Data Analysis and Interpretations

As one of the signatories of the CRC, the Government of India recognizes that every child has the right to minimum standards of living, that includes conducive environment for his or her physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. Though, the primary responsibility of the children lies with the parents to provide adequate support for holistic development but still the State has the responsibility to oversee and ensure that such duties by the parents are fulfilled. It is also recognized that children suffer from various forms of abuse and neglect and they need to be protected from such devastating incidences of life. The Government of India is committed to take all necessary and appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect children from any form of maltreatment or abuse from any sources, including their own parents. The Government is also committed to stop economic and sexual exploitation against children and to take required protective and rehabilitative measures to enable such children to enjoy a decent life with love and dignity. Especially in the case of children living with their families on the street, the dysfunctional family environment added to lack of appropriate adoptive and protective skills exposes the children to various forms of abuse and exploitations from both internal and external environment.

Child abuse is not only a societal issue but it has its roots within the problems at the family level. During the analysis of the study, it was observed that the acute poverty was one of the key factors for maltreatment and abuse of children. It gets more escalated by conditions such as environmental insecurities, marital strife, alcoholism, drug abuse, illiteracy and lack of knowledge on law and order machinery. All these conditions cause a critical stress situation, precipitating a crisis that frequently results in child abuse and neglect.

In this chapter, the collected qualitative and quantitative data have been
analyzed to understand the socio-economic profile of the street children, types of abuse perpetrated against children in different settings and perception of children and parents regarding existing law enforcement machinery. Efforts were also made to seek opinion of the children and their parents regarding effective law enforcement machineries.

Since the objective of the study is manifold, this chapter has been divided into several sections to categorise the findings of the study to categorise the findings of the study as well as to make it reader friendly.

Section 5.1  Socio-economic profile of the respondents.
Section 5.2  Abuse and Perpetrators-Perception of Children
Section 5.3  Abuse and Perpetrators-Perception of Parents
Section 5.4  Self Protection Mechanisms
Section 5.5  Child Rights-Perception of Children and their Parents
Section 5.6  Perception of Police Regarding Street Children and Child Protection
Section 5.7  Opinion of Children and Parents towards law enforcement systems.

Section 5.1

The socio-economic profile of the respondents:

This section describes the socio-economic profile of the children and their families living on the streets. It also describes their migration and settlement patterns in the urban pockets of Kolkata and their struggle to access the basic services.

Child Respondents & Gender

For the purpose of this study, the researcher identified 200 children, of both genders, of the age group 12-16 years, who lived on the streets of Kolkata. As per the methodology adopted for this study, equal numbers of male and female children were selected for the study, using the random purposive sampling technique. Thus, the total 40 children include equal numbers of both genders, who were selected from different zones of Kolkata city.
Table 5.1.1: Gender - Age Wise Distribution of the Child Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>12 years</th>
<th>13 years</th>
<th>14 years</th>
<th>15 years</th>
<th>16 years</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>66 (33%)</td>
<td>58 (29%)</td>
<td>39 (19.5%)</td>
<td>23 (11.5%)</td>
<td>14 (7%)</td>
<td>200 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the field experience of the researcher and literature review, it was found that the age group of 12-16 years was much more vulnerable as compared to 17-18 years. Besides, the children younger than 12 years of age were not able to express their problems and opinion sufficiently. Thus, the researcher purposely selected the age group of 12 to 16 years. The table 5.1.1 gives the age wise distribution of respondents selected for this study. Of the total 200 respondents, 66 children (33%) were of 12 years of age, 58 (29%) children were of 13 years and 39 children (19.5%) were of 14 years of age. Though, not purposive, but less numbers of children got included of 15-16 years of age in this study. Of these 200 children, 23(11.5%) children of 15 years of age and only 14(7%) children of 16 years age participated in the study. Also, there were only few female children of 16 years (2%) identified on the streets at the time of data collection. It can be inferred from the diagram 5.1.1 that with the increase in the age, the children were not easily identified on the streets during the daytime. And this can be due to girls getting married at an early age or their engagement in a full time domestic or labour work. Thus, significantly higher numbers of children in the age of 12 years (33%) were available on the streets as compared to the 16 years (7%).
Diagram No 5.1.1 Gender - Age Wise Distribution of the Child Respondents

Educational Status of the Respondents

The table 5.1.2 indicates the educational status of the children living on the streets. It was found that only 66 (33%) children were enrolled in the formal education system at the time of data collection. Of the total, 134 (67%) children were not attending the formal education system. It was found that, of the total children, 24 (12%) children never got enrolled in the formal schools and the remaining 110 (55%) children were drop outs. It was interesting to observe that the participation of girls in the formal education system was comparatively higher than the boys. It implies that there were more boys, who never went to school or who left the schooling half way through.

Table 5.1.2: Children’s Participation in Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Formal school</th>
<th>Drop-out</th>
<th>Never been to school</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>66 (33%)</td>
<td>110 (55%)</td>
<td>24 (12%)</td>
<td>200 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In reference to the 176 (88%) children of the total 200, who had some experience of schooling, the table 5.1.3 was created to understand the distribution of children attending different types of schools. It can be seen from the table that the majority of children (45%) attended more than one type of schooling system. During the field visits, the researcher inquired the family for the reasons of sending children to different schools. It was found that the parents felt safe to send their children to school instead of having them play on the streets, especially, for the girls, as the parents felt more secure to have them go to school. But from the conversation, the family did not think that education for the girls was an important aspect for their development. The parents were using the education services, especially the nearby non-formal schools, to keep their children off the streets. The schools run by the philanthropic organizations were felt to be the safest place for their children, especially the girl child, when the parents were away for work. It was also found that the family allowed their male children to attend far away formal schools and the distance was not the major concern. But for the girl child, both the distance and safety was an issue for which they preferred to send the girl child to the nearest NGO or Govt. run schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Attended only formal (Govt.) school</th>
<th>Attended both formal (Govt.) &amp; non-formal (NGO) school</th>
<th>Attended only non-formal (NGO) school</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>55 (31%)</td>
<td>79 (45%)</td>
<td>42 (24%)</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

,**Table 5.1.3: Types of Schools**

Religion of the respondents:

It was found from the data analysis that most of the children belong to families who followed either Hindu or Muslim religion. Of the total 200 children, there were 100 (50%) children who followed Hindu religion, 96 (48%) were Muslims and 4 (2%) believed in Christianity. It was evident from the field visit that the families with similar religious background tend to settle in a cluster.
Language spoken:

As most of the children migrated from the remote areas of West Bengal and adjoining States, it was found that everyone knew how to speak in Bengali. Of the total 200 children, Bengali was the first language for 190 (95%) children, whereas the remaining 10 (5%) children spoke dialects of Hindi language in their family. It found that most of the children were able to converse in Bengali as there were 176 (88%) children who had the experience of going to the school at least once. But when it comes to reading and writing, it was also found that only 46 (23%) children were able to read and write in Bengali. And the rest of the children used speaking as the mode of communication unless they resort to assistance of interpreter, translator or reader. The researcher also found that only 22 (11%) children were able to write their names in English language, though none of them were able to speak or read in English. And for this reason, the focus group discussions and questionnaire for the purpose of data collection was prepared in Bengali.

Migration to Kolkata

The table 5.1.4 listed below shows the pattern of migration across different zones of Kolkata. The settlement varies in these zones based on the development and job opportunities available in the area. Of the total 200 children, 80 (40%) migrated from other parts of the West Bengal State, 75 (37.5%) migrated from Bihar and remaining 45 (22.5%) came from Jharkhand, the neighbouring state of West Bengal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>West Bengal</th>
<th>Bihar</th>
<th>Jharkhand</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>80 (40%)</td>
<td>75 (37.5%)</td>
<td>45 (22.5%)</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of the total 80 children migrated from other parts of West Bengal state, 40 (50%) lived on the streets of South zone, 24 (30%) in East zone and 16 (20%) in North zone. It was identified that no children from West Bengal state lived on the streets of Central and West zones of Kolkata. The researcher found that most of the children who migrated from West Bengal came from South 24 Parganas District of West Bengal. And to maintain the proximity with the area of origin, majority (50%) of the children were found to have settled in the South zone of Kolkata. The most common areas of South 24 Parganas from where these families and their children migrated were Laxmikantapur, Canning, Joynagar, Kakdwip, Mograhat and Diamond Harbour. And from the North 24 Parganas area, Habra, Gobordanga and Basirhat were the areas from where families migrated. Also, there were families who came from Howrah district, Ranaghat and Nabadwip area.

Besides West Bengal, children were found to have migrated from Bihar and Jharkhand along with their families to settle in Kolkata. It was observed from the data that there were no children migrated from Jharkhand to the South and East zone. Similarly, there were no children found from Bihar to have settled in South zone. The preferred location for settlement of children with their families migrated from Bihar and Jharkhand was West and Central zone. Of the total children migrated from Bihar, 25 (33.3%) lived on the streets of West zone whereas 22 (29.3%) settled in Central zone. Similarly, of the total children migrated from Jharkhand, 15 (33.3%) children settled in West zone and 18 (40%) resided in Central zone.

Reasons of Migration

The most common push factor among the migrant families of West Bengal, who lived with their children on streets, was the lack of employment in their native village. Most of them were from agrarian community and had very small land holdings in their villages and were highly dependent on the rain fed irrigation. And, due to the irregularity of monsoon and failure of crops due to pests, the earning from agriculture was not sufficient to meet the expenses of their large joint families. Similarly, the families who migrated from Jharkhand and Bihar were also pushed out of villages to search for employment for their survival. Many
families did not possess cultivable land and for many generations they worked as agricultural labourers. Due to the seasonal variation, it was not a reliable source of income for them. This left no option for them but to migrate to the cities in search of better employment opportunities. During the focus group discussion with children, many shared their dream of living in a rented house or at some point of time, get some lease (patta) land from government on the outskirts of Kolkata. This dream was cultivated amongst children, as they have witnessed other families who received such benefits through their political connections. These children wished to get similar benefits for their families as they have experienced the pain and struggle to live on the streets.

Length of settlement of families

Based on the information gathered by the researcher, the inflow of respondents as migrant population showed a downward trend during the last decade. As depicted in the table 5.1.5, there were about 30 percent families, who migrated more than 10 years ago and about 48 percent families migrated between 5-10 years ago. Similarly, another 23 percent families were found to have migrated within last 5 years to search for employment in Kolkata. It was common to find that families migrated to seek employment as the local market in the rural parts, from where they migrated, was not stable for work. It was safe to assume that the uncontrolled population growth over the years has reduced the per capita cultivable land, and created overcrowding and high rates of disguised unemployment in the agriculture sector. These circumstances of livelihood pushed people out from the villages to large cities. It was usually the young male worker and his family who took the responsibility to go in search of daily wage employment in any unskilled vocation. Hence, we find that daily wage work was central to the livelihoods of such migrant families living on the streets of Kolkata.

From the data collected it is difficult to justify that migration trend is reducing. On further probing it was identified that few families who could afford it shifted from the streets to authorised slums as tenants.
Table 5.1.5 Length of Settlement of Families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Less than 5 yrs.</th>
<th>5-10 yrs.</th>
<th>More than 10 yrs.</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45 (22.5%)</td>
<td>96 (48%)</td>
<td>59 (29.5%)</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the total 96 families (48%) migrated between 5-10 years before. Of these families, 23 families settled in the North zone, 20 in the South zone, and 20 families settled in the West zone. Similarly, for the 59 (29.5) families who migrated and lived on the streets for more than 10 years, 16 belong to the South zone, 12 to the West zone, and another 12 to the Central zone. It was observed that the families who have recently migrated to Kolkata preferred to settle in the North and East zones. During the interview process, the researcher identified that most of the migrant families living on the streets were in the group of 5-10 years. Besides, there were some exceptional circumstances narrated by the families. ‘Kajal’ was one such lady, who came in contact with the researcher during the field visit and it was worth mentioning her life experience, which pushed her to live on the streets;

Kajal, at the age of 9 years, along with few other girls were brought to Kolkata from a small village in South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal. She came to work as a domestic help and was entrusted to one of her distant relatives to care for her. She did not enjoy working, as her employer used to overload her with work. At her work place, people did not behave nicely with her and even after working for 4 months, she was not given any remuneration. She felt very lonely in the big city like Kolkata and had no one close to her from her family or relatives. After dragging the work for few months, she got frustrated and ran away from her employer’s place. She roamed on the streets of Kolkata, not knowing what to do next. Fortunately, she got in touch with an elderly woman who stayed by herself on the pavements. She identified Kajal roaming on the
streets and happily extended support to her. Kajal was given shelter by the woman on the pavement and promised to send her home once she was able to recall her parents address or contact details. The elderly lady also arranged for work as a maid in one of the families known to her. Kajal started working as a part-time help for about 4 hours every day. Over a period of time, Kajal got adjusted to the life on the streets and grew up with the old lady till she got married to a hawker, who lived on the same pavement. After few years, Kajal’s husband helped her to locate her parents. Interestingly, now Kajal does not want to stay in the village, where her parents lived, for more than 2 days in a row, as she was not able to adjust without electricity and other entertainment means.

Strategic Settlement options:

During the mapping exercise, it was identified that most of the families lived in strategic locations of the city like the areas near the bus / train terminal, business centres and other important road junctions. They happen to choose such locations that provide better transportation connectivity to the work place and back. Also, it was easy to find petty jobs in the busy locations of the city. In addition, they earn higher wages by working in the core of the city as compared to the wages in the outskirts for similar work. Besides the economic advantages, the downtown of Kolkata offers non-threatening locations to stay, like the places under the flyover or bridges, premises near government offices and public places like parks, railway station and bus terminal. Such areas are less prone to the eviction drive by the authorities.

Living conditions:

As commonly seen in the rural parts of India, the families living with their children on the streets were also conscious about the caste system. It was observed that the families belonging to the same caste happen to stay together in the area. And, sometimes the barrier of caste was an issue, if the families perceived advantages of living close to other families from their native village or home state. Such settlement enabled them to develop better understanding and support system between families while they continue to face the challenges of living on the streets of Kolkata.
Table 5.1.6 Places for Night Shelter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shelter</th>
<th>No. of Children</th>
<th>percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inside a room</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under a plastic cover</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>48.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under a shed</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In open space</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>200</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The living conditions (Table 5.1.6), especially the place of shelter taken by the children at night determined the degree of vulnerability. Of the total 200 children living with their families on the street, it was found that 97 (48.5%) slept under a plastic sheet at night and 54 (27%) preferred to sleep in the open space. Of the total, there were 35 children (17.5%), who lived under a shed, which was without any walls on the sides. These sheds were commonly found at the railway platforms, market places, parks or bus terminals. Only few children 14 (7%) were fortunate enough to sleep inside a room at night. Thus, majority of the children (93%) took shelter in unprotected places likes sheds, under plastic covers or in open spaces. Besides, their vulnerability to get sexually abused at night, they were also exposed to severe cold of winter and mosquito bites throughout the year. It was a nightmare for such children especially when it rains heavily at nights during monsoons in Kolkata. It was not uncommon to find the families with their children standing under the flyover or shed for the whole night, as it was nearly impossible to find dry place to sleep when it rains.

Every morning, the children and their families living on the street pack up their belongings before they go away for work. The heap of their belongings, which includes utensils, clothes, bedding and other household goods are stacked and covered with a plastic sheet during the daytime. At night, when they return back, they roam on the street and wait till late evening before they are allowed to unpack their belongings and cook the meals. And most of the evenings, children remain hungry for long hours as their parents wait for the pavements to be cleared from public traffic, so that they can convert it into an improvised kitchen. With all these challenges and limited supply of water, it was extremely difficult for the families to maintain proper hygiene for preparing their food. By the time they feed themselves and their children, it was too late in the night and
many children were found sleeping on the street without any bedding. Later, the family members work together to make temporary shelters on the pavements with the help of the plastic sheets. This gives them some space for privacy and eliminates the reflection of lights from the vehicles moving on the streets. And for those families, for whom making of temporary shelter was not possible, they would try to hide and protect themselves as well as the children by covering with a plastic sheet on the pavements. Children are also found to sleep under a tree or in open space on the pavement. Again, they are to re-pack their belongings before begging in the morning. Illness also does not prevent them from this daily routine.

**Family size and its types:**

The researcher found that most of the families living with their children on the streets were nuclear in nature. It was followed by the second largest category of joint families. Usually the number of members in each nuclear family varied from 6-8 people, whereas in the joint and extended family, it was found to exceed more than 10 members.

**Water and Sanitation facilities:**

During the field visits, it was found that except for the children and their families living on the streets of West zone, the street dwellers of the remaining four zones had access to the roadside ‘pay and use’ toilets facilities up to 11 pm. And due to lack of such services in West zone, the families resorted to the use of open spaces for defecation. It was also observed that families tried to save on the expenditure for using toilets by limiting the use of toilets for teenage girls and adult women. The rest of the family members, which includes the male members and children preferred to use the open canals, riverside, parks and roadside drains. It was not perceived to be a problem as the families followed similar use of open fields for defecation in the rural areas. Though, the open spaces in the city did not allow sufficient privacy but still the migrant population was found to have got accustomed with the new city environment. Hence, it was not an issue for the families living on the street to use open spaces for toilet.
Most of the families living on the streets of all zones in Kolkata were using roadside taps for supply of potable water. This service was made available by the Kolkata Municipal Corporation, but, there were no facilities available for the bathing. Men and women were commonly found to be taking baths in the open spaces with their clothes on. In such circumstances, it is safe to assume that the people living on the streets were not able to maintain proper personal hygiene. And this may be an important reason for some of the skin and reproductive tract infections.

**Economic Conditions of the pavements dwellers:**

Based on the data analysis, the families living on the streets can be categorized based on their frequency of pay. It was found that the families had daily, weekly or monthly wages depending upon their profession. It was found that 59 percent of the earning members of the family were daily wage earners and 28 percent earned through a job that paid them on a weekly basis. Whereas, 13 percent had regular part time or full time jobs, which paid on monthly basis. It was perceived during the study that the respondents were not comfortable to disclose the exact amount of their income, both individually as well as a family. And for almost all the families, the source of income was not stable and so it was not possible to categorise them based on the amount of their income.

It was identified that 57 percent male and 88 percent female earning members of the family received pay below the minimum wages fixed by the government. And, it was commonly found that the male earners had better chances of employment and they tend to receive higher wages. Men were commonly engaged to work as labourers, rickshaw pullers, artisans, loaders, hawkers and rag pickers, whereas the females generally worked as domestic help, vegetable sellers, unskilled daily labourer, rag pickers and beggars. It was unfortunate to identify that the poverty of the family also forced children to engage in some form of work at a very early age. Commonly, the male children were found to start earning as early as 8 years whereas female children usually started at the age of 10 years.
Most of the boys followed their father or other men in the community and tend to shift from one profession to other. While these youngsters struggle to stabilize themselves in the competitive job market, it was easy for them to fall prey of anti-social groups. They were lured or pressurized to get involved in illegal activities like drug trafficking, stealing, pick pocketing and violence. Whereas, the girl children usually were engaged as domestic helps or help their mother at home. They often become the care taker of their siblings when their mother went away for work. This indeed was a means of child-labour in disguise and prevented the girl children from attending the school or play.

Income and expenditure:

Most of the pavement dwellers possess limited economic skills, which limit or restrict their access to better paying jobs. They were usually found to be engaged in the informal sector, where the wages were exceptionally low. With the day long struggle, they just earned enough money to pay for their food. And in case of emergency, they were forced to borrow money from other people at a reasonably high rate of interest. It was observed that for most of the families, living in a house was a dream but was not fulfilled due to lack of steady income or their income was not sufficient.

Based on the estimated income and expenditure of the families living on the streets, they were categorized into three major groups.

- The first being a high income group, where the expenditure per family ranges from Rs. 2000-3000/- per month. Of the total numbers of parents interviewed, 40percent were estimated to belong to such large families with about 10-12 members. In these families, there were more than 5 earning members, including the children.

- The second group consists of families having moderate income and spends on an average of Rs. 1500-2000 per month and their family size was usually of 8-10 members.

- The third group of families, which had an average family size of 5-6 members and were found to be spending approximate Rs. 1000-1500 per month. Naturally, as the family size increases, the number of earning
family members increases. And unfortunately, the poor ignorant street dwellers fall in this trap and produce more number of children, without realizing the other hidden costs involved in the upbringing and development of the children.

Based on the analysis of the data, it was found that most of the families spend 68 percent of their income on the food, 22 percent to seek pleasure from substance abuse, 5 percent on recreational activities and rest 5 percent on buying assets or utensils for the family. During the interview with the children, most of them revealed that they gave the earnings to their parents and kept aside Rs. 5-10 everyday for their own use. It was identified that the daily expenses for recreational and substance abuse was relatively higher among boys than girls. It was also found that girls spend Rs. 3-4 on substance abuse whereas the boys of similar age spend about Rs. 7-10. It was not uncommon to find the younger boys involved in consumption of alcohol and frequent participation in gambling to earn extra money. Instead, the girls showed more responsible behaviour with respect to spending money. Most of the girls worked as a domestic help and got paid on monthly basis. So they were less tempted to increase their daily expenses on entertainment and were found to be more cautious and prepared for an unexpected emergency situation within the family; demanding high expenditure. Many girls who worked in their houses reported that they try to save some money from the money given by the employer to meet the daily expenses of rations and cooking. They further reported that on an average they were able to save about Rs. 3-4 per day. And, there were some interesting stories when the girls came forward to rescue their family from eviction or illness by using their savings of many years.

The saving habits of families living on the streets were found to be very poor. For most, a portion of the wages was kept with their employer as they did not have access to bank nor they have homes to keep the money safely. It was found during the data collection that only 20 (10%) families invested in private saving policies like Sahara. Due to such poor saving habits, the families had no other source to access money at the time of emergency. In such crisis, they are forced to take loan from Mahajans (money lenders), who charge an exorbitant rate of interest, which may be as high as 25-35 percent per year. Some families
were also found to have taken loans or advance wages from their employer. This was a slightly safer way for the families as they were not required to pay the higher rate of interest, as in the case with money lenders.

It was revealed that the families preferred to take loan from their neighbours in case of any emergency. In most of the cases, the neighbours belong to the same caste or they happen to have migrated from the same native area or home state. And for some of the unplanned expenses, which may vary from Rs. 30-50, the families borrowed from the money lender and repaid within 2-3 days without any interest. But when they were required to borrow larger amounts like Rs. 100-500, they resorted to their employers. And in most cases, the employers did not hesitate to extend such support with the condition to adjust the amount payable with their next remuneration. It was only in some unexceptional circumstances, the families went to the money lender for borrowing amount greater than Rs. 1000. Such a situation mainly arose when some of the family members were hospitalized and there was a dire need to meet the medical expenses or they were evicted / arrested for petty reasons.

It was very unfortunate that this population, which silently struggles to earn their living, does not have access to bank or its services due to lack of any legal document to prove their place of residence or identity, which was mandatory for opening a bank account or borrowing money from the bank. Thus, they become victims of the money lenders, who charge high rate of interest and exploit them for their ignorance, innocence and crisis.

**Table 5.1.7 Reason of Money Lending**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Money lending</th>
<th>Total 200 children</th>
<th>percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medical emergency</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>(89.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily needs</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>(53.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Festival / social ceremony</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>(70%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table 5.1.7 indicates the reasons for borrowing by the families. It reveals that families approach money lenders for various reasons during their life on the streets. Of the total 200, 179 (89.5%) children’s family members borrowed money to meet the emergency medical needs and 140(70%) borrowed during
festivals or social ceremony like marriage. Whereas, 107 (53.5%) children’s families borrowed to meet the daily needs. Money lenders were easily accessible to the families living on the street as they remain open throughout the day. Due to convenience and informal understanding with the money lenders, most of the families approach them, inspite of the high rate of interest on the capital borrowed. It was also noted during the study that all families knew that they had to pay a high rate of interest for the borrowings. But, when they were asked by the researcher, as to how much was the rate of interest or how much more they have to pay, most of them i.e. 138 (69%) children’s family members were unaware. The respondents informed that they repay the loan in small instalment like Rs. 50 every few days. But interestingly, none of the respondents maintained records of how much money they have already repaid so far or how much was the remaining balance that they have to pay.

