CHAPTER – VIII

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

The problem of street children has become an important aspect of urban life and urban poverty studies cannot just ignore the issue. Today, more and more children and youth around the world are left with no alternative or choice but the make a living for their survival. Often, they have to do so or forced to do so to support the dependent families also and assume roles traditionally played by their parents.

Various factors have been contributing to the increase in the number of street children. While HIV AIDS is rated as the highest killer in Sub Saharan Africa (where the critical impact of the epidemic is such that more than 3.54 million children under the age of 15 years lost their parents and 13 million have lost one parent), in India poverty and related deprivation has killed many parents or pushed children out of homes to fend for themselves.

Every street child has a story to tell as far as its reasons to come to the street are concerned. Sudden freedom, excitement and release from rules and regulations are the general causes. But the main cause is destitution and thrown to the street being an orphan and having nowhere else to go. They are the result of failure of the parents and the family to support them and provide for their livelihood, leave alone education and good grooming. Being desperate to survive, they turn to become vagabonds and forever looking for means of surviving in the city, all alone. They are extremely poverty-stricken. Their only goal and activity is to make two ends meet and to earn their living by resorting to whatever means that are available, such as, crime, begging,
wage work, searching the bins for leftovers etc. proper clothing and health care are luxuries. Thus, they are becoming a burden on the society and liability for governments to achieve holistic development. The present study has attempted to look into the problem of street children taking the growing metropolis of the city of Bangalore which is the setting of study. It has sought to understand the causes and consequences of this growing menace in urban area.

8.2 Objectives of the Study

1) To understand the concept of street children in the context of a developing economy like India and the factors leading to such a state of affairs. The study aimed to identify the factors leading to the formation of ‘street children and youth’ in the fast expanding metropolis of Bangalore city;

2) Secondly, the study aimed to examine the factors leading to ‘Street – living’ among children and to trace the origin and development of the problem of ‘Street Children’ in Bangalore city;

3) Third, the study tried to examine the current social, economic and other aspects of the life of street children in the study area;

4) Fourth, it aimed to understand the gender, regional and caste/religion-specific vulnerabilities among these children, both in early life and after becoming street children;

5) The fifth objective was to critically look into the various interventions by both the state and civil society to address the problems of street children, particularly, health, shelter, food security, literacy and employment; identification and mainstreaming them into the regular society. It has tried to understand the roles and functions of various civil society organizations working for the betterment of street children in BANGALORE CITY; and

6) Finally, the study aimed to link the situation of street children to broader issues of urban development and poverty (as a Millennium Development Goal) and to suggest preventive and rehabilitative programmes for policy framing.

8.3 Methodology & Structure of the Thesis

8.3.1 Sampling and Universe of Study

As tracing and continuous follow-up of stray-street children was difficult it was decided to take up the study about street children of Bangalore city who are receiving institutional support. In Bangalore City there are a few NGOs dealing with
Street children such as – APSA in Thippasandra, PARASPARA in Yeshwanthpur. DON BOSCO in Chamarajpet and ACTION AID INDIA in Richmond Town. It estimated that about 15,000 street children are assisted by these institutions. On the basis of age – group, sex, educational level, skill they possess a few respondents were also contacted to discuss issues with them.

A total of 300 street children were selected for the study to conduct personal interviews with them using a detailed questionnaire. As Bangalore city is very vast especially after it has become a metropolis and named as Bruhat Bangalore Metropolitan Area and Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagar Palike (BBMP). It has stretched far and wide and engulfed a number of bordering villages and hamlets in that process.

As children tend to migrate to areas that are not well developed and contain slums to provide them with shelter, such areas were searched for the possible stay by street children. Finally the 300 children were selected from a cross section of zones and wards of the city. These were both from the city centre (like the K R Market, Subashnagar Bus Stand Area) and some of the outlying areas.

8.3.2 Tools of Data Collection

Considering that the topic or issue on hand is a sensitive one and realizing that the collection of information straight away from the street children themselves would be struck by field level constraints, both quantitative and qualitative methods of research were used in the present study. Secondary and primary – both sources of data were collected to have an understanding of the situation regarding the subject. Secondary sources included not only published books, journal articles, census reports and government documents, but reports of studies and work carried out by the civil society organizations (NGOs) on the street children. A number of related issues were
also looked into to have first-hand information about the topic of study. This helped in obtaining a situational analysis that was useful in designing the tools of primary data collection.

