



State of the World's Street Children: Research

Sarah Thomas de Benítez

Street Children Series 2

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Foreword

State of the World's Street Children: Research, is the second in a series of publications commissioned by the Consortium for Street Children (CSC), following our 2007 report *State of the World's Street Children: Violence*.

CSC is the leading international network dedicated to realising the rights of street children. We are continually expanding and currently have 60 member organisations working across 130 countries who we support through focusing our efforts on advocacy, research, capacity building and sharing best practice. Our network members have pioneered new ways of working with street children and are constantly seeking to improve their models of care. At the same time, researchers have been gathering new information about street-connectedness and improving the participatory nature of research methods with street children. But it has become clear in recent years that much of the available research about street children is not easily accessible, has not been used to inform service interventions or government policies as often as it could, and development of research about street children has been fragmented.

This report addresses these problems head-on: bringing together and making easily available to practitioners and researchers alike a comprehensive collection of street children literature from the last decade. It draws on more than 400 pieces of research written by scholars, development practitioners and NGOs working with street children. It also dispels some unfounded assumptions about street children and determines where advances have been made in our knowledge about them. In so doing, gaps in our current knowledge have been identified, revealing areas for further exploration.

A number of recommendations are proposed throughout the report, which we hope everyone who reads it can be instrumental in implementing. Scholars, researchers and NGOs need to become more aware of each other's research and collaborate more closely, drawing on the breadth of existing research to inform their work. While street children's experiences are diverse and personal, there are striking commonalities between them and, as such, comparative research is needed across a number of areas, including child protection systems – something CSC is already exploring. It is also clear that more needs to be made of street children's own accounts in shaping policy design, developing national programmes and improving local interventions.

When it comes to bringing together research on street children, this report is just a first step. One of the report's main recommendations is to create a dedicated, sustainable resource, where existing research literature (initially in English but

hopefully widening to include other languages) can be accessed by all those who have an interest – a ‘street connections’ library as it were. CSC is committed to making this a reality, aiming to develop a simple, free to access, intuitive research ‘hub’; a one stop research shop for scholars, researchers, policy-makers, practitioners and students – who can also contribute to the ‘hub’ their own and other studies concerning street children.

Despite starting to see a renewed interest in street children in policy agendas – such as the recently adopted UN resolution specifically on street children’s rights, the first since 1994 – one thing is clear: there are no easy solutions. Street children aren’t easy to define or quantify. Their motivations, characteristics, experiences and possibilities are diverse. Street children are some of the most resourceful individuals in the world, yet their rights are continually violated and denied in multiple ways – often at the hands of those that are tasked to protect them. CSC believes street children’s rights and needs should be distinguished – but not isolated – from those of other children in international policy debates and strategies. The strong body of existing research brought together for this report, alongside identification of where the main gaps lie and how they might be plugged, will help us to collectively contribute, in very down-to-earth ways, to realising the rights of street children.

Sally Shire

CEO Consortium for Street Children

Executive Summary

This *State of the World's Street Children: Research* report presents a unique Literature Review of international research studies about street children published during the decade from 2000 to 2010. Studies have been collected and 'mapped' into 12 thematic sections, drawing on more than 400 papers, chapters and books published around the world in the English language. Studies consulted were primarily academic, supplemented with key texts from the development literature on street children. Gaps between and within thematic sections have been identified and analyzed.

The report's dual purpose is:

- to **improve understanding of street children** by identifying recent advances in an academic scholarship which began in the 1970s
- to **identify priority areas for academic research** on street children, in order to build a stronger strategic base for the development of advocacy, policy and programme design initiatives.

