

STUDENTS SUPPORTING STREET KIDS

SSSK is committed to raising awareness about the issues faced by street children around the world.

SSSK currently supports twelve organisations in eleven countries across the world. Each and every one has been identified and visited by either an SSSK branch member or a Trustee. Each one operates in a different way according to the specific needs of the street children in that particular locality.

These are:

- Centre for the Working Girl (CENIT) in Ecuador;
- Centre for Children's Rights, Pristina, Kosovo;
- The Forum on Street

Children Ethiopia (FSCE);

- Let the Children Live (LCL) in Colombia;
- Nuevo Futuro, Peru;
- SEED who work at Howrah Station in Kolkata, India;
- Childhope Asia, Manila, Philippines;
- The Pangarap Foundation, also in Manila, Philippines;
- Society of St Vincent de Paul, in Sudan;
- Koto (Know one teach one) in Vietnam;
- Golden Futures in Cambodia; and

- Hope Village Society in Cairo, Egypt.

This newsletter gives more information about four of the NGOs we support financially. Each one is different.

For example, Forum for Street Children in Ethiopia (FCSE) works primarily to change the reaction of official institutions such as the police to street children to ensure their rights are promoted and protected.

Let the Children Live (LCL) in Colombia works in a climate where street children are thought of as 'expendable' and its workers may face violence and opposition themselves when trying to help.

SEED in India deals mainly

with migrant children. It has pioneered a number of successful initiatives both for children and their families to help street kids break out of deprivation by providing hope and opportunity.

Golden Futures in Cambodia provides older street children with micro-credit loans to enable them to go to college and get qualifications. As the loans are repaid, the model is self-sustaining.

SSSK is pleased to be able to support such a wide variety of NGOs working in different ways to empower and support street children, and to give them opportunities they wouldn't otherwise have.

WHERE THE NGOS THAT SSSK SUPPORTS ARE BASED. . .



STREET CHILDREN IN INDIA

India is the world's second most populated country, with over 1 billion people. It is estimated that there are over 11 million children living and/or working on the country's streets.

The country's size poses a big challenge to the government when it comes to protecting the rights of these children. It has implemented legislative

reform in light of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Efforts to address the issue have included the inclusion of modules on child issues in the training of police.

In 2000 the government established a joint project with a number of NGOs offering a 24-hour free, emergency telephone

hotline for vulnerable children which has been used by over 1 million children in the past five years.

As in many countries street children in India continue to face malnutrition, health problems, substance abuse, harassment by city police and railway authorities, and physical & sexual abuse.



SSSK IN INDIA

SSSK is supporting the Society for Educational and Environmental Development (SEED) in India.

SEED works mainly around Howrah station in Kolkata. This is the largest railway station in West Bengal, handling between 3-4 million commuters on any given day, and has spawned huge slums around it. The

conditions there are horrendous (as observed by SSSK visitors).

SEED has been operating three centres near the Howrah Station for more than ten years, including a drop-in centre at the station and a night shelter.

There are also half-way houses for the rehabilitation

of street children, for both boys and girls, run by SEED. Most of these children attend formal school during the day and get additional support (and a safe place to stay) and get specific training for future employment, and for general life-skills.

Research in India suggests that 25% of street children acquire a sexually transmitted disease within 9 months of living on the street.

THE EXPERIENCE OF A STREET CHILD IN INDIA

This case study is taken from the Consortium for Street Children's *State of the World's Street Children: Violence* report.

Govind is a 14 year old boy from Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. His mother died when he was 5 or 6—she had been a labourer. His father works in a factory where his monthly income is about US\$70.

Since his mother died

Govind's grandmother has been in charge of things at home. His father gets drunk and started to beat him regularly.

Govind got lonely when his mother died. He couldn't stay at school because his father didn't provide him with the necessary materials. Because of this he was treated badly by his school-teacher. Finally he stopped going to school. Govind

says he left home because of his father's abuse and his grandmother's neglect.

Govind says:

"My grandmother never used to give me proper food. Whenever I asked her for food she used to bully me. When my father got back from work he used to say false things about me and then my father would beat me.

