

Street Children in Dhaka City: A Sociological Study

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Abstract

Although the term "Street Children" is neither a precise, nor very useful classification for children "on" or "off" the street, the term does serve as a point of engagement in considering the variety of issues and problems facing far too many vulnerable children in urban centers throughout the Dhaka City. In this article, Street Children is used as shorthand for children who might transit to the street, children on the street, or children who previously lived on the street, with a variety of occupations, including beggar, rubbish/waste picker, shoeshine boy, flower vender, tea-stall boy, hotel boy, maid servant, sex worker, petty criminals, chocolate sellers etc. While there are common features in good practice to address problems faced by Street Children, the characteristics of these responses generally are linked to interventions designed to address other issues. This paper attempted to provide an introductory snapshot of issues concerning "Street Children" in this vast and culturally diverse region. This paper provides an introductory snapshot of issues concerning "Street Children" in this vast and culturally diverse region.

Introduction

In the words of Nobel Laureate Gabriela Mistral of Chile, "**Many of the things we need can wait, but the child can't. Right now is the time his bones are being formed, his blood is being made and his senses are being developed. To him we cannot answer 'Tomorrow'. His name is 'Today'.**" Every child has the right to live a decent and just life in society. Since we are unable to protect and promote their rights, we should take it as our duty to act in such a manner that these children can enjoy at least some of the rights that are necessary for their survival as human being. We talk about human rights, but we, at the same time should also remember that human rights actually begin with the rights of the children. The proper mental and physical growth of our next generation is indeed a necessity for building a prosperous nation, but that would only be possible if we could provide our children, the coming generation, with proper rights that they deserve. Proper nourishment of children, their education, their health care, their clothing and housing should be the first priority in national planning. It is through children, that humanity transmits the values, knowledge

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and skills which ensures its survival. When we speak of children's survival therefore, we are really safeguarding our own future and that of our planet.

In recent years the alarming rise in the number of street children in the major cities of Bangladesh is clearly visible. The usual image of the street children focuses on young homeless people, who live and work on the streets. But sociologically it would be more scientific to think of street children in terms of their relationship to the street. Some of these children come straight from street families; some live mainly on the street and may go back to the family home in the evenings or make sporadic visits. Yet others sleep in night shelters. A proportion of these children also endures periods in jail or institutions or spends their days working in open air markets. Most of them are working children. The reality is that our present society is not meeting the needs of:

- The 60-70% of children in living in poverty
- the 96,500 projected to die from AIDS in the next ten years and the 2 million who will be orphaned as their parents die of AIDS
- without life saving treatments
- the 42,000 in foster or residential care
- the 10,000 children live or work on streets in S.A.
- the 400,000 forced to work rather than learn
- the thousands of children subjected to sexual, physical and emotional abuse
- the 4 million children who experience some form of disability - over 70% of whom are out of school
- the 200 babies born HIV positive every day because their mothers do not receive drugs to reduce the chance of the infection spreading
- the 8.3% of children aged between 5-9 years who spend about five hours per day on economic child labor activities.

Source: UNICEF Annual Report 2004

As outlined above, '*street children*' is not a functional term in itself, because it is difficult to define the concept clearly. Even if the category is restricted to homeless children separated from family, it still opens up difficulties in defining "homelessness" or "separation" from family. To be homeless might include staying in insecure accommodation with others; separation from family might mean physical separation while maintaining familial contact and possibly remitting money. Despite such shortcomings, the categorization or term *street children* remains in everyday use by the public, the media, and professionals and project staff who deal with such children (or "street kids").

Table -1 Street Children of Selected Countries

Name of the Country	Number of Children	Source
India	11 Million	Unicef-1996
Brazil	8 Million	Service Brasileiro de Jus e Paz
Cambodia	4.5 Million	Unicef
Bangladesh	4 Million	Ministry of Social Welfare,2000
Sierra Leonean	3 Million	UNHCR-1999
Afghanistan	2.9 Million	Unicef-2002
Pakistan	1.2 Million	Unicef & ILO-2002
Philippines	1.2 Million	Childhope Asia
Ghana	1.04 Million	Acera association
Thailand	80 Thousand	www.children.thailand.com
Nepal	59 Thousand	Unicef
Kenya(Nairobi)	25 Thousand	HRW-2002
Argentina	20 Thousand	Unicef; Regional Office
El Salvador	10 Thousand	Do
Haiti	10 Thousand	Do

Source:

In this article attempt has been made broadly to analyze the emerging scenario of all of the categories of street children in Dhaka City. Coming from extremely poor families with or without parents, in their struggle for existence these children plunge into different types of work for their own survival or to support their families in the City of Dhaka. From their very childhood, these children grew up in an atmosphere of neglect and deprivation. Their dreams to survive as a human being often become nightmares along with struggle, improvisation, with little or no sense of right and wrong. Most of these children migrated from rural areas in search of living either alone or with the uprooted families from the rural areas of Bangladesh, with little no skill for any good earning. As a consequence, these children are rather compelled to earn for their own livelihood as well as for supplementing family earnings.

