Research Paper
on the promotion and protection of the rights of children
working and/or living on the street
OHCHR 2011 Global Study

By Sarah Thomas de Benitez with Trish Hiddleston

Contents Page

Executive Summary P. 4

Section I:
Introduction P. 5

Section II:
Global Review of Children working and/or living in the Street P. 7

Section III:
Framework of Roles and Responsibilities of Duty-Bearers P. 24

Section IV:
Criteria for Good Practices to Safeguard the Rights of Children with Street Connections P. 35

Section V:
Data Collection and Research with Street-Connected Children P. 53

Section VI:
Broad Conclusions P. 66

Bibliography P. 67

Annexes
1: A Comparison of Resolutions CHR 1994/93 and HRC A/HRC/16/12
2: Examples of roles and responsibilities of various duty-bearers in relation to street-connected children’s protection rights
3: Summary of child protection systems mapping and assessment
4: Background on the selection of the five crosscutting rights-based principles
5: Suggested indicators of ‘good practice’ in the literature about street-connected children
6: Examples of Techniques and Studies by Data Collection Method
Boxes
Box 1: Summary of key changes from 1994 CHR Resolution to 2011 HRC Resolution
Box 2: How are ‘guesstimates’ problematic?
Box 3: How are terms and definitions problematic?
Box 4: How are stereotypes of children’s characteristics problematic?
Box 5: How is a welfare ‘rescue’ approach problematic?
Box 6: Relationship between Rights-Holders and Duty-Bearers
Box 7: Obligations of State Parties as principal duty-bearers under International Child Rights Law
Box 8: Examples of non-State duty-bearers
Box 9: Case Study: Govind
Box 10: Best interests of the child might be applied in ‘good practice’ to ...
Box 11: Non-discrimination might be applied in ‘good practice’ with street-connected children to ...
Box 12: Good practice in participation might include ...
Box 13: Good practice in accountability could be evidenced in ...
Box 14: Good practice regarding sustainability could include ...
Box 15: Good practice regarding safety could include ...
Box 16: Good practice regarding availability of services could include ...
Box 17: Good practice regarding accessibility of services could include ...
Box 18: Good practice in quality of support could include ...
Box 19: Good practice in providing flexible support might include ...
Box 20: Example of a comparative CLRAM Study of children working on the streets in Turkey’s three principal population centres, 2001
Box 21: Children’s Own Research Shoshur Bari and street children’s research in Dhaka, Bangladesh
Box 22: Raising Voices in Uganda
Box 23: Reducing the risk, cutting the cost: An assessment of potential savings from Barnardo’s interventions for young people who have been sexually exploited

Figures
Figure 1: Proposed Typology of Children’s Street-Connectedness
Figure 2: Ecological Model illustrating the Child as nested within various environments
Figure 3: Child Protection Systems: Actors, Contexts, and Components

Tables
Table 1: Central Principles of a Rights-Based Approach and their Implications for Street-Connected Children
Table 2: Examples of Roles of States to Guarantee Rights at the three levels of Obligations with respect to Street-connected Children
Table 3: Proposed Criteria for Good Practice evidenced in Data Collection
### List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHR</td>
<td>Commission on Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLRAM</td>
<td>Child labour rapid assessment methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoE</td>
<td>Council of Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPS</td>
<td>Child protection system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRC</td>
<td>Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of Congo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRC</td>
<td>Human Rights Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IASC</td>
<td>Inter-Agency Standing Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPEC</td>
<td>International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCWG</td>
<td>global Protection Cluster Working Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIMPOC</td>
<td>Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDG</td>
<td>United Nations Development Group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive Summary

This paper was presented in draft to guide and stimulate discussion at the Expert Consultation on 1-2 November 2011 and to inform the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights’ report to the Human Rights Council. It has been updated to take account of the Expert Consultation and other contributions to the study. In response to the invitation in Resolution HRC/RES/16/12 to ‘conduct a study on challenges, lessons learned and best practices in a holistic, child rights and gender-based approach... including practices in the collection of disaggregated data and experiences on access to child-friendly counseling, complaint and reporting mechanisms to protect the rights of children living and/or working on the streets’, this paper articulates advances in understandings and actions concerned with: children themselves; policy and service approaches; good practice; and data collection.

As an introduction, Section I draws attention to global advances since the first Commission for Human Rights 1994 resolution on ‘street children’. Informed by this context, research and interventions, this paper moves the discussion forward by setting out four inter-linked proposals - each one the subject of a separate Section of this paper.

Section II dismantles myths about numbers, definitions, characteristics and the need to ‘rescue’ children from the street. Attention is drawn children’s multiple rights deprivations and to the Committee on the Rights of the Child’s adoption of the term ‘children in street situations’, recognizing that the ‘problem’ is not the child but the situations in which s/he finds her/himself. Building on this term, ‘street-connectedness’ is introduced to draw attention to choices children make in developing their relationships and identities in the street - in highly adverse conditions with very restricted options. Girls and boys who work and/or live in the streets also have relationships with family, friends and others in the community. Exploring children’s connections to the street, alongside their other relationships, invites us to develop richer, more textured, understandings of their lives.

Section III develops this to consider how States and other duty bearers can: prevent children from experiencing multiple rights violations that push them to the streets; and adequately support children who have developed street connections. Comprehensive Child Protection Systems, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, are proposed as mechanisms able to take a holistic, rights-based, gender-sensitive approach and to prevent street-connectedness. But child protection systems alone are insufficient, and specialized interventions offer critical support to street-connected children. Developing and sharing good practice is a vital ingredient in helping specialized interventions to flourish.

Section IV proposes 10 criteria of ‘good practice’ as applicable to all levels of practice, from community interventions to national budget allocations. These comprise five criteria driven by child rights principles: Best interests of the child; Non-discrimination; Participation; Accountability; and Sustainability; and five normative criteria driven by the circumstances of street-connected children: Safety; Availability; Accessibility; Quality; and Flexibility. These proposed criteria offer a basis for wider consultations about good practice within and across levels of practice and geographical regions.

Recognizing that protection of children’s rights and identification of good practice need a strong evidence base, Section V proposes a concerted focus on data collection, to generate evidence needed for States and other duty bearers to be able to fulfil street-connected children’s rights. The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommends a comprehensive and coordinated system of data collection about children, in which data are disaggregated to be able to identify discrimination and disparities in the realization of rights. This paper draws attention to the importance of identifying children’s circumstances and connections, by their characteristics and experiences, to design and monitor implementation of strategies, policies and programmes. Children have the right and expertise to participate as co-researchers in information gathering, analysis and dissemination of research.

Section VI concludes by drawing together the paper’s four main proposals.
Section I: Introduction

This paper consolidates and builds on advances between:

- 2011 Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/16/12 for ‘children working and/or living on the street’.

Since 1994, when the international community last came together to resolve to improve conditions for ‘street children’ within the forum of the Commission for Human Rights, the world has experienced dramatic changes. Global milestones have included:

- 1999 – Global population passed the six billion mark. Below five billion in 1994, the world population reached seven billion in 2011
- 2000 – Millennium Declaration launch and collective commitment to achieving eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)
- 2000 – UN Global Compact launch, a first strategic policy initiative for businesses committed to ten universally accepted principles and by 2010 the world’s largest corporate responsibility initiative
- 2008 - The world’s population became evenly split between urban and rural areas. 54% rural and 46% urban in 1994, 70% is expected to be living in urban areas by 2050
- 2010 – Numbers of mobile phone subscribers reached 5.28 billion - that’s more than 75% of the global population. Back in 1994, there were fewer than 100 million, and SMS had just been launched to enable text messages to be exchanged between mobiles.

During the same period, human rights instruments were developed and are now in force to better protect children’s rights, and more guidance has been issued of relevance to children in street situations:1

- In 1994 the (1989) UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) had been ratified by 168 countries. By 2011, 193 countries have ratified, including every UN member except USA and Somalia (which signed in 1995 and 2002 respectively)
- In 2000, two Optional Protocols to the CRC were introduced (A/RES/54/263): on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; and on the involvement of children in armed conflict. By 2011, more than 140 States were parties to these Protocols
- Several instruments of relevance to protecting street-connected children have also been introduced since 1994, perhaps most notably: ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999); UN Trafficking in Persons Protocol (2000); UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (2010); and the Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment No. 10 (2007) on the rights of the child in juvenile justice
- Two major studies have been undertaken by the UN on children since 1994 which are of direct concern for children working and/or living in the street: The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children (1996)2 together with a ten year strategic review entitled “Children and Conflict in a Changing World” (2007)3 and Violence against Children (2006)4

---

In 2011, a joint report to the Human Rights Council by the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children (A/HRC/16/56), provides guidance and recommendations to strengthen child-sensitive counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms to safeguard children’s right to freedom from all forms of violence.

Reflecting some of these global shifts over 18 years, significant differences are evident between the 1994 Commission on Human Rights (CHR) resolution on street children and the 2011 HRC Resolution on children working and/or living on the street. Annex 1 explores the two resolutions in some detail, identifying shifts between them, reflecting a changing world context, refined human rights instruments and better understandings about children. Box 1 below summarises these changes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1: Summary of key changes from 1994 CHR Resolution to 2011 HRC Resolution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• A shift in terminology from ‘street children’ to ‘children working and/or living on the street’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A pronounced move towards a holistic, child-centred, gender-sensitive approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased awareness of the diversity of children’s characteristics and experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• More emphasis on prevention, with more detailed guidance on priority actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased emphasis on multiple stakeholders working together to improve support for children in street situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased emphasis on addressing discrimination, encouraging social inclusion and enjoyment of all rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Stronger legal instruments and more guidance on legal support for children in the streets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• New emphasis on research for planning, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes, and importance of children’s views and robust data to inform these processes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This paper recognises the importance of these changes, summarises developments in the research about children and human rights, and in response to the terms of the invitation to the OHCHR to conduct a global study, develops four proposals:

• That ‘Street Connectedness’ is considered as a concept to explore children’s relationships with and within the street, drawing on a holistic approach that understands children to be growing up within a series of inter-connected environments. This proposal is set out in Section II

• That Child Protection Systems (CPS) are explored as structures coherent with a rights-based, holistic approach to protect children from multiple rights violations and prevent street-connectedness. This proposal is made in Section III, which recognizes that if child protection systems are not fully functional, specialized interventions are also needed to offer critical support to street-connected children

• That 10 Criteria of ‘Good Practice’ provide a starting point for further discussion - five cross-cutting criteria and five normative criteria - building on principles of human rights and on children’s experiences of multiple deprivations and street connections. The 10 criteria proposed are put forward in Section IV

• That Data Collection must be systemic, disaggregated and generated with the active participation of children to capture information meaningful for policy-making and design of interventions intended to support street-connected children. The arguments are set out in Section V, which identifies the most important gaps.

Section VI briefly draws together these four proposals.

---

5 See HRC 2011 Resolution A/HRC/16/12, Article 18
Section II: Global Review of Children working and/or living in the Street

A. Introduction

This Section identifies and dismantles four ‘myths’ that have fostered significant misunderstandings about children working and/or living in the streets. These myths address:

1. Numbers
2. Definitions
3. Stereotypes
4. Rescue

For each myth, new realities are described that represent current understandings about children’s experiences and lives.

The Section ends by proposing ‘street-connectedness’ as a term more consistent with a rights-based, holistic approach than ‘children working and/or living on the streets’, and which builds on the term ‘children in street situations’. A working definition and typology are introduced, with the aim of advancing discussions about policies and interventions to support street-connected children.

B. ‘Street children’: Four Myths and New Realities

B.1. Myth 1 - The Numbers Myth: There are 100 million street children and numbers are growing fast...

A frequently cited global estimate of 100 million+ ‘street children’ (and growing) has no basis in research. The figure was floated in 1989 by UNICEF as an estimate of the number of children growing up on urban streets around the world. More than a decade later, it was claimed numbers were still growing but the figures conflicted: ‘the latest estimates put the numbers of these children as high as 100 million’. Clearly a ‘100 million’ estimate cannot remain static for well over a decade, while at the same time being said to be growing. Meanwhile, the global population has grown by more than 30% since the late 1980s and urbanization continues apace in much of the global south.

Larger figures have been cited: ‘In 2001, the United Nations estimated that the worldwide population of street children [...] was 150 million, with numbers rising daily’ and some have projected increases to as many as ‘800 million by the year 2020’. But the magical ‘100 million’ remains a myth.

---

6 See Thomas de Benitez (2011) for a fuller discussion
7 Campos et al (1994)
8 UNICEF (2002: 37)
9 Dabir and Athale (2011: 15)
The ‘100 million’ ‘guesstimate’ still frames books, reports and academic articles sometimes accompanied by an urgent plea to address the rapidly increasing numbers: ‘...The alarming number of street children throughout the world, which is increasing on a daily basis’.

Seventeen years ago, Judith Ennew argued convincingly that most estimates of children in street situations had ‘no validity or basis in fact’. We are no closer today to knowing how many children are working and/or living on the streets of the world. As a 2011 report noted: ‘The global numbers of street involved children are not known. It is now generally acknowledged that initial estimates were very over-inflated. The figure of 100 million street children [...] though still widely quoted, has been largely discredited by researchers.’ That said, within a rapidly urbanizing and growing global population, numbers are likely to be increasing; richer regions also seem not to be immune.

At national and local levels too, ‘guesstimates’ have proved unreliable. An example comes from Latin America: In Brazil – where the 1993 Candelaria massacre of street children outraged the world - 30 million children were estimated to be living on the streets in the 1980s. By 1990 this figure had been downsized by a third to 20 million and radically reduced again in the same decade to 7 million ‘hard-core’ street children - a figure still cited frequently by institutions, journalists and academics, although widely attributed to hearsay. Meanwhile, 1995 head-counts in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paolo – cities thought to have the largest populations of street children in Brazil - found fewer than 1,000 children sleeping on the streets.

Some useful estimates have been generated by empirical research – these are discussed in Section V below. Guesstimates made without reference to well-constructed surveys are best ignored.

11 Reale for Save the Children UK (2008: 6)
14 Ennew (1994: 32)
15 Several contributions by Governments to the 2011 Global Study recognise that although children are working and living on the streets in their countries, but numbers are unknown. Dabir and Athale (2011: 22-24) on reasons why making estimates is such a complex process
16 GCPS (2011: 8)
17 Council of Europe (CoE): ‘While in most European countries there are no accurate figures of the numbers of children concerned due to the lack of a systematic collection of data, it is clear that the scale of the phenomenon is both alarming and on the increase in Europe’s cities.’ (2008: 1)
18 This experience is by no means limited to Brazil. In many countries, initially large guesstimates have been punctured after surveys have been carried out with children on the ground
19 Ress and Wik-Thorsell (1986)
20 Connolly (1990)
21 See for example Dabir and Athale (2011)
22 Hecht (1998)
23 Green (1998)
24 See for recent data on children in street situations in Brazil, Irene Rizzini’s presentation (p.3-4) at the expert consultation for this study, using the link at: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Children/Study/Pages/ExpertConsultation.aspx
**Box 2: How are ‘guesstimates’ problematic?**

- Global ‘guesstimates’ intend to convey scale and rising ‘guesstimates’ to convey urgency, but are misguided: In terms of scale - children who live and or work in the streets form a small proportion of the world’s urban poor – it is not their numbers but multiple violations of their rights that require a concerted response; In terms of urgency – numbers may rise sharply in circumstances when crisis conditions prevail (war, internal conflict, political upheaval, natural disaster, health epidemic, economic crisis) and then are likely to gradually fall – they do not require a rapid response but rather a sustained and thoughtful one. Global concern should be less about rising numbers and more about the persistence of conditions that force children to choose to work and/or live on urban streets in certain regions, countries or cities.

- Alarmist national and local ‘guesstimates’ have provoked governments into launching high-profile programmes and interventions based on insufficient data and misguided expectations. Such ‘guesstimates’ propel discussion away from a realistic assessment of children’s needs and considered responses towards rushed interventions that aim to reduce the apparent numbers of children working and/or living in the streets. They are doomed to fail – losing public sympathy, private sector interest and public sector resources as expected numbers do not materialize and projects fail to reach their goals. As policy-makers, private funders and the public become disillusioned, programmes are abandoned and children may be viewed as too hard - or even resistant - to help.

- Alarmist ‘guesstimates’ can encourage repressive responses by police as authorities seek: to calm public fears that their safety is threatened by inundations of ‘delinquents’; or to develop an image conducive to attracting investment, sporting events or high-level visits. Aggressive policing may clear the streets of visible children working and/or living in the street, creating the illusion of a successful strategy, but is likely to further endanger children as they are pushed into more marginal spaces or placed in detention centres in violation of their rights.

**New Realities: Numbers of children working and/or living on the street fluctuate and are more realistically assessed regularly at local level.**

A number of countrywide situation analyses to estimate numbers of children in the streets have been carried over the years, in countries as diverse as Romania\(^{25}\), Mexico\(^{26}\), Zimbabwe\(^{27}\); Georgia\(^{28}\); and Turkey\(^{29}\). These exercises can be useful as initial assessments of numbers, characteristics and circumstances of children in urban streets. A 2009 study in Georgia found that ‘the Point-Count Estimate revealed there was an average of 1,049 street children in the four cities in November 2007, with a maximum estimate of about 1,600 children’\(^{30}\).

National counts have rarely been repeated (Mexico is an exception with one in 1999 and a second in 2004), not least because of logistical difficulties and costs but also because they are of

\(^{25}\) Save the Children Romania & UNICEF (1999)  
\(^{26}\) SNDIF (1999 and 2004)  
\(^{27}\) UNICEF (2001)  
\(^{28}\) Save the Children, USAID & UNICEF (2009)  
\(^{29}\) See Government of Turkey’s Contribution to the 2011 Global Study at [http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Children/Study/Pages/Contributions.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Children/Study/Pages/Contributions.aspx)  
\(^{30}\) Save the Children, USAID & UNICEF (2009)
limited value for planning policies and designing interventions. Their greatest value may lie in puncturing alarmist ‘guesstimates’ – particularly about numbers of ‘street-living’ children and providing pointers for more detailed research with children working and/or living on the streets.

City-level counts, occasionally extending to two or three cities (e.g. Cairo and Alexandria, 2001) have often found smaller numbers of children working and/or living on the streets than earlier ‘guesstimates’ suggested:

- Mexico City: A 1970s ‘guesstimate’ by the authorities suggested 200,000 children were ‘roaming the streets of the capital’, but three surveys between 1992 and 2000 found numbers of street children (street-living and street-working children) to be 15% to 20% of that number despite assertions by some Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and media that numbers were growing.

