

SSSK Newsletter – October 2009

Featuring articles about some of our partners in India and Peru, news stories and commentary about Street Children around the world



Slumdog Millionaire, Victory, and still the Smell of Defeat

Slumdog Millionaire was an important, even victorious film. Not just because of the Oscars, the hollywood hype, or the media focus which, all of a sudden, threw street kids in the spotlight, doing more to raise awareness than SSSK can ever dream; but because Danny Boyle had done it again.

Just as with "Trainspotting" Boyle had made a film about a certain genre of people, then drug addicts, this time street kids, a group which are normally considered pests to the rest of us civilised, law-abiding folk. The "normal" in Edinburgh, like the "normal" in Delhi, would suddenly be made a little bit uncomfortable about what was going on in their back yard, - this dirty thing called poverty. Or at least, that's what the West thought might happen, and the world watched, fascinated, at how the film would go down in India.

Actually, the film met with mostly critical acclaim, but suffered originally in the box office. Yes, there was some hurt pride, about the image of India presented to the West, "poverty porn" and "slum voyeurism". But, for some who were less than enthusiastic, the

word used to describe the film was "banal".

"A lot of Indians were not keen to watch it for the same reason they wouldn't want to go to Varanasi or Pushkar for a holiday", says Madhur Singh, writing for the Times magazine, "- it's too much reality for what should be entertainment."

Just as it is difficult to turn a blind eye to the homeless in London, you can't live in India without seeing children begging, or passing slums, so why would you want to go and watch a film about it on a Saturday evening?

"The word used to describe the film was banal."

It's perhaps not so much what many people in India did, or didn't think about Slumdog Millionaire, but why the West were so fascinated to watch the fall out, that concerns me. India's reaction to the film which celebrates the resilience and strength of street kids in the harsh and abusive environment that constitutes their daily lives is only half the story. The other half is how

the world looked on, wondering how India would react to a Brit washing their dirty laundry in public.

The thing is, as SSSK knows, it is not just the responsibility of people who walk past the slums every day, to suddenly open their eyes, and go that extra mile to try to give street kids the opportunities, the education, the healthcare or even the childhood that every child deserves. If every child matters, then it was not just Indian dirty laundry that was being washed in public; it was ours.

The media has also watched big brother-like, at how the child stars would take going back to the school in the slums after a jaunt at the Oscars. There were even calls to go the whole hog and pluck those kids out of poverty forever. But not all slumdogs are or will become millionaires, and each of them has a story of resilience and struggle to tell. That any story like that could be described as "banal" is pretty scary. It stinks of defeat.

Commentary by Victoria Newton
SSSK Trustee

Who do SSSK support? – Focus on SEED, India



A visit to SEED in Kolkata early in 2009

Photo above, SEED Outreach workers meet a new arrival.

SEED is one of the NGOs we support regularly who have a well run programme of support for street/railway children, many of whom are migrants from the

poorest Indian states such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Many of the children, sometimes with their families searching for a better future, arrive on the trains terminating at the massive Howrah station. I have visited SEED before, and three of the best features of the visit this time were that:

- with some help from the railway company, they now have much bigger premises for their day-time 'drop-in' centre while the building used previously

- their new boys home on the outskirts of Kolkata is nearly complete, and partly occupied. It provides safe residential accommodation from which abandoned or orphaned children can get an education.

While I was there, several of the boys were returning from school. SEED has included two rooms in the building where volunteers can stay, and two SSSK members will be staying there for a week in October.

"Many of the children, sometimes with their families searching for a better future, arrive on the trains terminating at the massive Howrah station."

provides a night shelter. While the 'drop-in' is in a somewhat dingy warehouse, there's much more space for activities;

- relations with the railway management are much improved, and I met the new station manager who provides what help and support he can to SEED outreach workers;

While I was there, a group of clowns from the UK was visiting, and using the 'volunteers' rooms. They put on performances for both the boys and the girls and with the slapstick and clown performances, all language barriers disappeared! (photograph below)

Gordon Couch, SSSK Trustee



Who do SSSK support? – Focus on Asociacion De Hogares Nuevo Futuro, Peru



helped meet part of the costs, (This donation was a result of the Edinburgh Fashion Show in 2007.)