This report divides into four parts and a total of 12 sections, which reflect the most interesting advances in the academic research over the last 10 years:

- 1. Understanding Street Children: Old Myths and New Realities** Numbers, Definitions, Characteristics and Voices from the Streets
- 2. Street Children and Everyday Lives – The Wider Picture** Relationships, Migration and Mobility, Experiences on the Streets and Ageing into Youth
- 3. Policies and Interventions for Street Children**
- 4. Street Children's Rights, Laws, Budgets and Funding.**

The report's findings are summarised at the end of each part and drawn together here in the form of 12 key findings: Four Research Advances, Four Research Gaps and Four Points for Advocacy:

Top Four Advances in Street Children Research

- **Street children** are recognized to be young people who **experience a combination of multiple deprivations and 'street-connectedness'**. This combination requires a specific focus on street children within wider policy agendas and interventions, to restore access to their legal human rights.
- **Street children's everyday experiences and relationships** are recognised to be at least as important as numbers and characteristics, for understanding their lives and designing appropriate policies, programmes and models of care.

- **Street children should participate, as standard practice, as informants and co-researchers** in research about themselves. Their circumstances and experiences imply special ethical dilemmas for research strategies and techniques.
- **Longitudinal, repeat and comparative studies** are recognized as vital for developing our understanding of street children's careers within society, for assessing policy and programme impacts and for designing preventive strategies.

Top Four Gaps in Street Children Research

- **Academic and development studies** are conducted and used in isolation from each other. This means that academic advances rarely inform development practice and vice versa.
- **Academic understanding about street children is fragmented** into small islands of research within separate disciplines. This means research in law, economics or public policy on street children rarely informs or is informed by sociological, anthropological or geographical research.
- **Research into street children is not systemic**, so street children's experiences are disassociated from the laws, policies, interventions and environments that affect them. Research must explore links between children's environments and strive to understand their interconnected nature.
- **No motor exists for building a body of research on street children** – a collective entity is needed to drive forward concerted knowledge development within academia and development practice to improve prevention and inclusion.

Top Four Findings for Advocacy

- **Street children must be distinguished – but not isolated – from other children** in policy frameworks and intervention design, to respond to the nature of their multiple deprivations and to their street-connectedness.
- **Transparency of information about budget allocations, child protection systems and evaluation of their impacts on children** is needed to identify missing links between laws, policies, interventions and children's realities and at preventive level for effective protection of rights.
- **Local level policies and interventions** involving NGOs and local authorities must be supported by effective national laws and budgets to prevent and protect street children successfully.
- **Investment in research** is needed to develop and consolidate a strategic knowledge base capable of informing laws, policies and interventions to respond to street-connected children and youth and to protect young people from multiple deprivations.

This report presents conclusions and recommendations in its final pages. Here the key recommendations are drawn together under two priority areas.

What's Next?

1. Build a political space for street children and youth as an integral part of advocacy around children's and development agendas by:

- Identifying key **strategic agendas** for positioning street children. eg. post-Millennium Development Goals (MDG) agenda and policies around Children on the Move (see Global Child Protection Services, 2011)
- Recognizing the importance of: **multiple nature of deprivations over time** and **street-connectedness**. These are intertwined and have vital implications for the nature of services and preventive programmes in an agenda concerned with street children.
- Involving institutions that lead to knowledge generation and brokering and use this to help **transform knowledge** around street children into usable information for policy-making and development of child protection systems
- Helping advocates and allies to **understand the research** and the reasoning behind a political space, to resist subsuming street children into categories which overlook their key features
- **Revisiting the term 'street children'** and reviewing in the light of: a) the findings of this report; b) the different reactions 'street child' evokes within the development and academic communities; and c) strategic priorities, whether to consider a new term/definition. eg. 'children with street connections'/'street-connected children' or 'children for whom the street plays a central reference point' etc
- Including **participation spaces** for children and youth workers in the development of a political space.

