

A Civil Society Forum for South Asia on Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Street Children

12-14 December 2001 - Colombo, Sri Lanka



Organised by **Consortium for Street Children**

In partnership with ChildHope and Protecting Environment And Children Everywhere (PEACE)

Working collaboratively with its members, the Consortium for Street Children co-ordinates a network for distributing information and sharing expertise around the world. Representing the voice of many, we speak as one for the rights of street children wherever they may be.

Formed in 1993, the Consortium for Street Children is a network of non-governmental organisations which work with street-living children, street-working children and children at risk of taking to life on the streets.

The Consortium's work is firmly rooted in the standards enshrined in the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Its efforts are focused on building its member agencies' capacity to work with street children and on advocacy in the areas of child rights, poverty alleviation and social exclusion.

Acknowledgements

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We wish to thank those who presented country and thematic papers that formed the basis for discussions on the issues affecting street children in the region.

We thank all the participants, especially the children, for making the forum a success through their stimulating and informative contributions.

Foreword

Background

This conference is the first in a series of regional forums organised by the Consortium for Street Children with the aim of bringing together key NGOs and government representatives from selected countries to exchange experiences and formulate recommendations for the promotion and protection of the human rights of street children within each region. The second conference, for East and Southern Africa, was held in February 2002 in Nairobi, Kenya. Other forums are planned for South East Asia (Bangkok), West Africa (Ghana), Francophone Africa (Senegal) and North Africa and the Middle East (Egypt/Morocco).

Objectives

The key objectives of the forums are:

- to review the situation of street children in each region through country presentations and situation analyses;
- to provide opportunities for networking and sharing of experiences with a specific focus on strengthening dialogue and partnerships between CSOs nationally and regionally and between CSOs and governments;
- to identify specific human rights abuses of street children through focused working group sessions on issues concerning and affecting the rights of street-living and street-working children that are prevalent in each region and to exchange examples of good practice in order to address these violations;
- to formulate a joint statement of action-oriented recommendations providing practical strategies to promote and protect the rights of street children in each region with a focus on accelerated implementation of social development and poverty alleviation programmes targeting the specific needs of street children.

Summary

The official opening of the conference was addressed by Surina Narula (Co-Chair, Consortium for Street Children), Dr Hiranthi Wijemanne, (Programme Officer, UNICEF Sri Lanka), Prof. Harendra de Silva (Chair, National Child Protection Agency, Sri Lanka) and Sadia Mahmud-Marshall (Director, Consortium for Street Children).

The forum for South Asia was attended by 42 delegates drawn from 5 SAARC countries: Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. In addition there were 15 participants from international organisations and the international donor community.

Thanks to the facilitation of Hope for Children and Sri Lanka Interactive Media Group – Colombo (SLIMG-COLOMBO), a group of street girls and boys from Colombo performed a drama at the opening ceremony to illustrate the difficulties faced by street children with the police and judicial system in Sri Lanka.

During the forum delegates from each country presented country reports outlining issues and initiatives of national concern to street children. In addition, the forum addressed specific themes affecting street children in the region through group and plenary discussions based on key note presentations, namely: urban poverty and street children/street families; street children and housing / homelessness; street children's access to basic healthcare and education; child labour and street-working children; sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking of street-living and street-working children; juvenile justice and street children.

The results of these presentations and discussions, as summarised within this report, were fed into the joint statement of recommendations for the region. These recommendations will be used for lobbying and advocacy with governments, international organisations and other actors involved with street children.

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Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CEDAW	UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSE	Commercial Sexual Exploitation
CSEC	Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSC	Consortium for Street Children
CRC	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
CWIN	Child Workers In Nepal
CWS	Child Welfare Society, Nepal
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IPEC	International Programme on Elimination of Child Labour
IPER	Institute of Psychological and Education Research, India
MVC	Most Vulnerable Children
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPA	National Programme of Action
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Incidence of Street Children in South Asia

Statistics on street children are notoriously unreliable, due to the mobility of the children, their exclusion from 'statistic-friendly' infrastructures, the fluidity of definitions of 'street children' and the differing methodologies used to calculate estimates. In general, the incidence of street children is perhaps better understood through the evidence of continuing urbanisation and the failure to address socio-economic and environmental factors that combine to perpetuate levels of urban poverty. The issue of urbanisation and urban poverty is examined in more detail later in this report. In summary, however, the following quantitative estimates – combined with reports of continually rising numbers throughout the region - nonetheless serve to illustrate the scale of the street children phenomenon.

- A recent **Bangladesh** survey cited 445,266 street children in six of its metropolitan divisional cities (Government/UNDP, 2001).
- **India** estimates 11 million street children in total (UNICEF 1994). A study of 5 cities in India (Mumbai, Chennai, Kanpur, Bangalore and Hyderabad) revealed a street children population of 314,000 (IPER 1991); another study by the Government of India in 1997 estimated 500,000 street children in 7 large cities.
- **Nepal** reports a total of 29,700 street children (UNICEF/Child Welfare Society, 1997).
- There are no statistics currently for **Pakistan**, but anecdotal evidence cites the existence of approximately 10,000 abandoned or runaway children in the metropolitan centres of each of Lahore and Karachi alone.
- **Sri Lanka** reported 10,000 street-living children in 1991 (companion volume to the Government Plan of Action for Children).

Regardless of the statistics, however, it is important to acknowledge that the issues related to the well-being of street children in South Asian countries must be viewed not only from a needs-based standpoint but also from a rights-based perspective and approach. Viewed as such, the region should consider that even one child on the streets is too many if that child's rights are in any way being violated.

Overview / Summary of Thematic Issues Affecting Street Children in the Region –

based on a presentation by Dr Hiranthi Wijemanne, Programme Officer, UNICEF Sri Lanka, and on discussions throughout the forum

Overview

The CRC has been ratified by every country in the South Asia region, and of the reservations entered at the time, most have since been reviewed and withdrawn. Sincere efforts have been made by governments to improve conditions for children, particularly in relation to access to services, and over the past decade the CRC has focussed attention on the concept of the 'best interests of the child' in policy-making and programming.

Street children

Within the broader work of child rights, the principles and holistic approach of the CRC, promoted through active civil society lobbying, have contributed to a gradual change in perception by national and municipal governments towards street children. Governments have begun to acknowledge the effects of their economic and social development policies: i.e. that non-prudent macro-economic and agricultural policies that were pursued over long periods of time have pushed a large number of marginalised families into further deprivation. This has resulted in loss of livelihoods and land tenancies, urban migration and proliferation of slums and shanties in all urban centres. These causal factors of extreme poverty inevitably impact on family coping strategies and social cohesion at the micro level, resulting in children being pushed onto the streets in order to contribute to household income, or to escape the pressures of family breakdown. Over the past decade, governments have become increasingly aware that aggravating hardships in rural and new urban habitats are compelling these families and their children to use all their coping skills to fend for themselves, with the side effect of an expanding street children phenomenon in the region.

Over the last decade common goals have been set and accepted nationally and regionally. However, while some of these initiatives – particularly those relating to child survival and development - have been implemented with a great deal of enthusiasm and vigour, others – such as child protection and participation- have been slower to develop.

Achievements

- **Policy and legislative reform** towards domestic implementation of the CRC: Examples include: India's 83rd and 93rd Constitutional amendments in 1997 and 2001 making compulsory and quality education a fundamental right of the child; the creation of special authorities to address child protection in India and Sri Lanka (1994 National Authority for Elimination of Child

Labour, India and the 1992 National Child Development Authority, Sri Lanka).

- **Survival and development:** National Programmes of Action (NPAs) were developed to meet the goals of the 1990 World Summit on Children, accompanied by large investments by governments and civil society partners to galvanize and expand the coverage of national and sub-national programmes aimed at child survival and development, with an emphasis on delivery of basic health services and primary education. Thus, child survival and development initiatives in the region have generally shown good results. Particular gains have been seen in the dramatic increase in child immunisation rates in the region (from 25-45% in 1980 to around 90% by the end of 1999), resulting in reduced under-5 morbidity and mortality.
- **Protection and participation:** Protection and participation programmes did not receive adequate attention until the end of the 1990s when, thanks to continued NGO exposure and media attention, they finally came under public visibility and scrutiny. The governments of India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka responded to this awareness-raising by undertaking policy and programme development and law reforms in order to combat the abuse, neglect and exploitation of children as exposed by the many studies conducted by committed NGOs in the region. India's efforts to reform its juvenile justice system, Nepal's promulgation of the 1992 Children's Act, Sri Lanka's 1992 Children's Charter, and Indian and Sri Lankan law reform initiatives and the establishment of specialised staff to deal with women and children's cases in major police stations are some examples of government efforts to address growing child protection issues.
- **NGO participation in CRC implementation:** In many South Asian countries NGOs have become increasingly involved in promoting and protecting the rights of children. Strong NGO networks have been formed at national and regional levels and in most countries NGOs are now well equipped to submit alternative reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child every five years, giving their independent assessment of CRC implementation in their countries. Such alternative reports often challenge the official government versions, pointing to inadequacy of attention to and performance in child rights.
- **SAARC initiatives:** The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has endorsed a decentralised, inter-sectoral, community-level approach to

child development. A regional monitoring mechanism and a common reporting format have bound the SAARC nations together in monitoring their progress towards improved child development. The 1996 Rawalpindi Resolution on Children was a landmark in CRC implementation in the region due to its commitment to accelerated elimination of exploitative and hazardous forms of child labour by 2005 and all other forms of child labour by 2010. The SAARC Summit in January 2002 included the signing of SAARC Conventions on: (a) Preventing and Combating the Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution and (b) Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia. These initiatives present an important opportunity to revitalize the Urban Basic Services Strategy through modifications required at national and local levels in order to mobilise community self-help programmes to provide support and protection to vulnerable children.

