smoking cigarettes.

Visions and first-hand accounts from social workers:

After considerable discussion, a dozen of field workers agreed on common answers on several subjects which are pertinent to our study. Here they are:

A) What do the children think about tourists?

They think that the term "tourist" only refers to white-colored skin people; they don't care about Indian, African or Nepali tourists. They know that not all tourists are rich, but they recognize the rich ones easily. They categorize tourists in two types: the ones who are very nice to them because they readily give them money and goods, and the others who are not nice because they don't give them anything.

B) How do the children communicate with tourists?

They communicate with tourists by verbal and non-verbal means of communication. Some children have a good knowledge of English and so they easily communicate with tourists, others know some English, French, Italian, etc. Sometimes they use non-verbal means such as making signs, acting as if they had stomach pain because of hunger, pretending to be sick, etc.

C) How do the children view the tourists? Do they understand the ways of the different countries or do they think they are all the same?

To the children, tourists are just donors. They do not understand the ways of the different countries; they just recognize good tourists or bad tourists. The tourists who give them money and food are good ones, if not they are mean. Nevertheless, by the way the tourists are behaving, they can tell, roughly speaking, where they come from. To the field workers, they say: This one is an American, those are European people, this one is Chinese, Japanese, etc.

D) Do the children think they can survive a long time that way?

They don't worry about their future. They just think about the present and their goals are just to have fun and enjoy life. Even though they know this cannot be a permanent way to survive on the long run, they don't want to give it up.

E) What job do the children do?

All are beggars and pick-pockets. That is what is called a fixed job in the Thamel area. Some also work as porters in hotels and in the field of prostitution.

F) What do the children do during the day and at night?

In the daytime they are all begging and some children are selling handicraft items to tourists or work as porters. At night, most children are begging and pick-pocketing, or reselling the goods they received from tourists. Only a few of them also pick rags.

G) What do the children think about NGOs?

They think NGOs are agencies which bargain with children for their own profit. When they are in trouble (medical, legal or regarding their security), they remember the NGOs. The rest of the time, they are busy with street jobs. Most of the NGOs have no long-term program for the Thamel children, they just launch the pilot program and the impact on the children is not good. The latter think that NGOs are just doing this for the organizations' own profit and not for them. That is why the activities of such so-called NGOs have hampered the work of other NGOs which are implementing real programs with the children and for their benefit.

Analysis of the interactions

How do the different interlocutors interact?

There are various feelings involved. The children are there, in the middle of Thamel where they sleep, live and work. The tourists see them, some take an interest in them; others are afraid or look away.

The "Western" tourist is not used to being in close contact with children affected by such destitution, and thus he reacts as he can. First, he is on holiday and sometimes doesn't want to worry. He can also be embarrassed, irritated or angry when faced with the insistence the children show while begging for money, food or anything else.

Some tourist try to start a conversation, to understand why the children are there. The children have long and sad stories to tell, which are often romanticized to persuade tourists to be more generous.

As for the children, they observe, look at various ways of living, dressing and talking they don't know. They also taste different foods offered by do-gooders.

Sometimes, they are invited to little restaurants and learn to talk to the tourist. Most of them learned basic English on the street, from discussing with tourist, and even some words from other languages.

Occasionally, they are hired as "little guides" for the day.

Of course, there are more negative forms of interaction between the two groups. The children watch out for some preys for purse-snatching, sell drugs or give information to the local dealers. Moreover, the situation of the children makes them easy preys for pedophilic abusers. According to what they say, each Thamel child has already been approached for that kind of service. On both sides, mutual perception is full of prejudice.



Let us take up Geert Hofstede's idea⁷ according to which tourism is the most superficial form of intercultural encounter. . Of course, as an interactive point of connection, Thamel doesn't carry any value nor local culture. But there is a form of exchange. "Little seeds" are being planted, certainly within the children's minds who see and discover some elements and different ways of living.



⁷ Geert Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations*, Great Britain, Mc Graw-Hill International, 1991.

Street children are indeed still “children”, they are still learning and their “cultural boundaries” are not well-defined. Besides, because of the street situation and the notion of “survival”, they are forced to show considerable flexibility, and thus also openness. He won’t be shocked if a tourist offers him a beef burger (although this meat is prohibited for Hindus). Trust or friendship relationships can also spring up, but because of the prejudice or the child’s needs, this situation cannot last very long.

Thamel, a place of integration?

Could the interactions between tourists and children become factors of social reintegration? The answer is no, clearly no. The interactions delude the child with a wrong perception of the tourist... What he sees is just an image of the tourist at a specific moment. One does not behave the same way on holiday as one does in the everyday life in one’s home country.



Children thus have a distorted perception of a lifestyle they think (for the eldest ones) they understand perfectly. They start to like the music they hear, such as hip hop or any other “globalized” music (Madonna, Michael Jackson, etc.), claim to love pizzas, pastas and French fries, etc.

The Thamel children have a specific attachment to that place. Of course, money flows there, but they also told us they feel privileged to indirectly sample joys

which are prohibited to the other Nepali... Within their daily sufferings, living in Thamel gives them a status that they violently guard against other street children gangs/groups.

However, they are not “naïve”, they know their daily life is not good and have seen the eldest ones destroyed by Thamel. The path is simple and they know it: after having reached the age of 17-18, it becomes impossible to live on the street in Thamel, to beg and touch the passers-by. The craving for drugs increases. Petty crime becomes crime and they are enrolled in a mafia, that is, if they had the chance to escape a fatal disease (contracted through sexual relations which start very early or through the use of injected drugs).

Thamel is thus not a place of integration which will bring the child back to society. On the contrary, Thamel pushes him away from the NGOs, and the interaction with tourism pushes him into another somewhat parallel world, which only exists via his imagination and the narcotics he takes.

How do the interactions take place on the verbal / non-verbal point of view?

The first verbal contact is usually the begging, on a plaintive pitch, for money or something to eat, or the proposal to sell some drugs. The initial plaintive pitch quickly leaves room for a certain verbal – but also physical – insistence, the child follows his “prey” for a while until he gets what he wants. The tourist’s answer depends on his mood and/or convictions. Sometimes, the tone is very clear and brings the child to understand he has to stop asking. Often, the answer is full of embarrassment, something like “no, but...” which conveys the reflection in progress (after all, it is a child).

The child then knows and feels that the door is open and that he will more than likely get something. So, he goes on and starts using his usual expressions. If, after a while, he still doesn’t get any money, he switches to the beautiful story of “milk” which is necessary for his little sister, or says that he hasn’t eaten anything for 5 days, or that there is no organization which supports him, etc. When he finally gets the tourist to listen to him, when the “verbal” link, the real contact, is established, he shows off his skills.