2. Build a body of research to inform new research, legislation, budgets, policies, child protection systems and interventions. This body of research needs to be driven by a high profile vehicle – perhaps in the form of a '**Street Connections' Research Centre** – capable of building a reputation for generating research useful for advancing academic and development agendas. Such a body should draw on studies in the wide range of disciplines relevant to street children, which include law, finance, economics, public policy, criminology, social policy, media studies, political science, social work, medicine, urban planning etc, as well as from disciplines more directly associated with 'street children'. Intermediate steps should include the following:

- Bringing together available **literature in English**, keeping it updated and making it available in a pro-active way to relevant audiences as a **Street Connections Research Database**

- Attracting abstracts in English of **research in other languages**, to be included in the database, in order to keep abreast of international advances and to be ready to translate strategic papers
- Providing a **discussion space** to challenge sacred cows and elevate the quality of thinking around street children, perhaps in the form of an **annual Research Centre forum**
- Linking **academic and development literature** by encouraging trans-disciplinary research and joint research projects between academics and development practitioners, perhaps through small research grants
- Encouraging the generation of **new research and systematic literature reviews** in areas of interest to a 'strategic vision' around street children, to be registered in the database, perhaps awarding small research grants
- Developing a **strong profile** in academia and development practice by creating an Advisory Council of experienced academic and development researchers.

Introduction

This report was commissioned by The Consortium for Street Children (CSC) – the leading international network dedicated to realising the rights of street children worldwide. The CSC is committed to creating a better and sustainable future for some of the most disadvantaged and stigmatised children by working together to inform and inspire research and action that influences policy and best practice. This report, supported by Aviva plc, aims to improve our understanding of street children and identify priority areas for future research by mapping and examining gaps in the last decade's literature on street children. It is the second in CSC's 'State of the World's Street Children' series, a follow up to *State of the World's Street Children: Violence*, published in 2007.

Meanwhile, Plan, a member of CSC, commissioned a complementary report, *Still on the Street, Still Short of Rights*, written by GCPS (2011) which: provides an analysis of the practical situations of street children; explores how their issues are currently addressed within legislative and policy frameworks; and highlights programmatic initiatives of international and local NGOs.

The author of this report is Dr. Sarah Thomas de Benítez, author of several publications about street children and youth. Sarah brings together: practical experience as co-founder and director of 2 NGOs for street children in Mexico and Ecuador; experience as executive director of a UK NGO supporting programmes for street children across the world; and academic experience with a PhD from the London School of Economics and Political Science on street children's experiences of social policies, together with post-doctorate ethnographic research into the daily lives of street youth for an Economic and Social Research Council project ranked as outstanding.

The literature review's mapping and gapping process was guided by a working group of experienced academics, analysts, advocates, development practitioners and donors: Duncan Ross (CSC); Dr. Gareth A. Jones (London School of Economics); Dr. Lorraine Van Blerk (Dundee University); Iain Byrne (Interights); David Walker (Overseas Development Institute); David Schofield (Aviva); Felix Holman

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2011 provides an exceptional opportunity to reflect on knowledge accumulated through research about street children, and a profound responsibility to use this reflection wisely to benefit street children's interests:

- The UN Human Rights Council dedicated a full day to discussing street children on 9th March 2011 and adopted a UN Resolution on Street Children – the first since 1994 which includes an invitation to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to 'conduct a study on challenges, lessons learned and best practices in a holistic, child rights and gender-based approach to protect and promote the rights of children working and/or living on the street, including practices in the collection of disaggregated data and experiences on access to child friendly counselling, complaint and reporting mechanism to protect the rights of children living and/or working on the street [...] and to present the study to the Human Rights Council at its nineteenth session.'
- CSC launched the International Day for Street Children on 12th April 2011
- The African Union and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights of the Child dedicated 16th June 2011, the Day of the African Child, to street children.

This report contributed to preparations for these events by drawing attention to and interpreting the latest research on street children: their numbers and characteristics, everyday experiences and voices; their family relationships, spatial mobility, and careers – their lived lives, in other words. The net is drawn wider in Part 3 to examine knowledge about policies, interventions and models of care for street children; and wider still in Part 4 to explore research into the effects of structural deficiencies for street children, looking at their experiences of law enforcement, economic policies, budgets and funding.