Challenges

In spite of the achievements of the past 10 years in certain areas of reform, the challenges relating to the promotion and

protection of child rights in the region remain considerable. The following six themes have been chosen as being particularly relevant to street children and are examined in more detail later in the report: **urban poverty; housing / homelessness; access to basic healthcare and education; child labour; sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking; juvenile justice.**

These challenges are interrelated and interdependent and are both causes and consequences of problems faced by children living and working on the streets. They are symptomatic of increasing social, economic and cultural marginalisation of children affected by extreme poverty. This marginalisation is compounded by the phenomena of rapid population growth and rapid and uncontrolled urbanisation in many countries in the region. The swelling numbers of children living and working on the streets in South Asia are the result of multiple unmet needs and unfulfilled rights of children. The challenges needing to be addressed are great and must therefore be met with equally great concrete commitment by both governments and civil society.

Urban Poverty and Street Children

[Based on a presentation by Leo Fonseka, formerly South Asia's UNICEF Regional Adviser on Urban Social Planning and Protection Rights of Children].

Urbanisation in South Asia

South Asia, the home of nearly 350 million urban dwellers and six of the world's largest cities, is a kaleidoscopic amalgam of affluence and poverty. Urban poverty is being fuelled by uncontrolled population growth and lack of pro-poor economic policies and investment, resulting in unemployment and shift of populations from rural areas. The most rapid rates of urbanisation in the region are to be found in Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan, while Sri Lanka, due to sound population policies pursued for over six decades, has been able to keep its urban growth rate within manageable limits.

Urban poverty

The proportion of slum dwellers in major South Asian cities ranges from 23% in Karachi to 62% in Kolkata. A third or more of the world's urban poor live in this region. Of them, three-quarters are children, women and young people. In many parts of the region, up to half of the urban population lives in unauthorised makeshift habitats. Most of them live in slums and shanties. The un-stemmed growth of urban poverty, while stimulating the demand for resources, is also causing rising unemployment and is putting tremendous pressure on urban infrastructure and physical environment, causing city services to crumble. With over 30 per cent of South Asia's population currently living in urban areas, the achievement of global goals set by various World Summits of the 1990s will fall short of the planned targets unless the conditions of the urban poor are improved rapidly.

The urban child of South Asia

Over 120 million children live in the cities and towns of South Asia. Denied their rights enshrined in the CRC and deprived of basic services, many of them suffer extremely exploitative and violent conditions. Growing up in crowded slums and shanties, competing with adults for their share of crumbling urban services and leaving school early in order to help their families and themselves to fight the pressures of extreme poverty, these children have become victims of the urban cash economy and its individualism. Many of these children spend a significant part of their time away from home and school and many are engaged on the streets and marketplaces without support or protection.

Urbanisation is a child rights issue

The present condition of the urban child, particularly the street child, is a cumulative consequence of: rural landlessness and unemployment; rural out-migration; municipal incapability; absence of good governance; mismanagement of municipal and national resources; environmental degradation; eroding spirituality, values and support structures; increasing urban violence and criminality. More children were born in urban areas during the period 1960-1980 than in any preceding decade. Increasing proportions of children are born and growing up in urban, low income environments, joining the poverty cycle due to their limited options for the future, and thus threatening their own development as well as that of their communities and countries as a whole. Urbanisation is therefore a child rights issue.

Strategies Adopted to Address the Rights of Street Children in the Region

An overview of current street children programmes implemented in the region indicates three major strategies.

- **Correctional and curative strategies:** Conventional approaches, still employed by some governments, often as part of juvenile justice administration, consider street children as ‘vagrants’ or ‘delinquents’ and a ‘threat to society’. This criminalisation of street children results in the use of outdated, punitive correctional methods such as placing street children in jail, correctional homes and similar institutions where conditions are often poor, opportunities for educational and psychological development either minimal or non-existent, and human rights violations prevalent.
- **Ameliorative strategies:** Street and centre-based strategies aimed at helping street and working children access basic amenities such as healthcare, appropriate education, recreational, therapeutic and counselling facilities etc. are implemented either directly by the government or through NGOs. The objective is to mitigate the negative effects of street life and thus engage the children in a constructive and dynamic relationship to help them build self-confidence and communication skills, expand their life choices, develop personal ambitions, and set and pursue achievable goals. These strategies have worked well in many individual cases in many cities and are therefore very useful programming strategies. However, they often lack the capacity to adequately address the complex, broader causal factors of street migration linked to mass poverty etc.
- **Preventive strategies:** Methodologies include community level awareness-raising and social mobilisation that promote thrift savings, micro-credit and small enterprise development. While long-term poverty reduction interventions are the main focus of these strategies, they also encourage the incorporation of ameliorative actions to fulfil the need for short-term emergency relief. Care must be taken to ensure that excluded and marginalised children (who fall beyond the socio-economic infrastructures through which broader poverty alleviation strategies operate) are included in such schemes. Also, broad-based community poverty reduction schemes may not necessarily reach the specific group of children at high risk of street migration: not all poor children become street children – there is often a particular combination of push and pull factors involved including neglect, violence and shifting power structures within families *in addition to* extreme poverty.

Recommendations

Having considered the issues and views presented throughout the forum, the delegates recommended the following basic conditions and guiding principles as compulsory pre-requisites to address the growing phenomenon of street children in South Asia in an effective and sustainable way.

Three important pre-requisites

1. **Creation of greater political and administrative space and commitment** to help reduce urban poverty.
2. **Building of productive links and partnerships** amongst and between the government, civil society organizations and the private corporate sector, both at national and municipal levels to ensure that vulnerable citizen groups such as children, women, the aged, the disabled and orphans are not further marginalised in the process of continued urbanisation.
3. **Instilling of greater empathy and sensitivity** among city planners and administrators to the needs and aspirations of the urban poor and their children, particularly of street children.

Six guiding principles

Under these basic conditions, for effective impact and long-term sustainability of efforts, the Forum recommended these six guiding principles to govern the selection of future strategies, approaches and interventions for the well-being of street children:

1. Unconditional use of the **rights-based approach** to programming.
2. Strict application of the cardinal principle of **‘the best interests of the child’** in policy and programme development and implementation.
3. Emphasis on **family-based, community-owned approaches** in place of the conventional institutional care approach.
4. Ensuring the **availability of participatory mechanisms** that provide adequate space and fair opportunity to consult and involve the affected children / youth, their families and community organizations in the preparation of policies, programmes and legislation that are aimed at helping street children.
5. Emphasis on **partnership and alliance building and networking**.
6. **Holistic approach, integrated delivery and convergence of basic services** in place of piecemeal interventions.

Country Reports

It has not been possible to reproduce the country reports in full. The following is a brief summary. Full reports are available electronically from info@streetchildren.org.uk. The information contained in the country reports is the responsibility of the individual authors. Please note that street children statistics are notoriously unreliable due to the mobility of the children, their exclusion from 'statistic-friendly' infrastructures, and the fluidity of definitions of 'street children'.

BANGLADESH

[Based on a paper prepared by Aparajeyo-Bangladesh]

Background: Population: 130 million (55 million under 18). High urban population growth rate (over 6% p.a. for last two decades). Increased poverty in urban areas (out of Dhaka's population of 9.3 million, an estimated 5 million are below the poverty line). 90% of the urban poor live in single room, very poor quality accommodation. Estimated number of street children in Bangladesh: 445,226 (of which 75% are in Dhaka city); 53% boys, 47% girls (Sept 2001 survey). All categories of street children are called *Tokai* ('rag pickers') by the general public, although they may be engaged in a range of petty trading / employment / criminal activities. Average daily income of street children is approx. USD \$0.55.

Achievements: Positive government attitude towards reform. Government is piloting interventions for street children through 9 NGOs in 6 cities, funded by UNDP. 17 categories of interventions used in Bangladesh are: research / analysis; street approach (relationship building); drop-in centres; shelters / homes; appropriate education; vocational training; market survey (examining supply and demand of local non-hazardous labour market and identifying skills required for improvements in individual children's income generation); psycho-social counselling; recreational and creative activities; legal aid / protection; health services; job placement; advocacy; networking; awareness-raising; family reintegration; children's organisations (self-help groups).

Constraints and challenges: Severe problems of trafficking, CSEC and abuse. Concern about potential threat of HIV/AIDS due to lack of awareness and surveillance systems in place.

