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1.1. Theoretical Background of the Topic

This being so, the adult-child relation, parents in particular, is said to provide ‘care and protection’ – serving thereby the ‘best interests of the child’ and meeting their day-to-day ‘needs of survival and development’ (UNICEF, 2010). The adult is presumed to be the guardian and in that respect expected to take the responsibility of child’s welfare and development. Whether or not, the premise underlying this is correct, the childhood ‘reality’ on the whole is questionable, demanding critical evaluation (UNICEF, 2010). Accordingly, idealistic notions and representations associated with children and childhood have been challenged, especially in relation to poverty, disease, exploitation and abuse rife across the globe. Many also believe that childhood is that period during which children are subject to a set of rules and regulations unique to them, and one that does not apply to members of other social categories (WHO, 2011).

The resultant effect of all this was that they were treated as objects of intervention rather than as legal subjects in their own right. Many labeled them as a ‘problem population’ whereas others reduced them to being seen as property and thus treated them as non-entities. The Roman law, for instance, provided for the patriae protests whereby the father was endowed with absolute power and authority over his family. It included just vitae necisque, the power of life and death, and a fortiori, of uncontrolled corporal chastisement over wife, children and other family members. Ancient Greeks left girls and children born with disabilities on the wild hillsides, where exposure or animals were sure to kill them and the practice was continued routinely in Rome until Christianity became the State religion. The killing of unwanted children may have become less common in the centuries since then, but it never completely disappeared. In the given adult-child power
relation, the usual cliché of childhood being a ‘golden age’ not only seemed to be a myth but a distant dream for majority of these children (My name is today, 2013).

Today, of course, we view abandonment of children in fairly tales and in legends, as if it were all fantasy. Early Western historians writing about children and their childhood were of the view that till the Middle Ages, abandonment, harsh punishment and the use of fear and other life-inhibiting measures were all part of the era’s social history, economics and pattern of families. No doubt, the era of Middle Ages was rightly referred to as the Dark Ages. Perhaps, an important step in the definition of rights came in 1215, in England. After a period of Civil War, the English nobility forced King John to limit his power, which had been absolute and virtually unchecked, through the Magna Carta. Among other things, the Magna Carta guaranteed that no free man should be deprived of life, liberty, or property without the due process of law.

Children and childhood across the world, have broadly been construed in terms of a ‘golden age’ that is synonymous with innocence, freedom, joy, play and the like. It is the time when, spared the rigours of adult life, one hardly shoulders any kind of responsibility or obligations (WHO, 2011). But, then, it is also true that children are vulnerable, especially when they are very young. Since children are vulnerable, they need to be cared for and protected from ‘the harshness of the world outside’ and around.

It is indeed a period in a person’s life during which she/he is neither expected nor allowed to fully participate in various domains of social life. It is thus not a world of freedom and opportunity but one of confinement and limitation in which children are ‘wholly subservient and dependent’. This being so, childhood is nothing short of a world of isolation, sadness, exploitation, oppression, cruelty and abuse (Save the child, 2012).

In other words, the need to protect children’s interests gradually began to surface. In a similar development, courts in Roman-Dutch law jurisdiction
began to exercise the State’s responsibilities as parents’ patriae and came to be considered as the ‘upper’ or superior guardian of minor children (Freeman, 2010).

To dichotomize and juxtapose these theoretical models of the child-adult relation reveals fundamentally different ways of seeing and understanding the very essence of childhood and children. In this sense, childhood is not a static, objective and universal fact of human nature, but a social construction which is both culturally and historically determined. The history of Hebrews, Greeks and Romans, whose cultures had a great impact upon the Western society, bears testimony to the fact that children, by and large, were taken for granted by their parents and the patriarchal society at large (Apetekar, 2009).

While tracing the position of children and childhood in the Western society, it would be crucial to go through the writings of Michael Freeman too. In his book ‘The Moral Status of Children’ (Freeman, 2009), which is a second edition to ‘The Rights and Wrongs of Children’ (2009), Freeman’s contention is that with the passage of time childhood may have changed and perhaps would continue to do so. But those who toll the knell of its passing, often interpreting, what they consider to be, its demise to moral decadence, oversimplify, exaggerate and, in making the link with children’s rights movement, dangerously distort the true facts.

Consistent with the belief that life begins with conception rather than at birth, five stages of childhood were identified in the Indian tradition. These were: (i) Garbha, or the foetal period; (ii) Ksheerda (0-6 months), when the infant lives entirely on milk; (iii) Ksheerannada (6 months-2 years), the period of early childhood in which weaning takes place; (iv) Bala (2-5 years); and (v) Kumara (5-16 years). Each of these divisions of childhood was associated with major rites and rituals, which marked its transition from one period to another. Many of these childhood samskaras — like namakarana (naming ceremony), mundan (tonsure ceremony) and upanayana (initiation into
religion and wider community) are being performed even today with fanfare by the people of India (Kakar, 2006).

These samskaras, in a way, emphasized the critical period both in biological as well as social development thus paving the way for the gradual integration of the child into society. Ironically, girls and children belonging to the lower castes were largely excluded from these samskaras (Kakar, 2006). For instance, the sohras—joyous songs of celebration sung at the birth of a child in the Hindi speaking belt— are almost never sung for newborn daughters. In fact, many shores express the relief of mother’s over the fact that she has been blessed with a son and not a daughter (Kakar, 2006). The preference for a son when a child is born, thus, seems to be as old as the Indian society itself.

Our two great epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata also eulogies the Indian view of childhood whereby there is an intense parental longing for children, and their upbringing is characterized by affectionate indulgence. This ‘child centered ness’, however, was found to be limited to boys only. The Indian tradition all along has been indifferent, if not overtly hostile, to the developmental fate of girls. Secondly, the Indian tradition subscribed to an ideology that downgraded the role of the environment and nurture in the development of a child, and instead emphasized upon a deterministic conception of mystical heredity.

During this period, in India too, the early legal statements were conspicuously silent on children’s rights. The Ten Commandments, arguably the most influential of all legal codes, contains a clear normative pronouncement on parent-child relations but it is in terms of respect for parents and is silent on the obligation of parents to love and nurture children. One of the earliest recognitions of children’s rights perhaps is found in the Massachusetts Body of Liberties of 1641 where parents are told not to choose their children’s mates and not to use unnatural severity against their children. Children, furthermore, were given ‘free liberty to complain to the Authorities
for redress’. But this was also the law that prescribed the death penalty for children over 16 who disobeyed parents.