Basic Entitlements:

Almost all the families living on the streets did not have any residential proof and so they remain deprived from some of the basic entitlements like other citizen of India.

Voter Identification Card:

The right to have a voter identity card was one of the key entitlements of every citizen of India. Except 12 percent of the families, none had the voter identity cards or any other legal identity proof. Among these, 12 percent families who had voter cards, 10 percent were found to be living in Kolkata for more than 20 years or have recently migrated and have received the voter identify card in their native village. The families who have settled for more than 20 years narrated similar experiences of local counsellor, who helped them to get enlisted in voting list prepared by the government. They also narrated that as they do not have any settlement address they had to enlist their name as the resident of their relative’s home in the nearby slums. Another respondent narrated that they do not have any voter identity card registered in Kolkata but have got the same from their native village.
Below Poverty Line (BPL) Card:

Though the State government has promised BPL cards to all families living below the poverty line, the ground reality among the urban poor was very different. Among the respondents only 10 families (5%) have received their BPL cards. The draft report published by Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) in February ‘08 stated that 1,27,000 people came under the BPL category. But ironically, the list did not include those thousands of homeless people living on the streets of the city.

Public Distribution System (PDS) of food grains:

The families living on the streets were considered as “Illegal Migrants” in the city as they do not have any sort of residential proof. Thus, none of the families members living on the streets have ration card and they failed to receive the benefits of PDS system. It was also true that the State government was hesitant to issue ration cards to homeless people as there was a security concern and a legal notice was issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs. The said circular clearly instructed to avoid the issuance of ration cards unless it was established that the person was a resident of the new address. The, Ministry argues that “illegal immigrants” use the ration cards to acquire citizenship status in India.

Children’s perception about the environment:

A detailed concern survey and focus group discussions were conducted to know the perceptions of children about their environment. The findings are shown in the table 5.1.8 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concerns of children</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To take food at roadside</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No place to study at home</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can’t cook food before evening</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of safety</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No bathing facilities for female</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant noise of vehicles</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant threat of eviction</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>27.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No place to sleep during rainy season</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late night raids by police and administration</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>32.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filthy environment</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>32.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No safe place to keep belongings</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>35.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of privacy</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No safe place to sleep at night</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The first utmost important concern of children was “lack of safe place to sleep at night “Of the total 200 children, 110(55%) children reported that is the most important concern of children.
- Lack of privacy was an important concern for a significant number of children. Among 200 children interviewed, 44 percentages reported that they do not have any privacy. They were always remained exposed to public and did not have any privacy or private area. It makes them feel very odd when people passing by on the streets observe them with curiosity.
- Further, 35.5 percentages of children felt that “lack of safe place to keep their belongingness” is a major concern of the pavement dwellers which includes money and other important personal assets.
- Frequent raids by the police and administration at night were also an important area of concern reported by 32.5 percentages of children. Authorities conduct raids (they call it *hallagari*) on the slum dwellers at night without any prior notice. The families, including children get forcefully evicted at night from their temporary shelter without any notice. They snatch all their personal belongings including utensils, money and other assets like FM radio, torch, walkman, etc.
- Similar percentage of children (32.5%) reported that they do not like to stay at the filthy environment of the pavement.
- Getting a shelter during rainy season is a problem for all the street living families across all the zones. Besides, In Kolkata, water logging is a
common phenomenon. In such circumstances, the children and their families were forced to take shelter under a shed, where they stand for the whole night as the ground remains wet or waterlogged. However, only 28 percentages of the children perceived it as one of their concern.

- Families living on the streets face constant threat of eviction, because of the illegitimacy of their stay. Of the total 27.5 percentage of children perceived it as one of the environmental hazards.

- Other than these, constant noise of vehicles, filthy environment, taking food at the road side and lack of place to study were also some of the concerns raised by the children of both the gender.

- The children and the families who lived on the pavements of busy roads reported that they were not allowed to cook the food during day time. So they are to eat unhygienic food available on the street while they waited for the meals to be prepared at night. Also, due to lack of any storage facilities, the food prepared at night was not appropriate to be used on the next day.

Concerns among girls:

- Though lack of privacy was a common issue for both the genders but during the group discussions it was revealed that females were more concerned about it than the males. They felt that being a girl, they naturally required more privacy than the boys. They also reported that they did not have any private place or an easy access to bathing facilities.

- Of the total 100 girls, 78 felt that they did not have a safe place to sleep at night. They always felt the threat of being sexually assaulted at night by unknown people on the streets. Many had experienced that some unknown drunk person may enter into the temporary sheds and try to touch their private parts. Thus, they feel very insecure to sleep in open spaces on the pavements.

Conclusion:

Families settled on the pavements face risk of evictions, exploited by the authorities and political party leaders. In spite being a citizen of the country these families are treated as "illegitimate dwellers" in the city because of unplanned urbanization and lack of coordination between administration of the
place of origin and host state. Though, it is legal obligation of state parties to promote equitable, humane and lawful conditions to its every citizen but the street families are denied from their rights to participate in the mainstream society. Without the legal status, families become the natural target of social and economic exploitations. They rarely can seek justice because of their ignorance and access to legal instruments. Therefore, government should take steps to protect the legal identity of its citizen and take rehabilitative measurers to protect rights of their children at large.

Section 5.2

Abuse & the Perpetrators
Perception of Children

As discussed in the earlier chapter that the children living with their families on the streets were exposed to a number of risk factors because of their socio-cultural, environmental and lack of legal support. During the process of data collection, the researcher was told by the children living on the streets that they get exposed to various types of violence in different settings. The way it was expressed, it appeared that they have got habituated to undergo different types of trauma in their young life. It was not easy for the researcher to identify the incidence in these children’s life as they did not disclose due to fear of punishment. Ethically also, the researcher never probed the children to narrate their personal experiences if they were not interested to disclose. Also, the parents try to keep such incidences private within their family members as it could lead to isolation of the family and the child due to the social stigma attached to it. In this chapter, efforts are made to understand the perception of children about abuse and perpetrator within different settings, where children interact on a usual basis.
Children’s Perception of abuse and abusers

The researcher used different qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure participation of the children to understand their perception about the incidence of abuse and the abuser.

Ranking exercise:

One of the key tools used by the researcher in this study was the ranking exercise. This was used to help the children to priorities the types of abuse or various forms of maltreatment which they encounter at some point of time. The children were also encouraged to enlist the types of abuses other children or their friends faced in similar living environment. This exercise was conducted separately with both the boys and the girls and the findings were grouped gender wise. Based on this group work, children identified 37 forms of maltreatment or abuse that were perpetrated against them or other children living on the streets. Further, the types of maltreatment and abuses faced by the children were grouped in following five categories with the help of children’s inputs. The categories were:

- physical abuse,
- mental or emotional abuse
- sexual abuse
- economic exploitation
- legal abuse

From the data analysis, it was revealed that there were some types of abuses which were common to both the genders. Also, it was common to find that children of both the genders had some experience of abuse in their life but their perception of safety in the same environment varied widely. Some of the common reasons identified were the structure, status and culture of the family. It was important to note that obtaining information regarding sexual abuse was difficult as it was a very sensitive issue and there was a social stigma attached to it. For this reason, the quantitative data may not reflect the actual incidence of sexual abuse of the children living on the streets. Instead, the researcher has used methods to elicit qualitative information through the case studies. And this was done by facilitating interviews and focus group discussions.
with some case studies, which helped the children to associate it with their own life. In this process, there were few children, who narrated some of their experiences of sexual abuse. These real life incidences were reflected in this study in form of case studies.

The table 5.2.1, below, describes various indicators used by the children to indicate the experience of abuses and also the same were categorized in five different subgroups:

**Table 5.2.1- Indicators of Abuses as Described by Children**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of abuse</th>
<th>Indicators as narrated by children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Abuse</td>
<td>1. Beating, physical pain, burns &amp; injuries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Hard work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental/Emotional</td>
<td>1. Eviction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Humiliation, emotional torture and harassment,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Harsh treatment by the family members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Curiosity of unknown people on the street or passérby.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Family members don’t allow to play and force them to work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Fear of being alone due to separation or death of parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Fear of accident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Unknown person enter in to their plastic shed and so they can’t sleep peacefully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Comparison with other children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Use of abusive language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Bullying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Social stigma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>1. Use of offensive words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Unknown person enter into plastic sheet for wrong intention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Known / unknown person lure children with money and gift</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Touching and hugging of children with wrong intention
5. Making the child fondle others body parts
6. Touching of private body parts of children
7. Establishing physical relationship with children
8. Sexual harassment by senior group members
9. Observing children with wrong intention
10. Exhibiting private parts to children
11. Showing pornographic films/pictures

| Economic Exploitations | 1. Do not get proper remuneration.
2. Forced to extra work and overtime
3. Snatching of money and personal belongings |

| Legal Abuse | 1. Detention at police station for no reason
2. Forceful eviction at night
3. Forcefully snatching of belongings by law enforcement personnel
4. Taking financial loans
5. Non-cooperation during lodging of complains |

In this study, the researcher used the questionnaires as well as conducted FGDs to understand from the children about the common abuses that they face in different settings. Besides, critical incident technique was also used during one to one interview to facilitate children to narrate their experiences of getting abused. In order to facilitate the response from the children, the researcher narrated some stories that helped them to recall their experiences of abuse faced by them in recent past. The entire process of data collection was helpful for the researcher to understand and relate different experiences of children with the frequency of the occurrence of these abuses. For the purpose of data collection, the information about their experiences in the last 6 months was included.

Table 5.2.2: Perception of Children about Commonly Occurred Abuses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of abuses</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>(44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>(99%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>(42%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the data as shown in the above table 5.2.2, it was clear that the children living on the streets were vulnerable to all the types of abuses. Though the purpose of this study was not to estimate of the scale of child abuse but the above table gives the estimation of different types of abuse children face.

**Perception of girls towards abuse:**

It was quiet evident from the diagram 5.2.1 that all the girls were found to be very sensitive towards emotional abuse and they all were able to recall their experience of emotional abuse. It was the most frequently occurring type of abuse amongst girls and all the girls were able to narrate their exposure to emotional abuse within last six months.

**Diagram 5.2.1- Perception of girls towards abuse**

The second most commonly occurring abuse amongst girls was to get sexually abused. They reported during the data collection that they always felt the threat of getting sexually abused on the streets where they lived as the environment was open and unsafe. They were always on their guard as they do not have any safe place to live and maintain their privacy. Their life was open to everybody passing on the streets and they frequently encounter threat of sexual abuse from known as well as unknown people on the street. It was
It was shameful to note that the third common type of source of abuses faced by these children were from the authorities who were meant to serve people and protect them. The officials of the legal system, which includes the police, municipal authorities and traffic controllers was found to be the third most source of abuses faced by the girls. The authorities instead of protecting them as they belong to a vulnerable group threaten them with sudden eviction and exposed them to sudden raid by the police. It was found that 41 percent of the girls had some incidences of legal abuse within last 6 months.

Of the total girls, there were 40 percent, who reported to have faced physical abuse within the family environment. Though the actual number of cases reported was much higher amongst girls but only 40 percent of the girls perceived it as abuse. The rest of the girls did not find that physical torture or punishment was a form of abuse if it comes from their parents. Lastly, the abuse in form of economic exploitation was the least common experience amongst girls. Only 39 percent of the girls perceived that they faced economic abuse from their employers as well as the family members. It was important to note here that the abuse was perceived so differently amongst the respondents. Some children felt that the parents give physical punishment as part of disciplinary measures.
Perception of boys towards abuse:

Diagram 5.2.2-Perception of Boys Towards Abuse

From the given diagram 5.2.2, it was evident that the boys were also found to be sensitive to emotional abuse as 98 percent of the boys reported to incidence which caused them emotional trauma in the recent past. Most commonly, they faced such emotional abuse at the work place, in their community and within the family. The second most common type was the abuse in form of harassment by the legal and administrative authorities in the area. Of the total boys, there were 85 percent, who reported to have faced such incidences. On priority, the third most common type of abuse was the physical abuse. There were 48 percent boys, who reported to have faced severe physical assaults by the employers, police officials, neighbours and from their own family members, including their parents.

It was common amongst the boys to go out and earn money to support the income of the family. Most commonly, they were subjected to hard and unsafe work and due to their dependency; they were not able to refuse to work in such unhealthy environment. There were about 30 percent of the children, who reported to have faced economic exploitations by the employers, shop owners and family members. When it came to sexual abuse, it was not perceived to be a threat amongst the boys. As they lived on the streets, they were aware of sexual abuse that can occur to them but they did not feel afraid of it and had
their own mechanism to avoid it. But, there were 11 percent boys who reported that sexual abuse was a threat for them.

A comparative analysis of abuses perceived by both genders:

Diagram 5.2.3 - A comparative Analysis of Abuses as Perceived by Both the Genders:

![Diagram showing comparative analysis of abuse between genders]

Emotional Abuse - 1st rank

It can be clearly seen from the comparative chart that emotional abuse was the most frequently occurred abuse among children living on the streets. Of the total children, there were almost everyone (198) 99 percent who recalled their recent experience of chronic verbal aggression. Though the incidence of emotional abuse was notably high but many children did not feel that all those incidences could be labelled as abuse. It was found that all the girls and 98 percent boys were able to identify at least one incidence in last 6 months, which caused them emotional trauma. During the process of data collection, it was felt by the researcher that the girls were more sensitive towards emotional abuse compared to the boys. While stating this, it was quiet possible that the boys also felt equally painful on being emotionally abused but they did not
open up to express the same as it might affect their image amongst their
friends or peers.

**Abuse by Legal Authorities - 2\(^{nd}\) rank**

The study identified that the second most common abuses experienced and
perceived by the children living on the street was to get abused by the legal
authorities, which includes the police personnel, municipal officials, traffic
controllers, etc. Of the total respondents, there were 126 (63\%) children, had
experience of abusive behaviour from the officials of law and order machinery.
This was something contradictory to their role of being a public servant, who
was entrusted and responsible to provide necessary support to all the residents
and citizens of this country. It was noteworthy that the perception and
experience of boys were found to be 85 percent compared to 42 percent among
the girls. It is assumed that the boys were on the streets most of the time and
their probability to get abused by the legal authorities was relatively more.
Also, the police official have negative attitude towards the boys living on the
street as they are believed to be involved in petty crimes of stealing, drug
trafficking and other illegal activities. Possibly for this reason, the legal
authorities behave aggressively with the boys living on the streets. But it was
no way justified for the officials of the legal body to act in this manner which
was detrimental to the development of children.

**Physical Abuse - 3\(^{rd}\) rank**

The study identified that the third highest experience and perception of abuse
amongst children of both gender was to get physically abused. There were 48
percent boys and 40 percent girls, who expressed their recent experience of
physical abuse, where they felt humiliated. Though the actual incidences of
physical abuse were high among both the genders but only 44 percent of
children perceived that those incidences were abusive. Among girls, most of
the physical abuse occurred within the family set up. As the abuser were their
own parents or close relatives, children were not open to disclose abusive
experiences occurred within the family setting.
Sexual Abuse - 4th rank

The researcher found that the boys were hesitant to discuss about the experience of sexual abuse in their life. Instead, it was found that the girls were much more open to talk about their trauma due to sexual abuse. Unlike the general perception, girls were more open to narrate their perception and experience of sexual harassment compared to the boys. On the other hand, boys wanted to keep their abusive sexual experiences to themselves and it was identified during the focus group discussion that many boys were sexually active by the age of 13 years. Of the total, there were 73 percent girls who articulated their experience of sexual exploitation on the streets, which was also common with other girls like them living on the streets. But in case of boys, there were only 11 percent who opened up and articulated abusive sexual experience that occurred to them or other boys of their age who lived on the streets. It was evident from the data that 42 percent were victimized due to sexual exploitation and rest were hesitant to disclose or share their experience of sexual exploitation.

Economic Abuse - 5th rank

With reference to the economic exploitations, there were about 34 percent children who described their experiences of abuse in the recent past. The perception of economic abuse was found to be stronger among girls (39%) than the boys (30%). And most commonly, the boys got exploited by their employer and only few expressed their frustration due to the pressure from the family members to earn and supplement the family income. Commonly, the family members, including parents took away the entire earning of the children and still they were not perceived as perpetrators of economic exploitations by the children.
Children’s Experiences of Abuse in Different Setting:

Diagram 5.2.4: Perception of Children towards perpetrators of abuse:

Similar to the ranking exercise for the types of abuse, the researcher also conducted the ranking exercise for the perpetrators with the help of children living on the streets. The finding of the same is described as under:

**Passers-by - 1\(^{st}\) rank:**
On the top of the list, in case of setting where abuse is perpetrated, as perceived by the children was the unknown people passing on the streets. The children perceived them as the most common abusers in their life on the streets. Of the total 200 children, 138 (69\%) felt threatened by the unknown people or passers by on the street. And the feeling of insecurity and fear of abuse with reference to the passers by was found to be much stronger among the girls as compared to the boys.

**Local Administration and Police - 2\(^{nd}\) rank:**
The Law and Order machinery was meant to protect and provide necessary support to the public. But during the study, it was shocking to find that the officials of local administration and police department, instead of ensuring protection to children, were the second most common perpetrators of abuse. It was found that of the total 200 children, there were 122 (61\%) who perceived threat from the government authorities like police, municipal corporation and
traffic controller. And this perception was much stronger amongst the boys (86%) compared to the girls. The boys were the one who were the common targets for abuse and threats from these authorities.

Youth Clubs and Political Party Members - 3rd rank:
In Kolkata, it is common to find local youth clubs in almost every other streets of the city. It is a common gathering place for the youngsters to read newspapers, play cards or games like carom. They are the ones, who take leading role in representing the local community when there is any issue of services in the area. Usually, the role of the members of the youth club is perceived to be positive towards their own people. And most commonly these youth clubs are linked with the political parties and help the political leaders to carry out their agenda when needed. It was found that the children were scared of the local youths and members of the political party. Of the total 200, there were 96 (48%) children who perceived youth clubs and political party members as the third common abusers. Similar to the local administration and police, the perception was found to be much stronger amongst the boys as compared to the girls.

Employers - 4th rank:
Due to the pressing needs of the family, the children were forced by their parents to get involved in some sort of economic activities. And being a vulnerable and innocent group, they were pushed by their employers to work in unhealthy and hazardous conditions. It was not uncommon to find that these children are made to work overtime without any extra remuneration. Besides, they were subjected to abuse when they commit mistakes or their attention gets diverted to other fun loving or play activities. Of the total 200, there were 78 (39%) children who reported to have got abused by their employers. Again, this feeling was found to be much stronger among the boys as compared to the girls.

Family Members - 5th rank:
It was very common for the children to get punished by the family members. However, when the researcher looked at the perception of the children, many did not perceive that the punishment in form of slapping, scolding or use of
cheap language was a type of abuse. Many children felt that it was acceptable for the parents to punish their children when they commit mistakes. During the study, it was observed that the environment in which the children live was highly insecure. And the children have no other option but to depend on their parents for their needs, care and protection. In return, the children were accepting some of the inhumane behaviour of the parents and did not report the same to the researcher. Of total 200, there were only 35.7 percent children who perceived that their parents and other members of the family were the abusers. And of those who reported, the feeling was more common among the boys than the girls.

**Neighbours - 6th ranks:**

It was observed that there was interdependence between the neighbours and the families living on the streets. There was a feeling of trust to protect each others interest especially to overcome the environment threats. For example, when the parents go for work at night, the neighbours working in the day shift keep a watch on others family and belongings. In such circumstances, the neighbours act as the guardians of the children when their parents are busy at work. Taking advantage of such a situation, there are incidences, where the neighbours abuse the children. It was found that there were 50 (25%) children who perceived neighbours as the abuser and the feeling of being unsafe was felt more commonly among the girls compared to the boys, while talking about the neighbours.

It was evident from the above described ranking exercise that the children who lived on the streets were vulnerable to abuse by almost everyone around them. There was absolutely no one other then their own self upon whom they can trust. Unfortunately, many of them also did not feel safe with their own family members, and it was unimaginable for them to be protected and cared by the others around them, including, the neighbours, law enforcing authorities as well as the common people on the street. These findings mirror the unhealthy portion of our own society where the children living on the streets are abused for some petty reasons. Due to their poor economic and socio-cultural environment in which they are brought up, they tend to have low self esteem and are easily accustomed with the abuses. They start accepting such
incidences and trauma of life as normal part of their daily life. For the girls, it was easy to suspect anyone on the street to be their next abuser, whereas, boys were exposed to harsh external environment. Due to their socio-cultural environment, the boys were exposed to more forms of abuse than the girls, except for the sexual abuses. Therefore, their responses were found to be much stronger towards perpetrators, other than sexual abusers, compared to the girls.

Abuse and Neglect occurring in different settings

As explained in the earlier chapter, the children were victims of violence or abuse in various settings due to different socio-cultural and physical environment. Besides, the behavioural pattern of the perpetrator remains the key factor for an abuse to occur. In this section, the researcher has made an effort to understand the perception of children about the prevalence of abuses occurring to the children living on the streets in various settings. Some of the common areas selected are as under:

- Abuse and neglect within family set up.
- Abuse and neglect within educational set up.
- Abuse at work place.
- Abuse within immediate community.
- Abuse by legal authorities
- Abuse by peer group and deviant behaviours of the street children.

Street Children in their Family set up

The Convention on the Rights of the Child has a fundamental assumption that the family is the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members, and particularly for children. Thereby, it recognizes that the family has the greatest potential to protect the children and provide necessary physical and emotional support for their holistic development. In our society,
the privacy and autonomy of the family is highly valued. Every individual has the right to have a life within the family and to keep private to its members. We being a social animal, such correspondence are also guaranteed within the international human rights instruments. And, through the interaction and observation with this family environment, the children try to acquire skills for protection, survival and development. This naturally influences the way the children grow up and develop the personality. Hence, parents and members of the immediate community and their cultural values become an important source for children to learn and adapt to the existing value system. In this section, the researcher tries to understand the environmental and socio-cultural factors that influence the development process of children, while they live on the streets. Also, the same are co-related with the child neglect and abuse occurring in similar environment.

It was observed that the prevalence of violence and neglect of the street children was quiet common by the family members and their relatives. It was evident that there was a strong relationship between the abuse or neglect and the environment of the children. As described earlier in the Section I, the physical standard of the children living on the streets was not conducive for the physical, mental and emotional growth. One of these factors was the nature of settlement of these families. They lived on the encroached land or pavements, which always called for the threat of eviction by the local authorities. As a result, these families were not recognized by the local authorities for the purpose of benefits provided by the government. Additionally, the poor economic condition to meet the basic requirement of life makes the children more vulnerable to abuse. It was common for children living on the street to lack proper shelter and clothing. They struggle to enjoy regular and healthy meals and were always under the threat of expulsion from their temporary shelter on the streets. Due to lack of basic amenities, they were exposed to filthy environment, poor hygiene and remained denied of access to basic healthcare. Hence, these children were found to seek material support and security outside their family environment. And in the struggle to do so, they got subjected to severe physical and emotional neglect leading to poor development, malnourishment, serious illness, physical injuries, low self esteem and develop feeling of insecurity. It was also common to find that the
parents of such children usually failed to provide required affection, emotional support, supervision and control that were required for proper psycho-social development of a child. Instead, the children were exposed to the domestic violence, problematic behaviours, unnatural pressure and addictive behaviours of their parents. As a result, children develop poor self image, easily become a prey of substance abuse and develop destructive pattern of behaviours. And in almost all cases, the parents themselves lack knowledge as to what they are going through and what would be the implication of the same on their children. Due to the pressing needs of the day to day life, most parents developed short sighted reactive behaviours without any understanding of what it could lead to in the lives of their children.

**Parental Love and Support**

On further investigation of these 39 children reported that they receive positive support within the family environment. It was found that they had some common characteristics of the family.

Some of them are listed below:

- Total number of siblings was less than three.
- All the children in the family were enrolled in the school.
- Both the parents had experience of schooling in their early age.
- Father was not an alcoholic
- Parents did not force their children to earn money.
- Children slept with their parents at night.

On the other hand, the families where the children felt neglected and deprived of love from their parents also had some common features.