It was decided to use a variety of research tools to obtain the required data from the stakeholders ranging from the street children themselves, their parents (wherever they were traced), neighbours, staff of the concerned NGO, state government departments of labour, health, education, and so on; from the police personnel, from the employers of the working children among the street children, owners of the space used by the children to reside during the night, and others related to the issue.

Questionnaires were used to collect information from the above mentioned stakeholders. Street children were contacted using the random sampling method. Based on secondary sources of data, different localities where such children are concentrated were identified. These sources included both state and civil society organizations working for the identification, rehabilitation and betterment of such children. A representative number of such children were identified covering both gender, different age groups, religion and caste background; the work sector where the child was employed and the different localities/areas/wards in the city of Bangalore. Wherever necessary, case studies of select children were also conducted. Besides questionnaires and case studies, focused group discussions were conducted with a cross section of stakeholders. At times, participatory methods of data collection were also used, as the subject of study is quite sensitive and is not always amenable for interviewing and oral interactions. Observation was essential to document the day-
to-day life of the children, their activities and problems. Once the data collection was complete, data was analysed using both of quantitative and qualitative techniques.

8.4 Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework or theoretical framework of the study was discussed and presented in Chapter two. It has discussed the problems in defining street children, lack of studies to develop a framework and lack of sufficiently reliable government level data for designing the methodology such as selection of sample, preparing tools of data collection and so on.

8.4.1 Definitional Problems

Every social scientist, government departments and voluntary organizations have found the issue of street children complex and their definition difficult. Such children are described as ‘street children’, ‘homeless children’, and so on by studies ‘across countries and cultures’ (Shukla, 2005 pp. 1). Secondly, the children have missed out and deprived of any proper estimation as the national census, NSSO and other agencies have not covered these children due to operational problems of locating them. Rough estimates have put the number of such unfortunate children at 10 million to 100 million, predominantly found in the developing countries of Asia (25-30 million), Latin America (40 million) and Africa (over 10 million) (ibid). The studies have also reported that street boys are more in number than their female counterparts.

8.4.2 Types of Street Children

Literature survey or review has pointed towards the existence of at least two types of being on the ‘Street’. One is where the children are completely out of home
and virtually live on the street, day and night. The second type is one where the children are on the street, but return ‘home’ each night. The first type of children are the extremely vulnerable and deprived poor and destitute ones while the latter are relatively better as they return to their parents or relatives in the night. They also have relatively less worrisome reasons for turning to the streets. The second type is those who run away from home to ‘enjoy’ life, be with friends, to have ‘fun’ and pass the time. Studies state that the latter type of children is found more in a majority of countries. They are better than the ‘of the street’ children who have made the street their home.

8.4.3 Origin of the Phenomenon of Street Children

Literature review has unearthed that street children are not a new entity in the present day urban areas. They are a historical phenomenon and as old as poverty itself. The children of the very poor and vulnerable in most of the developing countries have ‘made the street their abode or theatre to learn the skill of survival and the battleground for fighting their orphan status. They are not acceptable in any society and culture although they are the products of the wrongs of the society. The society has addressed them with derogatory names common to all countries irrespective of their own developed status of economy and culture. For example, in Colombia they are called as ‘gamin’, ‘Chinches’ (meaning bed bugs); Rio calls them marginals and criminals; ‘Pajaro Frutero’ in Peru (meaning fruit birds), ‘Polillas’ or moths in Bolivia, ‘Resistoleros’ or little rebels in Honduras, Dust children (Bui Doi) in Vietnam ‘Saligoman (nasty kids) in Rwanda, ‘Poussins (chicks), mosquitoes in Cameron and Balados or wanderers in Zaire and Congo. In our state they are known as ‘beedhi makkalu’. A street child is a minor below the age of majority in the society in question.
Literature survey has shown that the children use the street to spend at least a part of his or her days and as a place of congregation rather than as simply a channel for moving from one place to another. Street children tend to reside on the streets full or part time and tend to generate their income there. According to the UN such children are those for whom the street has become the home or source of livelihood and as those who are inadequately protected and supervised by adults. The definition suggests that the child on the street may be a working child, school dropout or a homeless child. Sc is considered in appropriate by some agencies because it creates an artificial category and diverts attention from the interconnected dimensions of child vulnerability.

