8.0 Introduction

In the present day context across the globe, either at a lesser or at a greater degree, visibly or invisibly, admittedly or otherwise, street children exist. The phenomenon of street children is an offshoot of a complex interplay of various socio-economic and cultural factors such as religious, cultural, linguistic and geographical diversity. The large-scale presence of street children is a symptom of social disease. It has acquired a gigantic dimension in the wake of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation especially in the developing countries such as India. It is attributed to the exploitative socio-economic structure, lopsided development, inequitous resource ownership, large scale unemployment, rapid urbanisation, rural to urban migration, rapid population growth, extreme poverty, increasing disparities in wealth and income, cutbacks in government social and education budgets, high level child abuse by parents and society, and the break down of traditional family and community structures, etc. Consequently children are forced to live on the street and earn livelihood for themselves and also in support of their families, losing valuable time in life and foregoing all the opportunities for development in life. The risks of children living street life are great and their vulnerability to exploitation is enormous. The seventh largest country in the world, the future of India depends upon the quality of present day children. Hence, there is every need to attend to this problem.

8.1. Estimation of Street Children

Though the tendency of children using public places to survive existed for a long time, this phenomenon has become much more acute in recent years. It has become a common sight in many cities. This phenomenon of street children is not only reported from developing countries but it is also a worldwide experience. The nature of the problem of street children is on constant change both in size and
character. The efforts to estimate the magnitude of the street children’s problem are huge as this population is not adequately covered by national census.

Depending on the definition used, estimates of the number of street children across the world range from 10 to 100 million, and (the majority of them are located in major urban areas of developing countries.) with up to 40 million in Latin America, 20 to 25 million in Asia and over 10 million in Africa. In all the countries boys predominate (WHO Report, 1992) (71-97%) the street children population. In Brazil, for example, only about 10 - 15 % of street children are girls, and the figure is even lower in India (UNICEF Report). Street girls lead a more difficult life and are often exposed to sexual abuse.

8.2. Street Children in Indian Context

The problem of street children is widespread in India too. India has over 24 large cities and some 200 small cities, which are growing rapidly while drawing migrants from rural areas. Population explosion, besides increase in poverty, and limited educational facilities, jobs and resources, force the children to take up living on the streets. It has been estimated that there are nearly 1,00,000 street children in Delhi, more than 50,000 in Bombay and 40,000 in Hyderabad and 45,000 in Bangalore. In the other states and cities the problem is not acute though it is catching up quite fast.

The operation Research Group in, 1983 estimated that there are 44 million working children in India, of which, 11 million are street children (UNICEF, 1988) The report on the situation analysis of 11,864 street children in six major cities in India (Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Kanpur, Bangalore and Hyderabad), gives a comprehensive idea about the complexity of the problem of street children.
8.3. State Intervention

Even though the Ministry of Social Welfare of the Centre and the State have not recognized street children as a separate group, some of the Governmental programmes have been introduced under provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act, 1986. The centrally sponsored scheme of providing financial assistance for voluntary organisations running homes for children in needs of care and protection are catering to the needs of street children.

Recently formulated scheme of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Government of India, envisages providing financial assistance to NGOs in major cities for providing services to Street Children. The Government of India has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and prepared a National Plan of Action for children up to the year 2000 under the title ‘A Commitment to the Child.’

The government schemes at present covered 23 cities in India and number of children who have benefited from the welfare schemes is about 12,000 in 1993-94, 24,000 in 1994-95 and 26,000, 1995-96 according to the Welfare Ministry, efforts are being made to cover street children. Surveys of street children (sponsored by the Ministry of Welfare, Government of India UNICEF, 1992 - 93) in 8 major cities have indicated that a large number of street children suffer from destitution, neglect, abuse and exploitation due to circumstances which are beyond their control. The surveys have also shown that, due to a variety of reasons, basic urban services do not reach them in an effective and integrated manner (UNICEF 2000). The focus of the schemes is on the reduction of exploitation and abuse and the withdrawal of children engaged in hazardous work. Priority is given to girls, children without family ties and those who are victims of abuse and exploitation.
8.4. Role of NGOs

