CHAPTER 7
DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While discussing the sense of self getting influenced by various forms of abuse, the attempt was to look at how self is influenced, keeping children’s perspective in focus. The self, construction of which is an ongoing process, is related to the past and present events and their meaning making. How this self comes to be in an atmosphere perceived to be full of abusive situations was the main concern of the study. As the study progressed, a lot of patterns emerged which included a nexus of various forms of abuse, life on the streets and outside and the multiple influences on sense of self. An understanding, which emerged from the study, can be relooked at here again.

Piecing together the Self: Insights from the study

The Street environment and the others: Looking at demarcations. Previous studies did suggest a more vulnerable environment having peculiar effects on the life of the child and the memories of these experiences decide the way it transforms into a distinct personality. But the understanding of this environment needs some rethinking. After looking at the findings as a whole, it was realized that firstly, streets are ‘home’ for children rather than a temporary transitional phase. Secondly, the ways abusive situations are comprehended and internalized by adolescents in this atmosphere are clearly different from the confines of a home. This inherent comparison between the home and the street came about during the procedure of data collection because of the varied histories and types of physical, verbal and emotional abuse, which should be more rightfully called ‘culturally’ prevalent on the street as well as in the households.

Here, it is worth noticing that adolescents in retrospect might not necessarily perceive the street as a place of heightened vulnerability and danger. Rather, ‘home’ sometimes can provide more challenging an environment than the streets, which could actually acts as escape from the shackles of an unresponsive upbringing in the unbearable atmosphere of the household. Not that the study in any way supports children to look for this independence in the streets. Rather, the impetus lies in the families ensuring
an upbringing which is sensitive to the changing needs and desires of adolescents and thus avoiding an ‘escape’ to the unpredictability of the streets. The unique perception of each towards his/her surroundings was largely based on their individual experiences as well as the factors bringing them to the streets. Thus, the boundaries created between the home and street for understanding their ‘sense of self’ was found obsolete. It was more of an amalgamation of their experiences with the family and their struggle for survival on the street, which together decided their retrospective analysis of themselves.

**Significant Others.** One of the most important factors influencing this sense of self and abuse experiences was the relationship with significant others. Whether it is the pre-abuse relationships or the post-abuse, the way the social world around reacted to them, decided how they internalized their memories of abuse to affect their selves. Various forms of abuse had differing responses from the society in general. Physical and verbal assault was so intricately woven in the child rearing practices of our country that being beaten up by parents or other adults was not seen as devastating, at least consciously. Whereas sexual abuse, which was a threat largely to the piousness of a girl and masculinity of a boy, was internalized as more self-damaging than the others. This brings in the question of gender and the self into focus.

**Gender and the self.** The individual’s inherent need to subscribe to the gendered norms, a characteristic of the teenage years and, their overt reinforcement out on the streets, was seen as affecting the ways they internalized the familial as well as the street relationships. The nature of physical, sexual, emotional as well as verbal abuse was different for both genders. Their impacts were also different. While none of the boys seemed perturbed by anything ever ‘said’ to them, girls were emotionally shaken by their families frequently calling them names like ‘randi’ (slang for sex worker) etc. The effect was more among those who had suffered sexual abuse. If sexual attacks were disclosed, the girl’s sanctity was questioned externally and if not disclosed, the female would internally lead a life full of guilt and self-loathing.
Severity of abuse and its effect on sense of self. Severity of abuse had its effects on the construction of self as well. More prolonged the sexual abuse was, more was its emotional consequences. But severity can come to include not only the duration, but also the co-occurring physical and verbal abuse. Not individually, but physical and verbal abuse had most effect on emotional well-being if accompanied with anxiety provoking memories of sexual abuse.

Paving the way for conceptualizing Poly-victimization in the Indian Context

Sexual abuse is usually perceived to be one of the most traumatic for a child but it was observed that the trauma inflicted on an individual couldn’t be blamed on any one factor. The effects are dependent on a lot of closely interwoven phenomenon, making it difficult to distinguish any event from the co-occurring things around the person. This calls for a realization of the existence of poly-victimization along with an exclusive consideration of various forms of abuse. The existence of poly-victimization similar to what Finkelhor et al. (2007) suggested, which I prefer to call ‘experiences’ in this study, very well emerged as a reality in the Indian context. Victimization is not confined to one particular form of abuse. Its various types rather existed together, sometimes juxtaposition in a way to make it hard to be put into any one category. Clemmons et al. 2007, while looking at the effects of multiple child maltreatment types stated that the externalizing and internalizing symptoms of multiple forms of maltreatment are more than the effects of a single type of abuse.