Since the League of Nations held its meetings in Geneva, this 1924 Declaration of the Rights of the Child came to be known as the "Declaration of Geneva". Recognizing that ‘mankind owes to the child the best that it has to give’, the five simple principles of the Declaration established the basis of child rights in terms of both protection of the weak and vulnerable and promotion of the child’s development. The Declaration also made it clear that the care and protection of children was no longer the exclusive responsibility of families or communities or even individual countries; the world as a whole had a legitimate interest in the welfare of all children. The gist of the "Declaration of Geneva" is given in Box (UNICEF, 2011).

The League of Nations, as we all know, was not able to prevent another world war. The Second World War engulfed the entire planet, and caused even greater suffering for non-combatants, particularly children. In 1945, the United Nations Organization replaced the League of Nations. In 1946, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations recommended that the Geneva Declaration be reaffirmed as a sign of commitment to the cause of children.

The same year, the United Nations established a specialized agency — UNICEF with a mandate to care for the world’s children. Initially known as the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund, it provided assistance to children in Europe and elsewhere who had lost homes, family, and opportunity as a result of the war. Its mandate was later redefined so as to give the agency responsibility for long-term assistance to children who suffered from deprivation caused by economic and political conditions, as well as the effects of war (UNICEF, 2009).

“Declaration of Geneva” Child must be given the means needed for its normal development, both materially and spiritually. Hungry child should be
fed; sick child should be helped; erring child should be reclaimed; and the orphan and the homeless child should be sheltered and succored. Child must be first to receive relief in times of distress.

Child must be put in a position to earn a livelihood and must be protected against every form of exploitation. Child must be brought up in the consciousness that its best qualities are to be used in the service of its fellow men (UNICEF, 2010).

Development programmes in the country, including those for children, are carried out within the framework of the Five-Year Plans. Some of these programmes are wholly funded by the Central Government, some by both Central and State Governments, and some entirely by the State Government, depending on whether the programmes are classified as Central, centrally sponsored or State sector schemes. In addition, a wide variety of programmes are also being implemented in collaboration with international organizations and non-governmental organizations (Church, Michael, 2007) which are now growing as a vibrant sector in the development and empowerment of children. In the ensuing paragraphs, let us now see the milestones achieved by India on the whole ever since it achieved independence with regard to survival, development, protection and participation of children both at the national and international level (Compendium workshop, 2012).

In accomplishing the milestones, both at the national and international level, the non-governmental and civil society organizations have played an equally important role along with the Government in virtually every aspect concerning children. The media too has played a critical role in shaping public opinion and creating mass awareness. The Government of India and UNICEF collaborative initiatives over the years have focused on enhancing the capacities of the electronic and print media personnel in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting so as to integrate and represent issues concerning children and their rights effectively (UNICEF, 2010).
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As a result, the media is gradually focusing on children’s issues in a qualitative way. This is certainly a positive sign for the future and it is hoped that the media will increase its responsibility to include monitoring of child rights violations in a significant and persistent manner. It would be seen from this chapter that India has come a long way from 1947 to 2006 in achieving the milestones at the National and international level. All these efforts bear testimony to the overall concern of the Government and other stakeholders in reaching out to its children which are considered to be the supreme wealth of the nation.

India is a home to more than 400 million children who are below the age of 18 years (Rane Asha, 1994). While dealing with the complex dimensions of child rights, both in terms of numbers and in quality, we do feel satisfied about our country’s progress in several fronts such as immunization and enhancement of literacy rates in recent years. At the same time, we are aware and deeply concerned about certain other critical indicators such as infant mortality, malnutrition and regional disparities.

Our efforts should therefore be directed towards overcoming obstacles in these areas. Children in India represent diverse cultures, religions, castes, communities and economic groups. The development of this human resource should be considered as a key national concern not only by the Government but also by all stakeholders. It is the prime responsibility of all concerned to ensure that proper foundation is laid in the early stages of children’s life, so that their potential is properly harnessed for the growth and development of the nation.

This phenomenon of street children is not only reported from the developing countries but is worldwide experience. The nature of the problem of street children is thought to have changed both in size and character. There are efforts made to estimate the magnitude of the street children’s problems as this a population is not adequately covered by national census. Street
children do not have patience to work on a regular job; they prefer work at many little jobs where they can have quick money (Asha Rane, 1994).

Every child has the right to opportunity and facilities that enable education, play, and recreation, to be protected against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation. Yet millions of children toil on account of neglect and improper care by parents and community and subject themselves to exploitation due to economic distress (UNICEF, 2010).

The severity of conditions prevailing in home and community to which these children are exposed result in child abuse and exploitation in societies. As a result their right to childhood is very much jeopardized and such a condition ultimately affects their physical and mental health. So much so, the most vulnerable group who are exposed to these physical and psychological stresses many a time live and work on the street and sleep and die there as a result of negligence by society (UNICEF, 2010).

Street children are a growing phenomenon of modern times, especially in the urban areas in developing countries, which are faced with the process of rapid and unplanned urbanization. The contributing factor for the emergence of this problem of street children is by and large the abject condition of rural poor who are frequently exposed to the problems of poverty and unemployment. As a result, the rural poor become very amenable to urban pulls and pressures. These are the vulnerable groups in rural areas who are forced into urban migration leading to the problem of street children when they are unable to take effective care of their in a changed atmosphere (Save the Children, 2012).

One of the negative consequences of urbanization in the world particularly in developing countries is existence of a large proportion of the urban poor living in slums where many families don’t find any shelter resulting in life on pavements. Although there are several schemes to provide basic services to the urban poor, the pavement dwellers are hardly covered by any
one of them. Importantly, their number should be a matter of concern for all those responsible for urban community programme. However, the most vulnerable section amongst them is the street children in modern industrial cities (Rane, 1994).

It is important to understand that street children are not handicapped in any way nor can they be mistaken in any way compared to normal children, in terms of physical, mental and psychological abilities.

A review of the existing definitions clarifies that no attempts have ever been made to understand the children and their needs. Most children on the basis of their age, their stay and their link with families only. It has to be noted that this group of children lacks responsible adult care and protection. This by itself seems adequate for understanding their living pattern and the kind of day to day struggle such children would be going through for their survival and existence (HCHW, 2012).

The forces of modernization, including those of industrialization and urbanization, coupled with the conditions of poverty have adversely affected family life. Marital disharmony, separation or divorce, family tensions, death of parents, ill treatment by step parents, mortgaging of children as bonded laborers are some of the conditions that bring a large number of children on the streets.