- New Delhi: A 2010 study found approximately 51,000 street children (street-living, street-working and street-families’ children). That figure is just over half of earlier conservative guesstimates of 100,000 (2005) and just one eighth of some of the more alarmist guesstimates of 400,000 (2004) still in use today.

Differences in stocks and flows of children can be dramatic over time: a NGO in Puebla City, Mexico finds numbers of new children coming on to the streets in the 2000s have slowed since the 1980s to a ‘trickle’, while observers in several cities of Bangladesh and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) report respectively ‘phenomenal’ growth and ‘an explosion’ in numbers over the last decade. In large cities and in smaller urban settings, numbers have proved a helpful guide to the scale of planning for children living and/or working on the streets: a 2007 street survey in Thika Town in Kenya by NGOs in coordination with local authorities found 260 to 300 children working and/or living in the streets. A second, repeat survey in 2009 found numbers had fallen in two years by 40-50% to 150-160 children working and/or living on the streets. The real value of such studies is less in establishing numbers per se and more in improving understanding of children’s lives and changes in street experiences.

---

31 Van Beers (2003) noted that many ‘guesstimates’ conflated all children in street situations with street-living children, who in most serious studies have been shown to represent between 1% and 15% of children in street situations at any one time
32 UNODCCP (2001)
33 Agnelli & Rizvi (1986: 34)
35 IHID and Save the Children, India (2011)
36 Asha Rane cited in http://www.newint.org/issue377/facts.htm
38 See for example http://www.planeterra.org/pages/projects/19.php?id=8
39 GCPS (2011: 8)
40 AFCIC (2009)
B.2. Myth 2: The Terminology Myth: ‘Street children’ either live in the streets, or work there and go home to their families at night

The first definition of a ‘street child’ developed by UNICEF in the 1980s, trying to make sense of a surging phenomenon of children moving onto Latin American city streets, was:

‘...any girl or boy... for whom the street (in the widest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become his or her habitual abode and/or source of livelihood; and who is inadequately protected, supervised, or directed by responsible adults’.\(^{41}\)

UNICEF distinguished three groups\(^ {42}\):

- **Children ‘in’ the street**: children who work on the street but go home at night to their family
- **Children ‘of’ the street**: children who sleep and live on the street who are ‘street-based and functionally without family support’ although they maintain family links\(^ {43}\)
- **Abandoned children**: ‘street based’ children who are completely on their own

The terms ‘in’ and ‘of’ the street became very popular in 1980s literature, deriving mainly from field research pioneered by UNICEF in Colombia and Brazil, and subsequently exported to Africa and other continents.\(^ {44}\)

By the 1990s, some researchers had found these categories unhelpful because they did not reflect realities they found on the ground. For example, some children moved between categories - sometimes ‘of’ but at other times ‘in’ the streets. Others spent significant periods on the streets but didn’t fit either ‘in’ or ‘of’ – as they ‘hung out’, accompanied siblings, or lived with their families on the streets. Other researchers found the categories to be too constraining and ‘...constructed more revealing typologies and systems which consider other dimensions of street life such as street territories, social organisation, economic activities, and integration with street culture.’\(^ {45}\) Children’s street ‘domains’, their relationships and identity construction began to be explored.\(^ {46}\)

By the 2000s, the ‘in’/‘of’ terminology in practice was deemed unsatisfactory by many scholars ‘as children themselves defied these generalizations’.\(^ {47}\) Today, scholars generally recognise ‘street children’\(^ {48}\) as a socially constructed category that in practice does not constitute a homogeneous population or phenomenon. Used as early as 1851\(^ {49}\) the term is still useful as a rallying point for advocacy, fundraising and publicity. But for research, planning of policies, design of interventions and understanding children’s everyday lives it has, with time, proved less helpful.

\(^{41}\) Formulated in 1983 by the Inter-NGO Programme for Street Children and Street Youth, cited in Ennew (1994: 15)
\(^{42}\) See Dabir and Athales (2011: 6)
\(^{43}\) ‘Since its inception the term “street children” has been used to refer to children in a variety of circumstances, creating confusion about who street children are and what kinds of experiences brought them to the streets. The terms “on” the street, “of” the street and “on and off” the street are commonly used to classify street children in many countries [...]. Children “on” the street are engaged in the street but have regular contacts with their families. Children “of” the street live, work and sleep in the street. This distinction is usually referred to as a “UNICEF definition” Ennew 1996 in Aptekar & Heinonen (2003)
\(^{44}\) Ennew and Swart-Kruger (2003)
\(^{45}\) Scanlon et al (1998)
\(^{46}\) See for example Lucchini (1999)
\(^{47}\) Panter-Brick (2002: 150)
\(^{48}\) From Glauser (1990) to Ennew (2000) and for example de Moura (2002)
\(^{49}\) By Henry Mayhew in London, see Mayhew (2010)
New Realities in Terms and Definitions: they evolve to reflect better understandings of children’s experiences and develop more supportive approaches

HRC Resolution A/HRC/16/12 has sidestepped the definitional dilemma to some extent by using the phrase ‘children working and/or living on the street’ without defining who or what is included or excluded. However, even this more careful phrasing presents difficulties, excluding by implication, amongst others:

- Children when not on the street, even those who at various times work and/or live there (e.g. seasonal street workers, children who use in temporary shelters, children who move between street and home, children who are removed from the street to children’s homes, remand centres or other forms of forcible detention)
- Children who accompany adults or children working on the street but do not themselves work or live on street (e.g. dependants, friends, members of street-centred groups or gangs)
- Children who ‘hang out’ on the streets (e.g. use temporary night-shelters or are out of school and have limited places to go in the daytime, or who get together to use drugs / alcohol on the streets)

The term ‘children working and/or living on the street’ also draws attention to children’s physical presence on the street, ignoring their emotional attachments to public places.

Other options have been proposed, roughly within three broad categories:

1. **Extension of UNICEF’s ‘in’ and ‘of’ the street categories** to include new groups or sub-groups, e.g. children of street-based families, homeless children, runaways, young street adults, and migrant children on the streets.
2. **Use of alternative terms and/or definitions** premised on recognising children as capable social actors and even as having street ‘careers’. Notably, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, has “…on the basis of a “rights based approach” decided to choose the new wording “children in street situations”, which puts the accent on the idea that the child has of his/her own situation. In fact the problem is no more the child her/himself but the situations in which s/he may find her/himself.” Other examples include use of the terms ‘street-active children’ or re-defining the term ‘street children’ as meaning ‘children for whom the street is a reference point and has a central role in their lives’, a definition adopted by the NGO Plan while changing the term to ‘street involved children’: ‘We have adopted the following

---

50 See Thomas de Benitez (2011)
51 See eg Droz (2006), UNICEF Romania (2006) and States contributions to this study at http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Children/Study/Pages/Contributions.aspx
52 See http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Children/Study/BICE1.pdf for other identifiable groups
53 See Dabir and Athales (2011:13) for the history of this idea
54 http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Children/Study/Consultation/JeanZermattenCRC.pdf p.3-4
55 Dabir and Athales (2011:13)
56 Redes Rio Criança, Brazil (2007: 18)
3. Rejection of the categorization of children in terms of association with the street, on grounds that such debates identify children as a ‘social problem’ or ‘out of place’ and: ‘...problematize the ways in which society’s gaze, through such classification and implication of difference, serves to stigmatize the group and ends up serving the interests of particular sectors of society’\textsuperscript{58}. The political nature of categorization has been highlighted, for example: ‘(Re)Labelling ‘street children’ ‘street families’ conveys that Kibaki government’s moral ethnicity is up to the task of converting what are seen as dangerous thugs into future citizens working hard for the Kenyan nation.’\textsuperscript{60}. There has also been some refocusing and merging of children working and/or living on the streets into larger phenomena, for example as mobile youngsters within the collective term ‘children on the move’\textsuperscript{61}.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 3: How are terms and definitions problematic?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The use of different terms and contested definitions complicates attempts to find out how many children are in street situations that violate their rights, and limits efforts to compare findings from different studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Refinement of UNICEF’s ‘in’ and ‘of’ the street categories risks over-simplifying and compartmentalizing children, failing to take account of children as social actors with multidimensional lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Creation of alternative terms and definitions risks dispersing or ‘silo-ing’ knowledge and advocacy about children’s experiences, by focusing on themes or geographical regions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Shifting attention away street-based experiences risks missing children’s engagement and ignoring their connections with the streets, while ‘Children themselves, of course, are still on the streets, easily visible in the great majority of urban centers.’ (Panter-Brick, 2002:148)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B.3. Myth 3 – Stereotypes: Children working and/or living in the street are ‘Victims’ or ‘Delinquents’

Early research and publicity around ‘street children’ in Latin America focused on establishing ‘the hallmarks of a street lifestyle and the characteristics of street children’\textsuperscript{62}. In 1970s and 1980s Latin America, particularly in Colombia, Mexico and Brazil, ‘street children’ were found to be – and became typically represented as:

\textsuperscript{57} GCPS (2011: 8)  
\textsuperscript{58} Ennew (2003)  
\textsuperscript{59} Butler and Rizzini (2003)  
\textsuperscript{60} Droz (2006: 353)  
\textsuperscript{61} Reale (2008), Castle (2009)  
\textsuperscript{62} Panter-Brick (2002)
Male
- Aged on average 13 to 14
- Washing car windscreens, selling chewing gum or polishing shoes
- Prone to engagement in substance abuse, early sexual activity and criminality
- Orphaned, abandoned or from dysfunctional, poor families

These stereotypes and causal representations have often transferred with little question to other countries in the region and even exported to Africa and Asia. However, ethnographic research has established that characterizations of street children as ‘victims’ or ‘delinquents’ reflect public attitudes towards them - as helpless and hungry or as criminals lacking morality and respect for the social order - rather than realistic representations of characteristics of actual children or their circumstances.

**New Realities: Children have diverse characteristics. Prevalence of specific characteristics varies by location, time and context.**

Researchers have found substantive and dynamic diversity in children’s characteristics and their reasons for occupying the streets.

**Gender** stereotypes have been successfully challenged, with differences found even between cities in countries in the same region: for example a study in West Africa’s Mali and Ghana found ‘in Bamako, the large majority of our sample were boys, whereas in Accra, three out of four were girls.’ Boys in Bamako seem to have run away from all-male Koranic schools, while in Accra significant numbers of girls surviving on the street are young mothers. That said, many cities continue to have predominantly male street child populations. Research exploring gendered experiences has found differences between girls and boys in, for example: coping strategies; activities; health.

There is also diversity in average ages: Europe, USA, Canada and increasingly Latin America have older street-based populations than do cities in Africa and Asia (although specific cities attract different age groups) – and change over time. In the Kenyan city of Thika, for example, the number of ‘youth’ as a proportion of the street-based child and youth population was found to have increased considerably from 2007 to 2009.

Age presents different threats and opportunities: as children age into youth on the streets, work prospects, recreational activities, treatment by authorities and group responsibilities may all change. In Mexico ‘...if street kids survive, they are likely to become youths, young adults, veterans and seniors of streets and institutes, and the main exit from street life is death...’

---

63 See for example Dallape (1998)
64 See for example: Enew and Swart-Kruger (2003); West (2003); Butler (2009)
65 Hatjou & Huser (2005: 62)
66 For example Shanahan (2003); Payne (2004); Boakye-Boaten (2008)
67 Muntingh et al (2006) found 85% of street children in Zambia were male; Cheng and Lam (2010) found around 90% children living on the streets in Shanghai were male; Grundling et al (2004) found around 80% of all street children interviewed in Namibia were male
69 See Hansson (2003) ‘strolling’ in Cape Town; and Jones and Thomas de Benitez (2010) gendered work in Puebla, Mexico
70 See Benoit et al (2007) in Toronto
71 AFCIC (2010:5)
72 For example Beazley (2003), on Tikyan in Indonesia; and Gigengack (2008) on Mexico’s Banda
73 Gigengack (2008:13)
children may transition away from the streets while unemployed youth move into public spaces\textsuperscript{74}, in others children ageing out of institutional or foster care can find themselves on the streets as young adult drug users\textsuperscript{75}.

**Descent**, or caste, features in India, where ‘lower’ castes and ethnic groups are over-represented\textsuperscript{76} on the streets, but children of all descents, ethnic groups and backgrounds have been found in the streets of Nepal\textsuperscript{77}. A high proportion of **indigenous** children on the streets has been reported in Guatemala, and children with **disabilities** (some deliberately maimed, others not) in India and Egypt\textsuperscript{78}.

**Street-based occupations** are extremely varied and dynamic, reflecting: cultural context\textsuperscript{79}; local informal market realities (e.g. possibilities for washing car windscreens, juggling at traffic lights, breathing fire, selling chewing gum or fruit; recycling garbage); as well as the local illegal economy (e.g. sex selling, theft, drug running and selling pirated goods). Many children combine different jobs or change between them according to conditions. Some children are able to exercise a degree of choice over the type and conditions of work they do; others are forced into and controlled while doing specific jobs, such as commercial sex selling and forced child begging\textsuperscript{80}.

**Substance abuse** varies by location and over time, as well by age, gender and other variables. Two studies in Vietnam’s Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), conducted eight years apart, found striking differences in drug use. In 1992: ‘None of the 200 children in our survey were drug users. Glue or lacquer sniffing, widely practiced amongst street children in Thailand and in South American countries, is fortunately absent in HCMC.’ But by 2000 at least one in six children living on the streets used heroin: ‘There is little doubt that heroin addiction is the biggest problem faced by street children in HCM City today. The children themselves say so, as do the service providers and other concerned agencies.’\textsuperscript{81} Children’s engagement in early sexual activity and involvement in crime are similarly more related to wider social conditions, transformations and inequalities than to whether they work and/or live on the streets.

Conventional wisdom has been challenged in relation to **family backgrounds**. Children traditionally viewed as orphans, abandoned and alone on the street, have often been found on closer inspection to have strong, ongoing – if erratic - links to home, although home may be extremely disorganised and/or a highly abusive environment. And while poverty has been mooted as ‘the major cause of street children’\textsuperscript{82}, and has indeed been found to be an important pathway to the street in many contexts\textsuperscript{83}, the great majority of children who live in poverty do not work and/or live on the streets. Pathways other than orphanhood, abandonment and dysfunctional, poor families for children working and/or living on the streets have been found to include\textsuperscript{84}: war and internal conflict, natural disaster\textsuperscript{85}, HIV/AIDS

---

\textsuperscript{74} For example Kok et al (2010) in South Africa
\textsuperscript{75} For example HRW (2010) in California; and Robbins et al (2010) in Ukraine
\textsuperscript{76} West (2003)
\textsuperscript{77} Southon and Gurung (2005:93)
\textsuperscript{78} GCPS (2011)
\textsuperscript{79} For example children from Koranic schools begging in Sudan’s cities
\textsuperscript{80} For example Delap (2009) in Albania/Greece, India and Senegal; and Republic of Slovenia’s contribution to this study at http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Children/Study/Pages/Contributions.aspx
\textsuperscript{81} Bond (2004: 155)
\textsuperscript{82} UNCHS (2000: xvii) and see Lusk (1992)
\textsuperscript{83} See for example Smith (2006) in Sub-Saharan Africa
\textsuperscript{84} See Dabir and Athale (2011) for a recent overview
prevalence, homelessness, school failure\(^{86}\), violence and abuse of children in households and communities\(^{87}\); the demise of the extended family\(^{88}\); along with social exclusion, rapid urbanization and income inequalities\(^{89}\). Research in Rio de Janeiro has found children on the street to be: ‘virtually indistinguishable from other youngsters from the same communities of origin in terms of their physical appearance, consumption, dress and sexuality. Like these other young people living in the ‘favelas’ and urban peripheries, they are also subject to poverty, to a lack of adequate state provision for education, health, sanitation and security and of cultural, sport and leisure opportunities.’\(^{90}\).

In general, then: ‘paradigms have shifted from considering individual children as the site of problems - either as victims or as delinquents - to the conception of children interacting with a variety of environments’\(^{91}\), and the focus has changed from ‘dysfunction, pathology and psychological breakdown’ to understanding characteristics of children’s street lives as embedded in multidimensional contexts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 4: How are stereotypes of children’s characteristics problematic?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• They simplify, failing to reflect and therefore misrepresenting diverse realities of children’s lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Children perceived as ‘victims’ are more likely to be treated as passive objects of welfare rather than as subjects of rights (Ennew, 2003).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Children perceived as ‘delinquents’ are more likely to be feared, excluded and subjected to random and state-led violence, and are more likely to end up in the penal system (Wernham, 2006).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B.4. Myth 4: Children must be ‘rescued’ from the street, as a place of unremittingly negative experiences

‘The one thing all street children have in common is that they are at risk of exploitation, violence, sexual abuse, chemical addiction and numerous human rights violations. Sometimes they are at risk from the very authorities who are charged with protecting them.’\(^{92}\)

Children are exposed to a range of risks in the streets on a daily basis. Children experience many forms of violence there\(^{93}\) and as a UK study with detached young people, some of

\(^{85}\) See for example Marrengula (2010) in Mozambique
\(^{86}\) See Volpi (2002:6)
\(^{87}\) See for example Conticini and Hulme (2006) in Bangladesh
\(^{88}\) See for example Connolly (1990)
\(^{89}\) See Dabir and Athale (2011: 29-47) for a discussion of reasons why children come on to the streets
\(^{90}\) Butler (2009: 16)
\(^{91}\) Ennew and Swart-Kruger (2003)
\(^{92}\) CoE (2008: 1)
\(^{93}\) See Thomas de Benítez (2007)
whom spent time on the streets, reported: ‘Perhaps one of the most shocking findings of the research is the prevalence and extent of violence in the children and young people’s lives’.