Data and Methodology

Different research problems imply different research goals which in turn call for varied methods. Choices are guided not merely by the investigator's discipline but also by the nature of the problem and research goals.

This article is based on an exploratory research on the street children in Dhaka City. The research aimed at analyzing the prevailing situation in the pre-selected areas in Dhaka city on informal support services available for the street children. For the purpose the researcher attempted to conduct quantitative research as well

as with the juxtaposition of qualitative research in this study. Comprehensive structured and unstructured interviews had been undertaken by means of pre-tested questionnaire. Proportional percentage and correlation for significant variables has been sort out to give the research a proper logical quantitative ground. In-depth observations, case studies and focus group discussion with unstructured interview schedule and check lists were also conducted to have clear guess of the insights of the study to sketch the subtle points of the research. Four locations i.e. Shantinagar, Shajahanpur and Notunbagh (Khilgaon) were purposively selected for conducting field survey on the street children. The reason for choosing these four areas was because of the commercial and location importance of these four areas. Majority of the street children of Dhaka city actually roam around these areas.

The analytical framework:

The analytical framework of this paper was based on exploring the marginalized situation of the life of the street children in Dhaka city which was the root cause to put them into a world that ultimately forbids their travel to the future world. These children are rather compelled to face hard realities of pains and agonies of the world around them and are forced to surrender to the situation, non congenial for their healthy social upbringing. The nemesis of crude reality pulls them to the dark uncertain world of no return. They become prey of physical, mental and social harassment and in the process become children without root. Some of these children tried their utmost to come out of this situation but in vain. Almost in all cases they failed to put themselves in the right track. Even some of these children were not very much keen or interested in normal life because they knew that the so called normal life would not provide them the support that is needed to survive. This was the common picture for most of the respondents' of the researcher.

Street Children in Dhaka City

In Dhaka the Capital city of Bangladesh more than 15 million people live and earning their livelihood. Majority of the residents of Dhaka city could be termed as ultra poor. Of this population, the most vulnerable are the street children. Approximately there are nearly 1 million street children living and working on the streets of Dhaka (UNICEF:2004). Street children in Dhaka city could be categorized into two broad categories. These are:

Children on the street – On the street children are those who work, play and spend most of their days with other children in streets but have families to return at night. These children often help the family by earning money on the streets.

Children of the street – Of the street children spend their days and nights on the street without family, entirely on their own. These children grew up with the company of other street children forming group like solidarity among themselves. These children in the group support each others in case of needs and emergencies.

The analytical framework of this paper was based on exploring the marginalized situation of the life of the street children in Dhaka city. Poverty, the root cause of their marginalization put them into a situation which ultimately forbids their travel to the future world. These children are rather compelled to face hard realities of pains and agonies of the world around them and are forced to surrender to the situation hostile for their healthy social upbringing. The nemesis of crude reality pulls them to the dark world of crime and delinquency. They become prey of social, economic, political repression and ultimately end up as criminals, prostitute, and smuggler or in any other anti social situation. Though some of these children are aware of the serious consequences and about harmful effect of the life in which they step in, but even if they try to avoid, they cannot come out of the situation. As a consequence, at a very tender age these children become totally alienated from the rest of the society both psychologically and socially. Become disillusioned about the so called civilized life most of these children are not very much keen to lead a normal healthy life.

Socio-economic and Demographic Profile of the Study Population

In Table 2 below, data is presented on the age profile of the respondent street children. The data provide us an understanding about the number of children in different age groups.

Table-2 : Age of the respondents

Age	Child group		Total
	Boys	Girls	
<5	-	1 (1.8)	1 (0.8)
5-7	11 (16.2)	8 (14.3)	19 (15.3)
7-9	9 (13.2)	8 (14.3)	17 (13.7)
9-11	22 (32.3)	17 (30.4)	39 (31.5)
11-13	18 (26.5)	12 (21.4)	30 (24.2)
13-16	8 (11.8)	10 (17.8)	18 (14.5)
Total	68 (100)	56 (100)	124 (100)

Source : Fieldwork,2005. N=124.