On the “lean kine” days (which is a somewhat sad expression in a country where those animals are sacred), the child uses other techniques for people to look at him and to start the interaction. For example, one of them will cover his head with a big bandage and pork blood; it will then be easy to draw the attention of tourists and to more easily get what they want. They have the routine ready, but it is risky, as some passers-by want to take them to a hospital, which forces them to quickly flee...

That being said, the non-verbal contact seems to be present at any time. The children are there, invisible, but they watch out for every gesture or movement. At night, they feel like kings, sit proudly on top of the walls, at the corner of the buildings, they spy, see, try to understand, reproduce. On the other side, some intrigued tourists open partway the curtains of their comfortable hotel room and observe those very strange little beings.



Can we set out rules (patterns) concerning specific interactions?

The game of the capital cities or of the greetings: The conversation very frequently starts with a little game. The child spots the language of the tourist and tells him the name of his country and the capital city. What usually follows is a greeting in the language of the tourist, a little word the child learned before. The tourist is impressed, and asks the child for more information: “How do you know this?”, “Do you go to school?”, “What’s your name?”. For the child, it is already half won, the contact is established and the conversation can begin.

The request for milk for the little sister: Another regularity which must be highlighted (because of its frequency) is the story of the starving little sister. The tourist usually answers that he doesn’t want to give money, and the child then begins to tell his story about milk being absolutely necessary to feed a little sister in need. The child has the hang of things, and the story touches the tourist. He thus goes in a shop and offers the child the package of dried milk powder he asked for. The package will then be resold for a few rupees with the help of the local shopkeepers.

A game or actor situation: The interaction is built between two interlocutors who are, in a way, “playing”. The child exaggerates a situation he has been through in order to beg in a more effective way. For example, he will refuse to wear clean clothes, pretend to be starving, or worse, feign to have a serious wound. The tourist himself is also playing. He usually doesn’t act the same on holiday as in his daily life: he wears other clothes, acts differently, plays his role of a carefree vacationer. Of course, there are many various realities and home countries among the observed tourists.



In a way, the child knows the tourist plays a role, and vice versa. However, they mutually give themselves a deceptive and truncated appearance.

What are the factors which come into play and regulate communications?

The question of space:

The tourist is on holiday, alone or with his family and he has plans and habits. If, as he is in another country, he is ready to make concessions, he nevertheless wants his private sphere to be respected.

The “typical” tourist is white, Western and is not used to seeing close promiscuity. The culture shock Nepal gives him is significant. Hall considers the Westerner as belonging to a group where contacts are limited and where his privacy matters a lot. The idea of privacy, of personal space is very different for the Nepali.

The Western tourist quickly feels oppressed, he is being looked at, stared at, pressed against and even touched. In Nepal, men will be completely unscrupulous about holding hands on the street or walking arm-in-arm. The “tourist” woman, given the reputation of white women, risks bum groping, something no Nepali would dare to do with a fellow citizen.

For children in a street situation, the situation is all the more “extreme”: they live in a group, share everything, sleep on top of one another and the only property they have is the clothes (or rags, should we rather say) they wear. Living on the street when one is small implies to press oneself against the others. Alone, one doesn’t survive. The smallest children press themselves against the bigger ones to face dangers, protect themselves against dogs and human predators.

The child in interaction with the tourist will tend to quickly press himself against him, to enter his private sphere, his personal space. The child usually doesn’t consider this approach to be aggressive or oppressive, he rather feels the need to be protected. The street child remains a child, him being armed with a knife or worn-down with violence doesn’t change his crave for love, protection and his attraction to an adult who could “love” him... That is also why he is such an easy a prey for pedophilic predators.

Of course, entering the personal space of the tourist also enables him to steal his wallet... The latter is not fooled, and if he can be touched, he will remain watchful and will usually drive back the child, as he is shocked by his approach.

Once again, let us be careful about generalizations. The tourists we are talking about, even if we limit them to the “white” Westerners (a term which is already full of infinite ambiguity) are from really various cultures. A Finnish doesn’t have the same habits as an inhabitant of Marseilles, and an Italian mother will react differently towards a seemingly defenseless child from a

Norwegian lady without children who went to Nepal to climb a mountain.

Even our reflection includes prejudice: after all, why would our Norwegian lady not succumb to the little and sad smile of a lost child?

Let us not forget that the tourist is far away from his habits and doesn't "wear" his usual defences (his suit, his attaché case, his car, etc.).

During our years of observations and meetings with those children, we frequently saw that the most "distant" and the "coldest" persons from cultures a priori without any contact according to Hall let, with ridiculous ease, those little beings enter their sphere. These efforts are radical and useless for the children in the long run (hosting the children in their room, taking them with them, renting a flat for them, giving them all their clothes, etc.).

As for privacy, the street child lives, washes himself, sleeps, relieves himself and cries in the street. He thus cannot easily understand the need for personal space felt by the tourist or the Westerner.

Olfactory parameters:

To paraphrase Hall⁸, let us say that the Westerner, in general, is underdeveloped concerning the use of his olfactory senses. In Asia, and especially in Nepal, the smells are everywhere, strong and intense. At first a wonderful smell of cooking, of spices, and then the smell of the dejections and garbage which are strewn over the ground.

Of course, street children live in the dirt, are used to it and sometimes (certainly for plastic pickers) emit a smell of garbage.

They only have little access to facilities where they can wash or change clothes, and have very few spare clothes (if any). Besides, the Thamel street child rightly or wrongly considers his ragged getup as an asset to beg. Many refuse to wear the clothes offered by organizations or a tourist because it "works" less well when they ask for charity. The smell and appearance go along with the figure.

⁸ Edward T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension*, New York, Doubleday & C°, 1966.

Visual and auditory parameters:

The senses of the tourist who arrives in Kathmandu, and more specifically in Thamel, are turned upside down by so many solicitations. Colors, noises, singing and the most surprising images – a cow crossing the street and blocking a truck, a bus entangled in traffic jam, the toots of the tuk-tuks, tempos or rickshaws – are everywhere. The cries of people, the yells of the amps which pour out advertising or political slogans, are omnipresent.

The street child is, of course, used to it. However, his own senses are in a state of alert in view of the incongruities he sees in the tourists' appearance, sounds and words. Their appearance is strange, the way they express themselves too, and their style – fashionable, hippy – surprise them.

The tourist easily stands out, with his camera and his sandals with socks. Dressed up like an adventurer (in the middle of the city), such as Indiana Jones, he makes the child smile with his timorous, but sometimes haughty or annoyed, appearance.

What makes communications easier and what hinders it?

For the child, the tourist is a “potential customer”. There is thus some kind of relationship, of communication, to be established. The customer will have to answer to various propositions: coins, drugs, food, etc. The child must establish contact and develops a thousand stratagems to do so, which eases, or rather forces, communication, but also distorts it. What the child wants, we guess, is the wallet. But is it not what each local actor in contact with tourism, and especially with mass tourism, wants?

