

**AT THE MARGINS:
STREET CHILDREN IN ASIA AND PACIFIC REGION**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Asia and Pacific Region is home to nearly half the world's children, including large numbers of street children. This paper provides an introductory snapshot of issues concerning "street children" in this vast and culturally diverse region.

Although the term "street children" is neither a precise, nor very useful classification for children "on" or "of" the street, the term does serve as a point of engagement in considering the variety of issues and problems facing far too many vulnerable children in urban centers throughout the Asia and Pacific region.

The circumstances and experiences of "street children" overlap with several other categories of children, such as trafficked children, migrant children, and working children. There also is overlap with a range of problems and difficulties confronting too many children, including endemic poverty, domestic and/or sexual abuse and other violence, hazardous working conditions, exploitative labor, substance abuse, conflict with the law and juvenile justice, as well as the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Some street children are highly visible, and the subject of public concern because they are "out of place". Some see such children as victims; others see them more as small criminals. Often, we choose not to see them at all. And then there are the "invisible" street children, those kept and controlled as underage sex workers or as laborers in dangerous jobs or in unhealthy working conditions.

In addition to difficulties in categorising children, and the wide range of potential responses and starting points, there is enormous diversity within the countries of Asia and the Pacific. The region has varied economies and political systems that provide very different contexts for the reasons why children come to the streets, the problems they face on the street, their prospects for moving on from the street, and a wide range of government as well as civil society responses and interventions available to street children.

While there are common features in good practice to address problems faced by street children, the characteristics of these responses generally are linked to interventions designed to address other issues. For example, prevention initiatives need to cover the range of situations that place children at risk, including not only the transition to street life, but also in relation to human trafficking, child sexual exploitation, hazardous and exploitative labor, HIV/AIDS, drugs and other substance abuse, peer pressure, criminal behaviour, and so on.

One important question in looking at the lives and experiences of street children, is looking also to their future. What does an uneasy survival on the street now, or in other occupations, bode for children's development and future lives? Many children on the street are controlled by criminal gangs, and apparently even linked to larger criminal syndicates (such as those involved in widespread international trafficking). If they grow up retained in a controlled criminalized environment, what other options can exist for them? How can street children avoid the stigma associated with perceptions of them as deviant? How can they have a choice?

Since the almost universal ratification of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), emphasis has been given to the effective implementation of the CRC, including the development of a "rights-based" approach as an overall framework for addressing the circumstances and lives of all children. The CRC is especially useful in addressing the needs of the world's most vulnerable children, including those in "difficult circumstances" whose rights are particularly unfulfilled. Other international instruments also apply to children, such as conventions against torture and discrimination and, particularly for

street children, the International Labour Organisation Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

In many countries in Asia and the Pacific, provision for street children has been developed mostly by nongovernment organizations (NGOs). The development of frameworks for child-rights programming (CRP) recognizes that governments have responsibilities as **duty bearers** towards the realization of rights for children, and must provide at least minimum legal and regulatory frameworks. Governments also must ensure that services exist and are properly implemented.

Places and methods of work include the active participation of children, working with them to begin to address key protection issues. Beginning with where children are living, it is then possible to look at issues of prevention, street work, and children moving on from the street to situations that place them at increased risk. While the focus of much work with street children has been on provision of shelters or temporary accommodation, education and training, increased attention now is being given to prevention work. There is a great need for coordination of services, in order to seek out and fill gaps in the provision of services directed to street children, and for standards to be developed, implemented, and monitored.

In terms of ADB's involvement in the issues and problems affecting street children, there are a number of opportunities for ADB intervention at a structural level as well as through specific project activities.

The Rights of the Child

The League of Nations pronounced a Declaration on the Rights of the Child in 1923. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 implicitly includes children, but a second declaration of the Rights of the Child was made by the UN General Assembly in 1959. Because children require additional attention and protection, a separate Convention on the Rights of the Child was seen as necessary. The **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** was agreed in **1989** and has since been ratified by nearly every state in the world (with the exception only of Somalia and the United States).

The 54 articles of the CRC are divided into the following components:

- General measures
- Definition of a child
- General principles
- Civil rights and freedoms
- Family environment and alternative care
- Basic health and welfare
- Education, leisure and cultural activities
- Special protection measures
- Monitoring

The Convention has two general principles that underpin the whole: **non-discrimination** and **the best interests of the child**. Children's rights under the Convention are often cursorily discussed in terms of rights to **survival** and **development**, rights to **protection**, and rights to **participation**. These elements, however, are intertwined, and the Convention must be considered in its entirety, along with other human rights instruments, in developing rights-based approaches to practice, and in seeking international standards against which to measure children's lives and circumstances.

Countries that have ratified the CRC are required to submit periodic reports to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to indicate their progress in realising child rights. In addition to national (governmental) reports, civil society organisations are encouraged to submit independent reports to the UNCRC.

For many organisations seeking to protect and realise children's rights, the principles and practice of Child Rights Programming aims to use all appropriate international conventions, and not only the CRC.

In addition to the CRC, children are also implicitly and explicitly given rights under **other UN and international instruments**. These instruments include the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency, and others.

The **International Labour Organisation Convention No. 182 and Recommendation 190 Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor**, have particular relevance for many street children. The Convention defines the worst forms of child labor and implementation processes for ratifying governments.

The definitions of the worst forms of child labor include:

- All forms of slavery or similar practices, such as debt bondage, trafficking, or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
- The use of children for prostitution and pornography;
- The use of children for illicit activities, such as the production and trafficking of drugs;
- All work which is likely to endanger the health, safety or morals of children.

As of the end of 2002, the ILO Convention had been ratified by 134 countries.

1. INTRODUCTION

1. This Study was commissioned by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to provide a survey of best practice concerning street children in the Asia Pacific region, and potential areas of strategic intervention for ADB. . In May 2001 an ADB-NGO Roundtable on Street Children was held with a number of Philippines-based NGOs, and a subsequent internal meeting in June 2001 recommended greater ADB involvement in street children issues, within the context of ADB's Poverty Reduction Strategy, the Bank's Social Protection Strategy, and related policies and development priorities. The TOR and background to the Study are provided as Appendix 1.

2. The huge Asia and Pacific region has half of the world's population, 30 per cent of whom live in poverty, and 40 per cent of whom are children and young people (ADB 2001). The region has countries with vastly different sizes, government structures, and economies. The People's Republic of China, with more than 1.2 billion people, has one fifth of the world's population, while its northern neighbour, Mongolia, has fewer than three million inhabitants. Many of the Pacific nations have populations counted in only hundreds of thousands.

3. Street children are not usually counted, nor subject to census, so their numbers are not known. Different organisations produce local estimates, but conservative figures would run to millions of street children in the region. The problems experienced by street children include homelessness, exploitation, the worst forms of labor, abuse, health difficulties, coercion and control by adult gangs, conflict with the law, lack of education and identification papers. Their experiences overlap with other categories of children, such as those who are trafficked, those involved in exploitative work, which increases the problems of counting their numbers.

4. The geographical diversity alone begins to indicate the variety of contexts in which street children live within the region. The range of circumstances in which children live is exacerbated by the different responses to street children by government and nongovernment organizations in different states. In addition, there are an even larger range of problems and issues associated with children who spend a part of their lives on the street, working, in transit to other places, and who may or may not be permanently separated from parents, family or other adults.

5. This paper attempts only an overview discussion of the issues connected with street children, and intervention practices in the region. Section 1 first looks at the difficulty of determining a commonly held definition of street children, and then surveys issues confronting street children in the Asia and Pacific region. In considering the question of "good practice" in the region, the aims and forms of various street children interventions depend upon the particular social and economic context of individual countries as well as the purposes of the projects or activities concerned.

6. Section 2 takes up the issue of definition, and problems of poverty, homelessness and change. Although the term "street children" is in common use, it generally is impossible to reach an agreed definition of those children that can be classified as "street children" within a single country, let alone an area as large as the Asia and Pacific region – which is home to nearly half the world's children. Although the term "street children" is not a precise, nor very useful classification for the numbers of children "on" or "of" street throughout the region, the term "street children" does serve as a point of engagement in considering the variety of issues and problems facing far too many vulnerable children.

7. Major themes in most descriptions of street children include homelessness, separation from family, and being out of school, but often those children designated as street children do not possess all of these traits. A further set of characteristics include poverty and

the need to work. These in turn are linked to vulnerability to exploitation and risk of coming into conflict with the law.

8. The problems of defining street children are further exacerbated by state and cultural variations in the definition of a child, with different perceptions of ages of responsibility and regulations for example, for marriage. Developing sociological frameworks of childhood emphasise both local context and the reality of children's competence.

9. Section 3 explores the variety of childhoods of street children, and the various manifestations and overlapping categories of children that are connected with these experiences. The issues for street children include not only their current situation, but the myriad of causes that make up individual experiences, and which may be approached from diverse perspectives. The variety of perspectives has led to implicit classifications of children, but the categories used overlap considerably.

10. It has tritely, but accurately been observed that childhood is a "one-off window" of opportunity for development—with many children, and particularly street children, denied such a "window". Such an opportunity should be available for all children, but that it is not has led to attempts to design interventions for various groups. Processes of placing children in categories run counter not only to development of holistic practice interventions, but also to the realisation of children's rights which, given the almost universal ratification of the CRC, provides the main international standard for work with children (see box above). This requires addressing street children's lives in context. The first context is connected with children's identity, (proscribed or realised) as citizens and inhabitants of a particular state. Each state offers different opportunities and dangers for life on the street.

11. A brief overview of street children in the region is outlined in Section 4. The outline follows a broad based geographical breakdown of countries in attempt to take account of the range of polities, economies, histories and cultures across the region. Some countries are linked through experiences, for example of colonisation or economic models. Other connections stem from the migration and trafficking of children, many of whom are, or become, street children. The connections through children provide a set of different international linkages, some of which follow established conventional trade, but others are part of informal, criminal syndication.

12. In Sections 5 and 6, the Study looks toward the scale and requirements of interventions in the lives of street children in the region. These sections outline frameworks and principles for good practice, and also examine places and methods of implementation. The roles government and responses of nongovernment organizations are outlined in Section 7, in particular the need for coordination and regulation of services to a common set of standards linked to the overall CRC framework and principles of child rights programming

13. It is important that practice is reflective, that is it is embedded in local circumstances of children's lives and issues, evaluates work, is dynamic and responds to changing environment and changing needs. Such practice is essentially or implicitly rights-based, and holistic (that is, looking to the whole child, not a particular aspect of a child's life). This is a foundation on which projects concerned with prevention, protection, street activities and moving children on from the street can begin. In addition, such practice works to standards, ensures staff are trained, and works in partnership with others. It is necessary to recognise that isolated, charity based approaches, will not adequately address the issues of street children—or the problems confronting children "at the margins".

14. Just as the street children population itself is fluid and dynamic, so too the social and economic context is continually changing. Projects must be sufficiently flexible to be able to respond appropriately to change. Although street children have existed for decades, a new

threat is the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS, including in many of ADB's developing member countries (DMCs), and particularly the region's two largest countries, the People's Republic of China and India.

15. In parts of the Study, full references to descriptions of street children are not given. Many of the experiences and issues associated with street children are replicated across the region, and reference lists would be either long or cumbersome, or perhaps suggest that some problems or elements only applied in some countries. Where it is the case that some issues seem to be restricted in scope, references are given. A bibliography of materials consulted, by country, is provided as Appendix 2.

16. In looking at the lives of street children from different perspectives, there often appears to be a level of repetition of issues and experiences. Although an attempt has been made in this Study to minimize such repetition, such repetition as does remain provides a potent reminder of the vulnerabilities and risks that all street children face every day, as well as the need for comprehensive systems of protection that take a holistic approach to the realisation of children's rights.

2. WHO ARE STREET CHILDREN?

The problem of definition

17. Although the term "street children" passed into common use in the 1990s, the term has been used to refer to urban centers in Europe as early as the nineteenth century. The meaning and definition of "street children" is contested among academics, policy makers, practitioners, politicians, and the general public. Individuals and groups have their own preferred definition. These different definitions are important for several reasons. For policy makers and practitioners, the meanings given to "street children" defines their response in terms of the law, its implementation, and services provided. The perceptions of street children held by the general public may or may not influence the nature of official policy and professional welfare interventions. But the attitude of the public is important for the nature and success of responses. For example, popular explanations of the causes of children coming onto the street (for example as either victims or criminals), and public reactions to individual children may legitimate some actions taken by authorities, such as the practice in some countries of police relocating or incarcerating street children.

18. The children who are visible on the street, begging, and who may be popularly perceived as the stereotypical street child, who is imagined to be homeless, desolate and separated from parents (or imagined as a devious, hardened little criminal), have far more complex circumstances. Street children may or may not be living with parents and they may or may not be living with or supervised by adults. They may or may not return to some sort of home or shelter most nights. Many are working, often in dangerous or exploitative situations. They may be in conflict with the law. Street children constitute a dynamic population, shifting as opportunities arise, moving in and out of other designated categories of children. They may have been trafficked, escaped to the street, but then may fall prey to even worse circumstances. They may have run away from violence and abuse within the family, begun living on the street, and then be trafficked, or drawn into commercial sex work. They may be economic migrants. The permutations and combinations are numerous and depend on context. Poverty remains a dominant and overbearing characteristic for most street children, although a minority of street children originate from better-off backgrounds as the result of abuse, pressures at home or school, substance abuse, etc.

19. The difficulties of definition lead to debates over numbers. For example, a narrow definition of street children in Mongolia as being those who have no contact with family and live underground, arguably produces a figure of a few hundred children at most. Popular

perceptions, however, extend the definition to include children who are homeless, with or without family, and who work on the street, resulting in a far higher figure, well into the thousands, which represents a major problem given Mongolia's small and highly urbanized population. The problem is simple: it is not possible to quantify street children given the difficulties of definition (discussed below), and given the invisibility of a large part of the street children population, it is only possible to produce estimates to indicate the scale of the problem in the context of a particular country.

20. The problem of applying a standard definition across the vast Asia and Pacific region is exacerbated in two ways. First, there is the difficulty of making equivalencies across different countries and cultures. Second, the overlapping categories currently in use also include children who have had experiences in common with street children, who may have been street children or who may become street children. A broader perspective is necessary to make the term more meaningful, especially when considering the effectiveness of particular interventions.

Homeless, out of school, out of place

21. The term "street children" is in general use across countries with different polities, income levels, economic and social systems, and cultures. There is a tendency to resist the use of the term in developed countries, and replace it with, for example, "runaways" (children who have run away, or left home or residential care) or simply homeless young people. The implicit difference seems to be based on economies and polities, in that children are not expected to be able to find work, nor to be homeless under the age of 16 years in developed countries, because of legislative checks and welfare and police systems. But, this means that children who are separated from adult care, have to beg or become involved in informal or criminal activities and economies (often at risk of becoming invisible to the public) in order to survive—which stigmatises them further. In Australia, a Royal Commission in the early 1990s reported some 20,000 homeless children and young people (increasing to 26,000 in 2001, according to Australia's national census). Yet children who are separated from adult care (including family and residential care), and homeless on the street in developed countries face many of the same problems as those confronted by street children in other parts of the world.

22. Underlying the use of the term is a sense of children being out of place in a particular context: and that context depends upon local concepts of childhood, and particularly expectations of children's development and behaviour. An ideal or stated aim in many countries may be for children to live with parents and attend school, while the reality may be very different. The particular situations of street children results in their not easily being covered by the rights defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Street children generally do not attend school but they do work. They may not be registered or have official identity, they may not receive any public education or health care, they may be harassed by police, have no opportunity for recreation or play, and certainly are not consulted in matters which affect their daily lives.

23. Furthermore, the reality is that street children's lives are more complex than this particular set of negative connotations. Many street children display a wide range of skills, competence, knowledge and resilience in dealing with everyday life. In addition, street children may, for example, be better nourished than their peers who live in poverty in rural areas (see, for example, Baker 1996 on Nepal). This begins to suggest why some children move from their homes into conditions that might be an improvement for their life development only in some respects. Many children have become used to and may prefer their independent lives on the street to their lives at home (particularly in cases of abuse) or alternatives in institutions or foster care. However, in considering these complexities, the question of 'best interests of the child' and a developmental perspective needs to be taken

into account. In some places, for some children, the street may be better than the local institutional care, but this does not mean that either are desirable, and alternatives or improvement in care available is necessary.

24. The conceptualisation of street children as children “out of place” gives rise to a broad spectrum of potential meanings and associations that better express the vulnerable circumstances of street children and the risks to which they are exposed. The breadth of the issue then becomes apparent, and suggests why more specific definitions have been attempted. At the root of the definitional problem is a desire to make an intervention, the aim of which may vary on the part of organizations, projects or individuals, from “saving” children, to realising children’s rights, or to a more punitive attempt to put children back “in place”.

25. The spectrum of meanings is bound up with cultural connotations of what the “place” of children should be. The CRC is clear that children should be with their family, unless it is in their best interests to be elsewhere. Street children “out of place”, may be out of the family. Their family members may have separated themselves from the children, or caused the separation. The children may have been abandoned (as a baby or older child), sold, been trafficked with or without their parents’ collusion, or been sent away to work. Children’s vulnerability to being trafficked may be due to reasons such as poverty, or to violence or abuse in the home. Children may have left their family of their own accord. Again this might be due to violence at home (or at school), to sexual abuse, or because of abject poverty. Children may become economic migrants in their own right, in which case they may send money earned back home. This sample range of issues already includes what are often seen as separate categories of children, such as trafficked children, migrant children, abandoned children, separated children, unaccompanied children, as well as children subject to domestic violence or physical or sexual abuse.