High levels of exposure to violence and other risks, together with a sense of children in the streets as being ‘out of place’, means children in street situations are often seen as victims who need to be ‘rescued’ from the streets. For a small proportion of children - those who are forced to beg or sell sex for example – rescue from handlers, traffickers or pimps may indeed be vital to enabling children to access their rights. However, many interventions for children have been informed by a ‘welfare-based’ approach irrespective of children’s rights, experiences or views. In general, the view of the street as an unrelentingly negative environment from which children must be rescued ignores:

- That many children seek refuge in the street in response to, or instead of, what they perceive as more negative environments
- That the Convention on the Rights of the Child requires that children rights be fulfilled – implying that their presence or not on the streets, while important, is a secondary concern
- Some children’s own accounts of fun, adventure, play and modern consumption, of creative ingenuity and financial independence, and of meaningful relationships in the streets

New Realities – Children’s rights must be fulfilled: their voices and daily experiences are key to understanding – and responding to - their circumstances, coping strategies and aspirations

A paradigm shift in the last decade and a rights-based perspective in which children are seen as subjects and active participants, has led to a new emphasis, congruent with the remit of this study, on:

- Listening to children’s perspectives of their own lives and circumstances
- Improving understandings of children’s everyday experiences
- Focusing on enabling children to access their rights

This new emphasis, while proposing a different approach, can in no way be interpreted as reducing the moral or legal imperative to act to help children in street situations.

Children asked about their experiences on the streets often – although by no means always - include positive reflections about meaningful or enjoyable activities, spatial freedom, and friendships.

Activities: While some street work can be unrelentingly negative in terms of children’s survival, development and access to human rights, particularly if it is forced and controlled by adults, some street work can play a positive part in children’s daily lives and identity formation. It can encourage resourcefulness and enterprise as children: manage jobs; use opportunities presented by seasonal agendas, cultural festivals and tourist centres; or develop tactics for survival such as ‘blagging’ (persuading people to give food or other

---

94 Smeaton (2009: 116)
95 Other approaches include reactionary or repressive approaches and rights-based approaches - see for example CoE (1994) and Thomas de Benitez (2003)
96 Informed by the New Social Studies for Childhood, see for example Nikitina-Den Besten (2009)
97 See for example Young (2003); Evans (2005); and O’Kane (2003)
98 See for example Bordonaro (2010) Cape Verde

Global Research Paper for OHCHR: 15/12/11 Sarah Thomas de Benitez with Trish Hiddleston
Some research has identified children as embarking on street ‘careers’ as they explore income options, learn new skills and develop livelihood opportunities, reflecting strategies used in mainstream society. Working can enable a child to enter or remain at school or can help younger siblings access their rights. This does not mean that street work is an acceptable facet of children’s lives, but in highly constrained circumstances and adverse environments, some street work may represent the best available choice for children to be able to exercise their human rights. Such decision-making has been called ‘tactical’ or ‘thin’ agency, referring to: ‘decisions and everyday actions that are carried out within highly restrictive contexts, characterised by few viable alternatives’.

Even destructive activities such as drug use may not be unremittingly negative, for example when deployed as a coping strategy in highly adverse conditions: ‘A group of 20 street children built the hideout themselves […] They begged, stole and prostituted themselves to survive. Drugs helped them cope with their lives’. Or as part of a complex sub-cultural experience in Indonesia, where the ‘Tikyan’ get high together to perform: ‘a kind of collective ritual of escapism. […] also a means of suppressing hunger and inhibitions, to reduce anxiety, stress and depression and to help release anger, frustration and dissatisfaction with their marginalised role in society. […] Drug use, however, is also about seeking enjoyment, reinforcing solidarity and creating a sense of belonging and status within the group. Moreover, it is a collective protest against stigmatisation as street children, and thus a claim to power over their own bodies’. This is not to say that substance misuse should be interpreted as a positive aspect of young people’s lives, but that it may help children survive deeply distressing conditions.

Spatial freedom: Despite their inherent risks for children, the streets can also present some children with opportunities for personal freedom, adventure and financial independence. Children’s use of space in Mexico has been found to shift over time from a ‘reluctant’ to ‘harnessed’ mobility, reflecting changes from powerlessness to a certain mastery of surroundings in children’s relationship with the street. Children interviewed in Nepal saw time living on the streets as ‘transitional’ - a useful training stage between leaving a difficult or unpalatable home-life and accessing better employment. Some children have found better livelihoods through illegal migration across international boundaries although other research cautions that migration does not automatically lead to ‘social mobility and many young people find themselves moving around with little reward’. As well as the empowerment possibilities offered by mobility, children also learn to interact

---

99 See for example Smeaton (2009) UK
100 For example: Beazley (2003a); Butler and Rizzini (2003); Invernizzi, (2003); Abebe (2009)
101 See Section V on ILO and worst forms of child labour. Research has found few trafficked children on the streets – an ILO study in Nepal found 14 of 100 interviewed ‘street children’ had been forced or tricked to leave home and could be regarded as trafficked children. However, none of the respondents were trafficked for the purpose of street life or sex work – they were trafficked for domestic child labour, hotel boys, and carpet weaving, and had escaped to the streets as a better option (Subedi, 2002)
102 Honwana (2005)
104 UNICEF (2010: 31) in Ukraine
105 Beazley (2003a: 195-6)
106 Jones and Thomas de Benitez (2009: 77)
107 Southon & Pralhad (2003), Nepal
109 Langevang and Gough (2009: 752)
110 Conticini and Hulme (2006) Bangladesh
with others to develop complex social networks over time, processes which can be understood as contributing to the formation of personal and social identities\textsuperscript{111}.

**Friendships:** Children can develop and sustain meaningful relationships in the street. Street gangs can act as ‘surrogate families’\textsuperscript{112}. ‘Stroller’ bands with fixed territories and internal hierarchies\textsuperscript{113} have been found to share resources and information, protecting from outsider violence, and offering support during illness\textsuperscript{114}. Street subcultures can provide a reference group, a collective identity, with clear values and policing of norms\textsuperscript{115}. While such groups can put newcomers ‘at the mercy’ of peer relations\textsuperscript{116}, they can also teach life skills and how to embark on a street ‘career’ based on networks of solidarity and reciprocity\textsuperscript{117}. Such networks, sometimes perceived as supporting organised criminal behaviour, may also be ‘a resource for developing a modern, democratic and ethnically diverse society’\textsuperscript{118} and ‘a critical network of mutual support that enhances the prospects of surviving on the streets.’\textsuperscript{119}

Looser, informal, street groups have also encouraged collective reciprocity suited to informal urban living - from Rio de Janiero to Addis Ababa and Accra\textsuperscript{120}. Different characteristics are also associated with diversity in children’s relationships. In Kenya, for example, girls have been found to develop and sustain more supportive emotional and material ties on the street, in contrast with a more fractured, competitiveness found between boys\textsuperscript{121}.

Family relationships – even ‘fragile affective ties’ to family\textsuperscript{122} - matter. Child-centred research confirms the importance of family-based violence, abuse and neglect as important pathways to the street\textsuperscript{123}. But children have been found often to sustain active relationships with family while living on the streets. Children may make tactical decisions to be on the street - to reduce harm or improve options for themselves or their families\textsuperscript{124}. There is also evidence of children moving onto the streets, from home or from alternative care, to search for family members\textsuperscript{125}. And young people have been found to set store by and continue to invest in relationships with at least some members of their families – particularly mothers and siblings - even when living away, through visits, telephone calls, relayed messages or meetings outside the home\textsuperscript{126}.

\textsuperscript{111} See Van Blerk (2005: 18)
\textsuperscript{112} Shanahan (2003) Ghana
\textsuperscript{113} Hansson (2003) South Africa; Ennew and Swart-Kruger (2003)
\textsuperscript{114} Aptekar and Heinonen (2003)
\textsuperscript{116} Nieminen (2010) Ghana
\textsuperscript{117} Beazley (2003)
\textsuperscript{118} Ayuku et al (2003:116) in Kenya
\textsuperscript{119} Frankland (2007: 47) in Kampaala
\textsuperscript{121} Ayuku (2003) echoed in Tanzania by McAlpine et al (2009)
\textsuperscript{122} See Rizzini et al (2007) p.188
\textsuperscript{123} For example: Conticini and Hulme (2006) Bangladesh; Baron (2007) USA
\textsuperscript{126} Girls living in the streets may experience more traumas at home and maintain less contact with their families. See Wernham (2001:8) citing research in Kenya, Senegal, Bolivia, Brazil and Guatemala
Box 5: How is a welfare ‘rescue’ approach problematic?

- It encourages a widespread but usually mistaken belief that children who work and/or live on the street have no families or have relentlessly ‘bad’ families that forced their children out.
- It focuses on satisfying children’s ‘needs’ as perceived by adults, rather than on fulfilling children’s rights.
- It reinforces an understanding of the street as the ‘worst’ option - rather than as a logical response by children to other possibly ‘worse’ options - and therefore an environment from which children must be ‘saved’.

C. ‘Street-connectedness’: Terminology and a holistic, rights-based, approach

Limitations of the term ‘children working and/or living on the street’ used in Resolution A/HRC/16/12 are discussed above. Not only does the term exclude some children whose rights are consistently violated in the street, it also ignores the holistic nature of children’s lives. This section builds on the Committee on the Rights of the Children’s rights-based use of ‘children in street situations’, drawing in children’s experiences and the holistic approach recommended in A/HRC/16/12.

Children’s characteristics, experiences and interactions with their contexts can all be understood as contributing to building children’s identities. Children who work and or live on the street can be understood as having a unique relationship with the urban environment. This is implied in the various terms used for identification – from ‘in/of the street’, through ‘street-involved’ to ‘street-active’. This section now focuses instead on the connections that children develop with their street environment – whether alongside or instead of connections to family, community and wider society – as a vital element of a holistic approach.

C.1 Terms and Definitions - ‘Street connectedness’

By emphasizing ‘connections’ the term ‘street-connected child’ or ‘child with street connections’:

- Recognises each child as a social actor capable of developing relationships with people and places, and whose activities contribute to his or her identity construction
- Encourages a focus on children’s emotional associations with public spaces, rather than on current, physical, presence on the street
- Recognises that children who have spent time working, hanging out or living on the street form attachments there – just as they have varying connections to family, community and wider society

127 Van Blerk (2006: 47)
128 The idea of children’s ‘connections’ to and within the street is not new. See for example Lucchini (2007) on typologies, and ideas about connections within the Child-Street System.
Recognises that street-based experiences make particular contributions to identity development that may differ to those experienced by other urban and even other mobile or socially excluded children.

In so doing, ‘street-connectedness’ seeks to build on:
- A holistic understanding of children’s connectedness with a variety of environments - drawing on ecological systems theory recognising that human beings operate within connected or nested environments in what can be thought of as a ‘constant process of reciprocal interaction’.
- Recognition of children’s attachments to and within the street environment over time. This is consistent with reports from interventions around the world that the more time a child spends working and/or living on the street, the more difficulties he or she seems to experience in trying to leaving a street environment.

How may the term ‘street-connectedness’ be useful?
- The term aligns more closely children’s experiences with rights-based, holistic approaches.
- The term is consistent with the argument that ‘street children’ are a socially constructed group, while recognising that individuals build and maintain relationships with and within urban street environments.
- The term invites research into and analysis of children’s relationships with the street, rather than being bounded by characteristics or circumstances.

A working definition of ‘street-connected children’ could usefully extend Redes Rio Criança’s understanding of ‘street children’ from “Children for whom the street is a central reference point and has a central role in their lives” to capture development of street connections over time and their effects on lives and identities. A working definition of street-connected children might therefore be: “Children for whom the street is a central reference point – one which plays a significant role in their everyday lives and identities”.

C.2 Developing a Typology of ‘street-connectedness’

An emphasis on ‘connections’ invites analysis. A typology of ‘connections’ could classify by nature of relationship rather than by type of behaviour or characteristic. This could build on ideas developed over the years about ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors that are considered to propel and entice children onto the streets. In these and other readings, ‘push’ and ‘pull’ are proposed as causal factors, as follows:
- ‘Push’ factors are those that encourage or force a child out of a home, whether to work, hang out, spent nights away or even to consider leaving home entirely – such as neglect, sexual or physical abuse in the home or overcrowding, high costs of living, family disintegration.

129 Bronfenbrenner (1979)
130 Jack (2001: 185)
131 Redes Rio Criança (2007:18)
133 See for example Rizzini (2002),
134 See for example Le Roux (1996)
‘Pull’ factors are those attracting children onto the street, including surrendering to the ‘temptations of the street’, finding better opportunities to earn money and finding supportive relationships with other young people in street environments.

The ‘push-pull’ terminology is used by a range of NGOs providing services for children in street situations, and in numerous publications. For example: ‘...there are varied reasons for unaccompanied children being on the streets which involve several push and pull factors. **Push factors** such as: Extreme poverty, family conflicts and crisis, including violence, terminal illnesses and HIV/AIDS, abuse and neglect, including abandonment, bad experience in school etc. force children to come on the streets. **Pull factors** such as: Search of freedom, work and livelihood opportunities, encourage children to leave homes.’

There is general agreement that ‘push’ factors dominate children’s decisions to move to the street, with ‘pull’ factors only adding impetus to those decisions.

Street-connectedness builds on ‘pull’ factors as potential attractions of the street. However, the idea is that while street attractions are generally low in children’s priorities at the outset, their importance will change according to children’s experiences, transforming and developing over time possibly into sustained connections with or within their street environment. Street-connectedness suggests that:

- A child who leaves home purely because of ‘push’ factors (with no ‘pull’ factors at work) and does not develop meaningful street-based connections, may not experience street-connectedness - even while working or living on the streets.
- A child who finds attractions (‘pull’ factors) in the street and through them develops ‘connections’ to or within the street may experience difficulties in renouncing the street environment - even when offered seemingly appropriate off-street protection and fulfilment of rights to which he or she previously lacked access.

For policy-making and intervention-design, the proposal is that a child who has developed connections in and to the streets – ‘pull’ factors that develop into sustained interests within the street – will benefit from support that recognises the nature and complexity of his or her street connections. The following working typology identifies three broad areas of ‘street connections’, based on children’s experiences identified in research (section B.4 above).

**Figure 1: Working Typology of Children’s Street-Connectedness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>Examples:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Pocket Money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play</td>
<td>Art &amp; Creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Use</td>
<td>Drug Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

135 Campos et al (1994: 327)
136 Dybicz (2005: 765)
137 Butterflies, NGO in India, see [http://www.butterflieschildrights.org/working.php](http://www.butterflieschildrights.org/working.php). See also [www.tumainicenter.org/research.html](http://www.tumainicenter.org/research.html) NGO in Kenya
Examples of street connectedness might include:

- A boy who has built his connections to the street primarily attracted by the use of space – in which the street signifies freedom and adventure - and subsequently around his freedom to use alcohol. An understanding of this child’s street connections would suggest designing services to help fulfil his rights which take account of his spatial-activity ‘connections’ (in the purple/blue overlap above), as well as responding to ‘push’ factors that provoked his move to the street.

- A girl who has developed her street connections primarily around relationships with friends and on-street employers, and secondarily around her ability to earn money to buy consumer products. These connections would suggest support to help fulfil her rights that takes account of her street-based relationships and financial independence (relationship-activity ‘connections’ in the green/blue overlap).

The following Section III explores children’s rights and the roles and responsibilities of duty bearers in enabling children who have street connections to fulfil their rights.
Section III: Framework of Roles and Responsibilities of Duty-Bearers

A. Introduction

HRC Resolution A/HRC/16/12 urges States ‘... to ensure a holistic child rights and gender-based response to the phenomenon of children working and/or living on the street...’

This Section considers street-connected children’s rights and a human rights-based approach starting with an exploration in Part B of children as rights-holders and disparities in the respect and fulfilment of their rights. Part C then examines roles and responsibilities of duty-bearers in the respect, protection and fulfilment of street-connected children’s rights. The Section concludes in Part D with an exploration of a systemic approach as a holistic child rights and gender-based response to street-connectedness.

B. Children as rights-holders and disparities in respect for and fulfilment of the rights of street-connected children

Under international law, through the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), to which almost every country has now committed\textsuperscript{139}, its two Optional Protocols\textsuperscript{140} and other international legal instruments\textsuperscript{141}, all children have the same rights\textsuperscript{142} - irrespective of their background and the context they live in – and as such are ‘rights-holders’\textsuperscript{143}.

Street-connected children are entitled to the same rights as all other children. Yet significant disparities exist between respect for and fulfilment of children’s rights depending on the contexts in which they are embedded, and which can change over the course of childhood, due to:

- Political and socio-economic factors (e.g. poverty, income inequality, low social mobility, family size, high unemployment, low social security);
- Geographical factors (e.g. living in a remote area, an urban centre, a slum, an area of ongoing conflict or vulnerable to natural disaster);
- Discrimination (e.g. on the basis of sex, religion, disability, ethnicity).

\textsuperscript{138} HRC Resolution A/HRC/16/12 Article 2

\textsuperscript{139} The Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted in 1989; entered into force in 1990) is the most widely and rapidly ratified human rights treaty in history. Only two countries, Somalia and the United States, have not ratified this celebrated agreement. Somalia is currently unable to proceed to ratification, as it has no recognised government. By signing the Convention, the United States has signalled its intention to ratify—but has yet to do so.


\textsuperscript{141} See \url{http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/index.htm#core}

\textsuperscript{142} UNDG (2003: para 2).

\textsuperscript{143} Children are generally referred to as having rights by the international community, child rights activists, programmers, etc. (see, for example, \url{http://www.amnestyusa.org/our-work/issues/children-s-rights}; Seymour (undated); UNICEF (undated). There is debate, however, about the nature, implementation and indeed the existence of these rights; See for example Children’s Rights, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2010 accessed at \url{http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rights-children/}.

\textsuperscript{144} See, for example, UNICEF (2010: 2 and 12).
A feature common to street-connected children is their multiple deprivations of rights, many experiencing considerable violence at home.

When a child is being abused or neglected at home there may be multiple effects:

- Her capacity to learn is likely to be negatively affected;
- Her ability to make friends and socialize at school and in the community may be inhibited;
- He may be kept out of school for some time to hide evidence of the abuse/neglect;
- She may prefer to (or her abusers may prefer that she) drop out altogether - and her absence from school may not be followed up;
- He is less likely to be taken for medical attention if unwell or hurt lest evidence of the abuse/neglect be identified;
- She may not be listened to or asked about the source of her injuries – at home, at school, in a religious house or other community group - or even in a health centre;
- Even if asked, he may lie about the source of his injuries for fear of more abuse or of being sent/taken away - particularly if he is very scared and questioning is insensitive, inappropriate or lacks confidentiality.

An abused child, who is unable to seek protection or voice his or her fears, is also likely to continue to be abused. He or she may try to spend more time outside the home, perhaps working in the street, perhaps living there for short periods, often while maintaining strong family connections - even with those directly responsible for the abuse or neglect.