The NGOs have made a significant contribution to the handling of the situation of street children, and have provided vulnerable models. However, it is very important for the NGOs to form a network amongst them and coordinate with the Government, Municipal Corporations, and the Police. NGOs Forum has to come together with the Civic bodies, Government Departments and Public bodies to formulate City level action committees and State level task forces. A National NGO Forum for Street Children and working children was formed in 1988, with the objectives of promoting more forums at regional and city levels and to share, promote and strengthen the activities of the constituent members, and promote collective action on certain issues. CHILDLINE, an organization for Street Children, gives free phone service for those who are in need and distress under the age group of up to 18 years both boys and girls.

8.5 Organization of the study

The study is organized into eight chapters:

Chapter 1: It deals with introduction, characteristics, image of street Children, statement of the problem, causes of street children and need for the present study, objectives; sources of data, research methodology.

Chapter 2: It deals with reviews of literature on street children.

Chapter 3: It analyzes the status of street children in India, and including global scenario, covering 14 countries/ regions. The chapter also refers to the position in Andhra Pradesh, and in the three cities covered for field study.
Chapter 4: It deals the child rights and service provision for street children in India.


Chapter 6: It deals with analysis of the family background of street children in the study region.

Chapter 7: It deals with analysis of the sample survey data on living conditions of street children in the study area region, namely, three cities in Coastal Andhra region of Andhra Pradesh.

Chapter 8: It covers Summary of Conclusions and Suggestions.

However, no such systematic study of street children was so far undertaken in Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, and Guntur cities. In order to fill this gap, the present study has been contemplated; the study aims at a situational analysis of the phenomenon of street children in Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, and Guntur cities, covering a sample of 450 street children, at 150 children from each city.

8.6 Objectives

The Broad Objectives of the Study

This is an exploratory study of street children in three municipal corporations of coastal Andhra of Andhra Pradesh region in A.P. The cities selected for the study are the municipal corporation areas of Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, and Guntur.
1. To ascertain the socio-economic characteristics of street children in three municipal corporation limits of Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, and Guntur in Andhra Pradesh.

2. To examine the background of their families and parents and the reasons for children running away from home.

3. To examine the living conditions of street children, and the activities in which they are involved.

4. To examine the health conditions of street children in study area.

5. To suggest policy measures and modifications needed for the effective implementation of the existing services and programmes for the upliftment of street children.

8.7. Research Design and Methodology

Operational Definition

For purposes of the research study, a street child is defined as one who is 18 years of age, and who is on the streets for at least a period of three months with minimal or no contact with family or with his any significant other member in the family. The minimal contact with the family is defined as not more than one visit in three months prior to the time of interview, paid mutually by the child or a member of the family including the parent or significant member of child. A significant other is one who had been taking care of the needs and supervision the child till the child’s last contact with the family.
8.7.1. Source of data

A) Primary data

Research studies can be conducted by using primary or secondary data or both. In the present study both primary and secondary data was used. The primary data was collected from a sample survey conducted in the Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, and Guntur Municipal Corporations

B) Secondary Data

In consultation with resource faculty secondary data was collected by contacting resource faculty and libraries of few universities in A.P. especially from Andhra University (Vizag), Osmania University (Hyderabad), Acharya Nagarjuna University (Guntur). Recent publications unpublished doctoral thesis articles from journals, edited publications and seminar topic were carefully chosen for correcting useful information. A few of them are covered in review of literature and many of them were utilized for formulating the design and methodology of the study and also for findings, conclusion and recommendations.

8.7.2 Selection of the Sample

Selection of the sample is done through a purposive sample at a few places of concentration of the street children in the three cities selected for the study. For the purpose of the research study, a sample of 150 street children fulfilling the operational definition mentioned above has been selected from each city. The places of concentration selected are seven in each city. These include railway station, bus stand, busy centres, market centres, temples, hotels and parks.

Out of total sample of 450 street children, 57 are girl children, the street children are scattered over different places taking a variety of work activities for their livelihood. The rarely stay for a longer periods of times at a fixed place as such no official estimates are available about the exact number and status of street
children in the selected cities. Major concentrations in the respective cities were identified and structured questionnaire was administered on the children.

