4.0 Introduction

Today, we live in the world where there is an unprecedented increase of human rights enunciations, and a growing disregard for these very rights. The children’s group is one of those vulnerable groups whose rights have been disregarded due to many reasons. The violation of human rights of children has always been an area of concern. It is at the most destructive end, where children are used as labourers or workers or slaves in particularly hazardous conditions to repay the debts incurred by their parents or grandparents. Many times the industrialists engage child labourers to gain more profit without giving them adequate remuneration.

4.1 India’s Commitment for 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, and involved all relevant government ministries/departments, international agencies, NGOs, and it sought public inputs for frank and transparent reporting.\(^1\)

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 Union Ministry of Human Resource Development has formulated a National Plan

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\(^1\) United Nation convention right child (UNCRC), (2002)
of Action for Children. Most of the recommendations of the World Summit Action Plan are reflected in India's National Plan of Action.²

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. 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.³

It is estimated that there are 3,14,700 street children in Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Kanpur, Bangalore and Hyderabad combined, and about 1,00,000 in Delhi. Factors which have given rise to the increase in the 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.⁴

Street Children have received much attention, both in the national and international media in recent years. The awareness and sensitization efforts have led to several initiatives involving numerous groups working with street children,

⁴ Rane Asha J (1994), Working with Street Children, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai.
launching of specific schemes and programs at the local, state and national level, and initiation of numerous studies on street children.  

Non-Governmental Organizations 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 facilitates grant-in-aid to NGOs working on issues of street children.  

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, 2007).  

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 refers to external forces that reinforce conforming behavior, and operate through conventional social institutions such as family, school, community etc., through the distribution of rewards and negative sanctions. 

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6 NISD (2004), Training manual for Street Educators, UNICEF.  
7 UNICEF (2007), Child Protection Policy work report  
4.2 Service Provisions 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.\(^9\)

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, 2003). In a sense, street and working children are 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.\(^10\)

4.2.1 Drop-in-Centres

Shelters create alternative environment 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, knowing that they will be both listened to and heard. They are not places where they will be talked at or preached to even though there should be places where there may be relationships.

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\(^9\) Vilas Ujgare (1999), the problem of juvenile delinquency with reference to its prevention, control, and rehabilitation in the state of Maharashtra.

Shelters should not resemble remand homes or orphanages, where children say they feel like prisoners.  

4.2.2 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, 2006, Pattabhirama Reddy, 1999). It is common to think that all institutionalized services for children provide uniform facilities and services. However, evidences show that they are not uniform.  

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

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IX. Health education
X. Sheltered work opportunities
XI. Education
XII. Skills training
XIII. Counselling

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.\(^\text{13}\)

4.2.3 Basic Education

Basic education encompasses both tools of literacy and problem solving besides content, which includes 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 this material. 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 unlike state schooling which entails hidden costs of uniforms, books and registration. They also often include other services, such as giving a meal or at least snacks. If non-formal education takes place

\(^{13}\) Salve and Sahastrabudhe (1992), Socio-Psychological Profile of Juveniles, Institutional based study, B J Medical College, Department of Preventive and Social Medicine, Maharashtra, p 85.
outside normal school hours, it may be able to make use of the existing school building. Teachers may be volunteers, often from the local community.\textsuperscript{14}

\section*{4.2.4 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\textsuperscript{15}.

\section*{4.2.5 Recreation}

Recreation, although is often limited to football, cricket, and indoor games, it also accommodates children with special needs, such as physical or mental disabilities. Pleasure trips, visits and excursions all provide opportunities for children to learn about their society. It gives them some respite from daily problems or drudgery, and gives them a chance to get to know the project workers better.\textsuperscript{16}

Recreation should be integrated into project planning and children’s development, rather than just a bit of fun. Its effects should be monitored

\textsuperscript{14} Gazette of India (2003), Dept. of HRD, National Charter for Children.
\textsuperscript{15} NISD (2004), Training manual for Street Educators, UNICEF.
\textsuperscript{16} Divya Disha (2008), Organization profile and their activities, Tatachari Compound, Secunderabad, A P, www.divyadisha.org
alongside 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.\textsuperscript{17}

I. Learning to work as a group  
II. Learning skills of listening and responding  
III. Exercising restraint  
IV. Speaking distinctly  
V. Waiting for one’s  
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.

4.2.6 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, 2004). Specific problems with this particular scheme illustrate the limitations of most instant-solution employment schemes which:

1. Require considerable start up finance and organization  
2. Require prior market research to see if goods/services will sell  
3. Target children who do not fit into other programmes easily  
4. Can easily slide into being a youth employment scheme that does not cater for street children.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid
5. May have to battle against public opinion that stigmatizes street children and thus be unable to sell goods/services.