Poverty and work: vulnerability and risk

26. The processes of children’s transition to street work, and the circumstances in which they find themselves afterwards, provide additional categories and problems. As noted earlier, poverty is often a key issue, in that children may be sent out by the family to work as a necessity for family survival. Families living in rural areas may send their children to the city to work, particularly in situations where problems of access to land or environmental degradation compromise family livelihoods. Families as a whole may have migrated to urban areas with their children, or have lived in the city for some time and send children out to work as part of a strategy for family survival. Families may have long depended on the work of children, or may have fallen on hard times due to unemployment, illness or death in the family, or changing welfare economies. Children may leave homes in rural areas as migrants in their own right. All of these children are confronted with the need to work for a living, and many end up working in exploitative and hazardous jobs. Children are trafficked mostly for exploitative purposes, although children sold for (domestic and foreign) family adoption might also come under the category of “trafficked children”– the issues here go beyond exploitation since children may be well-cared for, and instead revolve around ethics, identity, and rights. In trafficking, and in the migration and movement of children in general, the issues of the worst forms of child labor come to the fore, including commercial sexual work and other forms of sexual exploitation.

27. For various reasons street children may be drawn into conflict with the law. Children who experience difficulty in finding work, or who are picked up by adults when they first arrive in cities, are particularly vulnerable. Some children are trafficked for use in illegal activities such as carrying drugs, petty thievery, street crime, or commercial sex work. Many street children are associated in the public mind with crime, and when they become involved with police, are drawn into inadequate (and usually adult, rather than juvenile) justice systems, and are often incarcerated, where they are vulnerable to life-threatening risks. Through

exploitation, children are also at risk of drug or other substance use as well as HIV/AIDS. HIV/AIDS affects children in different ways, including, in 2002, as many as 13.4 million children globally under the age of 15 who have lost one or both parents to the disease (UNICEF 2002). In countries most seriously affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic (e.g., sub-Saharan Africa) extended families or other communal “safety nets” are breaking down, leaving “HIV/AIDS orphans” traumatized, stigmatised, and left to fend for themselves.¹

Children and childhood

28. The definition of a child varies in laws, traditions, and customs across states and cultures with different standards or approaches in many countries of the region. Legislation often complicates definitions, for example by different ages of criminal responsibility (often for different acts), by regulating the ages for different kinds of work, by regulating the age for marriage.

29. For example, in India the census defines persons under the age of fourteen years as a child, but social scientists there include females aged 15-19 in the category “girl children”. Laws in India from 1860 onwards regulate children working in different occupations, joining the army, and marriage (Government of India, 1994). In the People’s Republic of China, the law provides for persons of 18 years and over to be adults, but in certain cases 16-17 year olds who work have “full civil capacity”, while children under 10 years have no civil capacity and must have representatives. The marriage age in the PRC is higher than India: 22 years for “boys” and 20 years for “girls”. There are also variations in work ages (PRC, 1998).

30. A standard international definition of a child comes from the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This denotes children as humans under the age of 18 years, to whom all human rights conventions apply, taking into account the special circumstances regarding age, but emphasizing their humanity and rights, including respect for their person, privacy, and identity. The ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor follows the CRC. “A child includes anyone under the age of 18, with no exception” (Geneva NGO nd).

31. The problems of definition are not limited to identifying the particular locations of “street children” which necessarily include places other than the street given that children may spend time at home, in slums, in back alleys, or in brothels. There is also the assumption that “children” are a homogenous category (see James and Prout, 1990). Street children, as children, comprise a range of ages, gender, (dis)abilities, ethnicities, classes and personal backgrounds and circumstances. Individual characteristics also must be set in the context of particular countries, cultures and locations, as well as risks, opportunities, social systems, access to service provision, etc.

32. Children are not passive vessels, but have effect on and influence other people in their surroundings—they are “social actors” (James and Prout, 1990). The research work and findings that have developed into what some called a “new sociological paradigm on childhood” provides reinforcement for the rights-based principles laid out in the CRC. The lack of homogeneity within childhood emphasises the need for non-discriminatory and inclusive approaches in programming. The notion of children as “social actors” demonstrates how children have influence on family relationships from birth, as well as how they gradually

¹ Stephen Lewis, the United Nations Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa recently presented a report on the crisis in the Southern African Countries of Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Zambia. Mr. Lewis reports that recent drought in southern Africa has exacerbated the crisis, with millions of people dying. Lewis calls the lack of effort to help “a crime against humanity”. The report says that what is lacking in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Africa is money. And that makes it a form of “mass murder by complacency”. As a result of the pandemic, the number of HIV/AIDS orphans living on the street is growing. And they are targets of sexual abuse, thus feeding the pandemic. The same situation could well face several countries in Asia and Pacific region. CBC News, “Lewis calls African AIDS crisis “mass murder by complacency,” 8 January 2003.

come to make decisions and take action in their own right. This notion, now widely accepted, underpins children's right to participation. The notion further emphasises children's competence in this area, well illustrated by the skills and the necessary daily decision making of street children. Overall, research and work in the area of childhood over the past fifteen years have exposed the problems created by the use of narrow categories to encompass children's lives. The term "street children" provides a significant example in this debate.

Alternative terms or definitions

33. Attempts have been made to identify alternate terms or definitions, with researchers and projects often identifying a range of children perceived to fall within the category "street children" in any particular context. This usually has resulted in the use of key subcategories. Principal distinctions are made between those children who are separated from family, who are homeless, or for whom the street is a place for living "24/7", and those who are not separated from their families or caregivers and who retain some contact with family or relatives. However, the complexities of even such a simple distinction rapidly emerge. Although children are separated from family it does not mean they are alone—they may be living in groups or gangs, they may be controlled or exploited by adults (or older children, such as the *bong tom* or "big brother" gangs in Cambodia), or live with adults who are not family members. Other terms also express this divide, such as "separated children" and "unaccompanied children", but these terms are used mostly in reference to particular circumstances such as natural or man-made disasters, civil conflict or war, or the movement of refugees.

34. For example, a typology was adopted in Ho Chi Minh City in Viet Nam, whereas street children projects in Mongolia have used a tripartite set of subcategories. Once established, these categorizations tend to become accepted formulations that are unquestioned, and often tend to restrict any new analysis or assessment.

35. The Mongolian and Viet Nam typologies continue to be used in different projects years after their introduction, although some analysts have expressed concern that they no longer apply to country circumstances. And because the question of definition is linked to aspects of service provision, definitional issues continue to be raised (although, it should be noted, with minimal impact on the ever-increasing number of street children throughout the Asia and Pacific region). Furthermore, although definitions or categories are adopted, it does not mean that they are used. In the People's Republic of China, for example, the official definition of a street child is "a person under eighteen who has left his/her family or guardian and lives a vagabond life for more that 24 hours without reliable safeguard for basic survival with the result of falling into dire straits" (Lauter 1998). There are now over 100 Street Children Protection Centers in PRC, but many do take custody of children who do not strictly fall within the definition, such as child flower sellers who are not necessarily separated from a parent or guardian.

Definitions or categorizations of “street children”

In 1994 the National Children’s Committee in **Mongolia** organised a national conference on street children, involving representatives from Parliament, the Ministry of Science and Education, Juvenile Police Department, Juvenile Prison, the *Aimag* Centers for Children, as well as UNICEF and Save the Children UK. The conference adopted three categories of street children:

- children who work on the streets during the day, but who maintain links with the family and who usually return to their homes in the evening;
- children who have some contact with their families, but who spend most of their time on the streets, especially during warm seasons;
- children who have lost contact with their families and live permanently on the street.

Accounts of street children in Mongolia, and especially by the external press, generally focus on children in the last category. These are the children who live or sleep underground, in tunnels and access points to urban heating systems (“manholes”), or in the entrances and basements of apartment buildings or other shelters due to Mongolia’s harsh climate. The health of such children is obviously at risk, given the lack of sanitation and access to water, as well as generally poor diets. Reports indicate that “There is a high risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases” or “the children survive through marginal and illegal activities, stealing, begging, prostitution and doing odd jobs, and face violence, abuse and aggression from the police, from drunks” and also from their peers. The perception of the general public in Mongolia, however, would include all three categories as “street children”. (West and Tungalag 2002, Save the Children UK, 2002.)

In **Viet Nam** a notion of “real street children” pervades both academic and informal definitions or categorizations. In Ho Chi Minh City, the work of Tim Bond in the early 1990s, and the tripartite categorisation of street children that he devised, had enormous and lasting influence. The classification scheme is as follows:

- Category A: children who have left home and family, or have no home or family, and who sleep on the street;
- Category B: children who sleep on the street with their family or guardian;
- Category C: children who have a family or guardian and (generally) sleep at home.

These categories appear to have influenced most subsequent work in Viet Nam, including service provision, which often focuses on or otherwise targets one particular category of children.

Commonly, the children in category A are seen as “real” street children, reinforcing popular notions of street children as victims “rather than as competent social actors, vulnerable but not passive”. (West, 2000b.)

In **Uzbekistan**, four different categorizations are employed:

- straight-forward orphans who have never been in the custody of the state;
- residents of children’s homes who only return to such shelters to sleep;
- children living with parents or close relatives, but who often lead anti-social lifestyles;
- children with relatives, but who have run away from home because of poverty or cruel treatment (from villages or towns in the regions) and also children who have escaped from children’s homes (Tahlil 2002: 15).

Changes for children

36. Change is inherent to the lives of street children, and it thus is essential that the street children population be seen as dynamic rather than static. As already noted, street children

do not consist of a homogeneous group, and come onto the street for a variety of reasons, and in response to varied and changing social conditions, and face different sets of circumstances. If they survive to become youth or young adults, they necessarily stop being classified as street children. Yet the numbers of street children generally do not decrease. The children who grow up are replaced by others, which suggests that in addition to circumstances that bring children to the streets, there also are formal and informal social structures and enterprises which need children, for example as cheap or compliant labor. Also, either because of necessity or lack of other opportunities, children also need the jobs and escape routes provided by life on the street. Street children themselves form relationships, or simply have babies—children born on the street to children.

37. Other attempts at generic terms have included “street and working children” and “children in street situations”. Such terms suggest the variety and problems of vulnerability and risk of exploitation. While the problem should not be perceived as the children themselves but rather the situations in which they find themselves, such replacement terms tend to focus on the circumstances of children now, with insufficient attention to the reasons or causes that brought them to the street in the first place, including the trafficking or sale of children. The notion of “floating children”—which is the literal meaning of “street children” in some countries—is both descriptive and useful. But the phrase “floating children” belies the coercion experienced by many children, or the “exceptionally difficult circumstances” in which they find themselves, including dangerous or exploitative working situations. What emerges, then, is a set of issues associated with the term street children, including abandonment, migration, trafficking, abuse, exploitation, HIV/AIDS, becoming orphans, conflict with the law, and lack of access to education, health, recreation or other services and opportunities that should be the right of every child. The contextualization of this range of issues is key to determining appropriate responses to the ever-growing number of children on the streets of urban centers throughout the region.

Street Children

38. As outlined above, street children is not a useful category in itself, because it is impossible to clearly define. Even if the category is restricted to homeless children separated from family, it still opens up difficulties in defining “homelessness” or “separation” from family. To be homeless might include staying in insecure accommodation with others; separation from family might mean physical separation while maintaining familial contact and possibly remitting money. Despite such shortcomings, the categorisation or term “street children” remains in everyday use by the public, the media and by professionals and project staff who deal with street children (or “street kids”).

39. In this paper “street children” will be used as shorthand for children who might transit to the street, children on the street, or children who previously lived on the street, with the street suggesting a variety of places and occupations, including beggar, rubbish picker, shoe-shine boy or flower seller, sweat shop worker, sex worker, petty criminal, etc. For many street children the street itself is but a fragment of their survival, including the process of growing up, developing, and hopefully moving on.

40. While definition will remain a problem, it is more important to focus on the issues faced and problems experienced by these children, of gaining a better understanding of their lives, those who are “out of place”, those living and working on the streets, often without any contact with family. The underlying issue, then, is the thousands, if not millions of children who are denied their basic rights, and who are vulnerable to and at risk of damaged childhoods, including exploitation and abuse. Another key concern is being able to reach out to those children who are at risk on the street, but who cannot be realistically separated off through service delivery or other interventions, including both child protection and child participation.

41. A framework for intervention approaches may be drawn from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as the international standard for children's lives. To make use of the CRC some understanding of the issues and experiences of street children is necessary. A general overview of street children's issues is given below, followed by a short regional survey. In planning interventions, general principles can be drawn from the CRC but the articulation of those principles ultimately requires more detailed analysis of the circumstances of particular children in particular contexts.

3. AT THE MARGINS—DAILY LIFE, ISSUES AND CAUSES

42. Although this Study was not intended to provide a country-by-country description of the situation of street children, some indication of regional variation is given in the following section. An important factor in the lives of many street children, as well as in designing appropriate or effective intervention measures, is the increasing interconnectedness of various problems across the region. Inter-country trafficking (of humans and drugs), civil conflict, the movement of refugees, and economic or other migration are changing the circumstances, lives and futures of street children. Processes of prevention interventions and resettlement and reintegration are needed which have some similarities for children in a variety of circumstances—the commonality is vulnerability and risk.

Daily Life

43. Street children are most evident in large cities, where they work in occupations that bring them into contact with the public, both the local population as well as foreign tourists. The range of work includes begging, collecting rubbish for recycling, scavenging rubbish dumps, shoe-shining, flower or magazine and newspaper sales, sex work (prostitution), or the less visible petty theft. In some of these occupations children work alone, although they frequently are under the control of adults, older street children, or gangs, and with or without knowledge of their parents (if they indeed remain in contact with their families). Many working children may be under coercion to deliver a certain amount of money each day. The adults in control of these children generally are careful not to be visible to the public.

44. Children do work openly with some adults in some places, for example with their families in food processing and selling, or as market porters. Solitary working makes children especially vulnerable to exploitation by adults, including kidnapping and trafficking, or being drawn or forced into criminal activities or commercial sex work.

45. There are also occupations invisible to the general public, such as work in factories or sweatshops, serving as drug couriers, or work in brothels or other forms of sex work. Some of these children may not have come directly to the street, but have followed paths and processes taken by other street children.

46. Street children come into conflict with the law in many ways. Some children are trafficked or otherwise coerced into involvement in illegal activities, from bag snatching and petty theft to drug or weapons smuggling. Children may steal food or clothes for themselves. Many children are controlled by criminal gangs. Street children are often stigmatised by police and the public, who believe they are doing something wrong even if they are playing. Children are not always taken into justice systems when in conflict with the law, but may be dealt with "informally" when they are perceived to have behaved wrongly. Street children may be beaten by police, shopkeepers or other adults, reinforcing the too-ready perception of street children as criminals. Children also report having to bribe authorities, including police, and often are subject to harassment by police including beatings, abuse and other violence, including sexual violation.

47. During either day or night children may be bullied by other children, or by adults. Children often report a lack of place or space to play, including being moved from parks or other public spaces by police or security guards. Children on the street also are exposed to other risks, including substance abuse (chiefly glue sniffing or solvents, amphetamine type substances, and opiates).

Rural

48. While street children are generally seen as an urban phenomenon, rural “street children” exist, that is children who are unaccompanied and living and working outside of cities but not in agriculture-related activities. Such work includes the transport of goods, particularly across borders. Also, as HIV/AIDS spreads in rural locations, increasing numbers of children whose parents have died become destitute, especially as family land or other possessions have already been sold for medical care, or have been seized by adult extended family members or other adults. Such children are left with no means of support and may not know how to, or completely lack the means to migrate to urban centers.

Movement

49. An important element in the lives of many street children is movement from home to street, rural to urban, rural to border, across borders and so on. Such movements can be attributed to a number of reasons or causes, such as kidnapping or trafficking, parents’ migration, abandonment, flight from civil conflict, self-migration, running away, or being sent away to work. In addition, the actions of parents, family, school or problems in the local community also are major causes of movement and separation from family. Once on the move, and especially in unfamiliar circumstances where they are not under the care or protection of parents or other adults, children are particularly vulnerable. For example, children who come onto the streets may be lured into brothels. Agents seeking child laborers go to railway and bus stations to pick up new arrivals. Many children who are en route to the street are taken instead into work and so may fall into different, but no less hazardous circumstances. There are also children who escape from traffickers and end up on the streets in cities far away from home.

Causes

50. The origins of the street children phenomenon are many, and the direct causes are varied. Any of the processes of children becoming separated from family may result in children living and working on the street at some point, perhaps via some other activity, and even then moving on to other places such as a brothel or sweat shop. Adults are often involved in children’s separation from home, sometimes directly in collusion with parents, more often by kidnapers or traffickers. Often traffickers are known to children and families involved, although in countries such as Cambodia NGO-led anti-trafficking campaigns and child rights training for both children, adults, and community leaders has made villagers more aware of the techniques and scams used by traffickers.

Poverty

51. The reasons for children coming onto the street include poverty, family abuse and experience of violence, poor parenting skills, as well as circumstances such as war or natural disasters. Poverty is a major context for the increase in the numbers of street children. Poverty may in turn have been caused by other factors, such as flood, drought, earthquake, and lack of state or other support in recovery efforts. Poverty also is caused by the shortage or loss of land, economic downturns, the closure of industries in transitional economies and the use of unemployment as a means of stabilising economies. Along with poverty, economic inequality has been shown to have a major impact on family health, and to

exacerbate family stresses, which often are manifested in domestic violence. Inequality also results in migration in search of opportunity believed to exist in urban areas inside or outside original countries of residence.

52. Outcomes of poverty include parents selling or abandoning children. Children who are sold tend to be very young, while abandoned children usually are infants, particularly disabled children. In some countries more female babies are abandoned (for example, in PRC and India because of son preference); in others (such as Cambodia) male infants are more frequently abandoned. But children as old as 12–14 years have been reported abandoned in cities, particularly in situations where families have too many children, and too many mouths to feed. Many abandoned children also come from families affected by HIV/AIDS, or are HIV positive themselves.