The “La Sagrada Familia” Home is supervised by the sisters of the “Santa Mariana de Jesus” Religious Community, the staff, but the work of the volunteer group is also very important, as with love and solidarity, the welfare of our children is made possible. We currently have a group of 80 volunteers in our organisation, who support the work of our permanent staff and make it possible to give our children the best attention. The volunteers attend the Home on an agreed timetable and during this time share with the children in their tasks, games and daily activities. The volunteers are individuals committed to the work that they do and carry out the tasks which they put into practice with a great deal of responsibility.

Our “La Sagrada Familia” Home is specialised treatment, giving them a place where they can be rehabilitated. The extension is located at our between the ages of 1 and 9 years, “Santa Luzmila” Home, with the coming mainly from the “Mercedes de Jesus” Creche-Home in La Molina.

The extension of the Home in Comas was started due to the unsatisfied demand for the specialised services in

pediatrics or child rehabilitation services, where support is provided for abandoned disabled children coming from various institutions in the provinces that don’t have the possibility of having an adequate diagnosis and/or require a

The execution of this project, given its importance, had the support of a variety of cooperative sources. And so it was that Students Supporting Street Kids came forward with a significant and important support that

In the month of December, in the first week of the month, the volunteer group organised a Christmas party for our children from all the Homes, with the presence of children invited from three foundations, held in the Olivar (Olive grove) in San Isidro, full of lovely surprises for the children. The volunteer group also organised a Christmas dinner for the staff of the Home with activities like the traditional “amigo secreto” (secret friend) and a draw of artefacts and other prizes. On December 20, the MITSUI Maquinarias del Peru SA. Company held a “chocolatada” for the children of our Home, thus closing a cycle of celebrations of an unforgettable Christmas.

The table on the left shows what has happened to the 40 children who the centre has looked after since September 2008. Report provided by the Asociacion in June 2009.

<u>Situation</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Total %</u>
Adoption	19	47.5
Institutional	3	7.5
Family	4	10
Family	2	5
Resident in	12	30
Total	40	100

If you want to volunteer working with street children, contact the trustees to find out how they can help, sssk@sssk.org.uk

Durban, 2010: Street Child World Cup

At the AGM in January, Jenny Dawkins announced the hugely exciting plans for the Street Child World Cup event in Durban, South Africa during March 2010. If you remember, she even asked whether anybody fancied volunteering actually at the event in Durban!

Since then, the plans have developed, and there will be teams coming from:

- Brazil
- India
- Nicaragua
- Philippines
- South Africa
- Tanzania
- Ukraine,
- the UK.

One of the NGOs we support - Koto in Hanoi, Vietnam, will be there, to provide much of the catering for the

teams. This contact, and the participation by Koto in the event, was the result of input from Matthew Parsfield (who is the President of Oxford SSSK) who worked with Koto a couple of years ago.

The intention is to spark off a global discussion on street children's rights and aspirations. SSSK (yes, that's you) recently gave a grant to help fund the Street Child World Cup. We think it has the potential to:

- Amplify the voices of street children worldwide;
- Equip all the participants with the knowledge and experience to realise street children's rights;

— Strengthen local, national and international efforts to stop the abuse of street children;

— Facilitate closer collaboration between grassroots organisations to discuss positive action through international decision-makers, national and local governments, to realise the rights of street children enabling them to live full and dignified lives.

For 'football-related' activities to promote this amazing initiative, go to: www.streetchildworldcup.org or share your own bright ideas between branches on facebook (search for SSSK - the mothership for an inter-branch facebook group.) If you want to get involved more directly, do contact Jenny at the Amos Trust.

The photograph below is of the football team at Umthombo, Centre for Street Children, the host organisation for the Street Child World Cup.

"One of the NGOs SSSK support's - Koto in Hanoi, Vietnam, will be there, to provide much of the catering for the teams."



World Cup Football and Advocacy; Don't put your foot in your mouth

This year, in the Trustee nest, there have been grumblings about awareness raising. Are we doing enough to effect lasting change for the organisations and children we support? How do we persuade other people that every child matters, that every child is our responsibility? To reverse an old expression, we need to put our mouth where our money is.

But awareness raising doesn't come without its contentions, its capacity to do harm.

Not long ago, the Trustees received an email alerting us to a very delicate situation in Durban, South Africa. The Misizi Charity Africa who work with street kids in Durban city centre, published a report online, telling worrying

tales. They spoke of regular police 'clean ups' to move the disadvantaged and vulnerable out of the city to make it 'presentable' for the 2010 World Cup. These so called clean ups involve beatings, tear gas and being dumped two hours out of the city in the hope the street children won't come back.