Programmes for street children are inadequate due to ever-increasing numbers linked to widespread and persistent poverty. Estimated that only 12% of street children are being attended to, with no government or NGO plans to reach the remainder. Government pilot project is only for 2 years (currently near completion), with no long-term programme designed based on lessons learned. Lack of access to healthcare facilities (due to lack of information, over-crowding, bureaucracy and discrimination) and lack of preventive healthcare (including sexual and reproductive health, vaccinations and basic hygiene

and nutrition). Failure to address street children's psycho-social trauma due to severe shortage of

professional social workers and counsellors etc., resulting in high levels of substance abuse. More expensive drugs used by gangs to lure children into committing crimes. Lack of skills and permanent address limits access to proper employment. NGOs are lacking in resources to implement long-term programmes.

Lessons learned: Due to relative inexperience of Government in this field, their tendency to mix the characteristics of disadvantaged children with street children has led to the design and implementation of costly, improper and ineffective methodologies. The 17 types of intervention outlined have been highly effective. Activating adult communities with direct contact with street children as well as the wider community helps reduce child exploitation as well as creating a positive environment for street children and support for programmes. Engaging peer educators and child-to-child contact is extremely successful. Ensuring participation of children in programmes makes the children more confident and empowers them in the mainstreaming process. Lack of training courses for workers specifically on street children in the country is hampering development: traditional reliance on 'learning through experience' is time-consuming and leads to poor quality interventions with adverse consequences.

Recommendations: Better mobilisation of resources, supervision of service organisations, and dissemination of CRC through local government level needed. NGOs should mainstream principles of the CRC into their planning. Programmes should be designed with the active participation of the children themselves. Replication of existing 17 initiatives needed to reach more street children. Need to strengthen inter-ministerial coordination in government. Income generation projects / micro-credit schemes are needed to accompany family reunification and to address rural-urban migration. Social mobilisation and community awareness programmes (involving strong political commitment and dedicated participation of law enforcement agencies) needed. Introduction of street children issues into the curricula of training institutions (especially for social workers, educators and counsellors). Create a forum for street children NGOs for both Bangladesh and South Asia for networking of good practices, exchange of information and advocacy.

INDIA

[Based on a paper prepared by Prof. Asha Rane]

Background: Seventh largest country in the world. Religious, cultural, linguistic and geographical diversity. Population: 1.027 billion of which 40% are under 18 (1/3 of the total population are under 15). One of the fastest growing developing countries, although it ranks 115th among 162 countries in the Human Development Index. Rate of urbanisation was 28.77% in 2001. Nearly 29% of the population live in urban areas, with dramatic growth of slums and shanty towns. An average of 50% of the urban population live in conditions of extreme deprivation - compounded by lack of access to basic services and legal housing and poor urban governance. UNICEF's estimate of 11 million street children in India in 1994 is considered to be conservative. Estimated 100,000 – 125,000 street children each in Mumbai, Kolkata and Delhi, with 45,000 in Bangalore.

Achievements: Legislative reform in the light of the CRC (e.g. Juvenile Justice Act 2000, Children's Code Bill 2000 etc.). Advocacy and sensitisation workshops held for members of parliament and the police. Inclusion of modules on children's issues in the training of police officers. Growing awareness and attention to children's rights in the media. Establishment of NGO training and advocacy fora. Government claims nearly 25,000 children benefited through 85 projects in 35 cities under revised government scheme for the welfare of street children which provides for grant-in-aid to NGOs in major cities (1998-2000) (N.B. NGOs claim the scheme has many loopholes and problems in implementation). Establishment of joint government / NGO project CHILDLINE, a 24-hour, free, emergency telephone hotline in 29 cities, used by more than one million children in past 5 years. National Initiative for Child Protection campaign launched in 2000 across police, healthcare, judicial, education, labour, transport, media and corporate sectors. Broad range of NGO interventions for street children.

Constraints and challenges: Lack of implementation and monitoring mechanisms for programmes and lack of enforcement of legislation. Lack of birth registration, uniform adoption law, children's participation and child-centred approaches in government. Impact of forced evictions, demolitions and displacement on children. India has the largest number of child labourers in the world. Widespread poverty, unemployment, increasing rural-urban migration, attraction of city life and lack of political will to address increasing numbers of children on the streets. Street children are subject to malnutrition, hunger, health problems, substance abuse, theft, CSE, harassment by the city police and railway authorities, physical and sexual abuse. Inadequacy of budget allocation impacts on sustainability of

projects and, in particular, the ability to employ qualified and experienced social workers.

Lessons learned: Old-fashioned approach of institutionalising street children in custodial care (often through juvenile justice system) is not an appropriate or effective intervention. Community-based models with an emphasis on the contact / outreach programme (trust and relationship building) linked to 'Contact Centres' (access to services) in the vicinity of their stay / work, are much more effective. As the children live in groups, working with the group is often more appropriate than working on a one-to-one basis. Promotion and protection of street children's rights is dependent on: sensitisation of allied systems such as the police, education, health, judicial system, media etc.; attitudinal changes in society which need to be addressed through public awareness campaigns. Government involvement and active support for NGO programmes is essential. Participation of street children themselves in decision-making and formulating intervention strategies is greatly undervalued at present.

Recommendations: Launch Railway Children intervention / prevention projects at major railway stations. Link street children into urban poverty reduction programmes. Increased emphasis on HIV/AIDS awareness programmes as street children are a high-risk group. Replication of: outreach programmes, community-based models, night shelters, drop-in / contact centres in the vicinity of places of work/stay of street children, innovative models of NGOs with *Bal Mandals* (Children's Committees), and children's participation in decision-making. Implementation and enforcement of the 2000 Juvenile Justice Act throughout the country. Amendment to Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986 to protect children (particularly street children) in informal labour economy. Simplification of procedures to obtain grant-in-aid from the government to reduce the burden of paperwork. Timely release of government grants, allocation of adequate funds on a long-term basis, continued financial support to ensure sustainability of NGO interventions and beneficiary rather than donor-led funding policies. Realistic appraisal of the situation of street children to acknowledge the current inadequacy of government and NGO interventions to reach such a vast number of children in major cities in India.

NEPAL

[Based on a paper prepared by Concern for Children and Environment (CONCERN).]

Background: Population: 23.4 million (52% under 18). One of the poorest countries in the world (49% of the population living in absolute poverty). Estimated 30,000 street children in Nepal, of whom 3,700 are homeless (UNICEF-Nepal 1997). Although street children in Nepal are relatively few, it is a growing problem: great concern that the phenomenon will become unmanageable without immediate preventive action. More than 60% of street children belong to the Dalit 'untouchable' community (compared with approx. 17% of the population as a whole). Estimated 46% of street children are illiterate. Particular concern amongst the public at the perceived link between street children and criminal behaviour. It has only been a decade since civil society has raised the issue of street children and child labour in Nepal. The restoration of multi-party democracy in 1990 has created an opportunity to place children high on the national agenda.

Achievements: Enactment of Children's Act 1992 and the Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act 2000. Existence of NGO networks and activities such as centres (transit, drop-in, rehabilitation), appropriate education, school enrolment programmes, vocational training, health support and mobile clinics, family reintegration, recreation and advocacy (including workshops, research and surveys, photo exhibitions on child labour, children's paintings, street drama etc.).

Constraints and challenges: Dangerous and unhealthy living environments and the resulting untreated illnesses and frequent injuries that entail. Lack of adequate emotional support, food, shelter and safe places to sleep and store belongings, leading to inability of street children to save money. Dependency of newcomers to the street on more 'experienced' street children. Involvement of street children in criminal activities (currently limited to petty theft etc in the Patan area). A survey on HIV/AIDS among street children has not yet been conducted by any organisation to date.

Lessons learned: Most street children programmes are needs-based rather than rights-based and are limited to ad hoc, community scale interventions without integration into a holistic approach to reduce duplication and maximise effectiveness. Programmes that fail to address sustained support for family reintegration will often result in the child returning to the streets. Sustainable rehabilitation depends on home visits and local fieldwork, rather than superficial intervention. Street children programme activities have not yet addressed root causes, nor have implementation agencies been successful in developing preventative programmes.

Recommendations: Integrated approach needed involving government, NGOs and INGOs. High-level advocacy campaign required to sensitise public opinion. Creation of a national hotline. Develop more cooperative, less competitive atmosphere among NGOs. Programmes need to extend to the street itself rather than remaining based in institutions. Community-level family support programmes and development of cottage industries is necessary using local resources and labour. Creation of a counselling / socialisation centre in urban areas to provide moral and physical support, including provision of lockers for children's belongings and washing facilities. Provision of continued appropriate education and integration into formal schooling system. Vocational training needs to be supported by job guarantees on completion of training. Improvement of first aid services to street children and support for rural repatriation if requested.

PAKISTAN

[Based on a paper prepared by the Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC)]

Background: Population: 140.5 million (almost 43% under 15). Almost 32% live below the poverty line. 1/3 of total population live in urban areas. Karachi is one of the largest and fastest growing megacities in the world. High population growth rate combined with weak economy is leading to increased poverty. Urbanisation and environmental degradation have led to widespread displacement of rural populations to urban areas - leading in turn to social tensions and a breakdown in family structures, thus contributing to the increase in street children. No statistics are available for street children in Pakistan although verbal estimates attribute 10,000 street children (with no apparent family links) each to Lahore and Karachi. Street children are mainly engaged in unskilled (including hazardous) labour, with limited occupational mobility and prospects for the future.