Prevention of street-connectedness and protection responses therefore require that a wide range of children’s rights be considered and addressed – from safety and protection to education, health, treatment for destructive coping strategies, such as substance misuse and self-harm, and support for positive coping strategies, such as life skills, work skills and protection of younger siblings.

A rights-based approach is defined by seven central principles summarised in Table 1 below: universality, non-discrimination and equality, indivisibility, inter-dependence and inter-relatedness, participation, the rule of law and accountability.
### Table 1: Central Principles of a Rights-Based Approach and their Implications for Street-Connected Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principles of Rights-Based Approach</th>
<th>Implications for Street-Connected Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Universality</strong> – all child rights apply to all children, at all times and in all circumstances. They are inalienable; they cannot be taken away nor voluntarily given up.</td>
<td>This principle is violated when street-connected children are excluded from school, beaten or turned away from a health centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-discrimination and equality</strong> – no distinction can be made on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.</td>
<td>Many children are on the streets because they have been discriminated against. Effects of social and economic inequalities reduce their future prospects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indivisibility</strong> - Child rights are indivisible, and should be delivered in a holistic way. No right is less important than another.</td>
<td>Deprivation of multiple rights over time heightens the importance of a holistic response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inter-dependence and inter-relatedness</strong> - All child rights are closely inter-related, inter-dependent and affect one another.</td>
<td>If many rights are violated, many rights must be addressed; responding to one violation is unlikely to be sufficient and a holistic response is essential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation</strong> - Individual and community empowerment is both an object of, and a means to, the realization of children’s rights. Children of all ages have the right to participate but how they do so develops as children mature into adults.</td>
<td>Street-connected children have experiences that increase independence but limit empowerment. Participation is therefore a vital and complex principle for street-connected children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rule of Law</strong> - Child rights must be protected by strong legislation and a fair, independent judicial system.</td>
<td>Street-connected children are among the least protected by law and law enforcers; meaning extra mechanisms may be needed to protect them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accountability</strong> – Duty-bearers are accountable to rights-holders for ensuring the respect of child rights and other human rights; children are rights-holders rather than objects of charity.</td>
<td>Critical, like participation, and rarely experienced by street-connected children.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within a human rights-based approach, plans, policies and processes are anchored in a system of rights and corresponding obligations established by international law. The following paragraphs address these obligations by exploring the roles and responsibilities of duty-bearers towards street-connected children.

---

145 Developed using UNDG (2003)
146 See Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) for discussion of effects of inequality on children
147 OHCHR (2006: 15)
C. Duty-bearers’ roles and responsibilities for street-connected children

Duty-bearers are the actors collectively responsible for the realisation of children’s rights and are accountable if rights go unrealised. When a right has been violated or insufficiently protected, there is always someone or some institution that has failed to perform a duty. Understanding and identifying who has responsibility, who is accountable towards children and why failures have occurred, is essential to be able to improve and develop appropriate responses, mitigate harm caused and prevent future breaches or deprivations of rights.\(^{148}\)

### Box 6: Relationship between Rights-Holders and Duty-Bearers

- Following a rights-based approach, human rights - including child rights - determine the ‘...relationship between individuals and groups with valid claims (rights-holders) and State and non-state actors with correlative obligations (duty-bearers). It identifies rights-holders (and their entitlements) and corresponding duty-bearers (and their obligations) and works towards strengthening the capacities of rights-holders to make their claims, and of duty-bearers to meet their obligations.’\(^{149}\)

Most rights-holders are also duty-bearers and all duty-bearers are also rights-holders. For example: A teacher has the obligation as a duty-bearer to teach all students without discrimination; The State as duty-bearer is obliged to ensure the teacher has the knowledge and means to carry out that duty; The teacher as rights-holder is entitled to be provided with the knowledge and means to carry out their teaching obligations. By the same principle, street-connected children as rights-holders have the right to be protected from violence and as they mature towards adulthood their duty not to harm others is shaped.

Under international human rights law, including the CRC, States are the principal duty-bearers and are accountable for respecting, protecting and fulfilling children’s rights in their countries to rights-holders, who include: Children; Their parents and families; Their teachers, doctors, social workers, probation officers, and all others involved in delivering their rights.

### Box 7: Obligations of State Parties as principal duty-bearers under International Child Rights Law\(^{150}\)

- **The obligation to respect** child rights means not interfering with their enjoyment. It requires the State and all its organs and agents to abstain from carrying out, sponsoring or tolerating any practice, policy or legal measure violating the integrity of individuals or impinging on their freedom to access resources to satisfy their needs. It requires legislative and administrative codes to take account of guaranteed rights.

- **The obligation to protect** child rights means taking steps to ensure that third parties do not interfere with their enjoyment. It obliges the State and its agents to prevent the violation of these rights by other individuals or non-state actors and where violations do occur the State must guarantee access to legal remedies.

- **The obligation to fulfil** child rights means taking steps progressively to realize the right(s) in question, engaging proactively in activities that would strengthen people’s ability to meet their own needs and providing services if the right(s) concerned cannot be realized otherwise. It involves advocacy, public expenditure, and governmental regulation of the economy, the provision of basic services and related infrastructure and redistributive measures.


\(^{149}\) UNDG (2003: para 3).

Table 2 below\textsuperscript{151} illustrates the different roles of the states in guaranteeing children’s rights at the three levels of their obligations.

**Table 2: Examples of Roles of States to Guarantee Rights at the three levels of Obligations with respect to Street-connected Children**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Right</th>
<th>Obligation to Respect</th>
<th>Obligation to Protect</th>
<th>Obligation to Fulfil</th>
<th>Relevance for Street-Connected Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Protection\textsuperscript{152}** | • Ban round-ups of street-connected children  
• Enforce sanctions against state worker abuses of children’s rights  
• Repeal status offences  
• Enact and implement child labour legislation | • Enact and enforce legislation prohibiting violence against children  
• Define and monitor minimum standards for out of family care  
• Ensure children’s access to legal and supportive services in event of abuse | • Provide social services to vulnerable families and children  
• Guarantee adequate funding for child protection services, child-sensitive reporting mechanisms, etc. | • Children become connected with the street often because they have not been protected. The State’s role is to: ensure their protection rights are not violated; put in place and enforce protection legislation; proactively promote and support a flexible child protection system. All are essential for adequate prevention and response. |
| **Education/Development\textsuperscript{153}** | • Enact and implement legislation guaranteeing all children access to education  
• Enact and implement child labour legislation | • Ensure parents or others do not prevent girls and boys from attending school | • Implement programs guaranteeing universal access to education  
• Guarantee adequate funding for the education system | • All children connected with the street have a right to education. The State has an obligation to ensure that educational opportunities are accessible for street-connected children, including through street-outreach work and provision of informal and/or supplementary education. |
| **Participation\textsuperscript{154}** | • Do not arbitrarily restrict the right of children to freedom of association (bearing in mind levels of maturity)  
• Enact and monitor legislation and policies requiring children be heard with respect | • Provide legal and supportive counselling services to children  
• Require consultation with children when designing strategies and actions concerning them | • Advocate for children’s voices and opinions to be heard (corresponding with their level of maturity)  
• Involve street-connected children, families and relevant NGOs in relevant policy decisions | • States have a duty to ensure that all children – including those less visible - are heard and respected. States are obliged to ensure street-connected children’s views are actively sought and valued as much as other children’s. |
| **Survival/Health\textsuperscript{155}** | • Provide health care to all children without discrimination. | • Ensure availability of legal remedies for street-connected children denied access to health care | • Provide and facilitate health care services for street-connected children  
• Guarantee adequate funding for State health services, including staff training and employment | • States are obliged to ensure that street-connected children can access health care including health education and prevention services. This might require them to proactively seek out street-connected children for treatment and support, adapting service provision as appropriate. |

\textsuperscript{152} Article 19, CRC  
\textsuperscript{153} Article 16, CRC  
\textsuperscript{154} Article 12, CRC  
\textsuperscript{155} Article 24, CRC
While States play the role of the principal duty-bearer for street-connected children, other non-state entities, professionals and individuals are central for the fulfilment of children’s rights. These mirror the relationship between environments in which children are embedded. Figure 2 below illustrates a nested, interdependent and inter-connected understanding of children’s relationships with family, community and wider society.

Figure 2: Ecological Model illustrating the Child as nested within various environments

Box 8 below provides examples of non-state duty-bearers who have obligations enshrined in law or in a code of practice and/or a moral responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil children’s rights. Armed groups opposing the State also have obligations.

Box 8: Examples of non-State duty-bearers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary duty-bearers:</th>
<th>Parents for children, teachers for students, police for crime suspects/witnesses/victims, doctors/nurses for patients, social-workers for clients, employers for employees, etc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secondary duty-bearers:</td>
<td>Institutions and organisations with immediate jurisdiction over the primary duty-bearers e.g. school principals, faith-based / community organisations, hospital administrations, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary duty-bearers:</td>
<td>Institutions and organisations at a higher level / more remote jurisdiction (NGOs, private sector organisations, businesses), etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External duty-bearers:</td>
<td>Other countries, institutions, organisations with no direct involvement e.g. UN, INGOs, Security Council, African Union/European Union etc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

156 Derived from Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological perspective
As Table 2 gave examples of States’ roles as duty-bearers for the rights of street-connected children, Annex 2 provides examples of the roles and responsibilities of various primary, secondary, tertiary and external duty-bearers in relation to street-connected children’s protection rights. Given the overlapping, inter-related nature of children’s rights, similar obligations and responsibilities are repeated under the various rights-groupings: protection, education, participation and health and survival. Clear delineations of roles and responsibilities must be explicit in codes of conduct, memoranda, protocols and/or manuals, to avoid children falling into gaps within systems or between services and avoid inefficient, potentially harmful, duplication when limits of roles and responsibilities are not clear.

A rights-based approach requires identifying immediate, underlying and structural or root causes that prevent or limit a street-connected child’s enjoyment of all of his or her rights at different stages of the life-cycle. Those duty-bearers responsible for ensuring that children’s rights are respected, protected and fulfilled must be identified and must have the capacity to meet their obligations. Since roles and responsibilities must be connected (to avoid gaps and duplication), they are best understood as forming parts of more complex ‘systems’. Here we consider how child protection ‘systems’ can protect street-connected children.

D. Child Protection Systems and their relationship to street-connected children

Until recent years, interventions experienced by street-connected children tended to:

- Provide support exclusively to children who lived and/or worked on the street. These interventions were often poorly coordinated, poorly resourced and isolated from mainstream basic services and other specialized interventions, limiting street-connected children’s access to their rights.

- Provide support to another thematically identified ‘group’ of children sharing some features with street-connected children – such as orphans and vulnerable children, child labourers, or children out-of-school. These interventions tended to ignore vital aspects of street-connectedness and/or multiplicity of deprivations. For example, a street-connected child treated as a ‘separated child’ who simply needed to be reunited with his or her family, may not address lack of safety at home and may under-estimate the support needed by the family to develop capacities to care for the child (and perhaps other siblings). Similarly, in treating street-connected children simply as ‘out-of-school’, the focus may focus on integration into school at the expense of addressing traumas or drug addiction and developing the family support needed to support school inclusion.

The example of ‘Govind’ in India, see Box 9 below, is illustrative of the multiple deprivations for which complex responses are needed.

---

159 Other such groups targeted children identified as trafficked, or within the juvenile justice system, children recruited into armed forces, AIDS orphans, subjects of violence, separated children, migrants and refugees. See for example Wulczyn et al (2009); Save the Children (2009); Save the Children (2010); UNHCR (2010).
Box 9: Govind

- ‘Govind’s mother died when he was five or six - she had been a labourer. Govind has one brother, studying Class VIII. His father works in a factory where his monthly income is 3000Rs (about US$70). An uncle lives with them and earns around 3500Rs monthly as a labourer. 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 very lonely when his mother died. He used to study in Class II, but couldn’t complete the year, as his father didn’t provide the study materials necessary to attend school. Because of this he was badly treated by the schoolteacher, and finally stopped going to school. Govind says he left home because of his father’s treatment and his grandmother’s neglect.’

Vertical, fragmented, issue-focused programming for street-connected children is inconsistent with a rights-based approach and can result in:

- Partial responses to street-connected children’s multiple rights deprivations
- Problem-shaping that ignores critical aspects of a child’s situation and determines specific responses
- Unresolved and emerging gaps in protection
- Inadequate referral systems
- Poor coordination between actors and responses
- Delayed intervention and insufficient attention to early intervention
- Lack of family support mechanisms
- Insufficient attention to prevention efforts
- Over-funding of some issues, and under-funding of others, including ‘issues’ like street-connected children which are complex, harder to resolve or less publically appealing
- Donor-fatigue in respect of harder to resolve issues
- Competition between beneficiaries of funding

Development or strengthening of Child Protection Systems (CPS) is increasingly being proposed as a way to respond to these weaknesses that is consistent with a rights-based approach. The aim is that multiple rights deprivations, such as those experienced by street-connected children, be addressed in a comprehensive, holistic and coordinated manner. The UN Study on Violence against Children supports this approach. This paper also supports development of child protection systems and recognises the importance of developing targeted interventions within these systems to address street-connectedness.

So what is a Child Protection System (CPS)? There is as yet no precise, commonly agreed, definition or description of a child protection system, partly because:

- The structure of a national system may vary from country to country and depends on context
- A systems approach has only relatively recently been considered at conceptual level for application to social work and child protection

---

160 Thomas de Benitez (2007: 17; Case Study 3).
161 See for example Staller (2010) on different treatments accorded to ‘missing’ and ‘runaway’ children
162 See States Parties contributions to this study for examples of development and strengthening of national Child Protection Systems, including challenges faced in the process, at http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Children/Study/Pages/Contributions.aspx
163 Pinheiro (2006:18), World Report on Violence Against Children
164 In an effort to address a lack of conceptual clarity, UNICEF contracted Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, with the Child Protection Research Center of the American Humane
UNICEF (2008) has proposed the following definition:

‘Child protection systems comprise the set of laws, policies, regulations and services needed across all social sectors — especially social welfare, education, health, security and justice — to support prevention and response to protection related risks.’

A conceptual illustration is shown here:

**Figure 3: Child Protection Systems: Actors, Contexts, and Components**

![Child Protection Systems Diagram](image)


The left side of the diagram illustrates how a system involves different actors in various environments:

- Children as rights-holders
- Duty-bearers including the family, the community, and the State, mirroring the ecological model shown above in Figure 2

Six system components are identified in the middle of the diagram, with a summary of sub-components given on the right hand side. The six components are:

1. Structures
2. Functions — together these three form the ‘building blocks’ of a CPS
3. Capacities
4. Continuum of care - specific ways in which the CPS responds to violations of rights
5. Process of care - procedures followed when the system engages children, families and communities (including assessment strategies, case planning, treatment, and follow up).
6. Accountability - comprising data collection, quality standards, research and analysis.

Association, to review the academic and professional literature on systems, in order to develop a conceptual framework for the systems approach in child protection. The result was Wulczyn et al (2010) *Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection: Key Concepts and Considerations*

165 UNICEF (2008: 4-5)
166 Wulczyn et al (2010: 22)
Establishing a comprehensive child protection approach:

A CPS, as set out above, can therefore be understood as holistic in its approach. However, developing and strengthening a national child protection system so that it is rights-based in practice and capable of protecting children from multiple deprivations takes time, financial resources, significant consultation and political commitment over time. Actors leading policy reform – governmental and other – will need to engage in a broad, consultative process to build consensus on the foundational values of a national system, its scope and the roles and responsibilities of various actors in its functioning. Further, unofficial, informal and endogenous community practices for protecting children and strengthening families need to be explored, to identify how positive practices at these levels may contribute to an effective national CPS which is able to protect children against any harm.

Key to preventing children from developing street-connections as a result of multiple deprivations is providing systemic support to families and other carers, as well as to local communities, to ensure children are safe and can access their rights. Examples of such support might include:

- Social work support for all new parents
- Tax relief and economic support for single heads of household
- Incentives for fathers to support their children and play positive parenting roles
- Provision of pre-school and after school child-care in the local community
- Provision of universal child benefit
- Early detection of domestic violence and local protection schemes

During the potentially considerable period of time a CPS is being developed, it will not be able to protect all children. Children with multiple deprivations are unlikely to be protected by a CPS in development because they are have more fragile affective relations and are harder to reach than children affected by a single deprivation, such as lack of access to school or health care. Early introduction of data collection systems and research mechanisms will be useful to enable periodic mapping and analysis of progress, in order to identify children likely to be left unprotected and to explore reasons for failure:

- By duty-bearers: Due to inadequate recruitment, inadequate training, insufficient numbers, and/or lack of equipment/materials?
- Processes: Are they lacking, unclear or impractical?
- Capacity: Is funding and/or infrastructure insufficient to meet need?

Good mapping and analysis of the current situation can help to guide a strategy that sets goals and targets for a coordinated effort to strengthen system components, processes and culture, in order steadily to protect more children more effectively. See Annex 3 for a summary of systems mapping and assessment.

A core Child Protection System will focus on child protection, social welfare and protection, justice and security. A comprehensive CPS will form part of a larger system of governance – within which child protection will interact with related systems including education and early childhood development, health and nutrition, finance, economic development and livelihoods, civic registration etc. As systems overlap and interact with each other,

---

167 Child Frontiers (2011). The five countries examined were Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Niger, Senegal and Sierra Leone. Child protection systems do not start from scratch – there is always some basis of a system, social values and legislation in place. UNICEF (2011: 3).

168 Maestral International (2010: 5).
boundaries may not be clear-cut, but should become increasingly transparent and explicit as the CPS becomes more comprehensive. For example, if a child stops attending school - is this a matter for the education system, the child protection system, or both to address? System mandates, processes and responsibilities of duty bearers need to be clear to avoid gaps and duplications. Cooperation, coordination and clarity are as essential between related systems as they are within them.

**Targeting street-connected children within a Child Protection System**

While a CPS can do much to protect children and prevent children from needing to develop street connections, some children will still move on to the streets when inequalities are high or at other times of crisis. More will do so when a CPS is not yet fully operational or has been weakened and is unable to provide comprehensive cover.