Figures in the parenthesis are the column percentage in each cell.

Out of 124 respondents, nearly 55 percent were boys and the rest were girls. Majority of the respondents (31.5%), belonged to the age group of 9 to 11 years as can be viewed from Table 2 above followed by children between the age group of 11 to 13 years (24.2%), between the age group of 5 to 7 years (15.3%) between the age group of 13 to 16 (14.5%) and children above 5 years (0.8%). Data depicts that at a very tender age the respondents became homeless and rootless and took shelter on the street of Dhaka City. Generally, the street children have to earn their livelihood from jobs which are very hazardous for their physical and mental growth. Moreover, in these jobs no social or economic security, or any provision for their well being, education are available. In some instances, children do jobs just for two meals without any pay. In short, the children on the street live on the mercy of others and are so vulnerable that, they do not know what might happen to them, to their families the very next moment.

During the survey the respondents reported about various occupations from which they earned their livelihood. In total 10 occupations were identified, from which the respondent children reported to earn their livelihood. A difference in occupational situation between the boy's and the girl's could be seen from the data in table 2 below. Majority of the respondents among the boys (35.3%) earned their livelihood as rag picker who are popularly known as 'Tokai'. Besides rag picking, respondent boys were also engaged in professions like selling of books (14.7%), food selling (13.2%), laborer (10.3%), boot polishing (7.5%), selling of Ice cream (4.4%), selling of flowers (2.9%), begging (2.9%). Nearly 6.9 percent respondents informed that they did not have any specific source to earn their bread and as such they engaged in any kind of job, whatever was available to them. On the other hand, majority of the girl respondents, were engaged in selling of flowers in the street (19.6%), followed by same number of respondents who had no specific jobs to earn their livelihood but earned their breads from whatever jobs were available to them. Also selling of books in the street was a preferable profession for a good number of female respondents (16.1%). Unfortunately few of the respondents admitted to 9 earns their livelihood as commercial sex workers (12.5%). Among other sources of earnings for the girls, begging (8.9%), food vending (5.4), street work (3.6%) were reported in which the girls earned their breads.

Table 2: Occupation of the Respondents

Occupation	Boys	Girls	Total
Rag Pickers (Tokai)	24 (35.3)	08(14.3)	32(25.8)
Food Vendor	09(13.2)	03(5.4)	12(9.7)
Street Laborer	07(10.3)	02(3.6)	09(7.3)
Sex Workers	00	07(12.5)	07(5.6)

Occupation	Boys	Girls	Total
Boot Polishers	05(7.5)	00	05(4.0)
Book seller	10(14.7)	09(16.1)	19(15.3)
Beggars	02(2.9)	05(8.9)	07(5.6)
Ice cream vendor	03(4.4)	00	03(2.4)
Flower seller	02(2.9)	11(19.6)	13(10.5)
No Specific job	06(8.8)	11(19.6)	17(13.7)
Total	68(100)	56(100)	124(100)

Source: Field level survey 2006

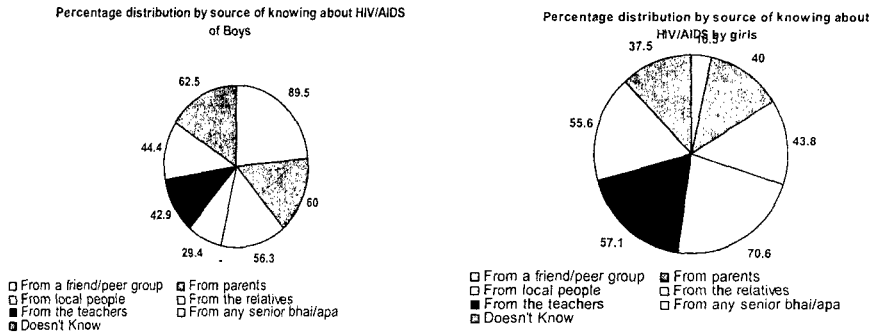
Figures in the Parenthesis are the column percentage.