8.5 Background of the Study Area

Chapter three gives an account of the profile of the universe of study, the state of Karnataka and the city of Bangalore. It also discusses, broadly, the various development programmes undertaken by the state and central governments for the improvement of rural poor. It is argued that despite several poverty alleviation programmes, those for providing basic amenities to the poor in rural areas, such as, drinking water and sanitation (Nirmal Karnataka), housing (Ashraya scheme, Dr. B R Ambedkar Housing Scheme and Indira Awaz Yojana), several employment generation programmes such as the NREP, JRY and NREGP in the past, SGSY, and the very recent MGNREGS, women empowerment programmes like Stree Shakthi Yojana and formation of women’s self help groups, many other such programmes for the SCs and STs, the poor are migrating from the rural areas to the cities and towns in search of better livelihoods.
Bangalore ® district has the highest rate of growth of population at 6.5 per cent. It has the smallest area of 2190 sq.kms has the highest population density of around 2979 persons per sq. kms. This could be attributed to the increase in commercial and economic activities which have led to increased population density. The causes of such expansion are placed upon its technological advancement. The expansion of the IT and BT sector, increased industrialisation have led to increased number of people coming to the city looking for better livelihoods and career. Migration is quoted as the cause of such speedy expansion of the city. As much as up to 7 per cent of the expansion is caused by migration out of the total increase of 15.57 per cent. Thus, population increase in the city is mainly due to migration from outside or in migration. These are the people who are coming in looking for jobs or livelihood base in the city. Statistics show that natural increase in population is only 22 per cent and the movement of population was mainly for employment purposes (45 per cent). Increase in the density of population is not only of immigrants but taluk-wise we find the density of population belonging to the SC and ST communities too. Statistics have shown that 8,51,047 persons belonged to the SCs and 86,018 persons to the ST category. Out of the total Scheduled Caste population, 51.13 and 48.87 per cent were males and females respectively. Similarly, 52.28 and 47.72 per cent of males and females were in the category of scheduled tribe population.

8.6 Findings of the Study

The findings of the study are presented in chapters four to seven. An effort is made below to briefly discuss the findings under each one of these core chapters:
8.6.1 Social and Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The social, demographic and economic profile of street children is presented in chapter four. The study has covered a total of 300 street children who resided in different pockets or wards of the city of Bangalore. There were 221 boys (73.67 per cent) and 79 girls (26.33 per cent) which tell us those girl street children are relatively less in density. This could be related to two factors: one is that the traditional hold over girls in families is still intact as a result of which girls did not leave homes that easily as boys do. The second factor which is in fact a field finding is that the low density of girls on streets is because as soon as they are of a certain age, they are lured or forcefully taken away for prostitution. In terms of their age composition, children in the age group of 13 years to 14 years were more in number (135 or 45 per cent) followed by 21.67 per cent of those above 15 years of age. The study came across 17 street children who were married. Otherwise 94.33 children in the sample were unmarried. Only in a few cases, we came across girls also doing other work such as flower selling.

The study also found that a large majority of street children in the sample, as expected, were illiterate (56.67 per cent). Only 41.33 per cent were literate. Out of those who were literate, 65.75 per cent (or 144 street children) had studied up to primary and 13.70 per cent had studied till secondary school. Those who had studied till high school were only 5.94 per cent.

In terms of their caste composition, majority of street children claimed that they did not know their caste (75 per cent). Among those who identified themselves as belonging to some or the other caste, majority (36 children forming 12 per cent) hailed from the OBC category. The next highest were those hailing from SC
background (6.33 per cent) followed by 11 children (3.67 per cent) of those belonging to ST group. There were 9 children forming 3 per cent of the sample belonging to even upper castes. Thus, street children are representative of all in the hierarchy.

The study has shed light on the interesting link between household size and caste/tribe background of street children. For example, the street children from ST background came from an average big family size of five plus members. The OBC and SC children came from slightly small size of households with 4 plus members. Those children who have not stated their caste background are those with large family size of 6 plus members.

On the whole, the study has found that the street children tend to seek shelter in small and congested homes. Some of them have faced separation from family during communal strife or civil unrest; some others have been released from jail or retention centres. They have resorted to escape from family problems; rejection-feeling that living on the street is better than coping with problems in their homes. Some of them have had conflicts with parents, experienced abuse - sexual or physical, neglected as disabled child etc. The street children have escaped from work demands in the home, i.e., from routine family tasks. There are greater demands on them; hence they reported that they were feeling as slaves, and were looking forward for escape and freedom. The greatest worry for some of them was to ways to escape from children’s institutions and even from prisons. The reason was that they could not adjust to rules and regulations.