Physical, Verbal and emotional abuse were parts of the everyday functioning of these individuals and these ways of dealing with children were not confined to the environment of the street. The transition between the home, street and the shelter (organization) had a level of physically and verbally abusive experiences so well integrated in the culture of the street and even the home that it did not lead to a realization of being victimized. However, its effects were clearly visible in the way they evaluated themselves and their relationships with others.
The reason to look at child sexual abuse specifically in the study was to put forth children’s perspectives regarding the problem. The seven participants who shared their memories of sexual abuse were part of the group discussions, thus giving the scope to the researcher to observe them in group as well as individual scenarios and hence looking at how integrated the sense of self is, to each of the ways of maltreatment. What was found was that sexual, physical and verbal assaults, as well as emotional maltreatment were very overlapping and hard to separate. Also, the ways the causes, consequences and the implications of these formed a nexus, makes it hard to pinpoint a linear relationship between any two phenomena. But the severity of one as compared to another did make that memory of abuse more conscious among the child, which could be said to have caused more effect on his/her self-concept than the other less severe forms. Instead of clear cut demarcations, the age at which abuse happened, gender of the person and the perpetrator; conditions of disclosure and the pre as well as post abuse were found as important factors in understanding as to which effect does abuse call upon the person and his/her sense of self.

Thus, the exclusive categorization of forms of abuse in watertight compartments (i.e. of the street here) can be negated and the findings of the study call for an understanding of the web that exists and the influences of each on the other. When understanding the influences of each in retrospect, the temporality associated with ‘recall’ cannot be ignored. When saying that we are looking at the experiences of the past, the inherent assumption is that the meaning of the past is very much a result of its interaction with the present. This study thus, reinforces this, showing that present state of the adolescents was influential in determining the perception of abusive experiences they have been through as children. Thus, memories form an important component of the self. The way a person expressed his/her ‘self’ depended a lot on the way these experiences are recollected, which is directly related to the differing influence these experiences had on them.

**Primary and Secondary Memories.** Memories of some events in life were central to analysis of the self i.e. those life events which influence the ‘self’ in more ways than the others. There was no specific indicator, which suggested the blame on one experience more than the other but certain patterns did emerge. Most significantly,
how the central memories are internalized and made to influence the self, depended on the nature and extent of secondary memories influencing one’s feelings, emotions and the self as a whole. It was also seen that some times, experiences showed no visible direct connection with each other. However, this can be attributed to how self-aware an individual was and the way he/she articulated and spoke about himself/herself.

I prefer to call the experiences, which were clearly found to influence the self, as primary, while the secondary are the ‘other’ experiences, which might be influencing the self more subconsciously than the very conscious awareness of the primary ones. When looked at a few children who have lived in a life full of physical and verbal abuse and more often than not, sexual abuse; the primary and secondary memories of these experiences respectively, were not necessarily centered on any one of these. The physically and verbally abusive events, for example, were never directly acquired to become primary memories. However, their influence was clearly visible in the relationship they shared with others, which in turn, were a strong predictor, indicator and sometimes consequence of falling prey to sexual abuse. For example, being beaten up by the father/mother at home or being thrashed by the police or peers on the street were not always explicitly said to be causing emotional turmoil. The social consequences of these events were not consciously realized. However, their effect was visible in the way they dealt with their relationships, influencing their construction of sense of self. Thus, because of a child’s inability to communicate with her stepmother (due to her constant physical and verbal abuse), sexual advances by a neighbour could never find a way to be disclosed. In another participant’s case, verbal assault labelling her as “characterless”, never gave her the courage to disclose to his father that his own brother was sexually abusing her. Thus, in a lot of ways, abusive situations let sexual abuse to persist.

**Perception of Children: Child Abuse**

Interestingly, what we call abuse might not necessarily be perceived as abuse, thus changing the way it affects the person completely. This comes from a retrospective analysis of what they feel is harmful and what not and hence redirecting the
conversation to the primary and secondary memories. Why a particular memory will remain with the person and keep consciously affecting him/her was clearly a result of the emotional upheaval it caused then. This upheaval not necessarily is because of events of sexual abuse by itself. Rather, the surrounding factors like unavailability of emotional support, being blamed for what happened, feeling ignored or confused, questioning one’s own sanctity and feeling the guilt and regret for not stopping it; are the factors which make them not let go. Some of these feelings were co-occurring only with sexual abuse making it the central memory. But, for some others, the availability of support of friends and family, the independence enjoyed on streets, the successful defence mechanisms employed, of avoidance usually, shifted their attention to other events in life. Of course, the intensity of other events was more in some cases, leading the person not consider sexual abuse as the most harrowed memory. For example, in case of one boy, the death of a father, loss of the house, being convicted repeatedly by the court were making him emotional steady, not to put his sexual experiences in the forefront while recalling his life years later.