Although I used to make some of the mistakes she said, they were not so big that he should beat me so badly.

My mother loved me very much but she died very early. Why did God call her so early? If she hadn't died nobody would dare to beat me, Nor would my grandmother scold me."

(Translated from Hindi)

INDIA: THE CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT BANK TIPS THE BALANCE IN FAVOUR OF STREET CHILDREN

An innovative international scheme is giving the young traders of Asia a helping hand in their daily fight for survival.

Ram Singh does not look like a banker - but then, this barefoot 13-year-old who fends for himself on the streets of Delhi works for an unconventional bank.

Ram manages the accounts at the Fatehpuri branch of the Children's Development Bank (CDB), a multinational co-operative run for street children by street children. His office is the corner of a night shelter on a teeming back alley close to the Old Delhi railway station. It opens for an hour every evening to allow child workers to deposit and withdraw cash and even to take out small loans.

At 7pm on a Saturday, Ram is updating his ledger book, while about 25 of his customers are fixated on a Bollywood action film playing on TV in the middle of the richly graffitied hall. Their attention is broken when a large rat bounds across the room, sending several of the smaller boys in pursuit.

Ram's story is typical of the CDB's clientele: he says he left his home in Uttar Pradesh, a poor state in northern India, for Delhi because his local school was no good and he wanted to follow his older brothers to the big city. "It was time I earned my own money," he

says. He thinks he was about seven at the time.

Similar tales - often relayed, like Ram's, with something of a swagger - are common. Estimates suggest that as many as 400,000 children work on the streets of Delhi - mostly as hawkers, ragpickers and lackeys for small businesses - a figure roughly equivalent to the population of Bristol. Across the whole of India, it is reckoned that at least 18million minors lack proper homes. The vast majority of them, of course, are complete strangers to financial services.

Rita Panika, of Butterflies, the non-governmental organisation that founded the first CDB in 2001, says: "If they do not have anywhere to put their money, it often ends up being stolen - by bigger children or employers who offer to look after their pay and then refuse to hand it over." Mindful that they had better use what they earn fast, street children often spend surplus cash on solvents to sniff, or just gamble it away. The CDB allows them to use their cash more wisely and, it is argued, gives them a greater say over their lives.

For instance, the children vote among themselves to decide who will manage the accounts. Those elected (such as Ram) are taught the basic principles of bank-

ing - but all involved pick up important life lessons, the scheme's organisers say.

"The bank helps children to prioritise their needs and think about how they use their money," Ms Panika says. "Most importantly they learn that it is important to have goals and to work towards them."

The first CDB branch was founded in Delhi 2001. The organisation has more than 8,250 members, all aged between eight and 18, in 12 locations - including branches in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. The average account holds £2.50 - a useful sum if you are a minor fending for yourself in South Asia.

Savings go towards projects of varying size. Hani, 14, is withdrawing 20 rupees (24p) to buy a shirt. If he has two, he tells The Times, he can wash one while wearing the other. Amit, 13, has just returned from his home town in Uttar Pradesh, after taking 750 rupees back to his family. One lad saved a seven-figure sum and bought a shop. The bank can also provide a safety net for the young entrepreneurs. Hemaut, who says he is 13 but looks much younger, is withdrawing 80 of his 100 rupees.

It is a large chunk of his capital but this afternoon the boy, who has been on Delhi's streets for two years, was caught going about his

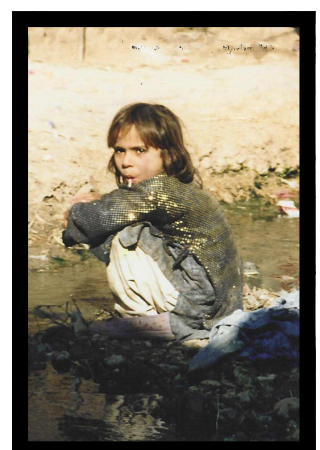
daily trade - selling coconuts on the city's buses. An official stole all the money he had on him - 150 rupees - and took his stock. He will use the 80rupees to buy some plastic pens with lights on them, which he hopes to sell tomorrow.