53. More widespread is families' need to send children to work, either to supplement family income or to reduce family size. Children may go to work daily and return home to live with parents at night, or be sent away to work by parents, or go off to seek work by themselves. Families in urban locations may live in squatter camps, shanty towns, stay with friends or relatives, or "sleep rough"—that is, the entire family may be homeless and live on the street. Children from such families may go to work locally on the street, with parents or separately, in various occupations. The work available may include factories in addition to scavenging or rubbish picking. Often the more remunerative the work, the greater the health and safety hazards, or the poorer the working conditions.

Discrimination

54. Discrimination also can force children to the streets. In many places communities have shunned the children of parents taken into prison, for example for the murder of a spouse. Without any state support, children are left to their own devices and move to the streets. In the People's Republic of China, this problem has led to the formation of a local NGO for the children of prisoners (see Anon 1999, Anon 2002). The stigmatization of parents living with HIV/AIDS, and their children, may cause problems for those children, particularly when their parents become ill and die. Other issues specific to certain countries include the acid burning of the faces of young women in Bangladesh if they refuse the advances of certain men. Such women, who are seen as unmarriageable, may be abandoned by their families. Discrimination against girls and young women in all situations is an important factor in the lives of female street children, particularly in South Asia, but by no means limited to that region alone.

Domestic violence and abuse

55. The reasons for children's self-migration, or running away, often revolve around parents, family, or other members of the community. Domestic violence, physical abuse, sexual abuse and exploitation, all create conditions whereby children decide to leave home.

56. Problems of violence in families may stem from family histories and experiences, as well as the consequences of poverty. Factors include reconstituted families in certain situations, where step-parents reject or do not want step-sons or step-daughters. The reconstitution of families also may lead to the abandonment of children, for example, where a mother (or father) remarries and does not take their children to the new household, at the behest of the new spouse. A woman may then become step-mother to her husband's child, and act violently towards the child, especially if she has a new baby of her own (step-mothers seem to be demonised in many places, including in folk-tales across cultures). But domestic violence is not limited to poor families only, with the children of better off families also choosing to escape and leave home.

School

57. Pressure and violence at school also causes children to run away. Children can be subject to bullying or violence from teachers or other children. Children may face enormous school pressures, including both the quantity of schoolwork and anxieties about doing well, particularly in cultures where a high premium is placed on educational achievement. In many places, although public school tuition is free, other school fees are levied or children are required to buy uniforms and school materials, which poorer families can find prohibitive and which thus keeps some children away from school. In addition to being denied an education, this increases their vulnerability to be used as cheap labor, or to be sent away from the family to work.

Drugs

58. The increased availability of a variety of drugs, particularly amphetamine type substances, is resulting in new categories of street children in parts of Asia. Drug use and dependence, and theft or other criminal activities to support such dependence, is causing some children from better off families to be thrown out of home. Glue or solvent sniffing, which causes permanent brain damage, also is common in some countries as a cheap and readily available means to escape personal problems or to diminish hunger.

Armed conflict, natural disasters

59. In parts of the region children end up on the streets as a direct consequence of conflict, either the conflict itself or in its aftermath, when families are separated, there are mass movements of people, and an absence of civil order. Afghanistan was a notable case in 2002, but such conflict is widespread in the region, for example, Indonesia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Tajikistan. Natural (or human-made) disasters also contribute to the numbers of street children, either directly, or as a consequence of deepening poverty.

Survival

60. In many circumstances, children are adept at analysing their situation and making decisions for their own benefit. These include daily decisions on coping or survival techniques, as well as general assessments of their own best interests. Children may be living in abusive or otherwise unsuitable residential homes/shelters, but find aspects of support or other service provision to be beneficial and on that basis may choose not to move onto, or back to the street. Some children prefer their independence, including the freedom to make their own decisions and have control over their lives. Children who have had difficulty with schooling may prefer not to continue with formal education. Others may choose to escape situations of family poverty when they can get more food on the street; or more freedom to play video games or go to the cinema when they somehow have earned or scrounged enough money.

61. The highly structured lives of children in some countries, where most of the week is taken up with schooling, stands in complete contrast to the lives of street children. While some street children express concern about their long-term futures, most see this being largely beyond their control. Many street children thus live fully for the moment. Although such behavior carries its own set of risks (e.g., in terms of substance abuse or reproductive health), it also serves as a kind of psycho-social coping mechanism.

All Children

62. Although street children primarily are associated with backgrounds of family poverty, it is to be emphasised that all children—whatever nationality, family situation, or socio-economic

class—potentially are vulnerable. Domestic violence and abuse is not limited to poor families, while school-related pressures may be more prevalent among children from better off families with higher expectations. This phenomenon is seen mostly in more developed countries, such as Japan and Singapore where school pressures contribute to a high adolescent suicide rate

Issues

63. Some of the major issues connected with street children are outlined briefly below. All of these issues impinge upon the lives of street children as a whole, either as causes of children's transit to the street, or the result of children being on the street. Each street child has his or her own experiences which contributes to their current circumstances, but which are likely to include some, if not many, of the following issues or problems.

64. The link between street children is more than the street itself. In looking at causes or reasons why children come to life on the street, the various processes at work mean that while some are trafficked, some migrate, some run away, a similar experience may not lead to the same outcome. Some trafficked children end up on the street, and others in brothels. Outcomes are also not the same, since whether or not children can be reintegrated into their families and communities depends upon their reasons for initially separating from home as well as their experiences on the street, or their options for something other than life on the street. The patterns and potentials vary considerably across the Asia and Pacific region.

Forced separation

65. This includes sale, abduction and kidnapping of children; child abandonment also can be included under this heading. Children who are alone on the street are vulnerable to abduction. Children who are abandoned by parents, depending on their ages, and where they are left, may well end up on the street. Children also are separated from family in situations of armed conflict, as the result of mass movements of people and lack of civic order. Many of ADB's developing member countries have experienced conflict over the past decade, to the point that many countries are struggling to rebuild before launching on a path of sustainable development.

Trafficking -in-country and across borders—for sex and other work

66. The links between trafficking and street children have been noted. Trafficking includes persuasion or tricking of the families of children and young people (particularly young women)—or children and young people themselves—to leave their homes, usually with an older person, and generally on promises of money, jewellery, or employment. The trafficked children or youth may or may not go with their parent's knowledge or connivance. The trafficker may be male or female, local and known to the children and their family, or complete strangers. Typically children and young people find themselves passed on by their traffickers into exploitative circumstances, including brothels or sale to rich men who abuse them for a while and then sell them on to commercial sex work. The high premium placed on sex with a virgin, combined with associated folk beliefs (of prosperity, disease prevention and remedy), contributes to the market for trafficked children and young women. Conversely, for many girls and young women, the loss of their virginity as the result of abuse or rape is so great a diminution that it causes them to become careless of life, with their feelings of worthlessness leaving them vulnerable to further exploitation. It is such vulnerability that also poses a threat for street children, in that some impoverished adults living with HIV/AIDS are reported to seek out even more powerless people, such as children, with whom to have cheap and often unprotected sex.

67. Young women increasingly are sold into marriage, an increasing problem due to skewed sex ratios in countries such as the People's Republic of China and India. Children of both sexes are trafficked for use in criminal activities, such as street theft, or other street work such as begging or flower selling. Children thus may be separated from, abandoned by, or run away from adult caregivers, to be trafficked as routes to becoming street children working and/or living on the street.

68. The destination of trafficked children and young people may be within their country or in other countries, depending on the location of demand and the traffickers' connections. Children from Asia and the Pacific as well as Africa are trafficked to both North America and to Western Europe, for example to work in the sex trade or domestic service (Tremlett and Hopkins 2002). Children also are trafficked within the region and within country. In large countries such as the PRC, the distances covered may be enormous, or only to an adjacent province. In some other countries cross-border trafficking is comparable in scale to a move within a Chinese province.

69. The borders in much of the Asia and Pacific region are porous, not least due to the fact that many ethnic minorities straddle international boundaries. The trafficking of children from Viet Nam into Cambodia, from Cambodia into Thailand, from Myanmar into the PRC and so on, is well known, but there are also instances of Bangladeshi children taken into Thailand, and Chinese children taken to Malaysia and Thailand. While much of this trafficking is for work in the sex industry, some children are trafficked for commercial begging groups, although these may be younger and destined to later move into sex work. Many of the foreign street children have been trafficked. Trafficked children find it particularly difficult to escape, often not knowing exactly where they are, may face language barriers, as well as having particular fear of the police or other authorities.

Migration – in-country and across borders

70. Although migrants are more conventionally thought of as adults, or families, many street children are themselves lone migrants. Children may migrate to cities on their own volition to seek work, or escape poor family relationships, or may be sent by parents to find work. In many cases they will regularly remit money home. In other circumstances children (or their "controllers") provide money for parents at the end of a period of work (and after the controllers have taken their cut).

71. Migration occurs within countries and across country borders. The shift within countries is largely rural to urban, and toward more prosperous areas. Children's patterns of migration are less researched, and may be over shorter distances, at least initially. Movements across borders also generally aim towards more economically developed countries. Problems with migration include no guarantee of being able to find work or survive, and vulnerability to exploitation. Children living on border areas, such as the Cambodian-Thailand border, are especially susceptible to migration work, being attractive to employers for transporting (or smuggling) goods across the border.

Difference and discrimination

72. Perceived differences among children—of gender, ethnicity, disability, caste, etc.—can impact on their experiences and circumstances as street children.

Gender

73. A preponderance of street children across the Asia and Pacific region are boys. The immediate dangers to girls, of sex abuse from the public, from the authorities, as well as

other street children are well known. In some places street girls keep their hair short in attempts at disguise (for example, IHT 2003).²

74. In some places girls face additional problems concerning their future, for example, the difficulty of making a decent marriage without the sponsorship or protection of a male relative. In many countries in the region, girls who have been raped or involved in the sex industry face stigmatisation and discrimination, although in other countries this is less of a problem. In Cambodia and Northern Thailand, for example, while it is known that girls who migrate to the cities often end up involved in some form of commercial sex work, it is euphemistically said that they “work in a factory”. Again, migration from home often involves issues of marriage, as well as self-identity, self-worth, self-esteem as well as having to cope with often traumatic experiences.

Ethnicity

75. Discrimination against various ethnic groups is rife in some countries. The victimized group in question varies according to locality. Where an ethnic distinction is obvious, then street children face additional problems: for example, the children from Xinjiang in other parts of the PRC, Vietnamese children in Cambodia, etc.

Disability

76. Many street children in the region are disabled, and a large number work as beggars. Some, it is said, have been deliberately mutilated by adults in order to earn more money. Disabled children often are abandoned at birth. Some of the disabilities particularly stigmatized, such as harelip/cleft palate, can easily be corrected through surgery, but also are the subject of belief systems that require purification of both mother and family, sometimes resulting in infanticide and maternal suicide or ostracization and abandonment. Many disabled children face discrimination within their own cultures and society, where they are not valued.

Caste

77. Although officially abolished in South Asia, caste remains an important influence, and a key basis for discrimination. A high proportion of street children in India is reported to be of the Dalit or “untouchable” caste (HRWA 2000).

Age

78. Street children are of widely different ages, and may live in groups. Hierarchies exist on the streets, with older and bigger children both taking care of, and bullying younger and smaller children, including extortion of money or clothes. Some street children spend all they earn in a day in order that nothing is left to be taken from them by other children—or by street adults. Other adults (which in some places may include police or other authorities) also may demand “protection money”.

79. Although the length of time children spend on the streets may increase their survival skills, extended street life likely will result in significant alienation from conventional social life. This makes it difficult for street children to successfully reintegrate into community life, including entry into shelters or daycenter projects as a way out of the streets.

² International Herald Tribune, “In Iran, runaway girls dodge abuse by dressing as boys”, 20 February 2003, p.1 and p.4. “[I]t is a growing phenomenon mainly among lower-class runaways who believe the disguise gives them a freedom and protection they could not enjoy as girls. Posing as boys on the streets makes it easier to avoid rape and falling victim to prostitution rings.

Justice system

80. Conversely street children also face the risk of institutionalisation, by being placed in prisons or detention centers or other forms of incarceration, which may further compromise the likelihood of their later being reintegrated into community life. The justice system and incarceration may be used inappropriately to remove children from the streets. Few countries in the region have adequate systems of juvenile justice. In many countries, street children report that police harassment is the major problem in their lives.

Alternative care

81. It is not only incarceration within the “justice” system that results in institutionalization. Some shelters, especially institutions catering to large numbers of street children, develop institutional practices that are detrimental to children’s future well-being. Such practices include bulk-purchase of poor quality food, uniformity in service provision, lack of children’s participation, and insufficient acknowledgement or respect for children’s identities and individuality. When children who have long been institutionalised move onto adulthood and face the withdrawal of support, they frequently find it difficult to adjust to independent life and decision-making. Many thus will drift into other institutions, such as the armed services. Although there is little firm data, it appears that prison populations have a large number of ex-street children.

Exploitation - Work and sex

82. The need for street children to make a living makes them vulnerable to hazardous and/or exploitative labor situations. Many established businesses in both the formal and informal sectors are dependent on children as a source of cheap labor.

83. There is an apparently insatiable demand for child sex workers of both sexes. Children may be engaged in brothel-based commercial sex work, or by street-based encounters with both local and foreign men. Some countries, including Cambodia, Thailand, and Sri Lanka have become well known “sex tourism” destinations, drawing, paedophiles and pimps, as well as street children who may resort to commercial sex work.

84. Problems include early sexualization, in addition to reproductive health issues and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. Street children are particularly vulnerable to rape, and to unprotected sex.

85. The issue of children exploited through various forms of work arises in all parts of the region and needs to be seen as, and linked to, the general question of ‘child labor’. The extent of such work emerged through a major study by the International Labor Organisation (ILO 2002a). Of the 352 million children aged 5-17 years engaged in economic activity, ‘The report found that 246 million children—one in every six children aged 5 to 17—are involved in child labour’ (ILO 2002b)—meaning the type of labour which should be abolished. This work includes ‘work performed by a children under the minimum age specified for a particular kind of work by national legislation or other standards; hazardous work that jeopardizes the physical, mental or moral well-being of a child...; unconditional worst forms of child labor as defined in the ILO Convention 182 (ILO 2002b). Much of the work undertaken by street children falls under the purview of the ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor, which specifies trafficking and sex work. Much of street children’s lives is structured around work, and shifting to different means of survival or opportunity. Much of the work available is controlled by criminal gangs, and children do not have a choice.

Identity and participation

86. A key issue for street children is their exclusion from much of everyday social life. In addition to scavenging for food at restaurants, they also are chased away from shops and restaurants by both owners and customers. Street children rarely are treated with any respect, and their views and opinions are seldom taken into consideration by anyone.

87. Street children are further excluded in that they are unlikely to possess identity cards or other forms of identification, including birth registration. This may be due to parents selling or pawning their children's identity materials, parents not registering their children, or registration processes not being readily available. In some countries, infants are not registered at birth due to customary belief and high infant mortality rates. When children migrate, with or without parents, and even within country, what identity papers they may possess may not be valid.

88. The lack of identity papers prevents street children from gaining access to education and health services that might otherwise be free, or result in them having to pay higher charges. Lack of identity, a key precept of the CRC, also can prevent street children from subsequently registering the birth of their own children.

Education

89. Street children generally lack access to public education services. In *some* urban areas, children who do not need to work, but who have been in conflict with the law, are excluded from schools as they are seen as a potential bad influence on their peers. These children spend their days on the street.

90. Other children are unable to go to school because of the need to work, because of discrimination, and because of costs. In some places it is believed that girl children do not need an education, or that boys are better off working. While school tuition is supposedly free in most countries in Asia and the Pacific, other school fees or charges that are levied make it impossible for poor children to attend school. A further problem is that traditional, rote methods of teaching often do not encourage children, and the content of classes is not seen to be useful by either children or their parents.

Health

91. Street children cannot afford most health services and thus treat themselves for any ailments and injuries. Even where there are supposedly "free" hospitals and health services, their socially marginalized positions means they may not be treated. Some preventable health problems may be missed through not having access to proper diagnosis and treatment. Many street children suffer chronic diseases, including typhoid, tuberculosis, jaundice, liver and kidney disorders, and malaria. Other reported health problems include scabies, epilepsy, and broken limbs. Many street children also suffer the effects of substance abuse, particularly when using drugs of unknown quality. Sexually transmitted diseases are prevalent amongst older street children, with increasing numbers of street children now living with HIV/AIDS.

Different sides of street life

92. As already indicated, the experience of life on the street can have profoundly negative effects, such as the already noted social exclusion, harassment, violence and exploitation. Street children are exposed to drug and substance abuse, premature sexual relationships (willingly, or through coercion), and poor health, including an increased risk of contracting HIV/AIDS.

93. While it is easy to enumerate along list of problems experienced by children on the street, many street children choose not to move from the streets, and see their lives as satisfactory, and their overall environment as beneficial – especially when compared to their earlier circumstances (e.g., domestic violence). It is crucial that these perspectives are taken into account when designing interventions that are meant to help or “rescue” street children.

94. Despite the inherent dangers, many children find life on the street to be liberating. For some, it provides the possibility to earn money, eat reasonably well, consume mind-altering substances, enjoy a sex life, watch films, or play video games. For some street children, the problems of life on the street may become apparent only when they grow older and their perspectives on life, and wishes for the future, change. The notion of street children being “out of place” thus may primarily be a perception held by adults. Much depends on individual experience.