The context and perception of abuse played a role in defining it. It needs to be understood that it was only three out of seven children (two girls and one boy) who could directly relate to their sexual abuse experiences being life altering. They remember them to be traumatic at that time and hope that had never happened to them. For other four, life had a lot more going on, that sexual abuse as an exclusive event took a back seat. For example, in case of two participants, whose identities were very much associated with the street, the struggle to survive and the pleasures it gave in return was very engaging. Sexual abuse for these two happened after a series of sexual ‘encounters’ on the street. Their slow sensitization towards sex and sexuality and their overt masculine behaviours, characteristic to adjustment on the streets, made sex without initial consent less traumatizing than those for whom it was not an exposure to the street or the ‘privilege’ of being a male. All the three participants for whom the abuse was central to their ideas of self and who have to be much more resilient to get these memories past them, had been abused in the confines of the family. The perpetrator was known and the abuse usually progressed gradually. The sexual abuse on the street however, was not seen as equally problematic.
The way abuse in various forms was perceived was very strongly associated with gender as well. If for a girl, sexual molestation was seen as the most prevalent dangers for a child, the boys talked about exploitation in work as the most dealt with. Although, the boys don’t deny the sexual molestation of males, the girls never talked about child labour as a form of abuse. This again puts our attention to the relationship between one’s gender identities has, with the way they perceive its infringement.

The findings thus suggest revisiting the meaning of street as per the child himself instead of looking from a third person perspective and deciding a course of action. Also, assuming the sexual forms of abuse as the most traumatic without putting the situation in perspective, would lead to a lop-sided understanding of the problem. Multiple forms of victimization need to come in together to chart out the plans of dealing with the issue in a more comprehensive manner. Repeated attempts of children to run away from the shelter homes, missing their life on the streets and still voluntarily remaining part of their respective organization, calls for a deep look into how the intervention mechanism are at play in our country and do they actually meet the needs of the children and adolescents for their long term benefit.

The stage of Adolescence: the Biological, Social and Emotional Tasks

A close look at each participant made the researcher get her faith reinstated in the fact that understanding an individual in the confines of an age group can never be completely accurate as his/her wholesome development is strongly influenced by his/her unique experiences, and the challenges thrown by the environment. Over the years, theories of Personality and human development have discussed in length, changes that take place in an individual; physiologically, socially and emotionally and ways in which, relationships play an instrumental role in defining their ‘selves’. Adolescence, of all stages of development, has always been considered a time of crises, where the construction of an identity and dealing with the bodily changes is believed to lead to a lot of emotional upheavals. But sometimes, assuming certain traits specific to age as a number and the expected emotional challenges could be diluted by the other more unexpected, but real tasks needed for survival. Based on the findings of the present study, I would like to propose that the demarcation
between a child and adolescent might not necessarily be as rigid as is perceived to be by the western theorists. This has also been touched upon by Burkitt (2008) while approaching towards an understanding towards the social selves. In a society, which puts the pressure of economic sustenance on the child, the so-called ‘innocence of a child’ is lost way before expected. Also, the ‘crises’ of adolescence, is not confined to the problems of dealing with one’s bodily changes or changing social expectations. For a child in a poverty-stricken Indian household, the crises are far many and thus, a child’s introduction to the complexities of an adult world happens much earlier.

All the children, in the study, who came to the city, had histories of troubled families in the past. Running away or being thrown out or sometimes just getting lost in the urban crowd, are situations which are enough to make a young child learn to deal with the physical and emotional crises nearing him/her. Exposure to ‘sex’, and all the things related, happened between the age of 7-10 for children living on streets. Thus, when adolescence as a number, i.e. 12-13 years strikes, the child ‘of the street’ has already seen a lot more than a society with its set rules and norms allows him/her to. No matter if the conservative traditions like it or not, a child likes the immediate freedom and independence and doesn’t take any time to get used to that kind of lifestyle. This adjustment becomes easier when it is interspersed with spurts of energy which one feels coupled with sexual maturity. With sources of pleasure spread all around them, the exposure and experimentation is much earlier and much faster than the conventional standards.