A child protection system therefore needs, at the same time as working to prevent multiple deprivations, to be able to support children who have developed connections to the street. Children’s complex circumstances combined with their accumulated experiences of multiple rights violations requires a targeted approach which:

- Takes a child-centred approach with each individual
- Accompanies a child over time to build a relationship of trust, consider effects of multiple deprivations and understand his or her street connections
- Ensures he or she can have full access to basic services
- Can offer relevant support by specialized interventions

Even a relatively developed CPS may well not be equipped for such tailor-made support. Small, autonomous and specialized, groups – whether semi-governmental, civil society or community-based organisations – may be better positioned to deliver targeted services, as they are likely to be more flexible, better suited to relationship-building, and better able to develop expertise in street-connectedness. They need strong links to the CPS to be effective – for access to basic services and other specialized interventions, as well as to be able to inform CPS planning, so as to improve future CPS support for children with multiple rights violations. Governments, as principal duty-bearers, should coordinate and resource these targeted services with:

- Operational funding
- Staff training on child protection and referrals
- Research capacity to assess cost-effectiveness of the interventions in supporting street-connected children to access their rights.
- Supportive legislation
- Supportive policy statements and minimum standards

Various promising and innovative practices have been identified over the years in enabling children with street connections to have their rights respected and fulfilled. The following Section IV discusses good practice and proposes criteria to identify good practices in support for street-connected children.

---

369 See a range of examples put forward by States, Intergovernmental Organizations, Academia and Civil Society in their contributions to this study at [http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Children/Study/Pages/Contributions.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Children/Study/Pages/Contributions.aspx)

170 There has been little research into cost-effectiveness of specialist interventions for street-connected children, but early indications are positive (See for example Cohen et al, 2007: Smeaton, 2009a)
Section IV: Criteria for Good Practices to Safeguard the Rights of Children with Street Connections

A. Introduction

HRC Resolution A/HRC/16/12 calls on all States to ‘strengthen international commitment, cooperation and mutual assistance in preventing and protecting children working and/or living on the street [...] including through sharing good practices...’

There is, however, no agreement on what constitutes ‘good practice’ in this field, reflected in the World Bank Institute’s 2002 report ‘Street Children: Promising Practices and Approaches’ which noted: ‘The term “promising practices” (rather than “good” or “effective” ones) was adopted as a humble reminder of the complexity of measuring impacts in this area.’ Nevertheless, since that document was written, understandings of good practice based on human rights have evolved and knowledge about children working and/or living on the street has advanced. At the same time, there are wider concerns about whether or not disseminating ‘good practice’ is an effective way to improve child protection and support, or whether locally generated processes or ‘effective principles’ attuned to local contexts are better approaches. This paper takes the synthesis position that ‘change occurs in the middle, where top-down forces collide, intersect, get entangled together, do battle, and otherwise encounter real-life complexities,’ in which good practices and locally generated processes can both make helpful contributions to improving support for children with street-connections.

This study provides a opportunity to progress in identifying criteria for ‘good practices’ of relevance to children with street connections. Part B provides a basis for developing understandings of ‘good practice’ with street-connected children. Part C then traces the dimensions of ‘good practice’ with street connected children. Finally, Part D proposes 10 Criteria of Good Practice: five Cross-Cutting Criteria and five Normative Criteria, suggesting examples what good practices might look like for each. Annex 4 provides background on the selection of the five crosscutting rights-based principles. Annex 5 provides some examples of indicators of ‘good practice’ that have been proposed with reference to children in street situations.

The proposals of criteria for good practice made in this Section are made with the intention of stimulating wider discussion and deeper consultations with a range of stakeholder groups, including children and youth with street connections and their families, in order to initiate processes for identifying and sharing ‘good practices’ of relevance to street-connected children within geographical regions and levels of policy and practice.

171 HRC Resolution A/HRC/16/12, Article 10.
172 Volpi (2002: 1)
173 See for example Miller and Rudnick (2008)
174 Patton (2011: 18)
B. The State of ‘Good Practice’

As a baseline, criteria for good practices would, in order to be consistent with Sections I to III above, need to:

- Advance a human rights perspective and
- Be appropriate to highly diverse circumstances of multiple deprivation and children’s experiences of street connectedness.

Possible starting points can be identified in ongoing collaborative processes to identify good practices within humanitarian and development, human rights, child protection and other relevant sectors.

As noted above, there is broad agreement that identifying and sharing ‘good practice’ can make a useful contribution to safeguarding children’s rights175, with cautionary notes about the importance of taking full account of local knowledge and cultural contexts when attempting to adapt a ‘good practice’ from one environment to another176.

In the field of child protection, UNICEF views good practice as vital for learning: ‘Identifying “good practices” is a necessary part of organisational learning and the pursuit of programme excellence. Good practices distil innovative and validated approaches - be they in programming, advocacy or management. Identifying good practices is part of ongoing monitoring and evaluative processes. Good practices can be assessed and documented using different methodologies with varying degrees of complexity and rigour. [...] All good practices are an attempt to better understand what works (and what does not work!), how, why and in what conditions. [...] Good practices allow UNICEF and partners to learn from experience and pursue the best approaches in each context to help children [...] realise their human rights.’177

UNICEF’s own definition of good practice emphasizes rigorous documentation and evidence of impact: ‘Good Practices are well documented and assessed programming practices that provide evidence of success/impact and which are valuable for replication, scaling up and further study. They are generally based on similar experiences from different countries and contexts.’178

Nevertheless, the definition of what might constitute ‘good practice’ is contested: ‘There is at present no agreed definition of what constitutes a good practice within the human rights, humanitarian or development community. Different definitions and evaluation criteria have been used at different times by different actors.’179

---

175 The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) - as the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance, involving both UN and non-UN humanitarian partners - issued in 2004 a Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen the Humanitarian Response, confirming the responsibility of each cluster to identify good practices in its area of expertise. The collection of good practices was accordingly recognised in 2008 as a key priority for the global Protection Cluster Working Group (PCWG): ‘The identification and exchange of examples of good practices in protection can greatly contribute to improved planning and programming and ultimately to enhanced protection for persons of concern’ IASC-PCWG (2008)

176 Lessons learned about interventions to foster community security by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) include: ‘The needed shift in orientation can be imagined as one in which a best practice is to have a “best process”: One best practice is to build and utilize a process for cultural research during the service design stage, so that organizational guidelines can be properly applied and advanced in different cultural contexts’ (Miller & Rudnick, 2008: 31)


179 IASC-PCWG (2008:1)
Within the wider human rights arena, work is in progress to define criteria for ‘good practice’ as evidenced for example in a 2010 report to the Human Rights Council by the independent expert on human rights obligations related to access to safe drinking water and sanitation: ‘...the independent expert decided to focus her work on good practices and elaborate a set of criteria that can be used as a standard against which to assess whether a practice is “good” in human rights terms.’

Her 2010 report continues: As “good” is a very subjective notion, and since different actors might have different (or even opposing) views on the accuracy of designating a certain practice as good, the independent expert considered it necessary to elaborate criteria that are based on human rights standards and principles, in order to provide her with a clearer and more objective standard of assessment.

Her report adopts a broad understanding of the term “practice”, also relevant to this paper, which is considered to encompass: ‘...both policy and implementation. What constitutes a good practice can thus include initiatives as diverse as international treaties, legislation (at the national, sub-national and local levels), regulations, policies, strategies, institutional frameworks, planning and coordination procedures, international cooperation policies, programmes, projects, campaigns, subsidies, financing mechanisms, tariff structures, operators’ contracts, complaints procedures and judicial and quasi-judicial decisions, among many other possible considerations.”

These evolving understandings in the fields of child protection and human rights are useful starting points for this paper, providing a basis for developing understandings of ‘good practice’ as they might be helpful for street-connected children.

C. Dimensions of ‘Good Practice’ with street-connected children

Building on the broad understanding of ‘practice’ cited above, this paper proposes to encompass ‘practices’ at all levels that affect children with street connections. These must therefore include for example ways in which: laws are made and enforced; budgets are calculated and shared; policies are designed; interventions are implemented; families are included; and children’s voices are heard.

Proposed here, then, is that good ‘practice’ in terms of street-connected children can include initiatives – among other possible considerations - as diverse as:

- Complaints mechanisms and procedures for reporting violations of children’s rights
- Partnerships with families and communities, public-private, public-civil society
- Models of care, interventions, projects and programmes with children
- Research, planning and coordination, monitoring and evaluation
- Capacity building, knowledge-sharing, organisational development

180 IASC-PCWG (2008) notes that ‘the Anti-Discrimination Unit of OHCHR has adopted the following criteria for good practices: impact, relevance, effective, participation, sustainable, and replicative.’
181 HRC Resolution A/HRC/15/31/Add.1(2010: 3)
182 HRC Resolution A/HRC/15/31/Add.1(2010: 3)
183 HRC Resolution A/HRC/15/31/Add.1(2010: 4)
• Advocacy, lobbying and campaigns
• Policies, strategies, institutional frameworks, regulations and procedures
• Budgets, subsidies and financing mechanisms
• Legislation (at the national, sub-national and local levels)
• International treaties and cooperation policies

There is relatively little research about good practices with a direct bearing on street-connected children at any level. This reflects: use of different terminology, difficulties of collecting data, poor investment in research and fragmented literature. A 2005 study of current ‘best practices’ in interventions noted that: ‘An extensive search of the literature yielded a total of 26 research articles on street children in developing countries [...] Of these, 21 had to be dismissed because they focused solely on describing the population, and thus did not touch upon best practice methods. [...] This yielded only five research articles that commented on specific approaches or practices with this population [...]. Of these, not a single article had as its main focus the determination of efficacy of a particular approach.’

However, material is available for developing criteria for good practices specifically with street-connected children, including:

• Promising practices and approaches identified in the literature on children in street situations

• A growing amount of literature about street-connected children, interventions, policies, laws and budgets, although still highly fragmented, with circulation of materials limited by language, geographical region, political ideology and academic discipline

• Written contributions submitted and presentations made at the expert consultation for this study

Some examples documented in the preparation of this study include:

• Local policies designed in consultation with civil society, academia and community groups, for example in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, around Railway Stations in India, and as part of Canada’s Homelessness Partnering Strategy to make a range of services available to young people with street connections.

• Training for law-enforcement officers on child rights and child protection has been initiated by some States, for example in Ethiopia, the Consortium for Street Children (CSC) partnered with Ethiopia’s Police University College and UNICEF in 2008-2009 to train police trainers who have in turn trained 36,000 police officers throughout the country.

• Outreach support on the street by social street workers trained in child-centred approaches is increasingly in use as a participatory approach to building relationships with children over time in their own spaces in cities as diverse as Kinshasa, Mexico.

Dybicz (2005: 764)

For example: Volpi (2002); Dabir & Athale (2011)

For example: Thomas de Benitez (2011); GCPS (2011)


City, New Delhi and Brussels. And an international methodology has been developed collectively by and for social street workers.\(^{189}\)

- Support for families has become the focus of organizations in a number of countries, for example, the Safe Families Safe Children (SFSC) Coalition is a group of organizations working together across the globe to strengthen family relationships to create home environments where street-connected children can gain sustainable access to their rights.

The following paragraphs build both on these materials and criteria for good practice identified in the fields of human rights, development and child protection.

**D. Proposing Criteria for ‘Good Practice’ with street connected children**

Criteria for good practice with street-connected children are divided, for the purpose of this study, into two broad types:

1. **Cross-cutting criteria** reflecting human rights principles and particularly children’s rights
2. **Normative criteria** reflecting values to which societies aspire for all children and which are significant for children with street connections and multiple rights’ deprivations.

**D.1 Crosscutting criteria - human rights principles and children’s rights:**

Five crosscutting rights-based criteria are proposed\(^{190}\) as:

1. Best interests of the child
2. Non-discrimination
3. Participation
4. Accountability
5. Sustainability

Each criterion, discussed below, should be evident to some extent in every example of good practice and must not be undermined by or contradict any of the remaining five criteria.


\(^{190}\) Developed using: The CRC (1989); UNDG (2003); HRC Resolution A/HRC/15/31/Add.1 (2010); HRC Resolution A/HRC/16/12 (2011)
1. Best Interests of the child

There is no precise definition of the “best interests” principle. UNHCR has summarised the term as: ‘... “best interests” broadly describes the well-being of a child. Such well-being is determined by a variety of individual circumstances, such as the age, the level of maturity of the child, the presence or absence of parents, the child’s environment and experiences. Its interpretation and application must conform with the CRC and other international legal norms...’

In accordance with the CRC, the principle of the best interests of the child requires that the best interests of street connected children must be a primary concern in all actions that concern them. This includes decisions being made throughout government, parliament and the judiciary. It concerns parents, lawmakers, policy makers, those who influence or control resource allocation, public and private welfare institutions, care-takers, etc. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has noted: ‘All legislative, administrative, judicial bodies and institutions are required to apply the best interests principle by systematically considering how children’s rights and interests are or will be affected – by, for example, a proposed or existing law or policy or administrative action or court decision including those which are not directly concerned with children, but indirectly affect children.’

Principles of universality (including inalienability), indivisibility and inter-dependence coupled with inter-relatedness of rights and the guiding principle of survival and development are inherent in considerations of the best interests of the child. A human rights based approach does not prescribe a particular intervention and excludes ‘one-size-fits-all’ responses, but instead calls for considering the whole child and context-specific solutions. This suggests a holistic, systemic approach – from assessment through to response – as proposed in Section III above.

191 Article 3 of the CRC states:

1. In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

2. States Parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of his or her parents, legal guardians, or other individuals legally responsible for him or her, and, to this end, shall take all appropriate legislative and administrative measures.

3. States Parties shall ensure that the institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, in the number and suitability of their staff, as well as competent supervision.

192 UNHCR (2008; 14)

193 Article 18(1), CRC


195 Universality means children’s rights apply to every child, at all times and in all circumstances; they are inalienable, meaning they cannot be taken away nor voluntarily given up.

196 Indivisibility means children’s rights are indivisible, and should be delivered in a holistic way; no one right is more important than another.

197 Inter-dependence and inter-relatedness mean all children’s rights are closely inter-related and interdependent and affect one another.

198 CRC Article 6(2) states: 2. States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.
Box 10: Best interests of the child might be applied in ‘good practice’ to:

- Children collectively: e.g. guidance for police and security forces on practical ways to interact with street-connected children in the best interests of the children

- Children as individuals: e.g. training for front-line health workers in how to respond to a street-connected child making contact with a health centre

- Promoting systematic use, in policies and practices, of the best interests principle in assessments of individual children’s situations through e.g. Practitioner checklists\(^\text{199}\) and designing comprehensive and coordinated responses to fulfil their rights

- Strengthening coordination between sectors, e.g. health, education and protection, of direct concern to street-connected children, to ensure a holistic response to multiple deprivations

- Adopting an inter-sectoral and inter-ministerial approach to birth registration, clearly defining roles and responsibilities among ministries and relevant actors, perhaps through national plans of action, including simple means for street connected children to register\(^\text{200}\)

- Assessing child protection systems - as a number of countries have done or are in the process of doing\(^\text{201}\) - and ensuring their guidelines and services cater adequately for street connected children with multiple deprivations

- Making realistic assessments of the costs of improving a child protection system to enable it to respond adequately to street connected children with multiple deprivations and allocating the resources required to implement such a system

A practical example for discussion of the ‘best interests’ criterion might be the development of a city-wide policy, based on participatory research and service providers’ experience, providing concrete, actionable instructions specifically to improve the lives of children in street situations - together with an implementation plan, adequate funding and a supervisory committee\(^\text{202}\)

2. Non-discrimination\(^\text{203}\)

The rights contained in the CRC apply to all children irrespective of their background, nationality, culture, ethnicity, colour, religion, status, language, ability and age. Girls have the same rights as boys. Children with a disability have the same rights as children who do not. Poor children have the same rights as rich children. It does not matter what kind of family a child comes from or where a child lives. Children’s rights cannot be compromised by what a child believes or does or says. All children, including those perceived as anti-social, children with addictions and children who have or are suspected of having committed

---

\(^\text{199}\) See for example, UNHCR (2008); Australian HRC
\(^\text{200}\) UNICEF (2009: 1-2)

\(^\text{203}\) CRC: Article 2 states: 1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status. 2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.
crimes, have the same rights. Street-connected children have the right to be treated as all other children. Equality in rights does not mean, however, that rights have to be delivered in the same way. Considering the best interests of each child determines how that child’s rights can best be achieved.

Discrimination against street-connected children by treating them as anti-social, delinquent or unclean, perpetuates their exclusion. It results in the denial of other rights, e.g. education, health, protection, and participation rights. Discrimination against street-connected children may be explicit, for example: vagrancy laws, status offences and policies that enable street children to be rounded up and held in detention centres discriminate against street-connected children.204 Alternatively, discrimination may not be so explicit. Requiring children to present a birth certificate in order to enrol in school or obtain medical care denies access to groups of children, including street-connected children who may not have been registered at birth, may no longer have (access to) their birth certificate and/or do not have the capacity to get a new one.

Children have the right to life.205 Brutality targeting street-connected children on the streets or in detention that puts their lives at risk breaches this right206. The right to life is inherent in non-discrimination. To address discrimination, targeted interventions will be needed to include children excluded by multiple deprivations and street connections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 11: Non-discrimination applied in ‘good practice’ with street-connected children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Educational support tailored to catch up on lost schooling, while recognising skills, independence and effects of discrimination and trauma on learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Personalized support for a disabled child with connections to the street, tailored to responding to independence and skills acquired on the street despite - or because of – disability, as well as to fulfilling rights’ deprivations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Support for children to cope positively with and overcome effects of early discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Social mobilization, including children, to change discriminatory and exclusive attitudes, prejudices and social norms, to change negative attitudes towards children connected with the street from criminalization to providing holistic supportive and protective services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Actively identifying children and groups of children ‘the recognition and realization of whose rights may demand special measures’.207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Regularly collating data on street-connected children, disaggregated by age and sex, to design realistic programmes and allocate adequate budgets aimed at eliminating discrimination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Providing services such as birth registration in rural areas so that parents who may not have the means do not have to travel to register their children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reviewing and amending legislation and policies e.g. vagrancy laws that allow police to detain street-connected children who may not have identity or residency papers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Training police and staff in detention centres on child friendly procedures and child rights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Holding police, staff in detention centres etc. accountable for brutality towards and other rights-violations of street-connected children.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A practical example for discussion of the ‘non-discrimination’ criterion might be the legal commitment and operational procedures in place to allow older children to register their births and obtain certificates at no cost and without family accompaniment208

204 See Thomas de Benitez, (2011); and for example: HRW (2006) Rwanda; HRW (2006a) Hanoi
205 CRC: Article 6 states: 1. States Parties recognise that every child has the inherent right to life. 2. States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.
206 See Thomas de Benitez, (2011); also McHale (2006); Lockhart (2008).
207 Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 5, para. 12.
3. Participation

The CRC encourages adults including parents to listen to children and involve them in decision-making. This applies to family, legal and administrative decisions. It does not mean that children have authority over their parents or other adults and can tell them what to do but rather that when decisions are being taken that affect children, children have a right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account. The Convention recognises that a child’s participation in decisions that affect him or her must be appropriate to their level of maturity recognising that children’s ability to form opinions and express their views develops with age. When involving children in decisions that affect them an age-appropriate and gender-sensitive approach must be adopted.