95. Street children who are “successful” have learned and practice a wide range of coping skills, which in other most other social contexts would be recognized as highly desirable. For example, abilities to negotiate difficult situations, to bargain, to assert themselves are attributes that might suit many small enterprises. Many street children thus might thus be better perceived as small entrepreneurs. The problem for these children is connected with the transitory nature of much life on the street, and their inability to gain an education or other work skills or qualifications that will take them off the streets. Street children who do not readily acquire “street smarts” have a particularly difficult time, and are unlikely to survive the streets.

4. STREET CHILDREN ACROSS THE REGION

96. Although the geography, economies and governance systems within the Asia and Pacific region are diverse, the circumstances and experiences of street children across the region are quite similar. This is reinforced to an extent by the interconnections of countries through trafficking and migration of children, criminal and drug connections, and through sex tourism and paedophilia—that is, the impact of adults on children.

97. However, the social and structural response to street children and associated issues in particular countries depends upon the national economic, political, and cultural context. Local ideas about childhood and both intra-family and inter-family relationships forms one contextual element, including attitudes towards girl children and sexual violence. Other key contextual elements are systems of governance, resource allocations (which again vary from country to country, including the amount of civil society input into state budgetary processes), as well as the local economic conditions.

98. A crude division of the region on the basis of economic, political, and geographical factors can be made in order to facilitate discussion on welfare provision for street children:

- The transitional economies of Central and Northern Asia;
- The PRC, with its huge population and distinct regions;
- the countries of South Asian that share a common colonial history and legacy of British jurisprudence, law and civil service;
- Southeast Asia;
- the Pacific Island nations; and
- East Asian market areas, including Japan and South Korea.

East and Central Asia

99. In the countries of Central and Northern Asia—including Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan—the presence of street children is a comparatively recent phenomenon that correlates closely with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rapid transition to successor market-based economies: “The fact is that the phenomenon of street children is a new one in Kyrgyztan” (IRIN Bishek 2001). “The main reasons for children to be on the streets [in Bishkek, Kyrgyztan] are alcoholism of parents, poverty, abuse and home violence. Often these children have step-fathers or step-mothers and their attitude pushes children to leave home” (Anon nd). A report on Uzbekistan similarly summarises the situation:

Uzbekistan, along with most of the other countries of the former Soviet Union, has experienced an increase in the number of street children. Street children are subject to the everyday risk of being abused, and experience violence at the hands of both adults and their peers. Many of them do not have timely access to qualified medical services. Their major concern, though, is the day-to-day struggle to make a living. It is very common for these children to be involved in criminal activities because they do not have any other means of earning money (Tahlil 2002: 15).

100. In many of the countries of East and Central Asia street children appear as a new category because of their increased numbers. Recent awareness of the problem of street children, however, occurs in a context where children who work has been a long-established practice. Problems include the absence of welfare support systems for families and children in the new economies, and the emphasis on the “market” that has had governments struggling to design and implement new provisions in a climate that is dismantling rather than developing or improving state services. In **Tajikistan**, for example, “Social and economic reforms in the Republic of Tajikistan are taking place under complex conditions of political instability. Consequently, owing to pressure of the economic development of the transitional period and the implementation of market reforms, the actual means available for state bodies to provide children with the opportunity to obtain the necessary education have diminished” (GRT 1998, para 4). Furthermore, “regrettably the list of children [in difficult circumstances] requiring special attention in the Republic [of Tajikistan] has increased. That category should also include refugee children, children from unemployed families, child victims of armed conflict, child beggars and children left without supervision—and this is not a complete list” (ibid, para 30). The report noted that the category of children in difficult circumstances previously included “orphans, children left without parental care and support, children of asocial families, disabled children and children who have broken the law and need special conditions for their upbringing” (ibid).

101. The case of **Mongolia** is comparatively well known, with increasing numbers of “street and manhole” children over the past decade. Economic changes have resulted in the closure of many industries, high levels of unemployment, and families moving in a downward spiral towards homelessness. Mongolia’s harsh winters force them to take shelter in Ulaanbaator’s underground heating system. At least one child is known to have died due to a burst steam pipe. Increased numbers of children have become separated from parents, or stayed with families and worked on the streets.

102. Mongolia’s economic transition has brought an end to the previous Soviet-style welfare system, but the development of a replacement system still is underway. The government is restricted in its ability to take on more staff, and there are also issues of appropriate social work training. Training courses for social workers have been developed at the State Pedagogical University with the support of an international nongovernment organization (INGO), with the first graduating class in 2001 (Quieta 2002).

103. In response to the large numbers of children appearing on the streets, the government in 1995 called for assistance from international nongovernment organizations. Such organizations continue to operate the bulk of shelters and other street children interventions in Ulaanbaator and in other Mongolian towns, and INGOs have been involved in other work such as supporting the development of social work training courses. As the country continues its “transitional” path a debate has begun over what the state and civil society can do to address the problem of an ever-increasing number of street children.

104. The Mongolian government has provided support of one large center, although some claim that the approach is too institutional. An INGO has worked with the government center to resettle many of the children with their families. With more than twenty NGOs and INGOs involved in street children programming in Mongolia, plus responsible government departments, coordination of work has become an important concern. Another challenge for the Mongolian authorities is effective implementation of the country’s child protection law.

105. Other countries in Central Asia reflect the situation of Mongolia (children in Bishkek, Krygyzstan also live underground due to similar climatic conditions), but have received less international attention. In **Kyrgyzstan** the street children population also includes child victims of armed conflict, whereas in **Tajikistan** and **Uzbekistan** a number of street children left institutionalised children’s homes. In Tajikistan the government’s report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child highlighted how the country’s economic difficulties deepened problems in the running of schools, orphanages and other institutions for children. Although an increase in the numbers of child beggars was noted, the problem has not yet been given government attention. While other state reports to the CRC only briefly mention the increase in the numbers of street children, NGOs and INGOs working in East and Central Asia have documented the situation in more detail.

106. Another category of children, “travelling children”, has been identified in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. These children provide sexual and other services (such as lookouts, guards, or porters) for male traders and travellers on trains. The children manage to cross borders easily enough and become street children at their destination until finding another customer to take them elsewhere. If caught, the children are returned to their “home countries” (depending on what information they provide); after spending a month or so in a detention or reception center, they are back on the streets (see Blackley 1999).

107. **The People’s Republic of China** is regarded by many as a country in economic transition and Chinese officials still speak of the PRC as a developing country. Although economic reform in the People’s Republic of China began in the late 1970s, somewhat earlier than other “transitional economies” in the Asia and Pacific region, the transition process in the PRC has avoided the sudden and wide-sweeping changes experienced by other countries in East and Central Asia.

108. The reappearance of street children in the PRC provoked official concern, and by the mid-1990s the Ministry of Civil Affairs began to create separate Street Children Protection Centers. By 2000, over 100 such centers were in existence across the PRC, mostly operated through municipal level civil affairs bureaux, but some at the provincial level. Beijing’s Street Children Protection Center is operated through the Public Security Bureau (police). The work of these centers focuses on the collection of street children, medical check-ups, and in-center education until the children’s families are located and the children are returned to their parents’ care. Despite such efforts, the numbers of street children have continued to increase. The last official estimate, in 1998, put the national figure at some 200,000, children, based on the numbers of children passing through the state Protection Centers, but not including children in related categories, such as working children with families.

109. Nearly all service provision in the People's Republic of China is operated by government. Beginning in the late 1990s UNICEF provided funding for initiatives in north-east PRC, Shanghai, and Anhui Hefei, and more recently in Henan. Save the Children UK has worked in partnership with the Ministry of Civil Affairs, Centers and Civil Affairs Bureaux in some twenty provinces, helping to establish information networks, and providing seminars and other training. Save the Children also has worked in partnership with Centers and Civil Affairs Bureaux on prevention initiatives, research, the development of best practice in Centers; in encouraging child participation, reintegration, the provision of alternative care for children who cannot return home; as well as related activities. As part of the "socialisation of welfare", the Ministry of Civil Affairs is looking to the possible development of NGOs to support the provision of alternative care, as well as to promote increased participation of children in such operations.

110. Parts of the PRC have been under external control or influence for some time. Hong Kong, for example, has a developed social services system, based on a British model, with qualified and certificated social workers. Nongovernment organizations in Hong Kong continue to play a role in service provision. Youth Outreach, linked to the Catholic church, is a major initiative for street children that includes both a shelter and an outreach program. As in Britain, however, in Hong Kong the problems of street children often tend to fall outside of main provision, coming instead under the category of "homeless young people".

111. The border regions of the People's Republic of China have various links with neighbours to the north, west and south. For example, the peoples of Inner Mongolia province have links with Mongolia. The autonomous region of Xinjiang is home to minority ethnic groups such as Mongolians, Kazaks, Uzbeks and others. The southern provinces of Guangxi and Yunnan have close links with adjacent countries and peoples. The PRC's many neighbours, as well as porous borders and ethnic groups that straddle international borders, has served to promote international migration, including the trafficking of children.

112. As indicated above, state-run institutions are the dominant response in the countries of East and Central Asia. Part of the problem with institutionalisation is that many children continue to spend their days on the street. In addition, children must leave state-run institutions at the age of 16 years, but the "new economies" have yet to offer employment opportunities. Many older street children thus are picked up by police and held in detention centers, replacing one institution with another. In Krygyzstan it is reported that some street children have to bribe militia or other authorities with all their daily earnings in order to retain their freedom (See Tahlil 2002, Anon no date, possibly 1999.)

113. Such problems are common to many countries in the Asia and Pacific region. The expressed aim in many countries (and clearly an unexpressed intention elsewhere) is to clear the cities of street children through police raids or round-ups. Such a response can be understood as the result of the novelty of the phenomenon, lack of knowledge about or attention to workable alternatives, and because the very existence of street children belies a successful market-based transitional process (not that Western industrial countries don't share the problem of "children out of place"). The need to establish social work as a profession and to introduce social work methods has been noted outside Mongolia (for example in Uzbekistan). Although there is an emphasis on returning children home to parents, this has been seen to fail where there is no prior preparation of children and their families nor careful monitoring or follow-up work (something noted in nearly all countries). Increased child prostitution has been observed in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, in addition to other work such as market portering, newspaper selling, and car washing. Parental migration (for example from Kyrgyzstan to Russia) without suitable arrangements for child care or for family reunification, including remission of money back to the child, has become common. There also has been an increase in abandonment of children, because parents simply cannot afford to maintain their offspring. Many children are working to help

supplement family income, and it is reported that some parents force their children to beg. (See Tahlil 2002, Anon no date, GRT 1998, IRIN 2001.) While increased use of alcohol helps to dull emotional pain and associated with feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness, alcohol abuse also contributes to domestic violence.

114. The instability of many families in the transitional economies is part of wholesale changes in social structures, including the lack of welfare provision, the emergence of social and material inequalities, new opportunities to exploit children (for example at work), and the increasing need of children to work, either to help support their families or for their own existence. All of these changes cause and exacerbate the problem of street children in East and Central Asia.

115. In addition, other changes in government provision have exacerbated problems for children. Teachers are chronically underpaid, with many having to take additional jobs in order to survive (a problem not limited to East and Central Asia). In Uzbekistan, there also has been a shift from the Cyrillic to Roman alphabet, begun when teachers were poorly trained, and with an absence of additional literature in Roman for home reading. [As a] result the children are isolated from Uzbek Cyrillic literature and surely from the Russian-language editions. The parents can't help them with the lessons' (Azimova et al 1999: 6, also see Blackley 1999). Inadequate and under-funded education systems, including poorly trained and disinterested teachers, contribute towards children staying out of school. In addition to losing the opportunity or being denied the right to education, such limitations further feed the drift to the street.

116. Such provision as exists for street children (and other categories of children at risk) is predominantly through "humanitarian and charitable funds", for example, boarding schools for orphans in Tajikistan (GRT 1998: 35) and shelters in Mongolia (West and Tungalag 2002). The exceptions are the larger government institutions, which may or may not have been rehabilitated or refurbished from earlier political regimes and which are based on very different perceptions of child welfare. Such institutions tend to perceive and treat children as social deviants, rather than as the product or consequence of changing social mores and economic transition. The limited NGO sector cannot cover all the needs and rights of children—including care shelters, access to education or to vocational training, social counselling, etc. Also, in places where access to education generally is a problem for poor families, there is a tendency for some parents to place their children in NGO shelters as a "preventative" measure so that their children might receive care, clothing and education that they cannot otherwise afford.

117. The uneasy economic and social transition underway in East and Central Asia thus poses great difficulties for children, particularly children at the margins of society.

South Asia

118. South Asia is home to some of the largest concentrations of street children in the world. In South Asia street children have been a distinct social underclass for longer than elsewhere. NGOs also have had more experience in service provision and other interventions targeted to street children, including the establishment of children's organizations and working children's unions. Such organizations are based on the principle of children's participation in personal decision-making, such as voluntary residence in shelters. Practice work has developed beyond the use of shelters towards a focus on working with children wherever they are living, and at times suitable to them, on the street or elsewhere. These approaches have included a structural focus on children's participation, including children's involvement in research, involving children in the operation and management of shelters and other centers, and non-formal education for street children.

Particular attention has been given to the problems of street children taken into justice systems, the roles and attitude of the police, and the issue of girl children and violence.

119. Many countries in South Asia remain influenced by the legacies of British colonialism, particularly with respect to legal codes and bureaucracies and other systems that have pre-independence roots. Nongovernment organizations have been active since the 1920s. Although the northern kingdoms, such as Nepal and Bhutan, have different political backgrounds, overall the historical, political, legal, and economic frameworks of South Asia are quite different from those of East and Central Asia.

120. Poverty again features as the major contributing cause of street children across South Asia, but the extent of poverty is such that it seems to be an accepted or given context. The daily experience of rural poverty and its privations probably is one reason why (rural) children are attracted to city life through the mass media, mainly films. Although poverty is an important reason for children working on the streets of South Asia, it seems that intra-family conflict, abuse, and violence are leading causes for children's separation from family (SKCV 2000a). Some abuse is especially linked to reconstituted families, with reports of children beaten to death when they are forcibly reunited with their families,

121. Children's life on the streets of South Asia is characterised by discrimination and stigma, as well as problems of police harassment. Such harassment extends to illegal detention or being detained on false charges, beatings and torture, and examples where the lawyers of local drug dealers succeed in securing release of children from imprisonment where child rights organizations have failed. A key element of the legal quandary affecting millions of street children appears to be the use of antiquated, pre-independence legislation as the basis for criminalizing children. Such laws simply do not apply to the contemporary context, particularly in view of the CRC.

122. **Afghanistan** occupies a special position in ADB's South Asia Region, region, serving as something of a bridge to East and Central Asia. In Afghanistan, the emergence of large numbers of street children is the consequence of more than two decades of armed conflict rather than the demise of the Soviet Union and economic transition. A preliminary head count in early 2002 recorded more than 37,000 children working and begging on the streets of Kabul. Some 80 per cent of this total were boys, with 36 per cent aged 8-10 years, and over half aged 12-14 years. Nearly one third had begun begging or working on the streets in the previous year. Notably, nearly all the Kabul street children had a place to go at night, and a large number lived with their parent(s). It was reported that 98.5 per cent of the children were sent by their families to the streets to work and beg in order to help the family to survive (material from TdH 2002). Although the current phenomenon of Afghanistan street children derives from the war, before that large numbers of Afghan children came onto the streets as refugees in neighbouring Pakistan. A drop-in center in Quetta found their numbers rapidly increasing after 1999, and reported that in winter the boys were likely to head to Karachi, where a warmer climate would allow them to continue scavenging, since this was their families' only source of income (SCUS, nd). In Karachi, it was reported that Afghan and Bengali immigrants had introduced glue sniffing to Pakistani street children and other children (Dawn 2002).

123. In **Bangladesh** there are a large number of NGOs working in the development and welfare fields, although it has been noted that "unfortunately very few national and international NGOs are active in the field of child rights" (Khair and Khan 2000: 41). In addition, many of the larger NGOs are now well-established and institutionalised, and tend to look to the upper reaches of a hierarchy of poverty. This "specialisation" is important with respect to the development of children's organizations, particularly in both Bangladesh and India. Such organizations emerge from a broader emphasis on children's participation. Since the bulk of agencies looking to the needs of street children in South Asia are NGOs,

there is less emphasis on the placement of children in institutions as elsewhere in the Asia and Pacific region. Voluntary attendance has been emphasised, with the result that services lean towards what children want, or what might benefit them the most, with aspiration of eventually operating such services in partnership with children. What is lacking, however, is linkage to the high incidence of child labor including organization to lobby for better working conditions for children, as well as enhanced protection of their basic rights.

124. **India** is claimed to have as many as 18 million street children, the world's largest concentration. Up to half the country's street children are Dalit, or belong to other scheduled castes or tribes, pointing to deeply ingrained patterns of inequality (HRWA 2000). The context for street children in India is high numbers of working children, estimated by one source to be between 70 and 100 million children (CACLI 2000). Although such figures are disputed, National Sample Surveys estimated the number of working children to be 17 million in 1987, increasing to 20 million by 2000. These figures, however, did not include the "unorganised sector of the economy" such as domestic workers, agricultural workers etc., that, when included, result in the much higher estimates (CACLI 2000). Whatever the total numbers, it is clear that India is home to enormous numbers of street children, as well as millions of child workers, many of whom work in hazardous or exploitative circumstances. Since child labor is illegal in India, millions of Indian child workers become officially non-existent, without faces and without voice. In addition to a violation of the principles of the CRC, their lack of legal status makes them ineligible for worker protection, including compensation for accidents at work (for example, losing a limb). These children are increasingly becoming known as 'nowhere' children—effectively excluded from school (education) and from regulated work (employment), and from relevant statistics (see, for example, Joshi nd, Lakshmi 2002, Kabeer 2002).