Achievements: Juvenile Justice System Ordinance 2000. Drafting of legislation in relation to health. Ratification of ILO Convention 182. Proposed government rejuvenation of *Nigheban* system (Centres for Lost and Kidnapped Children) - linked to a national helpline - to address the issue of street children. UNICEF 1999 initiative on street children including a qualitative survey, intended to address gaps in current service provision.

Constraints and challenges: "Larger social, economic and political forces combine to marginalize children and bring them to a city's streets: an economic atmosphere which pushes a section of our society to the edges, a political agenda that is based on tokenism and a strata of society which is increasingly splintering in the course of its struggle for survival." Street children are prey to criminal coercion by gangs and find it difficult to safely save money. They are subject to physical and sexual abuse and exploitation (both commercial and non-commercial), harassment by the police,

substance abuse (cigarettes, alcohol, solvents, marijuana and occasionally crack) and are at high risk of acquiring STDs and HIV. Societal distrust –perceived as delinquents.

Lessons learned: Homeless street children are more likely to initially prefer practical skills education required for day-to-day survival, but may opt for more formal / night school / higher education on growing older. Children with more family contact choose pavement schools etc. with flexible schedules in a relaxed atmosphere that fosters creativity. A plan of action should be wary of creating an inducement for child labour while offering education in combination with vocational training. Institutionalisation is not effective. The need for discipline can be met by consensus group decision-making on the running of the shelter. Street children are particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labour in the unregulated, informal sector.

Recommendations: Facilitation of street children to articulate their requirements and determine procedures to attain them. The government, donor agencies and NGOs must extend interventions towards family-based programmes. The formal school system's rigid admission rules must be relaxed. Development of a code of conduct for shelters in Pakistan. Police must register cases of missing children. Awareness-raising and sensitisation through media, traditional and performing arts. Community mobilisation strategies to develop monitoring / early-warning systems to identify children at risk of taking to street life and provide them with alternatives. Development of viable alternative income generation for at-risk families. Formation of a national pool of healthcare providers who have the expertise to deal with health issues affecting street children. Creation of a non-threatening environment to facilitate children's participation. Improvement in networks and monitoring mechanisms to share information and experience and to evaluate progress being made.

SRI LANKA

[Based on a paper prepared by Hope for Children]

Background: Population: estimated 18.6 million (1999). Cycles of violence linked to ethnic, political and economic factors experienced particularly over the last 15 years. Street children NGOs estimate 2000 street-living and street-working children in Colombo city (with 5000 children at risk) and 2,500 outside Colombo (with 5000 at risk). Some estimates place the at-risk figures in the region of hundreds of thousands. Accurate statistical data about numbers and dispersion of street children is limited, but there is acknowledgement that the number is substantial and on the increase.

Achievements: Rapid progress in accepting and implementing children's rights through the introduction / amendment of legislation, installation of monitoring mechanisms, establishment of administrative structures, and exposure of child abuse by NGOs and the media. Inclusion of street children as a category in the 1990-initiated National Plan of Action for children. Launch of the Street Children Network (SCN) in December 1996 which produced a directory of street children NGOs in 1998. Establishment of: National Child Protection Authority (1999); Child Abuse Desks at police stations; 24-hour child abuse hotline. Amendment to crime and education-related legislation. Extensive range of NGO services, including provision of birth certificates and identity cards, poverty alleviation programmes, micro-enterprises, formal and non-formal education and recreation. However, further work is required in areas such as out of school children, child labour, children in conflict with the law and children in especially difficult circumstances.

Recommendations: Strengthen coordination amongst and between government and NGOs. Mobilise community and corporate sector support. Compile a national profile of street children incorporating statistical and other data. Establish links with agencies in the SAARC region and with international agencies. Activate the Attendance and Monitoring Committees at village and divisional secretarial level in relation to education. Organise more services, especially street-based services, in consultation with street children themselves in fields such as literacy, recreation, cultural activities, healthcare, career guidance, counselling, skills development, family support. Identify causal factors – both immediate in relation to the family, and situational – in order to target preventative action.

Key / Thematic Issues in Relation to Street Children

The following notes are not comprehensive but aim to broadly reflect the presentations and discussions held.

Cross-cutting interventions

It is recognised that there are several programme interventions that transcend the thematic divisions examined in this report. They are trans-sectoral by nature and scope and are applicable to more than one of the six key themes discussed here. The interventions are:

- Capacity development and training of all major stakeholders.
- Advocacy and awareness creation among all stakeholders.
- Improved monitoring and regular review of programme implementation.
- Documentation/dissemination of good practices in working with street children.
- Restoration of family ties and rehabilitation of children.
- Social communication and community mobilisation as major instruments to address street children issues.

- Networking of efforts of NGOs and other main stakeholders.
- Review and evaluation of all national and municipal policies and Plans of Action related to health, nutrition, education and shelter to ensure that street children's concerns are incorporated with due priority attention.
- Promotion of inter-sectoral programme links and mainstreaming of street children's concerns within major urban programmes, including poverty alleviation.
- Implementation of the expressed desire of SAARC nations and governments to make decentralised planning and implementation operational.

Urban Poverty and Street Children / Street Families

[Presentation by Leo Fonseka, formerly South Asia's UNICEF Regional Adviser on Urban Social Planning and Protection Rights of Children]

Issues / Problems

- Of the estimated 120 million urban children in South Asia, 60 million are in near abject poverty. Extreme poverty, combined with other factors such as family problems, is a major cause of street migration.
- The pressures of urban poverty result in a concentration of problems such as violence, abuse, deprivation,

exploitation, and child labour which impact particularly on street children.

- Street and working children, in turn, remain a cause that perpetuates poverty as long as they continue to do full-time work and live on the streets without achieving even a basic level of education.
- There is an evident lack of systematic involvement of the urban local authorities in programmes aimed at helping street children. City administrations, urban infrastructure and, importantly, the streets must be made child-friendly.

SOLUTIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS

Immediate action

- Establish special centres for appropriate education for out-of-school children. Education must be seen as going beyond knowledge and skills to incorporate life skills, psycho-social and emotional development.
- Build working partnerships between and among the main stakeholders i.e. government, CSOs, child participants and the private sector to support street children programmes.

Longer-term initiatives

- Establish systems for psycho-social counselling, family reintegration, reproductive health education and gender sensitisation as integral components of street children programmes.
- Target community-based poverty reduction programmes to directly strengthen the economy of at-risk families. There must be systemic links between street children efforts and major poverty reduction programmes in the city.
- Greater attention must be paid to research and development relating to urban poverty and street children.
- Early adoption and implementation of draft SAARC Conventions on Trafficking and Regional Arrangements for Child Well-Being.
- Gradual shift of programming foci from curative band-aid interventions to a more preventive approach capable of attacking the root causes of the phenomenon and of poverty.
- Formulate and implement a comprehensive long-term Municipal Plan of Action for Children to reduce poverty in cities with specific interventions addressing the physical, economic and emotional needs of street and other children.
- Set up an independent self-assessment and monitoring mechanism at the municipal level to help measure progress of implementation of such plans.

Street Children and Housing / Homelessness

[Presentation by Harshini Gunewardene, ESCAPE, Sri Lanka]

Issues / Problems

- Shelter is a fundamental human right.
- Homeless children are being denied this right.
- These children are particularly vulnerable to the elements and as a result, many suffer from respiratory disorders and skin ailments.
- They are also extremely vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse and exploitation. In a survey in Bangladesh, 20% of the street children interviewed complained of rape whilst sleeping on the streets.
- They face harassment by the police for lack of identity documents and proof of permanent address (which can also affect their access to services such as healthcare).
- Lack of safe storage for belongings (e.g. shoe-shine equipment) leads to extra expenditure for 'security' (as well as the need to pay for washing and sanitation facilities in many cases) and as the children have nowhere safe to keep any money, they need to spend it quickly, thus hampering their life choices and longer-term development.

SOLUTIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS

Immediate action

- Establish drop-in centres and night shelters with provision of safe storage for belongings and money as well as sanitation and washing facilities.
- Urge municipal authorities to set up a Working Group to address the housing needs of street children on a local basis.

Longer-term initiatives

- Promote 'cooperative housing' for street children and broker long-term institutional credit for such housing.
- Promote corporate sector involvement and partnerships in planning and implementing local agendas on street children, particularly for housing for at-risk families.
- Call for greater allocation of public/municipal funds to support street children's programmes.
- Promote greater involvement and collaboration between government/municipal authorities and NGOs.

Street Children's Access to Basic Healthcare and Education

[Presentation by Wahida Banu, Director of Programmes, Aparajeyo, Bangladesh]

Issues / Problems

- Studies reveal the inability of street children to penetrate the barriers of access to basic services in large cities. Being homeless, they lack legal status, which impedes their access to health clinics - which is also compounded by the attitude and insensitivity / blatant discrimination of health centre staff towards street children.
- Street children are considered a high-risk group for nutrition-related health problems, skin infections, digestive disorders, substance abuse, STDs and HIV/AIDS.
- Street children are generally deprived of their right to education and have little or no access to the formal education system. The majority of them are illiterate and have either never been enrolled, or have dropped out of the formal education system. Lack of education is a primary factor in failing to break out of poverty cycles.

SOLUTIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS

Immediate action

- Conduct sensitisation programmes for education and health service personnel on the needs and behavioural norms of street children.
- Establish urban information services for street children about existing health and education facilities in the city and the consequences of substance abuse.
- Issue identity cards to street children to facilitate access to services.
- Expand HIV/AIDS education programmes to reach street children.
- Identify children out of school and establish drop-in centres with first-aid facilities and sexual and reproductive health and rights education.
- Compile a situation analysis of children out of school and develop a curriculum with flexi-timing appropriate to the needs and circumstances of street children.
- Appropriate education centres must be promoted not as parallel institutions to 'formal' education but as channels for transition to formal schools. Life skills education must be a mandatory part of its curriculum.

Longer-term initiatives

- Ensure that national policies on education and health address the needs and concerns of street children.
- Identify and meet the capacity building needs of health, education and local government functionaries to help street children.
- Upgrading and certification of child-friendly hospitals and schools.

Child Labour and Street-Working Children

[Presentation by Shyama Salgado, National Project Coordinator, ILO/IPEC, Sri Lanka]

Issues / Problems

- A considerable number of the nearly 30 million South Asian children who have dropped out of school are engaged in some form of work. Many of their urban counterparts are street children.
- The majority of street-involved children are engaged in various forms of informal income generation in order to contribute to the household economy or for personal survival. It has been argued that economic independence, and ability to contribute to the household, is an important psychological factor in street children's resiliency, self-confidence and feelings of self-worth.
- However, while some forms of child work are permissible as an integral part of their learning and development

processes, street children are particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labour which are both potentially and actually hazardous, including CSEC and involvement in organised crime. Also, due to the rigidity of formal education timetabling, the types of labour engaged in by street children often prohibit them from attending school, thus perpetuating cycles of poverty.

- Bangladesh, India and Pakistan suffer particularly from child labour problems. South Asia's main programme in this field is the ILO supported International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) based on the principles of ILO Convention 182. Though its impact so far has been minimal, its strategic approaches are promising.
- In most countries, the majority of child labourers belong to disadvantaged castes and groups.

SOLUTIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS

Immediate action

- Base programming on children's own perception of what constitutes safe / harmful / age-appropriate / educational labour.
- Target and focus integrated packages of basic services on urban poor families.
- Disabled children must receive priority attention due to their particular vulnerability to exploitation in the worst forms of child labour on the streets.
- Expand education services to make them accessible to working children.
- Give priority attention to immediately eliminating the worst forms of child labour with appropriate programmes to progressively reduce children's involvement in other types of labour.

Longer-term initiatives

- Harmonise domestic legislation with international standards, esp. CRC and ILO Convention 182.
- Awareness-raising among employers, policymakers, law enforcers, unions, children, families and communities.
- Increased investment in social services for poverty reduction.

Sexual Abuse, Exploitation and Trafficking of Street-Living and Street-Working Children

[Presentation by Maureen Seneviratne, Chairperson, PEACE (ECPAT Sri Lanka)]

Issues / Problems

- Sexual abuse and trafficking of children is on the increase in South Asia.
- Reports indicate that over 12,000 girls are being illegally transported annually from Nepal. 5000 are being trafficked from Bangladesh.
- Electronic promotion of sex tourism into South Asia is

proliferating due to Internet developments.

- Street children are extremely vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation (both commercial and non-commercial).
- Services to provide the required emotional support systems for traumatized children are few and far between, hampered by the stigma of this issue and the high financial rewards involved which fuel corruption and implication of officials in the abuse of those who they are supposed to be protecting.

SOLUTIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS

For immediate action

- Further develop counselling and rehabilitation services to assist victims/survivors and children at risk.
- Ensure more effective enforcement of existing policies and laws.
- Research the incidence and process of children displaced in war zones being pushed to the streets, or sexually abused. Similarly, probe into the plight of street children in towns where army cantonments are located.
- Implement immediately child protection policies and training for those entrusted with the care of vulnerable children.

Longer-term initiatives

- Enter into bi-lateral and multi-lateral pacts and treaties to help bring offenders to prosecution.
- Set up a SAARC-level mechanism to engage senior law enforcement officers in a series of discussions to agree on appropriate cross-country preventive measures.

Juvenile Justice and Street Children

[Presentations by Mr. S. Thurairajah, Senior State Counsel of the Attorney General’s Department, Colombo, Sri Lanka, and Premila Diwakara (JP), Superintendent of Police - Director (Children and Women Bureau), Sri Lanka]

Issues / Problems

- Much of the legislation dealing with juvenile justice in the SAARC region is inadequate and inappropriate. It conforms to outdated concepts that criminalise poverty by making vagrancy, begging, and truancy illegal, with harsh sentences for petty theft, substance abuse and CSE – which particularly affect street children.
- Furthermore, there is often confusion in juvenile justice

systems between children in conflict with the law and children ‘in need of care and protection’. Hence a street child is liable to be arrested simply for being on the street without having committed any offence.

- For children in conflict with the law, rehabilitation and not punishment must become the main aim.
- Efforts are also necessary to narrow the existing gaps between different qualifying ages for juvenile offences in different countries.
- Laws must always project the principle of the best interests of the child.
- Juvenile laws, systems and personnel should be child-friendly.

SOLUTIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS

For immediate action

- Strengthening and improvement of enforcement infrastructure for more effective administration of legislation in the best interests of the child.
- State provision of statutory legal aid of good quality to assist in the defence of children.
- Abolition of corporal punishment for children under 18.
- Establishment of high quality counselling services at law courts, juvenile homes and custodial institutions.
- Ensure time-bound sentencing processes and minimize the time taken for trials.
- Educate all street children, especially those in conflict with the law, on court procedure, their rights and the CRC.

Longer-term initiatives

- Review or draft new child-friendly juvenile laws using participatory processes (including children), ensuring transparency in law-making.
- Domestic laws must be harmonized with the spirit of the CRC and other international guidelines such as the Beijing Rules and Riyadh Guidelines etc., emphasising rehabilitation, diversion from the criminal justice system and alternatives to detention – with detention being used only as a last resort and for the shortest possible time.
- Ensure minimum involvement of uniformed law enforcement officers in the administration of juvenile justice. Instead, use probation officers, trained social workers and senior citizens for the purpose.
- Set up monitoring committees with state officials and civil society representatives to ensure the quality of care given by institutions.
- Explore ways and means to promote universal understanding and application of best practices such as national commissions and national authorities for child protection.
- Emphasize community services and supervised family-based work to help rehabilitate the concerned children instead of sentencing them to institutional care.
- Use/innovate reconciliatory, community-level mediation structures such as *Panchayati* Boards or panels of respected senior citizens to administer juvenile justice, in place of the time consuming current model of JJ administration.

Examples of Good Practices

During the Forum, several innovative approaches and initiatives to address the needs and rights of street children were presented. They are summarised here as profiles of potential best practices from South Asia. It has not been possible to reproduce the examples in full. The following is a brief summary. Full reports are available electronically from info@streetchildren.org.uk or refer directly to the list of contact details for projects at the end of this report.

Aparajeyo, Bangladesh

Aims and objectives: AB's aims are to protect vulnerable and exploited children, prevent child labour and to uphold the rights of disadvantaged children. Its immediate objectives are: To provide safe and secure shelters to vulnerable urban children; To equip children with education linked to life and livelihood; To improve the health and hygiene practices of these children; To make them aware of family ties and values and involve them in a concerted process of socialization; To equip children with life skills that will guarantee employment options; To discourage and reduce hazardous child labour and help children find alternative income opportunities; To help children reintegrate with their families and communities.

Strategy: Encouraging disadvantaged children, mainly street and working children and children of the urban poor, to visit its centres to discuss their problems and difficulties with the organization's social workers and animator-facilitators. They are then initiated to join any of the activities that AB conducts for their well-being. All the activities reinforce the culture, faith and values of the children. Aparajeyo's development approach emphasizes community awareness creation, social mobilization and total participation of the community and children. Its programmes are generally community-based outreach activities. Special effort is made to promote the protection of the rights of the child at the community level.

Activities: Integrated programme ranging from education to income generation. It helps mothers of children living under difficult circumstances acquire income skills and obtain micro-credit for entrepreneurial activities. Where necessary, AB advocates on behalf of children and their rights raising their strong voice to lobby for and protect child rights and promote social justice for children.

Its programme includes:

- Early Childhood Care & Development Programme for 300 children of 6 months to 3 years through 12 daycare centres in urban low income settlements in Dhaka City.
- Primary and secondary education for 1700 urban poor children of 4 to 14 years and preventive and curative healthcare and social education for 1600 mothers of these children.
- Non-formal education and youth counselling activities reaching out to 2000 children through learning centres and a community education centre in Dhaka City.
- Awareness creation and sensitization of more than 10,000 people on child rights and against child labour.
- Range of services to around 25,000 street children

through 4 Drop-in centres, 2 residential clubs and 2 Hostels for girls and boys in Dhaka and Chittagong.