The Street Children is fairly an urban phenomenon in recent times. The growth of street children is a potential threat in urban areas. Government of India took cognizance of the problem and evolved a central scheme of welfare of street children in 2008 for taking up the street children programmes by voluntary sector. Government of India provides 90 % of the grant and 10 % is to be borne by the voluntary organization. The Assembly has also constituted a House Committee on Rehabilitation of Street Children. The committee in its report has emphasized the need for comprehensive survey of street children and adequate budgetary support. It was also felt that not only Non-
Governmental Organizations, but Government Organizations also should take up the street children projects (JJ Act, New Amendment, 2012).

The traditional joint family had certain advantages i.e., the child grows up in an atmosphere of society and affection, both essential for the growth and development of personality there was no problem of the single or neglected child. The son took up his father’s profession. In those days, only few children were taking the formal education in the ashrams, rest of the children used to take up his father’s profession. In this system “Shishya” used to spend his entire time with the guru. Interference of the parents in the formal education was absolutely absent.

The joint family, however, has not been without its drawbacks. Being tradition-bound, the family protocol left little room for a gifted individual to take any initiative. The joint family by and large, left scope for enterprise and initiative and made for dignity of customs and resistance to change. In the process of great social, economic and political changes over the centuries, the structure and responsibilities of the family members are also changing (Aptekar, 2009).

Children across the world are better off today than they were a decade ago. Globally 400 million more children today have access to safe drinking water, better sanitation facilities etc., while the lives of 25 million children have been saved, as a result of immunization. Indian children represent one in five of the world’s children. With a population of 414 million children, India has a unique responsibility (Save the Children, 2009). The fate of these children will inevitably be a major factor in determining our collective future. The fate of the 26 million children born here annually will be as the nation itself (Agnelli, Susanna, 2006).

However, it is equally important to ensure that this trend address the huge disparities that exit across the country. Of all the visibility of young children on streets and their ever growing numbers with a lifestyle that
endangered living very existence, do attract a major concern (Consortium for street children, 2010). Children living on streets are one such highly vulnerable group that demands attention of all – the government, the NGOs, the philanthropists, the Donors and the Activists – everyone who shares a concern for children (Divya Disha, 2012).

However, it is important to understand that these children are not handicapped in any way nor can they be mistaken in any way compared to normal children, in terms of physical, mental and psychological abilities. A review of the existing definitions clarifies that no attempts have ever been made to understand the children and their needs. Most of these definitions have categorized children as street children on the basis of their age, their stay and their link with children lacks responsible adult care and protection. This by itself seems adequate for understanding their living pattern and the kind of day to day struggle such children would be going through for their survival and existence (Goel, 2008).

UNICEF estimates 11 million street children in India, which emerges as the highest figure of such a group compared to other developing countries. The figures are alarming in metropolitan cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolakatta. It is known that the figures available are only estimates. Full fledged studies on children living on streets and the estimation of their numbers in a scientific manner are almost negligible. It is also to be noted that the figures are quite often deliberately exaggerated or understand as per the need and situation demands both by the Government and NGOs. However, regardless of statistics, even one child on the streets is too many, if rights are violated. The bare fact that children are living on streets is an indication of a gross violation of the rights of children (UNICEF, 2012).
1.2. Definition of Street Children

UNICEF (2012) “Street children are girls and boys for whom the street has become their home and/or source of livelihood and who are inadequately protected or supervised by responsible adults. They are temporarily, partially or totally estranged from their families and society”.

UNESCO (2010) “Being a street child means going hungry, sleeping in insalubrious places, facing up to violence and sometimes becoming an expiatory victim; it means growing up without companionship, love and protection; it means not having access to education or medical services; it means losing all dignity and becoming an adult before even having been a child” (http://portal.unesco.org/education/fr, 2012).

A Street child is a minor for whom the street (in the wide sense of the word, including un-occupied dwelling, waste land etc.,) has become his habitual abode & who is without adequate protection (Judith Ennew, 2009).

The most popular general working definition for street children is from the Inter-Non- Governmental Organisation (Inter-NGO) in Switzerland who identifies a street child as: "any girl or boy who has not reached adulthood, for whom the street (in the widest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become his or her habitual abode and/or sources of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised or directed by responsible adults” (Inter-NGO, 2012, Schurink, 2012).

The social construction of street children that are portrayed as possessing socially unacceptable attributes has also been challenged. It is believed that these discourses operate to reinforce and maintain the street children existence on the margins of societies even further. Moreover, street children are constructed differently in different countries. For example, although, the term ‘homeless’ and ‘street youths’ have been used interchangeably, the term ‘homeless’ is often used in North America and
Western Europe, while the term ‘street child’ is most frequently used in Latin America, Africa, Eastern Europe and Asia. This indicates that by adopting different socially constructed discourses around street children, interventions which support and uphold the status quo of social inequalities are maintained (De Moura, 2002).

Street children are distinctly different from children of pavement dwellers and slum dwellers by the fact that they have chosen to leave their families "Sadak Chap" is a term by which children refer to themselves “Chap” means stamp & "Sadak" is street. The term partly describes those who carry. “The stamp of the street” (IRDS, 2011).

The International Catholic Church Bureau, Geneva, has viewed street children as “those for whom the street (in the widest sense of the word, ie., unoccupied dwellings, waste land, etc.,) more than their family, has become their real home, a situation in which there is no protection, supervision or direction from responsible adults” (ICCB, 2010).

Ennew (2012) has emphasized the importance of understanding the lives and roles of children in any culture. For example, she asserts that the notion of The African Child is as much of an obstacle in this process as the global construct of The Child. Children in different cultures experience different childhoods and so must be understood according to their history and culture.

"Street child is a social reality which comprised certain set of working as rather than personal or social characteristics of the street child/children it self/themselves”(Save the Children, 2010).
A number of distinct groups of young people have been subsumed under the definition of “Street Children” (NISD, 2011).

i. Children living on the streets, whose immediate concerns are survival and shelter

ii. Children who are detached from their families and live in temporary shelters such as abandoned houses and other buildings, hostels, shelters etc. or moving about between friend.

iii. Children who remain in contact with their families but because of poverty, overcrowding or sexual and physical abuse within the family, spend some nights and most of their days on the streets.

iv. Children who live with their families on the street

v. Children in institutional care, who have come from a situation of homelessness and are at risk of returning to a homeless existence.