It is noticeable that street children are involved in various work activities such as rag pickers, beggars, vendors, auto mechanics etc. As many of street children were less expressive in responding to an interview situation, the researcher developed rapport with the children by observing and interacting with them on a few occasions. He elicited the required information through the field work which was carried out during the months January to April 2010, and their perceptions of the children will be when they have been regularly in touch have also been gathered, these discussions are supplemented through the observation and discrimination with adult street worker, train ticket examiner, the personnel of railway force, police, scrap dealers, canteen owners and with the such other people who generally come in contact with street children.

The interview schedule used for the study covered aspects related to identification data of the street children which includes the street children’s family background, parental treatment, reason for leaving home, life on street, work and earning, peer group, network, mobility, previous work, past institutions experience and awareness about institutional for street children. An exploration into the future aspirations and plans of the sample street children was also made.

8.7.3 Analysis Pattern and Statistical Tools Used

Basic data of street children gathered through the questionnaire administered on 450 children has been analyzed using SPSS 12.0 Software. As apart of analysis of data grouped through frequency and distribution table, simple statistical tools such as average percentage, valid percentage and cumulative...
percentage, graphs, cross tables, table diagram has been used where ever necessary for various features.

Advanced statistical tools such as Chi-Square Test have been used since the study is exploratory in nature. Analysis based on the responses from street children is given in chapter six and seven.

8.8 Gist of the Findings on the Family Background of Street Children

The economic position of the families of most of the respondents is poor. Out of 450 respondents, the economic position of the families of 45 per cent respondents is very poor, 38 per cent is poor and 17 per cent can be stated to be sound. Majority of the respondents, i.e. 58 per cent belong to nuclear families, and another 42 per cent to joint families. Average number of male members in the family of the respondents is 2.7. The average number of female members in the family of the respondents is 1.8. Average of total members in the family of the respondents is 4.3.

The average of total assets of respondent’s household is Rs. 2,045,80 with a minimum of Rs. 6,000 and a maximum of Rs.10,00,000. The average number of earning members in the family is 1.8. The average annual income earned by the family is Rs. 52,239 with a minimum of Rs.10,000 and a maximum of Rs. 3,00,000. The average expenditure of the respondents’ household is Rs. 46083 with a minimum of Rs. 10000 and a maximum of Rs.180000. The average savings of the respondents’ household is Rs. 23604 with minimum of Rs.5000 and a maximum of Rs. 50000. The average debt of the respondent’s household is Rs. 23109, with minimum of Rs.2500 and a maximum of Rs.75000, The average annual income earned by the father is Rs 30781. The average annual income earned by the mother is Rs. 9416 which is very low.
Out of 411 respondents, a majority i.e. 48 per cent of the street children’s father’s occupation is coolie followed by 13 per cent government employees, and the majority, i.e. 54 per cent mother’s occupation is coolie. In this study, it is found that majority of parent’s occupation is coolie.

66 percent of the respondent’s fathers are illiterate, and 72 per cent of the respondent’s mothers are illiterate. Literacy level of parents of the street children shows that majority of the fathers of these respondents are illiterate, and literacy levels of mothers are far below that of fathers.

The marital status of the respondent’s fathers shows that majority of them, i.e. 67 per cent are currently married, 16 per cent divorced, 14 per cent widowed, and 3 per cent are separated. The marital status of the mothers shows that majority of 70 per cent are currently married, 17 per cent divorced, 9 per cent widowed, and 4 per cent are separated. 9 per cent fathers and 16 per cent mothers of these children are not alive.

Out of 41 respondents, the fathers of a majority of respondents i.e. 44 per cent died with natural causes, another 37 per cent died of accidental causes, and 19 per cent committed suicide. Out of 71 respondent’s mothers shows that a majority, i.e. 56 per cent died on natural causes, another 30 per cent died on accidental causes, 11 per cent committed with suicide. The cause of death of 3 per cent mothers of respondents is not known.