Remarkably, there is no sense that Hemaut feels cheated - neither by the crooked bus inspector nor by the cards life has dealt him. "If it was not for my bank account, I'd be in real trouble," he says.

Source: Times database

7 June 2008

Have a look at the links at the beginning of the Awareness page on the SSSK website.



STREET CHILDREN IN COLOMBIA

According to a 1994 Human Rights watch report, in several respects, Colombia can be described as a success story for children. Over the past decade, Colombia did more to improve its mortality rate for children under five than any other South American country and it is among the 93 countries that have finalised a National Program for Action on Children.

However, at an average of 6 per day, 2,190 children were murdered in 1993, the majority of whom were street children. Human Rights Watch found that the acceptance of 'social cleansing murders', the murders of groups of street children and other marginalised groups, appeared widespread in Colombian society. The report suggests that impunity is ubiquitous for the murderers of street children, for while many murders stem from common crime, a significant number were carried out by agents of the state, and were neither investigated properly nor prosecuted.

The United Nations Fund for Children estimates that along with Mexico City, Colombia's capital, Bogotá, is the Latin American city with the most gaminers (street children). About 1,500 children, some as young as five, mostly boys, live on the streets of Bogotá because of abuse within the home. Additional factors which have contributed to the high number of street children in Colombia include migration from the countryside to the city, persistent political conflict and the growth of the cocaine trade.

Colombia made the Code of Minors law in 1990. The Code is a model of progressive thinking on children's rights, which stresses rehabilitation rather than punishment for juvenile delinquents, support for struggling families, and education for parents and children alike. The 1994 Human Rights Watch report noted that, although laudable, the concepts of the Code for Minors have not been put into action due to a lack of funding and facilities by

Colombia's leaders.

Little research on street children in Colombia has been carried out since the 1994 report was published, and officials in Colombia continue to hide the endemic of street children, so current numbers of street children in Colombia are unknown. What is certain, though, is the fact that over the past decade grass roots NGOs have been working tirelessly to campaign for the rights of street children, and have been developing care provisions to protect the security of those children on the streets in Colombia. Through the work of these organisations 'social cleansing' murders are becoming less accepted, and the Code of Minors is gradually being implemented, within Colombian society. One such organisation which is dedicated to improving the lives of street children is Let the Children Live, based in Medellín, Colombia's second largest city.

"We the young are not allowed to express ourselves. . .they find us on street corners and want only to shoot us down."

Youth rap group, Social Danger, Ciudad Bolívar



"Can it be our wealth means so much to us that we have lost sight of those who have nothing? Can it be that we do not feel for the child in Somalia who has not eaten in several days, or the child on the streets of Bangladesh who has been lying on the sidewalks day and night with nowhere to go, and no-one cares if he or she lives or dies? Or the babies who are cast out on the streets simply because they were unlucky enough to be born female?

They are our reminders. They are our conscience. They are our salvation."

Muhammad Ali

SSSK IN COLOMBIA

Let The Children Live! is a UK Registered Charity through which people can respond to the needs of the street-children in Colombia. It aims both to safeguard the lives of children from the violence and poverty of the streets, and to make their lives worth living by giving them love, education and a future.

The Charity was founded by Father Peter Walters who became involved with the street-children in 1982 when they helped him after he became temporarily stranded in Colombia. Since then, he has gained first-hand knowledge of their problems and of the work that is being done to help them.

Let The Children Live! does not run its own projects directly but uses most of the

funds it raises to support Fundación ¡Vivan Los Niños!, which is known as Funvini for short.

Funvini is currently helping some 450 children through its various programmes. Convinced that prevention is better than cure, Funvini not only cares for children who are already living in the street but has also created a pioneering programme to prevent other children from ending up there.

The continuing war against drugs in Colombia has forced thousands of refugees to flee from the countryside into the cities. The *barrios marginales* (shanty-towns) where these refugees live are also very violent because of the constant battles between the *bandas* (youth gangs) and various paramilitary

groups. In Medellín, Funvini is working in some of these *barrios* with the younger brothers and sisters of the members of the *bandas* to try to prevent them from being recruited by these gangs or from having to seek refuge in the streets in order to escape from them.