A recent study by HCHW (2012) attempted to explore another level of definition: how street children see themselves in relation to their families and society at large. He asserted that in some countries, it is quite normal for children to “work in the street, dance in the street, begin the street, sleep in the street is the venue for their actions not the essence of their character” (HCHW, 2012).
### 1.3. Operational Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Street</td>
<td>An open place, out of the house, footpath, and pavement or market area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>The UN Convention on the Rights of the child (CRC) defines a child any person individual below the age of 18 years.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Juvenile</td>
<td>A child who is below 18 years for girls, 16 years for boys. Juvenile Justice Act, 1986.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rag picking</td>
<td>An act of collecting material that has been discarded as garbage or refuses such as paper, plastic, hair, metal, bottle, wires, or any other material, which has a sale value.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation</td>
<td>The process of helping the child to lead an integrated normal life one that is socially, emotionally will adjusted, physically and mentally healthy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional care</td>
<td>Care provided by an institution either set up by the government, voluntary agency, individual, or the society which provides food, clothes, shelter etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelter Home</td>
<td>Means a home or a drop-in-center set up under Sec. 37.</td>
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1.4. Helping Street Children

As people feel that they must rescue children from working or from the streets, there is a tendency to think in terms of providing for them and protecting them. Thus a common reaction is to start by handing out food and clothes, or by building an orphanage (Bose, 2012). The problem with these reactions, as we shall see later, is that they fail to provide lasting solutions. Instead they create dependency (Bharti Mehindru, 2010). In order to plan for development solutions, in which people confront their problems, tackle the root causes and find their own solutions, it is necessary to examine some of the most common mistaken ideas about street children (Francise Remington, 2011)

This section looks at issues relating to children and young people living on the street. Another section looks in general at issues facing children and young people living outside of family care. Other sections look in detail at children and young people living on commercial farms, in prisons and in situations of conflict.

1.4.1. Key Points about 'Street Children' are

i. They are defined by the United Nations as children and young people for whom the street has become their home and/or source of livelihood, and who are inadequately protected or supervised by responsible adults.

ii. They are mostly boys. Girls are more likely to become involved in domestic work or selling sex.

iii. There are 'push' and 'pull' factors which cause children and young people to be on the street. Parental death due to HIV/AIDS is an increasingly important 'push' factor.

iv. Street children are vulnerable to many problems. They are particularly vulnerable to HIV infection as a result of survival and commercial sex.
v. There are many examples of programmes which are working effectively with street children. Key principles have been developed from that work.

1.4.2. Street Children: Who are they?

The United Nations defines street children as girls and boys for whom the street has become their home and/or source of livelihood, and who are inadequately protected or supervised by responsible adults. This is a broad definition. It includes homeless children who live on the street. It also includes children and young people who earn their livelihood by working on the streets. It does not include children who live on the street with their families.

The number of street children is increasing in many cities around the world. They are mainly seen in cities and are said to be one feature of the increasing number of people moving to cities from rural areas. Most street children are boys. Girls are also affected by the same things that cause boys to move to the streets. However, they are more likely to become domestic workers or to be involved in selling sex. In many cases, both these kinds of work amount to a type of slavery. Girls working as domestic workers are often sexually abused. Girls living and working on the street are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse.

1.4.3. Why do Children Move to the Street?

In many cases, children and young people choose to move from a rural area to the city and then find themselves, living on the street because they are unable to live elsewhere. Reasons for such rural-urban movement can be categorized as 'push' and 'pull' factors.
1.4.4. Appropriate Responses

Programmes which aim to work with street children should be focused on the child's 'best interests'. This means starting working with them where they are and not trying to force them to leave the streets. In some places, authorities have introduced activities which are focused strongly on children and young people leaving the street. These are usually motivated by factors other than the best interest of the child, such as civic/political pressure to 'clean up' the streets.

Appropriate activities may assist them to find alternatives to life on the street. Equally, they may assist them to remain safe while on the street. Key features of appropriate activities for children and young people living on the street include:

i. Establishing a sense of trust with the children and young people. Many street children mistrust adults, particularly those in authority. Overcoming this mistrust is essential for an effective programme and for the children and young people to be more integrated in the community.

ii. Building skills which enable children and young people to earn income or to gain employment.

iii. Imaginative ways of providing education and health care for street children.

iv. Advocating on behalf of street children with those in authority. This may be done at national level. However, it is particularly needed at local level. For example, programmes working with street children will need to engage with police officers in the area to try to encourage a more supportive approach to street children.

v. Ensuring that street children participate in design of programmes. They should also participate in decisions which affect them.

vi. Reducing their vulnerability and risk to sexual abuse and its consequences.
vii. Working with families, the community and other organisations.

viii. Seeking to address the reasons why children move to the streets.

1.5. The Street Child Image

The children usually called street children seem to have the very opposite of a childhood. Many adults ignore them or think as a social nuisance (Govt. Gazette, 2011). Others want to rescue them. They are certainly mythical figures, either because they seem to be romantically free adult worries, or because they appear to be particularly immoral or usually pathetic victims. But they are not just outlaw or waif figures photographed as part of the urban scenery (ICIHI, 2009).

They are individual children, each with his or her own history, problems, necessities and hopes. Popular images of street children are one extra problem that they simply don’t need. Some object to being called ‘street children’ because of the negative connotations; others act up to the image, especially for tourists and photographers (Spring, Ennew, Judith, Swart, Jill, 2009).

Some popular perceptions about street children concerning their families, futures and the children themselves are noted here (NISD, 2012).

1.5.1. About their families

i. They have been abandoned by their families;

ii. They have run away from home because of sexual abuse;

iii. They are the result of the breakdown of the family;

iv. Their families have disintegrated because of poverty;

v. Their fathers have disintegrated because of poverty;

vi. They come from mother-headed families;

vii. They have no contact with their families.
1.5.2. About their Future

i. They will grow up to criminals;
ii. They will not survive to adulthood;
iii. They cannot be rehabilitated;
iv. They turn into terrorists and revolutionaries.

1.5.3. About the Children

I. They are starving;
II. They are thieves;
III. They have no choice but to be prostitutes;
IV. They are uncontrollably violent;
V. They have lost all ability to feel emotions such as love;
VI. They do not know how to play;
VII. They have no morals;
VIII. They are drug addicts;
IX. They have aids.

Some of these ideas do apply to some children on the street some of the time. Others are untrue or unproven, but all of them have been applied to youngsters on the street at one time or another. (Ennew, Judith, 2009). Some ideas are more characteristic of Northern observers. Others, such as the assumption that they are criminals and terrorists in the making, have been used by local groups as justification for campaigns of violence against children on the street (John Bowlby, Margery Fry, 2009).