- Like their parents, the children never went to school.
- Domestic violence and addiction was common within the family.
- Children were forced to go to work at an early age.
- Parents were not physically or mentally prepared for parenting.
- Large number of children with poor spacing and nuclear structure of family
- Poor management of income or inadequate source of income
Due to some of the above listed factors, the children were plunged into a traumatic life without any support and care by the family members. It was common to find that the parents believed in large families as they felt that having more children would help them to earn more money. Also, they had no idea of the use of contraception leading to poor family planning. All this factors culminated to a vicious cycle of poverty, pain and trauma in the life of the children, leading to poor opportunities for the growth and development of the children. Though, the researcher found that the parents, especially mothers felt that they would have been in a better position, if they were little more aware of managing the basics of their life. They realized that their day to day struggle was so much demanding that they were not able to extend any support to their children in spite of their best efforts. But, they sounded to be committed to avoid the detrimental effects of poverty from the lives of their children as much as possible. And as all parents, they all wished to provide a good future to their children.

Feelings of denial from parents:

Diagram 5.2.5- Feeling of denial

The feeling of denial from parents was very strong among the children. Out of the 200 children, 64 (32%) complained that their parents did not pay individual attention and they did not get the opportunity to express themselves to their parents when they were in emotional stress. They also felt that they didn’t get the attention especially when they needed the most. They replied that because of their parent’s involvement in economic and other social responsibilities they cannot give individual attention to them. It was also observed that interpersonal relationship and support within the family was very week.
Children do not get time and opportunity within the open environment to interact and disclose their emotional problems to their parents. Children feel threatened to interact with their fathers regarding their problems. In most of the cases, the mothers try to support their children to address their psychosocial needs and children were much more open to mothers than their fathers. But still, children were not satisfied with the emotional support they got from their family.

The size of the family had positive correlation with the emotional deprivation of children. It was evident from the data that emotional deprivation was more common among large families. They found it much more difficult to interact with parents and got less individual attention. Parental control and support was also less than other small families. Thus, the feeling of neglect and deprivations was also stronger among children in these families than small nuclear families.

**Family Violence:**

**Diagram 5.2.6: Children’s Experience of Family Violence**

Based on the interview, it was revealed that the children were exposed to violence and constant chaos within the family environment. Out of total 200 children, 98 (49%) reported that violence within the family occurred more than half of the days of the month, whereas 74 (37%)) children reported to have such incidence in the family for 7-15 days in a month. There were only 28 (14%) children who informed that such occurrence was not experienced for more than 7 days a month. In most of the cases, these types of violence occur when their father or other elder members of the family get intoxicated by drugs or alcohol. It was common for these children to get exposed to physical torture against them and their mother, with constant screaming and high pitched argumentation. It was so common within
the family environment that 174 (87%) children had no objection with such environment within the family and did not feel threatened by it. But for the remaining 26 (13%) children, it was a nightmare and they were fearful of getting isolated due to the separation or death of either of the parents. It was also recognized that the exposure of children to violence in their homes on a frequent basis, severely affected a child’s well-being, personality development and social interaction in their childhood and adulthood.

Expectations of family members: Of total 200 children, there were 145 (72.5%) who expressed their limitations in satisfying the expectations of their family members. It was observed children from both the genders felt that they could not satisfy the expectations of their family members. Among the boys, 76 percent complained that their parents always pressurize them to earn more money from an early age and forced them to contribute as much money as possible to support the expenditure of the family. Thus, there was an unrealistic pressure on the male respondents to meet the economic expectation of the family members. The girls, however, were subjected to the social pressures in the family environment.

Diagram 5.2.8-Expectations of family members

From an early age, they were restricted by their parents to go out and play with other girls of their age. Instead, they were burdened with the responsibility of taking care of their younger siblings, while their parents were away for work. Also, they were expected to work hard to support their mother in doing the household activities, which includes, cooking, cleaning and washing. It was found that 50 percent of the total girls were expected to help their mother in their job as a domestic help and would not receive any remuneration by the
home owner. Thus, they felt deprived of the economic power like their brothers or other boys on the streets, who were engaged in work which paid them in cash.

Image building among children:

The environment in which a child grows up has a significant impact on the personality of the child. For the children living with their families on the streets, they were usually exposed to demoralizing conditions leading to development of inferiority complex and low self esteem. Of the total 200 children, 162 (81%) reported that they felt uncomfortable to live on the streets as their deprivation was exposed to outsiders. They did not want others to know as to what kind of life they were undergoing. Similarly, 156 (78%) children reported that they felt embarrassed for their father’s behaviours under the influence of alcohol or intoxicated substance. It was also found that there were 136 (68%) children, who felt guilty due to their poor economic conditions and 112 (56%) felt ashamed for their physical appearance, which includes their clothing. The type of occupation of the family members was another factor, which induced the feeling of inferiority amongst these children. There were 110 (55%) children, who were not comfortable to openly discuss about their parents occupation. It was obvious from the data that these children living on the street inculcate inferiority complex, low self esteem, poor confidence and other personality problems due to their economic, social and environmental conditions. As a result, the growth and development gets grossly hampered leading to poor physical, emotional and psychological development. And the negative factors within and outside the family becomes the key repellent factors which drives them away from their families. In such circumstances, they try to resort to the help of outsiders for complementing their needs.

Physical Punishment:

In India, it is socially acceptable for parents to use corporal punishment in child rearing. This phenomenon is not only observed within the families living on the streets but it remains widely accepted across social strata. It is considered to be normal for the parents to take necessary disciplinary measures in order to control their children and at times, punish them for their misdeeds. But, in the
case of children living with the families on the street, they tend to become a subject for the frustration of their parents. It is common to observe that the family tensions and insecure situation leads to poor capability of the family members to adopt methods and approaches for parental control and disciplining. Occasionally, for some minor mischief, the children were subjected to unpredictable responses or sudden emotional outbursts from their parents. From children’s perspective, in about one third of the cases their parents behaved harshly with them, which could not be justified with the severity of mistake they committed. It was common to observe that the parents adopted faulty system of reward and punishment for the desirable and undesirable conducts of their children.

Of the total 200 respondents, 85 boys and 65 girls reported of physical punishment, most commonly from their parents. In the case of 85 boys who reported of physical punishment, more than 88 percent reported to have faced severe forms of physical punishment from their father. And similar figures were identified in the case of girls, where the father charged the girls with severe physical punishment. It was common in both the genders that father was engaged in slapping, beating up and hurting them when he was intoxicated with alcohol or other addictive substance. But the study also found out that there were many children who were physically punished by their mothers. Of total children who reported of physical punishment, there were 45 (53%) boys and 50 (77%) girls, who were harshly beaten up by their mothers using some cooking utensils. The girls were subjected to punishment especially when they expressed their desire for food or money. And it was difficult for these innocent children to comprehend their parent’s behaviour for some simple things. It was observed during the study that in most cases, the stress in the family and other forms of insecurity faced by the parents were translated into cruel forms of disciplinary actions towards their own children. It was quiet evident that the types of disciplinary approaches adopted by parents, who were struggling to cope with the stress and frustration of life, were unable to provide conducive environment within the family for the psychological growth and development of their children.
Aggressive verbal assault:

Usually it was seen that the children and people were called by their nick names. Many a times, nick names were given out of love by parents or the neighbours. But on the other hand, it was also very common to find that the children living on the streets were called by odd and unusual names describing their physical appearance, disability and colour. For example, it is very common to find a child with spectacles to be called as ‘chasmis’ or ‘kana’ (Blind). Some of these were acceptable forms of name calling though they can be seen as verbal abuses. During the study, the researcher found that parents used aggressive words to call, accuse, blame, order or threaten their own children, labelling the same as a mechanism to rear their children. Of the total 100 boys and 100 girls, 69 percent boys and 78 percent girls reported to have faced aggressive verbal assault from their parents in the recent past. It was observed that the father adopted physical abuse as a means to release their own frustration on their children, whereas the mothers used verbal assault and aggressive language. Of the total number of children who reported verbal abuse by their parents, 67 percent boys and 88 percent girls complained about the aggressive verbal expression towards them by their mothers. For the boys, the most common cause of aggression was due to lack of sufficient monetary contribution to the family. Also, it was used by the parents when the boys demanded some special food or material things like toys or clothing. And in the case of girls, they were subjected to aggressive verbal behaviour when they showed unwillingness to support their mothers in domestic chores or for not paying proper attention to their siblings.

Perception of children towards abuse within the family:

During this study, it was found that the incidence of physical abuse within the family setting was alarmingly high. Added to this, the occurrence is in the open environment of the streets, which depresses the self esteem of the children. The families live with their children in clusters in the open space and so the rude behaviour of the parents towards their children was commonly observed by the neighbours. In India, the children are considered to be the property of their parents and usually no one interferes when such incidences occur. It was
unfortunate that historically there was a cultural approval to inflict physical punishment in the name of disciplinary measures for children. And, it was not only accepted by the parents but also by the children. This could be observed from data that only 63 (74%) boys out of the total 85, who reported physical punishment from their family members, perceived it as an incidence of abuse. The conditioning amongst the girls was seen much more as compared to the boys. Of the total 65 girls, who reported to have faced physical punishment from their family members, only 12 percent perceived the family members as abusers. On further investigation, it was found that this feeling was common amongst the girls as they lacked any source of support within the society other than their own parents. Thus, the girls did not perceive the cruel behaviour of their parents as a form of abuse as they were the only ones who would protect them from the outsiders, when the need arises.

While working with the children living on the streets, it was realized that the female children were much more vulnerable than the male within the family setup. Usually, they were considered as a ‘responsibility’ or ‘property’ and were not viewed as individuals, who may have specific needs and freedom to enjoy rights. It was expected from the girls to accept and act as per the orders of their parents and they were not allowed to participate in the process of decision-making within the family. And when it comes to matter concerning their lives, decision were taken by the dominant member of the family, usually the father, without any prior consultation. The common goal of the parents was to arrange for their marriage at an early age. They were not given any opportunity to interact with the groom and most commonly the marriage takes place at a short notice of time, without any background check of the groom and his family. Many a times, it results into a frustrated marriage life with high risk of domestic violence against the girl or trafficking in the name of marriage. Often, they were sold off to the brothels after their marriage, where they lead a life of impoverishment and neglect.

After analyzing the socio-economic profile of the families living on the streets of Kolkata, it was found that most of them have migrated to Kolkata from remote villages of neighbouring districts. Usually people belonging to similar caste and religion preferred to stay close to each other and form a cluster.
Similar clusters were formed by the people who migrated from the same districts. Such settlement helps them to develop distinctive reciprocal relationship with each other in order to protect themselves from outsiders in the new city. Though, there are some inheriting similarities in social and cultural values due to their common background but it was observed that they did not possess strong bond and solidarity amongst each other.

Due to poverty and insecure life on the streets, the families have lot of dependency on neighbours. They take help of each other for small things in their day to day life, which includes supervision of their children. The members of one cluster seem to have frequent interaction with its members. Also, they come in contact with different types of culture and economic strata while they were at work. Female members working as domestic members come in contact with the culture, values and practices of families of different caste and class. Similarly, for the male members, they get exposed to the life of the city. Initially, the change was a cultural shock for the children and their families hailing from remote rural parts. But, the younger generation of the migrant population, which includes the children, adapt to some of these cultural values and practices of other social and economic strata. Their expectations from life become very different due to the exposure and they start dreaming of material possessions like travelling in a taxi, dinning in a restaurant, and owning a house. Many children and family members set some of these as their goals and work towards uplifting the standards of their living.

Moreover, due to their nature of being a floating population, they lack support from social organization. Therefore, the people and children living on the streets do not have the experience of primary relationship within the group. The children grow up in such an environment, which lacks of parental love and care, social control and supervision. From an early age, they get exposed to predominance of individualism, lack of community feeling and a mechanical way of living life on the streets. Such socio-cultural environment creates devastating effects on the personality of the child, which prohibits them from achieving personal accommodation and usually induces insanity, delinquency and other deviant behaviour among children. It was evident from this study that the environment on the streets was absolutely not appropriate for the
growth and development of children. It lacked almost all elements which were essential for the development of the child to become, socially and emotionally, a normal citizen. Moreover, unnatural demands of the community and the feeling of inferiority when compared with children of higher economic strata depress their self-esteem and they develop a defiant attitude towards the existing social-cultural and legal systems of the country. As a result, the children are deprived from their rights and they fail to develop a sense of responsibilities towards themselves and the society at large.

Street Children in Educational Setting

The Convention for the Rights of the Child (CRC) recognized that the responsibility for the education of the children lies with the respective State. It is duty of the State Government to ensure free and compulsory primary education is available to all children, irrespective of their family or socio-economic background. Further, the State should also encourage different forms of secondary education and make higher education available to all, based on their affordability. The right of every child to receive education was recognized by the Government of India and necessary revision was made in ‘The National Policy of Education’ in 1992, which indicated three thrust areas in elementary education:

1. Universal access and enrolment;
2. Universal retention of children up to the age of 14 years; and
3. Substantial improvement in the quality of education to enable all children to achieve the essential levels of learning.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

Sarva Siksha Abhiyan is the Government of India’s flagship programme, which was launched to achieve Universal Elementary Education (UEE) in a time bound manner. As per the 86th amendment of the Constitution of India, the education was recognized as the fundamental right of the child and amended the Right to Education Act. The elementary education was made free and compulsory for the children of age group 6-14 years. In addition, a supplementary scheme of mid day meal was launched to enhance the attendance at school and to
improve the nutritional status of the children. This strategy proved to be very successful in improving the enrolment ratio of children in the school and decreased the drop out from the school. It was also a boon in disguise to protect the children during the school hours from any sort of abuses.

National Child Labour Projects (NCLP)

The National Child Labour Project was launched in India and was operational in the city of Kolkata in collaboration with the non-governmental organizations to rehabilitate child workers by placing them in special schools with the following facilities:

1. Non-formal / formal education
2. Skilled / craft training
3. Supplementary nutrition @ Rs. 5/- per child per day
4. Stipend @ Rs. 100/- per child per month
5. Health care services through a doctor appointed for a group of 20 schools.

Besides, the Government of West Bengal also launched an alternative system of education called ‘Shikshalaya Prakalpa’ along with the NCLP. This was done to improve the accessibility of the schools to the deprived urban children in West Bengal. In addition, number of non-government organizations started education centres in different wards of Kolkata city to provide educational opportunities for the underprivileged children, improve the enrolment ratio of the formal schools and to support children so that they are able to retain in the formal school system. Because of these initiatives, the primary schools became easily accessible to the children in Kolkata. As a result, there was a shift in parents’ attitude towards the education of their children. Unlike in the past, the parents were now more interested and aware about the importance of their children’s education. The researcher was told by many parents during the data collection process that they find the schools to be the safe place for children, when they are away for work during the day. Further, the parents also realized that due to lack of safety in home environment and poor support system within the family, they prefer to send their young children to the schools when they are out for work. As a result, the enrolment in primary education was found to
be quite high (88%) among the respondents. Apart from the government affiliated schools, the children were also attending non formal schools and education centres run by the non governmental organizations.

In spite of all the above said advantages available for the children to receive education, it was found that the drop out rate among the children living on the streets was quite high. Due to easy access to education, most of the children were enrolled in the school at some point of time but they were not able to retain themselves in the school for variety of reasons. Of the total children, there were 67 percent who dropped out of the school. Thus, a significant numbers of street children remained deprived of their fundamental right to education. Though, the exact data was not available, but based on the interaction with the children and their families, it was identified that many children were not able to attend their schools regularly due to illness, illness of other members within the family, economic pressure and environmental problems like eviction, loss of books and rain. Thus, the socio-economic constraint, which is very peculiar for children living on the street, forces them to discontinue acquiring the basic life skills and confidence to cope with the challenges of daily life.

Reasons for children to go to school
Diagram 5.2.8- Likings for School

The researcher administered a questionnaires among the school going as well as dropped out children to identify what were the things which the liked at the schools. The findings are grouped under various heading and are described as under:
Food:
Of the total number of respondents, 59 percent boys and 62 percent girls said that they like the food that was provided to them at the school by the school authorities. It is important to recall the discussion from Section-I that for most of the families living on the streets in different areas of Kolkata were not able to cook their food during the day in most of the areas. This forced many children to remain hungry or eat left over from the previous day or consumed unhealthy cheap source of food on the streets. Occasionally, children were forced to pick up food items from the waste bins outside of a restaurant or shop. Thus, the food provided by the school under the mid day meal scheme was found to be the most important reason for attending the school, and in disguise it helped to improve the educational and nutritional level of the children living on the streets.

Clothing:
In most of the primary schools, uniforms are provided to every child by the Department of Education. Usually, the uniform has a simple design and common colours, which is not very attractive for general population. One of the purposes for this is to develop a feeling of uniformity amongst the students and to prevent any sort of class difference amongst the students in the same school. The children in the school, whether they belong to rich or poor families would have to wear the uniform dress provided by the school. This prevents children from poor families feeling inferior compared to other children, if and were allowed to wear expensive and attractive clothes to school. On asked the respondents as a part of this study, it was found that 44 percent boys and 10 percent girls liked the uniforms provided by schools. On investigation, it was found that the girls did not like the uniform dress as they were short and many a times did not fit them well. Moreover, they were used to wear covered dresses to avoid any remarks on the streets.

Besides, children of both genders liked the opportunity to interact and play with their friends at the school, which was reflected by 37 percent boys and 29 percent girls. Also, 16 percent boys and 20 percent girls like the books and teaching materials used at the school for the purpose of education. It was also found that a small percentage of girls felt that the schools were secure and
enjoyable place for them to interact with their peers compared to the street environment, where lack of privacy prevails. Also, it was common to find that girls liked their teachers and their way of interaction with them at the school.

**Abuse within the educational setting:**

**Physical Punishment:**
Globally, there is a movement to stop the practice of corporal punishment as disciplinary measures against the pupil at the school. Taking this forward, the Government of West Bengal and the Department of Education have started efforts to improve the awareness of teachers about the positive ways of managing children. The teachers are explained in detail about the adverse effects of beatings children at school when they commit mistake. But, it was shocking to find that the practice of corporal punishments within the schools was alarmingly high in different types of schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Nos. of children have exposure of formal schooling</th>
<th>Nos. of children faced corporal punishment</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>34 (39%)</td>
<td>39 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>13 (14.6%)</td>
<td>14.6 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>47 (26.7%)</td>
<td>26.7 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2.3 Corporal Punishment in Schools

From the data, it was identified that the use of corporal punishment by the teachers at school was still a common phenomena but the incidence was not very high among the formal schools in Kolkata. Among the total child respondents, 27 percent reported to have faced corporal punishment from teachers. The incidence of corporal punishment was higher (39%) among the boys as compared to the girls. The incidence was found to be much lower than the other national studies conducted where the incidence of corporal punishment was reported to be as high as 50 percent.
Emotional abuse
It is also a common to find that children face emotional abuse within the school environment. The children reported during the data collection that they were humiliated by the teachers for belonging to the families who lived on the streets. And similar incidences were identified by both the children who were currently attending the schools and those who dropped out of the school. Some of the common indicators of abusive experience of the children were as under:

1. Harassment and insults in front of the other students in the class
2. Labelling them as pavement dwellers
3. Attitude of discrimination
4. Asking about their parents’ occupation and their personal food habits in front of other students in the class.

Further, the researcher tried to study the experience of emotional abuse amongst the children attending non-government organization run schools and the Government run schools. A questionnaire was administered among the 176 children to understand the prevalence of emotional abuse within the formal education system i.e. the formal schools run by either non-government or government agencies.

Table 5.2.4 Abusive Behaviour of Formal School Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviour of Formal School Teachers</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harassment &amp; insult in from of other children in the class</td>
<td>65 (75%)</td>
<td>27 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labelling them as pavement dwellers</td>
<td>31 (36%)</td>
<td>10 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude of discrimination</td>
<td>52 (60%)</td>
<td>32 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking parents’ occupation &amp; their food habits in front of others.</td>
<td>19 (22%)</td>
<td>21 (24%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Harassment and Insult in front of other children of class
  It was identified during this study that the boys faced more humiliation by the school teachers than the girls. There were 65 percent boys and 30 percent girls, who reported of being insulted by the teacher in front of
other student in the schools. Due to such behaviour of the teachers, they were bullied by their classmates after the school hours. The children narrated that they were not insulted for mistakes in class work or for the poor performances in the examination but it was probably due to their poor socio-economic condition.

- **Labelling children as pavement dwellers:**
  The children, who were studied, also felt insulted when their teachers labelled them as street children ‘Rastar bachha’ or children of families living on the streets. These children were repeatedly scolded in an abusive language by their teachers. Many teachers hatefully said, “You are worthless”, “you can’t do anything”, and “you will remain poor and continue to stay on the pavement”. It was found that 30 percent of the boys and 10 percent of the girls felt bad due to such behaviours of their teachers.

- **Discriminating attitude:**
  The feeling of discrimination by the teachers was also found to be strong among the boys than the girls. There were 52 percent boys and 32 percent girls, who stated that they were not loved by their teachers. The teacher only liked the students who do well in the studies and always compare them with them in the class. The children felt that due to their poor academic performance and low socio-economic profile, they were not accepted by the teachers and received less appreciation in the class for their conducts. Most of them narrated that the teachers fail to understand their problems of belonging to a family who lives on the streets. The teacher also blamed them for the behaviours of their parents and lack of participation of their parent’s in the school meetings. Besides, it was common for these children to be called by funny and odd names and teasing them for their poor performance or habits. On reporting the same to the teacher, it was commonly observed that the teacher was not fair and always took sides of students who came from well off families.
• Asking about parent’s occupation and their food habits in front of others:
  As narrated earlier that children always suffer from low self esteem for their family background. Out of total respondents, 22 percent boys and 24 percent girls stated that they feel embarrassed if the teacher discusses about their parents’ profession, food habits or any other personal issues in front of other students of the class.

Relationship of parents with the education system:
One of the strategies adopted by the education department to ensure continued formal education of the children was by ensuring participation of the parents within the formal school system. Periodic meetings were organized with the parents to exchange feedback between the teachers and the parents. This was very useful to ensure that necessary support is provided by the teacher at school and similarly, the parents can support the child in a specific area as per the suggestions of the teacher. But, in most of the cases, there was absolutely no participation by the parents in the case of street children. There was a wide gap in the understanding of the problems faced by the children at the school and home as there was absence of dialogue between the teachers and the parents. It was found that the negative approach adopted by the teacher against their children at school, prevented many parents to initiate talk about their children’s performance and parents with the teacher. Such closed minded approach of the teacher was a common hindering factor to educate the parents how to support the children at home. Thus, the parents did not feel confident and courageous to face the humiliating situation at the school. It was perceived negatively by the teachers as the lack of interest by the parents in the education of their children. With no end to this vicious cycle, it was found that most of the children felt isolated at the school and were sooner or later forced to drop out of the school to prevent from facing various types of abuses at the school.

On further investigation, it was found that some parents were not even aware about the parents-teachers meeting at the school. Probably, this was due to lack of interest by the parents and the children did not want their parents to come to the school as the teacher will have lot of complaints and negativity
towards them, which would further humiliate them. In many cases, where the parents were aware of such meetings, they were not able to participate as they could not take a day off from their work. The parents, who survived on the income from daily wages, cannot afford to take a day off to participate a meeting at the school. Moreover, these dates were fixed by the school authorities and there were no alternative dates available to the parents in case they were not able to make it on that specific date. It was also common for parents to feel uncomfortable to confront teacher to know that their children were not performing well at the school and other related problems at the school. It was also surprising to know from the focus group discussion that there were few parents who were not aware whether their children are attending the school or not and if they were, which school and grade were they studying in.

**Children's perception towards formal school curriculum:**
Since last few years, the education department is constantly trying to modify the curriculum to make the education more simple and attractive for the students in the formal schools. The curriculum developed by the State Council Educational Research and Training (SCERT) is followed by all the primary schools. The expected outcomes are clearly set in the curriculum according to the academic year. While interacting with children and parents, most of them were of the opinion that the education system was not meant for the children living on the streets. On further investigation, it was found that the children were not able to relate the learning at the school with their daily life situation. To understand this further, the researcher gathered views of the children for their perception of the curriculum of two subjects taught at the school. Mathematics and Bengali were the two subject selected for this study. It was not within the scope of the study to compare the data with the expected outcome as stated in the SCERT curriculum. It was collected to get an idea of how useful theses subjects were perceived by the children living on the streets in their day to day life situation.