The prejudice/stereotypes carried by the two groups both ease and hinder communication. The child considers the tourist to be rich, powerful, but easy to scam.

The tourist considers the child either with pity, as a poor little street child, or with anger, as a petty criminal.



Both parties won't feign to understand whom they really face. Their worlds are really different from one another, as are their knowledge, and it is difficult to find a common language. Of course, English acts as an intermediary, but it is poorly mastered and doesn't enable them to dig further. Even if it was enough, the sphere of understanding is really narrowed by the different cultures of both groups. Incomprehensions and misunderstandings are thus common. That being said, prejudice also sometimes pushes people to establish a link, as we have said before, since the child needs the tourist to survive.

The police may either represent a hindrance or sometimes a facilitator. The visible violence they show against the children pushes the tourist (who feels exhilarated in a humanitarian way and who likes to titillate the authorities) to help the children, to talk to them, to prevent the policeman from scaring them off with a stick.

As for the NGOs, they try to inform the tourist and to prevent him from giving. Signs are placed, brochures are distributed to explain not to give, but rather to contact the organizations, etc., which unnerves the children.

Problems related to interaction



Begging:

As we have said before, in Thamel, most of the street children find money, food, and even a temporary housing through begging.

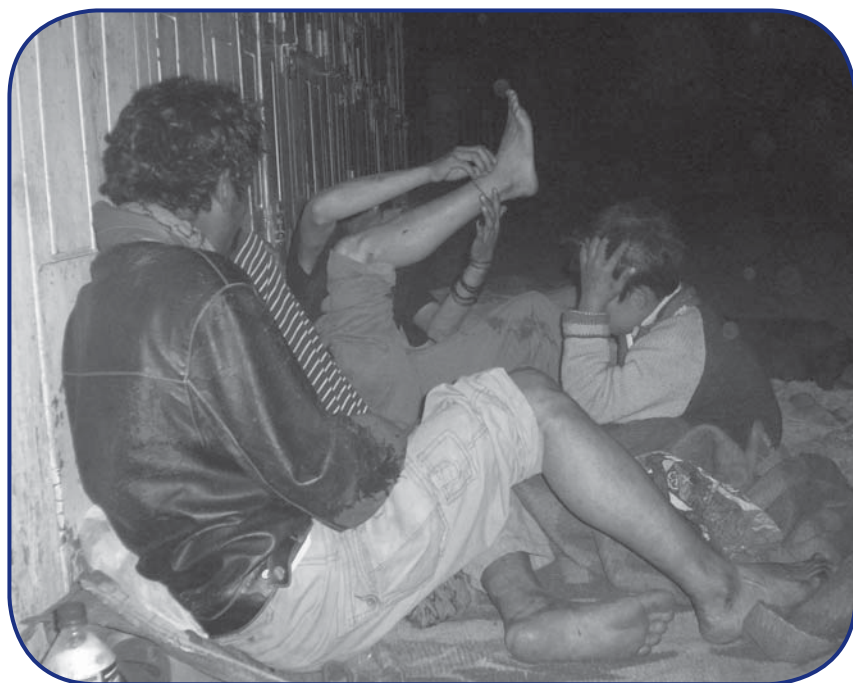
They wander about the streets, looking for good souls. However, begging puts them in a situation into which they risk to retreat. Admittedly, begging brings money, but it also puts the child in a state of dependence which marginalizes him even more and doesn't enable him to one day find his place within society (or only a very inferior one). The begging child is often socially unstructured, inferior, considers himself as a parasite who is dependent on the goodwill of the general public (even if begging seems to remain a game).

Moreover, the child prevents himself from accessing any form of education or socialization offered by his own family or by the organizations. The latter are

really powerless and the phenomenon is becoming more and more widespread. Of course, repression is inefficient and prevention is difficult with the children. In Thamel, street children have a higher daily income than the social worker that comes to meet them.

The tourists, as well as the local population, seem to be lost in the clichés about begging. Some of them think that it is selfish not to give anything. The tourists who give money to the children do not seem to understand that they do not improve their daily life, or their wellbeing, or their mental or physical health. They just enable the child and his friends to buy some drugs (glue, tablets, alcohol or cigarettes) or other fleeting pleasures which sometimes help to support real mafias.

Giving the children food instead of money doesn't change anything either, for they usually resell it for money.



Sexual, physical and psychosocial abuses

The needs of all kinds that these children, left to their own devices, have on the street make them very vulnerable to the approaches of any pedophile or other predator.

Relational and hierarchical structures, which sometimes exist between and within gangs, open the door to abuses, insomuch as you have to be able to elbow your way up and overthrow the others to become a “leader”.

Violence is there, everywhere and all the time, be it sexual, physical, moral or psychological. In Thamel, we estimate the percentage of children who are the regular victims of sexual abuses at more than 40%. This phenomenon takes root in a specific social context: an area in which the child lives near travelers, some of which think that, at the other end of the earth, it is “normal” to abuse a child.

The Thamel children are considered as potential criminals by the authorities. Their need for money, medical care, attention and food make them very vulnerable to the approaches of any pedophile, be he a foreigner, a Nepali or from his own environment.

There are many different factors which make abuses easier on the street – on the youngest by the oldest. On the street, children are left unsupervised from an early age and are part of a group. Without any specific educational model, they are readily exposed to violence which they trivialize and normalize. At night, rapes and sexual abuses are commonplace if there is no social worker to supervise the situation.





Despite their suffering, the children who are the victims of sexual abuse quickly get used to it because the context they live in forces them to trivialize and normalize this practice. Worse, it is out of the question to mention it to anybody in Nepal, sex and sexuality being hugely taboo. It takes a lot of time to talk about it unashamedly! Many children who were the victims of physical, sexual or mental violence suffer from important psychological and psychosocial problems such as a lack of confidence, a lack of self-esteem, a feeling of insecurity and the feeling of never being able to be loved.

There is some kind of trivialization of such facts and it is a tragedy.

The nearly complete impunity most abusers have is also a tragedy which we should quickly address.

Forgetting one's family and turning down NGOs' support:

Life in Thamel is something of a big game. Even if sufferings are real, drugs and pleasures durably trap the child in a distorted reality. Thamel cannot be compared to the other areas where street children live, its atmosphere being so specific and, in a way, almost addictive. The child retreats into his gang and in a parallel world, far away from Nepali realities, next to the luxury and freedom of this tourist and seemingly carefree world. Once integrated into the world of Thamel, it is really hard to go back to one's family or to turn to an NGO. A child once told us that Thamel is "too much": too much pleasure, too much money, too many abuses, too many drugs, too much freedom, etc.

A child who is already socially unstructured rebuilds himself there in a non-standard way and in a complete framework (musical, social, affective, normative) which is completely different from what he knew and lived in before.