Thus, when talking to adolescents who have spent a considerable part of their lives on the streets, experiments with women (usually older to them), multiple sex partners and unsafe sex were not uncommon. Their interactions with prostitutes, watching pornography, looking at magazines; exposed, but not necessarily educated them to sex. The development of their sexualities is strongly influenced by the subculture of the streets. The older peers and their ways of expressing their sexualities are inherited by these young boys who rely on them for their words of wisdom on engaging with the street and their sexual selves. Observing younger children go through sexual
abuse, abusing children themselves, getting aroused by women in small clothes on the streets etc. were the ways the boys explained their engagement with their sexualities.

Emotionally, need for someone close remains always. They do have girlfriends who they feel they are close to. But the parents are missed in spite of all the fun they have on the streets. In an attempt to identify with the peers and to engage successfully with the street environment, a masculine image is maintained which also decides their ways of meeting their own emotional and weak selves.

Based on the findings, a following conceptual frame can be suggested to be verified in the future researches.

Figure 7.1: A Conceptual Frame
RECOMMENDATIONS

Moving forward: Role of the organizations

Findings of the present research were based on the idea that the socialization process of a child is influential in constructing a person’s sense of self. But, when retrospectively perceiving one’s life in the past, making sense of it was not aloof of the experiences of the present or even expectations from the future. As discussed, self-appraisal, that is, just the comparison one makes with the self in the past and present, is a way one tends to evaluate him/herself. Thus, memory was observed to be dynamic, changing with the present experiences. These more recent experiences of the target population selected, was in the context of the organization. Findings suggested that exposure to the streets is not the only environmental factor determining the self, and is rather co-existing with organization where the child is living since the past couple of years. The evaluation of the organizational set up and the relationships that existed came up while conducting FGDs and in-depth interviews.

Generalist Social Work Practice

The different ways in which children with similar backgrounds responded to the researcher and the discussions on physical, verbal and sexual abuse, puts the role of the organization in focus. Their behavioural characteristics were starkly different, specific to the organizations to which they belonged, even though the retrospective experiences on the street were not as different. Thus, the role of the ongoing socialization process in an organization becomes unavoidable.

Based on what participants said about their experiences inside, a look at the micro-level practices for social workers have been listed. These have been reached upon based on the first hand observations and information sought from the participants themselves. Moving forward, the meso and macro level recommendations have also been put across.
Micro –Level Practices. One of the biggest gaps felt in charting out a rehabilitation plan by these organizations was to dissociate the children completely from their identities associated with the street. A child for whom, the street has been a habitual abode and a significant part of his life, remembered by him/her, with mixed and yet strong emotions; cannot ignore the vibrancy and baggage of its memories. The plans are to be in accordance with the unique histories of these individuals. As shared in one of the earlier chapters, a boy in FGDs shared that the organizations always tells them how difficult it would be to maintain themselves on the street, in order to restrained them for running away. But the participants completely disagree with this, as they feel confident in surviving and thriving in the independent environment of the street. Thus, a disconnect between the reasons given to children to leave their comfort zone and become a part of a much more disciplined and controlled environment (as perceived by the child), creates a gap. This can be seen as a result of the disengagement of rehabilitation strategies from the real experiential accounts of the child. This in no way suggests that the child should be left on the street, wallowing in a highly vulnerable yet control free environment but demands a look at the way these children needs to be approached. Here, one needs to thus, look at the positive aspects or strengths of a child rather than his weaknesses while formulating plans and policies for children. This has been well raised very recently by Balakrishnan (2014) who proposes a rights based perspective focusing on the ‘well being’ of children.

For adolescents who are living with families on the streets, the identity confusion existing because of their starkly different environments of the street and the shelter, co-existing at the same time, need to be recognized. Although, education has acted as a strong factor in making them move away from vices like drug addiction and other behaviours specific to the streets; many of their friends and families, still living in the same scenario, pull them towards this way of living. Through group discussions, it was realized that these adolescents constantly go through this push-pull struggle, as after all, they associate their identities equally, if not more, with the streets. When the organization plans to provide the child with food and education, appreciating their internal struggles and being available to pull them towards a life not characteristic of the street, becomes essential.
When dealing with abuse, the boundaries of physical, verbal and emotional abuse are so blurry that they are not even reported to the organization staff most times. More so, physical forms and the accompanying verbal and emotional maltreatment is so naturally normalized by a child as his/her routine experience that it is, most of the times, not realized as a ‘problem’ by them. There is not any set mechanism to find out its prevalence unless and until the child reports of it voluntarily. The case is even more complicated in the case of sexual abuse, not for its vague nature, but a conspiracy of silence that features around it. Although, all the organizations were informed about the sexual abuse of the children they are catering to, no set mechanism was observed in dealing with the cases.