Fathers of majority of the respondents i.e. 63 per cent take alcohol and mothers of 13 per cent respondents take alcohol. Fathers of 60.4 per cent and mothers of 2.9 per cent are smokers. 42.7 per cent of fathers and 6.7 per cent of mothers are in the habit of chewing of tobacco products. Only a very small per cent 1.1 of fathers and 0.3 of mothers are in the habit of using white correcting
fluid. For fathers and mothers, taking alcohol is the main habit fathers are also used smoking.

8.9 Gist of the Findings on Living pattern of street children

Among 450 respondents’ street children from three cities of coastal Andhra region of Andhra Pradesh, males constituted 87 per cent and females 13 percent. Girl children are thus a small percentage. Age and sex structure is very important for any socio-demographic analysis. The average age of the street children is 13.6 years, with a minimum of 6 years and a maximum of 17 years. There exists a positive relationship between the age of the respondent and educational qualification. The children of higher age are earning more income as compared to children of lower age. There exists a positive relationship between the age and habit of taking alcohol by the respondent.

The birth place analysis of these street children reveals that most of them are short distance migrants only. The study indicates that though these children are found at present in the urban area, for a majority of them the background is only rural. The average period of stay of these street children in the present place is 2.6 years with a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 15 years. It indicates that these children are spending a deprived life for pretty a long time.

In India, Hindus are the major group in the society, and hence most of the street children in the present study are found among Hindus. It is observed that the habit of taking alcohol is more among street children who hail from Hindu religion as compared to other religious groups. It is observed that the habit of smoking is more among children of Hindu religion as compared to other religious groups.
It is found that poverty is very high among STs and SCs, and hence they are found in large numbers among street children. Even though there are street children belonging to all communities, their presence is more in STs.

Out of 450 respondents, 60 per cent are literates and 40 per cent are illiterate. Out of 274 respondents of literates, a majority, i.e. 71 per cent studied primary (1st Class to 5th Class) classes and another 26 per cent studied between 6th and 7th class, 2 per cent studied middle (8th and 9th) classes, and 1 per cent studied at high school level. It clearly shows that dropout rate among street children after the 5th class level is very high. As compared to the general public, the educational level is very low among street children. This indicates the need for motivating these children to go to school to enable them to aim at better future for themselves and their families.

The reasons for drop-out from the school show that out of 450 respondents 37 per cent were unable able to adjust to the school atmosphere, 32 per cent do not have awareness of education, 13 per cent are reeling under poverty, another 12 per cent feel high stress of the studies, and the remaining 3 per cent are afraid of punishment by the teacher in the school.

When an attempt is made to know the reasons for children leaving their house, even though parents are alive, out of 450 respondents the main reason cited are for 34 per cent of the respondents disputes in the house, for 20 per cent improper care and lack of protection from their parents, for 17 per cent parental poverty, and for 14 per cent pressure from their parents to continue education. Surprisingly, 9 per cent felt that harassment from their parents is the main reason for their leaving home.
The occupational pattern of the respondents reveals that 20 per cent are engaged in begging, followed by 16 per cent begging-cum-collecting garbage, 16 per cent begging and shoe polishing in train bogies. Another 11 per cent are working in auto industry, 10 per cent are working in trade, 10 per cent are working in manufacturing sector, 7 per cent are working in service sector, 6 per cent are begging and cleaning vessels in hotels, 3 per cent are engaged in rag picking, and 1 per cent is prostitution. On the whole, a majority, i.e. 62 per cent are in the begging profession. Of course, on the whole, the respondents do not have a permanent occupation.

All these respondents are in the unorganized sector, which is mainly characterized by insecurity of employment. The average income per month earned by each respondent is Rs. 1233, with a minimum of Rs. 200 and a maximum of Rs.2,500, which is very low. The average annual income earned by each respondent is Rs 10,892 with a minimum of Rs.1,000 and a maximum of Rs.25,000. which is far below the income earned by an average Indian. The saving potential is very low among these respondents.

The source of arrangement of food by the respondents shows that 59 per cent depend on begging, 33 per cent prepare food for themselves, 6 per cent eat by spending out of their earnings, and the remaining 2 per cent eat surplus food from the functions. This shows the poor economic situation of the respondents, and hence they are living in the streets.