International perspective

By Simone Galimberti

Former Deputy Country Director – CCS (ITALY)

Bridging the gap between different planets

Visible as they are, it is no easy job pretending not to see the multitude of street children in Kathmandu. People might try to ignore them in the same way we often do while dealing with other cases of childhood deprivation: the children working in the tempo that we take on a daily basis or the children working in the local restaurant behind the corner of our house or the thousands of children involved in domestic work.

Children living or working in the streets (this concept is a new definition attempting to break with the use of an unfair and unjust terminology), represents a unique social group with specific needs and demands centered around their relationship, or better still, their “connection” with the street, the place they call home.

It is indeed extremely challenging to fully understand and comprehend the push and pull factors at the foundation of delicate and sensitive situations that abruptly break the patterns of a decent and ordinary childhood for thousands of children from all around the country. They are victims of deprivation, abuse and abject poverty.

To be clear, it is not just about poverty. There is multitude of circumstances that might drag a child into despair and consequentially to a physiological breakdown in which the street ends up representing the only escape. Unfortunately and unknowingly, children find themselves in a spiral without an apparent exit.

Ironically, the street and the group dimension associated with it actually represents some sort of safety net for these children; victims of an apparent unassailable layer of vulnerability and indifference that wrap them up all over, insulating them from our reality.

Yes it is indeed about our world and theirs, two pretty different planets that

function side by side, sometimes crisscrossing and overlapping with each other. Our “World”, is doing its best to avoid and escape from the other “World”. Isn’t all this understandable and justifiable to some extent? After all, children living or working in the streets stop being real human beings as their safety net, the street, strips them of any formally recognized right as inescapable, a “sine qua non” condition to be part of the “club”.

From our side, from the planet that preaches about the UN Convention on the Rights of children, we really do our best to erase any sense of remorse that still might function in the depth of our conscience when a so called street child approaches us.

I personally felt unsafe and insecure once, many years back in Cape Town, South Africa, where as a young student doing her thesis, was searching for a lodging. Surrounded by a small gang of poor black children threatening with sticks, I managed to run away and avoid falling prey to their despair and anger. Scared the way I was, once I managed to reach the entrance of a bar, I started thinking about the thousands of children living or working in the streets who are victims of a punitive policing that perpetuate offenses rather than offering a first stepping stone towards a decent way of living.

At the end of the day, weren’t they exercising, in their own way, according to the rules of the street, their own right to survival?

Fortunately for Nepal, children in the street here behave quite well: they get on with glue, they live from begging thanks to a multitude of sympathetic tourists that still have not learned how to ignore them. In few words, despite the vacuum that separates the “street” reality from mine and yours, street children here manage to maintain some sort of decorum, something that is, after all, acceptable.

Still, most of the people like me and you tend to ignore them, thanks to some sort of special magic that would well suit some of the characters from the Harry Potters sagas: we turn them invisible. This works well.

They approach you, they follow you, begging for something and we obviously presume that whatever they collect is going be used for more glue and we are convinced that avoiding them helps breaking their dependency with the street.

We awesomely manage to do away with them, while at the same time, we feel puzzled on the way some young freak foreign tourists enjoy their company and have fun, playing with them in the streets of Thamel.

What else should we do? Should we encourage a lifelong habit, like begging, that is leading to lifelong dependency? Should we just throw some nice words at them that obviously they tend to ignore because it is something else they want from us? Is it really like this? What should we do in these cases? How do we, decent people, possibly and probably involved in the development sector, keep handling these “stressful” situations? I, myself, do not know the right answer.

Each of us has his own coping mechanism that does nothing more than strengthen the sense of isolation and deprivation experienced by the children in what is an already “rich” menu of options available on the street.

I wish we could all be not simply so-called aid workers but be real social workers that are professionally trained to manage these kinds of situations. I wish every citizen could feel proud of mastering some sort of informal social worker skills. Altruism, compassion and spirit of service towards the Other should be solid enough values to start caring about the others and change a bit of society. Children living and working in the street can offer a first chance of redemption.

A social worker should be able to fill the gap between the street child planet and the ordinary/decent people planet. I wish practices and concept of social work were embedded in the curriculum of each educational grade and more importantly in the informal and unwritten set of values that the family, as an institution, should have the moral obligation to share with their children.

Family is what street children often run away from and once again, ironically, family is what they found in the street. The street, with its code of conduct, with its interrelated groups’ dynamics surrounding and regulating their lives, offers those pull factors that makes street life so attractive. Living in a group, absorbing the group’s dynamic, children can quickly learn and adjust to their new reality and they start to appreciate it.

Indeed, once you lose your way home and you find some sort of harsh, often cruel but at the end of the day, adjustable alternative, you feel accomplished,

you feel strong, you feel adult despite the early age. Actually you become adult despite the early age.

Street children are not normal children, neither are they normal human beings, not any more unfortunately. It takes time, courage and determination to win them over and bring them back on what we assume on their behalf, is the right track.

Fortunately, in Nepal, like in many other parts of the world, there are a fair number of organizations, an emanation of a civil society, that are doing their best to limit as much as possible the push factors and at the same time are trying to make less “sexy” the pull determinants. Some of them like Heart Beat are running entirely on volunteers, others have developed a certain level of professionalism that requires full-time paid social workers.

It is incredible to come to know the variety of techniques used by these organizations in order to engage the children living or working in the streets, overcoming that determination that keep them outsiders. Winning over their trust and confidence is a precondition for a gradual, step by step approach that might lead them to regain their due role in society. Meanwhile, it is paramount to recognize that while in the street, they are entitled to the same rights as other children.

Often, what happens is that what is missing is a concerted effort to avoid the evil “enabling” conditions that make the street the only chance of survival for thousands of children. What is truly needed is a comprehensive, holistic child protection approach, starting at grassroots level, with a system able to identify and detect the weak components of a community, the seeds of vulnerability that might degenerate and push the children to the extreme option of running away and seek refuge in far away streets of the town. This sort of vulnerability forces the families to predetermine the future of their children: they will grow up as skillful domestic or restaurant workers or fare collectors in the local transportation industry. They will live on the margins of society; they will marry at an early age; and they will have children that presumably will remain deprived of mainstream opportunities.

Vulnerable and marginalized children deserve not only basic rights but also options and opportunities to shape their own lives according to their wishes and merits.

A possible recipe to ensure this mix of approaches, based on immediate rights and claims for opportunities, lies in recognizing the role that the same children living or working in the street can have as peer educators towards other street children. At the end of the day, they are not only the problem but part of the solution. Their potential towards the society is enormous as well as it is the recognition of their immediate contribution that can challenge the stigma and invisibility towards the dark circumstances of street life.