It is interesting to note that in both the categories, few number of respondents reported to earn from begging, a profession which is a good source of earning easy money. While talking with the respondents who stated that they earn their livelihood from begging stated that they work for others and had to handover the amount they earn to their 'ustad' who gave them shelter. They looked very sacred while talking to the scribe, and was willing to switch over to other profession if they were given any scope. Same was the story with the respondents who had earnings as commercial sex workers. These unfortunate girls were hardly matured enough to go for such a profession. In most of the cases, these girls roam around the streets in an around Ramna area, in the Ramna park, Suharawardy Uddan and its adjacent locality. They informed the scribe that for their own protection these girls pick up a male under whom they perform their profession. In lieu, the girls had to pay money, sex to them. The girls also pay money to the law enforcing personnel to run their business, but even then, police often harassed them and also they were being subject to physical harassment by these law enforcing people. These girls were eager to return to normal life, but they knew it that it was a dream for them which could never be realized.

Source of Knowing About the HIV/AIDS :

The respondents were asked about their knowledge on HIV/AIDS an alarming crisis of the present day world. It is to be pointed out that the scribe did not use the term very broadly or go in the depth of it. The main intention was to find out from respondents' personal ideas about the killer disease to which they are the most vulnerable group. Unfortunately, it was observed that these children didn't have very clear conception about the disease though 60.0%(15) of the boys and 40.0%(10) girls reported that from their parents they came to know that this disease is a killer disease and it does not have any remedial treatment but have no idea about the causes and consequences. According to the boys, 89.5%(17) came to know about the disease from their friends/peer group. Among the girls 57.1%(12) came to know about the disease from their teachers.

Figure –1 : Percentage Distribution by source of knowing about HIV/AIDS



One of the respondent said that :

“I was quite curious when the big red buses (BRTC Buses) passes away with some pictures behind them. I want to know about what was written there. One day one of my friends said that, it was about the HIV/AIDS which is a harmful disease...”

EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION

The street children get some educational supports through the NGOs and Gos. That’s why some of them have the ability to read and write. However, there are some respondents who love to study, but can’t get or don’t know of how to get them. There are also some respondents who are engaged in the study, but they never enjoy that.

Place of their Learning to Read and Write :

Some of the respondents got themselves migrated from the other districts, after that still at that moment they couldn’t manage themselves to engage in the study. They got some education at their village primary school.

Table-3 : Place of getting the education by respondents

Place of getting the education	Child group		Total
	Boys	Girls	
In village primary school	39 (75.0%)	13 (25.0%)	52 (100.0%)
In NGO school	7 (35.0%)	13 (65.0%)	20 (100.0%)
In own house	3 (33.3%)	6 (66.7%)	9 (100.0%)
From local seniors	8 (50.0%)	8 (50.0%)	16 (100.0%)
Others	3 (42.9%)	4 (57.1%)	7 (100.0%)
Total	60 (57.7%)	44 (42.3%)	104 (100.0%)

Source: Fieldwork,2005, N=104.

From the above table, it is shown that, the majority of the boys (75.0%) mentioned their village primary school as their first basic educational institution. These boys are no longer engaged in the study whereas it was 25.0% for the girls. About 65%(13) girl respondents said that they are getting their education in the NGO schools where it was 35%(7) for the boys. The local seniors also play an important role here. 50% boys and 50% girls said that they are getting their education to some of the local senior guardians who are really helpful and there is no fixed timing for that reason, but they usually get that at night.

Reasons for Their Dropping Out :

The life of the street children are not smooth and easy. They face different kinds of social and mental barriers to continue their education and it is normal to the every street children's life.

Table -4 : Reasons for dropping out of the respondents

Reasons for dropping out	Child group		Total
	Boys	Girls	
For financial incapability	27 (56.3%)	21 (43.8%)	48 (100.0%)
To help parent(s) in their household activities	9 (34.6%)	17 (65.4%)	26 (100.0%)
Didn't enjoy education	3 (100.0%)	-	3 (100.0%)
It is too boring	5 (100.0%)	-	5 (100.0%)
The parents didn't want	6 (60.0%)	4 (40.0%)	10 (100.0%)
Too expensive	10 (90.9%)	1 (9.1%)	11 (100.0%)
Total	60 (58.3%)	43 (41.7%)	103 (100.0%)

Source : Fieldwork, 2005. N=103.

The main and major reason for their dropping out is their financial incapability. 56.3%(27) boy child and 43.8%(21) girl child informed about their lack of economic support which is more or less common to all of the street children in Bangladesh as well as in the Dhaka city. Among the girls, it was found that household activities is the another reason for which they dropped out their schools. 65.4%(17) girls said so. 100.0%(8) boy respondents expressed that they didn't like the schools whereas 90.9%(10) boys said that it was too expensive.

Duration Of Staying on the Street of the Respondents :

As a street child, they have to stay for sometimes in the street which make them of becoming a street child or children.