Part 1

Understanding Street Children: Old Myths and New Realities

1.1 NUMBERS



Photo: Marcus Lyon

1.1.1 The Numbers Myth

Summary: *Frequently-cited global estimates of 100 million+ street children (and growing) have no basis in research.*

In 1989, UNICEF estimated 100 million children were growing up on urban streets around the world (Campos et al, 1994). Fourteen years later the same international agency reported: *'The latest estimates put the numbers of these children as high as 100 million'* (UNICEF, 2002: 37). And more recently still: *'The exact number of street children is impossible to quantify, but the figure almost certainly runs into tens of millions across the world. It is likely that the numbers are increasing as the global population grows and as urbanization continues apace'* (UNICEF, 2005: 40-41).

The magic 100 million was questioned in two frequently cited academic reviews of the street children literature, first by Scanlon et al (1998, writing for a medical audience) and later by anthropologist Panter-Brick (2002) who drew attention to other sources suggesting that *'very large estimates of the number of children in the street are produced to draw attention to the need for the agency's work'*. These concerns were amplified in the policy review *'State of the World's Street Children: Violence'* (Thomas de Benítez, 2007). But despite continual warnings from credible sources that the *'arithmetic is as symbolic as the children involved'* (Ennew, 2000: 170), the magic 100 million remains common currency, framing books today about street gangs (Covey, 2010) and articles about street children's rights in academic journals (e.g. Ayuku, 2003; Sauv , 2003; Dillon, 2008; Wexler, 2008; Drane, 2010).

At the same time, claims continue that street children numbers are increasing: *'The alarming number of street children throughout the world, which is increasing on a daily basis'* (Drane, 2010, citing statistics quoted in a 2000 paper by Casa Alianza – a CSO advocating for street children's rights). It is clear, however, that these claims are at odds with a 100 million figure which has remained surprisingly static for more than 20 years – while the global population has grown over the same period by more than 30% – from some 5.2 billion in 1989 to 6.8 billion in 2009 and urbanization continues apace, with over half the world's population now living in cities.

In 1994 social anthropologist Judith Ennew argued convincingly that cited numbers of street children were rarely referenced to counting methods and usually had *'no validity or basis in fact'* (1994: 32). This was neatly shown in Brazil, source of much of the early literature on street children, where Ress and Wik-Thorsell (1986) claimed 30 million children were living on the streets. Within four years this estimate was downsized a third to 20 million (Connolly, 1990) and reduced again to 7 million 'hard-core' street children – a figure cited frequently in the 1990s by institutions, journalists and academics, although widely attributed to hearsay (Hecht, 1998). Set against these estimates, head-count researchers in 1995 found fewer than 1,000 children sleeping on the streets of Rio and Sao Paulo (Green, 1998). Perhaps under pressure to produce a global figure, Ennew wrote more recently: *'Estimates by governments, NGOs, and other groups vary widely. Nevertheless, it is believed the number of children living on the streets worldwide runs to tens of millions'* (2003: 4). Aware of the numerical discrepancies, even the most responsible of international agencies find the larger claims hard to resist: *'The number of street children is likely to*

run into tens of millions across the world, with some estimates as high as 100 million' (Reale for Save the Children UK, 2008: 6).

Why are these number games problematic?

- 'Guesstimates' try to convey a sense of scale and urgency, in the hope that policymakers will be more willing to address 'larger' rather than 'smaller' social problems, and that the public will be outraged and mobilized to action by more rather than fewer children in the streets. This worked for a decade or so but has worn thin.
- National and local governments may have been persuaded to address the issue of 'street children' on the basis of numbers, and funders may have decided to take up the banner of street children on this basis – but equally, 'the numbers game' has provoked donor fatigue, hasty, ill-conceived policies and violent responses towards street children.
- In addition, repressive responses by governments can push children from visible to invisible street occupancy, creating an illusion of a successful strategy and persuading the public that quoted numbers are unrealistic.
- Large and frightening estimates are also likely to push funders away from detailed explorations of children's experiences and circumstances, towards support for programmes which set out to reduce large numbers of street children rather than for support commensurate with those children's experiences, circumstances and rights.

1.1.2 New Realities

Summary: Localized counting is improving, yielding more modest and cautious estimates.