Simone Galimberti

Conclusions

The interaction between tourists and street children is the meeting between two really different worlds. Even if there is a common game, adopted positions, communicational habits, the meeting nevertheless gives way to so many incomprehensions. Both sides have a whole set of “clichés”, distorted perceptions and assumptions about the other which the meeting does not seem to alleviate.

However, the children will continue to be attracted by the tourists, and vice versa. First-hand accounts are clear. The children see the tourist as a resource, a treasure, and his way of living surprises them and they find it attractive. For the tourists, street childhood is a part of the pictures or stories which are almost mandatory when visiting a developing country. Everybody has his own little story to tell his close relatives or his colleagues on the “misery of the world” and the “infernal fate of the children from the other end of the earth”.

In this respect, street children are as much a tourist attraction as in return; tourists are the actors of a wonderful amusement park for the children. As we have already said, Thamel has a specific atmosphere, somewhere between Nepal and the rest of the world and where dozens of cultures associate with one another, compare themselves, kindly confront one another. The child has grown up with this universe and tries to integrate with it, but he has to do it through the group, the one of the streets, the gang, which he has to follow and help.

The street workers of the NGOs are unanimous: the Thamel street children are not like the others, they live differently, have a different link to money and to the country. Some will get out of it by becoming a guide or something, but many will only find their way out of Thamel through jail or an overdose. A more accurate understanding of this attachment to Thamel is no doubt necessary when one wants to find long-lasting answers to this tragic situation. Anyway, this was the goal of our work: to try to approach, see how these two worlds look at themselves, observe each other, and finally interact on a daily basis.

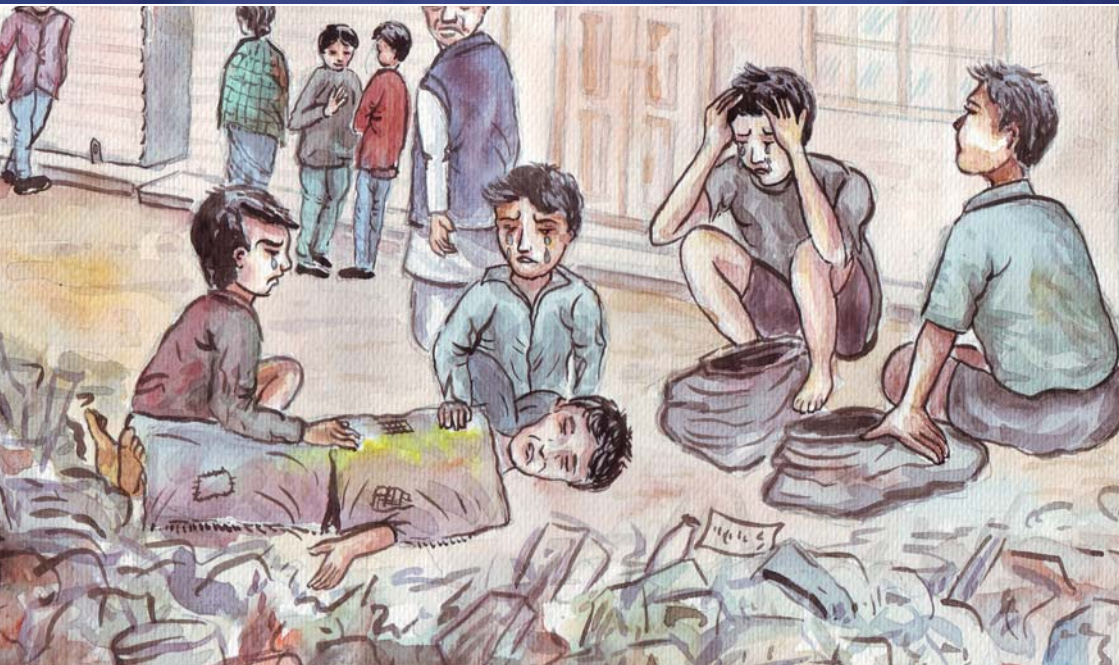
We thus don't have any real conclusion to offer, since our work is an observation, a critical review of one – or should we say several – situations of interactions between two “worlds”, the encounter between adults and children, old and young, those who have a lot and those who have nothing, those from here and those from over there – so different but however so similar.

CONCLUSIONS



CPCS

ARTICLE 40 (CRC) : “Children accused of a crime shall be presumed innocent, have the right to a fair hearing and must be of a minimum age”



Legal protection for street children does not exist. They can be arrested without any probe. Very young children are sometimes accused of crimes and denied any support or legal advice.

Which conclusion can we draw?

We tried to do a more or less complete outline of the situation of the youth or child in a street situation in Nepal. We highlighted a wide range of approaches and visions which would give the reader not only concrete explanations from the field, but also various reflections which confirm the diversity and the richness of this street world of which we tried to open the door partway.

Without claiming having been exhaustive (could we?), we think we dug as far as we could to succeed in writing a coherent and understandable book. We think – or hope – we highlighted this incredible diversity of realities, and therefore this essential need for any actor who shows interest in these children or youth in a street situation not to stop at a stereotyped vision of them.

Our questioning, our subject, was about the social, cultural and communicational practices and characteristics among the children and youth in a street situation in Nepal.



To conclude, let us now go back to the elements which, to us, seem the most revealing about the real situation of these children and youth, chapter by chapter:

Introduction:

- ✦ To commence, we adopted the definition of street children as ‘children in street situations’. This recognized that the children are individuals and their situations are all unique.
- ✦ More than two-thirds of the children were aged between 11 and 16, whilst 4% were less than 10 years old. 20% of the children were aged between 17 and 18 years old. 7% were female and 93% were male. 72% have already spent more than 2 years in the street with 81% of these street children being 13 years or older.
- ✦ Society rejects children in street situations because they are unsociable, and the children are unsociable because society rejects them. They are still children, but they have had to adopt some adult behavior in order to face their difficult environment. Feeling unaccepted by society, they form a parallel society (normally within groups or gangs) with its own codes, its language features and its own rituals, which includes sniffing glue and taking drugs.
- ✦ These groups offer the child protection, welfare, confidence and solidarity. Its values and systems become the basis upon which the child develops his identity, which is also strongly linked to the survival conditions of the street. Within his gang, he sees himself as a leader and a free individual who has his own role to play.

Chapter 1:

- ✦ The story of each child in a street situation is different but the vicious cycle of poverty is a constant.
- ✦ Relationships with the family – past, present and future – are the key to the lives and livelihood of the children. After time on the street, the street family gradually replaces the hereditary family.
- ✦ Gaining the trust of children in a street situation is paramount. Once you have their trust you can gain their respect. Only then, after gaining their confidence, can one reach out and assist them with their needs.
- ✦ Loss of freedom is a primary reason why most children do not want to get out of the streets. Fair proportions are ready to accept rehabilitation but very few want to live or return to their village. The first preference seems to be: get rehabilitated, get a job and a room, but in their “home”, the city.