**Mathematics:**
The discussion was carried out in two groups of 40 children each and equal participation of boys and girls was ensured to understand the differences of perception between different genders. Of the total 40 children, 30 (75%)
reported that they liked mathematics compared to Bengali. And of these 30 children who liked mathematics, there were 21 (70%) boys and 9 (30%) girls. The following were some of the key reasons, why these children liked mathematics as a subject to study at school:

- Mathematics was interesting as they learned how to count money. It helped them to be more aware while receiving money from their employer at work. They were able to apply the learning in their day to day life on the streets.
- The children liked the simple addition and subtraction work at school but they found it hard to remember the multiplication tables.
- Few children found multiplication and division to be useful when they go for shopping at the grocery shop.

Opinion of children regarding Bengali:
Similarly, the discussion amongst 40 children took place to identify why children liked Bengali language to study at school. Of the total, there were 24 (60%) children, which include 9 boys and 15 girls, who liked the subject and described the following reasons for their liking the subject.

- Learning to read and write in Bengali enables them to read the name of the shops and identify the bus number & name.
- Children liked the rhythms of some action rhymes.
- Enjoyed to write their names and address. Some felt that it was good to learn to read and write so that they can write letters to their parents while they were away from home.
- They are able to read few headlines of the newspaper but still found it difficult to read the whole story narrated in the newspaper. Children enjoy reading short and simple sentences but were not able to understand long sentences.
- Children did not enjoy memorizing and re-writing long poems and big paragraphs. They also did not like to read and write questions and answers from the exercise book.
- Interestingly, almost everyone showed eagerness to learn English so that they can interact with non Bengali population, read colourful hoardings around them, read and save names and numbers in mobile phones, send
text messages, etc. According to the children, learning to speak good English was essential as it would help them to explore some better livelihood opportunities in other cities like Mumbai, Delhi and Pune in India and some even felt it would be useful to go and work in Dubai.

It was interesting to understand from the discussion that as the children climb up the ladder of education system, they find it more difficult to relate and apply the learning with their daily life situation. As described earlier, the life of children living on the streets was found to be very insecure and challenging. And it was not possible for the children to relate the teachings at the school with the demanding situations of life on the streets. It was a common expectation of children and parents that the education would help them to access better livelihood opportunities but it was not practical for almost all of them due to the time involved in the entire process. So, the biggest constraint of the current education system was to relate the outcome of the learning with their day to day life and immediate future. It was not possible for the parents and children to prioritize the other advantages of education like mental and physical abilities and personality development. Hence, they come to the conclusion that the education was not meant for the children living on the streets.

While interacting, the parents explained that they cannot afford to pay the fees and manage other expenses related to education for their children to attend the secondary school. From a very narrow perspective, the parents think that if the primary education was not able to add any value to find a better job then what difference it would make if their children gained a higher education. Therefore, they train and engage their children in unskilled workforce from an early childhood so that they become skilful as early as possible. It was evident that there was huge gap in the expected outcome of the education system and that perceived by the parents, and for this reason, the children were in a dilemma and never received proper support to sustain their interest in education. All this culminated to lack of conducive environment in the family, resulting into poor performance of children with reference to the expectations of the education curriculum and failing to cope with the system. As explained, the vicious cycles puts the children in an
emotional turmoil, humiliation, feeling inferior and poor acceptance with the system of education. As a result, the children are thrown out of the system and are subjected to risky environment, which was open to abuse them.

**Street Children in Work Force**

In India, there are lakhs of children still engaged to work as labourers below the age of 14 years. All this is happening in spite of all the exhortations at the international level. Unfortunately, in India, there is a deep rooted history of children working in the production process and so the trends of many generations have made people to think that it is normal for children to work in their childhood. And one of the key factors was the extreme economic deprivation, which forces the children belonging to the poverty stricken families to leave the school and engage themselves in the workforce. The wide spread poverty lead to the rapid growth of child labour, which created a far-reaching effects on the economy and the education level of the country. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by all countries except Somalia and the United States, guarantees children the right “to be protected from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or interfere with the child’s education, or harmful for child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.” The Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention was adopted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1999, and ratified by 150 countries worldwide. Under this Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, some forms of child labour are flatly prohibited, such as slavery or practices similar to slavery. Other types of work are prohibited if they constitute “work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.”

As one of the signatories of the international treaties, the Government of India has also amended its existing labour laws and also enacted The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986. The government has decided to prohibit employment of children as servants, especially for domestic help or in ‘dhabas’ (roadside eateries), restaurants, hotels, motels, teashops, resorts, spas or in other recreational centres. The ban has been imposed under the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986 and was effective from 10th October 2006.
The Ministry of Labour has recently issued a notification to this effect giving three-month mandatory notice. The Ministry has warned that anyone employing children in these categories would be liable to prosecution and other penal action under the Act. In the Section 4 of the Act, it clearly indicates that appropriate Government agency would conduct time to time need based survey to enumerate number of children working in various establishments that has been declared as prohibited as per the law. Children working in prohibited establishments would be rescued and provided with safe shelter, food, clothing, boarding, appropriate medical care and educational facilities.

Besides, for the purpose of the rehabilitation of such rescued children, the Act has provision whereby these children would be entitled for free educational facilities, vocational education and training. Some of the free training courses include medical, engineering and computer education as per the aptitude and the need of the child. Also, there are provisions, which will assist such children to identify employment opportunities after the completion of their courses. The Act also recognizes that it is a cognizable offence to employ children or compel children to work as labourers as described under the Criminal Procedure Code (CRPC) 1973 and such act of crime would be punishable with imprisonment for a minimum period of four years, and may be extended up to seven years. But, in spite of these international and national promises, the engagement of children in work force is quiet visible. From the interview conducted with the children during the study, it was evident that 82 percent boys and 100 percent girls were engaged in such occupations or in such process which were prohibited by the Indian labour laws and / or The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act,1986. Some of the occupations and process where the children were found to be working during the process of data collection are listed below:
Table 5.2.5 Occupations & Process where children are involved

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupations</th>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Automobile garages and workshops</td>
<td>• Tanning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Slaughter houses.</td>
<td>• Automobile repairing process, welding, lathe work, dent beating,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Domestic work or domestic servants.</td>
<td>• Skinning, dyeing process of manufacturing of lather and lather products,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Roadside dhabas (Road side eateries), restaurants, hotels, motels, tea shops etc</td>
<td>• Tire repairing process,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Rag picking and scavenging</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Besides, there were 12 percent of the boys, who were engaged in prohibited occupations or process like cart or van puller, rickshaw-puller, fish and vegetable seller, etc.

The researcher identified during the field visit for data collection that all the boys and half of the total girls were economically active. Most of them were engaged in some kind of unskilled work or temporary jobs. And it found that the boys were able to join the work force earlier than the girls. The usual age of starting to work is around 8 to 10 years of age and after few years they pass on to the next age-group, when they become ‘full-time’ workers. Most of the boys were engaged in different types of work, which includes begging, rag-picking, slaughter houses and cleaning / washing dishes at the road side hotels. Some also worked at the auto parts shop, cycle repairing shop, garage and construction site. In the case of girls, they usually become economically productive after the age of 10 years. And girls over the age of 12 years are preferred for the work of a domestic help. Thus, it was observed that younger girls were accompanied and trained by their mothers from a young age as domestic worker and later they become independent and earn their own living.
As indicated in the bar diagram of the age and sex distribution of working and non working children, it indicates that the all the age groups of both genders are economically productive. As mentioned earlier, all the boys and half of the girls were found to be engaged in some kind of economic activity at the time of data collection. Of the total girls, 24 percent were engaged in direct economic activities from a very early age. At an earlier age, many girls were engaged in collection of waste recyclable material with their family members. And the remaining 76 percent girls started to earn at a later age of 10 to 12 years. Girls starting at this age were commonly found to be working as domestic help. Among the boys, all of them were engaged in economic activities at the time of data collection. Of the total boys, 57 percent became economically productive at the age of 7 years and remaining 43 percent started earning after they have reached the age of 10 years. Most of the boys, who started to earn early, were engaged in rag picking, waste recyclable material collection with the family or begging. Later, they shifted to other economic activities where they were working independent of their family.

**Educational Status of Working Children:**

**Table 5.2.6 Educational Status of Working Children (7-9 yrs)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Started to earn between the age of 7-9 yrs</th>
<th>Never been to the school</th>
<th>Drop out of the school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td>57</td>
<td>13 (23%)</td>
<td>44 (77%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11 (92%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>69</td>
<td>24 (35%)</td>
<td>45 (65%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the above data, it is evident that there is a strong co-relation between the age of starting to earn and their participation in school. It is obvious that those children who started to work and earn at an early age never got enrolled at the school or even if they did, they were the drop outs after a short period of time. Of the total 12 girls, who started to work at the age of 7-9 years, 11 (92%) never got enrolled in the formal school and the other girl was a drop out from class I at school. And in the case of boys, who were easily absorbed in the market for petty jobs, there were 13 (23%) boys, who never went to school in their early life. And the other 44 (77%) were the drop outs for the primary school at an early age. Looking at the overall picture, there were total 69 children, who were economically active from the age of 7-9 years, of which 24 (35%) were never enrolled in formal education and 45 (65%) were the drop out from the mainstream education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Started to earn between the age of 10-12 yrs</td>
<td>Drop out of the school</td>
<td>Studying in the formal school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>16 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>25 (66%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>41 (43%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When we look at the scenario of the children we got engaged in the economic activity at a later age, it showed co-relation with the higher ratio of enrolment at school and their education level as compared to the earlier group. It was found that a significant percentage of children who were working did not discontinue their studies at the school. In the case of girls, of the total 38 economically active girls, there were 13 (34%) of them, who continued their formal education while working as domestic help. Whereas, the remaining 25 (66%) girls dropped out from their school. Similarly, in the case of boys, there were 41 (72%) boys who were still continuing their education at the formal school of the total 57 boys. Though, in the case of boys, the drop out rate was not poor like girls but still 16 (28%) discontinued studies at the school.

Thus, it is clear from the above two tables that all the children, who were never enrolled in schools have started economic activities at an early age. And in most of the other children’s case, they started to work by the age of 12.
years due to the growing expectations within the family and increasing dissatisfaction in the school environment. Though the data does not reflect the true picture of the work status of the girls as all the girls were engaged in some kind of work, whether they were paid or not. In this study, the 50 percent girls indicated as working only reflect those girls who actually received remuneration for their work but the remaining girls were also involved in some kind of economic activities, but unfortunately they were never paid separately. Their work was considered as their free of cost help to their parents or nearby relatives.

**Income of Street Children:**

It was difficult to estimate the average monthly income of the street children, who were engaged in economic activities, as most of them did not have fixed income. During the process of in-depth one to one discussion, it was revealed that children were paid low compared to the amount of work they did and the time they spent after the work. Most of them were engaged in some kind of unskilled work and lacked the capacity to negotiate for better wages in the labour market. Also, many were working in small scale industries or work, which exposed them to hazardous conditions without any protective gears. Though, their effect may not be seen immediately but they may be prone to develop some health ailment at a later stage due to such exposure. This clearly indicates the failure of execution of the labour laws in our country.

Children who worked at automobile workshops or garages, slaughter houses, ‘dhabas’ (road side eateries), restaurants, hotels and tea shops were usually paid at the end of the day. Besides the daily wages, they had no other benefits of paid leave or medical coverage, in case they required the same. The wages paid to them varied across the city and there was no trend of uniformity in the payment structure compared to the same work done by other children in other area. Everything was dependent on the rapport and the negotiation skill of the children and their family members with the paymasters. During the study, the researcher tried to understand the wage structure of children in comparison to their age, types of work and hours of working. Some of the findings of the same are described below:
Wage structure of working male children:
For the purpose of data analysis, the type of occupation was broadly categorized in two parts, firstly, the children who were working in some sort of establishment and secondly, the children who were self employed.

Table 5.2.8 Type of Occupation & Their Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation in some establishment</th>
<th>Nos. of children</th>
<th>Average income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leather manufacturing units</td>
<td>6 (4%)</td>
<td>Rs. 50-60 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slaughter house</td>
<td>8 (5%)</td>
<td>Rs. 30-35 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garage</td>
<td>4 (3%)</td>
<td>Rs. 30-40 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road side food stall</td>
<td>30 (20%)</td>
<td>Rs. 20-30 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self Employed</th>
<th>Nos. of children</th>
<th>Average income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cycle / rickshaw pulling</td>
<td>7 (5%)</td>
<td>Rs. 30-40 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor at construction site</td>
<td>12 (8%)</td>
<td>Rs. 25-30 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable vendor</td>
<td>15 (10%)</td>
<td>Rs. 20-35 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rag picking</td>
<td>46 (31%)</td>
<td>Rs. 10-100 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic help</td>
<td>36 (24%)</td>
<td>Rs. 200-400 per month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>116</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above tables, it can be found out that of the total 150 economically active children, 116 (77%) were self-employment whereas 48 (32%) were working in some kind of establishments in and around the city. It was also found that the children enjoyed the power to earn money, though there was lot of pain involved at the work place. As they belong to poor socio-economic group, no one wants to trust them and give them a chance to work in the beginning. And it is not uncommon for these innocent children to get tortured and rudely behaved by other people at work, including the employer. But, they continue to work so that their income can supplement the monitory needs of the family. It was also common to find that the children were involved in more than one job at a time due to the pressure from the insecurity of the job market and their pressing needs. It is always a big challenge for the children to get into the mainstream of the job market, but still they continue to struggle to survive and earn their living to sustain their lives on the streets of a metropolis.
Children working in some establishments:

Children working at the tea-stalls, restaurants and hotels:
Many children are commonly found to be working in road side food stalls, hotels, restaurants and ‘dhabas’. The researcher identified that 20 percent of the total children, especially the boys, were involved in similar occupation during the field visits. And these boys were required to work for a minimum period of 14 hours each day, during which they cleaned and mopped the floors, cleaned tables, emptying the garbage bins, taking orders from the customers, supplying and serving food and helping in the kitchen. And for such slogging hard work, they would receive Rs. 20-30 per day as remuneration. Usually they work all the days of the week and are not expected to take long breaks or leave. They are expected to work as per the order of the employer and are not expected to complain. In return, the employer may provide them with two square meals and a place to sleep at night. Besides this, there are no other benefits as they are hired on a temporary and illegal basis.

During the interview, the children revealed to the researcher that they were forced to work long hours by their employer, for which they are paid a tiny some of money. Also, they do not get any overtime for any extra hours of work done for the employer. At the same time, if they happen to reach late at work or take a day off, their remuneration is accordingly deducted. Also, it is common for them to lose the job if they remain absent for couple of days, in case they or their family members fall sick. Hence, it is common for them to change jobs frequently.

Most of the working children reported that it was common for them to receive harsh treatment by the paymaster or senior co-workers. Of the total children working at the tea-stalls and road side eateries (dhabas), 65 percent reported that they were victims of severe forms of physical abuse. Besides, they were commonly exposed to burns, cuts and other physical injury during their work in the kitchen or near the stove. They also commonly suffered from body-ache, stomach-ache and other forms of physical problems due to consumption of stale, unhealthy and spicy food provided by the employer and lack of sufficient rest.
Raju, a 14 year old boy worked at a road side hotel near the Shobha Bazaar metro station. He started to work since he was of 6 years of age and so far he has changed more than 8 work places. He has worked at this place for 3 months now. Prior to this job, he was involved in a similar job at another restaurant. He was forced to leave the previous job due to work pressure and the harsh treatment by the employer and his co-workers. He found this current job through one of his friends, who also works in the same place. Raju works six days a weeks and prefers to take one day off to spend time with his friends. But, he mentioned that his family members and the employer want him to work all days of the week. Every morning, his day starts at 5 o’clock and ends at mid-night. During the day, he is given a couple of hours of rest when there is no work. With all this hardship, he makes about Rs.180 every week, which comes to about Rs.30 a day.

Children working at the slaughter houses:
The Slaughter houses are located in the eastern parts of Kolkata. For common people, slaughtering of animal is a loathsome activity and they do not prefer to know how and what is being done inside the slaughter houses. It was found that of the total children, there were 8 (5%) who worked at the slaughter house, which is prohibited as per the labour law of the country. The working condition inside the slaughter house in Kolkata is worse than working in a sewerage drain pipes. As you get inside these houses, there are carcasses of cows and buffalos hanging from the stuffed yards. The dregs from the slaughter houses are thrown in the open drains and get dumped without any chemical treatment as per the guidelines of the pollution control board. In such pathetic environment, the children get exposed to unhygienic and brutal activities inside the slaughter houses. These children are made to move the animals inside the slaughterhouses, help them in the process of slaughtering, remove the internal organs, clean the removed skin and dispose the waste. For such a filthy and horrifying job, they get paid up to Rs.30-35/- per day. They have no fixed hours of work, and they usually work for more than 7-8 hours per day.

Some children were also found to be involved in the process of cleaning and drying of the intestine and skin of cows, sheep, and goats. The income of these
children varies depending on their involvement in the process of cleaning and drying. It was surprising to know that the dry layers of intestine of cows and sheep are used as the raw materials for the manufacturing of absorbable surgical sutures. And there are many families, who are involved in the process of extracting the raw material in the eastern parts of the city. Such raw material produced in the households is collected by the middleman and is supplied to the surgical supply manufacturing industries. While interviewing a boy named Saleman, the researcher was told that he works at one of the slaughterhouses in eastern Kolkata and he felt proud that they were supplying the raw material to well known companies like *Johnson and Johnson* for making of absorbable surgical sutures.

**Children working at the tanneries:**

In India, West Bengal stands at the top for its exports of finished leather goods in the international market. More than 70 percent of the leather goods produced in West Bengal gets exported due to high demand in the global market. And, India is proud to have the Asia's largest leather manufacturing complex developed in Kolkata. The well known areas for leather manufacturing are Tiljala, Topsia and Tangra in the eastern parts of the city. The government is in the process of relocating these factories from the main city to the suburban areas of Kolkata to reduce the levels of pollution due to these industries. Though, the government has banned the use of children in the leather manufacturing process, still there were some children identified during the data collection who worked in leather processing industry. To protect the industries from any litigation, they use the back door entry to engage children in such process. Usually, the leather factories hire people on contract through the labour contractors and these children get employed by the greedy contractors, who pay them Rs. 15-20 per day for their exposure to hard and hazardous work. They are engaged at the tanneries to carrying carcasses, process the skin removed from the dead animal with different chemicals and laying the chemically treated skins for drying. Many a times, these children work as a help to their parents, who are employed through labour contractors on temporary basis.
**Children working in garages:**
Of the total participants, there were 4 children found to be working in garages. They were involved in different repairing processes, which include welding, tire reconditioning, restoration of car battery, cleaning and other activities involving lifting of heavy parts. They also worked with unguarded machinery like welding and grinder, which exposed them to the risk of injuries. Occasionally, children injure themselves while carrying heavy loads and from falling of objects or machinery. They were also exposed to hazardous chemicals of wet cells and fumes and for such tasks, the children were paid Rs. 35-40 per day and were required to work for more than 9 hours a day with only a short break in between.

**Children as domestic help:**
Since 2006, the Government of India has imposed a ban on the use of children for domestic help. But for the younger girls living on the streets, it is a lucrative job. And so, many mothers train their daughters to get skilled with domestic work, which includes cleaning, washing and cooking. For the purpose of the study, only those girls who worked as part time help were included as they had access to their friends and families. But, there was no way to get in touch with the girls who were working as domestic help, round the clock. However, it was reported that there was a growing demand for the full time domestic help and most of the girls and their family members aspire to get such jobs. The families, who live on the streets, always strive to get their daughters in a safe home of a good family, where she can work and stay. This would eliminate the pain and struggle of living on the streets, where the child may also encounter various forms of abuse, including the risk of getting sexually abused.

Most of the young girls felt that being a domestic help was one of the few options available to them for work. In this occupation, they are not only earning but they get an opportunity to live in a safer environment, And occasionally, the home owner provides them with food, which is much better in terms of quality and quantity, than what they were consuming while they lived on the streets. For most of the girls, they start working as an assistant to their mother at her work place but later, they take up independent jobs, where they
get equally paid. In many instances, these girls are also exposed to abuses especially sexual, by the home owner or their relative while they work at the home. And so, it is a challenge for them to find a good family where they can work full time as domestic help without worrying to protect themselves from such abuses. It was also reported that there are agents, who are in contact with their family members and they help to find a place of work in different parts of the country. But some of these middlemen are not trustworthy as they may be involved in trafficking of the girls across the border for the purpose of prostitution. The researcher was informed that there were three girls who took up such work from a local agent in different cities in India. But only one was able to return back home and that too with the intervention of the police. It was found that the local agent recruited these girls on the basis of false promises for good remuneration, food, clothing and place to stay. But, as narrated by the girl who returned back, she was brutally punished and exposed to mental and sexual abuse by her employer.

Self employment activities:
It was observed during the study that the children, who were self employed, were involved in number of activities to generate some income to supplement their family income. They were able to identify various mechanisms to survive and sustain themselves in the competitive market and amongst the challenges of living on the streets. The study identified about 16 percent of the children to be involved in more than one activity in a day to earn their living. Besides, they were forced to change their activities frequently, due to changing market needs and competition.

Children in rag picking activities:
One of the common self employment seen amongst the children living on the streets is rag picking. Of the total, there were 46 (31%) children engaged in the process of picking up recyclable material from garbage and similar scavenging activities. Of these 46 children, there were 14 girls and 32 boys and their income varied from Rs. 10-70 per day, depending upon what they find from the garbage. Many children start doing this at an early age and they tend to earn Rs. 10-15 per day, but with time, they pick up the work very well and spend more than 10 hours a day and their income is around Rs. 60-70 per day.
It was found that this work is done in a well coordinated manner by the children and their families. The children and their families get divided into small groups and they are given specific areas of operation, where they roam on the street and scan the garbage bins to collect recyclable items. During the day, they travel few kilometres in search of recyclable items. They search on the streets, in the garbage heaps by the side of the road, factory garbage, around railway and bus stations and near hotels. These children collect items like soft drink cans, aluminium foils, plastic bottles and polythene carry bags, metal pieces, glass bottles, paper and any other recyclable items. At the end of the day, the collected items are sorted out into neat piles by their respective categories in an open space or by the side of the road. Each recyclable item fetches a different rate depending upon its capacity to be reused and the demand in the market. The items collected by the children and their family get sold and a share of money is given to the children based on their contribution. Some children also hire cycle carts (vans), so that they can move around faster and pick up more and heavy material while they roam on the streets in different parts of the city. Usually, their target is to search in the bins of hotels, restaurants and dumping grounds of Kolkata Municipal Corporation. In such cases, their earning is usually higher than the other children, who are involved in scavenging by walking around with a large plastic bag to collect items. Their earning varies from Rs. 70-100 per day.

Dismantling automobile batteries, which is made up of recyclable lead, is a work done by specialized group of such children. Children break the battery to remove the dry cell from which they extract the Carbon rods, plastics and zinc covers, which gets sold in the market. While they struggle to survive from the income generated by selling the recyclable waste material, these children are exposed to various unhygienic and filthy environments. They are exposed to injuries, while searching for items from the pile of garbage without using any protective gear. Many a times, the heap of garbage is put on fire, which releases hazardous fumes from the burning of plastic, rubber and other waste. Such exposure also makes the children to suffer from upper respiratory tract infections. Also, they easily contract diseases due to their exposure to filthy
waste for the entire day, without any source of basic amenities to keep themselves clean.