Such strongly negative views result from the difficulties experienced by modern, middle-class adults trying to come to terms with the fact that what they are confronted with is children who simply don’t fit the modern image of childhood. It is threaten to adults to have to think about children who, just maybe, manage without them. Thus, in the early 1980s, the Inter NGO Programme for street children and street youth described street children as
being in ‘a situation in which there is no protection, supervision or direction from responsible adults’ as if this, in itself, were the problem. Perhaps this is why other commentators, including aid workers, academics and journalists, frequently refer to fictional tales of children living without parents. Sometimes they evoke romantically free children such as Mark Twain’s Huckleberry Finn and Dickens’ Artful Dodger, sometimes the dark picture drawn by William Golding in Lord of the Flies (Ennew, Judith, Swart, Jill, 2009).

### 1.6. India's Commitment towards Children's Rights

The Constitution of India, the National Policy for Children, many other policies and legislation accord priority to children’s needs. The Government of India ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 2nd December 2002. Accordingly, the government is taking action to review the national and state legislation and bring it in line with the provisions of the Convention. It has also developed appropriate monitoring procedures to assess progress in implementing the Convention, involved all relevant government / ministries / departments, international agencies, non-governmental organisations, and the legal profession in the implementation and reporting process, publicized the Convention, and sought public inputs for frank and transparent reporting (UNCRC, 2012).

India is also a signatory to the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children. In pursuance of the commitment made at the World Summit, the Department of Women and Child Development under the Ministry of Human Resource Development has formulated a National Plan of Action for Children. Most of the recommendations of the World Summit Action Plan are reflected in India’s National Plan of Action ([www.childwelfarescheme.org](http://www.childwelfarescheme.org), 2012).

The National Plan of Action has been formulated keeping in mind the needs, rights and aspirations of 300 million children in the country and sets out quantifiable time limits for India’s Charter of Action for Children by 2000 AD. The priority areas in the Plan are health, nutrition, education, water,
sanitation and environment (www.childwelfarescheme.org, 2012). The Plan gives special consideration to children in difficult circumstances and aims at providing a framework, for actualization of the objectives of the Convention in the Indian context.

The National Plan of Action also lists out activities to achieve these goals. To make the aims and activities of the plan more need-based and area-specific, the Central Government has urged the State governments to prepare a Plan of Action for Children for their States, taking into account the regional disparities that may exist (UNICEF, 2012).

It is estimated that there are 3,14,700 street children in Mumbai, Kolakatta, Chennai, Kanpur, Bangalore and Hyderabad combined and about 1,00,000 in Delhi. Factors which have given rise to the increase in number of street children in India include poverty, family break-ups, armed conflicts, natural and man-made disasters, lack of employment opportunities and the attraction of cities (Rane, 1994).

Street Children have received much attention in the media, both national and international in the recent years. The awareness and sensitization efforts have led to several initiatives involving numerous groups working with street children, launching of specific schemes and programs at the local, state and national level and initiation of numerous studies on street children (www.childwelfarescheme.org, 2012).

Non-Governmental Organizations or NGOs in India are doing laudable work in this area and are dealing with issues related to shelter, health, education and training of these children. A Central Scheme for the welfare of street children has recently been initiated by the Ministry of Welfare, Government of India. This scheme gives grant-in-aid to NGOs working on issues of street children (NISD, 2012).

India has also ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child which came into force in 1990. This ratification implies that India will ensure wide
awareness about Child issues among the government agencies, implementing agencies, the media, the judiciary, the public at large and the children themselves. The Government's endeavour is to create a conducive climate for acceptance of the goals of the Convention and to amend all legislation, policies and schemes to meet the standards set in the treaty framework (UNICEF, 2011). Now, control theory advocates that two types of controls evolve during the early socialization of the child 1) personal controls which result from internalizing social norms and the child’s acceptance of their legitimacy as guides for conduct and 2) social control which refer to external forces that reinforce conforming behaviour and operate through conventional social institutions such as family, school, community etc., through the distribution of rewards and negative sanctions (Ujjwala Rani, 2011).

1.7. Service Provision for Street Children

In work with street children, and to a certain extent with working children, there is a tendency for projects to concentrate on providing services – food, health care shelter and education. The soup kitchen and the orphanage, both nineteenth century solutions, are seldom far from people’s minds when they think of homeless and working children. But giving handouts of various kinds is only a short-term solution, a kind of first aid and it can create dependency (Vilas Ujgare, 2011).

On the other hand, it is not possible to direct project activities only towards development and prevention. You cannot ignore children who are in danger, for long-term solutions (IHRLPG, 2009). In a sense, street and working children are in permanent refugees, they need immediate help, but this will be of maximum benefit to them if it is planned so that it will become part of a long-term development solution (Subrahmanyam & Sodhi, 2009).
1.7.1. Drop-in-Centres

Shelters create alternative environments for children whose lives are difficult. They are places where children can feel relaxed and comfortable, safe and looked after. They are not places for regimentation, hierarchy and authority. They are places where children can talk to each other and to project workers, knowing they will be both listened to and heard. They are not places where they will be talked at or preached to even though they should be places where they may be relationships. Shelters should not resemble remand homes or orphanages, where children say they feel like prisoners (My name is today, 2013).

1.7.2. Shelter

The objectives of a shelter are to provide safety, security, health care, nutrition and education for the street child without encouraging the child to become dependent either on the shelter or the organization that runs it. People responsible for this kind of shelter must closely interact with the street child. They must create situations where such children can come together and get the attention they badly need; they must also strengthen and constructively direct their independence, while encouraging interdependency (My name is today, 2013).

It is common to think that all institutionalized services for children provide uniform facilities and services. However, evidences show that they are not uniform suggest certain minimum services and facilities could be provided in a rehabilitate through there could be customized, need-based arrangements made for children in the homes, some of the services and facilities suggested are as follow (Rizzine, Irene, 2011).
I. Storage facilities for working materials, clothes, personal belonging and money;
II. Washing facilities for clothes and bodies;
III. An opportunity for rest;
IV. Sleeping facilities;
V. Recreation and play opportunities;
VI. Food and cooking facilities;
VII. Meals;
VIII. Health services;
IX. Health education;
X. Sheltered work opportunities;
XI. Education;
XII. Skills training;
XIII. Counseling.

Giving food to orphan children is inevitably linked with the pathetic image of Oliver Twist. Too often food is distributed as an act of regimented charity for which children are made to feel grateful and is of very basic quality and dubious nutritional value. Many street children are not hungry; they are able to buy their own food from their own income or to beg reasonable food from restaurants. It all depends on local conditions and prior research should reveal what food needs (Salve, Sahastrabudhe, 2011).