8.6.2 Work Profile of the Respondents

The work profile of the respondent street children is presented in chapter five. We find that a majority of them worked as cleaners (18.33). The second type of
employment was working as sales kids (18 per cent). Begging, rag picking, casual labour, working as helpers were the other types of economic activities of the respondents. Girls were into prostitution. There were also 27.33 per cent beggars. The average income of the street child was an abysmally low Rs. 100-201. The street children resort to various means to earn - begging, carrying or bearing, drug trafficking, car washing, juggling, performing music, running errands, scavenging, sex work, shoe shining and vending.

8.6.3 Problems faced by the Street Children and Health Issues

The chapter six looks at the causes of children turning out to be street children, their problems and challenges, including problems of maintenance of good health. The causes of children turning out to be street children are varied. Yet, they are often related to domestic, economic, or social disruption in societies. The causes were not only poverty but also others like ‘breakdown of homes and/or families, political unrest, sexual, physical or emotional abuse, domestic violence, lured away by pimps or internet predators, mental health problems, substance abuse, and sexual orientation or gender identity issues’.

Being driven to the streets, the children suffer from a number of complexities. Their place of stay is risky and totally lacking in any facilities or basic amenities. They lack access to water for bathing, drinking and cleaning clothes. They do not bathe daily, look shabbily dressed and cannot practice any grooming practices like brushing teeth, combing hair, cutting nails etc. They lack facility of sanitation (toilets). Some of them stay back in the work place itself as they lack place to spend the night.
As could be expected, the children suffer from a range of health ailments. Many of these sicknesses are seasonal also in occurrence. A majority of children suffer from fever, cold, cough. The next major disease is skin allergy and skin related diseases like eczema and scabies. The third important and common diseases are Tuberculosis, Asthma, and stomach pain. The diseases are sensitive to gender, age and caste background of the child. Some diseases are specifically affecting girl children. Anemia, gynecological disorders are prominent here.

It was found that the children have a great constraint in consulting a doctor or medical practitioner for curing their ailments. A majority of them are not happy with the facilities offered at the government hospitals and health centres. They are turned down by the staff there, as per the children. Further, the children lack financial support to purchase medicines. A few of them resort to traditional medicines. As ill health is basically linked to absence of amenities at their disposal such as a decent place to stay and sleep, access to nutritious and quality food (most of them admitted to eating stale and left over food), regular bathing and cleanliness practices, it is futile to discuss the treatment options because the absence of a healthy environment induces them to fall sick again and again.

The street children lacked adequate food and nutrition in what they ate. They never got enough to eat they reported. This automatically led to malnutrition, anaemia and vitamin deficiencies. Upon that they were also inflicted injuries by fellow street children while having quarrels, fights and conflicts. Sometimes the children caused injuries intentionally due to intoxication. Injuries were caused while using tools meant for adults. Boys were seen to be more prone to such injuries. Sometimes, the injuries were caused intentionally by the children under the influence
of alcohol (intoxication), or due to depression etc. They were also caused unintentionally while using tools meant for adults. It was found that the boys were more prone to such injuries.

Sexual and reproductive problems affected both girls and boys. However, street girls were more vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse and exploitation. They became victims of sexually transmittable diseases, HIV AIDS, unwanted pregnancies, unsecure abortions, deprived of antenatal care etc. The children suffered from diseases such as Tuberculosis, skin diseases, dental problems, parasitic diseases etc. we have to note that all these could be prevented easily.

8.7 Role of Government and Civil Society Organisations

Chapter seven presents the various interventions made by the government and civil society organizations to address the question of street living by children in the study area. Including India, most nations have undertaken efforts to address the problem of street children. The general effort has been to identify them and rehabilitate by placing them in the orphanages, juvenile homes or in correctional institutions. Besides the efforts by the government, there have been efforts by various governments to support or partner with non-government organizations in this endeavour. The Popular approaches to address the problem of street children have been identified as dealt with by resorting to four methods. They are the Correctional Model, Rehabilitative Model, Outreach Strategies, and Preventive Approach. The chapter has discussed these.