**Vegetable selling:**
The other common source of earning amongst children, who were self employed was to sell vegetables near Sealdah railway station. This station is considered as the gate way to Kolkata as a large population flows in and out of the city through this station. Besides, it is also an important junction for both rail and road route. It is through Sealdah that the city connects with other important areas of the state as well as the neighbouring states. Sealdah is hub for distribution and sale of fresh vegetables, fruits, fish and other live stock products, which are then transported to different parts within and outside Kolkata. It was found that many children living with their families on the streets close to Sealdah station were involved in loading and unloading of these products. While working as loaders, they manage to get some vegetables and fruits from the large load, which they sell to other small scale vegetable vendor to make some money. Many were reported or beaten up for stealing vegetables from the packages, while they worked as loaders. However, their parents did not perceive it as something wrong and supported their children for such act of stealing. In case of some children, the entire family was involved in the loading and unloading work at the Sealdah Station, making it a primary source of income. It was common for children to be exposed to vulnerable situations. There were many occasions when they were treated harshly and were exposed to injury or accidents due to the risky nature of the job. For many children, back pain, body ache and minor injuries were something which goes without being registered till it turns out to be a chronic debilitating condition.

Besides, they were also involved in several other activities for their secondary source of income. They were found to be involved in selling lottery tickets, newspapers, clean train compartments, assist in smuggling of electronic goods, brown sugar and country liquor in plastic pouch.

Unfortunately, the country has several laws to protect the children from working but in reality there is sheer lack of system and personnel to enforce them. It has been clearly notified by the Government that involving children in several activities and processes is illegal and strictly prohibited. But due to the
miserable condition of the families living on the streets, the children are pushed by their parents to work in such hazardous and difficult occupation from a very tender age. For the parents to support the family, it becomes essential for their children to be working to supplement the income of the household. Their struggle is to survive the family in the miserable living conditions of the streets. In such situation, it is not possible for the family members to think whether the occupation is causing any negative impact on the development of their children.

On the other hand, there are individual owners of business or small scale units, who prefer to employ children as a cheap labour. They keep them as illegal workers to avoid paying higher wages and benefits to regular worker in their establishment. This helps the greedy businessman to avoid the legal obligation of providing any welfare to the employees. Most common places, where children get engaged are garage, roadside eateries (dhabas) and restaurants. They make the children to work at the whims and fancies of the employer and do not hesitate to bend or break the regulation, which gives protection to the children. The children are made to do slogging work for more than 8 hours a day without proper pay or basic facilities. And due to their vulnerable nature, they cannot negotiate with their employer otherwise the employer may replace them with other children. In the labour market, there is no dearth of cheap labour and so, the children tolerate all the pain of hard work in unhealthy condition to keep up with the job. Many children are exploited by exposing them to hazardous conditions of which they are not aware and could have detrimental effects on their physical and mental growth. So, the children are constantly searching for a better job to jump one step higher. And with time, they develop many other survival mechanisms to protect themselves from the negative effects of poor working conditions. Consequently, many a times they also get lured by the anti-social gangs, who involve them in various deviant actions to make a better living. Though these activities are also not free from hazards and exploitations but they prefer to pick up such work as they are not to work at the caprice of their employer.
Physical Abuse: An experience of boys at work place:

Diagram 5.2.10 Experience of Boys at Work

While recalling their experiences of last six months, 68 percent of the boys reported to have faced physical abuse by either their employer, co-worker or other person at the work place. Of the total 48 children working in some kind of establishment, the incidence of physical abuse was found among 36 (75%) children. It was comparatively low in the case of self employed children, where the percentage was 62 percent. The same can be seen in the above bar diagram. Some of the common forms of abuse were to get beaten up, slapped, kicked or pushed away. The data given below clearly indicates that 3 out of 10 working children face physical abuse at work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of hurt experience</th>
<th>Boys working in establishments</th>
<th>Self employed boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse causing swelling &amp; hematoma</td>
<td>18 (50%)</td>
<td>12 (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse leading to bleeding &amp; laceration</td>
<td>8 (22%)</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse causing burns &amp; scalds</td>
<td>6 (17%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically abused with or without injury</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>48</strong></td>
<td><strong>52</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Physical abuse: An experience among girls at work place:
The girls working as a part time domestic help were less affected by the physical abuse compared to the boys and other girls working as full time domestic help. Out of 36 girls, 15 (42%) reported to have faced physical abuse at their employers residence. In none of the cases the intensity of abuse were severe. It was observed that girls who worked as part time domestic help were
much more empowered and oriented to their safety measures. Usually, such part time workers stayed up to 2 hours at their employers place. In a city like Kolkata there is a growing demand for domestic help and so if they find any threat of physical abuse, they easily change to a different location of job at a short notice.

**Economic abuse:**
Apart from getting physically abused, the children who are in the work force are often victim of economic abuse by their employers. It starts with hiring of children at a cheaper rate compared to the adults and they are suppressed from demanding better wages or proper working conditions. From a very tender age, they are involved in the unskilled labour market and they get trapped in this segment and continue to derive low wages, even later when they grow up. It was reported by the children that in order to keep control over them, their employer always pays little less remuneration compared to what they are expected to get on weekly basis. As discussed earlier, children and adults living on the streets often rely upon their employers to take loan, in case of any unexpected expenses. And the employers recover the said loan by deducting a small portion of money every week. But, usually these children end up paying more money due to lack of their knowledge to calculate the instalment and interest for the borrowed capital. Also, they have no way to maintain records for the amount deducted by the employer and so they have no choice but to trust the employer and accept the wages as calculated and paid by the employer. Besides, the employer also takes advantage of the vulnerable situation of the children by making them work extra and long hours in return of the obligation of lending the money during the time of emergency.

**Street Children in immediate community**

The children often get exposed to various forms of abuse within their immediate community due to the poor socio-economic, lack of solidarity and absence of value system among the people living on the streets. While interacting with the children, it was found that children do not have faith and
respect towards the adults of their surrounding community. They believe that they cannot trust those adults as they lack self control and can easily take advantage of an opportunity to abuse them for their selfish interest. Also, the children expressed the feeling of fear from the other people living in the area during one to one interaction. On further investigation, it was found that the girls living on the streets were more fearful for getting sexually exploited by the people living around their shelter on the streets. Whereas, in the case of the boys, they were afraid of getting exploited for money by the community members in which they reside. It was common amongst both the gender that they were quiet cautious about any stranger around them and they were believed to have a reasonable sense of judgment to identify the intention of any approaching person.

it was found that of the total 100 girls, 74 responded that they do not have any faith on the adult members of their immediate community. Of these 74 girls, there were 8 (11%) girls, who disclosed that they were sexually abused by the known adults living in the nearby area. In addition, there were 43 (58%) girls, who were aware of such abuse occurring by the known people. Also, there were 17 (23%) girls, who were aware that there are some adults in their nearby community, who try to show their private parts to the children, including girls and children of very young age.

In the case of boys, there were 63 percent of them who were aware of incidence of sexual abuse occurring to someone whom they know from their peer group. The most common forms of abuse were masturbation, oral sex and anal sex. And the common perpetrators of abuse were the vendors (21%), leader among the street children (24%) and other influential people (12%) in the community. The children also reported that they feel the threat of abuse from the other youngster and taxi drivers in the community. And, if the children do not agree to their demands then they become furious and try to molest them, when they are alone. One of the boys during the interview revealed that they were allured to perform oral sex initially and later he was forced for anal sex, which was a very painful experience. Similarly, during the focus group discussion, some of the children narrated the following incidences of abuse perpetrated against the children.
- Children are often offered free movie tickets and tasty snacks to become friendly with them. Once the perpetrators gain the little faith of the children, they lure the children to accompany them to watch a movie in the nearby cinema hall or video parlour. This helps to establish rapport with the children after which they are taken to cinema halls to see pornographic films. Here the children are forced to involve in the sexual activity with the perpetrator. These incidences commonly occur among both the genders. Similar attempts are also made by elderly men, who try to allure children by fondling their private parts and then force them to entertain with sexual activity.

- To start with, the children are lured with cinema tickets, tasty food and cosmetics but later, the perpetrators lure them with money by throwing Five Rupee coins on their shelters. Many times, the child gets trapped and follows the perpetrator. And the perpetrator engages with the girl in sexual activity promising her for marriage. They engage in such relationships for few months and then withdraw once they lose interest. Many girls understand this and so they try not to accept the money at the first instance.

During an interview, Reena, a 13 year old girl said, “I felt very disheartened, when I saw that the person whom I loved the most has betrayed me. He was interested for only physical relationship with me......he has not only exploited me but was playing similar games with my other friends also... He had promised to marry and take me away from the pathetic life on the streets ...promised me of a good house ...good food...but now I can realize that he was a liar.....after three months of intensive relationship, he handed me over to three of his other friends... who abused me and tortured me brutally....now the same person is doing the same thing with one of my friends....

After repeated incidence of abuse like in the case of Reena, many girls are pushed in the flesh trade. These girls lose the emotional attachment in life and become sex worker due to its vast demand. It fetches them easy money in a short period of time. Gradually, they learn the tricks of the business, where the customer throws coins on the shelter and they pick up and follow them. Then,
such perpetrators take the children to some lonely place and engage in sexual activity by promising to give good food and extra money. Many a times, these children get into the racket of pimps, who are involved in the arrangements of girls from the streets to entertain their clients. From the streets, these girls move as per the directions of the pimps and are taken to hotel and vacant flat for sexual engagement. In such places, they are given time to get ready, allured with good clothes, cosmetics to wear and food to eat. Subsequently, they are forced to sexually entertain multiple clients against a meagre amount of money.

Besides, the sexual assaults by the known adult members of the nearby community, the children also reported of incidence of abuse by an elderly person from the community. The children from the south zone described that they have seen many older persons of the community abusing young girls and boys in vacant places near parks, beside cinema halls or inside a taxi.

A man of around 60 years of age was well known within the community for his behaviour and love for children. He was known for helping parents to take care of their young children while they were out for work. Parents were also relaxed as there was someone from the community who was taking care of their younger children at home. He used to bring candies & gifts and played with the children for most of the evenings. One day, while playing the children saw a 3 year old girl lying unconscious in one of the lonely places behind the park. Her dress was drenched in blood and she had marks of injuries all over the body. Children informed people in the community and the child was immediately taken to the hospital. Later on, it was found that she had severe injuries near the genital area as someone had raped the child. After a day, when the child regained consciousness and narrated her horrible experience with the same old man of 60 years of age. People came to know that he raped the girl, whom they trusted to be a fatherly person and left the children under his supervision when they went out for work. They also came to know that he had attempted to abuse many other children in a similar fashion.
Ratan, a 13 year old boy, worked as a rag picker and was also engaged with some local smugglers. He provides help to the gang to traffic brown sugar through the international border with Bangladesh. Occasionally, he travels to Bangladesh via Bongaon boarder and transfers the goods to another Bangladeshi boy, whom he meets there. He stays in Dhaka for a few days before he returns back to Kolkata. He makes good money for doing this work but he is also scared of the security forces at the border. Once, he was caught by the Border Security Forces (BSF) and was detained for a day, but was released as he had nothing in his bag while returning back to India. He was aware of the risk factors involved in this type of work but was enjoying the thrill to overcome those challenges. Also, it was helping him to earn handsome money.

Sheikh Salman, a boy of 11 was locked up in the police custody for two days. He was caught by some local residents while he was running away with a stolen fan from a nearby primary school. He was beaten by the people on the street as he was caught red handed and later the public handed him over to the local police station. Police detained him in custody and after a prolonged negotiation with the primary school authorities and on the request of the local influential members and parents, the police released him. During the group discussion, the participants introduced him as a ‘criminal’. It was observed that during the entire session, the child remained silent and never participated. Later, the researcher conducted an in-depth interview with the Salman, during which he revealed the following.

“I was hired by one of the local persons...I will not mention his name....he gave me an advance of Rs. 50/- to do the job of stealing a fan from the primary school. I was accompanied by two other local youths, who were around 19 years. They broke the window and helped me to get inside the class room, after which I opened the wooden window of the primary school so that they can come inside. I had helped them to bring the fans down from the ceiling. Immediately after that they ran away and asked me to carry those fans to a nearby place. When I came outside the building with the fan, I was caught by one of the local residents. He called other people and they beat me very badly. I was bleeding from my mouth. They handed me over to the police,
where I was again beaten. But I could not disclose the names of the other accomplices. In our group, we do not disclose each others names. The person, who had hired me, helped me to get out of the police lock up. He has given Rs. 500/- to my family members for not disclosing his name. I worked for him before and was able to complete the given task successfully. And I will continue to work with them”.

Though it was very difficult to enumerate the exact numbers of street children getting trafficked each year but it can be assumed based on the above case studies that it must be very common. During the data collection, the researcher came to know about two girls from the North zone, who were trafficked by a woman from their own community. The girls were lured by the women to get a good job as a domestic help at an old lady’s home. The parents also agreed as the woman promised of good salary and other facilities like stay and food. One day, she left the area with the two girls promising that they will return back in few hours after meeting the old lady, who was in need of domestic help. The woman assured to the parents that if the old lady agreed to hire the girls then the parents can visit and negotiate the remuneration and other benefits of the job. But after she left, the woman never returned back nor did the girls. The members of the community lodged complain with the local police station but they were not able to trace her. On investigation, it was found that the woman was also a pavement dweller as she was thrown out of her home after getting a divorce. It was believed that she belonged to a good family and worked as a domestic help in the nearby vicinity. But in reality, all these were stories she told the community members to create a good will and rapport with them. In fact, the woman behaved in a manner to gain trust of people and later betrayed them by trafficking their girls by luring them with false promises of employment.

Excluding abduction and forced trafficking, the younger girls were also lured by their peer groups. Once a girl becomes a victim, they try to entice other girls of the community to become like them. And most of the times, they are successful to allure them. During the study, there were 4 incidence reported from 5 zones, where girls were taken away by their friends with the promises
to get them a better job. Once they trust them, these girls usually fall in the racket of child trafficking.

Similar problems were also seen in the case of boys, but the numbers of incidence were less as compared to the girls. They were usually trafficked or abducted to train them to get into antisocial activities like trading and transporting of drugs, country liquor, imported electronic good and other smuggled goods from dockyard and / or from the railway yards. The boys were also lured to get involved in other antisocial activities like prostitution, pick pocketing, shoplifting and burglary. And after the initial period, these children are lured to do life risking jobs with the expectation to earn large amount of easy money.

Peer Group Abuse and different deviant behaviour:

It was observed that children adopt various forms of deviant behaviour to cope and adjust with the street environment, where there is poor supervision and lack of societal control. Some of the practices adopted by these children are to get involved in a gang culture, use of intoxicating substances, deviant sexual practices, watching of pornographic films, gambling and living in a world of fantasies.

Gang Cultures:
The boys living on the streets believe in gang culture to protect themselves from any external threats. Such gangs operate in a confined area, where they usually reside and they lack any constructive guidance to utilize the energy of young members in constructive activities. They are often influenced by the local political leader for their mutual interest. Of the total 100 boys, there were 87 who reported of their affiliation with one or more such gangs or groups. During the discussion, it was found that the some members of the gang were already involved in some form of deviant activities and they are best used by the political parties for their interest. As these gangs operate under the umbrella of political parties, they receive protection against their act of
violation of law and order in the society. It becomes very attractive for the children to gain such power by joining the gang and they get exposed to activities that violate the law.

To ensure that they remain well accepted in the gang, they get in the habit of substance abuse and gambling, which are the common recreational activities among the gang members. The new children joining the gangs are instigated to get involved in these activities. And, in most cases, they force themselves to inculcate this behaviour to get acceptance by their peer group. The members of the gang usually get involved in various types of competitive activities to prove their capabilities and ranking amongst the members of the gang. It is a sign of power and prestige in the gang to develop tolerance for different types of substance abuse, have multiple sex partners, be the winner in gambling and other rebellious activities. It helps them to get promoted within the hierarchy of the gang.

The boys are usually members of more than one group, and they tend to affiliate with the more powerful and influential group as one of the protection strategies. These groups and its members are not always from the same communities. And, it is common to find that the new children joining these groups get abused by other senior children, who force them to watch adult movies and make them consume intoxicating substance. The habit of gambling is also very common in the gang and often the young and new members get cheated by the senior and influential members.

The senior members of the gang often encourage the young and new members to engage in law violating activities to vent out their frustration from the past abusive experiences and deprived life on the street. It was found from the discussion that the children mostly developed rebellious behaviour against the law enforcement authorities, who were one of the perpetrators of abuse. Besides, they also have lot of bitterness from the ill treatment received from the economically better class of people living in the nearby area. And the other means to compensate for their limitations in life, the children tend to derive satisfaction from their masculine power or their capacity to procure expensive materialistic things. They do this to show their power and attract beautiful
girlfriends, who can accept them as a ‘real man’. By doing so, they try to estimate their acceptance amongst their peer and young girls in the community.

It was also revealed from the discussion that the children in the gang develop different alternative activities to satisfy their psychosocial needs. Among such behaviour, homo sexuality and sexual relationship with multiple partners are quiet common. They also tend to develop sexual relationship with girls at an early age with limited knowledge about the reproductive and sexual health. It was identified that of the total 100 boys, there were 3 who were married at the age of 13-14 years and were already managing a separate family on the streets with their own children.

While there are advantages of being a member of a gang, there are many disadvantages. It was reported that a large number of children get abused by the senior members of their gang. Often, they steal or snatch their hard earned money and on resisting, they get physically assaulted. Of the total 87 children, who were involved in the gang culture, 37 (43%) reported that they were physically abused by the senior members when they first joined the gang. But there were also 34 (39%) children who reported of abuse by the senior members of their gang, even after being in the gang for sometime. Thirty nine (45%) children also reported that the senior members use abusive language to prove them inferior in the group. They reported that senior children snatch their money and personal belongings. Besides, sexual abuses by the gang members were also common behaviours of the gang. Twenty six (30%) children reported of being forced to get involved in a sexual relationship with others in the group during the first few days of joining the gang. But there were 34 (39%) children, who reported of regular sexual relationship with their peers.
Substance Abuse among children:

Diagram 5.2.11 Use of Substance

As described earlier, the life of the children living on the streets is quite stressful. And in order to relieve some stress, the researcher found that the children were using various addictives. There were 85 percent of the boys and 48 percent of the girls, who use addictive substances like snuff, tobacco, alcohol, brown sugar, Gutka (a preparation from tobacco & betel nuts), and hashish. Similar trends were seen across the five zones of the Kolkata city, except for North and Central zones, where the children were found to have access to intoxicating substances like brown sugar, dendrite, glue, Nitragipum tablets (N-10) and petrol.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Gutka</th>
<th>Alcohol</th>
<th>Cigarette</th>
<th>Snuff</th>
<th>Brown Sugar / heroine</th>
<th>Hashish</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the data collection, it was found that the consumption of Gutka was the most common form of substance abuse among the children living on the streets. Almost, 95 percent of the boys and 64 percent of the girls were found to be eating Gutka and they reported that it is difficult for them to feel normal without consuming it. This clearly indicates that these children were addicted to Gutka, as it was made with addictive substance like tobacco. Of the total children who ate Gutka, about 80 percent boys and 30 percent girls reported that they use Gutka on regular basis.

The second most commonly abused substance among the children was alcohol. The rate of alcohol abuse was 85 percent among the boys and 19 percent in
case of the girls. Most of the children reported to use alcohol regularly to get relief from the body ache and fatigue at the end of the whole day's hard labour work. There were 3 girls who reported the use of alcohol regularly during the winter season to keep them warm from the cold weather at night. Some of the girls were of the opinion that the intoxication of alcohol helped them to tolerate the pain of spending the whole night under a tree of small shade during unfavourable environmental conditions. Besides, there were 3 girls who revealed that they were lured to use alcohol and other substances before they were forced to sexually entertain some of the clients.

The third most commonly substance abused by the children is tobacco snuff. It was found to be a common practice of many children to sniff the powder of tobacco as well as keep the powder under the tongue to get the kick out of the addictive tobacco. In addition to sniffing, there were 57 percent boys and 13 percent girls who reported the use of cigarette and bidi (country made cigarette). Another common form of addiction among children is to use Patta (brown sugar / heroine), which is legally prohibited in India to be used by any individual, including adults. It was found that 25 percent children were found to procure and use patta, whereas other 50 percent were aware of their friends being addicted to brown sugar. Though, it was not common for the girls to use brown sugar for addiction but there were 9 percent, who admitted to have experienced it. Similarly, marihuana (Cannabis) and hashish were used by 27 percent of the boys and 2 percent of the girls. Those children, who were not able to have access to costly addictives, inhaled different forms of solvents like petrol, glue, and dendrite as substitutes. There were 44 percent children who reported the use of such alternative addictions on regular basis.

Around 7 o’clock in the evening, Rana, a boy of 12 years of age, was playing cards with three of his friends. He was badly intoxicated with alcohol. During the interaction with his other friends, the researcher came to know that he used alcohol as well as patta (brown sugar) on daily basis. Rana narrated that he could not work without the use of alcohol. He works as a rag picker and earns around Rs. 70/- per day. But, he is forced to spend almost all the money on his addictions. He uses a pouch packet of alcohol
every morning and goes out for work. He has a group of friends with whom he shares patta. In a day, he takes almost 4 to 5 packets of alcohol and 5 to 7 packets of patta. He finds it difficult to manage money for his addiction and is forced to borrow money from others.

Rana’s father was also a rag picker and an alcohol addict, who died in a road accident. His addiction started from his home, soon after he started to work as a rag picker at a very tender age. Every evening, he suffered from pain due to excessive physical stress of work during the day and he learned from his father that consumption of alcohol helps to relieve the pain. Since childhood, he has witnessed regular conflicts between his parents and he was used to sleeping without food for many nights. He knew that his mother used to go away with some clients to earn money. Rana and his elder sister used to take alcohol from his father to get relief from hunger and physical pain. After the birth of Rana’s younger sister, his mother left the house leaving Rana and two younger sisters behind. She got married to another person and now she works as a prostitute. Rana and his elder sister started to work with their father in the scavenging work.

After the death of Rana’s father, he and his sister are now staying at their grand mother’s place. His grand mother works as a maid and takes care of the cost of their living. Raja can’t remember when he started the use of regular alcohol and patta but he cannot manage his day and life without the use of these substances everyday. He wants to supplement the income of his family but cannot manage to save money. He borrowed some money from the alcohol shop owner and from other friends, who used him to smuggle brown sugar and other substances from one vendor to other. He makes little money from it and repays his loans. Most of the nights Rana spends with his friends and desperately tries to find some work so that he can earn money to buy alcohol and patta.
Gambling:

Diagram 5.2.12 Gambling Practices Among Children

It is very common to find that the children living on the streets were involved in gambling. There were many ways of doing it and some of them were to buy lottery tickets, play cards, use of gambling machine like ‘Super Lotto’ or video games. But of those, the most common means of gambling was to play cards on the streets. It was found to be the most enjoyable way of earning easy money by the children, who actively participated in the card games, which gave results in a short span of time. Many children took a chance by playing with their day’s hard earned money to gamble and try to make a large sum of money by fluke. The data revealed that out of 200 children, there were 62 (31%), who gambled regularly. Of the total children, who gambled, 1/3rd of them were boys and 1/4th was girls.

Different forms of sexual activities:

It was surprising to know that most of the children living on the streets became sexually active at a very early age, when compared to the other children who were not living on the streets. Homosexuality, heterosexuality and group sex were common amongst these children. It was found that most of the boys aspired to have sex partner from their young age and many a times, they are able to identify more than one sex partner. Besides, physical relationship, it was common for these children to watch pornographic movies. And they had an easy access to such movies through the video parlours, which are available in all zones of the city. During the focus group discussion, all children were not found to be open to disclose their experience and practice. So, it was allowed to them to report of any sexual behaviour they were aware of about their friends. Some of the findings from the discussion and interviews are described as under in various categories:
• Homo sexuality:
Of the total boys, 70 percent reported that their friends were sexually active and they enjoyed having sex with same sex (MSM). Most of them reported that their friends engage in such act for fun during the leisure time. Practices of homosexuality, however, were not common among girls. Only 10 percent of the girls reported that their friends were involved in homosexual practices.

• Hetero sexuality:
Hetero sexual practices are also very common among children living on the streets. Most of the boys prefer to have a sex partner and of the total, 20 boys reported to have more than one partner. In the case of girls, 27 revealed that they have their sex partners and other 16 reported that they have boy friends.

• Sex for survival:
Sex was also a mechanism used by the girls for their survival. They felt proud to describe that their sex partner is someone influential in the area and he provides necessary support for the survival of the girl on the streets.

Santoshi, a 14 year girl narrated “On a rainy night, a person offered me to come inside and take shelter. I accepted the offer and the man gave me good food, wine and place to sleep. In return, I allowed him to have sex with me.”