125. In **Nepal**, it was estimated in 1996 that there were some 30,000 street children, with fewer than 4,000 living with their families (SCNT nd). Most are said to come from families of poor farmers or agricultural workers, and who have dropped out of school before achieving literacy or numeracy (CWIN, 2002). As elsewhere, police harassment was identified as a major issue. A recent drop in the number of street children in Nepal has been attributed to there being more facilities for street children, linked to an increase in social awareness. However, this reduction seems to depend also on the way in which street children are counted, since the same source points to a worsening of the problem of sexual exploitation with an increase in sex tourism (CWIN, 2002). The complexity of the problem might be observed in a summary of reasons why Nepal has not achieved its target goals for children: "one of the reasons for not attaining the target goals is the conventional approach towards development. Our development planning is generally not child friendly, nor are they rights-based; they are guided by the charity-based approach instead (Pradhan 2002). While many agencies working with street children in Nepal have not yet included children's active involvement in their projects, others have developed "children's clubs" or other groups, including groups looking at issues of violence against girls.

126. In Nepal, as elsewhere, it has been noted that be noted that "the use of violence as a pedagogical tool by family and teachers alike is extremely common" (OMCT 1996). Similarly, police harassment also is identified as a major issue for Nepali street children.

127. As elsewhere in South Asia, street children in **Pakistan** might be seen in the broader context of a large number of working children, conservatively estimated to involve 10 million children under 14 years of age in 1994 (OMCT 1994). Children are said to be engaged in labor in poor and hazardous working conditions that approach "near slavery". Some children in bonded labor abscond to the streets. Other children are trafficked. In 1992 it was estimated that some 20,000 Pakistani children were sent to the Gulf region to be used as camel jockeys. It was reported that children taken into detention were placed with adults, and open to sexual exploitation and to "re-education" by hardened criminals (ibid). In this

context it may not be surprising that in Pakistan “the issue of street children has not been considered important or considerable enough for a check on magnitude to be drawn in this country, therefore numbers are not known” (workshop SC 2002). However, one estimate for Lahore alone suggested 10,000 street children. Given that some 40 per cent of the 14 million population of Karachi live in squatter settlements, it is suggested that the figure for street children in this city could be many times the estimate for Lahore. Causes for street children in Pakistan also included poverty and family violence and conflict. NGOs appear as a major resource in working with the children and undertaking practice-based research of the issue. In 1999 a “non-government initiative” was launched “to protect more than a million street children in Pakistan following the sensational murders of nearly 100 children in Lahore by a serial killer” (Najeeb 1999). A report in 2001 noted that of the more than 10,000 children on the streets of Karachi, a majority of these children were Bengalis and Burmese, with other ethnic groups including Punjabis, Baluchis, and Urdu-speaking children. Nearly 90 per cent used various drugs, with some 65 per cent using solvents (Dawn 2001). The range of national origins, as well as extensive substance abuse, points to the vast differences travelled by some street children, as well as the interconnections across national borders.

128. The development of street and working children’s own organizations, and associations of other groups of children, has been recognised as important characteristic of provision in South Asia, including Bangladesh, India, and Nepal. Such organizations have been successful to the extent that they have been challenged by some religious and political groups apparently opposed to children’s active participation as citizens, despite this being a fundamental element of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The existence of these organizations has had some impact on the development of provision for street children and an emphasis on meeting children’s needs on the street, including children’s empowerment. Many of these organizations have now reached the point that they are looking to mechanisms for organizational sustainability as some of their client group move from adolescence into adulthood.

Mekong and Southeast Asia

Mainland Southeast Asia

129. The countries of mainland Southeast Asia represent a diverse group of countries, not all of which were colonised, but which do share a history of shifting power groups and capital locations. In addition, a number of minority ethnic groups straddle current international borders. Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam all share borders with the People’s Republic of China. All of the countries in sub-region have large numbers of citizens who are ethnically Chinese but whom have intermarried with local populations to varying degrees.

130. An important characteristic of this sub-region is the migration and movement of humans, including the trafficking of children and young women. Rapid change in the economies of Southeast Asia, including the shift towards market economies in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam have produced geographic and other forms of inequality, stimulating migration as well as providing opportunities for traffickers to earn money. These processes of human movement are also played out in-country with migration and trafficking from rural to rapidly growing urban areas. While not all of those trafficked, for example, will become street children, the processes involved are similar for those who do end up on the street. The details of trafficking and other migration continues to be researched (see, for example, Caouette nd, Derks 1997 and 1998a, SCUUK 2001), but it includes children moving from Viet Nam into Cambodia as well as southern PRC (and beyond), from Myanmar to Yunnan (PRC) and Thailand, from Cambodia to Viet Nam and Thailand, etc. Reasons for such movements of people vary, but include both economic migration and large-scale criminal trafficking networks, usually connected with the commercial sex trade. It has been estimated, for example, that some 20,000 children aged 3-16 years from Myanmar currently work in

Thailand as beggars, street sellers, or rubbish pickers, with many older girls (i.e., 12-19 years) working as sex workers (U Soe Soe 2002).

131. Another feature common to the countries of the region is the ever-increasing availability of a wide range of illegal drugs and narcotics, with increasing abuse of such substances by children and young people. Amphetamine type substances (ATS) are common in Cambodia, Thailand, and Viet Nam, with many millions of pills manufactured in factories along the Myanmar-Thailand border. Heroin and other opium-based substances also are available and used, with established drug trafficking networks across the region and beyond. High quality marijuana production also is increasing, particularly in Cambodia.

132. Children's connection with drug use is not just in their own consumption, but also as part of the transport of such substances within countries as well as across borders. Associated problems are not only children's drug dependence and the risk of HIV infection from shared needles or other injectibles, but also that street life can make the use of drugs an attractive recreation and/or escape from hunger and the psycho-social difficulties associated with life on the street. Children's need of money and their comparative powerlessness (both physically and socially) make them vulnerable to coercion, force and exploitation by adults or older children. Street children thus frequently use glue, petrol, or other readily available solvents to provide a temporary escape from their environment. The cycles of living on the street, using drugs, imprisonment for drug use or trafficking, release, return to the street, drug use, and so on, was noted by a project in Thailand (West 2000a). The links between some street children and drugs are one cause of many street children falling foul of the law. The conditions of detention often further alienate children from adults and community life, or introduce them to new forms of criminality. In Thailand in early 2000 a series of riots broke out at youth detention centers over living conditions and treatment of children.

133. Children's and young people's use of drugs also results in some children's movement to the street. Well-off children who develop a drug dependency, and need to fund their habit, may steal from their families, or be thrown out of home as a family disgrace.

134. The context and circumstances of street children in countries in mainland Southeast Asia has some variation, albeit within an environment of large numbers of working children. For example, in Thailand agencies speak of a second generation of street children, while in **Viet Nam** the phenomenon of street children is linked to economic reform (as elsewhere, such as in East and Central Asia). The Thai experience has led some social workers to make a useful distinction between temporary and permanent street children, or those who could return to their families, and those who cannot return because of abuse or other problems. But the notion of "permanent street children" also represents the growing perception that street children are a permanent feature of the urban landscape throughout much of the Asia and Pacific region due to poverty, family problems, and the attraction of greater independence. Some older children in Viet Nam, for example, rent shelter in small groups, funded from their earnings. In Thailand, a variety of NGOs provide shelters and undertake streetwork, using the principle of participation, particularly children's involvement in decision-making. An example of such decision-making is helping children to decide whether they should move from the street to a shelter or other accommodation. In other countries in the sub-region it remains the practice of authorities to collect children and take them to an institution.

135. While there are many commonalities, each country has its own particular circumstances for street children's lives. For example, in **Cambodia** children work picking rubbish on tips, often living with their families who will all depend on scavenging. The economy of rubbish picking is complex, with a hierarchy of status and variety of income opportunities (Gourley, Un, Gray 1997). Cambodia also has an historical context of children

working; during the Khmer Rouge regime, all children over five years of age were required to work (ibid). The depth of poverty in Cambodia has meant that children are vulnerable to trafficking as well as migration to seek work. The country also has been a noted destination for sex tourism, although this problem is receiving increased attention, including prevention awareness raising at the village level, anti-child sex publicity at airports and in hotels, etc. While such efforts have contributed to a wider understanding that sexual exploitation of children is a crime, inadequate legislation and enforcement mechanisms, as well as endemic poverty has meant that child prostitution continues in Cambodia. Recent studies of the tourism sector at Cambodia's Angkor Wat temple complex have shown that in addition to solicitation by both local and foreign men, children also seek sexual relationships for their livelihoods (see Nuon, Yit and Gray 2001).

136. In **Viet Nam** there remains a social, economic and cultural difference between north and south, with a history of street children and widespread drug use in the south that preceded reunification. Since the launching of the *doi moi* economic reform process, the focus on "making money" also has been instrumental in families splitting up. In 1995 it was estimated that there were 50,000 street children in Viet Nam. The government's response to the phenomenon initially focused on existing state institutions established to deal with perceived "deviants" or people out of their geographical place. By the mid-1990s counselling centers were established, by local NGOs, usually with the support of international NGOs. Provision now includes drop in centers and open houses supported by the development of qualifications in and a profession of social work. Children's participation also has gained profile in Viet Nam, allowing children to decide whether to enter a shelter. Towards the end of the 1990s, the interest (and funding) of INGOs appears to have shifted from street children towards child labor issues. This shift well demonstrates both the influence of donor agencies and the difficulty of mounting long-term or sustainable programs to address long-term problems such as that posed by large numbers of street children.

137. Sex tourism, along with HIV/AIDS and gender issues are general problems for street children across Southeast Asia. Increasing numbers of street children are contracting HIV/AIDS in Cambodia, Thailand, and Viet Nam (particularly in the south). "AIDS orphans" have existed in Thailand since the late 1980s, and are increasing, particularly in Cambodia, at an alarming rate. At the end of 2002 Cambodia had the highest per capita rate of people living with HIV/AIDS in all of Asia (although it is predicted that India will soon take over this dubious distinction).

Island Southeast Asia

138. The vast Indonesian archipelago makes up most of island Southeast Asia. Major changes in the sub-region over the past decade, including political instability in Indonesia and the 1999 military campaigns in Timor-Leste and the country's subsequent independence, provide the contemporary context for street children in this part of the Asia and Pacific region.

139. In **Indonesia**, it was reported in 2001 that the numbers of street children were increasing rapidly in north Sumatra, trebling over the three-year period 1999-2001 (Syamsul 2001). As of 2001, Yogyakarta in Java had large numbers of girl street children. Seventy per cent of street children in this city were reported to come from other parts of Indonesia. Overall, a 1999 survey of twelve cities in Indonesia found 170,000 street children (Childhope Asia News Bulletin 11 (1-2), from the Straits Times), a dramatic increase from an estimated 50,000 in 1997 (KKSP 2001). Although there are perhaps more than the usual problems of counting in these figures (since the KKSP report suggested that overall numbers would reach 100,000 to 150,000 in 2000), there is clear agreement that the number of Indonesian street children is fast increasing.

140. Street children have been present in Indonesia for over two decades, with a group in 1984 developing their own cooperative. In 1992 this group even rented their own house, but were evicted just over a year later because they did not have identity cards. These were children separated from family, but who needed a family in order to obtain the necessary identity papers (Yanasan Humana nd). At that time street children were reported to be subject to national “cleansing operations”, which included detention and beatings (ibid). The problem of violence experienced by Indonesian street children has been highlighted, for example being beaten by parents if they do not return home with money, with regular physical abuse being a key reason for a child’s decision to leave home (ibid).

141. The end of the 1990s saw significant changes in the lives of Indonesian children, partly as a result of economic crises, and other socio-political changes. The numbers of children dropping out of school increased, as did the number of teenage sex workers. (Kearney 2000). Over half of the children on Indonesian streets in 2000 were reported as “new entrants” since the beginning of the Asian economic crisis in 1997 (Dursin 2000). The major intervention response in Indonesia has come from international and local NGOs. These organizations see the country’s main children’s legislation, the 1979 Child Welfare Act, as ineffective, with urgent need for a new Child Protection Law as well as new institutional and implementation arrangements within government.

142. The incidence of street children across **Malaysia** appears to have not been documented, although one estimate suggests that peninsular and island Malaysia may be home to up to 75,000 street children (Austin nd).

143. The **Philippines** are reported to have large numbers of street children, although estimates vary widely. One report suggests 1.5 million street children, while another suggests only 15,000 street working children (Jubilee Action nd and Austin nd respectively). However, both reports agree that there are some 100,000 child sex workers in the country. As elsewhere in the region, the context for Filipino street children is endemic poverty, with over half the country’s urban population categorized as living below the country’s absolute poverty line, a figure rising to 64 per cent in some rural areas according to one report (Jubilee Action nd). Poverty in the Philippines has been linked to problems of “structural adjustment,” exacerbated by concentration of wealth, institutionalised graft and corruption, as well as natural disasters that drain national resources (Silva 1996).

144. The sexual exploitation of children, including sex tourism, continues to be a major problem in the Philippines. Filipino girls are trafficked out of the country for sex work (Son 1995). At least one NGO rescues children from brothels and other exploitative work situations. The incidence of sex tourism was reported as compounded by the past practice of parents in Olongapo encouraging children to “go with an American”, referring to naval personnel (JubileeAction nd). Although the naval base has since been closed, the demand for child sex workers continues. The withdrawal of US troops from the Philippines in 1992 is said to have left some 50,000 AmerAsian children (JubileeAction nd).

145. In **Timor-Leste**, street children are reported to be new phenomenon since 1999. Three reasons have been cited: the separation of families during the forced evacuation to West Timor; the destruction of many homes in the capital, Dili; and the September 1999 destruction of all orphanages in the western part of Timor-Leste (Odling-Smee 2001). Around 1,000 street children have been reported in Dili, with two projects established by religious groups to provide some services. It has been reported that it is unlikely that the new government or the United Nations will rebuild the country’s orphanages, with orphan care thus left to NGOs or other civil society groups. In West Timor orphanages are said to exist in all major townships, run principally by religious organizations—Catholic and Protestant as well as Muslim—as well as some other groups.

The Pacific

146. The situation in the Pacific is varied, with urban youth identified as a problem in **Papua New Guinea** as well as large numbers of homeless children in neighbouring Australia. Some of the Pacific's island states report no issues associated with street children. In **Vanuatu**, for example, it was reported that there were no known cases of either child labor or child prostitution in the country (WVI V 1999). The same report, however, noted that the "issue of child prostitution is a new phenomenon and growing in the South Pacific" (ibid).

147. Research in Australia in 2002, using data from the 2001 census, found an 8 per cent increase in homeless children in the country since 1994. There are now reported to be some 26,000 homeless children aged 12-18 years across Australia. The rate varies by state, from 69 out of every 1,000 children in Northern Territory to ten per thousand in Victoria, with an overall national average of fourteen children per thousand. In Northern Territory, high levels of domestic violence and family breakdown are associated with the problem of homelessness (ABC Newsonline 2002). As elsewhere, there are overlapping definitions or categorizations of street children, including children living on the street, children living in crisis or refuge accommodation, children living in temporary accommodation without security (e.g., staying with friends), children in unsafe family circumstances including domestic violence and abuse (Social Policy Group 2000). These categories are somewhat different to those conventionally applied to street children, but are important in suggesting the range of child rights still to be realised. Service provision for homeless young people in Melbourne, across organizations, was found to have a high turnover. This was primarily attributed to inadequate funding, lack of resources, low salaries, stressful work, and a lack of professional supervision (Mallet, Rosenthal and Myers 2001). It thus would seem that homeless children in developed countries also are publicly stigmatised, and given low priority for attention, as with street children in the Asia and Pacific region.

5. FRAMEWORKS AND PRINCIPLES FOR INTERVENTION

148. The variety of circumstances in which street children find themselves, and the problems they face, suggest that if interventions are to be effective they need to be guided by a set of principles leading to a framework for practice. The Convention on the Rights of the Child provides a ready framework for any intervention in the lives of children, including street children. The CRC represents an international standard for children's rights to survival, development, protection, participation, and freedom from discrimination, within an overall context of the best interests of the child. Following the almost universal ratification of the CRC, efforts have been directed to monitoring the implementation of the CRC as well as to the development and refinement of what is commonly referred to as **child rights programming (CRP)**. A child rights programming framework provides guidance in how to use and implement the CRC (and other international instruments) in the best interests of children everywhere. Child rights programming represents a holistic approach combining legal-based responses to international conventions on child and human rights with perspectives of childhood and development, to seek accountability for rights. The CRP framework utilises sociology (paradigms of childhood), cross-cultural psychology (childhood development), provision (care and protection as well as education and health services), citizenship, governance, and good practice in the areas of child participation and field-based youth and community work. Child rights programming takes this basic framework a stage further, by utilising a rights-based analysis of the situation of children that seeks to identify the duty bearers responsible for protecting and supporting those rights. The purpose is to recognise children as **rights holders**, not as passive beneficiaries. Similarly, there is a need for **accountability for children's rights** (see, for example, James and Prout 1990, Theis 2001a and 2001b, Christensen 2002, ISCA 2002).

149. As signatories to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, state parties are required to bring their legislation into line with the provisions of the CRC. In some countries, the development of comprehensive child rights legislation is still in process. In other countries, appropriate legislation is in place, but mechanisms for effective implementation are absent. State parties too often lack either capacity or financial or other resources, such as a cadre of trained social workers. Similarly, a country's particular social context may be adverse to the realization of child rights, such as where the public or some state apparatus (e.g., police) continue to place children very low on the social hierarchy. Too often street children, in particular, are perceived as nuisances, if not lesser beings. There thus is need for awareness raising and behaviour change among adults, as well as society as a whole to realize the full scope of children's rights. There also is need for sensitisation and training for a range of professions, including police and the judiciary. Unfortunately, Departments or Ministries with overall responsibility for children and children's rights are often the weakest and most under-resourced units in national bureaucracies.