The Correctional Model is one which is primarily used by governments and the police in tracking and rehabilitating the street children. Here the children are viewed as a public nuisance and risk to the general security of the public. This model
also aims to protect the public and help in keeping the kids away from falling trap to crime. The methods this model uses to keep the children away from the life of crime are the juvenile justice system and specific institutions like juvenile homes.

The second one, i.e., Rehabilitative Model is supported by the churches and NGOs. It holds that street children are damaged and in need of assistance and help. Its objective is to rehabilitate children and bring them into the mainstream society. It also adopts methods to prevent children from going back to the streets. These are education, drug detoxification programs, and providing children with a safe family-like environment. This is justified in the findings of this study where we find that the street children are largely under the care and supervision of the NGOs some of which are sponsored by religious institutions/churches.

The Outreach strategy is supported by street teachers, NGOs, and the church/religious organizations. This strategy views street children as oppressed individuals in need of support from their communities. The objective of the Outreach strategy is to empower the street children by providing outreach education and training to support children.

The Preventive approach is supported by NGOs, the coalition of street children, and lobbying governments. They consider street children’s poor circumstances as arising from negative social and economic forces. In order to help street children, this approach focuses on the problems that cause children to leave their homes for the street by targeting parents’ unemployment, poor housing campaign for children’s rights etc. The NGOs have undertaken measures to offer counseling service to parents of street children. Wherever possible, employment
opportunities are promoted for them by the NGO/church. These are discussed as under:

8.7.1 **Type of Interventions by the NGOs/Civil Society Organisations**

The methods adopted by Civil Society Organisations and Non-government Organizations to address the problem of street children are not single fold. They employ a wide variety of strategies. One such is the UNICEF’s strategy to segregate Street Children who live at home from those who live outside. The experiences of children who live at home are evidently considerably different from the abandoned child who must rely on other children for protection, sustenance and nurture. It defines that unsupervised children and child workers can become full- fledged street children in course of time. The typology differentiates between three categories viz 1) children at high risk, 2) street children on the streets and 3) street children of the streets.

The NGOs call the first category as consisting of the boys and girls who live in absolute poverty in HHs that do not satisfy their basic needs. They may spend time on the streets to work or hang out. Through this, they are exposed to street culture, adult street workers, gangs, vagrants, prostitutes and homeless families. Most of the street children come from families who work for below normal wages and are from BPL background. Such children are at high risk of becoming Street Children. The NGOs identify such families and provide counseling services.

8.8 **Reasons behind being on the street: Various factors that explain why children are on the streets**

The first and foremost cause that the study has unearthed refers to family-related causes. These are poverty, lack of education and proper skill to obtain good
jobs and large family size. In other words, while poverty inhibited the children from not to leave home, lack of knowledge and skills needed for taking up good paying jobs further oppressed them.

The second visible cause is, as reported by the children themselves, the lack of responsibility on the part of the parents to care for their children and their needs of good and nourishing food, education, basic needs like clothing, bathing etc. It was further noted that the children were affected much by family conflicts, and quarrels between parents, parental bad behavior, use of substance by parents, alcoholism by father, gambling and such other vices by him. Many children have also complained of materialistic view or outlook of parents who never cared for them and were emotionally tied up with them.

The third and the most unfortunate finding that shook us was to learn that the children were physically abused in the family and outside it. This was by the relatives, visitors to the house, and friends of parents. The children reported that they did not waste any time to run away from the torture inflicted on them due to such torture and abuse.

The next problem the study has unearthed as bothering the street children relates to the child itself. It refers to a wrong personality pattern. Rebellious behavior of the child was a problem at home and in the neighbourhood that ultimately led to its deserting the home upon the beatings by parents. The government and NGO staff has a consensus that every child has its own reason to be on the streets. They say that only in a few cases excitement and freedom are the causes, but in a majority of cases, they are pushed to the street by helplessness and orphaned status having nowhere to go. Generally the intervention agency (be it the government or the NGO) names or
identifies street children after their main survival activities. Poverty is their greatest problem and they are ever striving to meet their basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, health and security.

A street child is literally one that is on the streets; having been abandoned by the family. In many cases, the agencies have found that none of the family members was alive. Such a child is left to the streets with no relatives to take care of it and stricken by poverty living in abandoned buildings and public spaces. The agencies have found that the second reason is children orphaned arise when families are displaced by poverty, natural disasters or wars when parents and even relatives are dead. It is virtually pushed to live on the street. Sometimes the surviving members of the family also live working on the streets. It is only later that some of them are identified and rescued to be taken for institutionalized care.