1.7.3. Basic Education

Basic education encompasses both tools of literacy, numeracy and problem solving and content, such as knowledge, values and attitudes. Some education systems have developed programmes for non-formal education to complement school-based learning and many projects make use of the materials developed. Non-formal education classes are held when children are able to attend, at the end of the working day, at weekends or other holiday times.
The classes are genuinely free; whereas so much state schooling entails hidden costs of uniforms, books and registration. They also often include other services, such as giving a meal or at least a snack. If non-formal education takes place outside normal school hours it may be able to make use of existing school building. Teachers may be volunteers, often based in the local community (Gazette of India, 2009).

1.7.4. Vocational Training

Vocational training is a common education option in projects for children over 14 years of age, although it is often accompanied by basic literacy and numeracy. Vocational training schemes are often run by government as well as by NGOs. As in institutions, they usually offer a restricted range of skills, such as carpentry and electrical wiring for boys and sewing, typing, computer, soft toys, DTP etc. for girls (NISD, 2012).

1.7.5. Recreation

Form of recreation, although this is often limited to a space for football, cricket, indoor games, and also for children with special needs, such as physical or mental disabilities. Camping trips, visits and excursions all provide opportunities for children to learn about their society have some respite from daily problems or drudgery and get to know project workers betters (Divya Disha, 2013).

Recreation should be integrated into project planning and the children’s development, rather than just a bit of fun on the side. Its effects should be monitored other project components. In addition to enjoyment, the therapeutic and educational value of sport, visits, drama and art need to be maximized. Drama, for example, has the following (Divya Disha, 2013).
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I. Learning to work as a group
II. Learning skills of listening and responding
III. Exercising restraint
IV. Speaking distinctly
V. Waiting your turn
VI. Responsibility for others
VII. Memory tasks
VIII. Learning to interactive rather than just reactive
IX. Expressing emotions safely
X. Having fun
XI. Showing the world what you can do.

1.7.6. Business Schemes

On the surface this is a very attractive instant solution and this kind of scheme is attractive to donors. It aims to develop dignity and self-reliance, yet the very necessity to be businesslike means that there is a tendency to be authoritarian (CAP, 2012).

Specific problems with this particular scheme illustrate the limitations of most instant-solution employment schemes which:

i. Require considerable start up finance and organization
ii. Require prior market research to see if goods/services will sell
iii. Target children who do not fit into other programmes easily
iv. Can easily slide into being a youth employment scheme that does not cater for street children.
v. May have to battle against public opinion that stigmatizes street children and thus be unable to sell goods/services.
1.7.7. Family Reunification (Repatriation)

Street children looking for alternatives to closed institutions such as orphanages, they naturally think about trying to reunite children with their own families. All other thin being equal, this would always be the preferred choice. However, life has a way of being very unequal indeed and few projects have achieved much success with this option. If family reunification is a chosen option, the project should establish with families what children would do when they get back home. Will they go to school, find work or help with family task, much will depend will depend on the opportunities available locally, so this entails work with the whole community, giving particular emphasis to its children (Donbosco, 2012).

1.7.8. Advocacy and Campaigning

While service provision meets immediate needs and community work address long-term problems, advocacy and campaigning confront the root causes of the problems experienced by street children. The best kind of advocacy and campaigning involves children in defining their own problems and being helped to put their own case. It aims to inform and educate public and policy-makers and to bring about changes that will improve children’s lives (HCHW, 2012).

1.7.9. Child Participation

In an ideal situation children should participate at all levels of project planning, operation and evaluation. They should be part of each process from the beginning. However, this is the goal, and as such will not be totally possible in the early planning stages. After all, it is adults who first saw the children working or on the street and decided to do something about it (UNCRC, 2012).
1.7.10. Street Educators

There is some mystique attached to staff working on projects dealing with street children. Much of this is associated with what are called 'street educators', a term associated with the Latin American, non-institutional model of street children project. Street educators contact children on the streets and encourage them to be involved in project work. In reality, their role is more one of contacting and befriending, often including health services and counseling, than educating (NISD, 2011).

1.7.11. The Child Care Institutions

The childcare institutions should be built on the principals of child rights. The institutions should develop standards and norms that provide safe environment for children (JJ Act new amendment rules, 2012). The child is protected from the abuse only if their rights are ensured. The rights are realized as a result of the practices and norms of the institution. The care institutions should stand on the four principles of right against discrimination against caste, creed, race and religion, right to life, survival, development, right to participation and act in the best interest of the child (UNCRC, 2012). Protecting the children in the care institutions entirely depends on the approach of the institution and the standards and the practices adopted by them. The different forms of abuse are a result of denial of different rights to the children. Only by ensuring all the rights which will affect the protection of the children the child abuse can be stopped. Protection strategy for children from abuse should be evolved with rights perspective (DIET, 2009). This is possible only if the care institutions are clear about the rights of the children and develops norms and practices to ensure these rights with in their institutions. Child abuse can be stopped in all kinds of care institutions (institutional situations) only with long term strategies, institutional standards and norms adhered committed and strictly followed (CINI-ASHA, 2011).
1.7.12. NICP (National Initiation for Child Protection)

National Initiative for Child Protection (NICP) is a campaign initiated by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment through National Institute of Social Defence (NISD) and CHILDLINE India Foundation. “To every child a childhood” is the vision of NICP. It hopes to achieve this by facilitating a clear understanding of Child Rights and Juvenile Justice Act 2000 among the members of allied systems, NGOs and others. NISD carries out intensive training and capacity building of different level of functionaries working under Juvenile Justice System in the country (NISD, 2012).

1.7.13. Childline – 1098

CHILDLINE is a 24 hours free phone service initiated by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in 1998 – 99. A child in distress or an adult on his behalf can access the service by dialing the number 1098 on telephone. It provides emergency assistance to a child in distress and subsequently based upon the child’s need, the child is referred to an appropriate organization for long-term follow up and care. The CHILDLINE service is currently in 256 cities (Childline, 2013).


The Government of India have had for consideration the question of adopting a National Charter for Children to reiterate its commitment to the cause of the children in order to see that no child remains hungry, illiterate or sick. After the consideration, it has been decided to adopt the National Charter for Children enunciated below (UNCRC, 2012)

I. The State can make special provisions for children (Art 15 (3)).
II. The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age six to fourteen years (Art 21 A)
III. No child below the age of 14 years shall be employed to work in a factory, mine or any other hazardous employment (Art 24)

IV. The tender age of children is not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength (Art 39 e)

V. And that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment (Art 39 f)

VI. Whereas it is a Fundamental Duty of a parent or guardian to provide opportunities for education to his child or ward between the age of six and fourteen year (Art 51 A)

VII. Whereas through the National Policy for Children, 1974, we are committed to providing for adequate services to children, both before and after birth and throughout the period of growth, to ensure their full physical, mental and social development.