150. With respect to street children and the implementation of the CRC, the two principles predominate: **protection** and **participation**. **Protection** is fundamental, and constitutes the main reason for seeking interventions in the lives of street children. This includes protection from abuse and exploitation, but also suggests more pre-emptive approaches in enabling the development of children's skills and knowledge, and in building support structures and mechanisms that improve children's environments, making them safer and less vulnerable. One aspect of protection is the prevention of children moving on to the streets. Prevention work is an essential component of work with and for street children, and requires the pre-emptive approaches that form part of protection work. Protection needs children's participation if it is to succeed, just as any successful prevention initiatives usually involve children.

151. **Participation** is equally important, particularly when most street children already have taken an increased measure of responsibility for their lives. Child participation allows children to express their views and to be involved in decision making to the extent of their capability. It should be obvious that street children know far more about their reasons for choosing to leave home or to migrate to the streets than anyone else. Such children certainly know far more about survival and making the most of street life through a variety of coping mechanisms. Street children also know what they want in terms of care, reintegration, and acceptable work.

152. A key aspect of children's participation is the right to information in order to make decisions about their own best interests. Street children make decisions everyday, and their rights to information, knowledge and understanding about such risks as unwanted or unprotected sex, HIV/AIDS, and substance and drugs usage, will assist them in making safer decisions. Not taking children's views into account or not involving them in decision-making is one reason why many children who are forcibly returned to their families are "back on the street before the bus that took them home".

153. In many countries, children's participation is felt to be difficult, as a new practice, and there are fears that it might only be tokenistic or superficial. These fears can be addressed through support and training (particularly for adults). A great deal of children's participation work has been accomplished in different parts of the Asia and Pacific region, largely work with poor and disadvantaged children in difficult settings.

154. Following the principle of children's participation means that a child's current situation and circumstances must be taken as a starting point. The CRC suggests that the best place for a child's development is to live with his or her family (or to live in a family type setting), for reasons including identity, care and protection. While this implies that separated children should be returned to their family as soon as possible, at least two questions need to be

addressed. The first question concerns reintegration and how children might not only be reunited and resettled within the family but also reintegrated into their community and surroundings. Stigma attached to street children (and especially those who have been involved in sex work), together with the sense of freedom, personal control, and enjoyment that some children find on the street, means that their reunification may be less immediately possible than some adults expect. The second question is related: is it in children's best interests to be returned home? Adverse conditions at home, such as situations of domestic violence or abuse, or abject poverty make resettlement difficult if not impossible. It is not in a child's best interest to be sent to an environment that is injurious or dangerous. Children also may not know where they are from (given that some have simply gotten lost, or been trafficked at an early age). Alternative forms of care, protection and living in other than a family environment might be in the best interests of many children, and necessary for those such as children orphaned by HIV/AIDS.

155. It is to be noted that there is some tension between the principles of protection and participation, given that adults' perceptions of protection and dangers may be quite different from that of children. But children's participation in protection is crucial for any intervention to be effective: what appears risky and dangerous to adults (especially those with secure homes) may be negotiated safely by children. A clear paradox is the removal of a child from the street for its safety, and its subsequent placement in a family home or other accommodation that is abusive and exploitative. In some cases, children might be better off on the street because available alternatives bring no real improvements to their lives (or best interests). Such decisions, however, can only be made through careful analysis of a child's particular context with the active participation of that child, again according to his/her capabilities to participate in decision-making. It is to be noted, however, that putting into practice the principle of best interests is not easy, particularly in institutional or bureaucratic settings.

156. The question of best interests also is linked to ethical practices. Street children are visible and generate a diverse range of reactions: from sympathy and regarding street children as victims, to disgust and regarding street children as criminals or inhuman beings. The CRC denotes children as humans under the age of 18 years, to whom all human rights conventions apply, taking into account the special circumstances regarding age, but emphasising their humanity and rights, including respect for their person, privacy, and identity. Ethical principles require respecting children's views and decisions, while taking into account their best interests. Such principles also mean that street children should not be objectified or sensationalised in newspaper and other media accounts, or expected to recounting their histories, or to continually be subject to viewing by project visitors (even if they are donors).

157. The nature of provision designed for street children also poses significant challenges. The most common form of provision is shelter, which may fulfil children's needs in part, but in fact may more fulfil adult perceptions of children's needs, including adult feelings about the importance of a home or not wanting children to "sleep rough". For a child, the main issue may be a haunting traumatic experience, or family relationship breakdown, rather than nights on the street. Even in the harsh winter climates of Mongolia, homeless children and adults have found shelter.

158. Child rights programming has enormous implications for the development of principles of good practice. First is the importance of research or careful case management to ensure that project work is based on the reality of children's lives and circumstances rather than well-meaning assumptions. Such research needs to include and involve children, with some of the research activity possibly conducted by children themselves (as has been shown to be both possible and effective). Such research will ensure that particular contexts or

circumstances are taken into account and include children's own perceptions of the benefits and dangers of street life.

159. Second, the range of street children's possible circumstances means that several areas of practice must be addressed, both with adults and with children, and that work is not limited only to street-based interventions or only to the provision of shelters. As noted earlier, children's life "on the street" may involve places other than the street, such as brothels, factories, sweatshops, squatter homes, etc. .

160. Third, the nature of provision created for street children must be safe, offer protection and enable their personal development.

161. Fourth, and linked to the question of provision, the ways in which children move on from the street, particularly with respect to their possible reunification with family as well as their future lives.

162. Highly varied street circumstances necessitate action-based research. Different circumstances create problems of process and place, which in turn create difficulties for practice. While there is a tendency to focus on the lives of those children who remain on the street, such an approach ignores the reality of transitions – that street children's lives are not static, and that street children respond to opportunities and constraints, to coercion, as well as to their own growing older. A clear difficulty is mediating varying responses to individuals and groups through project constraints of staffing and overall resources, as well as the local context.

163. In addition to respect for children's person, privacy, and identity, ethical principles require respect of children's views and decisions, while taking into account their best interests. Ethical principles also mean that street children should not be objectified or sensationalized in newspaper and other media accounts, should not be expected to gratuitously recount their life histories, or to be continually subject to "show", including for the benefit of donor agencies.

6. METHODS OF IMPLEMENTATION

164. Given the range of issues associated with street children, and principles of good practice, a number of areas of work may be identified. Such areas of work can be broadly categorized as prevention, work on the street, and helping children move on from situations of risk, abuse, or exploitation. Prevention includes efforts to stop children leaving home and coming onto the street unnecessarily. But protection is important here, including the recognition that not all families are safe places for children, and that there must be some provision for children who cannot live at home without abuse or exploitation. Once children have become separated from their families or caregivers, or are living/working on the street, establishing and maintaining contact with them is necessary as an essential prerequisite to providing them with protection as well as provision of essential services such as health care, education, and counselling, particularly with respect to their futures. Protection on the street involves harm reduction, a term usually associated with substance abuse, but used here to include unsafe sex and other practices, so as to reduce risks. Assistance to help street children move on from the streets involves other areas of work such as vocational training, resettlement, and reintegration into communities and families. All of these areas of work involve both adults and children, as well as the engagement of government institutions and community organizations at a number of levels. The range of issues faced by street children thus requires multi-sectoral and multi-level work, networking and liaison, children's participation, as well as protection.

Protection, participation, standards and law

165. Child protection, like participation, is a governing principle that needs to run throughout areas of work, and involves consideration of children's best interests in planning and implementing projects and services. The creation of appropriate and relevant legislation and the effective implementation of laws is part of the process for multi-sectoral and multi-level work necessary for child protection. But while frameworks of law are important for child protection, it may be necessary to support the operationalization or activation of legislation that already exists, but has no mechanisms for action. As part of the processes of protection and participation, and linked to legal frameworks, is the development of national standards for practice and provision. Such standards should provide a series of attainable and measurable benchmarks against which work or other interventions can be monitored and evaluated. This includes checking, developing, and revising legislation where necessary, creating and reforming mechanisms for implementation, and establishing standards and appropriate values and cultures for the operation of law to act in the best interests of children and in recognition of children's rights. Capacity building, including training and development for several professions also is required.

Research

166. Research is an important part of practice, particularly when used to establish baselines against which the impact of an intervention can be measured. Research also is fundamental in better understanding the lives of street children and in designing appropriate interventions. The involvement of children in research activities increasingly is regarded as fundamental, although in some countries such practice is still comparatively new. Whereas merely asking children questions is seen as innovative in some countries, in others it taken for granted that child input can guide or inform all aspects of the research process, and that children may be able to conduct research themselves.

Prevention

167. Strategies for prevention need to address issues such as trafficking as well as situations of domestic violence or abuse that cause a child to leave home. Prevention strategies thus cover a wide area, including public awareness raising and capacity building. Such strategies also may include financial or other support to poor families to enable their children to stay at home. Strategies need to be linked to harm reduction so that children are better equipped to make informed decisions about their own best interests. Peer education has proven a particularly effective means of raising awareness about child rights, as well as the threats confronting children. Public discussion about the core principles of child rights and information about trafficking mechanisms similarly can help reduce the incidence of trafficking as well as other situations of abuse or exploitation. In addition to work with children, prevention methods require work with adults at all levels, including families, communities, community leaders, teachers, police and the judiciary, and other government institutions. Increased knowledge of children's rights is an important starting point, but the work also must include information about the reality of life in cities, including the risk of trafficking.

168. Behavior changes are sought in prevention work, including issues around parenting styles and support for children to stay in school, which may require changes to the education system and schools so that children are able to attend, want to attend, and find schooling enjoyable as well as useful. In many developing countries in the region, this might mean more flexible school calendars, to allow children to assist their families during planting or harvesting seasons—a broadening of the current notion of “child-friendly schools”.

Interventions on the Street

169. Establishing and maintaining contact with street children, many who may have become alienated and excluded from conventional social life, is a starting point for other work. In such cases, removal from the street might not be in the best interests of the child. Harm reduction and child protection constitute twin basic strategies. For example, it may not be possible to stop street children from having sex, or being involved in sex work, but the associated risks easily can be reduced through appropriate counselling (including by peer educators). The same can be done with substance use, where harm reduction involves knowledge about the effects of drugs and promoting their safe (or safer) use as a means of aiding street children's survival and potential future development.

170. Children's rights to health care and education can be addressed by taking into account their current circumstances and offering service provision on the street or in close proximity to where they live and work, and at times and in places which are accessible to street children. This might entail "streetwork" methods including both outreach and detached teams making direct contact with street children. Work in street situations also might include facilitating and supporting the development of children's own organizations.

171. Whereas outreach work generally involves teams of staff operating from drop-in centers and shelters, detached work takes provision such as healthcare and education to children where they are on the street. While outreach workers may work with children on the street, they also offer possibilities for the use of other facilities, including residential accommodation. Efforts also are required to contact and address the needs and rights of children in sensitive or generally invisible areas, such as domestic servants or commercial sex workers. Principles of protection and harm reduction must be involved where "rescue" is not possible or would lead to children shifting to even worse circumstances or more exploitative situations. Encouraging children to help decide what is in their own best interests is essential.

172. In order to establish contact and make service provision available, drop-in centers need to be open at appropriate times for children, respecting their working day and lives. The same tenet of accessibility applies to both outreach and detached work

173. Part of streetwork, either through detached teams or drop-in centers, includes the provision of services as well as ensuring that children have the opportunity to access available services, including medical and hospital services; access to training and education including literacy, numeracy and vocational skills; legal aid and advice; and being able to find refuge at times of risk or danger.

Leaving the Street and Moving on

174. In order for children to successfully move on from the street they need to be involved in decision making about the opportunities available to them. Returning to their families often requires more than transport, and may entail some preparation of both children and family, as well as support to successfully reintegrate children into families and communities. "Moving on" expresses both a physical and emotional progress, and thus encompasses a range of processes and possible destinations, with some consideration given to children's best interests for the future. Several steps may be required in the process of "moving on" including provision of temporary accommodation when children are not able to return to families, or alternative care, such as foster families. For older children who may be moving on to independent life, considerable preparation may be required through appropriate vocational or other education to enable them to earn a living off the street. An important principle is that such vocational or skills-training is realistic given economic and work opportunities actually available in a particular country or setting.

175. In the process of moving on, shelters for street children are a widespread component of practice, based on the notion (mostly by adults) of returning children to settled life. Shelters should involve children in their design and daily operation. Shelters need to be appropriate to the local economic conditions in order that they do not attract additional children, or that parents might send their children to such shelters as a way of providing their children with education or healthcare, or simply to relieve the costs of care. The problems of shelters providing better conditions than ordinary home life is one reason why other causal factors need to be addressed, such as support for poor families to be able to keep and provide for their children at home. In addition, shelters need to avoid the “institutionalisation” of children, which reduces their competences and compromises their opportunities for future independence. This can be done by setting minimum standards, and children’s participation in the organisation and day-to-day running of shelters or any residential care.

176. Shelters must not be seen as final “ends” for children but rather part of a longer process of moving on, which means also moving back into community life. Children and young people who have been away from communities, or enter new places but whose past is known, are often stigmatized because of real or perceived involvement in sex work. Again, principles of participation are important, with the recognition that some children are better off on the street. Forcing or coercing children to live in residential or other accommodation often fails.

General

177. The question of support to families is linked to prevention and to anti-poverty initiatives. These might work on two levels, individual development and social-structural change. A discussion of anti-poverty initiatives is beyond the scope of this paper, but clearly includes the use of vocational or skills training to enable children and families to generate income and links into broader structural concerns such as the use of taxes, anti-corruption initiatives and issues of good governance. This in turn is linked to other elements, such as capacity building, including training on children’s rights, child protection issues, and on how to work with children. Other aspects of new or developed capacities include the coordination of services, the establishment of standards, the implementation of existing legislation, and the promulgation of new child protection laws that are more in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

178. There are many cross cutting elements to the principles for intervention. The development of reflective practice, that is analysing development and current activities in the context of the environment, means that some attention must be paid to any current, urgent issues. Currently, the HIV/AIDS pandemic is such a problem and presents particular issues for children, which demand responses. In the present situation, along with principles of participation and protection, it seems that some recognition of youth reproductive health, including intensive HIV/AIDS awareness activities must be a key element of any programming for street children.

179. Finally, major effort is required to facilitate and support children’s own organizations, in that such organizations have proven in many countries to be an effective means of promoting children’s protection and development.

7. GOVERNMENTS AND NONGOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

180. A set of principles provides an important framework for implementation of interventions, and a range of methods can be identified. The issue of coordination of services and other provision raises the question of who should do the work. Generally this work has not been attractive to private or profit-making organizations, because the work is not profitable, and there is no ready source of income. Although some public-private partnerships

have been initiated, one example in Thailand has recognised that it has reached only a small number of street children, and only just begun to “scratch the surface” (Panpac/unicef nd—see box “The Youth Career Development Program, Thailand” below).

181. In western countries where welfare services have been “privatised”, service provision often is contracted to not for profit nongovernment organizations (who may supplement the monies provided by the state with their own contributions raised as charity). Where for-profit concerns have taken over, for example, residential care for older people, there have been debates about standards and the quality of care provided to those who have no funds of their own. Private care for street children remains limited, although some adults engaged in the informal economy supply basic accommodation and food for street children in return for part or all of the income they earn through begging and other street activities. At issue is the degree of coercion and exploitation involved (which might also exist in family settings where children are sent off to work). Another link with private or for-profit concerns is where profits are partly used to pay for the operation of provision for street children—this seems more often to be for orphans and children abandoned when young. There have been problems with some of this “private” provision, which has in reality been established in order for adult(s) to gain profit (e.g., through foreign adoption) or for sexual access to children (although this may also happen in other sectors, such as the creation of NGOs for similar purposes). This is one area where regulation, standards, and monitoring and evaluation by an outside body with some degree of power is essential, and an area which requires action by governments in the development of appropriate legislation as well as realistic enforcement mechanisms.

182. The majority of provision for street children is organised through NGOs. A main issue in the response to street children and providing the context for their lives, is the relationship between NGOs and GOs (government organizations), and their respective responsibilities. In several parts of the Asia and Pacific region, the provision of welfare services was, until the late 1980s or early 1990s, the responsibility of the state through work units or other mechanisms. The shift to market economies has brought new social problems that existing mechanisms of provision are unable to cope with. Funding and the development of new, replacement provision generally has proven difficult and also often requires new laws and new types of services and professions such as social work. The introduction of such changes in countries in the region was hampered by the Asian economic crisis. The development of NGOs, often tentative at first, given that in many countries NGOs are new little understood forms of social organization, and the expansion of INGO-supported activities represent responses to these new or social problems. In some countries the development of NGOs is seen as an important indication of the development of “civil society” and new forms of governance.

183. Elsewhere, NGOs have long been in existence, and are a main provider of welfare and other services, especially for the poor. NGOs have been at the forefront of street children work in several countries in the region for some time. It is noted, however, that relatively few NGOs have a particular focus on children, and especially focus on children’s rights and associated approaches to work. Despite nearly universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a key problem remains lack of overall vision as well as real government commitment or involvement in such work.

184. A problem common to both countries with a newly emerging NGO sector and countries with a more established NGO sector, is the need for at least minimal coordination and regulations or standards for provision. There is much competition for profile and status, as well as for scarce donor funding. The problem of raising funds is linked not only to issues of sustainability, but also to public perceptions of street children problems and issues. Funding through INGOs is dependent on work in their home countries, or skills in raising money from other donors, such as western governments. In the region there are a number of “bilateral INGOs”, such as trusts or other organizations working in just one country (for

example in Afghanistan, Nepal, or Sri Lanka) and dependent on funds raised in the United Kingdom in a competitive “charity market”. Other organizations may limit their work to a small number of countries. The easiest way for such organizations to raise funds is to simplify the issue and present graphic images of street children, but which may conform to stereotypes of public expectations.