Unemployment in Medellín is very high, and children who live in the shanty-towns are often sent out to beg or work in the street. Funvini's street-educators go out to make contact with these boys and girls when they first appear on the street.

Their task is to try to reintegrate these children into their families and the school-system before they break away completely and get lost in the world of the street children.

Funvini's programme in

Medellín is based at Casa Walsingham (Walsingham House), which is strategically located between the city centre and the northern *barrios marginales*.

Some of the boys and girls who attend the centre are malnourished, so Funvini aims to provide about 50 children with a well-balanced diet. The children who come to Casa Walsingham also take part in educational, artistic and recreational activities.



THE REAL VICTIMS OF COLOMBIA'S DRUG TRADE

Street children are victims of the killings, poverty and corruption that surround the cocaine business in Colombia. Many children orphaned by violence end up sleeping rough and often end up taking drugs themselves and falling into prostitution.

Now 11-years-old, Juanita began to sniff glue and became involved in prostitution at the age of 10. Juanita deliberately cut her own wrist in a bid to kill herself before receiving help

from Let The Children Live! (LCL).

Juanita's harrowing story began when her family fled to the city to safety to Medellín after her father was murdered in the countryside. With no home, regular income, or family support network in the city, Juanita's mother struggled to cope and Juanita and her 8 year old brother Enrique, who also became hooked on glue, ended up on the streets.

With the support offered by LCL project workers, both children have now been reunited with their mother. But hundreds of other innocent and vulnerable young children remain on the streets of Medellín, the victims of the drug-fuelled violence which plagues Colombia.

The Daily Record

20 May 2008

Studies have found up to 90% of street children have used psychoactive substances including heroin, cannabis and readily available industrial shoe glue.

STREET CHILDREN IN ETHIOPIA

The immense human suffering due to major droughts in Ethiopia in recent years has been well documented in the press.

Unfortunately the dramatic rise in numbers of street children in the last 3 decades due to civil strife, the demobilisation of soldiers and the effect of 'Structural Adjustment Policies' on family unemployment has not received such international interest.

There are an estimated 60,000 street children in Addis Ababa and 150,000 nationwide (UNICEF, 1994).

The 2002 report from 'A

Civil Society Forum for East and Southern Africa on Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Street Children' highlights the recent developments in provision of services for street children; community based government and UNICEF programmes for the prevention and rehabilitation of street children have been established in 14 major towns, and there has been support for improving street children's access to health services through the issuing of identity cards.

Yet at the same time the report points out that lack of financial and human

resources, both at government and NGO level, continues to constrain programmes and leads to the instability of projects.

As a result of the report, NGOs working with street children in Ethiopia have been advised to design their projects to be more beneficiary-led as services had previously not been meeting the needs of street children.

With 150,000 street children in Ethiopia, there is a lot of work to be done.



SSSK IN ETHIOPIA

SSSK has supported the Forum for Street Children in Ethiopia for a number of years.

FSCE is a locally run NGO managed by skilled and experienced people who have had years of experience of working with child based organisations. Their largest project is in Addis Ababa but they also run similar programmes on a smaller scale in 4 other cities around Ethiopia.

Much of FSCE's work is done behind the scenes in terms of working on government policies protecting street children and training police in how to deal with

'child deviants'. Below is a summary of the work they are doing in the capital city.

The largest project is based in the biggest slum area in Addis Ababa and they have 4 main areas in which they work:

Sexually Abused Children

FSCE has established a drop-in centre for those children involved in the sex industry. They offer food, education, contraceptives and washing facilities. If the girls show willing they can move to a safe house where they will be helped with finding safe work and living.

Education

The non-formal school centre has 7 classes, hosting 308 students from some of the poorest families in the community. The staff work hard to liaise with the local authority and formal schools to set up links for students. They also provide support in formal schools for girls to encourage them to stay in school.