Institutions working for street children are quick in picking up girls on the street. The voluntary workers have mentioned that the girls are also selective in their street stay as they face sexual assault if they are found to be totally unprotected. Hence, they may join for more protected environment for work such as houses as domestic help. Often they also end up working as commercial sex workers and are protected by the agents.

Discussion with the children and the agencies has also shown that in some areas or cases, girls avoid the public by disguising as boys. They may also avoid the welfare agencies, police and others by appearing only in the night at specific points. The case workers from government and voluntary agencies have expressed sadness that girl street children face stigma of being bad much more than boys do. They face more difficulties and are easily exploited. They are also less capable of obtaining
work opportunities. Many jobs do not fit them due to working hours till late in the night or hard physical work etc. Even when they are employed, they are paid fewer wages than boys get for the same job. Girls are also sidelined by street educators who tend to use boys for giving examples, or getting tasks done.

8.9 Girl Street Children

Girls are reported to be less than boys for the following reasons:

- Families generally tend to take the girl children along with them when they go out for work. They may leave behind boys but not girls for reasons of security;
- Girls are also socialized by their families to be submissive and caring. Hence, they have fewer chances of being abandoned or running away. Their behavior is also comparatively better disciplined than that of the boys. Generally girls are docile and submissive, they are brought strictly and within the confines of the home, hence they tend to have fewer behavioural problems than boys’. Thus they have lesser conflicts with the families on matters of money, work obedience and discipline; and
- Girls are married off relatively early in traditional societies. Hence there are less chances of their being abandoned or running away from home.

At the community level, the children have faced tremendous odd situations, such as, lack of opportunities, inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities for employment, problems in working conditions, lack of recreational activities, etc. Children living in slums have faced congestion in houses and roads and inadequate or poor housing. Another difficult situation that a majority of children reported was the restrictive and inflexible educational system.

As far as the political and civic rights or environment is concerned, the children reported that there was poor law enforcement. There were societal causes for this that included political and economic conditions of poverty and deprivation, underdeveloped resources etc. the children and their families lacked financial means.
to buy clothes, food etc. They could not afford schooling and that was also because they could not afford accessories such as uniforms etc. The houses they had to live in lacked basic facilities like a toilet, bath, drinking water facility etc. These only added to their vulnerability and made them more amenable to diseases and ill health.

Childhood experiences of neglect and stress are carried over to life and transferred to children too. Transitory lifestyles that involved moving frequently from district to district or between cities, by choice or force, to hide from police, welfare authorities, gangs, drug syndicates, etc. led to such insecure feeling where children could not develop emotional attachment to people. Mental problems, emotional disorders, learning disabilities – all these are also caused by such childhood experiences.

To conclude, the street children were found to have spent their precious lives in utter misery and poverty conditions. They were deprived of a childhood and all activities that children are generally involved in. These included medical, educational, recreational and vocational resources. Health care was very poor and the children were not covered under any health package or insurance. They were excluded from medical, educational, recreational, educational, and vocational resources. They never had any vaccination or immunization; this has resulted in poor health. Added to these is their illiteracy, hence cannot acquire skills for finding jobs.

While it was known that the street children were abused at home, it was shocking to hear them telling that they lived in a violent environment outside home too. They were totally unprotected, exploited and bore many physical injuries. There were some instances of death from violence. The common sources of causing violence were the police, gangs, drug syndicates, commercial sex businesses, supari
killings or death squads, threat from other street children and sexual partners. The next in importance among the problems of street children is stigmatization. They were perceived as bad elements and causing trouble; as uncontrollable, violent and using substance; as children with no morals and who had lost all ability to feel emotions such as love and could turn out as terrorists and revolutionaries. Hence they were treated as deserving to be on the street.

8.10 Survival and Resilience of Street Children

The street children thus have a very bad life. It is an arduous task to obtain food, clothing, shelter and protection against violence and different forms of abuse. The children have stated that a lot depends on personal strength and resourcefulness to solve problems quickly and efficiently, with available resources. They have also laid emphasis on the ability to recover from shock, depression and other difficult situations. Team work, intelligence, creativity and concern for one another - these are the qualities that they get from their peers. The children, though they are on the streets, share common interests and needs. Those who are homogenous in age and gender blend more easily being peer group as there is need for acceptance, sense of belonging and protection. The group often determines the process of change, socialization and development among them by providing emotional and material support.