- Curative and preventive health care services for 30,000 children and 35,000 people in urban slums through indoor and outdoor clinics including the AB Street Children's Clinic.
- HIV/AIDS prevention programme that has raised awareness among 15,000 street children under 18 years and 20,000 others.
- Training cell and an Information and Publications Unit.

Appropriate Resources for Improving Street Children's Environment (ARISE), Bangladesh

Objectives: Collaborative initiative of Department of Social Services, Ministry of Social Welfare, supported by UNDP. To identify and strengthen existing support services; To develop new support services according to the needs of street children; To establish and strengthen channels of information sharing and communication; To develop a system for referrals between government and non-government support agencies, formal and non-formal sectors for service delivery; To develop necessary policy recommendations and advocacy; To build a national capacity for resource mobilization.

Project Goal: The Goal of the project is to build capacity of street children in Bangladesh in accordance with principles of the CRC. The focus of the project is on the Most Vulnerable Children (MVC) and is targeted to: Work with 30,000 most vulnerable street children with special emphasis on girls; Work jointly with government and NGOs; Build up national capacity on child protection with focus on MVC.

Activities: Holistic approach in providing services to street children through partner NGOs, including: half-way/shelter homes/drop-in centres, non-formal education classes, awareness raising, psychological counselling, health services, recreational activities, market surveys, vocational training programmes, job placements, networking, advocacy and legal aid protection. At the national level, ARISE is engaged in: preparation of education materials for community sensitisation; documentation of best practices; undertaking innovative research.

Achievements to date:

- Implementation responsibilities of ARISE project sub-contracted to 9 partner NGOs (4 in Dhaka and 1 each in 5 other divisional cities).
- Conducted baseline survey on street children in 6 divisional cities of Bangladesh.
- Completed 5 studies to review the existing street

children related services provided by governmental, non-governmental and private organizations in the major urban centres.

- Organized training for the government and NGO personnel on psychological counselling.
- Developed counselling manual.
- Developed health manual
- Developed appropriated education curriculum for street children.
- Provided training to all teachers and related staff of partner organizations on appropriate education.
- Developed core trainer team on counselling.
- Enrolled 25,144 street children (84% of target) to receive package services through partner NGOs in 6 divisional cities.

Bangladesh Shishu Adikar Forum (BASF), Bangladesh

BASF is a national network of 133 NGOs that are actively engaged in child rights activities. Formed in 1990 as a response to the national commitments to the Declaration of the World Summit for Children and to the CRC, it raises people's awareness of and commitment to child rights. It also facilitates access of disadvantaged children to their rights and basic services. BASF is the largest and strongest Child Rights network in Bangladesh.

Objectives: The objective of BASF is to help establish an enlightened society that respects, promotes and protects the rights of children, a society where the child is free of abuse, discrimination and exploitation irrespective of her nationality, religion, caste, colour or region.

Strategy: BASF strategy is to create a formidable national network of like-minded NGOs who have a proven track record of working for the well being of children, particularly the poor, the disabled and the disadvantaged. For realization of its objectives, BASF works closely with parliamentarians, international concern groups, civil society leaders, academics, opinion leaders and prominent child activists. It mobilizes their support and action to awaken the society to the spirit of the CRC and to energize civil society action to promote and monitor the implementation of the Convention in their own geographical, professional and operational areas. It also coordinates the work of member NGOs and liaises with government authorities, the UN and other bi-lateral and multi-lateral agencies and international organizations to influence national and international attitudes and policies.

Activities: Inter-agency networking and coordination; Awareness creation; Advocacy for implementation of CRC; Training and capacity-building of member NGOs; Research and documentation; Development of databases, resource facilities and information sharing; Lobbying for policy review, refinement and development; Participation in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the National Plan of Action for Children; Annual observance of 'Elimination of Child Labour Week' and 'Girl Child Day';

Promotion of public dialogue on issues relating to child rights, child labour and progress of implementation of government commitments to the Declaration of the World Summit for Children.

Butterflies - Programme of Street and Working Children, India

“ When, as an individual, I want to express my problems, no one listens to me. But when we formed a collective and started performing, people began to listen. Similarly, in our wallpaper we report about our perception of the problems around us. The general public doesn't bother about us and the mass media don't care for us. So reports on our lives don't get published much. It is the life of the privileged class that's more in demand. So, we started our own wall newspaper to communicate among ourselves and others interested in us. That's enough for us. ”

Butterflies is a voluntary organization, which believes in the right of every child to have a complete childhood where she has protection, respect and opportunities for her growth and development and also the full opportunity to participate in decisions that affect her life. The organization has been in the forefront of promoting and protecting the rights of street and working children since India began to understand the phenomenon of street and working children as a national paradox. In a way, the organization was among the pioneers in the field. It befriended the underprivileged children, talked and worked with them, trained, educated and nurtured them, promoting their own initiative.

Aims and objectives: The organization aims to identify and assist underprivileged children who are living on and of the streets and who are working in different situations and conditions under exploitative circumstances, in order to work for a better tomorrow where they are recognized, respected and supported for what they are. It endeavours to assist such children in: Understanding their self, their capacity and likes and dislikes in order to guide them their efforts towards personal goal-setting; Acquiring specific sets of skills for living and coping with circumstances, for income earning and for identifying and selecting vocations; Obtaining the best possible social and environmental conditions, facilities and opportunities for respectable living and for optimum growth and progress; Creating sustainable supportive environment for the growth of these children and full realization of their human potential by being their advocate at national policy-making and implementation levels.

Strategy: Butterflies has been working with street and working children since 1989. Its approach is democratic and decentralized. Its strategy ensures that children actively participate in decision-making. Butterflies does not have centres or institutions. All activities are conducted on the streets or parks where street and working children abound. Its street educators reach out to 800 children through nine such contact points.

Activities: Non-formal education; Micro-savings schemes; Health co-operatives; Technical education; Income generation; programmes; Alternative media activities; Lobbying for child rights; Networking with non-governmental organizations nationally and internationally to influence state policies and help sharpen government programmes affecting the lives of street children; Managing a documentation, research and advocacy centre, conducting its own surveys and research; Implementing with other agencies the National CHILDLINE Project in Delhi that keeps a telephone hotline open twenty-four hours for child victims to contact and seek help; Input into the alternative report to the CRC; Conducting children's campaigns to get their voices heard at the policy making citadels of power, encouraging the young to band together for their own legal and social protection; Helping street children form their own trade union of a sort as working children (though the law on employment of under-aged children prevented them from being recognized as a trade union).

Children supported and nurtured over the years by Butterflies, have started their own development initiatives including: their own restaurant in the busiest bus terminal of Delhi; a **bi-monthly wall newspaper** in Hindi & English which evolved out of a genuine need expressed by street and working children to have a newspaper of their own. (They were disappointed and frustrated with the mainstream media, which, according to them, were not sensitive to the views, problems, needs and aspirations of the underprivileged). The paper was started in 1996 and is now a self-sustaining exercise.

Street theatre has been an integral part of Butterflies' alternative education programme for over eight years. Using drama as a means of therapy, communication and advocacy has led children to become a full-fledged street theatre group called Bal Rang Manch. The group, supported by theatre educator meets five days a week and works closely with the National School of Drama to develop a curriculum for training street theatre enthusiasts. The impact of such theatre is aptly expressed by an 11-year-old group member when he said: "When I say something as an individual no one listens but when the theatre group says the same thing, people begin to listen".

CHILDLINE India Foundation (CIF), India

For more information, see: www.childlineindia.org.in

India's first 24-hour, free, emergency phone service for any children in need of care and protection, with an emphasis on marginalised children such as: street children, child labourers, children who have been abused, CSEC, differently-abled children, children with substance abuse problems, children in conflict with the law, children in institutions, mentally challenged children, HIV / AIDS infected children, children affected by conflict and disaster, child political refugees and children whose families are in crises. It has taken over a million calls and made a difference to the lives of hundreds of

thousands of children all over the country. Established in Mumbai in 1996, it went national in 1999. It aims to be operational in every city and district of India.

Children call to seek help directly or just to share their problems. CHILDLINE offers (e.g.) medical assistance, shelter, repatriation, protection from abuse, emotional support and guidance. After initial crisis intervention, it links these children to long-term services. It also undertakes development, networking and facilitation, training, research and documentation and awareness and advocacy at the national and international level.

Initiated by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, CHILDLINE is a unique example of co-operation between government and NGOs. It is a partnership between the Government of India, UNICEF, Department of Telecommunications, street and community youth, NGOs, academic institutions, the corporate sector and concerned individuals.

Vision

1. Establishing CHILDLINE-1098 as a brand for child protection that stands for quality service.
2. Taking telephone technology to the most marginalised groups and making it accessible to them.
3. Strengthening the child protection network in the country by sustaining and expanding the partnership between children, NGOs, academic organizations, state governments, bilateral organizations and the community.
4. Establishing CIF as a premier child protection agency in the country.

Mission To respond effectively to individuals/children calling 1098 and follow-up on each call thoroughly. To dialogue with allied systems to evolve concrete avenues of collaboration between NGOs and the allied systems. To advocate for children's services, based on the concerns of children calling CHILDLINE.

