



SSSK Newsletter February 2013

The AGM

We held our AGM on 8th January and thank you to all those who came along! The AGM was a really great way for students from different branches to meet and glean some fundraising tips and advice from each other.

Adam, Trustee and former St Paul's Boys School student, began the evening by reminding us all of the importance of SSSK: to raise awareness of the realities that street children face and equally, to raise money for projects on the ground that support street children. SSSK is unique in that all of the money raised for street children goes to street children – there are no office costs and Trustees are volunteers.

Street children are often forgotten by policy-makers and frequently slip through the gaps of government interventions that provide welfare support. This is because they do not live in a typical household and do not go to formal school or access the same services that other children do and government provisions often do not take this into account. As such, support for street children often falls to grassroots NGOs and it is these organisations that SSSK supports. Without the support of SSSK, many of these organisations would not be able to add the value

that they do to so many street children's lives.

We watched two videos that really capture the lives of street children: one in Ethiopia that follows two boys in Addis Ababa whilst they look for food and work, (www.youtube.com/watch?v=4nEcl4E17So); and one from the Street Child World Cup (www.streetchildworldcup.org/media-library/video-gallery/) that demonstrates the power of sport in engaging street children and that street children too have great potential, given the opportunity. A great way to inspire us for the evening ahead!

It is vital that SSSK provides consistent support to the NGOs we support. And to ensure this, we aim to raise between £10,000 and £12,000 each year through SSSK branches. Currently, we have just five branches, and our biggest priority is year on year sustainability. However, we would like to grow a little, so if you have friends or siblings at other universities, or are going up from school to a university without an SSSK branch, it would be great if you wanted to start a new branch! And of course we would be on hand to support you through this.

We then got the low down on street children in 2013 from Natalie, a Trustee.

Who is a street child?

Street children have varied connections to the street: some live there, some work there, some live and work there and some hang out on the street. Taking this into account, the most recent definition of a street child is *a child for whom the street is a central reference point, one which plays a significant role in his/her everyday life and identity.*

How many street children are there?

Although it is commonly touted that there are 100 million street children in the world, this figure is not based on fact – there is no accurate global data on street children. Local and regional data is more accurate.

Why might a child connect to the street?

There are many reasons why a child might start spending time on the street, the main driver being poverty. Many street-connected children have experienced family breakdown or violence at home. Another common reason is that the family need the child to work and earn money, or more simply, the family cannot afford to keep the child any longer. Some children are also attracted to city life.

What challenges do street children face?

One of the biggest challenges street children face is violence, from almost all members of the community, including the police. In fact, street children became a prominent feature of world news in the 1990s because of

government brutality towards street children and the extrajudicial killings of street children in Brazil. The violence that they experience can be explained in part by the stigma that is associated with being a street child in many parts of the world. Street children are often labelled as delinquents with nothing worthy of contributing to society and are discriminated against daily, noticeably through their lack of access (and in some cases refusal of access) to health services or education schemes simply because they are a street child. Conversely, street children can also be seen as poor and needy victims when in fact street children are extremely resourceful and resilient.

Dragon's Den

The presentations were followed by a Dragon's Den fundraising challenge. In teams, students had to come up with a fundraising idea that was both replicable across all SSSK branches and could be used by future branches. The teams then had to pitch their idea to the Dragons (Claire and Iona!)

Funnily enough, both teams presented the idea of a Football Tournament! The idea being that teams pay to enter and then the actual event can serve as an awareness raising drive too. If you're interested in holding an event like this, contact your Branch Liaison Trustee who would be more than happy to help!

The International Day for Street Children

The International Day for Street Children is held on 12th April every year and provides a platform for millions of street children around the world – and their champions (for example, SSSK) – to speak out so that their rights cannot be ignored. Lots of

different people celebrate the Day and it certainly provides an excellent fundraising hook for all our branches! Check out the website for tips and resources:

www.streetchildrenday.org.



The theme is 'Home Street Home', highlighting that for many children across the world the street is their home: the place where they spend the majority of their time, forge an identity for themselves and often sleep. And this year, part of the Day will focus on working to get the Day

recognised by the UN. With UN recognition comes greater global exposure of the issue, continuity and increases pressure on governments to act. There will be a petition to Demand a Day and you will be able to sign up on the website: www.streetchildrenday.org.

A visit to SEED in Kolkata



My friend and I visited a night shelter in a Muslim district of Kolkata, designed specifically to offer young girls from the area an opportunity of education, and a safe place to sleep if they needed it.

It was late afternoon when we arrived. The girls, all under the age of 14, had been working all day in the sewing and embroidery trades, earning money for their families. After work they came to the shelter, to spend a couple of hours learning to read and write English, together with other subjects.

We had been around other charity-run schools where the young children had been completely distracted by us. Here, the girls were very involved in their class, and the teacher was brilliant at keeping their attention, with only the odd giggle if they met our eyes.

It was a different story when we left, and they all clustered round, following us part of the way and then racing to

the windows, calling to us and waving goodbye. Even the younger class on the bottom floor, which we had only visited to distribute some sweets, were eagerly waving us off. Some of the older girls asked their teacher if they could give us a present of a chocolate bar. We were very moved as the girls have so little themselves and we were the ones who were supposed to be giving out sweets.

The children were all local to the area, as opposed to some of the boys that SEED helps, who may travel long distances to get to Kolkata. Those girls without families were allowed to sleep in the shelter at night, but it was just a temporary arrangement. They had to take all their possessions away with them again in the morning when they went to work.