Malati, a 13 year old girl was known for having good relationship with the local authority officials. She offered herself for physical relationship to the local influential persons and in return she got the BPL card. Now, she is able to get regular rations from the local Public Distribution System dealer and plastic sheets during the rainy season.

Pregnancy and unsafe abortions:
Unfortunately, the young children, who were sexually active, were found to be having very limited knowledge about safe sex and contraception. And due to the immediate cost of the contraception, many boys did not bother to use
them. As a result the girls were subjected to the risk of pregnancy. Due to poverty and limitations for access, the girls adopted traditional methods of prevention and termination of unwanted pregnancies. But, all this resulted into unsafe abortion by putting the life of the mother at risk. During the study, the children narrated 2 incidence of death in their area due to unsafe termination of pregnancy procedure adopted by the girls. Similarly, there were 13 girls who revealed that their friends have experienced the problem of unwanted pregnancy and they were forced to take the help of the traditional methods of abortion.

In the North zone, the girls reported of one of their friends, who had an unwanted pregnancy. She identified about it at a late stage and was forced to deliver the baby. Later, it was found out that she was not able to keep the child and sold her baby to some unknown person. Similarly, the children also reported that the problem of unwanted pregnancy of street girls was also common in the Central zone area. They reported that there is a charitable institution which supports the street children to safely deliver the unwanted babies. And they help the girl with required medicine and food during the time of pregnancy and delivery. Later, if the girl decides to give away the baby, the institution takes the responsibility of the child.

Thus, it was observed that children adapt to various forms of high risk behaviours to satisfy their psycho-social needs as well as to survive in the street environment. Moreover, these behaviours are promoted within their societies due to lack of parental supervision, ability of parents to support their children’s basic needs and wide acceptance of deviant practices within their society.

**Interaction of children with legal authorities**

As one of the signatories of the CRC, the Government of India promises to take appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect children from exploitation and abuse. However, it seems that a change
is taking place in the socio-legal system of the country after the ratification of CRC. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act was enacted in the year 2000 and further amended in 2006 to plug few loopholes. A separate Ministry for Women and Child Development was formed, which drafted a scheme on Integrated Child Protection. Further, a draft Bill of the new Offences Against Children Act 2006 was drawn up by the Women and Child Development department, under the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 has given a new dimension to the whole Juvenile Justice system of the country. Most of these acts now lay more emphasis on the treatment, care, protection and developmental needs of the children by adopting a child friendly approach in the adjudication and disposition of the matters for the best interest of the children. Focus has also been given on the voice of children towards identification and solution of their own problems. But, it does not encourage children to access police system to lodge complains in case of violation of their rights. The act also states to constitute a Child Welfare Committee for every district or a group of Districts. It encourages children in need of care and protection to produce themselves before the Child Welfare Committee in case their basic rights get violated. Despite the enactment of all these legislations a wide gap is visible between the law enforcement bodies and primary beneficiaries i.e. the children. The Juvenile Justice Act encourages children and other primary beneficiaries to access the system but it does not emphasize to modify the system to make it easily accessible for the children.

As described in the literature review that as one of the signatory of ‘The Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice’ and Child Rights instrument, the Government and its law and order machinery must adhere to the international standard of dealing with juvenile offenders. For such compliance with the international treaties, the Government of India has established separate juvenile justice system and amended its rules to deal with juvenile offenders. As per the recommendation, Juvenile Justice Board has been established for every district or for a group of districts. These boards are entrusted to deal exclusively with all proceedings related to child in conflict with law. The Government also recognizes that the juvenile justice system shall
accentuate on the well-being of the juvenile. The system must ensure that any reaction to juvenile offenders should always be in proportion to the circumstances of both the offenders and the offence. It also clarifies that appropriate judgment should be allowed at all stages of proceedings and at different levels of juvenile justice administration, keeping in view the special need of the juveniles as well as the variety of measures available. Appropriate scope for discretion should be allowed during investigation, prosecution, adjudication and the follow-up of dispositions. Police is one of the important players in entire justice system of the country. As an important law and order machinery, they must play a significant role in prevention of crime, investigation of cases and also extend requisite assistance in the prosecution of offenders.

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000 recognizes the adoption of a “child friendly approach” during dealing, adjudicating and disposition of cases to protect the best interest of the children. But in reality, no guideline or procedure has been designed to make the system ‘friendly’ for the children to take necessary support when they need in crisis. So far, people recognize police as their first contact point of the law and order machinery. And geographically the police stations are reachable and accessible to common people due to its location in strategic and well connected places. They act as a liaison point between the community and the justice system. And as per the new Police Act 2006, it recommends a separate child and women desk in each police station to provide easy access to the system for the vulnerable people. In this section of the research, efforts are made to understand and analyze the interaction of people living on the streets with the law enforcement agencies. The researcher has tried to understand and record the perception and experiences of children dealing with these law enforcement bodies and their adherence to the juvenile justice system in dealing with the children living on the streets.

Perception of Children towards police:
To understand the level of interaction of the children living on the streets with the justice system, they were asked to draw pictures of police eliciting some of the characteristics they are familiar with. After the drawing exercise, the
researcher facilitated group discussions, followed with in-depth interview with few children to understand their perception. The findings from these exercises are described as under:

**Table 5.2.11- Perception of Children About Police**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception of children</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eviction without any notice</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>80 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take away belongings</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>53 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically assault street children</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>51 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrests and detains children without any valid reason</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>46 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always suspect street children as criminal and gives harsh punishment for petty offence</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>46 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives trouble to street children for petty cases</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>28 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take bribes to release especially during occasion or festival</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>44 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not listen to the street children and discriminates against them</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>62 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forces children to work for the police station and do not remunerate them for the work done.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police can trace missing people</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>15 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensures safety to only elite people</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>33 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few police personnel are good and do not beat them</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was interesting to find that the children living on the streets had a very negative perception about the police and law enforcement systems. About 80 percent of the children stated that the police are known to conduct surprise raids at night to evict the families living on the streets without any prior intimation. More than half of the children reported that during the eviction drive the police would throw or take away their personal belongings, which
includes cash, cooking utensils, clothes and bedding. Many also reported that they were physically assaulted by the police during such eviction drives.

Children reported that the poor families living on the streets were discriminated by the law and order machinery as they were vulnerable and could not use any influence to defend them. More than 58 percent of the boys reported that they were detained by the police and detained in the lockup for no reason whatsoever. They also complained that police officials always suspect the families living on the street for being criminal and occasionally arrest them for some petty criminal cases. The children were also subjected to harsh treatment for any minor offence and their families were compelled to pay bribes to release them from the police lockup. Few children also reported that the police officials make them do work at the police station and never pay them for their hard work.

In spite of these negative feeling amongst the children, 65 percent also had some positive experiences with the law and order machinery. More than 14 percent of the children believed that the police have very strong administrative network throughout the country and they can easily trace missing people. They perceived that the police is the only agency which can ensure safety and protection of the city. However, most of the children complained that police listen to only elite and influential people and do not care for the poorer section of the society. About 16 percent of the children cited the example of a few good police officials, who had extended support to them and never assaulted them.

**Diagram 5.2.13 Children Visited Police Station**

It was identified from the collected data that of the total respondents, 61 percent children have visited police station at least once or more in their life time. The ratio of boys was
comparatively higher than the girls for visiting the police station. And, the negative perception of the children showed strong co-relationship with the children who visited the police station at some point of time. While describing the reason of visit, it was found that none of the boys went on their own to the police station. They were taken to the police station, either when they were detained or were arrested for petty crimes. Also, many boys from the streets are rounded up by the police when a serious crime takes place in that locality to identify, if there was anyone from the streets involved in the case. It was rare for the boys to seek out help at the police station to safeguard their rights.

But in the case of girls, they often visited the police station to negotiate with the police officials to return their belongings, which they might have taken during the eviction drive. As the police was softer with the females, the women and girls living on the streets would represent the families to negotiate with the police officials. Similarly, they also went to the police station to request for the release of their children, who were detained or arrested or to lodge a complaint against any rival groups on the streets. It was also observed that more numbers of girls have accessed the police station to seek legal support against any abuse that they may have experienced. However, in most of the cases, their visits to the police station were accompanied by other adult members of the family and influential members of the community.

Through the focus group discussions and in depth interview with the children, the researcher was able to cite different forms of abusive experience of the children. The inputs form the children are described as under:

**Abuse by the Police and Municipal Corporation Officials (Hallagari)**

The experience of the children from all the zones of the city was quiet similar with reference to the abuses subjected by the police and municipal corporation authorities. As mentioned earlier, people living on the streets were always afraid of eviction as they were illegitimately occupying the pavements. And occasionally the eviction drive is carried out jointly by the police and municipal corporation authorities, which mostly takes places around midnight without any prior intimation. People living on the streets call this phenomenon as
‘Hallagari’. When it happens, they are forced to evacuate the place without their personal belongings. The officials commonly demand for money, take away some precious belonging and throw the rest of the things off the streets. The authorities use abusive language to drive them away from the area and subject to physical assault, if anyone gets caught by them. Children also reported that the police was known to snatch away their hard earned money during the eviction drive.

- Besides, the police officials suspect that the people living on the streets are criminals or they are closely linked with people who are involved in serious crime. Hence, the police conduct surprise raids in the settlement, when any crime takes place in the area as a part of their investigation. They were also known for harassing the boys living on the streets and many a times, they are picked up by the police for further investigation. Of the total boys, there were 37 who were detained by the police and placed in the lockup at some point of their life. Of these 37 boys, there were 24, who were charged for some petty crime and their parents had to pay a heavy bribe before they could be released from the lockup. There were 5 boys, who also reported that police had forced them to work in the police station and denied to pay any wages for the work they were made to do.

**Accessed Police Station to lodge complains:**

**Diagram 5.2.14 Number of Children Accessed Police Station**
The geographical location of the police station was quite suitable for people to access. It was usually located in a well connected prominent area of the city, making it easy for people to access when needed. But still, the reality is that people do not seek the help of police, unless it becomes very critical. Thus, it was found that there were only few children who actually accessed police station to lodge complaints against any abuse perpetrated against them. Of the total 200 children, there were only 22 (11%), who ever went to the police station to lodge complaints for any abuse against them. Of these children, there were 9 boys and 13 girls, which indicate that the boys resorted to other means of protection rather than seeking help of the police. In the case of girls, the help of police was sought especially when the abuse was gross in nature. But still the number of girls accessing the services of the police is much less compared to the incidence of abuse taking place against them. And, for the cases of abuse in which the police was the perpetrator, it was not possible for either gender to access the same police system to seek justice for the crime of abuse against them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Nos. of children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To report incidence of a child missing</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To lodge complaint against sexual abuse</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To report economic abuse against an employer</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To report the incidence of physical violence against a few youths</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Besides, the children also had the feeling that the police have a strong network, which can identify missing children or individuals. Of the total respondents, there were 3 children who accompanied their parents to lodge a missing diary for their missing brother or sister, at the nearest police station. The children reported that the police personnel helped them a lot and referred them to few non-government organizations which also helped them to trace their missing brother/sisters. They felt that due to their poverty and illiteracy,
they faced obstacles in accessing the services available for the recovery of missing children. As the children were the witness of the process of lodging a complaint at the police station, they described some of the following problems they faced to lodge complaints.

- The police requested for a recent photograph of the missing child but they were not able to provide the same at the time of lodging a complaint of a missing child in the ‘General Diary’.
- The police gave names and addresses of the non-government organizations working to trace the missing children. But they had to go from one organization to the other to search for the records to find if their brother or sister is found and kept there. The children felt that there was lack of coordination between the police and the non-government organization in keeping the data of the missing and unfound children.
- Of the total 3 missing cases, 1 missing child was found from a NGO run institutional care facility. The organization requested for residential proof and relationship certificate from their parents, before they could hand the child back to them. But, these families living on the streets had no such records and had to go through lot of trouble before they could get the child back.
- In the other 2 cases, the police were not able to trace the missing children as the family members were not able to provide a photograph of the missing child. The family was referred to the Missing Persons Squad and other children’s homes, where there was some possibility of finding the missing children.

During the discussion with children and parents, they reported that the people living on the streets face lots of problems to access the facilities provided by the Government as most of them do not have any official identity such as residential certificate, voter identification card and ration card. They also informed that most of them do not have photographs or any such documents, which can help them to trace the missing person or the child. They also expressed that due to their temporary pattern of settlement and frequent displacement, they cannot preserve important government documents. And, for
multiple reasons, they get harassed by the government authorities and remain deprived of their basic rights and opportunities.

**Problems faced to lodge complaints against sexual abuse:**

Of the total children, there were only 5 girls, who sought the assistance of the police to file a complaint against the perpetrator of abuse. These girls informed the researcher that they were subject to much harassment by the police, relatives of the perpetrators and the prosecutors. On further investigation, it was found that the 5 girls who took initiative to register a case against the perpetrator did not receive satisfactory response from the system. And it was found that the following was not done in accordance with the Juvenile Justice System of the country, with reference to the respective cases:

- In all the cases, the children found that a literate person was required from the community who can do the needful paperwork for filing a case at the police station. In most cases, the trial continued for more than a year.
- Due to manipulation of the case, none of the perpetrators were convicted and sentenced for the crime by the court.
- Children did not get any legal and financial assistance for the preparation and presentation for the case.
- Children were required to appear before the judicial court and were compelled to testify against the abuse perpetrated against them.
- Of the 5 cases, 2 underwent the medical test after the required period of validity from the time of the abuse. The children and the family members were not oriented about the objective and the pre-requisites of the test. Thus, in none of the cases the medical test reports could be used as clear evidence against the perpetrator.
- In all the cases, the children were kept with their parents on the streets, and so they were not protected from the threats of the perpetrator, friends and relatives.
- Of the 5 cases, 3 children reported that they were taken to the judicial court in the same vehicle along with the perpetrator.
During an in depth interview, all the children reported that because of their illiteracy they had to face lots of difficulties to understand the required official procedure at the police station. There were 2 children, who reported that if the language of communication was in Bengali, they could have understood what they had written. It was observed that in none of the cases, children were taken to safer places after the occurrence of abuse. Children were not produced before the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) and no effort was made to provide emotional and psychological support to these victims.

Suman, a 13 year old girl reported that she was a victim of sexual abuse and visited the police station, with her parents, on a couple of occasions to lodge her complaint. Her parents admitted her at the hospital and she was unconscious for about two days. She was found lying on the street, after the incidence of abuse under the influence of some intoxicating substances. At night, the people living around her found her unconscious near one corner of a lonely pavement in North Kolkata. For two days, when she was unconscious, nobody knew who the perpetrator was, but, on the third day, when she recovered consciousness, she was interrogated by the police. The girl said, “I was not feeling comfortable to reply in front of other patients in the hospital”. She could only remember that Sk. Rajjak, offered her a glass of cold drink before the incident. Sk Rajjak is one the taxi drivers, who parks his taxi in a nearby garage of their locality. Suman had undergone a series of tests in the hospital and after four days of her stay, she was discharged from the hospital. She had severe injuries in her anal areas and faced lot of difficulties to manage her life after the incidence on the pavement. After returning to the pavement, she came to know that police arrested Sk Rajjak and would produce him in the court. In the morning, the police officials took Suman and her mother to the police station as they had to appear before the Judicial Court. They were taken to the court with the Sk. Rajjak in the same police van. During the trial period, Suman had to face very awkward questions of the prosecutor hired by Sk. Rajjak. Suman said, “they all want to prove that I had sexual relationship with many male members of the community and they have abused me. I am intentionally taking the name of Sk Rajjak to get some monitory benefit from him.” Suman said she had to visit the court for couple
of months, and for all those days, her mother had to take days off from her work. They had to undergo lot of problems, while dealing with the court. The prosecutor continued to ask silly questions and Suman said that she was very much confused as she was not been able to recall the entire incident. One day, the prosecutor revealed the report of Suman’s medical test, which said that she had intercourse with multiple partners. Suman said “I could not understand what they said during the trial, most of them were using English words” During one of the trials, the prosecutor asked Suman about her personal relationship with one of the boys staying in the same locality. Suman had to admit that once she was involved with him in a physical relationship, but that was in the past. Next day, that boy was arrested from the locality. Suman had to face lots of criticism and pressure from her immediate community and the influential persons from her locality, as well as friends of Sk Rajjak. After all these incidences, Suman’s family decided to leave the place and went back to their native village without informing any body. After a couple of months they came back to Kolkata and decided to settle down in another pavement of Eastern zone of Kolkata. Suman was almost crying and continued “I cannot wipe off these unpleasant events from my memory.....”

Complaint against economic abuse:
The researcher was able to identify 5 respondents, who took help of the police to resolve their problem of economic exploitation. But in all the cases, the children approached the police station with their parents. Due to illiteracy, the children made verbal complaints against the employers to the police and the police did not bother to document the same and so the cases were never registered in the police diary. The police tried to settle the case outside the police station even though it was not the role of the police to do so. Thus, the children living on the streets have no faith on the officials of the law enforcement agency and they believe that the police did nothing to resolve their problem of economic abuse. They felt that in most of the cases, the police take the side of economically better off people and thus, they cannot fight for their rights to be protected from getting abused.
Reporting the incidence of physical violence by some youths:
Of the total 200 children, 9 went to the police station to report a case of violence against few members of their rival group. The incidence of rivalry between two groups is quite common among the children on the street. There are many groups and each one has distinct characteristics and are highly influenced by the material aspirations due to the media. Many a times, they get in conflict with the other group to show more power and influence over the children in their locality. It is quiet common for them to imitate the characters of film actors and perform stunts like the movies in front of the other members. Occasionally, there is a fight between the competitive individuals, which may get extended to the entire group.

The other reasons for the conflict between gangs were for the craving of power between the groups. There is always a gulf between the senior leadership and other members of the group. The group leader is the one who dominates and intervenes in all the affairs of the group members. But, within the group, there are other strong members, who try to exert their power upon others and many a times it leads to conflict between them. As mentioned earlier, most of these groups are affiliated with some political party members. The local party members try to dominate the community through these youth groups. Thus, if any individual tries to get rid of the dominance of the group, the local party leaders intervene through the local youth. On the other hand, the rival group/s also takes advantage of the situation and influences the victimized individual to lodge complaints against the youth group in the local police station. In all the cases, the police take the role of a negotiator and try to settle things between the two parties.

Reasons for not accessing the legal assistance against the abuse and exploitation:
The majority of the children living on the streets believed that the police do not listen to them and they cannot independently lodge complaints at the police station. In all the cases, where children lodged complaints at the police station, they were always accompanied by adults. It was believed by the children that they must be accompanied by adults and there has to be someone with them who is literate to do the necessary paperwork for lodging complains.
Thus, the children told that they are restrained to take any legal assistance against the perpetrator, if they were not supported by the family members. And in most of the cases, the family members refuse to support their children when the perpetrator is a member of the family, or influential members of the community or senior government official.

Moreover, children have experienced that law and order machinery is guided by the adults and they do not let the children to participate in the entire process. There is no means for children to get any legal and supportive services so that they can take independent action against the perpetrator. Hence, they believe that taking legal assistance without the support of the family will push them into more vulnerable situation and they will face further difficulties to cope with the situation. As a result, the children living on the streets have learned to accept the abusive experiences as a part of their life and they try to adopt other survival mechanisms to continue their insecure life on the streets.

Experience of children who were identified as “Children in Conflict with Law”

Rajiya, a 13 year old girl was abused by her step father, when she was 10 years of age. Her step father had taken her to a nearby house and given her an intoxicating substance. Rajiya was partially unconscious and was shocked to see that her father was sexually assaulting her. She was badly injured around her private parts and tried to disclose the matter to her mother. But her mother took Rajiya to hospital for treatment and asked her not to disclose the case to others. Still, she lives with her mother and step father but she can no more tolerate her step father. She wants to report the case to the police but her mother does not support her. Rajiya knew that she cannot take any step alone.. thus, she had to keep quiet.

Of the 100 children interviewed, 37 percent complained that the police abused them in form of detentions, beatings, extortion, or verbal abuse. And of those, there were 37 boys, who complained of arbitrary detention on one or more occasions. Of these 37 children, 25 (73%) cases, the guardians were not informed about the arrest nor the reason for the same. In rest of the cases, the
police arrested the children in front of their parents but did not inform about the reason for the arrest. From those children who were arrested, there were only 5, in which cases the police was able to justify the arrests. The police also arrested a few adults for the 2 cases out of the previously mentioned 5. The children reported that in most of the cases, there are adults involved in the crime but the police fail to arrest them for various reasons. In the cases where the children were arrested, they were kept at the police station for more than 5 hours. Except for 1 child, all other children reported that they were kept in the police lock up for the whole night. And out of the 37 children, 30 reported that they were placed in the same lockup along with the other adult criminals. Also, of the 37 children arrested, 22 reported that the police took bribes in form of money to release them from the police lockup. It was agreed by all the children that the police do not listen to the street children and force them to admit or elicit information about the crime.

Sukhdev, a child of 12 years was arrested by Narkeldanga police as a suspected offender for the case of burglary. He spent the whole night in the police station but not in the lock up. The child mentioned that because of the provision of the law that children cannot be placed in the lock up, the police kept him outside the lock up but tied to a chair in the police station.

All the children reported that the police commonly use verbal abuse and physical torture in form of beating with fists and slapping at the time of interrogations. The children reported that police believed that the street children are always involved in some crime or the other and are aware of the actual offender, when a crime takes place in an area. Thus, the police apply physical force to elicit the information from various suspects. It was found that 2 children were produced before the civil court and jointly charged as adult offender. After the production, both the children were referred to “Aryadaha”, which is an observation home for boys in conflict with the law.

Conclusion:

There are countless children living on the streets, who continue to suffer violence resulting in physical injury, psychological trauma, within and outside the family setting. It was very unfortunate to find that in many cases, the
parents or close relatives of the child were the one who exploited the child. Added to this, the social and economic instabilities within the family spoils the healthy environment required for the growth and development of a child. Due to stress of managing the basic needs of the life, the parents fail to provide required affection, care, psychological and emotional support, supervision and control to their children, which is an integral part of the psycho-social growth and development of a child. But, unfortunately due to the prevalence of domestic violence, addiction and substance abuse by parents, problematic parental behaviour and insecure environment leads to the development of poor self-image in children. Later, when they grow up, they tend to engage themselves in substance abuse and develop trends of destructive behaviour. These children get pushed at a budding age into vulnerable situations due to combination of different socio-legal and environmental factors. And, as commonly seen, many children also forced to enter into the work force at a very tender age, which is a clear evidence of denial of their basic rights. Children are also exposed to physical risk and violence within the work environment.

As described in the earlier chapters, the temporary settlements on the pavements are looked down as illegal population or settlement of unwanted people, though they are living over there for many years. The illegitimacy of their residence is the main stumbling block for the families living on the street to access the required support from the law enforcement agency. The fear of eviction looms largely over these people and they view police as a force which is meant to trouble and evict people like them on the street. On the other hand, police have negative feeling for the children living on the streets and they are viewed by them as drifters and criminals. Thus, the illegitimate status, fear of eviction and poor perception by the police officials towards the people living on the streets result in to a defiant attitude towards the existing legal system of the country.

While it is true that street children are sometimes involved in petty crimes, drug-trafficking, prostitution and other criminal activities, it is wrong for the police to assume that all the children living on the streets are involved in criminal activities or associated with criminals. Due to such negative attitude
of the police officials, the rights of the children living on the streets gets grossly violated and many a times, the perpetrators are the officials of the law enforcement agencies themselves.