Concern for Children and Environment (CONCERN), Nepal

Aims and objectives: Promote and advocate child rights among children and communities; Alleviate child exploitation, particularly child labour; Promote and preserve a better social and physical environment for children and their families in which to live; Rehabilitate children living in high-risk conditions; Uplift the economic condition of underprivileged children and their families; Provide up-to-date child-related information to relevant organizations and individuals; Assist in networking the various efforts of organizations and individuals who are concerned with the plight of underprivileged children.

Strategies: Integration strategies based on consultative processes encouraging maximum participation of children, their families and immediate communities. It endeavours to

help children in distress to:

- Come together and learn from each other's legacies of the past.
- Realize that the path trodden so far has been alienating and not integrative.
- Help those who show interest in reintegrating themselves with their own families and society and assist them in minimising the problems in that re-entry process for the child, family and community.

The above three aims involve self-realization exercises, personal goal setting for each individual child and helping him or her to acquire life and vocational skills required for achieving the set goals.

Activities: Research in 1994 surveying the situation of child porters in Kathmandu, supported by Child Workers in Asia (CWA) based in Bangkok; Child Development Centre to prevent underprivileged children from becoming street children by providing opportunities for holistic personal growth and development; Emergency shelter home to provide temporary homes for children in crisis situations; Centre for withdrawal, rehabilitation and reintegration of child porters. It employs tested and proven methodologies that engages the body, mind and spirit of the child to search for what s/he is, what s/he can be and what s/he wants to be. After this self-examination and analysis, the child is taken through a process of attitude and aptitude analysis, course correction, skills-acquirement, counselling and guidance to reach the goal that she sets for herself. To help acquire life and vocational skills, CONCERN also promotes income generation programmes at family and community levels. It works with target communities and through a process of awareness creation, conscientisation and empowerment, helps these communities understand and fulfil their obligations towards children on a sustainable basis.

Under Privileged Children's Association (UPCA), Nepal

“ Initially, we invited a few street children to pay a visit to our centre which was a one room unit then. A few of them came first and started interacting with us. When the children continued to arrive at our Contact Centre regularly, we realized we were meeting a great need. They needed someone to talk to and take their problems to. And we filled that vacuum. Gradually, the numbers increased and their needs became complex. Each time it happened, we adjusted ourselves to help them. That's how we added the night shelter and other components to our programme. ”

Aims and objectives: UPCA is dedicated to child protection and works actively against all forms of abuse and exploitation of children and child labour through public awareness creation, social conscientisation and through various forms of welfare activities aimed at helping under-privileged children. Non-profit making voluntary organization, non-political in nature and scope working towards improving the quality of life of children who are neglected and exploited. It works closely with like-minded organizations and institutions, both

voluntary and governmental, towards implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Strategies: Multi-pronged strategy to promote mental, attitudinal, spiritual and behavioural development, leading to high self-esteem, respect for ethical values and aspiration to become a peer educator whilst undergoing personal development. To do this, the organization uses a three-fold approach.

- Conducting programmes to improve under-privileged children's knowledge, attitudes, aspirations, skills and behaviour by working with them as a friend and guide.
- Launching awareness creation and education activities to improve the societal understanding of and attitude towards these children in order to make the environment less hostile to under-privileged children.
- Networking like-minded civil society partners to create a national and global level of concern for such children through concerted national and local level planning.

Activities: Establishment and support of NGO networks through: help in coordinating their work; mobilizing financial and physical resources for sustainability; collecting and building data and information through surveys and research; sharing information with national and international organizations through periodically conducted seminars and training programmes. Contact centre / night shelter for street children, Child Wall Newspaper regularly published by the children, non-formal education in under-privileged communities, formation of child groups, training workshops, research, surveys and seminars. Works closely with the municipal governments in these areas. (Local government authorities finance some of its work directly).

Society for Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC), Pakistan

“ No miracles can be expected if the concerned authorities and the perpetrators deny the existence of child labour, bonded labour and child exploitation or the conditions that violate the rights of the child. For promotion and protection of child rights, acknowledgement of the problem is a pre-requisite. That is exactly what SPARC in Pakistan is endeavouring to do. ”

SPARC was born out of a necessity to educate and motivate the nation and its leaders regarding the new children's order ushered in by the CRC in 1989. Sparked by the resolution of a few like-minded people SPARC first assessed the situation, conditions and needs of children and then created necessary mass awareness on children's needs and rights throughout Pakistan. SPARC now operates from three regional centres - Islamabad, Lahore and Peshawar.

Aims and objectives: SPARC's organizational strength lies mainly in its capacity for analytical research and creative search for alternative options to change the situation of Pakistani children for the better. Among its objectives are:

- Study, analyse and disseminate information relating to the status of fulfilment and realization of the rights of the Pakistani child with the view to raising the level of awareness of the people and building a national conscience and consensus in favour of children.
- Search for, experiment with, and share creative options that can help upgrade the quality of life of children.
- Provide a platform for the voice of children to be heard by the political, economic and social sector decision-makers in Pakistan and abroad who can make the difference that children are seeking.

Activities:

- Constant assessment of the state of Pakistan's children through regular studies, research and analyses. Collaboration with other agencies in collecting and analysing child-related data and in the dissemination of their findings.
- Regular release of reader and user-friendly publications on themes of interest to childcare-givers and child rights activists such as compulsory education, child labour, bonded labour and the death penalty.
- Mobilisation of individuals, groups and communities to express their deep concern about lack of 'teeth' in government policies and/or in their implementation (e.g. petition campaign requesting the Federal Minister of Education to appoint a focal person to constantly and consistently monitor the implementation of the Education Sector Reforms adopted by the government, supported by a sound reporting mechanism with an appropriate database for the Minister to regularly review progress).
- Action against evident violation or denial of children's rights and education of national and international communities on actions, practices and changes that facilitate the realization of the rights of the child.
- Vigilant attention to new government legislation, making it known to the general public and to those concerned with children, thereby promoting wider public dialogue and scrutiny of such laws.

Struggle for Change (SACH), Pakistan

SACH is a non-governmental organization established in 1994 in Islamabad, Pakistan. It is non-profitable entity of professional social scientists working for rehabilitation and reintegration of then survivors of organized violence and torture, mainly on the streets and homes of urban low-income areas. The organization employs an interdisciplinary and holistic approach and works for the total well-being of the victims. In a society where violence and torture, particularly against women and children has acquired institutionalised form, there is societal silence and insensitivity to domestic violence, police brutality,

lack of justice to the underprivileged and the disadvantaged as common incidents that only the authorities can deal with. There is hardly any social realization that civil society has a very noble and robust role to play to sensitise, educate and mobilize the masses against such cruelties to fellow humans.

Objectives: Initiate work for elimination of all forms of institutionalised violence human rights abuses; Raise consciousness against torture, violence and cruel and inhuman treatments and punishments by individuals, communities and the authorities.

Strategy: SACH works with individual, communities and organizations to help the victims of torture and violence and fight against organized intimidation of people and human rights violations. Many of these victims are women and children, particularly street children. Multi-pronged strategy that includes: Training of professionals to work with and for victims of torture and violence; Influencing government policy on human rights abuses, enforcement excesses etc; Providing free professional services including medical services to the victims, particularly those who languish in prisons and hospitals; Organizing public education programmes to create civil consciousness about the issue; Joining with other national and international networks to fight against human rights violations.

Activities: Public and basic education programmes; Regular public meetings, seminars and workshops to educate, raise awareness and train public leaders and concerned; Provides training on UN Conventions such as CRC, CEDAW; Rehabilitation Centre that provides assistance to victims by a group of professional who have acquired specialized training on management of trauma and post-trauma disorders; Medical assistance and physiotherapy; Psycho-therapeutic support group to help the victims combat the common effects torture such as anxiety, helplessness, insomnia, lack of concentration etc; Stress & Tension Reduction and Life Skills Development workshops for the survivors; Assistance provided to survivors and their families to establish themselves financially; Counselling, training in managing small businesses, vocational skill training and micro-credit and market links; Legal assistance, temporary shelter and youth and family counselling to the victims and their families.