Chapter 2:

- ✦ The freedoms of rag picking make it the job of choice for the majority of the street children.
- ✦ A high majority of the children regularly worked at night, placing them at greater risk to abuse and exploitation. In particular, 86% of rag pickers continue to work around the clock. 62% of beggars work at night.
- ✦ Earnings as a beggar can be a lottery with 61% earning less than 200 rupees, but 11% earning more than 500 rupees per day.
- ✦ Saving money and sending it home has been difficult for children in a street situation.
- ✦ The work carried out by children in a street situation is done out of and for daily survival strategies. Paradoxically, law enforcement agents are

frustrated with and thus punish the street children for their actions, rather than protecting them from exploitation or penalizing the initial lawbreakers – their “employers”.

Chapter 3:

- ✦ Substance use is very common among street children – not just in Nepal but endemic around the globe.
- ✦ Street children as young as nine are smoking ganja; 35% of 13 year olds and 60% of street youth regularly smoke ganja. Children from the age of six are regularly sniffing glue.
- ✦ The critical ages for many street children to use glue seem to be between 9 and 13. It is here that between 25 and 35% of the children have not tried sniffing glue. The addiction may be circumvented if prevention, intervention and harm reduction services and activities are provided quickly enough.
- ✦ As long as the children perceive no viable alternatives in the “real world”; substances will continue to help them “see what we want to see”. It forms part of a daily resilience concept.
- ✦ The key for intervention and for prevention to succeed seems to be in understanding why substances are used. They are used to both hide and solve problems, as well as replacing something that is missing – an emptiness or longing.

Chapter 4:

- ✦ Street children live under constant fear of emotional abuse (threats and humiliation) but the threats often result in severe beatings and physical abuse. The major perpetrators are police, security guards and street youth. To a lesser extent, fellow street children are also involved in abuse.
- ✦ Society turns a blind eye to the internal abuses that occur within the street gangs/groups. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the general population, for

whatever the motivation, prefer not to deal with the injustices displayed in the parallel world or culture of the street.

- ✦ Sexual relationships with penetration (forced and own choice) dramatically increase for street children 14 years and older. It is inconclusive which occurs first. Group or gang culture (fitting in) seems to influence children in performing sexual acts.
- ✦ Children in street situations seem to have formed clear distinctions between love and sex. One senses there is no union between the two as love may be an obscure romantic concept and sex is linked to abuse and a method to earn money. As expressed by Kaufmann “is it really possible to talk about love in a life made up of violence?”
- ✦ Rana reminded us that as well as being victims, children in a street situation are also resilient, resourceful and active agents of their lives. They are survivors.
- ✦ Street children use NGOs to fulfill their needs. Keeping that in mind, when framing activities and resources for street children, they need to be molded with a child-centred approach. NGOs must tap into the child’s abilities, interests and needs. This will strengthen their motivation to positively change their lives. They must see that a life off the streets is better than on it.

Chapter 5:

- ✦ The gang or group has a great level of importance in the street child’s or youth’s everyday life. The gang is something of a social support; it replaces the family, the adults and authority, offers rules, structure and, above all, a real protection.
- ✦ A street child’s role and place in a gang significantly contributes to his identity formation. Although some see their self-image in ambiguous ways: considering themselves as dirt but also sees themselves as leaders, free individuals and as role players.

- ✦ Being in a group leads to street children being involved in activities that children would not normally do. These included taking drugs together and being involved in sexual relationships.
- ✦ 87% of the street children had visited Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) often. Similarly, 78% often slept at a NGO. 66% reported that they regularly visit different NGOs. 89% think NGOs are helping street children in appropriate ways.
- ✦ The role and relationship that youth workers or social workers play in the field cannot be underestimated. As a “witness-actor” they understand what the children in a street situation are going through and their roles are key to building the bridge between the two worlds the children live in.

Chapter 6:

- ✦ The child or youth in the street situation is still proud of being a Nepali, even if going abroad would be tempting should he have the opportunity. Patriotism is extremely high with 93% indicating they love being a Nepali and 86% thinking Nepal is a nice country and know the national anthem. On the other hand, just over half feel concerned about what happens in Nepal. Even less (19%) care about what happens globally.
- ✦ Many children changed their name, because of the caste system or to flee either their family or the authorities. Being isolated on the street, it is appealing for the child to change his social position simply by changing his last name.
- ✦ Like all things in the street situation, traditions and religion are flexible and adaptable. The child still shows some respect for what he acquired from his parents and keeps in touch with religion, but has no difficulties altering them. The child may conveniently change them if it is advantageous to his survival.
- ✦ Acharya referred to street children suffering from an ‘identity crisis’ by not being part of the “normal” society and what they learn in the street as ‘faulty socialization’. This, as well as the summary of points above, has helped reshape the children’s overall identity.

Chapter 7:

- ✦ Most of the street children have experienced situations of abuses, crises, violence or extreme poverty in their family. They reach a point where they see their current street situation as a better one and as a perspective that could last (for lack of any other possibility). For this reason, many of them envision a future on the street.
- ✦ 15% of the street children have never been to school and only 9% have completed a primary school education. Over 40% had stayed in school until grades 3 to 5, except those aged 10 to 12. They were well under 30%.
- ✦ Educational classes given by NGOs are very popular and 51% reported that they would like to go back to school. For the street youth (in particular the 17 and 18 year olds) over 90% would prefer to learn a skill or be in training.
- ✦ Having said that, the children in a street situation are really disappointed by the organizations which offer training or school alternatives. It is questionable whether or not the child or youth is committed to education, instead focusing on what is possible in his environment. He is aware that having a good life on the street is not completely possible, but has got his habits, friends, temptations and he is attached to them.
- ✦ The street and its difficulties are also turned into a child's game, a story. One tells of the adventures and makes light of the sufferings. One talks about the death of close friends or relatives with extraordinary detachment. Drugs play an important role in allowing them to forget and the child carefreeness remains an important factor of this ability of resiliency.

Chapter 8:

- ✦ The micro study of the Thamel district offers unique insights into the inter-relationships and complexities between all actors involved. The study looks at the links that develop and the feelings generated by the forced contact of the two parallel worlds.

- ✦ There is a common game, with adopted positions and communicational habits. The meeting nevertheless gives way to much incomprehension. Both sides have a whole set of “clichés”, distorted perceptions and assumptions about the other which the encounters do not seem to alleviate.
- ✦ Thamel can feel like a circus of sorts. The children will continue to be attracted by the tourists, and vice versa. For the tourists, street children are part of images and stories which are mandatory when visiting a developing country. The children see the tourist as a resource and a treasure. They find the tourists ways of living a surprise, exotic and appealing.
- ✦ The Thamel encounters again highlight just how complex it is for NGOs to work with children in street situations. Why would they want to change out of their world when life is full of surprises (and hidden abuses)? What could be more exciting than living in the moment, with all your friends and support networks? Could any NGO really offer them more?
- ✦ Finally, aren't all these different chapters, the first-hand accounts of those children, their lives, and thus this book as whole, evidence that those children cannot be considered as a “uniform” group?