VIII. Whereas we affirm that the best interest of children must be protected through combined action of the State, civil society, communities and families in their obligations in fulfilling children’s basic needs.

IX. Whereas we also affirm that while State, Society, Community and Family have obligations towards children, these must be viewed in the context of intrinsic and attendant duties of children and inculcating in children a sound sense of values directed towards preserving and strengthening the Family, Society and the Nation.

X. And whereas we believe that by respecting the child, society is respecting itself.

XI. Now, therefore, in accordance with our pledge in National Agenda of Governance, the following National Charter for Children, 2003 is announced.

XII. Underlying this Charter is our intent to secure for every child its inherent right to be a child and enjoy a healthy and happy childhood, to address the root causes that negate the healthy growth and development of children, and awaken the conscience of the community in the wider
societal context to protect children from all forms of abuse, while strengthening the family, society and the Nation.

For the last several years, field workers of different organizations, including UNICEF have been well aware of the phenomenon of street children in different countries of the world. However, they worked mostly in isolation in the absence of collective awareness of the problem and concerted efforts to mitigate the suffering of the children (Rane, 1994). Yet the turning point in the situation came with the declaration of 1979 as the International year of the child when the problem of street children was brought to the public attention. As a result of this, a pioneering effort was made by “Inter – NGO Programme on street children and street youth” for a period of three years during 1982 – 85 with the main objective of promoting public awareness over the issue and developing policy formulations to contain the situation all over the world. In the year 1983, the Covenant House, a major programme for Street Children in Newyork, organized “Shelter – 83” – an international conference on street children with representatives all over the world. In the same year the UNICEF organized seminars for field workers on “Children at High Risk”, a term which includes Street Children in Latin America (Bemak, Fred, 2011).

The year 1986 witnessed the growing wave of International action for Street Children where three significant events occurred in this field. 1) An independent commission on International Humanitarian Issues, Switzerland, brought out a book on Street Children, probably first of its kind for the general public (ICIHI 2009). 2) The UNICEF Executive Board adopted a resolution fully recognizing the importance of the issue, and recommending increased action by the UNICEF in this field across the globe. 3) A new world wide movement for Street Children “Child Hope” was established by the founding members of the Inter – NGO Programme (Let us speak, 2012).

All these and many other developments show that a good start has been made at the International level for the cause of Street Children culminating in a convention on the Rights of the child in 1989 by the Human
Rights Commission with 80 International Laws, covenants and Declarations which were later accepted by the General Assembly of the UN in 1989. The Draft Convention consists of 54 Articles covering Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural rights ranging from survival Rights such as adequate health care, food, clean water and shelter, to rights of prevention against abuse, neglect and exploitation, the right to safe and proper development through formal education and freedom to participate in the social, economic, religious and political life of their culture. (UNICEF, 2012). The convention and the Rights it sets out are based on three principles: 1) That children need special safeguards beyond those provided to adults; 2) That the best environment for a child’s survival and development is within a protective and nurturing family setting; and 3) The governments and the adult world in general should be committed to acting in the best interests of children.

India is constitutionally committed to an all-sided development of children. In the Directive Principles of the State Policy of the constitution of India, it is provided that the state shall direct its policy towards securing that the children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner in conditions of freedom and dignity, and that childhood and youth are material abandonment (Article 39). Article 24 proclaims that no child below the age of 14 years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment. Article 45 provides that the state shall endeavor to provide within a period of ten years from the commencement of the constitution free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years (JJ Act, 2012).

All these constitutional provisions related to children’s survival, development and protection have been made a part of the National Policy. The National Policy for children, 1974 seeks to provide adequate services to children before and after birth and through the period of growth to ensure their full physical, mental and social development. Further, the National Policy on
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child labour was presented in the Parliament in 1987 which envisages a three-point policy whose ingredients are: a legal action plan, a focus on the welfare measures for working children and their families, and a project-based plan of action.

Under the legal action plan, emphasis would be placed on the strict and effective enforcement of the various Acts related to working children such as the child labour (Prohibition and regulation) Act, 1987; the Factories Act, 1948; The Mines Act, 1950; The Plantation Labour Act, 1951, etc., The policy also envisages the utilization of various programmes for the benefit of child labour and their families.

The existing welfare programmes in the areas of education, health, nutrition and employment for the poor are to be used to create socio-economic conditions in which compulsions of early employment could be diminished and children could be encouraged to attend schools. The project-based plan of action is aimed at taking up special measures in the areas of high concentration of child labour in the hazardous occupations. In these areas, special schools would be set up for child workers to provide them education and vocational training, supplement nutrition, health care, etc., If necessary, stipends would also be given to children withdrawn from the labour force to compensate them for the loss of their earning (Mission India, 2012).

The only principal agencies, which are responding to the problems of street children in India, are the Non-government organizations (NGO’s), which are involved in programmes and service delivery for street children in India with varying approaches and strategies. They are: Bangalore onlyavara sena coota; Jaya Rajendra Rag pickers project, Bangalore; Vatsalaya Project of the College of Social Work, Nirmala Nikethan, Bombay; Prema Seva Sadan Open House, Hyderabad; Missionaries of Charity, Calcutta; Ashalaya, Calcutta; Cochin Project, Cochin; Butterflies, New Delhi; Catch, Visakhapatnam; etc., The central and state governments have yet to incorporated street children among the various categories of children for whom the Social Welfare
Department implements the programmes. The street children are primarily a phenomenon of the metropolitan cities. Whatever the sources of their entry in cities, street children end up in urban areas. But, as of today, the Municipal Corporations do not have the information about the magnitude and dimensions of the problem and the pity (Rane, 1994).

Is that basic services such as health, nutrition, recreation, etc., are not sensitized with a view to adopt them for facilitating access to the street children. The publics at large are not aware of the problem. On the contrary they perceive the street children as pests, rogues, delinquents and parasites of our society. Such a perception on their part fails to recognize these children who have lost their valuable childhood and are contributing to the city dwellers by providing cheap labour. Of course, mass media is playing the role of sensitizing the public on issues and problems related to street children. It appears that whatever active action has been taken on the part of the NGO’s the Govt. and municipal corporation’s efforts give a dismal reading (Rao, 2009).