What should SSSK do? Write to FIFA? Considering the amount of money that is being generated and the high level sponsorship, surely they could do something to effect lasting change?

Concerned, and a little cautious, we wrote to the Amos Trust (organisers of the Street Child World Cup) to ask for their advice. The Amos Trust told us to tread very carefully. They too had been concerned at the increased numbers of

round-ups in Durban. But this delicate situation required a positive rather than antagonistic approach, encouraging, rather than accusing those involved. Making links with organisations, would be too threatening, as would anything that might look like a concerted campaign; rather students, if going to write at all, should write as prospective tourists. The municipality, and indeed individual police officers are not happy about the round-ups either.

Staff at the Uthombo Centre for Street Children, the host for the Street Child World Cup, have been talking to the municipality on this issue, and have had very positive conversations. The municipality agreed to speak to the police about this, a very significant and long-awaited piece of progress. A progress that might have been threatened by letters written too hastily, putting more street children, and Umthombo, at risk.

All is looking brighter in Durban, but SSSK is as ever, crucially cautious on the advocacy front.

"These so called clean ups involve beatings, tear gas and being dumped two hours out of the city in the hope that the street children won't come back."

Marathons and other events that can be used for raising funds and awareness

While the 'big' event every year is the London Marathon, there are countless other opportunities around the country for running slightly shorter distances, and/or taking part in cycling, mountain walking and a host of other activities, and for getting sponsorship for these.

For SSSK a problem with the London Marathon is that it costs the charity quite a lot of money to 'buy' a place. We bought such a place for 400 pounds (paid for by the trustees in line with our

policy that all monies donated go to our NGOs), and Gabriel Lambert ran for us, raising a substantial sum. The 400 pounds only bought us a potential place once every five years! Obviously if students win a place in the entry ballot for the Marathon and want to run for SSSK we will be delighted.

For a small charity like SSSK it makes a lot of sense to encourage people to take part in local events where the entry fee is more manageable. If you ask the Trustees, they may be able to help with this, and you can either approach your BLT, or e-mail sssk@sssk.org.uk. In addition, we have a link on the website on the Donations page using an organisation called Charity Choice (CC). They will accept on-line donations using credit or

debit cards, and the entire amount is credited to SSSK together with the Gift Aid if the donor is a tax payer. We have deliberately used this site rather than the widely used Just Giving (JG) because JG take a significant slice from the money donated to cover their costs. There is, of course, nothing wrong with this, but as there is an easily usable alternative which makes no charge, we think it better to use CC.

In late October Ben Haden from Oxford SSSK is running ten miles with a couple of mates, all raising money for SSSK (for which we are extremely grateful).

Street Children in a Changing Climate

What will climate change mean for SSSK?

We are currently condemning the world to a period of several thousand years of dangerous temperature rise. Climate Change will affect the world's poorest, those who are least available to prepare, or recover from its effects, and those who are least responsible for it. You will recognise statements like these, you will, no doubt, have heard it all before. But in many ways, street children are the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The Trustees asked Andy Wimbush, from the New Economics Foundation to tell us what would happen to street children, in our changing climate.

Andy started by making clear,

"climate change will take its toll within the lifetimes of children and young people who are alive now"

A ten year old in one of the organisations that SSSK supports might, if no action is taken, live to see the following scenarios take place:

SSSK supports Seed based at Howrah station in Kolkata, India. Many children run away from rural Bengal to Kolkata, to find a future in the city, and end up scrounging a life on the streets. With climate change the weather will become unpredictable and the monsoons may fail, making it difficult for farmers to predict what to plant. The poverty will force more children to migrate to the increasingly overcrowded Kolkata. The map on the right shows the flooding in Kolkata and the surrounding area if there was a sea level rise of only 1m.

SSSK supports Hope Village in Cairo. More than 60% of the nation's food supply in Egypt comes from farmland 10,000 sq miles north of Cairo. In this

important area coastal erosion is badly only get worse. affecting the Nile Delta, which will only worsen under climate change. The IPCC declared the Nile Delta to be among the top three places in the world vulnerable to sea level rise. A sea level rise of just one metre, would erode 20% of the Nile Delta.

SSSK supports Golden Futures in Cambodia. This is one of the most disaster prone parts of Asia. The Golden Futures children's home sits near the banks of the Mekong River, which flows through South East Asia, providing food for 65 million people. According to the WWF, rain in the region has already become less frequent and more intense. That means less regular rain for crops, and more storms which cause landslides and floods.