Finally, we categorically conclude that the street child in Nepal only exists in the mind of those who think they understand, support or analyze him.

Would this assertion make any analysis, any intervention, any support impossible? On the contrary! But it forces us to consider the complexity of the phenomenon as central in every action concerning these lives crossed on the sides of the streets...

They are not victims, nor are they guilty. These lives just reflect a world which likes to categorize what cannot be when one cannot justify it. There is no rational or complete explanation which would enable to explain why, on the streets of Nepal and elsewhere, so many children or youth survive!

The street child sells, the street child is a myth, the street child only exists in individual stories, case by case, life by life.

METHODOLOGY, DIFFICULTIES & BIBLIOGRAPHY



CPCS

ARTICLE 16 (CRC) : “No child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy ... nor to unlawful attacks on his or her honour and reputation.”



Many times, street children are insulted and psychologically abused, scared, terrorized by persons who are afraid of them or who don't recognize that they are still children despite their way of life.

METHODOLOGY AND DIFFICULTIES

This book is based on a research that was initiated by CPCS in April 2012. It has been motivated and influenced by the years of experience, knowledge and relationships the CPCS team has developed with street-living youth and children.

This study is based on the 3 following sources of data:

1. Data from observation. Our years of work with these children enabled us to observe their behaviors, their habits, their reactions. We partly use this knowledge in the text.
2. Data from semi-directive or free discussions. More than a hundred meetings were organized with the children or youth and enabled to approach different subjects in an open and friendly way.
3. Data collected with a questionnaire. 302 children accepted to answer a questionnaire. Our quantitative data come from these answers.

Our study is thus essentially based on qualitative data from our observations and from open discussions, but also on quantitative data which were checked and compared.

So, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used for the study. A structured questionnaire, developed by CPCS, was used for quantitative data collection in May and June 2012.

Informal and semistructured interviews were conducted in July and August 2012 to collect qualitative and quantitative information, as well as observation reports from field workers. Various additional points of view and analyses on the different subjects and chapters by professionals were collected subsequently in August 2012.

Data Collection

A questionnaire designed by the author under the supervision of Mr Reyniers from the UCL University (Université Catholique de Louvain – Belgium) was conducted with 302 street-living children or youths who voluntarily participated.

Children who already attend CPCS shelters/centers participated, as well as children who were motivated by field workers to come to participate in the study.

These children came from all around Nepal and data were collected in the following cities: Kathmandu, Patan, Banepa, Narayangadh, Butwal, Hetauda, Itahari, Biratnagar, Pokhara, and Birtamod.

A prototype questionnaire was developed by the CPCS team and tested on a group of twenty children. Necessary changes were made and training conducted with a team of data collectors.

A total of eight data collectors who had worked extensively with street children were divided into three separate groups and conducted the questionnaires over a period of two months. Completed questionnaires were continuously reviewed to ensure their consistency.

Interviewers made themselves available from morning to late evening with the added support of the entire CPCS team and monitoring by the Research Director and Research Coordination Committee to ensure that the children voluntarily participated and that data were reliable and valid.

Questionnaires were only conducted with the children who were ready to respond and felt a sense of trust with the data collectors.

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

Data Management and Analysis

A prefiltering was done with all the 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 18 years old?

The remaining questionnaires were entered into a database and analyzed using the SPSS statistical software system. Univariate and Bivariate Data Analyses were performed.

Qualitative information from interviews, case studies and field worker observations were analysed and studied manually. Quotations were selected according to their significance in each subject area.

Difficulties and limits of this study:

The final goal is double and it obviously represents an asset, but also a difficulty. The idea is to succeed in writing a paper which would not only be relevant to help people understand the phenomenon of street children, but which would also be able to directly help the future interventions/projects with these very children and youth.

This need for intervention which follows the study is certainly something which affects the study and even its results. We understand the possible reticences even if we don't share them. The anthroposociology our study claims to be a part of is not an "accurate science" and cannot be disconnected from the involvements, debates, claims, recognition, questionings it (or its claims) raises. Anyway, that is our opinion. Are the absolute scientific detachment and the total analytical objectivity realistic and compatible with the daily life of the children or youth who are wandering and suffering? According to us, the answer is no, and we thus consider that it is not nonsense to connect this work with citizen and societal goals.

The position of the author and of the different actors of the study represents an additional difficulty. Being also "active" with these children and youth, we are thus partly away from the "neutral" position of the conventional researcher. That being said, we consider that from the moment when this particularity is clarified in the "possible limits to the study", our approach also offers us an experience which is based on the long term, on the field, on observation. Distancing ourselves enough to ensure that the work is pertinent is compatible with our action. Anyway, that is the challenge we think we succeeded in taking up, from a scientific and from a professional point of view.

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SOME ACTIVE NGOs AND GOs IN NEPAL & CPCS, ITS ACTION AND ITS PARTNERS



CPCS

ARTICLE 24 (CRC) : “All children have the right to the highest attainable standards of health ... (including access to) primary health care ... nutritious foods and clean drinking water.”



Many street children are suffering from cuts, diseases and are denied treatment. The NGOs exist to grant them access to basic facilities, basic education, basic health care.

Some Active NGOs and GOs in Nepal

APC-Nepal (Association for Protection of children) Nepal

Dallu, Kathmandu

PO Box 13439

Kathmandu, Nepal

Phone: 4266186, 9851054578

Email: info@apc-nepal.org

Website: www.apc-nepal.org

CENTRAL CHILD WELFARE BOARD (CCWB)

Harihara Bhawan, Lalitpur

Phone: 5010045, 5010046, 5539211

Fax: +977-1-5527591

Email: ccwb@wlink.com.np

Website: www.ccwb.gov.np

CONCERN for Children and Environment - Nepal

Dallu Aabash Siddhartha Marg G.P.O. Box: 4543,
Kathmandu, Nepal.