Table -5. : Duration of staying on the street of the respondents

Duration of staying on the street	Child group		Total
	Boys	Girls	
<1 month	3 (100.0%)	-	3 (100.0%)
2-6 months	12 (63.2%)	7 (36.8%)	19 (100.0%)
6-12 months	8 (47.1%)	9 (52.9%)	17 (100.0%)
> 1year	24 (57.1%)	18 (42.9%)	42 (100.0%)
2-3 year	11 (55.0%)	9 (45.0%)	20 (100.0%)
3-4 year	4 (33.3%)	8 (66.7%)	12 (100.0%)
4-5 years	1 (25.0%)	3 (75.0%)	4 (100.0%)
> 5 years	5 (71.4%)	2 (28.6%)	7 (100.0%)
Total	68 (54.8%)	56 (45.2%)	124 (100.0%)

Source : Fieldwork,2005. N=124.

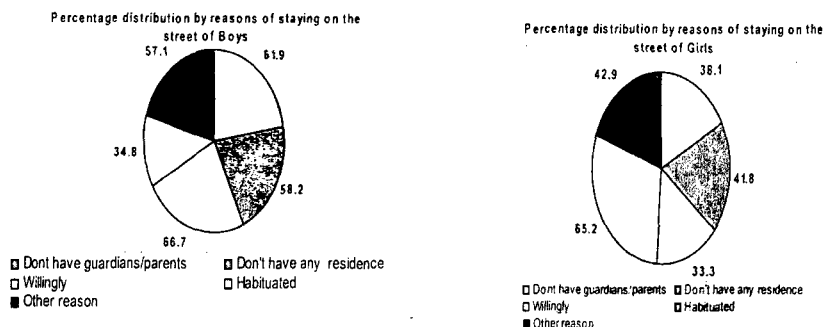
It was found that, the maximum number of boys 24 (57.1%) said that they are living in this town for more than 1 year where the maximum number of girl respondents (42.9%) said so. 63.2%(12) boys said that they are living for 2-6 months and 55%(11) boys said that they are staying here for 2-3 years.52.9%(9) girl respondents said that they are staying for 6-12 months and 45.0%(9) respondents said that they are staying for 2-3 years.

Reasons of Staying on the Street :

As migrated from different districts, when these children came to the town there are some reasons behind them which make them to be a street child. The investigator tries to find out the most common reasons of their being a street child.

The main problem which is supported by most of the respondents is this that 58.2%(39) boys and 41.8%(28) girls said that the main reason is they don't have any residence. However, 65.2%(15) girls also informed that they are habituated.

Figure-2 : Percentage Distribution of the Reasons of Staying on the Street (by the Respondents)



The Amount of Paying the Others by the Respondents for Staying :

As they live on the street, it is obvious that these children and their families need to pay a certain amount of money as ‘tips’ to live peacefully(!). This is very common to all of them.

Table -6. : The amount to pay the others by the respondents

Amount	Child group		Total
	Boys	Girls	
<5tk.	10 (58.8%)	7 (41.2%)	17 (100.0%)
10-20 tk.	25 (44.6%)	31 (55.4%)	56 (100.0%)
20-25 tk	19 (63.3%)	11 (36.7%)	30 (100.0%)
25-30 tk	9 (64.3%)	5 (35.7%)	14 (100.0%)
>30 tk	5 (71.4%)	2 (28.6%)	7 (100.0%)
Total	68 (54.8%)	56 (45.2%)	124 (100.0%)

Source : Fieldwork,2005. N=124.

Most of the boy respondents(44.6%) said that they usually pay 10-20tk. for this purpose where 55.4% girls said the same. 63.3%(19) boys and 36.7%(11) girls said that they give 20-25tk. However, 71.4%(5) boys and 28.6%(2) girls informed that they pay more than 30tk. which is distributed through the different channels.