4.2.7 Family Reunification (Repatriation)

Street children looking for alternatives to closed institutions such as orphanages, naturally think about trying to reunite with their own families. This would always be the preferred choice. However, life has a way of being very unequal indeed and a 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 on the opportunities available locally. So, this entails work with the whole community, giving particular emphasis to its children.

4.2.8 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 such as experienced by street children. The best kind of advocacy and campaigning involves children in defining their own problems and being helped to put forth their own case. It aims to inform and educate public and policy-makers and to bring about changes that will improve children’s lives.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{18} Hyderabad Council of Human Welfare (HCHW) -A P (2007), MARG, A path for children in difficult circumstances, Hyderabad.
4.2.9 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.\(^\text{19}\)

4.2.10 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 of contacting and befriending, often including health services and counselling than educating.\(^\text{20}\)

4.2.11 Child Care Institutions

The Childcare institutions should be built on the principles of child rights. The institutions should develop standards and norms that provide safe environment for children.\(^\text{21}\) 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

\(^\text{19}\) Ibid


\(^\text{21}\) J J Act (2006), New Amendment Rules for Fit Institutions, written submission to Western Cape Provincial Parliament, Department of Social Development on the budget process from the homestead (projects for street children) NPO 003-217bdaza@wcpp.gov.za
the institution. The care institutions should stand on the four principles: 1. Right against discrimination 2. Right against caste, creed, race and religion, 3. Right to life, survival, and development, 4. Right to participation and act in the best interest of the child.\textsuperscript{22}

Protecting the children in the care institutions entirely depends on the approach of the institution and the standards and 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 effect the protection of the children, the child abuse can be stopped. Protection strategy for children from abuse should be evolved with right perspective (DIET, 1999). 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 within 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.\textsuperscript{23}

\textbf{4.2.12 National Institution for Child Protection (NICP)}

National Institution 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

\textsuperscript{22}Ibid

\textsuperscript{23}CINI - ASHA (1999), Child Protection Policy, Pdf. folder, Kolkata, West Bengal.
capacity building programmes for different level of functionaries working under Juvenile Justice System in the country\textsuperscript{24}.

### 4.2.13 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 dialling 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 93 cities.\textsuperscript{25}

### 4.2.14 National Charter for Children

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, 2002)

- The State can make special provisions for children (Art 15 (3)).
- The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of 6 to 14 years (Art 21 A)


\textsuperscript{25} Child line India Foundation (2008), Listening to children, an over view to Child line traces the evolution of India’s first helpline for children. It examines the model created for Child line in a developing nation like India, and illustrates the need for children’s voices to be heard and be acted upon, Private circulation, Mumbai.
No child below the age of 14 years shall be employed to work in a factory, mine or any other hazardous employment (Art 24)

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)

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)

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 years (Art 51 A)

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.

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.

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.

In accordance with our pledge in National Agenda of Governance, the following National Charter for Children, 2003 is announced. 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 between 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 New York, 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.26

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 1986). 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, 2007).

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 U N 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, 1988). 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

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employment. Article 45 provides that the state shall endeavour 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, 2000).

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 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.\textsuperscript{28}

The only principal agencies, which are responding to the problems of street children in India, are the Non-government organizations (NGOs), 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 incorporate 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.\textsuperscript{29}

Is that basic service such as health, nutrition, recreation, etc., are not sensitized with a view to adopting them for facilitating access to the street children. The public 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

\textsuperscript{28} Mission India (1999), A Report of Children at High Risk, Bangalore, filed under, India Street kid News.

\textsuperscript{29} Rane Asha J (1994), Street children, a challenge to the social work profession, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai.
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 Government and municipal corporation’s efforts give a dismal reading.  

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, 2004). Do get acted upon by the organisations concerned, including the governmental institutions.

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, 1992). 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.

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As mentioned above, because there is difficulty in defining street children, it follows that definitions may result in being either helpful or unhelpful (Aptekar, 1994). Aptekar (1988) points out that the term ‘street children’ tends to carry very strong emotional overtones (Aptekar, 1988) 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. Williams (1993) 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.

Aptekar 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. 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 presents two different explanations that account for most of the hostility towards 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

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commit criminal acts. The media also tends to sensationalise 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, 1988). 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, 2002). 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, 1998). 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, 1997). In South Africa, the law does not provide real protection for street children and many youths are left at the hands of individuals within the penal system. Swart (1988) 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.  

“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,

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but more than anything, it is already taking shape in the bodies and minds of our children.” – Kofi Annan\textsuperscript{38}.

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, and 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 need to be addressed are great and must therefore be met with equally great concrete commitment by both governments and civil society.\textsuperscript{39}

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.

\textsuperscript{38} UNICEF (2004), Prevalence, Abuse and Exploitation of Street Children (PDF report).

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid
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.\footnote{CINI-ASHA, (2007)}