

STREET CHILDREN: EDUCATION & REFORMS

Veena Jha

Principal, Chouhan College of Education, Bhopal

Aneesh Jose

Ph. D Research Scholar, Barkatullah University, Bhopal

Voice of Research

Volume 5, Issue 1

June 2016

ISSN 2277-7733

Abstract

The word 'Children' seems to be equal to 'joyful'. We bear in mind so many smiling faces of young beautiful kids. But the term street children give an opposite impression. A street child is a term for children experiencing homelessness who live on the streets of a city, town or village. Other words a street child is someone for whom the street has become his or her habitual abode and or source of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised, or directed by responsible adults. Homeless youth are often called street kids and street youth. Some street children, notably in more developed nations are part of a subcategory called thrown away children who are children that have been forced to leave home. Thrown away children are more likely to come from single-parent homes. Street children are often subject to abuse, neglect, exploitation, or in extreme cases, murder by clean-up squads that have been hired by local businesses or police. In western societies, such children are sometimes treated as homeless children rather than criminals or beggars. It is estimated that more than 400000 street children in India exist. Mainly because of family conflict, they come to live on the streets and take on the full responsibilities of caring for themselves, including working to provide for the protecting themselves. Boys and girls of all ages are found living and working in public spaces, and are visible in the great majority of the world's urban centres. Though street children do sometimes band together for greater security, they are often exploited by employers and the police.

Keywords: Children, Education, Reforms

Category among street children

UNICEF has defined Street children into three types.

Street Living Children: Children who have run away from their families and live alone on the streets.

Street Working Children: Children who spend most of the time on the streets, fending for themselves, but returning home on a regular basis.

Children from Street Families: Children who live on the streets with their families.

Apart from these, Children who are open to street life includes those who have been abandoned by their families or sent into cities because of a family's intense poverty, often with hopes that a child will be able to earn money for the family and send it home. Children who run away from home or children's institutions frequently end up on the street since they rarely return home due to dysfunctional families, or physical, mental and or sexual abuse. In several areas of the world, disabled children are commonly abandoned, particularly in developing countries. In addition, refugee children from armed conflict areas, children separated from their families for long periods of time and AIDS orphans, repeatedly find nowhere to go but the streets.

How does a child become Street Child?

Street never gives birth to a child. As per UNICEF, 2010 Survey, it is estimated 100 million children living in the streets in the world. It is the condition focuses the child to be a street child. These are the few causes

Poverty; Armed conflict; Natural and man-made disasters; Famine; Physical and sexual abuse; Exploitation by adults; Disinheritance or being disowned; Dislocation through migration; Family Breakdown; Freedom from childhood itself.

Apart from these issues, so many other reasons make the

child to be part of the avenue. Children suffer more severely than adults from these upheavals, and many lack the adequate institutional support to address their special needs. Eventually, they end up on the streets. Many studies have determined that street children are most often boys and aged ten to 14. Many girls live on the streets as well, although smaller numbers are reported due to their being more useful in the home, taking care of younger siblings and cooking. Girls also have a greater vulnerability to trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation or other forms of child labour. It is often believed that street children are only seen in undeveloped and developing countries but almost all countries, rich or poor, having young people living on the street.

My observation on nature of street children at Chennai City

During my stay at Chennai City, I got opportunity to observe the street children especially on their daily routine. A study conducted in 1996 identified as many as 75000 street children in Chennai city. But this number presently is not the same but possibilities and indications are to have increased. I mainly focused on Kodungaiyur, Perungudi and Todiarpur areas where you can find so many rag-pickers in the dump yards. It was very difficult for me to get an idea about their day to day life since they keep on moving from one area to other areas. So I need to attract them with food article and financial aid. At last I was able to reach out 40 to 50 children

Mostly street children (boys) have no fixed and permanent place to live and sleep. They congregate wherever there is a possibility to find money and food. During day time the used to move from here to there and take rest at market places, road side and other places. They mainly sleep in the areas like footpaths, public parks etc. under and over the over- bridges.