Since the early 1990s, 'situation analysis' studies have estimated populations of street children at country and city levels, such as UNICEF's 2001 Rapid Situation Assessment of street children in Cairo and Alexandria, a 1992 India-wide situation analysis of street children in its major cities, and the 1995 headcounts in Brazilian cities referred to by Duncan Green above. Such research studies have, for the scale involved, tended to be joint initiatives between UNICEF and governments, often in collaboration with civil society and/or academics. In the 2000s, these country and city-wide street population studies have become more careful in their research methods and more circumspect in their estimates – for example in Mexico (SNDIF, 2004) and Romania (UNICEF, 2006).

There are two broad approaches to city-wide studies identifiable in recent research:

- Social science approach: Quantitative surveys together with qualitative participant observation and focus groups/semi-structured interviews with

small, stratified population samples continue to be used to count children on the streets (e.g. Aptekar and Heinonen, 2003 in Kenya, Colombia and Ethiopia; Muntingh et al, 2006 in Zambia; CPCS, 2007 in Kathmandu, Nepal; Plummer et al, 2007 in Khartoum, Sudan; PEDER, 2009, DRC cited in Henry et al, 2010; AFCIC, 2010 in Thika, Kenya; Ensing and Strehl, 2010 in Cusco and Lima, Peru; Ward and Seager, 2010 in Guateng, South Africa). Developed in the 1980s and 1990s, this combined, cross-referencing method for counting street children and compiling characteristics is firmly rooted in the social sciences. During the last decade, involvement of experienced street educators and social workers in counting exercises has become increasingly common. And there is encouraging evidence of studies in some cities being repeated after some years (e.g. AFCIC, 2010 in Thika, 2007 and 2009; Bond, 2004 in Ho Chi Minh, 1992 and 2002) to explore trends over time. Active participation by street children as co-researchers, however, remains disappointingly rare – perhaps reflecting the considerable investment of additional time needed for preparing and planning with children. A recent example of street children as co-researchers to estimate numbers in a city is Marrengula’s 2010 study, using socio-cultural animation methods in Maputo, Mozambique.

- Methods adapted from wildlife biology: Capture-recapture techniques, devised to count elusive populations for which a comprehensive census is impossible, are in use with social groups (see Jensen and Pearson, 2002). This method has now been used to estimate numbers of street children in several places including Aracaju, Brazil (Gurgel et al, 2004), Bamako, Mali and Accra, Ghana (Hatløy and Huser, 2005), Kathmandu and Pokhara, Nepal (Southon et al, 2005), Cairo (Guarcello and Koseleci, 2009), with ongoing research in El Salvador and Guatemala (Odell, UCLA School of Public Affairs, 2011). Capture-recapture, used since the 1990s to count homeless populations in the UK, is sometimes used in combination with respondent-driven sampling (RDS) to explore characteristics of the street child populations (e.g. Koseleci et al, 2007 in Dakar, Senegal; Johnston et al, 2010 in Albania). The capture-recapture method was first used with homeless populations in the 1990s (Fisher et al, 1994).

Both methods have significant drawbacks due, among other things, to children’s mobility and elusiveness. Prudent researchers conduct substantive literature reviews and advise caution in using their estimates for policy-making and programme planning (Aptekar and Heinonen, 2003; Koseleci et al, 2007), as well as using thorough, participatory action techniques with children in complementary qualitative research (e.g. Ensing and Strehl, Peru 2010 and Strehl, Peru, 2010).

1.2 DEFINITIONS



Photo: Marcus Lyon

A major difficulty in estimating street child populations is that definitions of the term 'street children' are contested and '*Without an accepted definition of the term "street children" it is not possible to determine their number accurately*' (Ennew, 2003: 4). The pressure for numerical – and therefore definitional – certainty has at times led researchers to squeeze children into very poorly fitting boxes. This section summarizes patterns and trends in definitions.