The Colombo Statement Adopted by the Delegates of the Civil Society Forum for South Asia on Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Street Children, held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, From 12th to 14th December 2001

We, a concerned group from civil society organizations and governments of South Asia, having met in Colombo from 12 to 14 December 2001,

Assessing and analysing the situation of street children in the region, their numbers, growth trends, living conditions, special needs, aspirations and their inter-linkages with urban and rural economies, and how the government and the civil society have attempted to address the many related problems and issues,

Learning from different country experiences in South Asia that it is possible to use social communication and community mobilization as a major instrument to address the multifaceted and complex issues that not only create the phenomenon of street children but also sustain it,

Viewing the issues related to the incidence of street children in South Asia from a rights perspective and approach and noting that we consider that 'even one child on the street is too many' if his/her rights are in any way being violated,

Considering that the South Asian nations have shown commitment manifested through actions leading to new policies and programmes, legal and policy reforms, simplification of rules, procedures and regulations and greater allocation of funds for implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child,

Noting that the new economic path of globalisation of financial markets, economic restructuring and structural adjustments has resulted in a range of negative social impacts on children, families and their communities, the growing phenomenon of street children being one such,

Realising that street children and urban poverty are interlinked,

Recognising extreme poverty, environmental degradation, ineffective governance and denial of basic rights as some of the major challenges in the new Millennium,

Agreeing that greater political will and administrative provisions need to be created to help reduce poverty in our communities, we

- *Hereby pledge our unstilted cooperation and continued support* to make our nations and our cities child-friendly,

- *Call upon the civil society organizations, governments and the corporate sector to build productive partnerships* among them to ensure that in continued urbanisation, our cities are sensitive to the needs and aspirations of children, particularly to those of the street child,
- *Appeal to the international development partners to play their role in caring for children, especially street children*, by helping in creating fiscal space in national budgets of governments through debt relief, structural adjustment with a human face and ensuring that fiscal transfers in line with international and UN commitments are made promptly,

and, together, we declare and fully commit our efforts to:

At Programme Development and Monitoring Level

- *Make our cities child-friendly* through strengthening of participatory, community-based and community-owned policies, programmes and processes that would attack both the immediate and underlying causes of poverty.
- *Link street children interventions with poverty alleviation programmes* in order that poverty programmes will not miss the expected target beneficiary groups and bypass the numerically weak, voiceless street children groups. There is a great and urgent need to shift programming foci from curative band-aid intervention modes to more preventive ones capable of attacking the root causes of the phenomenon of poverty.
- Formulate and implement comprehensive *City-level Plans of Action for Children* to improve access to basic services and ensure promotion and protection of basic rights through specific interventions addressing the physical, economic and emotional needs of the street child.
- Set up an *independent self-assessment and monitoring mechanism* at the city level to help measure progress of implementation of such plans.
- Place greater emphasis on interventions that *protect and improve the economic security, educational opportunities*

and emotional support systems for children on and of the street.

- Search for ways and means to *promote universal understanding and application of best practices* such as national commissions and national authorities for child protection.
- *Promote corporate sector involvement and partnerships* in planning and implementing the city-level plans for street children.
- *Promote greater involvement and collaboration* between government, local government authorities, civil society including NGOs and the corporate sector.
- *Raise the level of public awareness* on the needs, aspirations and causal factors of street children.
- *Ensure programmes to orientate* civil society, administrative machinery and political leadership.
- *Call for greater allocation of public and local government funds* to support street children's programmes.

At Policy Development Level

- *Effect a paradigm shift* from needs-based planning to rights-based strategic approaches for programme development.
- *Ensure more effective enforcement* of the existing policies and laws and introduction of new laws where necessary.
- *Ensure that street children programmes* are an integral part of CRC implementation in order to ensure that CRC implementation also makes a measurable impact on improving the lives of street children.
- *Promote inter-sectoral programme linkages* through regular reviews and evaluation of all National Policies and Plans of Action related to health, nutrition, education and shelter sectors with the view to mainstreaming street children's concerns within these policies.
- Create *greater space for direct participation of children, their families and communities* in decision-making processes that affect their well-being.
- Recognize and ensure that the *primary responsibility of meeting the needs and aspirations of vulnerable groups such as street and working children lies squarely with the government* at national and sub-national levels. It has a distinct role to play in policy and programme formulation, legislation, regulation and facilitation of implementation. Correspondingly, *NGOs can play only a supplementary role* of advocacy, social mobilization, demonstration of new and more effective approaches, and sharing of good practices to influence the updating and

refinement of national policies and programmes.

- Lobby for and *enhance the role and involvement of government at all levels* in improving the well-being of street children with greater emphasis and focus on issues such as HIV/AIDS, child labour, child abandonment, child abuse, commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking, children with disabilities and children affected by conflict.
- *Review and sharpen the existing definitions of 'street children'* in order to acquire a uniform understanding of the term among all stakeholders.
- *Make juvenile justice administration more effective* by bringing national laws into conformity with the CRC; strengthening and improving the enforcement infrastructure; abolishing corporal and capital punishment for children under 18 years; providing quality statutory legal aid to assist in the defence of children; setting up high quality counselling services in courts of law, police stations and custodial care institutions; providing adequate scope for non-custodial sentences; making judgment processes time-bound thus minimizing the duration of trial time.
- *Undertake appropriate research* into multi-dimensional aspects of the street children phenomenon including those street children conscripted or forced onto the streets by armed conflict with the view to ascertaining policy and programme directions.
- *Set up appropriate consultative mechanisms* for regular monitoring and review of programmes addressing the issues of street children.
- Ensure that all relevant *national policies on children, poverty and environment adequately address the needs of street children* in a child friendly manner.
- *Make youth and family counselling a regular outreach service and responsibility of all major municipalities.*
- *Make elementary education compulsory, of good quality, with flexi-schedules and vocation-oriented curricula.*
- Urge South Asian nations to make *peace initiatives and reduce defence expenditure and channel the peace dividends to strengthen child protection and development work*, especially in promoting and protecting the rights of street children.

APPENDIX - List of Participants: Contact Details

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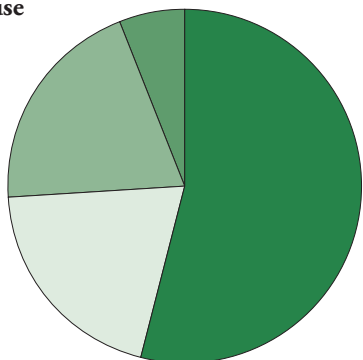
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Lives of Street Children in South Asia

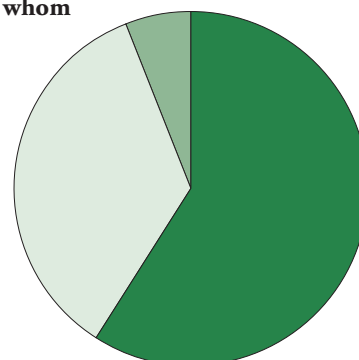
BANGLADESH

Nature of abuse



- sexual harassment 54%
- raped whilst sleeping on street 20%
- bad/offensive remarks 20%
- torture by police for sex & money 6%

Abused by whom



- employers 59%
- mafias / neighbours / people 35%
- police 6%

Participatory workshops in six divisional cities of Bangladesh identified problems and needs of street children. These are: **Shelter / security:** children demand safe shelter because they don't have access to bathing and latrine facilities and are vulnerable to sexual abuse, beating and they are robbed of their money and belongings at night by adults and the police. **Decent jobs and income:** Street children want access to decent jobs and better wages. **Healthcare facilities:** Street children want access to curative healthcare facilities as they suffer from incidence of cuts and wounds, eye infections, diarrhoea, dysentery, skin diseases, hepatitis, fever and other contagious diseases. **Education:** Street children want to be educated in order to get a decent job and be respected in society. However, schooling must not conflict with their working hours. They expect child-friendly educational school environments and learning through a recreational process. Reasons cited by the children for coming to cities: poverty / hunger 84%; came with parents 5%; landlessness 4%; runaway 4%; broken families 1%; other 2%. [Government / UNDP Sept 2001]

INDIA

“When, as an individual, I want to express my problems, no one listens to me. But when we formed a collective and started performing, people began to listen. Similarly, in our wallpaper we report about our perception of the problems around us. The general public doesn't bother about us and the mass media don't care for us. So reports on our lives don't get published much. It is the life of the privileged class that's more in demand. So, we started our own wall newspaper to communicate among ourselves and others interested in us. That's enough for us.” [Butterflies, India]

NEPAL

“Here we do not have any kind of blood relation with each other. But when we are in the street with other friends, though we do not have any name for our relation, we are like a family. We are all actually members of our street family. We share food and shelter with each other. If someone gets sick we care about him, and we take him to a clinic. If we have to buy medicine, whoever has money shares it or we search help from others.” [Street Diary, SCF-UK Nepal, 2001]

PAKISTAN

“Engaged in a day to day survival scenario, street children develop resourcefulness, self-reliance, independence and survival skills in an unfriendly and unsupportive street and general environment. They hardly have any savings and do not usually keep money on themselves for fear of losing it to older boys. Therefore they prefer to spend most of what they earn.” [SPARC, Pakistan]

SRI LANKA

“The majority of street children live on the streets because no housing facilities are available to them. A considerable proportion of street children are engaged in petty trades or engaged in begging. There are numerous factors which have caused them to lead this street life, and among them poverty, family disputes, parents' behaviour and abandonment are predominant.” [A Census of Street Children, University of Colombo / UNICEF, 1998]

Member Agencies

Action International Ministries UK
Calcutta Hope
Casa Alianza UK
Child Welfare Scheme
ChildHope
Children at Risk Foundation
Children of the Andes
The Child-to-Child Trust
GOAL
Healthlink Worldwide
Hope for Children
International Child Development Programmes
International Childcare Trust
International Children's Trust
Jubilee Action
Let the Children Live!
New Ways
PLAN International UK
Questscope
The Railway Children
The Rocket Trust
SKCV Children's Trust
Street Child Africa
Street Child India
Street Kids International
Tearfund
The Toybox Charity
University of Cork, Child Studies Unit
Womankind Worldwide
World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts
World Vision UK
YCare International

Affiliate Members

Amnesty International
Anti-Slavery International
ECPAT UK
Save the Children UK
UK Committee for UNICEF

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