Participation is both a right and a practical imperative for a rights-based approach. If the opinions of children, their families and other concerned individuals are not sought when planning prevention strategies for street-connectedness, false assumptions can render interventions ineffectual. For example, a response focused on ‘reintegrating’ a child into his or her family, may ignore both home-based abuse and the ‘pull’ factors connecting him or her to the street – unless the child fully participates in developing and reporting on the process. Street-connected children are often, as a result of negative experiences, mistrustful of adults and authority – so particular care and respect, created over time, are important to ensure their participation.

Participation must therefore be meaningful, going well beyond mere consultation. When children are asked for their opinions but there is no intention to take them into account, this is not meaningful participation. Meaningful participation requires freedom of expression, assembly and association, including being able to form social movements, and the right to information. So, for meaningful participation, children in street situations need access to information that concerns them, for example on birth registration, access to school and health care, and ways of reporting violations of their rights. Information should be available in places they frequent, using means they understand, and that are appropriate to their age, level of literacy and circumstances. The degree and level of children’s participation has a direct effect on impacts and sustainability of interventions.

---


209. CRC: Article 12 states: 1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. 2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

210. In Latin America, for example, social movements of working children and adolescents (known in Spanish as NAT for Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes Trabajadores), have achieved recognition of their right to work in appropriate conditions, in countries such as Bolivia and Venezuela, see for example: http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Children/Study/CM.pdf as a contribution to this study
Box 12: Good practice in participation might include

- Outreach support that includes sustained efforts by street workers trained in child-centred approaches, to gain trust of street-connected children, including taking the time to listen to them, responding to their concerns and demonstrating that their opinions are valued and respected. This promising practice relies on building relationships with children over time.  

- Peer support, in which children support each other and act as a referral for other children to make contact with street workers and other service providers, can help build trust and enable children to access services more quickly.

- Sharing age- and gender-sensitive information, in ways that include or specifically target street-connected children, about ways to access services of interest to them, in child-centred appropriate language and using means that will reach them.

- Translating relevant laws and policies into child-friendly versions, in languages or dialects they speak, and ensuring they are informed by people they trust.

- Systematically involving street-connected children and their families in planning, monitoring, analysis and evaluation of interventions – and even policies - that concern them. Making sure that all involved – including girls, young children, ethnic minorities etc - are able to participate meaningfully in such activities.

A practical example for discussion of the criterion of ‘participation’ might be improving street-connected children’s participation in the research process, in collecting but also in analyzing and disseminating information.

4. Accountability

Where there is no accountability, and obligations cannot be enforced, the rights of street-connected children will not be realized. This includes situations where: there is no rule of law; children’s rights are not prioritized; children do not know about the law, are too scared to take action, or do not believe they will be taken seriously. A rights-based approach highlights obligations of duty bearers and the corresponding claims of right holders. Without accountability, right holders may not be able to claim rights and duty bearers may not be clear about their responsibilities.

There are different types of accountability. At the formal judicial level, for example, courts and tribunals need to be independent, impartial, adequately funded, staffed by qualified professionals, accessible, affordable, timely and effective to function. To be accountable to street-connected children, they also need as a minimum to: use appropriate language; offer child-centred legal aid; have judicial staff trained in child friendly procedures and child rights; listen to and take due account of children’s experiences. To be accountable, judgments must be enforced. Street-connected children who are victims of violations are entitled to reparation, restitution or compensation and guarantees of non-repetition. Other forms of

---

211 Henry et al (2010)
212 Henry et al (2010)
213 See http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Children/Study/Pages/ExpertConsultation.aspx link to Lorraine Van Blerk’s paper on experiences of street-connectedness in research
214 The UN Statement of Common Understanding (2003) explains accountability and the rule of law as: ‘States and other duty-bearers are answerable for the observance of human rights. In this regard, they have to comply with the legal norms and standards enshrined in human rights instruments. Where they fail to do so, aggrieved rights-holders are entitled to institute proceedings for appropriate redress before a competent court or other adjudicator in accordance with the rules and procedures provided by law.’
accountability include mediation services, traditional, indigenous, customary or traditional justice systems. These should not compromise other rights of street-connected children.

While the State has the primary obligation in relation to children’s rights to protection, other actors – parents, teachers, social workers, police, probation officers, NGOs, etc - have obligations that need to be matched with mechanisms for accountability to the children they are obliged to protect. Both state and non-state actors can be involved in accountability by monitoring and evaluating practices, receiving or responding to complaints, providing remedies or redress when violations of rights have occurred or rights have not been met. International human rights treaty bodies such as the Committee on the Rights of the Child and national human rights institutions can also play an important monitoring role and can be the focus of complaints, as can parliamentary review committees.

**Box 13: Good practice in accountability could be evidenced in**

- Successful prosecutions of violations of street-connected children rights\(^{215}\) in which justice is seen to be carried out in defence of children
- Reviewing police and judicial processes to ensure they comply with international standards of justice\(^{216}\) and ensuring they are consciously used with street-connected children
- Non-discriminatory media attention, campaigning, lobbying, social mobilization and social activism promoting enforcement of the rights of street-connected children.
- Training staff in child-friendly standards and child rights, addressing negative perceptions of street-connected children and emphasizing the universality principle.
- Providing street connected children with legal assistance including accompanying them through the legal process and legal aid.
- Monitoring arrests and judicial decisions that involve street-connected children.
- Intervention planning, monitoring and evaluation cycles requiring meaningful participation by street-connected children\(^{217}\)
- Provision by donors of resources and encouragement to design and pilot mechanisms for accountability of interventions and policies for street-connected children\(^{218}\)
- Providing inputs to the Committee on the Rights of the Child on monitoring of street-connected children and monitoring implementation of their recommendations.
- Communicating minimum standards of care and codes of conduct to children in a language they understand
- Establishing adequately funded, independent, regulatory bodies and grievance mechanisms that encourage street-connected children to report violations of their rights
- Ensuring that when standards are not met, codes are breached, and children’s rights are violated, regulatory bodies take appropriate action.

A practical example for discussion of the ‘accountability’ criterion might be the bringing of a legal case against State perpetrators of violence against children in street situations – and in the case of a successful outcome ensuring redress\(^{219}\).

\(^{215}\) Thomas de Benitez (2011: 56) ‘The most famous case brought to court to date involving street children concerned the murder of five street youth in Guatemala, three of whom were under 18 years of age, known as the 1999 Villagrán Morales v. Guatemala case. A landmark decision of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ruled that the State of Guatemala had violated numerous Articles of the American Convention of Human Rights, and awarded damages totalling US$508,865.91 against Guatemala in favour of surviving relatives of the murdered street children (Ewelukwa, 2006).’

\(^{216}\) See UN (2008).

\(^{217}\) Programmes and interventions apparently targeting street-connected children have been found to miss children working and/or living on the street altogether in favor of children from poor families who are easier to reach and whose rights are more easily fulfilled. Accountability of programmes to their targeted clients is key for effectiveness (Thomas de Benitez, 2008).

\(^{218}\) See Railway Children’s Reach Model at [http://www.railwaychildren.org.uk/article.asp?id=654](http://www.railwaychildren.org.uk/article.asp?id=654)
5. Sustainability

In her 2010 progress report on compilation of good practices, the Independent Expert on human rights obligations related to safe drinking water and sanitation, wrote: ‘Guaranteeing human rights requires more than mere rhetoric. These rights must be operationalized, and as such, good practices from a human rights perspective should positively contribute to the realization of the human rights [...] This criterion is essential for assuring meaningful interventions which can effect an improvement in peoples' lives.220

This criterion goes beyond immediate accountability to children to recognise the importance of sustainability, in terms of:

- Improving the lives of individual children
- Ensuring continuity of support to protect and defend children’s access to their rights.

Policies and interventions should enable children not only to access their rights but also ensure that children continue to benefit from fulfilment of their rights after their participation in programmes, projects or interventions has ended.

Sustainability of individual improvements means preparing children with appropriate support so that they are able to continue to enjoy their rights beyond childhood into youth and adulthood. Participation of street-connected children in design, planning, monitoring and evaluation phases can help promote sustainability of intervention impacts on children’s access to their human rights.

Sustainability of practices means ensuring sufficient support – including from graduates from interventions for street-connected children, their families, communities, businesses, civil society and/or governments – to guarantee their continuity. In the case of child protection systems, their sustainability relies on government commitment to protect all children’s rights. Sustainability at practice level implies cost-effectiveness.

Interventions that are sustainable are likely to contribute successfully to prevention of street-connectedness. Research into cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness should be conducted to find whether and which preventive services are economically more viable than protection and restoration of rights to street-connected children in the long term. Allocation of budgets should take full account of potential cost-savings found by research into policies and interventions, which provide a more rational platform for decision-making than simply considering economic ‘means available’ in the short-term.

A practical example for discussion of the ‘sustainability’ criterion might be an exploration of the financial benefits of interventions for street-connected children and identification of cost savings to society generated by their outcomes221

---


220 HRC Resolution A/HRC/15/31/Add.1; para 62

221 See for example Research Brief 2011, Barnardos with ProBono Economics, UK, available at: www.probonoeconomics.com and www.barnardos.org.uk/research_and_publications for a recent study of an intervention for sexually exploited young people which found that savings to the taxpayer by providing the intervention were 12 times the cost of delivering the intervention, providing substantial long term public savings. Also see Box 23 in Section V for more information about this UK-based research
Box 14: Good practice regarding sustainability could include

- Pilot-testing and analysis by governments prior to rolling out national initiatives, including repeated field testing before finalization of approach in the design phase.
- Guaranteeing budgetary commitments to child protection systems and for sustainability of cost-effective interventions with street-connected children.
- Community ownership and participation in programmes to empower and support families.
- Developing social equity programmes that effectively target street-connected children, their families, and the communities they live in.
- Building local capacity, in government or civil society, to support, manage and undertake effective interventions with street-connected children.
- Embedding a routine national birth registration system with government ownership and dedicated budgetary commitment, rather than an ad hoc system dependent on external funding campaigns.
- Significant and sustained increase in birth registration evidenced in standardized collection of data that is made publicly available.
- Guaranteed funding and dissemination of research into cost-benefits and cost-effectiveness of initiatives with street-connected children.

D.2 Normative criteria relevant to children’s experiences of multiple deprivations and street-connectedness

An additional five normative criteria are proposed for policies and interventions concerning children with street connections as:

6. Safety
7. Availability
8. Accessibility
9. Quality
10. Flexibility

Unlike cross-cutting criteria, these criteria may not be relevant to every example of good practice and are better understood as offering a potential starting point for local to regional multi-sector consultations with stakeholders including children and youth in street situations.

---

222 UNICEF (2009)
223 IDS (2011:14)
224 IDS (2011:14)
225 UNICEF (2009)
227 Developed using practices identified in some of the literature as ‘promising’ with children working and/or living on the streets (see some examples in Annex 5); HRC Resolution HRC/16/L.13
6. Safety

Children need be able to feel safe in their family home, neighbourhood, community and society. Children who feel unsafe - lacking protection from violence, abuse, maltreatment, neglect or negligent treatment, including exploitation, gender-based violence, trafficking, forced begging and hazardous work, displacement or forced recruitment by armed forces and armed groups – have the right to be protected and kept safe. Violence at home and in the neighbourhood is frequently cited as a prime cause of children making connections to the streets.

In the streets, children are vulnerable to a range of sources and types of violence, and need recourse to safety. Children who are abused – whether by officials, members of civil society organisations, other representatives of society such as community leaders, or by members of the public, need to be protected from violations – which at the extreme may include forced disappearances, extrajudicial killings or rapes - and should be fully supported to find safety – immediately and in the longer term - from these and from everyday forms of violence to which they are exposed.

Box 15: Good practice regarding safety could include

- Listening to children, taking their safety concerns seriously and responding sensitively and adequately over time to traumas or distress they have experienced
- Supporting children to form their own groups and social movements to support their development, safety and well-being
- Supporting families and caregivers to make home a safe environment for their children
- Training educational directors and teachers to make school a safe environment for all children
- Coordinating networks of local businesses, community leaders and social workers to keep children safe on the streets
- Providing temporary safe houses and refuges for children in danger, with adequate support to ensure that children can transition to a safe, stable environment
- Ensuring perpetrators of violence towards children on the street are brought to justice, including making juvenile justice processes safe for children.
- Ratification of the Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (No. 182), and becoming States parties to the CRC and its Optional Protocols.

A practical example for discussion of the ‘safety’ criterion might be development of a positive support network around a child. When a positive family environment can be enabled in which relationships become nurturing and protective, the impact for a child can be dramatic and powerful.

---

228 See for example Thomas de Benitez (2007: 45 Case Study 12)
229 See for example in Peru http://www.manthocperu.org
230 See for example Roberts (2010)
231 See for example JUCONI Ecuador (2010)
7. Availability

Basic services – birth registration, basic education, health care, housing, water and sanitation - are often not available in sufficient quantity and in the right places to reach all children without discrimination. Lack of availability of basic services can help push children onto the streets.

Specialized interventions to respond to the deprivations, experiences and circumstances of street-connected children may also be unavailable. These include: treatment for physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional trauma, and mental illness; support for recovery from substance abuse; treatment for HIV & AIDS, sexual infections and other illnesses; support for pregnant girls and their babies; safe houses and refuges from violence: legal representation for children brought before the courts; and mechanisms for children to report violations of their rights. Lack of availability of appropriate specialized interventions can prevent street-connected children from accessing their rights – including their fundamental right to survival.

Basic services must be available for all children to be able to grow up in conditions conducive to promote healthy development. Specialized interventions responsive to effects of multiple deprivations and street connectedness must be available to enable children (re)gain access to their full range of rights. As a minimum, services must be available in order to meet criteria of accessibility, quality and flexibility.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 16: Good practice regarding availability of services could include:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Building and equipping enough schools, clinics, houses, registry offices and recreational facilities to ensure sufficient basic services are available for all children in a country, region or locality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Undertaking regular, child-centred, research necessary to explore, plan and provide the type and scale of specialized interventions identified as necessary to fulfil the rights of children connected to the street – including drug rehabilitation services, safe houses and legal aid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Guaranteeing and monitoring use of budgets and human resources to ensure that basic services remain available to all children, and specialized interventions remain available to street-connected children as needed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A practical example for discussion of the ‘availability’ criterion might be the fostering of a range of networked services available at points of entry to the street, such as Railway Stations in India[^233].

8. Accessibility

Even when basic services and specialized interventions are available, some children cannot access them. Barriers to access include exclusion on the grounds of: discrimination by sex, age, disability, ethnicity, caste or religion; lack of identification papers; geographical boundaries; numerical quotas; refugee status or prohibitive costs.

Basic services apparently free and open to all children may have hidden costs. Families may need to contribute books, materials or weekly ‘subs’ to school and to buy uniforms before their children are allowed to attend lessons. ‘Free’ clinics may require families to purchase medicines, supplies or food to access health care. Other barriers include age (children considered ‘too old’ for school), sex (girls excluded from school by culture or physical distance), ethnicity (indigenous children unable to speak official languages) etc. Access may be denied to street-connected children on the grounds of their appearance (e.g. unkempt, dirty) and other adult prejudices against children working and/or living in the streets (e.g. fear, contempt and perceptions of antisocial behaviour or delinquency).

Specialized interventions may also exclude street-connected children through prohibitive cost (e.g. treatment for mental illness, HIV & AIDS), requirement for parental support (drug rehabilitation programmes), gender (safe houses exclusively for boys or girls), prejudice (treatment of sexual infections), or organisational capacity (interventions unable to support girls with babies), or because of adult fears of antisocial behaviour or delinquency.

Box 17: Good practice regarding accessibility of services could include:

- Introducing universal, free, simple, expeditious and effective birth registration procedures and raising awareness of the importance of birth registration at national, regional and local levels.
- Providing free basic education and health care for all, without discrimination
- Strengthening efforts to eradicate poverty to help ensure the realization of the right of all children to an adequate standard of living and development opportunities.
- Establishing child-friendly and effective counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms accessible to children using a wide range of media.
- Facilitating late, free registration of birth
- Ensuring that children who are not registered gain free access without discrimination to health care, protection, education, safe drinking water and sanitation, and other basic services.
- Training for officials, community leaders and gatekeepers of interventions to facilitate street-connected children’s to access basic services and relevant specialist interventions
- Strengthening referral mechanisms so that street workers are enabled to facilitate children’s access to appropriate services and interventions
- Introducing and sustaining 24-hour child help-lines manned by trained psychologists and social workers able to provide counselling and referral to available services
- Developing public and/or private partnerships with civil society organisations to provide bridging and additional specialized interventions designed to respond to street-connectedness.

A practical example for discussion of the ‘accessibility’ criterion might be making education, personal development and other services for integration accessible to street connected children through thoughtful involvement in sport.

9. Quality

Even when there are sufficient basic services and access is open to all, lack of attention to quality can mean that services do not bring about hoped-for changes. Poor quality health services can affect children’s survival and development; poor quality education can lead to truancy, poor grades, repeated years and early drop-out; poor quality, overcrowded, housing exacerbate health and social problems, putting immense strain on families. Poor quality social work and insufficient financial services can lead to inadequate support for families. All these can contribute to children developing connections with the street.

Specialized interventions for street-connected children are often severely under-resourced in terms of their capacity to address multiple deprivations of rights and street connectedness. Poor physical infrastructure, lack of organisation, isolation from basic services, poorly trained and supervised staff, inadequate planning and feedback mechanisms are among factors that negatively affect children’s outcomes. Poor quality interventions can lead street-connected children to give up on support services altogether.

Children whose rights to survival, development and participation have been violated in multiple ways in the home, community and by wider society need extra support – extra quality of care - to strengthen their connections with society and have their rights fulfilled.