8.11 Main Problems Concerning the Street Children

The study has found that there is not much information about the daily lives and activities of street children. Street children in Bangalore are a legion. They are everywhere or all over. It was difficult to estimate their number or to take stock of their situation. In addition to this, exaggerations are also there about their living
conditions by NGOs. Usually the children are spotted as beggars in front of restaurants, temples, museums etc. They are also spotted as working in public places. Lacking in a place to stay, the street children tend to use the open as toilet near the market, rail station, under pass etc. Some return to the place of stay in the night. For all these young children who live on the streets, life is tough, mean and short. Prostitution, drug use, infections and illiteracy are common.

The problem is that of estimating their number because there is a distinction between children on the street and children of the street. Children on the street work to support families in the informal sector and return home to sleep. They work to supplement their family income but return to their parents at night to rest. They are the children of the impoverished in the households headed by them. This includes single women who are either separated from husbands, widowed or never married and unwed mothers. Most of the time of the day and night is spent by these children on the street itself selling eatables like candy or gum; or guarding cars, washing them or working in vehicle repair shops.

The children of the street have most often times completely severed ties with their families. They seemingly choose to leave homes where hunger, neglect and exploitation are common place, making life on the street much more preferable. A very small number of such children actually live full time in the streets, often engaging in illegal activities in order to survive. Children of the street are more often associated with theft, drug sales, petty theft, prostitution and gang activity. The young children begin their careers on the street by begging but rely increasingly on crime to support them as they age and become less successful in their theft and such other
criminal and illegal activities. Young street girls commonly use prostitution as a way of supporting themselves.

The street children often severe ties with homes, unable to bear poverty, hunger, neglect, exploitation and abuse, and have come out of homes deserting parents and siblings and relatives, preferring to stay on the streets. A very small number actually lives full time on streets only. They often engage in illegal activities to survive. They are associated with theft, drug abuse, petty theft, prostitution and gang activity. Younger ones chose to beg but rely on crime to support them as they age and young girls resort to prostitution.

The ever increasing number of street children has led to a change in public opinion: earlier 20 years ago, these children used to receive compassion and sympathy. But now, society looks at them and treats them as a nuisance and a danger to public safety. Street children are looked down upon as potential criminals who need to be locked up. Some civilians treat them as ‘poor children in the wrong place’.

A number of efforts are no doubt made to reform these children by creating councils to act as advocates of these children’s rights, with an eye towards integrating impoverished children into the larger society. Community-based initiatives are the preferred alternatives. Rehabilitative approach is gaining importance all over. It is based on the thesis that street children are not bad children but come out of bad situations - such as victims of poverty, child abuse and neglect and untenable living conditions. As environment plays a significant role in harming them, religious, particularly church and voluntary, programs are helping them out. These rehabilitative measures include housing or shelter, education, work programs as the case may be, detoxification etc. In addition the NGOs who work with the children also teach them
basic hygiene, literacy, business skills, etc to instill self reliance and empowerment in them, so that they will find solutions to their problems. Street educators are employed by a few NGOs who give awareness about advantages of schooling, skill formation, health and hygiene. HIV AIDS prevention and risk reduction are the outreach activities. Preventive approaches address chiefly childhood poverty. The UNICEF is conducting educational programs to alert policy makers to the causes of children moving to the streets. It helps in two ways: a) technical assistance and support for promising local efforts to provide daytime activities, schooling, jobs and other alternatives for high risk children and b) prevention of family disintegration, through co-operative day care centres, family planning clinics, small business services and community kitchens.

8.12 Policy Suggestions and Recommendations

The study, after a detailed study of the social, economic, demographic profile of the street children in the selected area and of the governmental and NGO interventions, has come up with the following suggestions and recommendations:

- The street children must be rehabilitated as early as possible, after they desert home and start to live in the, or of the, city;
- They must be ensured of provision of good nutritional care;
- Both boy and girl street children must be ensured of equal opportunities in education and later on for suitable employment or income earning activities;
- The personality of the street child must be properly groomed. It faces much public stigma and insult. Hence, its self confidence must be boosted. It must be viewed with self esteem;
- Girl children must be rescued on a priority and sent to rehabilitative homes. As far as possible, they must be identified and measures must be taken to see that they do not get into early pregnancies and child birth;
- A lot of awareness must be provided to the street children through the capacity building programmes already implemented by the government and the civil society organizations. Skill formation for better livelihood options, awareness about health and hygiene, threats of HIV AIDS and other deadly diseases, proper eating habits, bathing habits, education and
vocational training must be ensured. The children must be given sufficient knowledge that street life is bad and one has to live in the family along with one’s parents and siblings;