Out of 450 respondents a majority of them, i.e., 88 per cent are not aware of child rights where as the remaining 12 per cent are aware of child rights. Majority of the respondents, i.e., 92 per cent are not willing to rejoin the school where as 8 per cent are willing to continue their education. The average weight of the street children is 34 kg.
The frequency of consumption of food by the respondents shows that out of 450 respondents, 44 per cent consume food once in a day, another 33 per cent twice in a day, 14 per cent once in two days, 5 per cent three times a day, and the remaining 4 per cent consume food when they are hungry.

Surprisingly, 3 per cent of these respondents never wash their clothes. Majority of the respondents, i.e., 50 per cent wear normal clothes, another 43 per cent second hand clothes, and 7 per cent wear torn clothes. Out of 450 respondents, a majority of the respondents, i.e., 72 per cent purchase clothes, another 22 per cent beg, and 6 per cent steal the clothes. Fortunately, 89 per cent of the respondents do not have any impairment.

Majority of the respondents, i.e., 65 per cent have the habit of taking alcohol and the remaining 35 per cent do not have the habit of taking alcohol. A majority, i.e. 64, per cent have the habit of smoking, and the remaining 36 per cent do not have the habit of smoking. With regard to the habit of using white fluid, out of 443 respondents, a majority, i.e. 51 per cent inhale white fluids while 49 per cent do not touch it. Out of 226 respondents who use white fluid, a majority, i.e., 54 per cent use white fluid distillers daily, and 27 per cent use weekly, 19.5 per cent use occasionally. Majority of the respondents, i.e. 93 per cent are not habituated to cough syrups.

The reasons for drinking and using correcting white fluid distillers by the respondents shows that out of 226 respondents, 47 per cent take it for sedation, 30 per cent to forget problems, and 17 per cent as a substitute to drinking, and the remaining 6 per cent to avoid hunger.

An attempt is made to know the respondents’ opinion about their health status at the time of interview. Out of 443 respondents, a majority of the
respondents’ i.e. for 89 per cent health is normal and the remaining 11 per cent health is not good.

Out of 436 respondents, a majority, i.e., 55 per cent of the respondents experienced sickness at least once in a year and another 45 per cent had no such ailment. A majority, i.e. 81 per cent were treated by doctor, the remaining 19 per cent were treated by a nurse and a compounder and majority, i.e., 77 per cent had taken treatment from Government hospitals.

An attempt is made to know whether the respondents are suffering with anaemia. Out of 450 respondents, 69 per cent of respondents are suffering from anaemia, and the remaining 31 per cent have ‘no’ such problem. 26 per cent are suffering with skin allergies. 73 per cent have no wounds while, 27 per cent have wounds. A majority of respondents, i.e. 65 per cent are malnourished and the remaining 35 per cent are on the safe side.

An attempt is made to know whether the respondents are suffering from any disease at the time of survey. Out of 438 respondents, a majority i.e. 73 per cent were fortunate not to have such bad experience, 24 per cent were suffering from various diseases while 3 per cent could not answer this question. Majority of respondents i.e. 79 per cent revealed that they are not suffering from any skin disease.

An attempt is made to know where the respondents sleep. Out of 450 respondents, majority, i.e. 33 per cent sleep in railway stations, 28 per cent in bus stations, and 9 per cent on foot paths, 7 per cent under the shadow of trees, 7 per cent in inns, 5 per cent in front of closed shops, 3 per cent in temples, and 1 per cent sleep in open places.
An attempt is also made to know the place of begging by the respondents. Out of 450 respondents, majority of the respondents, i.e. 37 per cent beg at bus stations while 36 beg in railway stations.

With regard to the items begged by the respondents, out of 276 respondents, 69 per cent beg food and money, another 29 per cent beg money, and 2 per cent beg food. 72 are self motivated to beg, 25 per cent feel shy while begging.

The maximum money collection per person at a time shows that out of 275 respondents, a majority i.e. 58 per cent get five rupees from each person, 30 per cent two rupees, and another 6 per cent one rupee, and the remaining 5 per cent get 10 rupees from each person.