**Box 18: Good practice in quality of support could include:**

- One-on-one mentoring and support by well-trained, dedicated, staff in the streets and through specializsed interventions.
- In-depth, evidence-based, longitudinal research that enables practitioners better to understand children’s experiences and to learn from their progress through interventions and their outcomes.
- Consistent, professional support for families, community volunteers and others to encourage child-centred care in family or develop substitute-family environments.
- Well-developed micro-credit, savings and/or business experiences with street-connected children.
- Well-developed and tested interventions that effectively address trauma and strategies to cope with violence.
- Appropriate supplementary education and vocational training schemes, whose outcomes evidence success in education and in adequate work environments.
- Carefully documented, field-tested models of care with evidence of street-connected children’s outcomes in terms of school graduation, recovery from substance abuse, healthy lifestyles, successful work experiences or rights-based parenting practices.
- Developing or supporting policies and strategies, in partnership across government, with civil society, schools, health care centres, communities, families and children, that are culturally sensitive, focused on relationships of trust and delivering outcomes for individual children.
- Budgeting based on evidence of outcomes and with support for development of human resource and organisational capacity over time.

A practical example for discussion of the ‘quality’ criterion might be the development of long-term global partnerships between States, civil society and business, investing in making sustainable impacts for children with street connections.\(^{235}\)

---

10. Flexibility

Flexibility in basic services and in specialized interventions is an enabling element in a rights-based, holistic approach. Inflexibility refers to a focus on implementing rules and procedures, instead of a focus on responding to children’s changing circumstances and experiences.

Some children drop out of – and others never access – inflexible support structures. Inflexibility is manifest in, for example:

- Schools (and school systems) that insist on specific paperwork, or fail to understand difficulties for attendance faced by children in poverty, or refuse temporary migrants;
- Housing services that do not allocate families accommodation appropriate to their children’s needs;
- Cash transfer programmes for poverty alleviation whose parameters exclude certain types of family or communities, or impose onerous conditions for reasons of control rather than well-being;
- Birth registration services that exclude families and/or children who cannot conform to specified rules and procedures.

Inflexibility in services for children and families can contribute to children making street connections.

Specialized interventions for street-connected children highlight flexibility as an essential element of service delivery. Children who experience diverse and multiple rights deprivations, and who have forged connections in the street environment, have disorganised living arrangements. Each child needs a personalized mix of services that is capable of responding to ever-changing circumstances in order to strengthen his or her connections with society on his or her terms.

**Box 19: Good practice in providing flexible support might include:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establishing comprehensive child protection systems which allow for personalized support packages for children with multiple rights deprivations and street connectedness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking a strength-based approach - encouraging children and families to monitor and assess their own progress towards goals, and to set new goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instituting a collaborative referral system between organisations, agencies, programmes and sectors to facilitate a child’s access to interventions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent street-outreach presence that allows children to choose how and when to access particular services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing or supporting policies and strategies, in partnership across government, with NGOs, schools, health care centres, communities, families and children, that are integrated, collaborative, understanding of street connected children’s needs for tailored service provision and accompanied by sufficient budgets and training.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A practical example for discussion of the ‘flexibility’ criterion might be empowering young people to access their rights from where they are - in the street - using child-centred social work.²³⁶

Section V: Data Collection and Research with Street-Connected Children

A. Introduction

HRC Resolution HRC/RES/16/12 of 2011 recognises: ‘the lack and the desirability of more reliable and in-depth systematic disaggregated data collection and research on children, including children living and/or working on the street’ and ‘Encourages States to develop, strengthen and implement, as appropriate, national systems for collecting, monitoring and evaluating disaggregated national data on children, including on children working and/or living on the street’, inviting the OHCHR to include in its study ‘practices in the collection of disaggregated data’.

Data collection can be understood as a systematic process of gathering information. Here, disaggregated data is taken to mean information that clearly identifies:

- Children who have street connections, within larger populations of children
- Sex, age, ethnicity and/or other salient characteristics
- Type of street connection and/or other factors relevant to children’s rights in local contexts

For a discussion of data collection practices, we need first to locate them within the larger framework of ‘research’. This paper’s main interest is policy research (generation of knowledge for action) rather than theoretical research (knowledge for understanding), although the boundaries are blurred. Policy research is often multi-dimensional and multi-method (to get a rounded and balanced picture of any given topic), and relies to some extent on collecting ‘evidence’ from the field. In general terms, evidence-based research is now accepted as a component of successful policy-making and practice. Support for evidence-based research where children’s rights are concerned is widespread, for example: ‘An evidence-based approach to preventing violence against children is essential for long-term success. A priority must therefore be to expand this evidence base by supporting scientific studies that measure the effectiveness of prevention programmes everywhere, but especially in low- and middle-income countries where the problem is greatest’.

The HRC Resolution recognises there are important gaps in information available about street-connected children and their access to rights, but does not specify or prioritize those gaps. This Section V first makes the case for disaggregated data collection with street connected children (Part B) then explores existing research (Part C) before identifying important gaps for street-connected children (Part D). Part E proposes ideas for good practice in disaggregated data collection together with concrete examples.

237 HRC Resolution HRC/RES/16/12 - Preamble
238 Ibid: Article 9
239 Ibid: Article 18
241 Other terms are sometimes preferred, such as data ‘generation’ – for example: ‘The term ‘generation’ is used rather than ‘collection’ to encapsulate the wider ranges of relationships between the researcher, social world and data which a qualitative research spans.’ SOYAC (2011: 1) see http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Children/Study/Pages/Contributions.aspx for link to the Maltepe University Research and Application Centre
242 See Hakim (2000: 3-9) for a fuller discussion
243 Dr Catherine Le-Gales-Camus, Assistant Director-General, WHO, cited in Pinheiro (2006: 333)
B. Making the Case for Disaggregated Data Collection

Data collection is easily recognised as necessary to explore:

- How many children are on the street, who are they and what do they do?
- What are children’s circumstances at home and in the streets?
- How do they help themselves and each other?
- How effectively do interventions support them?
- How do policies affect them?
- What happens to street-connected children afterwards?

However, children with street connections are not distinguishable in population censuses or standard household surveys, leaving them invisible or excluded from national data collection systems - even though they need more support than many to access their rights. Disaggregated data about street-connected children could tell us something about their numbers and characteristics, about differences (and similarities) between, experiences of girls and boys, or of young children and adolescents, and how these and characteristics such as disabilities, HIV, orphanhood, and discrimination affect children’s access to rights and services. The more carefully disaggregated the data, the more clearly patterns can emerge, to develop new assumptions, design more appropriate services and think about providing more effective support for children. The above sections have proposed that children with street connections are in particular need of support to access their rights – and need tailored services to do so; gathering information with and about them is an essential starting point.

It is important for policy-making and intervention design to be able to distinguish street-connected children from other children who seem to share similar situations, in order to uncover effects for children who have multiple deprivations of their rights and are also connected to the streets. For example:

- A community-based intervention seeks to enrol and educate in a local school a total of 100 children who live or work on the streets or are at risk of doing so.
- An assessment carried out six months later finds that 100 girls and boys enrolled (100% success) and that six months later, 90 of them are still at school.
- 70 of these 90 have full attendance.
- After one year however, an additional 20 children have left school.
- On the face of it, the intervention still looks reasonably effective... 70% of children have joined school and completed a full year of schooling.
- However, if only 10 of the original 100 were living on the street at project start – and these were the 10 who had dropped out – then that would suggest the intervention has not worked at all for children who live on the streets.
- And if an additional 20 were working on the streets at project start, and these were the 20 of the 90 who had irregular attendance before leaving school – then that would suggest the intervention has not provided sufficient support for children who work on the streets.
- The intervention, then, while seeming to help street-connected children is in reality beneficial only for children considered at risk of becoming street-connected.

This example may be overly simplistic but shows how interventions and policies aimed at including street-connected children may in reality miss them out. Clearer evidence about their participation and benefits can be found only by disaggregating information collected about children to identify characteristics such as street-connectedness.
• On entry to the programme (baseline data);
• During periodic interim assessments (monitoring);
• At the end and post-intervention (evaluation of outcomes).

This also applies to surveys of ‘child workers’, ‘children on the move’, ‘children in poverty’ and more widely to household, workplace and social institution surveys as well as to population censuses.

Data that can be disaggregated by type of connection to the street can also be valuable. For example, evidence collected about effects of a policy or intervention can tell us how children with different types of connection (e.g. strong gang links, substance abuse, work and income, spatial independence) benefited, were harmed or excluded. An intervention found to have benefited only 20% of children entering the programme may not be considered effective, but if the 20% were all substance users, then the evidence might suggest that the intervention could be oriented to support substance-using children in the streets. This has implications for intervention design, budgets, professional training and infrastructure etc.

Finally, data collection can elicit street-connected children’s experiences with institutional stakeholders. An important justification for this is that children who experience severe and diverse violations of their rights (multiple deprivations) stand to gain most when a State assumes its full range of responsibilities under the CRC. When full responsibilities are not assumed, however, these children are among the most likely to be left behind, because:

• Short-term costs of (multiple) services needed for each individual may be higher than for other children. This creates a short-term economic incentive for decision-making to support for children with fewer and less severe violations of their rights
• Street-connectedness combined with multiple deprivations of rights is likely to require more extended and more intensive services than those required for other children. This creates a short-term incentive for hard-pressed child protection systems and social services to focus on ‘easier’ cases – at the expense of more ‘difficult’ ones.
• On the other hand, street-connected children can be an inflammatory political issue: whether as the visible face of urban poverty, a concern for public security, or a daily reminder of policy failures. These create political incentives for decision-making to favour removing children forcibly from the streets – implying violations of their rights.

Data collection including baseline information, service costs and outcomes for children can also be used to assess costs of interventions for street-connected children, which can in turn be used to estimate cost savings made by provision of such support services compared to long term costs of not having such interventions.

Evidence-based research relies on ongoing data collection as well as at specific stages of a policy or intervention:

• Situational data – data collected to better understand a situation and plan a strategy
• Baseline data – data collected to assess or measure initial indicators in a policy pilot or at the start of an invention
• Interim or ongoing data – data used to monitor progress of the policy or intervention towards agreed goals in a specific timescale, and/or to identify unexpected results to modify planning
• Outcome data – data collected to assess changes attributable to the effects of an policy/intervention after an agreed period of time

While data collection is the basis for evidence-based learning, it is not always helpful or justifiable. This is true when:
The purpose of research is unclear
Information gathering efforts add little if anything to what is already known
Data collection and the production of ‘evidence’ does not match up to programme, organizational or funding planning cycles and are therefore redundant
Children’s and/or their families’ expectations of support are raised but then nothing is done to help them
Data collection is insensitive, thoughtless or intrusive
Collected data are not thoroughly analyzed or interpreted
Children are treated as objects of research rather than subjects – and their expertise is under-valued or ignored

C. Current Data Collection Practices and Street Connected Children

Advances have been made in data collection and understandings of street connected children’s lives in recent years, building on innovative theoretical research and policy studies since the early 1980s. A flavour of these advances is found in the State of the World’s Street Children: Research 2011, which discusses advances in research available in the English language and which ‘…draws on more than 400 pieces of research written by scholars, development practitioners and NGOs working with street children’

Advances in data collection observed in this literature can be summarised as:
- Improved counting techniques
- More nuanced exploration of characteristics and experiences
- Recognition of children’s rights, agency and expertise
- Recognition of children’s connections to a range of environments
- Growing interest in prevention
- Growing interest in comparative data and longitudinal studies
- Interest in collecting evidence about outcomes and costs of interventions and policies

But as reflected in the submissions to this study by Governments, few States collect or regularly update information about children in street situations. Reasons include: contested definitions; methodological difficulties caused by children’s mobility and elusiveness; lack of investment in research; and lack of policy leadership.

This paper proposes that research of relevance to street-connected children must be understood as encompassing all environments that affect them, including:
- Children themselves

---

244 Thomas de Benitez (2011)
245 The report is limited mainly to recent research in English, building on earlier studies mainly from Latin America, and recognises there is a wealth of relevant, diverse and burgeoning research about street connected children in other languages and from other regions. It will be important to explore the literature in other languages and regions to inform further global discussions and consultations.
246 Sally Shire, CEO of the Consortium for Street Children, in Thomas de Benitez (2011: vi)
247 See Thomas de Benitez (2011) for a fuller discussion
248 The Council of Europe recognises ‘in most European countries there are no accurate figures of the number of children concerned due to the lack of a systematic collection of data’ (CoE 2008:1). See also State submissions to this study at http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Children/Study/Pages/Contributions.aspx
Their families and homes
Their streets and neighbourhoods
Interventions supporting and institutions restraining children with street connections
Policies and systems affecting, including and/or targeting street connected children
National legislation and budgets designed to guarantee and enforce children’s rights
Global institutions and interactions between countries

The first four of these environments are now generally recognised as concerning street-connected children, but it is also clear that economic policies, social budgets, legislation and global trade are important causal factors underlying children’s development of street connections, and present opportunities or constraints for respect for children’s rights.

Commonly used methods to collect data about street connected children for advocacy, policy-making and intervention design include:

- Headcounts and situation analyses by city/town/region: To estimate numbers, describe characteristics, contexts and circumstances of children
- Ethnography and participatory techniques with children: To explore experiences, capabilities, perceptions, aspirations, daily lives and conduct research together with children
- Literature Reviews and secondary analysis of existing documentation: To synthesize existing knowledge, make comparisons over time and between places, assess costs of policies and interventions.

These may all be used together for example in: case studies, outcome evaluations and explorations of systemic relationships. See Annex 6 for some examples of techniques used and studies conducted by method.

Data collection in fields related to street-connectedness – including violence, child labour, mobility and poverty – has experienced uneven progress. Perhaps the most interesting advances have been made in child labour, as a direct result of an ILO-UNICEF collaboration prioritizing worst forms of child labour for more than a decade. Advances for data collection on child labour have significant implications for street-connected children because:

- Many street situations and types of street work are recognised by the ILO as Worst Forms of Child Labour, which States party to the Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (No. 182) are committed to eliminating. Data collection about child

249 Drawing on GCPS (2011) and Thomas de Benitez (2011)
251 See ILO Submission for this study: P. 4 – ‘Working on the street is not, as such, classified as child labour, let alone its worst form, under international standards. Nevertheless, the worst forms of child labour covered by the ILO Convention No. 182 (1999) include many types of situations faced by children on the street: being victim of child trafficking or other forms of forced labour, used in forced begging, prostitution, drug trade or other illicit activities, as well as in work on the street that is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.’ and P.5 ‘The Global Child Labour Conference in The Hague in May 2010 adopted the Roadmap for Achieving the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour by 2016. This forms part of the Global Action Plan adopted by the ILO Governing Body in November 2010. This ambitious goal – linked also with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly the reduction of poverty and ensuring education for all by 2015 – would not be achieved without addressing the situations faced by children living and/or working on the street.'
labour therefore includes at least some situations and some work carried out during some periods of time by street-connected children.

- Advances made in data collection and information systems about child labour suggest pathways for improvements in data collection about street connectedness.

Data collection about child labour is explicitly addressed in ILO Convention 182’s accompanying Recommendation No. 190: ‘Detailed information and statistical data on the nature and extent of child labour should be compiled and kept up to date to serve as a basis for determining priorities for national action for the abolition of child labour, in particular for the prohibition and elimination of its worst forms, as a matter of urgency’.

Quantitative data collection tools include surveys for households, schools and the workplace. However, numbers of children in the worst forms of child labour are difficult to identify using these quantitative methods and so far have not been measured directly. In 2002, numbers were estimated using qualitative methods, as part of a first round of the ILO global estimates. Crucially, ILO has recognised that: ‘A combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches best lead to an understanding of child labour; these methodologies complement one another in interpreting a complex reality. This understanding can lead to more successful programme and project formulation or other kinds of intervention. [...] it has been found that qualitative approaches add a new dimension, one that complements quantitative methods. Whenever possible, at the same time, it is generally understood that data should be collected and disaggregated by age and sex, while gender differences must be accorded a place in both data collection and interpretation.’

To address the data gap, ILO-UNICEF developed a ‘Child Labour Rapid Assessment Methodology’ (CLRAM) to ‘improve the collection of child labour data by enriching quantitative surveys with solid qualitative information.’ Some CLRAM studies have included or even focused entirely on children working on the streets. A CLRAM Manual available on ILO and UNICEF websites offers practical guidance to data collection. CLRAM is advocated as:

- An effective research instrument where time and financial means are limited
- Well suited to research in small, well-defined geographical areas
- Providing a means to use and integrate quantitative and qualitative data to produce “actionable” results
- Providing comparability across child labour realities and in different contexts

CLRAM can be used to explore, among other things:

- Causes of and pathways into child labour
- Actual work that boys and girls do
- Living and working conditions
- Children’s own perceptions of their situations

---

252 ILO-UNICEF (2005: V)
255 ILO-UNICEF (2005: 6)

To identify the kinds of work done by the children on the streets, their living and working conditions, a rapid assessment was carried out in Diyarbakir, Adana and Istanbul. Prior to data collection, researchers used elements of sports and music as entry points to establish a comfortable connection with children working in the streets and build rapport. Snowball sampling was used to identify interviewees. Interviews were first conducted with children in front of the main shopping centres, city centres and bus terminals, where many working street children could be found day and night. It was then possible to identify and contact some of the families of these children, and further interviews were conducted. Other families in the neighbourhood — also with children working in the streets — were then reached and included in the sample [...] Common activities on the streets were found to be shoe polishing, selling different goods and scavenging. In terms of hazards, children were found to face exposed to pollution and the risk of being run over or hit by cars, while those working at night were exposed to drunks in bars, older street children involved in petty crimes and drugs, and the danger of being sexually abused by gangs of older children or from adults. The survey considered the most difficult and dangerous work might be scavenging, underlining health risks including jaundice, contagious diseases, attacks by dogs. Some children became addicted to drugs to bear the working conditions.

ILO/IPEC: Turkey – Working Street Children in Three Metropolitan Cities, p. 44

Child labour data collection is supported by ILO’s Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC), launched in 1998 with contributions from donor countries, to provide a solid information base for appropriate research methodologies on child labour. SIMPOC helps countries with data collection, provides guidance on how to process and analyze collected information, and offers a variety of statistical tools, micro datasets and survey reports, and regular trend reports.