- There are children on the street compelled to earn for their families besides for themselves. Thus, their problems will be solved only when we address them by understanding their responsibilities;

- Provision for education and vocational training for the street children is of utmost importance. They are denied a chance to go to a school. Even when they went they were forced to drop out. Therefore the compulsions that make them to discontinue education must be addressed;

- There is not much information about the daily lives and activities of Street Children. The problem is that of estimating their number because there is a distinction made between children on the street and children of the street. The government should undertake steps to first of all estimate how many street children are there in Bangalore city (and other cities too in the state);

- The Government should set up a “Protocol or Child Line Patrol” to be operated or implemented by the Dept of Women and Child Development, so that the cell can identify and take to shelter the large number of street children we tend to see in every traffic signal, selling many accessories. The Cell should take them to its custody and place them in schools;

- There are many NGOs who have already set up Patrolling services to trace and pick up street children from the streets. Yet the government should also have their patrol in addition to those set up by the NGOs in order to keep proper vigil and should keep roaming inside the city;

- At present, there are many NGOs which are established illegally. They are harassing children both mentally and physically. In order to avoid this and to set right the things, the government should stop giving permission to the setting up of new NGOs, as long as they realise that it is very essential, keeping the safety of street children in view;

- Efforts must be taken to fix CCTVs in every Government organisation and NGOs enabling access, directly, to the Commissioner of Police to inspect and track any illegal activities, to put a break when they notice any staff trying to assault any children and to create and provide homely atmosphere in the organization;

- Anti-street children campaign, road shows etc should be organised to demonstrate to people as to how they have to take care of their children, especially in the slums;

- The government has to arrange for marathons to make all the people active participants in helping street children. These should be organised with the help of famous personalities;

- The NIMHANS should set up a separate Counseling Block or Centre, only for the care of street children, so that they get special attention from the psychiatrists to receive easy and quick rehabilitation and to be reformed to become like other children in the society;
The Centre for Working Children should give proper and useful opportunities for the students of Master of Social Work course and also those from Sociology courses to take up projects for the street children. They must be encouraged to understand the root of the problem and to help the affected children at a preliminary level itself. These students must be encouraged to develop an urge to work for the betterment of street children;

In the Government Homes, whether it is temporary or a long shelter home, the children should be enabled to complete their schooling and higher education in the high school also. There should be provision for regular schooling in the same campus. The children can enroll for 6 months or till 1 year. There should be no break up in their school later on also so that they can switch over and continue from the same class if they want to be with their parents.

The above work on street children is one of the rare studies on the situation and problems of these unfortunate children in urban settings. It has shed light on the origin and nature of the problem thereby covering the family from where the children have hailed and the forms of exploitation and inhuman treatment of their own children by parents but owing to poverty and related circumstances. It also shows that children are out of school or have not got into a school at all, owing to unemployment and poverty of parents and large family size that deprives education especially to girl children. Thirdly, the outer society is scary and exploitative that pounces on these orphans in urban areas by torturing them sexually, physically, mentally and employing them in most hazardous and inhuman jobs. Therefore, the family, the school and the government – all three are responsible for the continued problem of street children. Effective policy and rigorous implementation of the programmes and schemes towards poverty reduction, employment, provision for basic amenities like housing, drinking water and sanitation, education and health provisions is necessary to bring about a radical shift from the circumstances that lead the families of street children to misery and impoverishment that ultimately leads to children running away from homes or becoming orphans. The present study has contributed towards unearthing some of the sociological issues that are at the root of the problem of street
children engulfing the key social institutions of the family, work and governance. Hence the study and its findings are expected to assist the policy makers and the institutions engaged in bringing about the reform of street children by identifying and rehabilitating them and finally mainstream them into the broader society. The study has its own limitations as it was carried out in a given setting with specific objectives. The problem of street children having historic, economic, cultural and political dimensions to it, obviously gives scope to inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary approaches to resolve the issue and make provision for a dignified life to the children poor and destitute families. Thus, the study offers a number of insights for future researchers from both sociology and other disciplines to take cue from in their own research endeavors.