I could find many girls live in the slum with their parents and

relatives. They frequently change their living places. Chennai city faces lot of drinking water problems these days due to recent flood. In slum areas they have to face a lot of difficulties for collecting drinking water. Street children have to use the dirty water from the ponds and unrepared public bore wells even for drinking. Being the bank of sea, they often take shower in the sea. Street children to whom I had talked never used the toilet to answer the nature calls. They use the common grounds, public roads, railway tracks or sea beach. I could find few common toilets in the slums of Kodungaiyur and Perungudi.

I have seen so many street children eating from the garbage mainly from big hotel wastes. They use their personal income which they get it from different sources like begging, stealing or even selling the waste goods to purchase tea, dosa etc. It was found that many of them are able to find a source for their daily income. Many of them are suffering from different internal diseases like skin diseases, wound on the body etc. They are not all aware about any external diseases. They don't mind of having cold, fever, sneezing, Dysentery, headache etc. The use of drugs by street children is common in Chennai city. Many of them have smoking habits and they use drugs which are cheaper and easily available.

Educational status and awareness

Educational status and awareness of these children were very poor even their parents. I could not find a single person who is literate. They are not interested to be part of education since their ultimate aim is earn their livelihood. They might be interested to part of school if someone helps them for their living. I feel, it was condition and awareness lacking in their life. Many parents of the slum wished to send their children to schools if they get adequate financial support because they themselves don't have the work and children themselves had to earn for their living. Other issue they feel about clothing. Most of the children have torn shirt and pant that they wear and walk bare foot.

Many NGOs and Govt Organizations have been working for the development of Street children of Chennai City. Chennai Corporation launched a project to provide education and night shelter for street children in 2009. The project would also motivate such students to join school to make education more inclusive. The beginning stage, the civic body identifies 824 child labourers and admitted them in various corporation schools. Most of them were in the 5- 17 age group and engaged in some kind of economic activity including rag-picking. Their parents were imparted training for proper employment and loans have given to improve their economic conditions.

Smile Foundation, inspired by Senge's philosophy, a group of young corporate professionals was setup in 2002 to work

for the underprivileged children, youth and women through relevant education, innovative healthcare and market-focused livelihood programmes. It has done so many work for the development of street children in Chennai city itself. It has implemented 13 welfare projects for street children out of 158 in Chennai itself so far.

Karunalya Social Service Society, a non profit voluntary organisation registered in the year 1995 was started as a grass roots organisation for the welfare and rehabilitation of street and working children of Chennai city. It also focuses attention towards the protection of the girl children in the community and their counselling, shelter home care, food, clothing, health care, formal and non formal education, vocational training in tailoring and family reintegration. It creates a secure place for the children of those parents who go to work and regular school going children. One teacher and one helper have been appointed in each centre. The children are given opportunity to develop their skills in observation, motor development and provided space to play. Children are trained in good health habits to maintain personal and environmental hygiene.

Recommendation on Education & Welfare for Street Children

Education is both the means as well as the end to a better life: the means because it empowers an individual to earn his/her livelihood and the end because it increase one's awareness on a range of issues – from healthcare to appropriate social behaviour to understanding one's rights- and in the process help him/her evolve as a better citizen. Lot of work have been done by different Government and Non Government organization for the welfare of street children and their educational reforms. Now on seeing status of street children, I am sure that it was not sufficient for their development. If you take the example of Chennai more than 262 Organizations have worked for the (As per Survey on 2010) benefit of this group. But number has not come down, but yet it has gone up only. So there should be unified and systematic system should be there.

Government should set up a separate department for the welfare of Street Children in each state with a headquarter as well as district sub quarters. This department should take open day care centre as per requirement. Employers who will be appointed in these offices should be capable and able to work with dedication. All the organization working on this area should come under this department. There should be proper coordination among the NGOs and other organization. State headquarter should monitor all their work and allot the area in which they should focus. Proper survey should be done on their number and frequent place of visit every year. It will help us to about their area where we can provide the shelter, rehabilitation and then comes the education.