This asks for revisiting the methods involved in dealing with the cases of sexual abuse. Five out of the seven participants told that they had disclosed abuse to significant others outside the organization, immediately after the abuse. They were adamant on not telling anyone in the future as well. They shared this with the researcher only on the condition that she will not disclose it to others in the set up. This suggests a lack of faith, which comes from the fear of breach of confidentiality and being judged. This is an indicator of lack of trust on the professionals available for help. Disclosing to an outsider (i.e. the researcher) who has interacted with them way less than the organization's counsellor (in terms of the time spent) suggest that they were ready to disclose but the organization did not provide a conducive environment.

The researcher observed that the silence around topics related to sex did exist in the organizations, even though awareness programmes on sexual abuse were not uncommon. The unacceptability of the problem at the individual level of the counsellors, the unavailability of space exclusively to discuss emotionally charged memories and the same counsellor attending to the close friends of the child, could be some of the reasons.
Meso Level Practices

A sensitization of the counsellors, social workers and other staff is essential to ensure that they are perceived as sources of help and emotional support for the children. Sexual Abuse and related consequences are to be understood and ways of dealing with the problem need to be learned. Although, the organizations indirectly led to recovery of these participants through provision of a social circle and educational tasks, direct sharing of such memories is equally essential, for catharsis, if nothing else.

Also, organizing sex education programmes, catering to the myths and doubts of the adolescents is essential in opening up the space for a hesitation free discussion on sex and sexuality. But this is easier said than done. While engaging with the children of one organization on a weekly basis, the researcher happened to come across an awareness generation programme on child sexual abuse. She tried to understand the perspective of the children towards the programme and found that the participants felt a gap in the way they were approached in the discussion as felt to have been perceived as people who know nothing. They felt that the people in the close walls of the organization have no idea what goes on outside and that; it is easier to say things in such talks than actually be on the streets, experiencing them every other day. The gap in the programmes concerning sex and sexuality thus, need to see the areas where they are falling short, to make them more suitable for the children.

While understanding the rehabilitation structure it was found that the integration back into the families is debatable for those with the history of running away. Sending an individual back to a family of economic difficulty, prevalent physical, verbal and in some cases, sexual abuse can put him/her in the danger of falling a victim to the circumstances and trying to take a step again. These organizations do make an attempt to locate the families of the children who ran away from homes. There is a need to integrate these families into a process of rehabilitation instead of integrating the child who left, now an adult, back into the same family.

If the families are not traceable, a person when reaches 18 years of age, is asked to move out of the organization and make a living on his own. Although its completely
justified on the part of the organization to expect so, some of the participants were found to be extremely unsure as to how to survive in Mumbai city without a home and job. Although, informal ways of helping the person are available, a formalized way of supporting these people, guiding them towards a stable life would reduce their risk of drug addiction relapse and will prevent from other possible risks. An inter-organization network for the support and guidance of these adolescents could be made available. Support groups of people who have had histories of a life of abuse and victimization could learn a lot from the stories of each other and can even act as a family in a lonely city.

Provision of skill training programs in and outside the organization reduces this risk of falling back to street. One of the organizations did provide such skills to the girls 'rescued' from the streets and it was proving to be very helpful in her personality development and confidence in dealing with a world, otherwise perceived as highly dangerous.

Those children, living with their families on the street, time again share their dilemmas to choose between employment and education. The financial condition of the family demands them to earn a living as soon as possible. Although they totally realize the importance of education, the obvious choice between food for basic survival that is an everyday need, and, education, which give fruits after twelve years, dwindles their priorities. All of the boys who live with families on the street, clearly state that “bhooke pet pe padhai nahi hoti” (its impossible to study on a hungry stomach). This very valid dilemma again posits the need of an organization to deal with the larger stresses of life of a child. There is a need to intervene with the kin through the child himself and thus, ensure the rehabilitation of the family along with the child.