Process of Becoming Street Children :

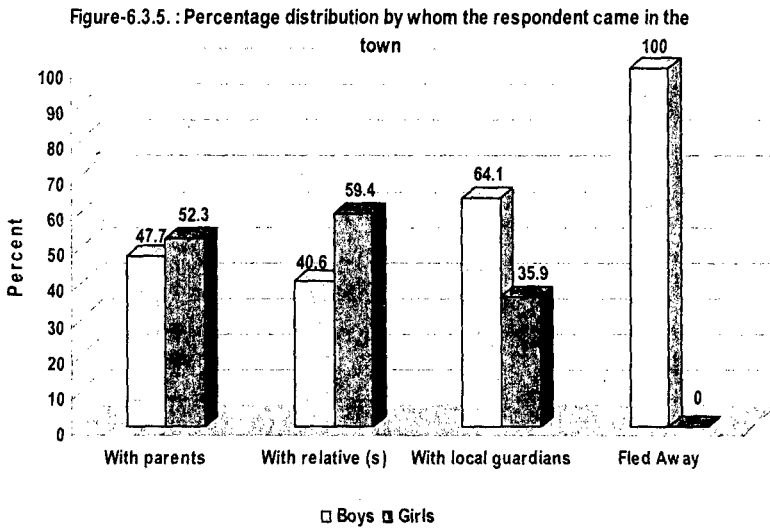
Those who are called ‘Street Children’ today, they are not in this form within one day only. There is a continuous process behind them. The first thing which is

important is that, they are migrated from the different parts of the country. After coming here, they are at a loss, to recover from that situation they have to jump to the practical life in order to survive.

With Whom the Respondents Came to the Town :

As they are young, most of them came here with their parents or it is better to say that they are migrated with their parents. There are lots of social problems which forced them to come to this town.

Figure-3:



The majority of the boys (47.7%) and girls(52.3%) said that they came here with their parents. After that, 40.6%(13) boys and 59.4%(19) girls said that they came here with their relatives. It is mentionable that, 64.1%(25) boys informed that they came to the town with, the help of their local guardians. However, 9(100.0%) boy respondents said that they fled away from their home.

Reasons for Leaving Their Villages :

They came to this town and became a street child—the calculation is not so easy like this. There are lots of social, psychological and economic factors by which they are recognized today as “Street Children.”

Table-7 : Reasons for leaving their village

Reasons	Child group		Total
	Boys	Girls	
To earn money	23 (65.7%)	12 (34.3%)	35 (100.0%)
To help/support the family	28 (90.3%)	3 (9.7%)	31 (100.0%)
To see the Dhaka city	3 (17.6%)	14 (82.4%)	17 (100.0%)
For family reason	14 (35.9%)	25 (64.1%)	39 (100.0%)
For other reasons	-	2 (100.0%)	2 (100.0%)
Total	68 (54.8%)	56 (45.2)	124 (100.0%)

Source : Fieldwork, 2005. N=124.

The maximum boys (90.3%) said that the reason is to help/support their families. 65.7%(23) boy child said that they came here to earn money where 34.3%(12) girls said so. However, 82.4%(14) girls said that they came here for family reasons which was responded by 35.9%(14) boys.

One of the respondents said :

“I have heard from my paternal uncle that the city of Bangladesh is very wonderful.....I was then quite excited.....and think in my mind that one day I will be in this town.....”

Another respondent said :

“My family is very poor and live in hardship. I have eleven sisters.....this is really hard for my parents to bear such a family. I, therefore, came to this town in order to work hard and earn more and with that I am helping my family....but it is too little....”

Earning in a day on an Average by the Respondents :

As an young guy, it can't be expected that the street children will earn quite satisfactorily. They earn to help their family as well as to survive. How much they earn ? It is showed in the following table.

Table-8. : Earning in a day on an average by the respondents

Earning average money	Child group		Total
	Boys	Girls	
<20	9 (45.0%)	11 (55.0%)	20 (100.0%)
21-50	18 (36.7%)	31 (63.3%)	49 (100.0%)
51-100	29 (74.4%)	10 (25.6%)	39 (100.0%)
101-150	8 (72.7%)	3 (27.3%)	11 (100.0%)
150>	4 (80.0%)	1 (20.0%)	5 (100.0%)
Total	68 (54.8%)	56 (45.2%)	(124) (100.0%)

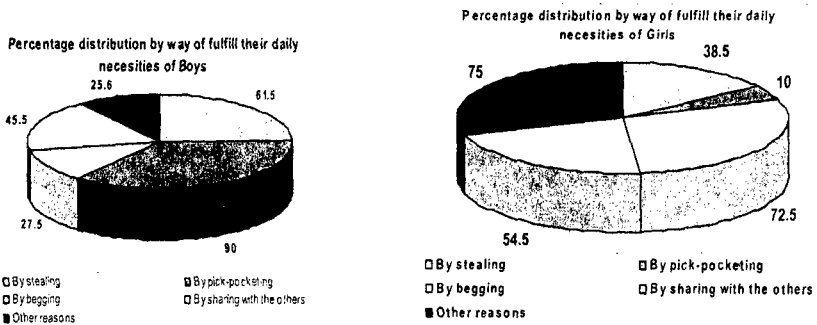
Source : Fieldwork,2005. N=124.