Why do children end up on the street? Just some of the reasons given by the World Health Organisation, include;

- poverty
- natural and man-made disasters
- famine
- dislocation through migration
- urbanization and overcrowding

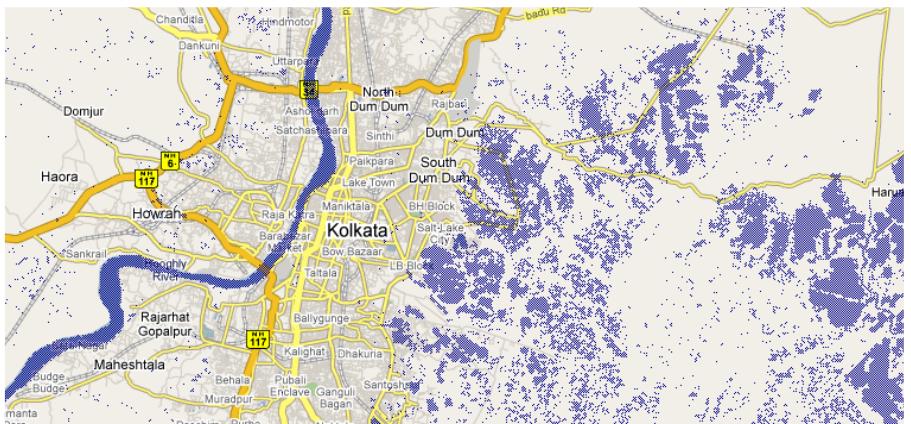
It's easy to see why the numbers of children living on the street cannot but increase. And on the street, the problems faced by street children will

Increased temperatures can quicken the growth of mosquito larvae, meaning a thousand fold increase in mosquitoes – along with the diseases they carry: West Nile Virus, Yellow Fever, Dengue Fever and Japanese Encephalitis. And disease spreads quickest when people are packed tightly together, such as in cities and slums, where street children live. By 2050, 25 million more children will go hungry due to climate change. Wheat prices will rise, leading to famine, and conflict over food. And street children will be the last to get fed, and the most vulnerable to conflict and becoming child soldiers. Lack of shelter, lack of protection, lack of education, disease, famine and conflict.

So what can SSSK do?

Andy's message to SSSK was that we have 86 months to get the temperature down, Governments must agree a 3% reduction in emissions year on year. Consider talking about climate change when raising awareness about street children, or attending the National Climate Change March on 5 December 2009 with an SSSK banner.

But most importantly, keep doing what you're doing. The work of SSSK will become more important than ever.



Street Children on the BEEB

20 years since the Convention on the Rights of the Child was agreed, and Street Children were making the news for all the wrong reasons this summer

Alarm over Somali Child Soldiers 29 July 2009

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/8173079.stm>

For years, warlords have conscripted children to fight in bitter conflicts over money, power and land. But the BBC Somali Service's Mohamed Mohamed reveals widespread alarm that the practice is now becoming entrenched in Somalia.

"Children as young as eight years old are going missing."

Some are drugged, some are brainwashed, others are paid up to 30 pounds per month for fighting. Most people are frightened to speak openly, but those who can afford it are sending their children out of the country to safety.

An elderly man told of how his son vanished, how he looked everywhere for him, even asking the militant group al-Shabab whether they had seen him. They said they had not, but later he found out that al-Shabab had recruited his son to join them, telling him that "he would go to heaven if he died."

"After a long search I found that my son is being held at a training camp on the outskirts of Baidoa", he said, "They are using our children as a shield. But the children of the people who claim to be leaders are not in the camps. They are not fighting."



"Al-Shabab only use children from the poor as fighters."

Residents of Mogadishu also reported how he had seen young children on street corners armed with AK47s and whips. Some of the boys said a Pakistani trainer had drugged their drinks with something. The street children are most vulnerable as they have no family to look after them.

"Some of the street children of mogadishu are most vulnerable as they have no family to look after them."

"There should be no more children on the street" The police spokesperson said.

Female police officers will round up the children, and when these round ups take place at night the children will be taken to a police office or women's bureau.

The authorities said that no children would be remanded in court custody, but that if the parents could be traced, they would be called in for questioning. The aim is to force the children to attend school, which will be state funded if the family cannot afford it.