Phone: 4277033, 4288253

Fax: +977-1-4289432

E-mail: concern@mos.com.np

Website: www.concern.com.np

CPCS (Child Protection Centers and Services)

Dillibazar Pipalbot, Kathmandu, Nepal

Post Box No: 8975, EPC 5173

Kathmandu, Nepal

Phone: 01.4414394

E-mail: contact@cpcs-nepal.org

Website: www.cpcs-nepal.org

Emergency line: 4411000

CWCN (Child Watabaran Center, Nepal)

Sinamagal, Kathmandu
Post Box No: 8975, EPC 4194
Kathmandu, Nepal
Phone: 4498924
Email: watabaran@mos.com.np
Website: www.watabaran.com

CWIN (Child Workers in Nepal)

Ravi Bhawan, Kathmandu, Nepal
Phone: 4282255, 4278064
E-mail: info@cwin.org.np
Website: www.cwin.org.np

CWSN (Child Welfare Scheme Nepal)

Pokhara Nepal
Phone: 061202616,432087
Fax 061-432210
Email: childwelfareschemenepal@cwsn.org
Website: www.cwsn.org

Diyalo Pariwar

Chitwan Nepal
Phone: 056-521828 056-233031
Fax: 0977-56-522797
Email: diyalopariwar@yahoo.com
Website : www.diyalopariwar.org.np

Juvenile Offender Correction Home

Address: Sanothimi, GPO Box: 1286, Ktm
Bhaktapur, NEPAL
Phone: 6635135, 6630388
Fax: +977-1-6663129

Kids Shangrila Home

Boudha, Aarubari, Kathmandu
Phone: 4478157
Email: shangrila.home@oabdira.be
Website: www.shangrilahome.be

NAOSC–Nepal (National Alliance of Organization working for Street Children)

Secretariat Office:

PO Box: 10589, Anamnagar, Kathmandu, Nepal

naosc@wlink.com.np

977-1-6218565

<http://www.naosc.org.np>

National Center For Children at Risk

(Khoj Talas)

Bhrikutimandap, Kathmandu

Phone: 4226006

Nawa Asha Ghriha (NAG)

Bansbari, Kathmandu

Phone: 4372975, 5521238

Email: nag@mos.com.np

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

PRAYAS

Address Pingansthan, Gaushala ,Kathmandu

Phone: 4478402

Email: prayas_weforus@wlink.com.np

Website: www.prayas.org.np

Saathi

Address: Ekantakuna, Bhanimandal GPO Box: 7770, Ltp

Kathmandu, Nepal

Phone: 5000063, 5000074

Fax: 977-1-50000160

Email: contact@saathi.org.np

Website: www.saathi.org.np

SAHARA Group

Bashundhara Kathmandu, Nepal

Phone: 4365216

GPO Box: 13853

Email: saharagroup@mos.com.np

Website: www.saharagroup.org.np

Some Active NGOs and GOs in Nepal & CPCS, Its Action & Its Partners

Sath Sath

Sangham chowk New Baneshwor, Kathmandu

Phone: 4472349

Email: sathsath@wlink.com.np, info@sathsath.org

Website: www.sathsath.org

Tiom Laura

Address Jorpati 5 Bahundhara Kathamandu

Phone: 4915276

Email: Sherpa_temba@hotmail.com

Website: <http://www.straatkinderenvankathmandu.nl>

Under Privileged –Children Association (UPCA)

Dharan Nepal

Phone: 025 521838

Fax: 0977-25-530864

Email: upca@ntc.net.np, info@upca.org.np

Website: www.upca.org.np

Voice of children (VOC)

G.P.O Box: 8975 EPC 1936

Kathmandu, Nepal

Phone: 5548018/5548619 Fax 977- 5551573

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

CPCS, ITS ACTION AND ITS PARTNERS

CPCS was founded in 2002 to answer the children's needs on the streets of Nepal. Every year, a lot of children, attracted by the allures of the "big city", leave their villages. Once there, they discover the harsh realities of life on the streets and are left to their own devices to face multiple forms of danger and abuse (mental, sexual and physical).

CPCS was created to support these children and youth and to prevent more children from ending up on the streets.

The organization's work can be divided into three steps:

1. Prevention (prior to and during the street life): set of interventions focused in two ways:
 - prevent and, if possible, avoid the arrival of the child on the street;
 - raise awareness among the general public, the families and the children themselves about the realities of a life on the street (its causes, its daily routines and its consequences).
2. Risk reduction (during the street life): short-term perspective focusing on the immediate reduction of the dangers of street life.
3. Social rehabilitation (after the street life): long-term perspective focusing on progressive and eventual reintegration of a child into society.

Our organization currently has eight centers in the Kathmandu Valley and twenty-five other regional centers where CLASS (CPCS Local Action Support and Services) programs are being held.

Daily, up to 850 children are being helped by our organization's activities, 400 to 500 children are supported by our socialization or rehabilitation centers, 1300 ex-street children and children at risks go to school and several dozens receive medical care or legal support.

CPCS's main Working Partners are:

- The Simons Foundation (United States)
- Ecpat (Luxembourg)
- The American Himalayan Foundation (United States)
- Les amis de Sœur Emmanuelle (Belgium)
- The Vieujant Foundation (Belgium)
- Dynamo International
- The Benina Foundation
- La Chaîne de l'Espoir (France)
- Sourires de Katmandou (France)

Additional regular CPCS Partners are:

- Loisirs et Missions NPO (Belgium)
- Lies Fund (Holland)
- Sibani Charity (England)
- SOS enfants abandonnés (Belgium)
- Werkgroep (Shangrila Children Academy) (Belgium)
- Les greniers de Katmandou (Belgium)
- Vie d'enfant-Kinderleven (Belgium)
- Europe Tiers-Monde (ETM)
- The Cornelis Family



CPCS (Child Protection Centers and Services)

In Nepal:

Phone: 00977-16-224660

Email: international@cpcs-nepal.org, contact@cpcs-nepal.org

Emergency Line Number (24hrs medical care and legal support for street children):
00977-1-4411000

In Europe:

Address: 7A Rue de Larmont – 5377 Noiseux – Belgium

Phone: 0032 86 36 66 74

E-mail: international@cpcs-nepal.org

Website: www.cpcs-int.org

Join us on Facebook: Group “Friends of CPCS”



To make a donation:

CPCS International

Address : 7A Rue de Larmont

5377 Noiseux, Belgium

Account Nbr : 734-0107571-07

IBAN : BE74 7340 1075 7107

Swift Code : KREDBEBB

Or in Nepal : Account number: 001 050101027 28

Bank : Nepal Investment Bank (Swift : NIBLNPKT)

Some Active NGOs and GOs in Nepal & CPCS, Its Action & Its Partners

This study is based on ten years of observation and intervention with the children and youth who are “isolated” on the street and excluded from all parental or family support. A total of 302 children were interviewed and various additional analyses on the different chapters by professionals from Nepal and abroad were collected.

Without claiming having been exhaustive, we think we dug as far as we could to succeed in writing a coherent and understandable book. We think – or hope – we highlighted this incredible diversity of realities, and therefore this essential need for any actor who shows interest in these children or youth in a street situation to not stop at a stereotyped vision of them.

These youth, these children are living on the fringes of the society with their own habits, dreams and perspectives... They are supposed to be human beings like everyone else. Unfortunately in Nepal, as in many other countries, they are far from enjoying even basic human and child rights.



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