185. While NGOs often are accustomed to operating with considerable autonomy, coordination is needed so that the overall needs and rights of children are met, and that comprehensive services are provided. Although the “rescue” of children garners headlines and profile, and the provision of shelters offers something both tangible and needed, prevention work should not be ignored, in that prevention efforts are an essential element of working with street children.

186. In addition to coordination, a set of minimum standards is required for provision of accommodation and other services, so as to ensure child protection. These coordination and standard setting mechanisms normally are encoded in legislation, and thus generally need to be supervised by government. In places where government is the main provider of services, standards may consist of regulations rather than law. Because child rights address all of a child’s needs and rights, children’s legislation must address issues such as labor regulation, working hours, pay, conditions and age, etc., as well as regulation of sex work, police behavior, children and young people in conflict with law, juvenile justice systems, and so on.

187. The mechanisms for implementation of legislation also are crucial and may bring NGOs and GOs into conflict. For example, the protection of children from sexual and physical abuse may require some agency to take the lead, including having formal investigative authority.

188. One means of developing an overview is the use of child rights programming and particularly through analyses of context and circumstances of children’s lives in relation to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. When such analysis considers children as rights holders, and identifies breaches of children’s rights, it also addresses who are the duty bearers with responsibility towards children’s rights. This might work on a number of levels. For example, responsibility to ensure children are not abused in shelters might fall to individuals employed at the shelter, managers, or a board of directors or trustees, but also points to who has responsibility for monitoring such organizations, or for enforcing legislation meant to protect children, including bringing perpetrators to justice. In many countries, however, there is an absence of provision, as well as effective supervision, including the delineation of roles and responsibilities.

Images

189. One of the problems embedded in defining, providing and monitoring services for street children are the images easily created because of the visibility of some street children. For example, Mongolia’s street children are comparatively well-known in the western world because of the dramatic images of children emerging from underground heating systems, symbolised as rats coming out of a sewer (Knight 2002). Such images may correspond to the search for “real street children” espoused by some practitioners, who are concerned particularly for the children who need protection and who have difficulty in surviving on the street. It is to be emphasized, however, that these “visible” street children represent one point on a continuum of movement and change, and that children who are less visible or hidden also require services and provision, particularly in situations of abuse or exploitation.

8. PRACTICE AND EXAMPLES

190. There are numerous examples of good practice in projects across the Asia and Pacific region, although it must be recognized that individual projects cannot address every aspect of a street child's life. Rather, approaches usually are limited to particular issues, such as health or education, children and work, children and drugs, trafficking, and so on. Table 1, below, provides an indicative list of necessary practice areas relating to street children.

Table 1: Street Children–Basic Areas of Practice

<p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participation • protection • research • standard setting • monitoring and evaluation • capacity building of organizations • training of staff • multi-sectoral working • partnerships ▪ coordination and regulation ▪ law ▪ budgets ▪ advocacy and awareness raising
<p>Prevention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ family violence and abuse ▪ poverty reduction ▪ schools ▪ community awareness ▪ anti-trafficking ▪ sex tourism ▪ transport ▪ lifeskills ▪ substance abuse ▪ reproductive health ▪ HIV/AIDS
<p>Street activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ street work ▪ outreach ▪ detached ▪ legal aid and advice ▪ identity papers ▪ education ▪ health ▪ peer education ▪ drop-in centers ▪ services for children in conflict with the law ▪ HIV/AIDS ▪ drugs and substance abuse, harm reduction ▪ helplines

Moving on

- vocational training
- shelters (and child protection)
- resettlement
- reintegration

Participation and Children's Own Organizations

- organizational support, facilitation of child participation

191. The following section provides some examples of good practice from the Asia and Pacific region.

Participation

192. The practice of children's participation is uneven across the region, and probably best developed in parts of South Asia and the Philippines. However, examples occur in many countries of both general participation projects for all children, and the inclusion of participation as a main element in work with street children. Preparations for the May 2002 United Nations Special Session on Children featured child participation. While such activity is important, particularly in popularising the notion that the voices of children are important, one-off promotional events often detract from the need for children's ongoing involvement in decision-making in family and community and daily life. In addition, such opportunities rarely extend to poor or vulnerable children, including street children. Well-known examples of child participation include children's unions in India, Child-Brigade in Bangladesh, and the street children "Butterflies" project in India. Other examples include the children's clubs of Nepal (a series of projects for all children—see Rajbhavidary, Hart, Khatiwarda 1999), and children's involvement in decision-making in connection with making a move to shelters in Thailand (Foundation for a Better Life for Children)

Standards, cooperation and coordination

193. The setting of national standards for provision has been undertaken by many developed countries as well as by some Asian states. The establishment of such standards is linked to the development of legislation and the coordination of services. In the People's Republic of China the Ministry of Civil Affairs has begun the development of standards of care. In Thailand new legislation for children was developed by 2000. While cooperation and multi-sectoral working are in evidence in some countries (see examples in ESCAP nd, 2001?), it is also clear that there are many gaps and issues that require further attention. Other areas such as research, certain prevention initiatives, the development of street work, the provision of temporary accommodation, and education and vocational training are more advanced. Capacity building has been an integral part of most good projects, if only to train project staff in ways of communicating and working with children. In some countries effort has been directed to the development of social work and related professions, including through the establishment of university courses (for example, Save the Children UK's support of a social work course at the State Pedagogical University in Ulaanbaator, Mongolia).

Good Practice – Child Protection Projects

Child protection usually has been linked more to issues of protection from abuse or exploitation rather than the broader remit of social protection. Increasingly, child protection looks beyond physical protection to the varied circumstances and reasons why children are at risk. Collaborative and multi-sectoral working, the coordination of services, and partnerships are playing an important part in the wider protection of children's rights.

In Sri Lanka, for example, national coordination has been developed through the National Child Protection Authority (PEACE nd). In Pakistan a lawyers organization has developed partnerships with other groups focusing on legal aid, awareness raising on child abuse, and policy input (LHRLA nd). The Philippines has developed a multisectoral approach to case management in the area of sexual exploitation of children (DSWD nd).

Another example of a broad approach to protection is found in Bangladesh, through the Bangladesh Shishu Adikar Forum. This is a national network of 130 NGOs that are actively involved in child rights activities, with the objective of establishing a social environment that "respects, promotes and protects the rights of children...where the child is free of abuse, discrimination and exploitation irrespective of her nationality, religion, caste, color or religion" (CSC 2002). The Forum's activities include inter-agency networking, coordination, capacity building, and lobbying.

The problem of sex tourism has also led to protection initiatives, including research (such as that of World Vision in Cambodia—see Gray, Gourley and Paul 1996 and Chuan Wathuana et al 2002). Work with and within the tourism industry on training for prevention has been undertaken by ECPAT Australia, including "child-wise tourism" in addition to programs ("choose with care") to prevent known child sex offenders from joining organizations working with children (ECPAT Australia nd). Other initiatives have included the implementation of child protection policies within INGOs, such as Save the Children UK.

NGOs also have undertaken training and rights awareness activities with police, including anti-trafficking partnerships.

Research

194. Research analysis is required to identify issues of children's rights that remain unmet, as well as addressing the question of who are duty bearers and how they can fulfil their responsibilities. Such effort will ultimately involve the development of standards, as well as the regulation and coordination of services—all of which remain major gaps the realisation of children's rights. The implementation and enforcement of law is another aspect linked into research, analysis, monitoring, and evaluation.

195. Research also is necessary to understand the complexities of local situations, and the circumstances of children, to give a better or more accurate idea of the scale of the problems to be confronted. In development work and other practice, research ideally is undertaken first in order to provide a "baseline" against which to measure future development. But in some situations and contexts it is not possible to undertake preliminary research. In addition, the usefulness of extensive baseline research for the measurement of change has been questioned because of the nature of social change and issues relating to what exactly influences attitudinal or behaviour change. Research thus is more often used as part of a process for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness and use of specific interventions.

196. Research nevertheless is useful in determining the nature of problems experienced by children, what range of needs are to be addressed, and in providing some record of the current situation against which future developments can be checked, and change assessed.

Research needs to investigate the multiple areas in which street children find themselves. In Cambodia, for example, World Vision has conducted research and project evaluations in a number of arenas (such as sex tourism, life on rubbish dumps, child labor) as a way of promoting better understanding of the range of issues confronting vulnerable children. There also is a need to understand local complexities in order to consider and design appropriate interventions. For example the hierarchy of status and variety of income opportunities in rubbish picking in Cambodia has been shown to be far more complicated than cursory observation would suggest (see Gourley, Un, Gray 1997). In Uzbekistan, research indicated the particular problems and circumstances of children sleeping in residential care but working on the streets during the daytime (Tahlil 2002). In Afghanistan a piece of research on street children in a disaster or post-conflict emergency situation provided the basis for planning interventions, especially by revealing the extent of ongoing family links (see, for example, TdH 2002)

197. An important development in the research agenda has been the active participation of children in research, including children's own research. Such research has brought new insights into children's situation and the processes needed to realise children's rights. Adults, including those with much experience of work with street children have expressed surprise at some findings, with children highlighting issues not otherwise seen as important. For example, street children in Bangladesh highlighted the problems they experienced in playing outside, because of police harassment and the attitude of the general public (see Khan 1997, also West 1999).

Prevention

198. Prevention work includes advocacy at different levels, and training of adults (professionals, community leaders, local residents) as well as children (including peer educators). This type of work has been very successful in Western PRC, in reducing the numbers of children migrating or being trafficked eastwards. The style of advocacy and training, however, must fit local conditions and culture—the mass meetings in Western PRC (together with other work) might not be as effective elsewhere. Campaigns against sex tourism in Cambodia have included printed material (such as maps of Phnom Penh and Siem Reap) given away free to tourists upon arrival.

199. Prevention work must be undertaken in a variety of places and in a number of ways, in that children become vulnerable or at risk in different ways, and at different times in their lives. Families, schools, and communities are important starting places, but other kinds of prevention work is required. At present, statutory social welfare services either do not exist, or are very unevenly distributed. Some projects have looked to community awareness raising and training in different areas, but this work needs also to be linked to issues of poverty.

200. Research, particularly participatory action research, has been used to identify problems and initiatives. This type of research has been used in "cross-border projects" in Southeast Asia and the People's Republic of China to reduce the incidence of trafficking (for example, Caouette nd, SCUUK 2001). Such work has been very effective in promoting awareness about trafficking. But underlying issues such as poverty, abuse, discrimination, exclusion, all need to be tackled to prevent children's drift away from home.

201. Thus, part of prevention work should include poverty reduction strategies including income generation and skills training. Schools are a fundamental part of children's lives, and making education free and friendly is an important contribution towards prevention and reducing children's vulnerability.

Children's Own Research
Shoshur Bari and street children's research in Dhaka, Bangladesh

Since 1997 street children in Bangladesh have conducted research with support and facilitation by adults. The "Shoshur Bari" research focussed on street children who, at some stage of their lives, came into contact with law-enforcing agents, which resulted either in their being taken into custody or incarcerated in jail or a home for vagrants. There were fourteen children in the research group, comprising both boys and girls. The actual process of the research took place over a period of six months. The most unique part of the research was that the children were given the authority and space within broad parameters to decide specific research issues and various methods for accumulating information, identifying, analysing and prioritising key findings and recommendations. Interviews were also taken of lawyers, magistrates, government officials, police personnel, jail officials ex and current child and adult prisoners. The adult core team members then carried out interviews with lawyers, magistrates, government officials, police personnel, jail officials, and current and former child and adult prisoners to strengthen the children's research findings.

The study described the stages through which children often leave home, and how they too often end up in jail. Maltreatment by family members emerged as the major cause of children leaving home. While on the street, they often are picked up by police, usually without any specific case or warrant, and become victims with no recourse to legal representation. Police have various tactics to apprehend street children, usually intensified during the eve of *hartal* [strike] days on account of "street violence" as described by the children. Under custody, children experience physical and psychological abuse from the police, and when taken to court, are not properly represented, leading to their indefinite detention in jail without any follow-up for release. In jail and shelter homes, they suffer a denial of the basic necessities of life as well as egregious violations of their human rights.

The child researchers also developed recommendations to improve the situation of street children in detention. Such recommendations include: stopping police from apprehending children without specific charge, the establishment of alternative center(s) exclusively for child detainees, stopping abuse of children by family members at home, treating street children's situation with special consideration, and effective NGO involvement to ensure the protection and well-being of street children. In support of these recommendations, the children suggested certain advocacy measures, including meetings with senior government officials, and NGO representatives as well as holding press conferences and producing television features on street children issues.

(Taken from Khair and Khan 2000.)

202. Prevention initiatives need also to look particularly at issues of gender, disability and ethnicity that contribute towards children's vulnerability. In South Asia, there are many projects working against violence towards girl children, as well as projects focusing on disabled children. While not necessarily undertaken to prevent children coming onto the street, such work has impact on the context of children's lives and the opportunities that correlate with the development of circumstances of risk and vulnerability.

203. Prevention initiatives are also linked to the provision of identity papers for children, and their registration with authorities.

Examples of Prevention Work in the People's Republic of China

In Yunnan province, the Provincial Public Security Bureau, together with the Provincial Women's Federation, the Civil Affairs Bureau, and the Ethnic Commission undertook projects in two prefectures (Honghe and Wenshan) along with the local PSB and Women's Federation; the work was supported by Save the Children UK.

The principal aim of the project at the Honghe Township sites was to influence local people in a joint effort to produce educational material related to trafficking prevention. The focus included rescued women and girls, mobile children and youth under 18, children within the community and community members in general. Among the activities used during this phase was the singing of mountain folk and popular songs revolving around the subject of trafficking, production of Sansun Village's 2002 Prevention of Trafficking in Women and Children Calendar, and the knitting of a fabric poster on the same subject in the style of the Hani people by people of Bamu Village Office (a grassroots level administrative district), Sancun Administrative Village. A VCD concerning community based activities at project sites in Honghe was produced with strong support from the Honghe Prefecture PSB, Honghe County Women's Federation and Honghe County Bureau of Culture. The VCD was shown on the Honghe Prefecture TV station as part of the program "Twenty Minute Police Forum" and had significant social impact.

Project activities in Wenshan Prefecture focused on the construction of self-governing community organizational structures in Longma village in order to guarantee that project objectives were realised. Objectives included: engaging in projects that benefited the community as a whole; improving the organizational skills and self-determination of community members (especially women); bringing about community-wide participation; increasing trafficking prevention awareness and skills among community members; and making the village into a "trafficking prevention civilized village" involving inter-departmental cooperation.

The responsibilities and functions of the different organizations were established and village laws drafted with the support of the Guangan County PSB and Women's Federation, the Nanping Township Government, the Women's House, Village Protection Brigade and the Villagers' Team.

To the north-west, in Xinjiang, the provincial Street Children Protection Center developed a multi-sector collaboration involving the Justice Bureau, Civil Affairs Bureau, the Women's Federation, and the University and Social Science Academy, again with the support of Save the Children UK. This collaboration provided training on children's rights, parenting and children's issues, awareness raising workshops on trafficking and urban life, as well as participatory action research. The collaboration was repeated around the province, and included mass meetings in local languages. In addition, much use was made of local television. Apparently as a result of the project, the numbers of street children coming from Xinjiang province dropped significantly over the following year.

(Part taken from He Ye 2001.)

Street

204. There are a large number of practice examples of different elements of street work. These examples include projects providing education on the street, for example at designated times and places, or in drop-in centers. Other projects have helped children without formal identity papers to access hospital services and medicines. Legal aid services have been provided through drop-in centers, which also have been used to provide many of the services otherwise provided on the street.

205. The development of street work, however, is unevenly distributed across the region. Street work does not exist in the People's Republic of China (although there has been some

experimentation), and has only recently started in other parts of East and Central Asia. For example, street educators recently have been employed in Mongolia with the aim of drawing street children into services provided by daycenters or drop-in centers (West and Tungalag 2002). Street work is more common practice in other countries. Street work is vital for reaching out to children in less visible circumstances, and for children who are often best contacted by other children, including sex workers, child domestic servants, and children engaged in hard or hazardous work.

Butterflies, New Delhi, India

The Butterflies Organization of Street and Working Children has been working with children on the streets of New Delhi since 1988. Through a team of street educators the organization is in contact with approximately 700 children at nine contact points where there are concentrations of street and working children. Butterflies' *general objectives are*: to empower street children with the knowledge and skills necessary to protect their rights as children and develop as respected and productive citizens; to provide such children with necessary support and assistance for re-instatement in their families where possible; and to use the Convention on the Rights of the Child as a major tool for ensuring Government and public accountability for the well-being of all vulnerable children.

Butterflies believes in the principles of democracy and community participation in decision making. Every fortnight, children of each contact point hold a meeting to discuss issues, critique on-going activities, plan future activities, etc. Once a month, representatives from each contact point come together for the Bal Sabha (Children's Council, the supreme body and the guiding force and mechanism of the Butterflies program). The children elect a chairperson and a minute taker. Each member is encouraged to share any agenda issues, and each of the outlined points are discussed, with key decisions recorded. Most often, issues discussed are about police harassment, non-payment of wages, need for better jobs, wages, education, saving schemes, problems of gambling or drugs, as well as planning picnics and other outings.

The meetings enable children to discuss and share information that concerns their lives, to analyse various social and political events and decisions, and to work together towards collective action. It has helped in refining Butterflies program interventions, as well as helping to organize children and create a forum where they can speak and share their ideas. The idea of a Children's Council provides a concrete mechanism for children's collective voice to be heard.