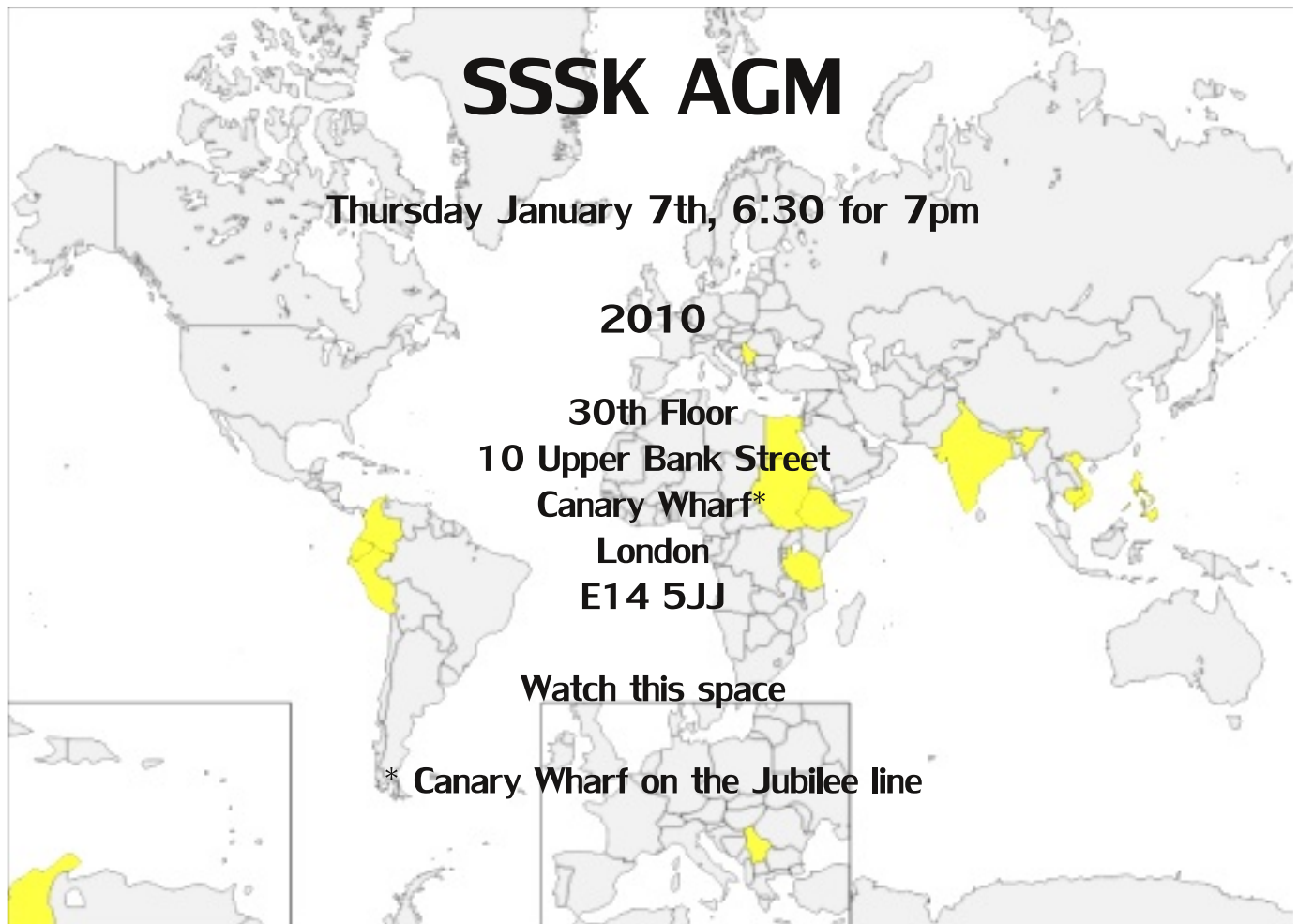
Under Sri Lankan law, all children under 14 must attend school.

Police to pick up Colombo Urchins 12 August 2009

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/8197831.stm

Police announced that street kids in Sri Lanka's capital city - Colombo, would be rounded up in August this summer. The announcement came after a Juvenile Court Magistrate gave the order to detect all children who weren't in school.

If you would like to submit an article for the next SSSK newsletter, please contact us on sssk@sssk.org.uk



Students Supporting Street Kids is a student-led charity that seeks to improve the situation of street children around the world. Our partner organisations are shaded yellow on the map above.

SSSK is driven by the enthusiasm of its members, and anyone and everyone can get involved.

Please contact us at sssk@sssk.org.uk to find out more.

This newsletter has been produced by the Trustees, for our student branches, October 2009.

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