When intervening with families, the earning capacity of the family can be enhanced so as to reduce the burden for the child. For the case of the participants in this study, for example, most of their parents were alcoholics and thus, did not work and earn for the household. This put the pressure on especially the male child to earn for the family. This can be one of the immediate issues to be targeted by the organizations.
Macro level Practices

Programmes and policies, acts and amendments, treaties and conventions; all are existent in our country, to provide a safe environment to the child. But they all come with their own issues of implementation. For example, the Justice Verma Committee Report, which revisited the laws related to sexual abuse and exploitation among women and children, and promote the well being of victims in the medico-legal processes. A year before that, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act of 2012 recognized crimes of sexual nature and promised for a child friendly judicial system of dealing with such cases, including a mandatory reporting of such events. On similar lines, Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act of 1986 also ensured a childhood free from the exploitation of work and the burden to sustain economically. From such laws with a protectionist approach to those which focus on rehabilitative principles, the endeavours by our society have been enormous. Right of Children to free and Compulsory Education Act of 2009, which gives scope to economically and socially disadvantaged students to get compulsory education and the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act (2011) with its approach towards the children in conflict with law and in need of care and protection; work towards ensuring an environment of love, affection, which fulfils their basic survival needs and pushes them towards education. But, children do get sexually abused and most of the times it goes unreported. Many children who run away from homes and land up on the streets state ‘labour’ and ‘exploitation’ as reasons for it. But, even after reaching the city, these children are forced to work, to sustain themselves. Thus, the question rises on the implementation of all these efforts in making the child not engage in labour, or forced to give up his/her education, and provided an environment free from abuse and exploitation. But, the socio-legal systems are ironically turning out to be exploitative themselves. Atrocities by the police, for example, was one of the most profound feelings among children’s fears while staying on the streets. Even if the police is available to help the child enter government run institutions, the high prevalence of abuse in these homes repel further children to enter. For example, one particular children’s home in Mumbai was repeatedly mentioned by all the male participants as “hell”. The perception of this home is so bad that there is even a stigma attached against those children who have been there. It came out in group
sessions that in this government run home, the elder ones teach all sorts of mischief to
the younger ones. The food quality is extremely bad. Authorities beat the children and
“galat kaam” (wrong things) happen with young children. The “superintendent”
himself supplies tobacco inside the home for money. First hand experiences of being
physically beaten up were shared with the fact that every new member is beaten up to
give him a taste of life inside this shelter home. “Gangs” exist inside which fight
against each other, while inside the home or outside. Sexual abuse of the younger
ones by the older boys is routine and has been observed by many participants in the
toilets of the shelter home.

Wahan log chup chup ke waaji paani bahut karte hain. Dhandagiri bahut hota hai
udhar. Gay giri...Wahan bahut maarte hain bachche log ko. Bachhon se kaam
karate hain... Bahut maarte hain. Galti karega toh bhi maarte hain, nahi karega toh
bhi maarte hain...Bachhon ko bahdkaate hain. Main tereko kangli la ke dunga, mere
ko ‘woh’ de de. Chhote bachchen ko.

(Inside, people secretly take drugs there. Men engage in sex with men. Children are
beaten up a lot. They beat up whether you are at fault or not. Children are instigated
also. That I will buy you a comb if you give me that (suggesting sexual favours). This
happens with young kids.)

These personal accounts of adolescents about children homes make them run away
from the idea of a shelter home itself. These homes are the last resort, when the child
feels completely incapable of making money or emotionally weak in sustaining self.
Most of the children reach here involuntary when they are recognized by the police on
the streets/pavements/platforms and shelters and put under the jurisdiction of Child
Welfare committees. This leads to a cycle of a child repeatedly running to get back to
the vulnerability of the streets, which he/she chooses, over the shelter fulfilling the
basic needs of food, shelter and clothing. This asks for an urgent look at the systems
which exist and how detached they are from the realities that exist at the level of
target populations.

This asks for a breaking of cycle of abuse and maltreatment, which exist across
homes, streets, and shelters, that forces a child to move from one context of
exploitation to another. The policies and programmes that exist need to be integrated
together to look at each child in totality and his/her problems and concerns instead of
giving a particular problem a separate status. For example, an intervention in dealing
with child labour requires the understanding of ways poverty affects a household (urban and rural) and the child in it, thus, ensuring rehabilitation of the family as a unit in turn ensuring a child’s education. An economically sustained family would have much less chances of a child falling prey to the abuse and getting a chance to consider an environment as vulnerable as the streets as desirable. In another case for example, a child born without a family needs to be identified at the earliest and efforts need to be made by the government and the civil society to provide him/her an environment conducive for growth.