Section 5.3

Abuse and the Perpetrators - Perceptions of Parents

Like any other parents, families living on the streets do love and care for their children. The researcher interacted with many parents living with their children on the streets. It was common amongst many parents to start a happy married life with equal sensitivity amongst both the parents for their children. The role within the family was clearly defined, where the mother was expected to bear the responsibility of child rearing and household jobs and the father was expected to earn the livelihood. But, over a period of time, the stress of poverty caused lot of destruction and shifting of the roles and responsibilities. The parents succumbed to the struggle of survival and were no longer in a position to offer the ideal parental role to their beloved children. It was common to observe that most of the families were victims of unplanned family growth, disease, substance abuse, death of one or both parents and separation of parents. These situations were mainly responsible for the neglect of the child in an unstable family environment. In addition, there were external factors like the threat of eviction, illegitimate status and other environmental coercions which made the family situation much more vulnerable for children to get abused.
Diagram 5.3.1-Concerns of Parents for their Children:

Road accident:
It was identified that the commonest concern among parents was for accidents on the road. It can be observed in diagram 5.3.1 that of the total respondents, 67 percent of the parents raised their concern for road accidents and over 91 percent of children also raised their concern about the same. The pavement dwellers tend to settle beside busy roads or market places, where they have easy access to livelihood options. These roads are congested and overloaded with traffic. Moreover the erratic nature of driving and speeding of vehicles causes frequent accidents. It was found that the parents were afraid for their children becoming victims of road accidents. Also, they lacked any support system to take care of their children, if they had any minor injuries. Thus, parents were found to be anxious for the safety of their children who remain unsupervised while they are away for work.

Substance Use
The second most priority was given to substance abuse. The study found that 73 percent parents were concerned for their children getting addicted to substance abuses. From the diagram 5.3.1, it can be observed that, there were 87 percent parents of male children and 59 percent parents of female children who felt that their children were exposed to the risk of substance abuse due to the poor street environment. It was a common belief amongst most of the parents that the wrong type of companionship was the key factor for the initiation and continuation of substance abuse among their children. The
parents were aware of the addictive behavior of their children and they found that majority of adolescent children used cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, heroin (patta), dendrite or illicit drugs. And, they acquire the knowledge about different addictive substances from other older children in the community.

**Abduction of children**

Abductions by strangers understandably receive the most attention and generate the most fear among the parents of street community. Abductions of young children and girls are the most prevalent in street community. And the obvious reason for abducting children is to traffic them for prostitution, domestic workers, induce them into begging and use them in illegal activities. Thus, parents are always on an alert and they try to keep an eye on the strangers and take necessary action to prevent abduction at night. The Diagram 5.3.1 shows that the fear is more prevalent among the parents of female children (78%) and 66 percent among parents of male children.

**Anti-Social activities**

Many parents admitted to the researcher that they were not able to provide adequate support and supervision to their children. And as a result, they were not able to keep a watch on their conduct. It was common to find that such unsupervised children often develop relationships with bad elements of the locality and learn deviant behaviour. They adopt different antisocial tricks and expose themselves to various levels of risk. Children are lured and induced by adult criminals to get engaged in anti social activities. Such novice criminals become easy prey for the police. There were about 68 percent parents who were concerned about antisocial activities and it was found that the parents of boys were more worried. There were 82 percent parents who were worried for their male children whereas 53 percent parents of female children showed anxiety for antisocial activities.

**Sexual exploitation:**

It was found that parents of most of the girl children were concerned about sexual exploitation and molestation of females on the streets. Similar to the children’s response, the parents also admitted that lack of privacy for females on the street environment and due to exposed environment, the girl children are easy victims of sexual exploitation. The common perpetrators of sexual
molestation are by unknown drunk people at night. The diagram 5.3.1 shows that there were 98 percent mothers who reported that they received threats from known and unknown people for abusing their daughter from their very childhood. Also, it was felt that such people can easily abduct the girls living on the streets for the same purpose. On the other hand, the parents were not very concerned about the abuse by incest, i.e. sexual abuse by family members or close relatives of children. In case of parents of male children, they were not at all worried about sexual molestation. They believed that male children do not face the threat of sexual exploitation.

**Exploitation by employers**
Due to the pressing needs to survive in the street environment, the parents are forced to engage their children in the work force from a very tender age. It is almost impossible for most of the parents to meet the needs unless their children work and contribute to the family income. It was experienced by most of the parents that children are exploited by the employers both physically and economically as they bear poor negotiation power. Such concern for exploitations was found to be much stronger among the parents of the female children (57%) whereas it was about 43 percent among the parents of male children.

**Relationship with male members**
It was found that most of the parents (98%) were concerned about their girls for developing relationship with male members living on the streets. Parents were skeptical that such relationship can lead to premarital sex and unwanted pregnancies, which was not acceptable by the society. The parents were aware of the fact that there are many local youths who try to lure their adolescent girls to develop relationships with them.

**Harassment by police**
It was reported by the parents that they face harassment by the police officials during the eviction. Such eviction drives are conducted during the night without prior notice and they subject the pavement dwellers to unwanted harassment. The parents were of the opinion that the police have a negative attitude towards the street living families and suspect them to be
criminals. They occasionally conduct surprise raids in the settlements whenever any crime takes place in the area. It is also common for the police to harass the children and many a times these children are detained for investigation at the police station without proper procedures. There were 75 percent parents of male children who were afraid of such harassment and detention. Similarly, the parents of the girl children were also afraid but their percentage was quite low. There were only 2 percent of the mothers living near Sealdah Railway Station who perceived such fear for their daughters and the harm caused by the police.

**Perception of parents about perpetrators of child abuse:**

Diagram 5.3.2: Perception of parents about perpetrators of child abuse:

![Perception of parents about perpetrators of child abuse](image)

**Parents:**

Parents did not perceive parents as abusers. They agreed that due to poverty and insecurities they cannot take proper care of their children and fulfil their material needs. So it may appear to be an unhappy family environment but none of the parents have an intention to abuse their children. The parents also admitted that they occasionally scold their children as a disciplinary measure, and this is done to control and shape the behaviour of their children.

**Family Members:**

The diagram 5.3.2 above shows that there were only 2 percent of the parents of girl children, who felt that their family members can also abuse their children. And, this could happen when one of the parents is a step parent. It
was common to find that the step parents force the children to do all the household work, torture them and serve less food. On the other hand, the parents of normal families would always try to protect their children from any form of external evil. Parents do feel that exposure to family violence is common among street families because of their poverty, substance dependence among male members and other daily struggle of the street life. They felt that it is difficult to hide their emotional outbursts from their children because of lack of privacy.

**Passers by:**
Like children, 92 percent of the parents of girl children and 78 percent of parents of male children perceived unknown people or passerby as abusers. They felt that affluent people enjoy watching miseries of the poverty stricken people. They hate people who live on the streets and use abusive languages, while addressing them. Moreover, there are many people who seek the opportunity to sexually molest female members as well as adolescent girls living on the streets. The parents also reported that abduction of children from street families is also a common phenomenon. Thus, they try to protect themselves and their children from any unknown passers-by.

**Police and administration:**
It was evident from the interaction that the families living on the streets were aware that they do not possess any legitimate status for their residence. And, so they are always fearful of eviction by the law and administrative authorities. Majority (90%) of the parents agreed that their children face harassment from the local administration and behave in an inhumane manner. They are ruthlessly evicted from the streets when the administration conducts raid and eviction drives and such actions are usually conducted at night and the families living on the streets get treated very unjustly. The police chase people away from the area and if anyone resists the same, they get kicked, slapped, hit or jabbed by the batons of the policemen. The children of these families spend sleepless nights off the streets when their personal belongings are thrown away during eviction drives.
The families living on the streets narrated that they become easy targets of the police and administrative authorities. From the interaction it was observed that boys are more vulnerable for police harassment. More than 64 percent of the parents of male children voiced their concern for police harassment. The parents of female children were less concerned for the same problem (24%). Parents narrated that whenever any criminal activities or incidence of burglaries take place in the nearby areas, the police conduct routine round-ups of street families upon suspicion of involvement in the crime. It is common during such time for the male members and adolescent boys to be detained in the police lock-ups overnight. There were also frequent reports of severe police brutality against the children and adults both at the time of arrest and particularly during interrogation at the police station.

The families living near the Sealdah railway stations reported that the Railway Police Force (RPF) officials occasionally physically and sexually harass the children and women living on the streets. The parents reported that the RPF officials force their children to lift goods from the train during the unloading process and they do not remunerate them. Similarly, the women headed families are considered most vulnerable and they are forced to please the RPF officials by having physical relationship with them. Hence, the parents living near the railway stations are very cautious for the physical and sexual violence of RPF officials against their children. And the perception of the parents regarding the law enforcement authorities as the perpetrators of abuse was also shared by the children.

Local youth:
The parents also reported their fear from the local youth. They perceived that the youth of the area are involved in varying degrees of antisocial activities, and the parents of 645 of adolescent girls narrated that they try to keep an eye on their daughters and do not allow them to interact with the local youth. They are apprehensive that these local youth can lure their daughters and involve them in a relationship, which may lead to premarital sex. Such emotional decisions can ruin the future of their daughters. All the parents aspire for a better and secured future for their daughters. They believe that marriage with
a well established person is the only solution to get their daughters away from the life on the streets.

Parents of 46 percent of the boys were also apprehensive of the local youth. They think that the local youth could use their sons for criminal purposes and later the police will harass their sons and the whole family for being involved with such groups. They also perceive that these youth entice children to indulge into substance abuse. The parents also reported that they have less control and supervision over their sons as they spend most of the time with their peer groups. Thus, they cannot do much to protect their sons from abuse though they are always worried for the same.

Conclusion:
Parents who live on the streets with children also believe that every child has the right to grow up in a safe and supportive family environment. And the parents do have a decisive role in protecting their children from potential harm. Because of poverty they are forced to keep children on the roadside without any support system and also engage them in some work from a tender age to support their family. Thus, parents feel that they cannot provide the required support and protection to their children but can try to adopt different mechanisms to protect their children from potential harm from the perpetrators.

Section 5.4

Self Protection Mechanism

We have realized that families living on the streets are exposed to various risks and exploitations. Illegitimacy of stay prohibits these families to access essential amenities of life and to enjoy the basic constitutional rights. Thus, it was observed that people have to readjust and modify themselves to survive in the society.

Heterogeneity of social and cultural groups, lack of cohesiveness, semi isolation and predominance of primary relationships are the main characteristics of the
social groups live on the streets. Families living in these semi-isolated groups do not have any structured social control system and are highly influenced by external cultures.

These families and individuals develop and modify their coping mechanisms and adopt different strategies to safeguard themselves from external risks. It was observed that children living on the streets learn to adjust themselves and reframe their own perceptions.

In this section, we tried to understand the perception of children and their family members about feeling of safety and insecurities. Attempts were made to understand different self-defence strategies that the children and street families developed as a social group to protect their children from abuse and exploitations.

**Opinion of children regarding their feeling of safety**

Safety is a feeling of well-being which can evolve through a family and the community where the children stay. Here insecurity means the feeling of anxiety or fear that comes from physical, social and emotional insecurities. The causal factors of these feelings are based on perceptions of children, families and communities about potential harm that they will bear as a consequence of being on the streets. The insecurities reflect from the outlook of other city dwellers towards the street communities, attitude of unknown passers by, support system they have, helping attitude of the administration and welfare authorities as well as the socio-economic profiles of these children and cultural belief systems of the street families. Data was collected from children to understand the factors that help them to feel safe within the environment irrespective of their vulnerable situations. Qualitative as well as quantitative data were also collected from the children and their family members to understand different forms of protection mechanisms that children and their families adopt to survive on the streets.
Feeling of safety within the environment:

Diagram 5.4.1 Feeling of Safety Within the Environment

From the above table, it is identified that the feeling of insecurities are significantly higher among girls than the boys. Among the girls, 89 percent reported that they do not feel safe within the environment. While only 11 percent of girls said that they feel safe.

The following factors were common among these girls:
1. They are not worried as they are stay with parents.
2. They all attend formal schools as well as NGO run education centres.
3. They have positive perception about school and attend schools regularly.
4. All the children are from nuclear families and the size of the family are relatively smaller (4-5 members).
5. Mothers are literate which means they can help their children to read and write.

6. Mothers work as domestic workers and have stable monthly income that is Rs (600-1100) per month and bear the maximum cost of their family.

During the interview with their parents it was reflected their parents do not allow children to spend much time on the streets. They try to keep their children either in education centres or involved with some jobs that will keep them away from street life. Among all these respondents, it was observed that mothers are much more concerned about their children’s security issues. Beyond the school hours their mothers always try to keep their adolescent girls either with them or keep them in some safe environment. Out of these 11 girls, 7 girls accompany their mother while they work as domestic help at the employer’s house. Mothers of rest of the girls have engaged them as domestic help in some good families where they spend around 4 hours a day beyond school hours. The girls who are working as domestic help responded that they save little money at their employers’ place so that they can support the cost of their own education. On holding discussions with the mothers, the response from them was that they do not want to make their children like other girls who live on the streets. They dream for a secured future for their children and they do not want their children to suffer as they have suffered on the streets. Another respondent mentioned that the girls are not their property so they are responsible to protect them until they reach a mature age, when they can get married into a good family. One of the mothers recalled that she was from a very poor family and her father forced her to get married at an early age and could not continue her education at her village school. Yet still, she believes that they should get their daughters married at an early age so that they can get rid of the street life as early as possible.

Among the boys, 65 out of 100 responded that they feel safe within the environment. While depicting reasons, it was observed that the feelings of securities among boys are depending on the following factors:
Table 5.4.2 Reasons for Feeling Safe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Association with a powerful group</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>49percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power of negotiation with outsiders</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>49percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regularity of income</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>43percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muscle power</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge about the environment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.6percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of the 65 boys 32 (49.2%) responded that they feel safe as they are affiliated to some powerful groups (gangs). These children do not feel insecure as their groups pose strong negotiation power and influence on local community. Thus, they can be protected from external risk and exploitations. Among boys, 12 percent responded that male members should not feel insecure because they have muscle power whereas 7.6 percent said that they have good knowledge about their area and people. Thus, they know how to protect themselves from abusers, they know safer places to hide and seek assistance of others if they are threatened. The balance respondents felt safe in the environment as they get the opportunity to earn money on a regular basis.

Thus, it was observed that girls are more dependent on their family members for their personal securities. The feeling of insecurities among the girls comes from the attitude of family members towards their girls. On the other hand, boys are not dependent upon their family members for their personal securities. They seek assistance from their peers and groups members for their personal protection.
Feeling of safety and Exposure to education:
Diagram 5.4.2 Feeling of Safety vs. Exposure to Education

It was observed from the data analysis that children’s participation in education has a positive correlation with the feeling of security. If we analyze the educational background of street children who feel safe in the environment, it can be identified that a significant number of children (72%) have exposure to education. Among boys, 44 (67%) children have attended schools while among girls that percentage is 100 percent. From the discussion it came out that the children who can read and write feel more confident because it ensures protection from economic exploitations.

Thus, it can be said that schooling, has a positive association with the feeling of safety of the children living on the streets.

Protection Mechanisms:
As preventive mechanism, children and their parents generally adopt the following means to protect themselves.

Protection mechanism of the street communities:
Families always settle in clusters.
Families living on the streets always settle in clusters. They try to keep cohesion among the families by living in same cluster. From the cluster of families, one person who has leadership skills emerges as leader. They turn into the key influential members of that area. In all the areas it was observed that these leaders are affiliated by some political party who support them to deal with external problems. All these areas are affiliated to one or other political party leader who help these street families to get emergency support like admission to government hospitals; free/subsidies treatment facilities, negotiate with police and administration during eviction. They also revealed that people from administration of municipal corporation “Hallagari” and police always try to evict them from pavements but the political party members always negotiated with those authorities and helped them to settle down on the same pavements for years. Thus, local leaders in coordination with political party members take the responsibilities of protection of pavement dwellers.

Case Study:

Bishnu aged 38; (Name Changed) is one of the key influential persons of Rashbehari Avenue. His family is staying on the pavement of Rashbehari crossing since the last 40 years. His family migrated from Diamond Harbour before he was born. During the time of data collection, the researcher had to take permission from him to interact with other pavement dwellers. It was identified that pavement dwellers are not allowed to give information to any outsiders without the permission of Bishnu. The researcher had to explain the purpose of the research to Bishnu who in turn gave the permission after a thorough discussion with their local political party leaders. The cluster is affiliated by a sub committee leader of a political party. They maintain very good relationship with all the members living on those pavements through Bishnu. The political party members conduct medical check up camps on a regular basis and also provide trampoline to the street families during rainy season. Bishnu maintains the liaison among political party leaders, local administration and street families.
In all the Zones, similar types of social support system have emerged among the street families to protect their own interest.

**Mechanism adopted by the family members to protect children:**

1. Sexual exploitations among adolescent girls are very common in all the Zones. Thus, parents always try to adopt some mechanism to protect their girls from sexual assault and exploitations. It was reflected from the data that children as well as girls experience maximum threat of sexual exploitation during night. In all the areas they alleged that unknown drunk people/commuters try to assault adolescent girls. They enter into their plastic sheds and try to touch their private parts. The experiences were common across the Zones. Thus, to protect girls all the female members sleep inside the plastic sheets. And male members sleep outside so that they can protect girls. In a few areas the families who have adolescent girls sleep together in group. Mothers/older female members sleep at both ends of the row and keep their girls in the middle. In central Kolkata, female members have divided their responsibilities and take turn to keep watch in shifts. A few members keep themselves awake for few hours at night and in turn other members also do so. Thus, they try to sleep early (by 8:30 pm) as they can’t sleep comfortably at night.

2. At night some mothers keep girls tied to their bodies with pieces of cloth so that no one can take them away.

3. In all the zones parents said that they perceive schools as a place where they can keep children for a few hours. In most of the areas it was found that families prefer to send their girls in more than one school to keep them away from unsafe environment. For the younger children, families use schools as a crèche and prefer to send them to schools when they are out for work. Thus, it was observed attendance of younger children at school is better than adolescent boys and girls.
4. Engaging adolescent girls as domestic help is also a mechanism as it helps to keep girls stay away from street life. Thus, they always look for good families where they can engage their children as domestic help. To ensure regular food and security parents are also interested to engage their adolescent girls in fulltime domestic jobs with good families.

5. Majority of families are nuclear families having no support service within the city to look after to their young children. Thus, when parents go out for work they are compelled to keep the younger children tied with rope to prevent them from getting into any harm.

Mechanism adopted by children:

6. Boys living on the street prefer to stay with friends in groups to protect themselves from outsiders. These groups take on certain behavioural pattern and cultures. These groups are generally play in groups and get them associated with local political party leaders and compete with others to gain powers. In most of the cases they define power as their intimacy with powerful party leaders and negation skills with law and administrative authorities and outsiders. These groups are led by young adults who have strong hold over the community. Group members tend to satisfy their various needs within the group which they can not satisfy otherwise within the family environment. Each group operates within a distinct mode of operation and gratifies mutual interest and provides protection to its members.

7. Boys living on streets always believe in gang culture for their own protection. They also try to get themselves attached to some strong powerful groups. Though exploitation within the groups is common but they in turn ensure protection to their group members. These groups are also supported by some powerful persons of the community. In most of the cases those influential persons are connected to some political party. Thus, they always use that connection to influence or negotiate with others. Thus, because of these influence and power boys feel themselves more secure than girls.
8. During the discussion girls revealed that they always take the help of mothers, elder sisters, sisters in laws and other female members of their communities. They always openly discuss with them regarding any type of abuse they face. Their mothers and their elder female members also always train them about different self protection mechanisms. During discussion they revealed the following methods they adopt to keep themselves safe:

- They do not talk to unknown people.
- Do not take any gift/food from any unknown people.
- Do not roam or stay alone in any place.
- Talk with male members from distance.
- Do not allow any male members (even known people/relatives) to hug or to touch them.
- Use covered clothes.

Support taken from NGOs:
In a few areas NGOs provide night shelter facilities to children. Parents and girls also prefer to avail the night shelter facilities as it provides a safe place to their children to sleep at night. In these shelters children enjoy safe shelter at night, bathing, nutrition, recreation, personal lockers (to keep their belongings) facilities. But these types of facilities are not accessible in any of the areas except in central Kolkata.

Conclusion:
Street living families try to settle in small social groups and adopt various methods of defensive behaviour to protect them from potential harm. Though lack of cohesiveness and individualism are predominating characteristics of these families but they try to organize in groups to pursue their common interest. Families try to derive common strategies from the conditions of their localities and extend mutual support to protect their interest. Children also adopt various tricks to protect themselves from abuse and exploitations. Girls are mainly dependent upon their family members for their protection where as
boys try to organize themselves in groups for their own protection. Besides, children learn to adopt different strategies to safeguard their interest and fulfil their own needs. Night shelter facilities are not accessible throughout the city, but children and their family members long for this support to protect their children during the night.

Section 5.5

Child Rights-Perception of children and their Parents

During the study, efforts were made to understand how children living on the streets perceive their rights as an individual. For this purpose, various techniques like one-to-one interview, drawing exercises and group discussions were used with the children. Through these exercises, the children came up with a list of immediate needs that affect their daily life. They also expressed their desires for the future through these exercises. The children were facilitated to state their rights based on their experience of daily life, insights and desires for the future to lead a quality and meaningful life. It was a common plea of most of the children living on the streets that they do not want to be ignored by people and they would like to be a part of the society. The following is the list of basic rights as perceived by the children living on the streets.

Table 5.5.1 Perception of Children towards their Rights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rated priority</th>
<th>Rights of Children</th>
<th>Frequency Boys (%)</th>
<th>Frequency Girls (%)</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Regular food / Right to good food</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>83.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Safe shelter / safe place to sleep</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Clean environment to live</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Privacy of their family life</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>House to stay</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>To be safe</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>48.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Not to be tortured</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Proper clothing</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>80.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>To be cared &amp; loved by parents</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>48.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>To be cared &amp; respected by others</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>To have freedom</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The researcher also interacted with the parents of street children to find out what they felt about their children’s rights. It was found that the parents had a desire to provide the needed support to ensure proper development of their children. However, the parents were also aware of their poor socio-economic condition and limitations in achieving their aspirations. The researcher also conducted some exercises to identify rights of the children as perceived by their parents. It was found that there was a strong recognition that parents and government are mainly responsible to ensure that the children receive necessary support. The following is what the parents perceive as the rights of their children.

**Parent’s perception of Child Rights:**

- Right to have regular food
- Right to have a safe place to sleep and / or safe shelter
- Right to get educated.
- Right to have decent life.
- Right to have clothes to wear
- Right to be cared and loved by their parents.
- Right to have proper medical attention.
- Right of decent behaviour from law and order officials.

**Regular food:**

More than 83 percent children and their parents felt that children should have the right to have regular and proper food. Parents of 87 percent boys and 79 percent girls believe that “right to food” is one of the prime rights of children but unfortunately due to their poor socio-economic condition they were not able to ensure four square meals a day for them. It was identified that the parents had a bias for male children in terms of the needs and their priority for the distribution
of food within the family. They believed that male children required more nutritional food than females as they perform heavy physical work to earn a living as compared to the female children.

Safe Shelter:
The study found that there were 47 percent of the children and 75.5 percent of the parents who believed that the children should have the right to safe shelter. And, it was not surprising when parents of 95 percent girl children and 59 percent boys considered safe shelter as one of the important factors which can prevent children from getting abused. For obvious reason, parents of girl children believed that the requirement of safe shelter is more significant for girls than among boys.

Education:
The data revealed that more than 21 percent children and 54 percent of the parents thought that education is an important aspect of life and every child should have the right for proper education. The perception was stronger among parents of boys (65%) than that of the girls (43%). While interacting with parents, most of them were of the opinion that “education system is not meant for the street children”. On further investigation, it was found that the children living on the streets were not able to relate learning of the school with their daily life situation. Thus, children as well as their parents voiced for an education system that can help children to learn required skills to earn money, so that they can lead a decent life.

Clothes to wear:
It was found that more than 73 percent of the parents and 80 percent of the children believed that children living on the streets should have the right to have proper clothing. It is essential to protect them from climatic changes and also it is helpful to prevent children from getting abused. Parents of 89 percent girls felt that proper clothing is an important requirement for girls living on the streets to help them ensure their privacy.

Love and Care by parents:
It is well known that for the proper development of a child, it is essential that the child receives proper care and adequate love from the parents. In this study, it
was found that 78 percent of the girls were of the opinion that no children should be denied from parental love and affection. On the contrary, there were only 19 percent boys who identified love and care as one of the rights of the children. But, the parents of both boys and girls were of the opinion that the children should have the right to receive love and care from their parents. Also, it was surprising to observe that 64 percent parents of girl children had a feeling that girls require more care than the boys as they are much more vulnerable on the streets.