D. Where are Gaps in Data Collection about Street Connected Children?

First, a framework is needed within which to identify and prioritize gaps in data collection. Using parameters established in the previous sections, an appropriate framework for data collection concerning street-connected children should reflect:

- A rights-based approach
- A holistic approach to children’s experiences and circumstances
- A systemic approach to interventions and policy-making

This implies searching for gaps within the following dimensions:

- Issues of importance for fulfilment of street-connected children’s rights and prevention of rights violations
- Whole lives within which childhoo ds play a distinctive and time-limited role
- Environments within which street-connected children navigate and build their identities
- Links within and between systems affecting street-connected children
- Uses to which collected data are put

---

256 Aksit et al (2001), extracts taken from ILO-UNICEF (2005: 47 & 188) and ILO Submission for this 2011 Global study (p.12-13)
Gaps in Issue-led data collection

Issues of relevance to fulfilling street connected children’s rights include poverty, child labour, education, multiple health risks including HIV and AIDS, violence and abuse, mental health, migration and mobility, sexual exploitation, early pregnancy, birth registration, child trafficking, armed conflict, juvenile justice and substance use. Data collection in these themes has evolved at different speeds with varying strategies.

- Issue-led data collection that includes street-connected children, such as child labour, is rarely disaggregated to identify children with street connections and allow for secondary analysis of data collected about them.

- A critical gap in issue-led data collection concerns violence against children. All street-connected children experience diverse forms of violence, often with traumatic and long-lasting effects. Violence against children is nevertheless chronically under-researched: ‘Accurate and reliable data on the magnitude and consequences of family violence against children are essential to evidence-based advocacy, policy development, resource allocation and programme implementation. The lack of data has been a constant refrain throughout the Study...’

I recommend that States improve data collection and information systems in order to identify vulnerable subgroups, inform policy and programming at all levels, and track progress towards the goal of preventing violence against children. States should use national indicators based on internationally agreed standards, and ensure that data are compiled, analysed and disseminated to monitor progress over time. [...] Data should be disaggregated by sex, age, urban/rural, household and family characteristics, education and ethnicity. States should also develop a national research agenda on violence against children across settings where violence occurs, including through interview studies with children and parents, with particular attention to vulnerable groups of girls and boys.

Gaps in data collection about Whole Lives

Data collection methods and information systems about childhood have developed in recent years, for example to measure progress towards Millennium Development Goals on education, child mortality, poverty and hunger. Such measurements provide evidence of effects of governmental policies and strategies on children’s well being that can contribute to efforts preventing children taking to the streets.

---

258 See themes referred to in HRC Resolution A/HRC/16/12
259 Designed primarily to collect data about child labour, Rapid Assessment is a flexible methodology that could also be adapted to focus on exploration of street connectedness and multiple deprivations of rights. There would seem to be advantages to advancing systematic, disaggregated data collection about street-connected children with UNICEF and ILO. Another area of data collection of direct relevance to street-connectedness is poverty. Social protection programmes such as Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programmes designed to reach children in poor families were introduced successfully in Latin America in the 1990s and are increasingly used in Africa. They have relevance for street-connectedness. Conditional Cash Transfer programmes have already been used with street-connected children in Brazil (Villatoro, 2005) and are currently being piloted by in DRC by the World Bank – see http://siteresources.worldbank.org/SOCIALPROTECTION/Resources/280558-1254328646148/RSR-MDTF_Activity_Report_March2011.pdf
260 Pinheiro (2006: 90) The same report includes a Recommendation on p.270 to: ‘Collect data about violence against children in the workplace. Given the almost total lack of data about violence against children in the workplace, Governments should ensure that all possible means of collecting such data are deployed within programmes and services and by specific studies and surveys. Especially vulnerable children should be targeted for research, notably those in home-based, street-based and illicit work’
• Data collected about the fulfilment of children’s rights does not – but should - include street-connectedness as a reference characteristic. Being able to identify street-connected children within data collected more generally about children’s rights should permit analysis of multiple rights deprivations associated street-connectedness.

• A critical gap in data collection about street-connected children is longitudinal research, involving the collection of data over time to explore developments from early childhood through childhood and adolescence into youth and adulthood, with implications for identity construction, relationships, livelihoods and social inclusion. Longitudinal data collection can also explore long-term impacts of interventions on the lives of street-connected children, providing much-needed evidence for intervention design and policy-making. Used in related fields such as childhood poverty\(^{262}\), significant longitudinal studies about street-connectedness have not been undertaken.

Gaps in data collection about children’s Environments
The street has been the environment of choice for data collection with street-connected children, and little research has been undertaken in their other environments.

Critical gaps in data collection here include:
• The family environment, both as primary environment for prevention of street-connectedness and as environment for providing rights-based support for children once they have developed street connections
• Community environments, particularly schools – as environments contributing to prevention of street-connectedness and as inclusive environments able to support children who have street connections
• Specialized interventions, as environments of change. Evaluations and reviews of impacts of interventions on street-connected children are rare\(^{263}\).

Gaps in data collection about links within and between systems affecting street-connected children
The limited data collection that exists around support systems for street-connected children has focused mainly on the number, type and services offered by social work services and specialized interventions. However, services and interventions are supported - or constrained – by organisational strategies, policies, budgets, legislation and law enforcement – about which very little data has been collected. Yet these are arguably the most important constraints to making progress in fulfilling all children’s rights.

• Gaps in data collection are particularly evident in economics and finance. There is for example little data on national or local budgets allocated to children – and their families - and how these budgets are disaggregated between themes such as street-

\(^{262}\) Young Lives, for example, is an international longitudinal study of childhood poverty, involving 12,000 children in four countries, Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam, over 15 years. Through researching different aspects of children’s lives, Young Lives aims to seek to improve policies and programmes for children. See [http://www.younglives.org.uk/](http://www.younglives.org.uk/)

\(^{263}\) University of Canterbury Christ Church is currently undertaking the first known Systematic Review to explore ‘Interventions to promote reintegration and reduce harmful behaviour and lifestyles in street children and young people’, see: [http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Children/Study/Pages/Contributions.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Children/Study/Pages/Contributions.aspx)
connectedness.\textsuperscript{264} Such information would enable analysis of policy costs and effectiveness. Economic research into cost-benefits or cost-effectiveness of interventions for street-connected children is also rare, but could produce findings about cost implications\textsuperscript{265}, providing a stronger evidence base for policy-making.

- Data is lacking around the research-policy nexus to explore how knowledge is generated, brokered and used for policy-making and intervention-design to prevent street connectedness and to support children connected to the streets.

**Gaps in uses to which collected data are put**

Identification of gaps in data can usefully encourage a focus on new priorities for more disaggregated and more systematic data collection about street connectedness. But regular data collection is the first stage in a process of analysis and sharing findings to contribute to policy-making and intervention design (as the ILO-UNICEF example on child labour suggests).

Significant gaps in this respect are:

- In a rights-based approach, the bottom line in data collection must be to do no harm, and the aspiration must be to serve children’s best interests. Collected data should therefore be appropriately processed, and findings should be diligently and regularly disseminated.
- There is no inter-governmental entity responsible for promoting, gathering, processing and systematically disseminating data collected about child street-connectedness.

\textsuperscript{264} See the Government of Canada’s submission to this 2011 Global Study, which specifies budgets allocated to children, homelessness and by project.

\textsuperscript{265} See Box 23 from a closely related field: An assessment of potential savings through Barnardo’s interventions for young people who have been sexually exploited in the UK.
### E: Good Practice Criteria and Data Collection with Street Connected Children

**Table 3: Proposed Criteria for Good Practice evidenced in Data Collection**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Criteria</th>
<th>Proposed Criteria</th>
<th>Ideas for Good Practice in Data Collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Cross-cutting human-rights criteria                    | Best interests of the child                                                       | • Data about violations of children’s rights is systematically and comprehensively collected and analysed, using a holistic approach and child-centred research methods  
• Collected data is used to fulfil street-connected children’s rights |
|                                                       | Non-discrimination                                                               | • Data collection is sensitive to detecting discrimination and disaggregated to identify specific discrimination (e.g. ethnicity, gender, caste, age, disabilities…)  
• Data is gathered in gender-sensitive and other non-discriminatory ways that enable children from all backgrounds to participate |
|                                                       | Participation                                                                     | • Children are understood and treated as co-researchers in designing research, collecting data, analyzing findings and reporting results - using techniques appropriate to age, circumstance and capabilities |
|                                                       | Accountability                                                                   | • Data collection is responsive to children, who have a right to be consulted before findings are reported, have their views included and be informed about use of the research |
|                                                       | Sustainability                                                                   | • Data collected is geared to having a positive and sustained impact on children’s fulfilment of their rights |
| Normative criteria to support children with street connections | Safety                                                                          | • Information gathering exercises should protect children from potential harm derived from collection or sharing of data, through provision of appropriate psychological and/or physical support – keeping children safe |
|                                                       | Availability                                                                     | • Data collection mechanisms should be available to all children to report rights violations, in ways that are then used to protect rights |
|                                                       | Accessibility                                                                    | • Data collection mechanisms should be child-friendly and easily accessible to street-connected girls and boys, of different ages and languages |
|                                                       | Quality                                                                          | • Data collection should be designed to maximize both rights-based outcomes for children and the research process with children |
|                                                       | Flexibility                                                                      | • Data collection should be highly responsive to children’s well-being, circumstances and contexts, capable of following children’s research leads |
Here are three examples of potentially promising practices in data collection relevant for street-connected children:

**Child-led participatory research**

**Box 21: Children's Own Research Shoshur Bari and street children's research in Dhaka, Bangladesh**

Since 1997, street children in Bangladesh have conducted research with support and help by adults. The “Shoshur Bari” research focused on street children who, at some stage of their lives, came into contact with law-enforcing agents, which resulted either in their being taken into custody or incarcerated in jail or a home for vagrants. There were 14 children in the research group, comprising both boys and girls. The research took place over six months. Uniquely, the children were given the authority and space within broad parameters to decide specific research issues and various methods for accumulating information, and identifying, analyzing, and prioritizing key findings and recommendations. Interviews were also taken of lawyers, magistrates, government officials, police personnel, jail officials, and former and current child and adult prisoners. The adult core team members then carried out interviews with a similar sample group to strengthen the children’s research findings.

The study described the stages through which children often leave home and how they often end up in jail. Maltreatment by family members emerged as the major cause of children leaving home. On the street, they often are picked up by police, usually without any specific case or warrant, and become victims with no recourse to legal representation. Police have various tactics to apprehend street children, usually intensified during the eve of hartal [strike] days on account of “street violence,” as described by the children. Under custody, children experience physical and psychological abuse from the police, and when taken to court, are not properly represented, leading to their indefinite detention in jail without any follow-up for release. In jail and shelter homes, they suffer a denial of the basic necessities of life as well as egregious violations of their human rights.

The child researchers also developed recommendations to improve the situation of street children in detention: stopping police from apprehending children without specific charge, the establishment of alternative centre(s) exclusively for child detainees, stopping abuse of children by family members at home, treating street children’s situation with special consideration, and effective NGO involvement to ensure the protection and well-being of street children. In support of these recommendations, the children suggested certain advocacy measures, including meetings with senior government officials and NGO representatives as well as holding press conferences and producing television features on street children issues.

*Source: Khair and Khan 2000 – cited in West, 2003: 42*

**Gathering and using information about violence against children**

**Box 22: Raising Voices in Uganda**

Over 1,400 children were involved in research in five districts of Uganda in 2004 and 2005. It focused on the various types of violence they experience at home, in schools and in the community, how it makes them feel, and their ideas about violence-free childhoods. Also involved were almost 1,100 adults who provided their perceptions of punishment and discipline, mistreatment and how they also feel about the issues. The research fed into an evidence-based advocacy campaign, launched in 2006, directed at protecting and promoting children’s rights to live free from violence. These efforts were intended to increase public debate and break down the barriers to taking action. The campaign made an important contribution to the Ministry of Education and Sport’s initiative on banning all corporal punishment in schools in Uganda.

*Source: Pinheiro, World Report on Violence against Children 2006 p.322*
Demonstrating cost-effectiveness of interventions

**Box 23: Reducing the risk, cutting the cost: An assessment of potential savings from Barnardo’s interventions for young people who have been sexually exploited**

Extracts from the report:

Using a range of information from Barnardo’s services, the average cost of providing intensive support to each individual was estimated to be £2,918 [...] Outcome data from 539 service users were analysed to determine the impact of Barnardo’s interventions on young people’s risk of sexual exploitation. Four additional risk factors, which were highly correlated with risk of sexual exploitation and which could be assigned a monetary value, were also included in the analysis. These were: going missing; substance abuse; disengagement from education, training or employment; accommodation need [...] Existing empirical studies were used to place a monetary value on the four risk factors associated with sexual exploitation [...] for three scenarios:

1. Pre-intervention – the cost before a young person receives an intervention
2. Post-intervention – the cost after a young person receives an intervention
3. Control group – the cost if a young person does not receive an intervention

A ‘synthetic’ control group was created using data from the initial assessment of young people of different ages to build up a picture of the progression of risk over time in the absence of the young person receiving any intervention. Data from this ‘control group’ were then compared to data from the group of young people who had received support from Barnardo’s to determine the effectiveness of the intervention [...] The costs are based on the severity of risk in each scenario, with the final group – the control group – taking into account how young people’s risk might change in the absence of an intervention.

[The research found] a significant reduction in lifetime costs if a young person at risk of sexual exploitation receives an intervention, with the total cost to the taxpayer falling from £45,784 to £28,148. This represents a saving of £17,636, or six times the cost of delivering the intervention. [...] The savings increase further when the estimate of how the risks would have changed in the absence of an intervention is applied. The average cost per individual in the absence of an intervention in this scenario is £63,508. When compared to the average cost after receiving an intervention, this represents a saving of £35,360 – twelve times the cost of delivering the intervention.

**Implications of the Research:**

1. Specialist interventions can be an effective means of reducing the risk of sexual exploitation and other associated risk factors.
2. In the absence of an intervention, the risks posed to young people, and the associated costs, are likely to increase further.
3. Providing specialist interventions to young people at risk of sexual exploitation saves the taxpayer money

**Source:** Research Brief 2011, Barnardos working with ProBono Economics

[www.probonoeconomics.com](http://www.probonoeconomics.com) and [www.barnardos.org.uk/research_and_publications](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/research_and_publications)
Section VI: Broad Conclusions

We do not know how many children depend on the streets for their survival or development. Numbers fluctuate according to socio-economic, political and cultural conditions, including growing urbanization and inequalities, as well as terminology and definitions used. We do know, however, that diverse conditions and multiple rights violations push children into developing connections with the streets. Once there, children face a range of new challenges, including hostile perceptions of them as delinquents, and many forms of violence.

Four proposals have been set out in this paper. They have articulated some of the advances in understandings since the 1994 CHR Resolution on ‘street children’, focusing on themes of interest for study in the 2011 HRC Resolution including: children’s challenges; policy and service approaches; good practice; and data collection. Together these four proposals form a framework consistent with a rights-based, holistic approach towards children in street situations, to stimulate further discussion and wider consultation:

• First, the idea of ‘street connections’ encourages exploration of children’s associations with and within the streets, in relation to children’s connections with family, friends, school and the wider community. This emphasis on ‘connections’: Recognises each child as a social actor capable of developing relationships with people and places, even in highly adverse circumstances; Encourages a focus on children’s emotional associations with public spaces, rather than just on current, physical, presence on the street; Recognises that children who have spent time working, hanging out or living on the street form attachments there – just as they have varying connections to family, community and wider society; Recognises that street-based experiences make particular contributions to identity development

• Second, comprehensive Child Protection Systems (CPS) are proposed as mechanisms that take a holistic approach to children in protecting, respecting and fulfilling children’s rights. Key elements of a successful CPS include: making explicit the roles and obligations of duty-bearers; and ensuring adequate investment. However, even a strong CPS is unlikely to be able to provide the tailor-made, personalized support needed by children who have already developed street connections. Such specialized interventions rely on building positive, ongoing relationships of trust with children, whether in the form of street-based social work; or strengthening family connections; through social movements or community-based initiatives.

• Third, the paper recognizes the use of sharing ‘good practice’ to improving support services but acknowledges a lack of agreement on what constitutes criteria for identifying ‘good practice’ with children in street situations. Ten possible ‘criteria’ are proposed that build on principles of human rights and are consistent with a holistic approach.

• Finally, the importance of recognizing children as co-researchers is highlighted in gathering information to inform policy-making and design of support for children, families and communities. An international coordinating mechanism for knowledge sharing is need to advance the collection, analysis and sharing of data about children in street situations.

These proposals can be used to develop a number of recommendations to States and should also encourage wider and deeper discussions within and between civil society, academia, the private sector, children and youth movements, and the international community, as well as at all levels of government, on how we can make sure that children’s rights are fulfilled and how we can strengthen young people’s connections with society.
Bibliography


Beazley, H. (2003a) ‘The construction and protection of individual and collective identities by street children and youth in Indonesia’, Children, Youth and Environments, 13 (1), Spring


the streets of Rio de Janeiro’, *Childhood*, 16 (1): 11–29.


Child Mobility Platform

CHR (Commission for Human Rights) Resolution 1994/93 *The plight of street children*


Dallape, F. (1988) *An Experience with Street Children Nairobi* UNDUGU Society


Ennew, J. (2003) Working with street children, exploring ways for ADB assistance, Regional and Sustainable Development Department, ADB


training in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of Congo, StreetInvest and University of Ulster


HRW (Human Rights Watch) (2010) My so-called emancipation from foster care to homelessness for California youth, New York: HRW

HRW (2006) Swept Away: Street Children illegally detained in Kigali, Rwanda

HRW (2006a) Children of the Dust: Abuse of Hanoi Street Children in Detention


Marrengula, M.L. (2010) *Addressing Socio-cultural animation as community based social work with street children in Maputo, Mozambique*, PhD Dissertation University of Tampere, Department of Social Work Research, Finland


Southon, J. and D. Pralhad (2003) *A life without basic services: Street children’s say, Save the Children* UK

SOYAC (Maltepe University Research and Application Centre) (2011) Submission to the OHCHR Global Study Available at: [http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Children/Study/Pages/Contributions.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Children/Study/Pages/Contributions.aspx)


UN (United Nations) (2008), *Guidance Note of the Secretary General: UN Approach to Justice for Children*


UNHCR (2008) *Guidelines on Determining the Best Interests of the Child*