Saving and Credit Program

This is a system set up to offer start-up capital and then to provide a rolling credit system for destitute women in the community. They help set up bank ac-

counts for the women and encourage them in their chosen business pursuits

HIV prevention and orphan support

Much of this work is done through their health program, and uses their community workers.

THE STORY OF AN ETHIOPIAN STREET GIRL



Violence and sexual abuse within the home are among the main reasons children run away to live on the streets, according to a report, the State of the World's Street Children, published by a coalition of charities.

The following is Genet's story, taken from the State of the World's Street Children.

"My troubles began when I was 14 years old and my mother became too ill to care for my younger sister and me.

We were sent to live with a family as their domestic labourers, where we were both subject to frequent beatings and were not allowed to go to school.

A year later we were taken to live with a distant male relative elsewhere in Addis. We were told our mother

had died and this would now be our home. Here I was forced to go to bed with the male relative who we had been sent to live with and a woman in the household again beat us both.

After two months I ran away but my younger sister was too frightened to come with me.

I ended up in the house of a family friend who took me in but they demanded that I pay my way by working as their domestic servant.

After being beaten and verbally abused, I decided to take my chances on the streets. I find it very difficult to talk about my time on the streets of Addis; I survived there as best I could for over two months, but was often very hungry.

Other girls I met living and working on the street told me about the Drop-in Centre

for street children.

It took a lot of courage to go there for help as I found it very difficult to trust adults, but when I told the community workers there what had happened to me they immediately gave me a place in their safe home for girls.

I am now 16, I have started school again and am being trained at a local health centre as a janitor so I will be able to support myself when the time comes to leave the safe home. I am desperate to see my sister again.

When I grow older I want to help other children in the same situation as me."

Source: BBC News

20 November 2007

Did you know that there are an estimated 150 million children living and or working on the streets around the world?

STREET CHILDREN IN CAMBODIA

Cambodia has a population of nearly 12 million with nearly 50% under the age of 15. Only 14.4% of children enroll in secondary school.

Cambodia's turbulent history has left a legacy of social problems, including large numbers of street children. Little research has been done into exactly how many children have been forced onto the country's streets but figures certainly exceed 20,000.

In the 1990s, war was a major push factor forcing these children onto the streets, but now the main reasons are poverty, domestic violence and family breakdown.

A more alarming development is the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in families: 40% of new street-working children identified in 2002 stated HIV in the family as their reason for migrating to the street.

The government has made ostensible efforts to protect the rights of these children but this falls well short of what is required. Cambodia has the fastest growing rate of HIV/AIDS infection in the South East Asia and street children are among the most affected. With little or no access to healthcare and no compulsory nor free education it looks likely that Cambodia's street child population will continue to grow.



SSSK IN CAMBODIA

One of the most recent NGOs to be supported by SSSK is Golden Futures in Cambodia who work through New Futures for Children.

Golden Futures has been set up recently in order to provide microcredit lending to some of the older children in the orphanage run by New Future for Children. Here the emphasis is on education, as well as providing a safe and familiar atmosphere.

It can also provide the microcredit to other street children, although NFC will undertake the local organisation.

Microcredit essentially means that money will be loaned to someone in order to help them become self-sufficient in the long term, for example to help them start a shop or to put them through university.

Once they are able to do so

they pay back the loan (interest free) and this money can be used again and again to help more and more people.

88% of street children in Phnom Penh have had sexual relations with tourists.

THE VOICE OF A CAMBODIAN STREET CHILD

"My name is Vibol. I am 13 years old. I have been street living on and off since I can remember. My mum died and my dad does not really care about me.

We have lots of beaches and tourists here. I can make good money from collecting cans and I used to get presents from tourists

and scraps of pizza from them. They often gave me money or bought me coca cola.

I used to hang out with Sambath and Kosal, they made me try glue. That was 6 years ago and I am still struggling with the habit. One boy in my gang, Sok, knew a way of making fast

money. .he encouraged to go with me and his friends. They met a tourist who paid them \$2 to sexually abuse them. I would not join in; I just kind of hung out with them. It happened 5 nights in a row behind the sand dunes.