An attempt is made to know whether anybody tried to educate these children saying that begging is not good for their livelihood. Out of 269 respondents, a majority i.e. 70 per cent respondents were approached and motivated, and the remaining 30 per cent were not educated by anybody in this regard. The average begging period of the respondents is 2.5 years. The average number of persons dependent on the respondent’s income is 2.

An attempt is made to know whether any person (dependent) beats the respondents when sufficient income is not earned by them in a day. Out of 216 respondents, majority of them i.e. 82 percent responded negatively and the remaining 18 per cent respondents responded positively.

A majority, i.e., 55 per cent revealed that they visit temples occasionally, another 39 per cent revealed that they visit temples once in a week, and the remaining 6 per cent revealed that they visit temple daily.
An attempt is made to know whether the respondents are harassed by the patrolling Police. Out of 446 respondents, a majority, i.e., 61 per cent were harassed by the police, and 39 per cent were not harassed by the police. An attempt is made to know whether the respondents were involved in any criminal cases by the police. Out of the 450 respondents, a majority of respondents i.e. 92 per cent were not involve or in any police case and only 8 per cent were involved in criminal cases. While, 79 per cent were involved in theft cases and 21 per cent were involved in pick pocketing case.

An attempt is made to know whether the respondents were motivated by any anti-social elements to join activities like Maoist militant movement, pick-pocketing, and chain snatching. Out of 441 respondents, a majority of the respondents, i.e. 81 per cent had no such experience while 19 per cent were motivated to do so.

An attempt is made to know whether the respondents intend to marry a person of the same occupation background, namely person in the street. Out of 208 respondents, a majority, i.e. 75 per cent do not have any objection to marry a person living in the streets as they are satisfied with them, and, 25 per cent hesitate to arrive at a decision.

An attempt is made to know whether the respondents have any hatred towards God for giving a sort of cursed life. Out of 443 respondents, a majority of respondents i.e. 72 per cent do not have any hatred towards God, 21 per cent do hate God while 7 per cent remain undecided.

An attempt is made to know what the respondents expect from the society to better their life. Out of 339 respondents, 59 per cent wanted financial help, 23 per cent wanted avoiding ill-treatment and another 14 per cent wanted not to be
made untouchable, 3 per cent wanted encouragement to study, and the remaining 2 per cent wanted provision of shelter. Majority of the respondents, 78 per cent, watch cinemas for recreation,

Out of 77 respondents who answered this question, a majority of 36 per cent want to be mechanics, 34 per cent are interested in agriculture, 20 per cent are interested to become a doctor, 5 per cent want to be teachers, and the remaining 5 per cent want to be in business.

One of the important problems associated with street children is physical abuse. Out of 450 respondents, 33 per cent had the experience of physical abuse. Out of them 40 per cent are beaten up (slapped), 31 per cent are kicked, and 21 per cent are punched. However, 8 per cent are victims of hair pulling. There is every need to put a full stop to these activities as they are barbarous in nature. On an average one-third of respondents faced physical abuse.

Out of 141 respondents who experienced emotional abuse, a majority, i.e. 78 per cent experienced both shouting and cursing, 16 per cent experienced shouting and the rest of 6 percent experienced cursing. The emotional abuse affects the individual psychologically, and leads to mental stress, and needs immediate attention.

A majority, i.e., 69 per cent reported touch of their private body parts. Another 21 per cent of the respondents were forced to touch the private parts of others. However, 7 per cent experienced pornography, and 3 reported stating that they were asked to participate in sexual inter-course.
8.10 Major Findings

1. Street children do not enjoy any kind of respect or recognition in the society as the street life is considered an inferior way of living.

2. Street children do not have proper permanent shelter and adequate accommodation.

3. Dropout rate from schools after the completion of primary education is high among street children.

4. The services of street children are exploited by many organizations which employ them. These organizations resort to economic exploitation by under paying the street children.

5. Street children have little access to institutional provisions such as health care, education, credit, and civic amenities.