Butterflies also helped launch children-planned initiatives. For example, in 1989 children started their own Butterflies Restaurant as a training venture as well as to provide subsidised meals to other street children. In 1991 children formed their own Child Workers Union (Bal Mazdoor Union) and in 1996 children established a media group called "Bal Mazdoor ki Awaz" (Child Workers' Voice) that produces a regular wall newspaper on issues affecting children. In 2000, a Children's Health Cooperative was established. All these initiatives were the outcomes of children's collective response to Bal Sabha discussions.

(Taken from O'Kane 2002.)

206. Two particularly important aspects of work on the street include HIV/AIDS awareness and the provision of "lifeskills" and/or harm reduction training around the use of drugs and other substances and sex and reproductive health. Useful strategies have included peer education, whereby a group of children are trained to be able to pass on accurate information to others. There are a number of issues in the provision of accurate material and sustaining projects (West 2002). Another important area concerns the vulnerability of street children in relation to the law, and particularly their relationship with police. A number of other (non-street children) projects have been established to look at juvenile justice system issues. Services are needed for children in conflict with the law, including access to advice and

representation, in addition to advocacy on related issues such as the treatment of children in detention. A number of projects or localities have established telephone helplines and emergency lines for children and especially for street children.

Centers and shelters

207. Drop-in centers, together with shelters are a common means of maintaining contact with children and providing a range of services, from healthcare and advice, to education and vocational training. The breadth of services provided varies by project, partly connected with links into other work, for example street work or temporary accommodation. While drop-in centers may be the key component of work for some projects, and provide a visible face to donors and point of engagement with street children, for others such centers are conceptualised merely as an extension of street work—that is conducting informal education sessions, peer information and so on in a building rather than on the street, perhaps for reasons of safety.

Mith Samlanh (Friends), Phnom Penh, Cambodia

It is estimated that as many as 20,000 children live and work on the streets of Phnom Penh. They are on the streets because their families cannot support them. Some of them have been orphaned by the war or their parents have been maimed by the land mines left by the war. Formed in 1997, *Mith Samlanh*, Cambodia's leading street children program, reaches an average of 1,500 children daily. The organization's target group is homeless and vulnerable street children and adolescents, including their families, who are at high risk of exploitation, physical and emotional abuse through commercial sex and violence in the streets.

The objective of *Mith Samlanh* is to provide care for the health and well-being of street children while working for their reintegration into Cambodian society. The organization addresses this objective through vocational training and employment, education and reintegration into the public school system, and linking children back to their families and to their own culture. *Mith Samlanh's* activities for street children include 12 inter-linked programs: outreach, transitional home, boarding house, training, education, family reintegration, youth reproductive health, HIV/AIDS awareness, substance abuse prevention and harm reduction, incarcerated children, child rights, and staff development. *Mith Samlanh* also operates a restaurant that provides apprenticeship, training and employment for street children. Although *Mith Samlanh* mainly serves the street children of Phnom Penh, it also operates smaller programs in the cities of Kampong Cham and Kampong Speu. *Mith Samlanh* staff travel extensively in all Cambodian provinces to locate children's families and to assist in their return home, where feasible and in the best interests of the child,

Mith Samlanh has a staff of 120 supervised by a board of directors and is supported by grants from AusAID, UNICEF, UNAIDS, UNFPA/EC, World Food Program, FHI-Impact, DOH-International, CCFD, Save the Children Australia, private donors, and the Australian and British Embassies in Cambodia.

Moving On

208. There are several components to providing support to children moving on from the street. The provision of accommodation and/or places of refuge is widespread, although quality varies and there often is an absence of standards. While child protection remains an important element, not all projects place priority on this or have the capacity for protection mechanisms, being run on a low-cost basis. Police checks on the identity of personnel working with children, for any record of abusing children, have become common in the west, and mandatory in many countries and service. But these require circumstances of

governance, systems of child protection including arrest, trial and record, and levels of technology not always available. Continuous observation and awareness is therefore necessary.

209. Although projects directed to the development and improvement of foster care and residential care have been undertaken in many countries, projects for street children more often focus on temporary accommodation (shelters) and education/training. The two are linked in that a project will attempt to provide or find vocational training (or education) for children who live in project-based shelters.

Child Helpline International

The NGO Child Helpline International aims for a global network of telephone and outreach services for children and young people.

As of 2002 there were some 38 helplines for children in different countries. A children's telephone helpline is accessible, free-of-charge to children around the clock, enabling them to contact someone in an emergency situation. Children's helplines allow children to directly express their concerns and issues affecting them. Child Helpline International believes that children have rights and that children can identify the problems that confront them. A telephone helpline ensures that children have access to assistance whenever they want and also provides a platform for the community to partner in protecting children.

The experience of helplines across the world includes listening to children, responding to crisis situations, networking amongst organizations working with children, and generating data to feed into government policies. Children in need of care and protection often are unaware of services available to them, or do not have easy access to such services.

Helplines should provide 24-hour service for children and young persons in emergency situations, and includes a range of media, including telephone (fixed line and mobile telephones, text messaging), internet, band radio, and mail (including free post). The target group is the most marginalized groups of children in developing countries.

In order to strengthen and develop helplines for children, Children's Helpline International (CHI) has proposed a global network of helplines and telephone outreach services for children and young people.

(Abridged from Childline 2002.)

210. Less importance seems to have been placed on resettlement and reintegration work for street children—that is, returning children home and ensuring their protection and reintegration, or provision of longer term alternative care. Part of the problem is the level of resources required to not only prepare and transport children, but also to undertake necessary follow-up, including counselling for both returning children and their families. Where large distances are involved this becomes especially difficult for smaller NGOs, particularly in the absence of national or international networks.

The Youth Career Development Program, Thailand

The Youth Career Development Program (YCDP) has contributed towards a reduction in commercial sexual exploitation of children by giving girls aged 17 to 20 employment training for the hotel and travel industry. The girls are selected from provinces in the North and Northeast of Thailand. The target provinces are among the poorest in Thailand, and have the lowest levels of non-agricultural employment. Social pressures, parental expectations, poverty, and a lack of educational and employment opportunities can put girls at risk of economic and sexual exploitation. Each year thousands of young women flock to Bangkok and other urban areas in search of work. Many young women without appropriate skills end up working in bars, massage parlors, and brothels. Some girls are even sold into prostitution by parents and relatives, and in several areas of northern Thailand it has become acceptable to encourage daughters to enter commercial sex work. The Thai government estimates that between 20,000 and 40,000 girls under the age of 18 are engaged in commercial sex work.

The Pan Pacific Hotel in Bangkok and the Child Protection Section of UNICEF Thailand worked together to develop the program. The program uses the hotel's expertise in human resources development to provide disadvantaged young girls with the skills to work in the hotel and travel industry. UNICEF finances the girls' stay in Bangkok and their transportation to and within the city. It also organises child rights training, and coordinates the activities of a number of other partners, such as the Thai Ministry of Education and NGOs. The Pan Pacific Bangkok coordinates the activities of seventeen other hotels participating in the project. The course covers hotel service and life skills, and lasts 22 weeks. The hotel service component is taught by department heads and supervisors from participating hotels and includes housekeeping, laundry, floral arrangement, food preparation, and food and beverage services.

By providing vocational and life skills training, the YCDP ensures long-term social and economic security for young girls otherwise at risk of economic and sexual exploitation. When the YCDP was first launched in 1995, it had nine participants. A year later, the program expanded to include five other hotels with a total of 35 participants. The program since has grown to include 18 hotels and has trained a total of 450 young women from 17 provinces (one boy, who had been working on a deep sea fishing boat, participated in the first year of the program, since then no other males have done so.)

(Taken from Panpac/ unicef nd.)

Law and Governance

211. Any overview of practice for street children must be linked to related sectors. The issues of coordination and cooperation have been noted above, including the importance of partnership between projects. The role of state parties (to the Convention on the Rights of the Child) also is necessarily linked, including the establishment and minimum implementation of appropriate legislation. There are also the roles of duty bearers in relation to children's rights.

212. The question of finance is always raised in relation to project work and practice, both by NGOs and government. One means of looking further at this issue has been the development of children's budgets, specifically detailing how much of national budgets are spent on children and in which areas. Children's budgets help to link the role of the state with children's rights, at least in terms of spending. Analysis of overall resources allocations (including non-financial resources) provides a starting point in examining how gaps in children's rights might be fulfilled.

CHILDREN'S OWN ORGANIZATIONS

The Bal Mazdoor Union (Child Workers Union), New Delhi, India

The child workers own union enables children to gain strength from their unity and increases their bargaining power. The Bal Mazdoor Union sees itself as a platform of and for children who are denied access to their basic rights. The Union is concerned about the situations of abuse, exploitation and/or denial of basic fundamental rights, such as the right to a childhood, education, recreation, leisure, shelter, health care, the right to respect and opportunities to participate in policies and programs affecting them. Through their Union the children also seek to mobilise public opinion to redress conditions and pressures that force them to work, including the situation of poverty and unemployment of their families. The Bal Mazdoor Union in its various collective actions have also highlighted the situation of children in this larger context and have held adults accountable when children's rights have been severely violated. For example, in 1994 The Bal Mazdoor Union brought to the attention of people the callous death of 15 year old Zaffar Imam by his employer in April 1994. In this case the Bal Mazdoor Union through its dialogue with the Chief Minister of Delhi was able to change the charge on the accused employer from Section 307 of the IPC (which relates to attempt to murder) to a murder charge (Section 302 of the IPC). Further, on behalf of the child's parents the Bal Mazdoor Union filed a case in the Delhi High Court for compensation for a sum of Rs.10,80,000.

Through their active participation and associations street and working children have been empowered to improve their own lives and to influence programs and policies on issues concerning them.

(Taken from O'Kane 2002.)

Child Brigade, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Child Brigade is an organization that started in Dhaka in 1995 as a pilot project of Save the Children Sweden. Child Brigade since has become an established and well-known organization its own right. The motto of Child Brigade is "Be Together and Organized". By uniting together, street children strengthen their capacity to survive. Child Brigade also strives to improve the circumstances of street children. The children of Child Brigade seek to participate at all levels on issues affecting them.

A core group elected by a wider group of street children bears responsibility for carrying out the organization's activities. Any street child aged 10-16 years who is willing to follow the rules and regulations of Child Brigade can become a member of the organization. Members have opportunities for: training and personal development, education, health care, space to leave belongings, and some income generation activities. Child Brigade also organizes a street and social networking program to raise awareness among street children through a group training process. The organization reaches out to some 400 street and working children through 6 contact points in the city. Through drama and "Baboo", their own "literacy kit", Child Brigade involves street children in discussions on issues affecting them, child rights, as well as literacy and numeracy. Child Brigade has published its own book, "Amra", based on the observations of street children, and also has produced a series of posters highlighting the problems facing street children in Bangladesh.

Child Brigade members have made linkages with street children involved in other projects, as well as with child rights activists. For example, Child Brigade members played an active role in discussions and actions related to the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children, together with a wider forum of children from other NGOs and children's organizations. Child Brigade recently has have formed partnerships with an adult human rights organization ("Adhikar") as well as a group of journalists. In addition to helping to sensitize the wider public in Bangladesh about the abuse and exploitation of children, Child Brigade has helped to establish a "Monitoring Cell" that provides street children with immediate, free, legal assistance.

(Taken from O'Kane 2002.)

Children's Budgets

The idea of "children's budgets" or a "child-focused budget" has emerged as researchers and policy makers have paid more attention to the links between macro-economic development and children's rights. The "main research issues of studies on this theme [are] to clarify resources, especially financial resources from governments, which have been spent (directly or indirectly) on children, and to analyse [the] possibility to improve efficiency of this spending....Such child-centered budget studies are clearly problem-oriented, as they can be a basis for suggestion and advocacy for children's rights, especially in countries which have ratified the international Convention on the Rights of the Child" (Nguyen Thi Van Anh et al, 2000 Viet Nam study, p 8).

Child-focused budgets are an aspect of the general framework of budget setting and particularly the transparency of the link between policy commitments and outcomes that are, partially at least, expressed in financial commitments and expenditure. Problems associated with transparency include lack of knowledge and information, but also issues such as pressures to ensure policy commitments and legal obligations are followed up. This is especially true in the case of children's issues since children have no political voice and are subject to many other disadvantages" (Nguyen Thi Van Anh et al, 2000 Viet Nam study, p 8).

Much initial work in this area was conducted in Africa for example, in South Africa (see Robinson and Biersteker 1997 as well as www.idasact.org.za/bis/), Ghana and elsewhere, but interest has also been taken up in Asia, particularly in Viet Nam (for example Nguyen Thi Van Anh et al 2000 on education and disabilities, and Crumpton and Giap 2002 on basic education).

One study in Viet Nam aimed to make children, especially children with disabilities, more visible in policy and decision-making processes. The study focussed on the budget for primary education at the district level to identify and clarify the link between budget and policies related to children's right to education. The study determined that existing school budgets were inadequate to provide for children with disabilities or other special circumstances (see Nguyen Thi Van Anh et al, 2000 Viet Nam study).

A 2002 study in Viet Nam (Crumpton and Giap) similarly identified that "the consistent feature of the budget allocation process is that salary costs take precedence over other budget items and represent the lion's share of the recurrent (and overall) education budget. This translates into an acute shortage of state expenditure on basic learning materials, facilities and maintenance at the school level, negatively affecting the quality of teaching and learning as well as investment in the sector" (Crumpton and Giap 2002: p 5). The study pointed out that this shortage means that "parental and community contributions are increasingly important to address high funding gaps at the school level and ensure a minimum standard of education" (ibid: p 6). This "reliance on parental contributions to provide a minimal level of service....[adds] to the financial and learning disadvantage of poor families, thus contributing to the cycle of poverty" (ibid: p 6).

Although these examples are drawn from children's budgets in education, such budgeting review also can be linked to street children issues, where poverty prevents children from attending school, not receiving an education, and thus becoming at risk of moving to the streets.

<p>TERMS OF REFERENCE AND BACKGROUND TO THE STREET CHILDREN WORKING PAPER</p>
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I. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. The Asian Development Bank requires a staff consultant to assist in the preparation of a Working Paper on good practice in addressing the needs of street children.³ Such a report follows ADB-NGO Roundtables on Street Children in May 2001 and December 2002 and the results of follow-up internal Bank meetings that recommended greater operational involvement of ADB in street children issues in the context of ADB's Poverty Reduction Strategy, its new Social Protection Strategic Framework, and related poverty and social dimensions issues. Such involvement could include the following:

- Economic and sector work and technical assistance grants (TAs) to improve ADB's knowledge base on the issues affecting street children;
- Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFPR) grant projects (which normally complement ongoing or planned ADB loan activities);
- Specific loans where street children concerns are included as part of project components;
- Support for improved NGO capacity to work with street children; and
- Strengthened media coverage and effective awareness campaigns to highlight the needs of a growing street children population in the region.

2. The objective of the Working Paper is to provide information to ADB Management and Staff on the concerns/needs of street children in the region, and how such concerns can better be reflected in ADB's lending and non-lending activities, especially in relation to ADB's overarching goal of poverty reduction.

II. TASKS

3. The tasks of the Consultant will include the following:

- (i) review existing draft report and other background materials provided by ADB;
- (ii) prepare a detailed workplan outlining overall timeframe for completion of the report, including any additional research-related travel time (and itinerary) that might be required;
- (iii) collect, collate, and review background material and documents that describe initiatives aimed at addressing the issue of street children in Asia and the Pacific supported or implemented by ADB, other multilateral and bilateral donors, NGOs, and other civil society institutions;
- (iv) analyze these documents and review major common strengths and weaknesses of the various approaches or initiatives under review. Highlight

³ A consultant was recruited in late 2001 to prepare a similar report. However, due to illness the consultant was unable to complete the assignment as per the initial TORs. The first consultant's rough draft as well as other background materials will be provided to the consultant who is recruited by ADB to complete the "Best Practices" study.

- innovative practices that have achieved concrete results (e.g, through presentation of “text box“ case studies);
- (v) analyze institutional arrangements employed in dealing with street children issues, e.g., the roles of local and central governments, NGOs, and other civil society organizations;
 - (vi) analyze linkages between street children issues and the impact on poverty at various levels, e.g., family, community, local, national, including with respect to social capital, institutional development, and human development perspectives;
 - (vii) prepare a Working Paper describing the major findings of these analyses in relation to ADB practices, procedures, and comparative advantages, especially in the context of ADB’s overall poverty reduction objectives. As much as possible, relate the findings to ADB’s country and regional programs (Bank Social Protection staff will share responsibility for this portion of the report);

Consultant’s Qualifications

4. The consultant should have a degree in a relevant field of applied social science, preferably with specialization in social protection and/or poverty reduction. She/he should have substantial work experience on issues such as street children, social protection, child labor, and urban development. The consultant should be familiar with experience and approaches used by governments, multilateral and bilateral agencies, as well as NGOs and other civil society organizations on issues relating to street children. Some knowledge of ADB policies and programs on poverty reduction and social dimensions is desirable.

III. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

5. The consultant will produce the following outputs:
- (i) preliminary outline of review findings and case study analyses after four weeks, including a bibliography of documents under review. Copies of all reviewed documents ultimately will be provided by the consultant to the Poverty Reduction and Social Development Division, Regional and Sustainable Development Department (RSDD);
 - (ii) draft Working Paper
 - (iii) a final Working Paper incorporating comments or other input from ADB and other interested parties.

IV. TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT

6. The consultant will be recruited under a lumpsum contract for 40 working days over a period of 12-16 weeks starting August 2001, and finishing no later than end-March 2003. The consultant’s engagement will be in accordance with the ADB’s Guidelines on the Use of Consultants. The Poverty Reduction and Social Development Division will have primary responsibility for liaison with and supervision of the consultant’s work, under the oversight of an *ad hoc* Bank inter-departmental committee.

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