From the above table it is shown that, the maximum girl respondents (63.3%) said that they earn on an average about 21-50 tk. whereas the maximum boys(74.4%) said that they earn about 51-100tk. There found 45%(9) boys and 55.0%(11) girl child who mentioned that they earn on an average less than 20tk. in a day. About 80.0%(4) boys and 20.0%(1) girl said that they earn more than 150tk. a day.

Besides Working They are also Engaged in :

It is interesting to say that, the street children have a tendency to be involved with some other extracurricular activities besides their work. It is natural to all of them more or less.

Figure- 4: Percentage Distribution of the works they are also engaged in

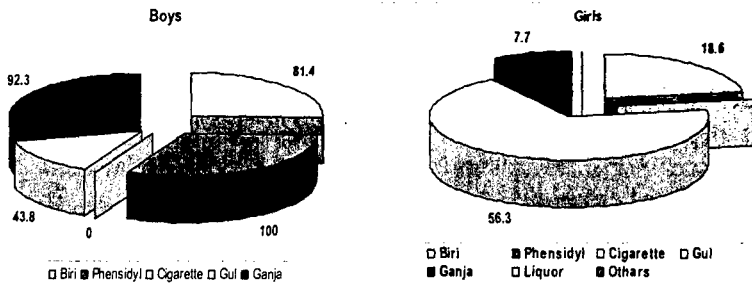


Surprisingly, 90.0%(27) boys said that they have more or less the experience of pick-pocketing. However, 61.5%(24) boys and 38.5%(15) girls said that , sometimes they are engaged in stealing and it is a part of their daily activities. Begging is also another remarkable point which is found in this study. 72.5%(29) girls and 27.5%(11) boys said that they have the experience of begging.

Some Items that are Habituated by the Respondents :

These children can't take food properly, as a matter of fact they have got themselves addicted to some kinds of drugs or addictions which is not legal. This is found very common to most of the respondents. Somehow and for some reasons these children are very fond of this type of items which is highly prohibited for their age.

Figure-5 : Percentage of Some Items that are Habituated by the Respondents



Biri/Bidi is the most common item that is habituated by the respondents. 81.4%(48) boys and 18.6%(11) girls informed that they are very much addicted to this. 92.3%(12) boy child were found who were addicted to ganja. 43.8%(7) boys and 56.3%(9) girls mentioned about their addiction to gul. However, 1 boy respondent were also found who is addicted to phensidyl.

One of the respondents said that :

“I can't work too long without *biri*. I even pass a day without food, but without *bidi*, it is not possible for me to pass a single day... I have passed even some days without any food, but on those days this *biri* helps me to survive...”

Having External Threats of The Respondents :

When these children spend most of their time on the street, at that moment their life is also under the threat of some of the people who tortured them for many purposes.

Table -9 : Having external threats of the respondents

Type of People	Child group		Total
	Boys	Girls	
Police	28 (71.8%)	11 (28.2%)	39 (100.0%)
Mastans	31 (51.7%)	29 (48.3%)	60 (100.0%)
Employers	2 (100.0%)	-	2 (100.0%)
Opposite sexes	2 (11.1%)	16 (88.9%)	18 (100.0%)
Others	5 (100.0%)	-	5 (100.0%)
Total	68 (54.8%)	56 (45.2%)	124 (100.0%)

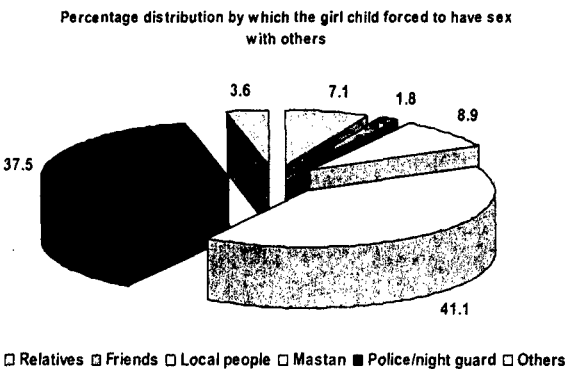
Source : Fieldwork,2005. N=124.

The majority of the boys (51.7%) said that they are highly threatened by the *mastans* where 48.3%(29) girls said so. After that, 71.8%(28) boys said that they got threat from the police off and on where 28.2%(11) girls said so. To the girls, there is an important point which is this that 88.9%(16) girl respondents mentioned that they are frequently threatened by the opposite sexes which is very acute to all of the adult girl respondents.