6. Poverty and family disruption are the two main reasons which force the children to take up street life.

7. Street children are accustomed to inhaling white fluid distiller which seriously hampers their health over a period of time.

8. Majority of the street children are in between 11-15 years of age.

9. Begging is the main occupation of the majority of street children as it is a free job in the sense that the child is not answerable to any controlling authority. And moreover begging is a readily available job even for an un-skilled person.

10. Illiteracy is high among the parents of street children.

11. The main occupation of the fathers of the majority of the respondents is
12. Majority of the street children reel under starvation as their financial resources hardly allow them to afford food once in a day.

13. Majority of the street children are STs.

14. Majority of street children aspire for financial assistance to take to self employment.

15. Majority of Street children are victims of police harassment.

16. Majority of Street children are malnourished and anaemic.

17. Due to illiteracy, ignorance and mobile nature of work, street children fail to form any kind of unions or associations for themselves which may keep them united, and which may be used as a platform to voice their problems.

18. No social security is guaranteed for street children.

8.11 Challenges

- The problem of street children is on the rise, and it is going to be worse in future. Every year, millions of children are pulled into life on the street by economic needs.
- The majority of street children are either homeless or delinquent, and highly vulnerable to exploitation.
- They have very few opportunities to form emotional connections, and develop social abilities, education, job skills, and lead a productive and purposeful life. This is the most pressing challenge.
• They live in corrupt gangs for security and survival, and find it difficult to come out easily.
• They are addicts of bad habits. Integrating them into the society is a herculean task.
• They never follow rules and regulations. The government schemes are not tailored to their needs, and the efforts of the government have not yielded the desired results so far.
• Transforming the lives of these street children across the globe is an urgent task.

8.12 Suggestions on Improving the Life of Street Children

1. There are many NGOs to address street children’s problems but most of them are increasingly isolated. Government and NGOs should work together more effectively to give street children the services and attention needed to reconnect them with their families, and their communities, and develop the right attitude and skills among them by creation a conductive environment through NGOs.

2. Advanced counselling centres should be established in villages and towns, which should guide and teach the street children the valuable human life.

3. Family based integrated educational psycho-therapeutic services should be provided to improve the life of street children.

4. Protection and care are necessary. Governments are required to do everything possible to protect street children from abuse and negligence.
5. Legal provisions against child abuse should be communicated to the employers where children are working.

6. Parents should be provided with the support system.

7. Child prostitution is a widespread problem that is not adequately addressed in our society. It should be addressed immediately.

8. Gaining access to key rights that facilitate active learning in formal education, improving family relationships, fostering employment in the formal sector, and enabling them to participate in the development activities as responsible adults.

9. There are so many rights to which street children can have access. These include protection from abuse, provision of shelter, basic economic conditions and supportive family environment, participation in school, family and community. Awareness programmes must be conducted in different centres for street children, which may guide their life in the right direction.

10. There is need for intervention from government and NGOs to tackle the problems such as sexual abuse, physical illness or dangerous work.

11. Street children need formal education, improved family relationships, and employment in the formal sector.

12. Street children should have access to basic welfare concerns, and should be enabled to develop some emotional and cognitive abilities.
13. As some street children have expressed their desire to start their own trade or business, giving financial assistance to such children can be an important strategy to rehabilitate them. A few organizations have already experimented with this strategy for the rehabilitation of the street children. The children were involved in scrap collection, selling of newspapers, butter milk, eatables etc, on the railway platform. If a non-governmental organization can support financially these small ventures and monitor their activities closely, some of the children can be helped to take up these activities on a continuous basis.

14. The study revealed that there is every need to develop the culture of saving. If proper facilities for savings can be arranged, this potential can be exploited to make them financially independent to some extent.

15. Since poverty and discard among the families forced the children to take refuse on streets, some definitive measures should be taken up for improving the economic well being of such at risk families. They can be targeted for income generating schemes such as integrated rural development programme, self employment program for urban poor, etc. Women belonging to these families can be helped to avail the saving and credit schemes under DWACRA, MGNREGP, Mahila Samriddhi Yojana, and Rashtriya Mahila Kosh to improve their financial well being.