After a few months I saw more kids getting paid to do

this. I needed the money and I wanted to be like my older mates.

The first time I did this the man took me and two mates to his apartment to watch sex movies, then he started to touch us. It was horrible, he is a horrible man, but I wanted money for glue."

CSC Violence Report

MICROCREDIT LENDING

One of the most original and successful ideas pursued over the last twenty-five years or so in development work has been the use of microcredit finance. This was pioneered in 1983 by the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh and has since been copied in many other countries.

The principle is to lend quite small amounts of money to people who wouldn't be able to get any kind of conventional loan. The money is borrowed in order to invest in some kind of money-making activity. Wool or material is bought so that people can make clothes - which can be sold. Seed and/or fertiliser is bought to increase the yield from a small plot of land. Small fish are purchased so that they can breed in a lake. Some activities are individual, some are communal.

I have seen how one such scheme works in a rural village outside Kolkata in West Bengal, India. It

involved some eighty women from the village divided into four 'self-help' groups, each with an elected leader. The groupings enable people to share skills and insights, and to ensure that others are successful with repaying their loans. They elect the person who is most likely to coordinate the group well. Future funding is dependent on a degree of success in the enterprise being supported, and in the repayment of the loans in good time. Interest is absolutely minimal.

The scheme is facilitated by the Young Men's Welfare Society (YMWS) who have close links with SSSK (for more information go to Links on our website).

The mutual support from within the groups meant that there was a collective interest in everyone else's success. Funding women in this way helps the children in the families. Part of the YMWS interest is to try to ensure that families have

enough resource so that the children can stay at school. They are then less likely to be forced into working (probably on a farm) at a very early age, and less likely to finish up on the streets of Kolkata when they rebel when they're a bit older. The funding also redresses the balance of power in the family so that the mums have more say in what happens to their children. In that kind of context, fathers are quite likely to want their children to become economic contributors very early, and to be less concerned about education.

It is interesting that three groups who are (or have been) supported by SSSK use this mechanism. In addition to YMWS, Golden Futures in Cambodia, who interestingly use microcredit loans to enable older students to go and study. They can get a decent qualification, and then repay the loan, enabling the next

generation of (poor) students to get an education. Once up and running the system is in principle self-sustaining.

Finally the Hope Village Society in Cairo which runs several brilliant centres for local street kids also uses microcredit, again to support and empower the families of children who have run into problems. They will then be better able to care for their children.

Microcredit finance is one of the many mechanisms that can be used to combat the effects of acute poverty - which is a major reason why children become 'street children' - and we are pleased that some of the groups we support are making use of this mechanism.

Gordon Couch

SSSK Trustee

Every child is a gift from God, loved into being, infinitely precious to God, created for greater things: to love and be loved.

Yet so many are forgotten, abandoned, abused, made to suffer the most unimaginable pain in their souls and bodies. I have looked into the eyes of children—some shining with hunger, some dull and vacant with pain. I have held countless babies in my arms—dying for lack of milk, some medicine. And why does this all happen? Why?

Let us begin by loving the child. And love to be true must cost us. . .if the rich were more willing to share with the poor, to give up a little bit of luxury, some little pleasure. . .need the child be exploited, abused, or die of hunger?"

Mother Teresa

www.sssk.org.uk



WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

You can make a difference by joining SSSK.

Whether you have experience of working with street children, or have seen the problems when travelling, or are simply interested in the issue, you can make a difference through joining SSSK.

SSSK has 7 Branches in 5 universities and 2 schools across the UK. Getting involved with one of these branches, or setting up a new branch in your university, will not only enable you to make a difference to some of the 150 million children living and/or working on the world's streets but will also give you an opportunity to make new friends, help organise events and raise awareness about ways in which street children can be empowered.

For more information please send an email to sssk@sssk.org.uk or your nearest branch. Contact details are available on our website: www.sssk.org.uk

SSSK's AGM is being held on Monday 5th January 2009 at the Christian Aid offices near Waterloo. For more details please contact: sssk@sssk.org.uk