General Hazard and Disaster Related Information :

Here, this question is generally asked to the girl respondents who are usually facing this type of difficulties all the time.

To Whom the Girl Respondent is forced to have Sex :



The majority of the girls(41.1%) informed that they are forced usually by the *mastans* to go for such a type of harassment. After the *mastans* 37.5%(21) said that the police/night guards are the main criminal in this sector.

Figure-6: Percentage Distribution where the girl child is forced to have Sex*Source : Fieldwork,2005. N=56.***THE FUTURE DESIRE AND ASPIRATION :**

How old are they? Definitely, not too matured. But their sharp eye and practical experience are so transparent that it is really hard to believe that they are too young. Their innocence proves their age, their smile expresses their honesty. Like all other normal humans, they also dream to touch the sky—with a heavy heart.

The Dreams of the Respondents :

These respondents have some little dreams in their hearts. They don't know that whether they could fulfill it or not, but these dreams are really innocent.

Table-10.: The types of Dreams of the respondents

Dreams	Child group		Total
	Boys	Girls	
Want to go home	11 (68.8%)	5 (31.3%)	16 (100.0%)
Want to have a job	18 (66.7%)	9 (33.3%)	27 (100.0%)
Want to married off	13 (33.3%)	26 (66.7%)	39 (100.0%)
Want to study	15 (57.7%)	11 (42.3%)	26 (100.0%)
Want to have training	7 (100.0%)	-	7 (100.0%)
Don't know (cant say anything about skills development)	4 (44.4%)	5 (55.6%)	9 (100.0%)
Total	68 (54.8%)	56 (45.2%)	124 (100.0%)

Source : Fieldwork,2005. N=124.

Most of the girls(66.7%) desired that they want to marry only and live a happy life which is their dream. But it is quite different to some of the boys. Because 33.3%(13) boys mentioned that it is their dream. Most of the boys (66.7%) mention that their dream is to get a good job in future by which they can help their family financially. Some of them also give importance to their education, that's why 57.7%(15) boys and 42.3%(11) girls said that they want to get proper education which will help them to establish. Home seems sweet home to 68.8%(11) boys and 31.3%(5) girls which is their only dream that they want to go there home—their own village home. Some 7 respondents also mentioned that they want to get proper training.

Some Correlations at a Glance :**CORRELATIONS**

	Age of the respondents	Occupation of the respondents	Daily income of the respondents
Age of the respondents		.875	.860
		.000	.000
Occupation of the respondents	.875		.901
	.000		.000
Daily income of the respondents	.860	.901	
	.000	.000	
	124	124	124

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Conclusion

A significant portion of disadvantaged children live on the streets on account of acute impoverishment and social deprivation. Often separated from their families, many of these children migrate to the cities in search of a livelihood. Devoid of material resources and the support system that is essential for survival, these children end up leading nomadic lives on the streets and working at any occupation that pays. This may range from street vending, rag picking, dealing in drugs and contraband items to prostitution. Deprived of their basic rights to health, food, education and shelter and rendered completely powerless, street children are particularly susceptible to adult abuse, exploitation and manipulation.

In a world where three billion people live on less than \$2 a day, it is important in our own point of view, to assist the most needed and vulnerable group of society in developing countries such as in Bangladesh. There are more than 3 million children in Bangladesh. Most of them are living in a very hard condition in big cities, such as in Dhaka, in order to earn some money to survive, facing daily all kind of dangers.

Street children occupy only a marginal place in the overall national policy and as such their health and well-being receive the least priority in the national planning. Street children, like other disadvantaged children, are much more susceptible to disease and illness compared to adults and children from better off families. But, again, among street children girls are more vulnerable than boys.

At last, quoting from Elena Poniatowska, we can say that ---

In the street, everything is raw: reality, food, eyes, solidarity. Nothing has to be elaborated. Everything is thrown in their faces: aggressive nicknames, ruthless laughter, plunder, sneering, ridicule, the scar that never heals, the manhandling, the crudeness.

Only the street is theirs. It compensates for loneliness, rejection, lack of love. It lures them. It gives them the rhythm, tempo and immediate retribution. "I'm someone, I'm something, I just earned my dinner."

Time is different for these children. They do not care what day it is. The days of the week trap them. The hours are the hours of their disaster.

["Children of the Streets"; The State of the World's Children 2006; Unicef]

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