Proper medical attention:
Parents as well as the children believed that “proper medical attention” should be made available to all the children and it should be one of the most important child rights. Over 64 percent of the parents and 44 percent children felt that all the members including the children should have the right to proper medical assistance, when needed. People living in sheer poverty cannot ensure proper treatment to their family members due to sky high cost of medicine and treatment. Also, there is an opportunity cost involved when a member of the family falls sick and other members need to take care of the sick family member. It was a common experience of many families that they cannot rely upon the government hospitals as they are always full and is almost impossible to find a vacancy for admission in case of emergency. Moreover, they have to depend upon the local political party leaders and counselors for recommendation to the hospital to waive the charges and provide free treatment. This obligation can also be a source of exploitation and abuse at a later stage.

Decent life:
There was a common feeling among 77 percent parents that the children should not be discriminated against because of their socio-economic status. It was perceived that the children should be treated equally in the society. And, it is essential for the street living children to have a healthy environment for growth and development. The study found that the perception was almost equal among parents of both the gender i.e. 77 percent among boys and 78 percent among female. The inputs from the children indicated that they want to receive equal treatment like other children in the society. More than 41 percent children felt that they should not be denied from equal treatment due to their socio-economic conditions.
**Decent behavior from law and order officials:**
During this study, it was found that the parents as well as the children firmly believed that they should have the right to fair and unbiased treatment from law and order officials. Parents of 73 percent boys felt that their children should not be harassed by the police and the parents of 43 percent girls believed that the law and order agencies must ensure that their children are protected. Similarly, 44 percent children also believed that they should have the right to get adequate support and protection from law and order officials.

Besides, the above mentioned rights, there were some more areas, which were identified by the children as an important aspect of their rights. These are the areas, which were not mentioned by their parents during the study. Other than the above mentioned rights, children also identified some other issues that were not mentioned by parents.

**Privacy for their own family life:**
In this study, more than half of the children perceived that they should have a private family life and that should be one of the important child rights. The feeling of privacy was found equal amongst both the genders. It was found that the children had a strong desire to keep the daily life struggles, family life tensions, poverty and family violence as private as possible. They felt embarrassed to expose the difficulties of their life to outsiders. They feel that the right to privacy of street living families gets denied as their life is exposed to the strangers.

**Right of freedom:**
The study revealed that more than 62 percent children were of the opinion that all the children should have the right to freedom. It means that no one should force them to work and they should have the right to use their hard earned money in the way they like. The children also felt that they should have the right to move around freely. The data analysed indicated that 79 percent boys valued freedom as their rights whereas 55 percent girls perceived other aspect as their rights.
Right not to be bullied by others:
The children narrated to the researcher that because of their filthy clothes, appearance and poverty, they are bullied by others at the schools, play grounds and work places. Their access to the play grounds is denied and they face humiliating comments. They, therefore, felt strongly that all the children should be treated equally in the society. The data analysis did not reflect any gender disparities where almost 65 percent of both boys and girls perceived “right not to be bullied by others” as an important aspect of child rights.

Right not to be forced into marriage:
Girls believed that almost all the girls in the society are forced by their parents and relatives to get married to the strangers. Once children are married, parents and family members generally deny taking any responsibilities of their lives. Thus, over 55 percent of the girls stated that they should be protected from forced marriages.

Conclusion:
Overall, it was observed that children’s opinion were not very different from adults. From the discussion with children it was felt that they were skilful and analytical enough to identify and analyse their rights based on the struggles of their daily life and perceived needs. Children were much more involved and vocal in analyzing their rights and denials than their parents. Throughout the discussions, children and parents pleaded for the right to equality in the society and demanded for basic human dignity to lead a decent life. They felt that extreme poverty of the family is the core issue that results in denial of basic human rights and restricts access to basic services required for a respectable life. They believed that it is the responsibility of the society that includes parents, government and other members to provide required support to promote their rights. It is important to note that children viewed the above mention rights not only as “child rights” but also as “basic human rights”. Though in the earlier sections, children identified various perpetrators as abusers and it was their need to get oriented enough so that they do not exploit others. They also appealed for strict action to be taken against the perpetrators who commit repeated abuse within the society.
Section 5.6

Perception of Police towards street children and Child Protection

Roles and responsibilities of police:

One of the key objectives of this study was to identify areas to make the environment child friendly so that children remain protected from all kinds of abuses. This cannot be envisaged without the involvement of the police. Hence, the researcher felt the need to understand and analyze the roles and responsibilities of police under the newly amended Police Act. The researcher interacted with various ranks of police officials during various training programmes conducted by the researcher to impart training on Child Rights and Juvenile Justice Act in Kolkata. In this section, efforts have been made to understand the perception of police towards the street-living children and their role in protecting their basic rights.

The new Police Act was drafted after the amendment of Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection Act) 2000. The roles and responsibilities of police officials of different ranks were modified to incorporate the expectations of Juvenile Justice Act, 2000, beside many other changes which were required to improve the functioning of the police department. Realizing the need to replace the 146 year old Police Act, 1861, the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, ordered the formation of a committee of experts, under the Chairmanship of Dr. Soli J. Sorabjee, former Attorney General, Government of India. In Sept. 2005 the committee came up with a draft of the new Police Act, which could meet the growing need for efficient policing and fulfil the democratic aspirations of the public. While working on this draft, the committee incorporated the changes that were required in the roles and responsibilities of police officials. It was expected that the changes in the Police Act would give a new vision to the police department and would help to change some of the rudimentary assumptions of the past. In the new Police Act, it has clarified the relationship of the police establishment and the political executives, civil
administration and general public. In the Chapter IV of the new Police Act, the details of the duties, responsibilities and powers of police are clearly described.

In Chapter IV a significant change has been made where power and authority is replaced with roles, function, duties, social responsibilities and emergency duties. It describes in detail the general duties of the police like promoting and preserving public order, investigating crimes, identifying problems and situations that are likely to result in commission of crimes, reducing opportunities for commission of crimes through preventive patrolling and other prescribed police measures, creating and maintaining a feeling of security in the community, etc. In addition, the chapter states the duties of the police towards the weaker section, poor people and general public. Sec. 44 of this Chapter states that it shall be the duty of every police officer to guide and assist members of public, particularly the poor and indigent, disabled or physically weak and children who are either lost or find themselves helpless on streets or other public places.

The Police Act has defined the following roles and responsibilities of police personnel:

- Upholding the law and order and public peace under all circumstances.
- To protect life, liberty, property and human rights of the public.
- To provide as first responders all possible help required to people in disaster and thereby, if necessary, to provide active assistance to other agencies for relief and rehabilitation.
- To regulate traffic on roads and highways.
- To counsel and resolve conflicts in the community, to protect internal security and therefore prevent crimes or investigate crimes, if any.

Social Responsibilities of police include:

- Behaving with the public with due courtesy, particularly, while dealing with women and children.
- Guiding and assisting members of the public, particularly children, women, poor people and physically or mentally challenged individuals, who are either lost or helpless on the streets or other public places for help or protection by self or person or by any organized group.
• Providing required assistance to victims of crime and of road accidents and give prompt medical aid, irrespective of formalities.
• Preventing harassment of women and children in public places and public transport.
• Arranging for legally permissible shelter to every person in custody and also give information on legal aid schemes enforced by the State.
• Caring of vulnerable sections of society and upholding human rights

The new Act lays greater emphasis on empowerment of the police constabulary and outlines the training required for them to adopt to the newer way of working with a community friendly attitude. It has also redefined its administrative procedures and had made the police force more accountable for their conduct and deeds. Under the new Act, every police station should have a reception-cum-visitors’ room, separate toilets for men and women, separate lock-ups for men and women and a separate Women and Child Protection Desk, which will be staffed by a women police official. It requires a prominent display of all the information required to be made public under the Right to Information Act. This act includes the Supreme Court guidelines, which orders for a public display of the list of persons arrested and held in lock-ups.

The hierarchy of Kolkata police and their roles and responsibilities are described in brief as under:

**Commissioner of Police (CP):**
The Commissioner of Police is the In-charge of the overall metropolitan district; He / She enjoys the power of a Class I Magistrate; He is also responsible for special reports like of a dacoity, drugging, forgery etc. In the absence of CP, the additional CP carries out the duties.

**Joint Commissioner of Police (JCP)**
The Joint Commissioner of Police is in-charge of a particular division.

**Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP):**
The responsibility of the DCP is to ensure inspection within designated division; to supervise special report cases and in areas of communal riot.
Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP):
The ACP supervises within the designated subdivision; holds discussions with Investigation Officers on cases to be tried by the Sessions Court.

Inspector of Police:
He / She also act as the Officer in Charge (OC) of a particular police station. His / Her responsibility is to maintain the Police Station record keeping, delegate work among the Sub inspectors and Assistant Sub Inspectors. The OC reports to the Sub-divisional ACP and has to keep the ACP updated with daily reports.

Sub Inspector:
Sub Inspectors are also called Sergeants or Duty Officers in absence of OC. In Kolkata, there is female Sub Inspectors who has been given additional responsibility to work as Child Welfare Officers (CWO). Some of the key responsibilities of SIs are as under.

- Filing charge sheets in court, as the first investigating officer.
- General diary (GD) Entry
- Manage all non-cognizable offence, inquiries, investigations, and producing cases in the court.
- Manage Sergeant-out-reach programmes and maintaining traffic and law and order

Assistant Sub Inspector:
An ASI is the In-charge of a police station in absence of the OC. They are not authorized to file charge sheets but can only investigate on behalf of a SI. ASI will handle all cognizable offences in their jurisdiction.

Constables of Kolkata police:
The responsibilities of constables are as follows:

- To Escort and guard cases.
- Accompany on investigation, call witnesses and effect arrests.
- To collect definite information, under special orders of OC.
- Conducting out-reach services.
- Maintaining note books.
Head Constable (KP):

Their responsibilities include:
- Keeping footpaths clear of obstructions.
- Checking movements of registered old offenders in his area on regular basis.
- Collecting names of nearby hospitals, public institutions etc. & becoming acquainted with these places.

Functions of the State Police Board:

According to the new Police Act, it is mandatory to form The State Police Board within 3 months of implementation of the Act. The key functions of the State Police Board are as under:
- To frame policies and guidelines to ensure that the police services are carried out efficiently and effectively. And the same should be made accessible to the public.
- To systematically review and evaluate organizational performance of the police officials using the indicators like public satisfaction, victim satisfaction, etc.
- Of the total 9 members of the board, there will be 5 members from the fields of academia, law, media and NGO Board, who shall act as “Independent Members” and would facilitate to design and review the system periodically.

On the whole, the new Police Act is a welcome change to make the police force more efficient, service oriented and community friendly. Besides upholding the law and order system, the act also lays emphasis on prevention, emergency support and rehabilitative duties of police personnel to protect life, liberty, property and human rights in the society. To make the functioning efficient, accountable and public friendly, the legislation has focused on making the system free from extraneous influences. It has also emphasized on capacity building needs to bring about a positive change in the attitude of the police personnel. Excluding these positive initiatives, it is wearisome to observe that the Police Act did not make any effort to converge with the Juvenile Justice (Care and protection) 2000 Act though it was amended long after the amendment of Juvenile Justice Act. As a signatory of Convention on the Rights
of Child and The Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice, Government of India amended its Juvenile Justice Act in 2000 and tried to adhere to the international standards for dealing with children and juvenile offenders. As one of the implementers of Juvenile Justice Administration, Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) 2000 Act, has laid down some specific roles and responsibilities of police personnel to uphold and safeguard the rights of children. The Juvenile Justice Act of 2000 provides more significance on treatment, care, protection and developmental needs of children by adopting a child friendly approach in the adjudication and disposition of the matters for the best interest of the children. Focus has also been given on the voice of children towards identification and solution of their own problems. It has also mandated that a Juvenile Police Unit is to be set up, to deal with child related issues. However, besides the forming of women and child desk in the police station, the new Police Act has not designed any operational protocol to deal with child related cases. Moreover, the new police act did not make any effort to coordinate with other Juvenile Justice Administrations to promote child protection. Thus, the New Police Act again reflects the government’s attitude and negligence in upholding child protection issues. It can be assumed that, without any further amendment in the Police Act, police personnel will continue to neglect child related cases because of lack of priority, inadequate resources and lack of capacities to deal with children. Therefore, the role of police personnel in safeguarding child rights will continue to be an uncertain issue in near future.

Perception of Police towards Street children and Child Protection

It was reflected from the earlier chapter that a wide gap exists between the law enforcement authorities and the street living families. Overwhelmingly, negative experiences were recorded by the researcher from the children living on the streets against the law enforcement authorities. The families living on the streets did not perceive police as trusted machinery for the protection of their rights. Added to this, the illegitimacy of stay restrains street living families to access the required support of the law enforcement machinery. It was also found that the children living on the streets have developed a strong feeling that they are widely discriminated by the law enforcement authorities
due to their poverty and illiteracy. They reported that they cannot participate in the legislative procedures as they cannot understand the procedure and language of communication. As a result, their rights are widely violated and the families living on the streets could not take any steps to safeguard their best interest. There has been a widely held perception among police officials that child protection work is something that sits out beyond the fringes of “Real Police Work”. Moreover, Juvenile Justice System does not offer children any measures to take legal steps to safeguard their own interest.

Most of the people including street living people are not aware of the whole gamut of Juvenile Justice System and none of the authorities other than police are physically accessible to them. Though in constitution, Indian legislation recognizes that arbitrary detention is prohibited but the illegal detention of street children was observed as a very common phenomenon. Though, because of their socio-environmental reason many children were involved in criminal activities but they have the right to know the ground of arrest and also to get other legal support to safeguard their own interest. Overall, the current system fails to take into account the individual needs of children, ensure participation and confidence of street living families in the system. Thereby, the system does not offer the opportunity to uphold inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of street living children.

- During the interaction with the police officials it was observed that police officials were over burdened with different acts and its amendments. No official training programmes are organized for these officials to update their knowledge about the recent amendments. It was found that most of the officials were aware of the title of the new Juvenile Justice Act, but were not well oriented on the special features of the same and their individual role in its implementation. It was surprising to find that there were some police officials who were not aware of the latest definition of a child as amended by the Government of India. Thus, most of the measures they take while interacting with children do not match with the standards set in Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2000.
It was reported by the police officials that they do not have sufficient staff and resources to carry out their desired role with emphasis on the treatment, care, protection and developmental needs of the children. The police were found to be more concerned about the punitive aspect of crime rather than the protective aspect. Most of the police officials had their own perception about the child friendly approach which was largely predisposed by their own socialization process. Moreover, there was no standard operational guideline to deal with child in need of care and protection and children in conflict with law.

It was a general perception of the police officials that they were not trained enough to deal with the children. Most of them felt that police cannot earn the trust of children and thus cannot establish proper communication channels with them. Therefore, they were not able to ensure children’s participation in the process of interrogation and investigation of the legal matters.

Police officials do acknowledge that street children are one of the most vulnerable sections of the society, but they are forced to carry out frequent eviction drives in order to keep streets clean and free from obstructions. It was also found that the general perception of police about most of the street children was that they are involved in criminal activities. Thus, they take action against these children to keep peace and safety within the community. Police officials also acknowledged that the street children face lots of difficult situation and abuses but police cannot intervene unless someone lodges complain at the police station. It was also found that the police did not feel that the prevention activities were under the preview of police system. According to police officials, children are not entitled to lodge complaints in the police station unless they are accompanied by an adult person. They strongly felt that they should not encourage children to directly lodge any complaint to police station. As per their opinion, children should be accompanied with adult/s, who should support the children to lodge the complaint. According to the police, children take whimsical decision,
and thus on the basis of their complaints police cannot take any legal action against the perpetrator.

- Another group of police officials reported that the police stations are not equipped to handle problems of the children. They do not have necessary facilities to take care of them and so the only thing they can do is to refer them. But in most of the situation, police officials were not aware of various referral centres and their services available for the needy children. With reference to the production of children in Child Welfare Committee (CWC) and Juvenile Justice Board (JJB), police officials were found to be aware of it but they did not have sufficient monetary and human resources to transfer the children to safe places or CWC or JJB.

- It was found that police had no idea as to how to involve a child in the identification of a problem. Sometimes they are apathetic and do not involve themselves in actual investigation beyond what they can see. They act according to their prior experience. Thus, they do not understand the uniqueness of cases and keep applying same technique or approach with every child. As a result, they end up in superficial solutions by providing sentences to the young offender living on the streets but do not take any long term action to actually get the child out of the trap or vicious cycle of the situation.

- Most of the time they categorize cases and conduct investigations according to their own perception. The Juvenile Justice System does not offer children any measures to take legal steps to safeguard their own interest.

- Moreover, police have other priorities to deal with and so they cannot provide adequate attention to child related cases.

- A few police officials have been identified as Child Welfare Officer (CWO) who is responsible to deal with child related cases.
Conclusion:
Overall, it was felt that an adequate convergence between the Juvenile Justice Act and the Police Act is needed to create a safe environment for the children within the community. It is essential that the Government does not fail to execute its commitment of promoting child rights and this can be done by clearly stating the roles and responsibilities of police officials in line with child rights and Juvenile Justice Act. The role of police personnel in child protection will continue to be a tentative issue unless the roles and responsibilities of the police in the implementation of child related laws are clarified in the Police Act. Special emphasis is required to be given to equip police officials to deal with child protection issues through capacity building initiatives, adequate resource allocation and appropriate coordination with the other functionaries of Juvenile Justice Administration. Moreover, a standard operating procedure within the police discipline code needs to be developed to create a child friendly approach in the adjudication and disposition of the matters for the best interest of the children.

Section 5.7
Opinion of Children towards low enforcement systems
To capture the opinion of children regarding the child friendly police system various qualitative research methods were used. Focus group discussions were conducted with the children to understand children’s perception about child friendly police system. It is significant to mention that children were not given any orientations on child rights or existing children laws to facilitate their discussion. Only the case studies were shared with the children to facilitate their discussion. Venn diagram exercises were conducted with the children before the discussion to facilitate them to plot the existing protective instruments available in their surroundings. Children were also facilitated to depict their ideas in the form of colourful circles. Children identified various institutions as
machineries available for their protection and ranked them with size as per their scope to access those:

1. Local party leaders.
2. Youth groups
3. Police stations
5. Police Mobile Van
6. GRP Office
7. Courts
8. Formal schools
9. NGO run centers
10. Child Line
11. Kisholaya and Sukanya (CWC)
It is worth mentioning that only 4 children identified CWC as one of their protective instruments. These children had previous experience of interaction with the CWC authorities. But they had less faith on the system as their protective instruments because of the physical distance from their community and lack of clarity on the responsibilities of the CWC in child protection.

10 children were aware about child line but did not know the help line number. These children were reached out by some Non Governmental Organisations and taken part in an awareness programme conducted on child line. They have faith on the system but narrated that PCO personnel do not allow them to make calls from their booths. They also narrated that public telephone booths remain close at night so it is not effectively accessible for children at night.

Following are the expectations of children from the law and order machineries and their protection systems:

**Access to police stations:**

- Children should have access to police stations.
- Police should honour children as an individual, listen to them and recognize their problem.
- Children should have the permission to lodge complain at the police station independently with or without the support of any adult member.
- Police should officially acknowledge complains lodge by children and paraphrase what they have written at their register as most of the children living on the street are illiterate.
- Each police station should have a recording system where children will register their case with voice recording system. Police should also write the case in their register and use both during the time of investigation.
- Each police station and police help desk should have a complain box. Children who are not willing to come in direct contact with the police or afraid to disclose his/her identity can drop his/her complain.
- A few children suggested that complain forms should be attached to that complain box with instructions to facilitate children to describe their problem. The instructions in the forms should be simple and both in
written (Bengali and Hindi languages) and pictorial form so that children as well as illiterate people can also understand.

- Each and every police station, police help desk, mobile police van, schools should attach a board at a visible place where punishment for child abuse will be described.

**Children in conflict with law:**

- Police should not assault children without any valid reason.
- Police should not always suspect street living children as criminal.
- Police should not keep children in same locker with murderer.
- Police should not behave too harshly and listen to children so that they get the chance to tell the truth.
- Police should also trust the child offender and give them enough protection so that they can disclose the name of actual offender.
- Jail for the children should be clean and well ventilated.
- Good food should be provided to children in the lock up.
- Police keep all the personal belongings of the children under their custody before sending them to jail. Police should return children all the belongings after the trial or punishment is over.

**Investigation:**

- Police should investigate the case in consultation with the concern child and punish the offender.
- Police should be transparent in investigation and should not take bribe from the offender to settle the case.
- Punishment for the police personnel should be there for taking bribe.
- Confidentiality of the child should be maintained as they are not safe on the streets.
- Police should investigate the case in a different way so that the perpetrator can not identify the child who has lodged the complain.

**Trial system:**

- Children and their family members should have access to free legal system. Children narrated that people living on the streets should have access to lawyer who will fight cases for the children living in
deprived situation. A few children narrated that most of the time, perpetrators are influential persons and children or their family members can not fight to protect their rights because of their ignorance about legal systems.

- Children should not be forced to give testimony in front of adult offenders.
- Judge should listen to the initial recorded complain of children and then read police documents.
- Children feel threatened and ashamed during the process of interrogation (especially in child rape cases) and in most of the cases children and their family members do not understand the questions they have been asked.
- Trial process prolong for long time. Therefore, victim child and their family members loss their day long income to participate in the process of trial. Therefore, the families prefer to settle cases outside the judicial system to avoid their economic loss and further complicacy. Thus, children suggested avoiding the process.

**Punishment:**

- Strong punishment should be given to the perpetrator for the offence of child abuse.
- Any officials found to have violated children’s rights should be dismissed from the official capacity and should be punished.

**Opinion of parents towards law enforcement systems**

Parents narrated that because of their sheer poverty people who alive on the streets do not get a fair chance from law enforcement authorities because of their illegitimate status in the city. Also, they have inadequate means to access legal services to protect their self interest in case of violation of their rights. Police should give an ID to all the residents living on the streets to prove their citizenship and legal status.
Access to police station:

Parents reported that they seek the assistance of police personnel to trace missing or abducted children, lodge complaints against abuse and to negotiate violence within their community. From their experience of dealing with police they highlighted the following expectations from the law enforcement authorities:

- Parents pleaded that police should not evacuate street living families without any prior intimation.

Tracing missing or abducted children: List of all rescued individuals with their photographs should be displayed in each police station. Parents reported that parents face lots of trouble to trace their missing children. They are to run from one police station to another or in different

Lodging of complaints:
Parents suggested that families living on streets should get fair chance from the law and order machineries to lodge complaints in the police station. They emphasized the suggestion of having voice recording system as tool to lodge FIR. They stated that for any illiterate person lodging a written complaint is very difficult. Thus, police should give equal priority to voice recording system as written complaint as an official process.

The time of trial should be expedited: Parents suggested that the time of trial should be expedited as it hampers the income of the family as well as it harasses children who are the victim of the abuse.

Simplified trial process: During trial lawyers should use simple words so that they can understand and respond to the queries. They also suggested that the lawyers should not embarrass children with offensive questions.

Safe custody during trial: Parents suggested a safe custody for their children during the trial process as they face lots of threats from the accused person while they are on the streets.
Free legal aid: Parents recommended access to free legal aid lawyers who can help the children and their families to understand legal procedures and can fight for their rights.

Equal and fair system for the street living families: Parents narrated that police should not be biased during settling the cases. Employers exploit children economically and physically. Police should take up those cases and help them to negotiate without any prejudice.

Besides, parents suggested the following issues to avoid harassment:

- Police should not detain children without any valid reason.
- Police should not perceive all the street living children as criminal and give due respect to the street living families.
- Police should explain the reason to the parents before arresting the child.
- Parents admitted that many a time children commit offence but they are lured by adults. Thus, police should also arrest the adult offender who has lured the child to commit the offence.
- Police should not physically assault children without any concrete evidence of crime.
- Police should not take bribe to release children from custody.
- Moreover, parents appealed that police should listen to children and their family members and treat them with respect.

Conclusion:

All the children and their parents narrated that systems of the law and order machineries should be simple and transparent so that children as well as illiterate people can keep faith on the system, access them to protect their own rights. Children’s expectations from the law and order machineries were compiled according to different stages of interventions.