All of them are very vulnerable, as there is an inherent inequality in their community, where girls are traditionally considered weaker and inferior to boys. They are at risk of being married off or sold off to men

who would likely exploit them and many could easily end up in the sex trade. The night shelter project, run by SEED, is trying to help them break out of this cycle, offering both an education, and advice and support, which might perhaps allow them to do something else with their life.

One girl, aged about 10, was really pretty, and fairer skinned than the other girls. My friend and I both noticed her. Madhumita, the SEED staff member who took us to the shelter, also mentioned her, saying how sweet and well-behaved she was. She had been telling us about the dangers of trafficking in this area and how common it is, and that often the parents will not warn their girls of the threat. When we asked about this girl Madhumita said that she was particularly vulnerable because of her looks and light skin.

The shelter offers some protection and although it is trying to use education to break with tradition, if the SEED workers interfere too much, the families will not want to send their girls to the school. The main issue for many families in this community, and throughout Kolkata, is that they cannot afford to keep the girls or even

offer a dowry to marry them off, which often results in marriages which endanger the girls.

On the way back to where we were staying, we drove through a red light district. Along the main road were girls hanging around, leaning on cars, dressed in western clothes, wearing short skirts, t-shirts and heavy make-up, obviously out of keeping with the way women traditionally dress or behave in the area. The girls came up to the car, quite happy to talk, and spoke to Madhumita. We didn't know what to say to them, and could not help thinking of the girls back in the classrooms.

Katie Hooley, student

It is precisely because of this kind of situation that SSSK exists. These vulnerable girls have great potential and it is through working with effective NGOs, that we can help these girls achieve it.

For more information, have a look at *The Street Girls Manifesto* which arose from the Street Child World Cup, Durban 2010.

Gordon, SSSK Trustee

A visit to CENIT



Last May I visited Ecuador and was able to go and see where CENIT (in English, the “Centre for the Working Girl”) are operating. Founded by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, a Catholic order, in 1991, CENIT offers educational, psychological, and medical programmes, as well as job training to working children and their families. Many have suffered various types of abuse, be it physical, sexual, or psychological, and despite the title, both boys and girls are now welcomed.

It was pouring with rain on the day I visited and, unfortunately, a national holiday! However, I was given a tour of the very large and impressive building where the charity is based and given an overview of the different projects. Predominantly, CENIT

operates a school, largely similar to the state schools in Quito but with more flexible hours and condensed learning options, thereby meaning that the working children who have missed their chance to attend state school do not fall out of the education system entirely. However, in addition to the academic programme, a range of vocational workshops are run, including a well-established bakery, leather workshop, carpentry and card-making workshop. The aim is to give the CENIT children a skill which will help them create their own employment possibilities when they finish school.

While the teaching is going on, the grass-roots street outreach project takes place every weekday. Volunteers head to the local

marketplaces with a bag full of educational resources. The session is free to all children and is a chance for CENIT to make itself known in the community and provide a taste of opportunities available for the poorest children. It is also a chance for the children's parents to consult the volunteers about enrolment in the school. The street outreach projects are hugely popular locally.

In July and August, CENIT holds a non-residential American-style 'summer camp' for the local children. All local children can apply for the camp, which is free. This year they had 50 children aged 6 to 12. For many of these, it will have been a summer of a lifetime. As well as classroom-based activities there were day trips to the swimming pool, some of Quito's historic monuments and

the city's many public parks.

Overall, I was hugely impressed by the organisation and, in particular, was struck by what an excellent opportunity for people looking to do some volunteering it offered. They have a well-established volunteer programme and a dedicated volunteer coordinator, Brendan, an American. Roles range from assisting with the school's academic and vocational programmes, to helping to run the student outreach programme, working in the medical and dental centres, to running the summer camp. Please let us know if you would like further information, but the basic requirements are a minimum of two months commitment and conversational Spanish (except for those who are medically trained).

Claire, SSK Trustee

Update from ...



One of our NGOs is ChildHope Asia in Manila, which was visited originally by Gordon who saw some of the impressive work done by the Street Educators, who are the first point of contact with street children there. ChildHope Asia's principle purpose is to advocate for the cause of the street child throughout the world, but it also conducts a number of programmes on the ground in Manila and several other cities in the Philippines. These include providing alternative education opportunities (such as basic literacy and numeracy, para-legal education, sports and recreation) and psychosocial support for street children, and a drop-in centre for girls

who have been sexually abused or prostituted.

We recently received a quarterly report updating us on their activities. Notably, between July and September 2012, a total of 890 children were reached and served. Of these, 23.3% fell within ChildHope's first priority group, which are the street-based children or those who were abused, abandoned, and live alone on the street. 71.3% of the street children assisted fell under the category of children of street families or those whose parents are also street dwellers. Furthermore, ten children were passed on to recovery shelters,

one child was reunited with his family, a total of 995 beneficiaries were seen and managed by the Mobile Health Clinic, and approximately 300 children participated in skills development training (such as basic computer

literacy, sports and dance workshops). Clearly this is all very impressive. The charity also thanked us for our continued support.

Claire, SSSK Trustee

And finally ... SSSK has a Marathon slot!

Adam Geale from Edinburgh SSSK is running the London Marathon for us, (thanks Adam!) and we wish him well. If others want to raise money through sponsorship, have a chat with your Branch Liaison Trustee as we can fund entry fees for participants.