16. The income generating programmes for families should also be seen as programs for the prevention of children from continuing as street children. Since poverty is clearly the major cause of mothers and fathers for sending children out to the street in search of work, guaranteeing poor families with some income would certainly reduce their incentive to do this. Also to some extent vocational training for parents, and care
for the children of working parents from low income neighbourhoods can prevent children from going on the streets.

17. The problems of maltreatment of the child partly lie with the parents. Wherever possible, counseling services should be provided to the parents.

18. Another strategy for prevention is education support to educationally backward children from disadvantaged groups. Improper schooling, academic delays, poor performance in schools, and sometimes even lack of school facilities in the neighbourhood lead children to drop out from the school. This leaves a large part of their day free to roam in the streets, and too much time spent on streets can introduce the child to activities that are more gratifying than being at school. Therefore, by identifying educationally backward children, and children coming from the ‘at risk’ families, and by giving them the needed financial and educational support, the drift of such children on to the streets can be prevented.

19. If the Government establishes a “Street Children Protection Force”, the protection force catch the children who are newly entering into streets from their houses, and admit them into the army schools and navy schools, through this force, we can eliminate the anti-social elements which are made from the street children and the same, we can utilize them for the service of the country. In this direction, regular monitoring and counseling at busy centres like railway station, temples, market centres can improve the situation.

20. If the Government takes steps like passing orders for not supplying the white correcting fluid to the children, we can save the children from the
addiction of white collecting fluid, which is more harmful to the lungs of the children.

21. The prevalence rate of Bad habits among the street children is very high at the railway stations and bus-stands because of the human transportation.

22. There is every need to establish an autonomous body for the supervising the NGOs and review of work performance of the street children.

8.12.1 Other Suggestions

The following are a few suggestions to improve the data dissemination in general, and improve the conditions of development work situation of street children.

1. Brief brochure indicating the data variables (items) collected during the surveys /censuses need to be published/publicized and may be widely disseminated. This is in addition to the detailed reports of surveys/censuses.

2. Data tables may be posted on the websites in forms compatible to data sheet management programs like MS Excel to facilitate further usage and analysis of the data.

3. Lack of laws that look after their welfare and well-being is the problem. Passage of a law that would establish welfare and crisis centres for street children all over the country is needed. It is lamentable that while there are several laws that protect the rights and welfare of children in general, there is practically no piece of legislation addressing the special needs of street children.

4. Crisis centres should be established in every city or municipality that will provide various types of assistance to street children like temporary shelter,
emergency medical and feeding programmes as well as basic education. This measure will assist in providing street children the means to uplift their conditions, and take them out of the streets through programmes that will equip them with livelihood and, technical and social skills.

5. The study suggests strategies to address the problem: more assistance for single-parent households; coordinating efforts for children in destitute communities; and self-help movements in poor settlements to slow down the growing number of children being forced on to the streets.

6. The plight of street children in India is at an early stage in comparison with more “developed” countries. Some street children in India organize gang groups, and often have to resort to violence to survive. Here, street children just produce a feeling of pity and sadness in the minds of the general public rather than strong fear and repulsion. If there are some street kids involved in social evils, we often consider them as the victims of those evils rather than evil makers. We need to effectively tackle the street children problem in India with a sense of urgency.

7. First, there is a need to strengthen our skill in providing counseling work to the children in guiding each child on the right path. Second, after receiving certain education or training, children need additional help in applying their acquired knowledge to the real life situation. A training programme or a long course is needed. They need more incentive and assistance to secure a stable job, and build a family to lead a normal life in the society.
8.13. Conclusion

Rehabilitation and reintegration of the street children are very important, and this leads the child to live in the main stream of the society. To achieve this goal, a holistic approach is essential and this approach should invariably involve family, educational institutions, government agencies, and NGOs keeping in view that each child is unique in general, and street children in particular. These Rehabilitation services are to be well tailored to the specific needs of the street children. These services will facilitate the provider of street children being well settled to lead a useful life. Abundant support and guidance from government and non-governmental and philanthropic individuals or institutions will the main stream of the society.