Government should avoid completion rather it should be attraction. How can we attract them? First foremost employment opportunity should be given to the parents. Through them these children will be attracted. It is the livelihood that can attract orphan and destitute children to day care centre. Here comes the education. Few organizations are running their own schools. They work among these children under the street children Education Project with support of international volunteers. They provide them with free education, educational materials, uniforms and play materials. The volunteers are mainly focusing on the ways needed for the development of these children. They are taught general knowledge, etiquette/ norms and manners while talking, sitting, moving, eating, reading, speaking etc. They accomplish this with the help of the class teacher and the volunteers. Sports and games are conducted to develop their physical stamina. But these were not sufficient meet day to day needs. There should be adequate day care centres in each areas and coordination among these centres is necessary for their rehabilitation. If the children happen to leave one centre, there should be provision for the other centres to adopt them. All the centres should follow single curriculum and children should be make into different categories as per their level not by the age. They can be given the basic lessons of all the main subjects. They can focus on hygiene awareness, developing other skills, creativity exercise like drawing, painting, music and dance. Apart from this physical excessive is must. Once they learn basic lessons, we can think about inclusive education. They will have the capability to adjust with normal children. But here does not end the work. There should be proper follow up about these children. Otherwise these should be change that they may go back to their past life.

Conclusion

Homelessness and street life have extremely detrimental effects on children. Their unstable lifestyles, lack of medical care, and inadequate living conditions increase young people's susceptibility to chronic illnesses such as respiratory or eat, some scavenge or find exploitative physical work. Drug use by children on the streets in common as they look for means to numb the pain with deal with hardships associated with street life. Studies have found that up to 90 per cent of street children use psychoactive substance, including medicines, alcohol, cigarettes, heroin, cannabis, and readily available industrial products, such as shoe glue. Today, 8 million children in India are out of school – surrounded by poverty, illness and despair; they are fighting a daily battle for their survival. Together, we can bring hope in their lives. Together, we can bring change and make it last.

References

- A.Langston, L. Abhott. V. Lewis, and M. Kellett, 'Early Childhood'. Doing Research with children and Young People, S. Fraser, V Lewis, S. Ding, M Kellett and C. Robinson, eds., London: Sage, pp 147-160,2004.
- A. Richter- Kornweiz,- Child Poverty- Social and Economic Policy for Children.
- B. White,- Globalization and the Child Labour Problem, II Journal of International Development, Vol, 8, no 6, pp. 829-839,1996
- C.A Hartzen and S. Priyadarsini, The Global Victimization of Children: Problems and Solutions. New York: Springer Science + Business Media. LLC,P 57, 2012
- C Bellamy, The State of the World's Children, 2005: Childhood under Threat. New York : UNICEF, 2004.
- D. Remenyi, B Willams, A Money and E Swartz, Doing Research in Business and Management: An introduction to Process and Method. London ; Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, p 285,2003
- D W Stewart and P N Shamdasani, Focus Group Discussion: Theory and Practice. London: SAGE, p,10.1990
- E. Rubinton and M.S Weinberg, The study of Social Problems: Seven Perspectives, 7th ed. Oxford University Press, p, 2011.
- G.R Sethi, - Street Children- A window to the Reality, II Indian Pediatrics, vol.41- 2004
- Human Rights Watch, World Report 200: The events of 1999. USA: Human Rights Watch
- IFRC, First Aid in the community: A Manual for Trainers of Red Cross and Red Crescent Volunteers in Africa.
- M. Desai, A Right- Based Preventive Approach for Psychological Well- Being in Childhood. New York:
- P.C Shukla, Street Children and the Asphalt Life: Street Children and the Future Direction. Adarsh Nagar, New Delhi. India.
- R.K Jain, Lifestyle for Total Development: A Unique Guide to Develop Your Personality, New Delhi
- S. Deb, children in Agony: A Source Book. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company. 2006
- S. Verma, - Socialization for Survival: Development issues among working street children in India.
- WHO, UNIESCO. School health education to prevent AIDS and HIV: A resource package for curriculum planners. 1994
- WHO & Mentor Foundation Young people and substance use: A manual on how to create use and evaluate educational materials and activities. Geneva, 1999