Academic researchers have produced a great deal of empirically sound scholarship on child labour abuse in India. Similarly, there are innumerable studies of school dropouts, who they are, why they leave, what they subsequently do. These research finding appear in scholarly journals but unfortunately those seeking to bring about required changes (ILO, 2011).

The problem of street children in urban India thus is very complex and acute, and therefore calls for immediate, suitable, and feasible policy action to bring these children back into the normal system. Very little work has been done exclusively on the problems and situation of the street children in our country covering all the above dealt aspects in its holistic perspective (Rizzine, Irene, 2009). The study it is hoped, would be of help to planners, administrators and policy makers in providing them with sufficient knowledge and information about the street children and in carving out suitable schemes...
and programmes not only for welfare and rehabilitation of these children but also for possible and feasible preventive strategies to contain the problem.

As mentioned above, because there is difficulty in defining street children, it follows that definitions may result in being either helpful or unhelpful (Aptekar, 2009). Aptekar (2009) points out that the term ‘street children’ tends to carry very strong emotional overtones (Aptekar, 2009) and because every aspect of their lives is exposed to the public gaze - their physical appearance, their way of life and their behaviour – conflicting emotions of pity, disgust, horror and disapproval among the public has resulted (De Moura, 2012). Williams (2011) has pointed out the irony of this as the term ‘street children’ was initially coined by international agencies in order to avoid any negative stereotypes of street children (Williams, 2011).

Aptekar (2009) has argued that ideological discourse on family values and public order is contradicted by the very existence of street children and the criminal activities they sometimes use for survival. This has also tended to threaten the public’s sense of security (Aptekar, 2009). In addition, the very term ‘street child’ is thought to be oxymoronic because a child should represent the family values contained within a private environment, yet the child exists on the street, a public environment without the safety required from the necessary community (Aptekar, Abebe 2009).

Aptekar present two different explanations that account for most of the hostility toward street children. They assert that, firstly, a penal-instructive hostility has resulted because the public’s perception of these children is that they are deviants, running away from parental authority, and ‘tsotsis’ and ganters who commit criminal acts. The media also tends to sensationalize negative behaviours of youths emphasizing stereotypes, which increases the public’s level of fear, further exacerbating the problem. Communities therefore look to the penal system to control these youth’s behaviours, and do not take into account the full picture of their circumstances (Aptekar, 2009). As these youths are generally viewed as deviant antisocial criminals, the ‘cleaning up’
of these children by the penal system becomes justified and therefore, the
general public is relieved of its’ responsibility towards them (De Moura, 2012).
Penal systems in different countries have different ways of dealing with street
children. There is abundant evidence that social cleansing occurs in many
countries involving arrests, imprisonment and torture of these children (Le
Roux & Smith, 2008). Reports indicate that public officials in some countries
(most notably Brazil and Colombia) carry out extermination assaults where
drive-by shooting are common (Aptekar & Stocklin, 2009). In South Africa, the
law does not provide real protection for street children either and many youths
are left at the hands of individuals within the penal system. Swart (2008)
points out that in South Africa a child as young as seven can be arrested and
held in custody and can be charged, tried, convicted and sentenced without
the defense of a lawyer or any intervention by a parent (Swart, 2008).

“To look into some aspects of the future, we do not need projections by
supercomputers. Much of the next millennium can be seen in how we care for
our children today. Tomorrow’s world may be influenced by science and
technology, but more than anything, it is already taking shape in the bodies

In spite of the achievements of the past 10 years in certain areas of
reform, the challenges relating to the promotion and protection of child rights
in the region remain considerable.

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

These challenges are interrelated and interdependent and are both
causes and consequences of problems faced by children living and working
on the streets. They are symptomatic of increasing social, economic and
cultural marginalization of children affected by extreme poverty. This
marginalization is compounded by the phenomena of rapid population growth and rapid and uncontrolled urbanization in many countries in the region. The swelling numbers of children living and working on the streets in South Asia are the result of multiple unmet needs and unfulfilled rights of children. The challenges needing to be addressed are great and must therefore be met with equally great concrete commitment by both governments and civil society (UNICEF, 2012).

Urbanization in South Asia, the home of nearly 350 million urban dwellers and six of the world’s largest cities, is a kaleidoscopic amalgam of affluence and poverty. Urban poverty is being fuelled by uncontrolled population growth and lack of pro-poor economic policies and investment, resulting in unemployment and shift of populations from rural areas.

The most rapid rates of urbanization in the region are to be found in Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan, while Sri Lanka, due to sound population policies pursued for over six decades, has been able to keep its urban growth rate within manageable limits. The proportion of slum dwellers in major South Asian cities ranges from 23% in Karachi to 62% in Kolkata. A third or more of the world’s urban poor live in this region. Of them, three-quarters are children, women and young people. In many parts of the region, up to half of the urban population lives in unauthorized makeshift habitats. Most of them live in slums and shanties. The un-stemmed growth of urban poverty, while stimulating the demand for resources, is also causing rising unemployment and is putting tremendous pressure on urban infrastructure and physical environment, causing city services to crumble. With over 30 per cent of South Asia’s population currently living in urban areas, the achievement of global goals set by various World Summits of the 1990s will fall short of the planned targets unless the conditions of the urban poor are improved rapidly (CINI-ASHA, 2012).
1.8. The Urban Child of South Asia

Over 120 million children live in the cities and towns of South Asia. Denied their rights enshrined in the CRC and deprived of basic services, many of them suffer extremely exploitative and violent conditions. Growing up in crowded slums and shanties, competing with adults for their share of crumbling urban services and leaving school early in order to help their families and themselves to fight the pressures of extreme poverty, these children have become victims of the urban cash economy and its individualism. Many of these children spend a significant part of their time away from home and school and many are engaged on the streets and marketplaces without support or protection (Francise Remington, 2011).

1.8.1. Urbanization is a Child Rights issue

The present condition of the urban child, particularly the street child, is a cumulative consequence of: rural landlessness and unemployment; rural out-migration; municipal incapability; absence of good governance; mismanagement of municipal and national resources; environmental degradation; eroding spirituality, values and support structures; increasing urban violence and criminality. More children were born in urban areas during the period 1960-1980 than in any preceding decade. Increasing proportions of children are born and growing up in urban, low income environments, joining the poverty cycle due to their limited options for the future, and thus threatening their own development as well as that of their communities and countries as a whole. Urbanization is therefore a child rights issue (UNICEF, 2012).