1.2.1 The Myth of Children 'on' or 'of' the Streets

Summary: *Children have multiple identities and relationships off-street and experience complex circumstances which can defy easy definition.*

As some articles begin with the magic '100 million' number, others launch with a definition and categorization of street children. Often cited is the definition adopted by UNICEF and developed with Latin America in mind (UNCHS, 2000: 74) of a street child as: '*...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*' (Glasser, 1994: 54). More often still has been the use of the categorization – with sub-definitions – of street children as being 'of' or 'on'

the streets: the former term generally meaning children who live on the streets or 'street-living' children, the latter meaning children who work on the streets during the daytime and return home to their families at night, also known as 'street-working' children (for example Szanton Blanc, 1996).

These terms were very popular in the 1980s literature in Latin America, derived from field research pioneered by UNICEF in Colombia and Brazil, and subsequently exported to Africa and other continents (Ennew and Swart-Kruger, 2003). By the 1990s, researchers had '*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.*' (Scanlon et al, 1998). And by 2002, Panter-Brick found the 'on'/'of' terminology in practice was unsatisfactory '*as children themselves defied these generalizations [...] Today, the focus on discrete categories of street lifestyles has fallen into disuse*' (p 150). Since then, much research has been underpinned by two interrelated strands of thought, which together represent the "New Social Studies of Childhood" (see Nikitina-Den Besten, 2008):

- Social constructionism – which argues that street children do not in reality form a clearly defined, homogeneous population but instead constitute a subject constructed through discourses in the literature (Glauser, 1990; Lucchini, 1997; De Moura, 2002). Following this line of thought, street children can better be understood as young people considered by the public to be 'out of place' (e.g. Raffaelli, 1999; Ennew, 2000).
- Children as 'agents' or capable social actors – a perspective that brings children from the margins to focus on them as social actors in their own right, with varied lives and diverse experiences (e.g. O'Kane, 2002; Ennew and Swart-Kruger, 2003; Prout, 2005; Ansell, 2008).

1.2.2 New Realities

Summary: *Definitions reflect tensions between policy/intervention planning and social researchers' increasing focus on children's experiences.*

Three broad approaches to definitions are evident in research today:

1. Acceptance or development of UNICEF's 'on' and 'of' the street categories: taking in and further defining street-family children (e.g. Droz, 2006 on Kenya and Brazil) and young street adults (e.g. UNICEF, Romania, 2006). This refinement of the more traditional approach can be broadly recognized as intended for national or local policy purposes (e.g. Strehl, Peru, 2010; Ward and Seager, South Africa, 2010) and in studies which privilege definitional certainty (e.g. Drane, USA, 2010 whose legal study defines street children categorically in order to argue for their inclusion into a legally recognized child protection category for asylum purposes).

2. Alternative terms or definitions: premised on recognizing children as capable social actors and often informed by a programme intervention lens. Within this approach, some research has continued to use the term 'street children' but with reworked definitions, such as '*children for whom the street is a reference point and has a central role in their lives*' (Rede Rio Criança, Brazil, 2007: 18). Other research has sought new terms to capture diverse situations and experiences including 'independent child migrants' (e.g. Kwankye et al, Ghana, 2007 and 2009), 'children in street situations' (e.g. Terres des Hommes, 2010), 'street youth' (e.g. Jones et al, Mexico, 2007; Kidd et al, USA, 2007), 'homeless youth' (e.g. O'Connor, UK, 2001), 'delinked' (McAlpine et al, 2009), or 'detached' children (see Smeaton, UK, 2005 and 2009), the latter used '*to describe children and young people who are away from home or care for lengthy periods of time; who live outside of key societal institutions, such as the family, education and other statutory services; who do not receive any formal sources of support; and are self-reliant and/or dependent upon informal support networks*'. Others have proposed new typologies, for example based on causes and situations such as proposed by Hong et al (2005) in Vietnam.
3. Rejection of the designation of young people on the street as a social problem: some research has critiqued the concern to '*define and classify a particular group of youngsters that use the street for work, leisure and/or habitation. Instead, these debates 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*'. (Butler and Rizzini, 2003).

Sometimes governments have sought to shift the emphasis away from street children as a social problem for political reasons: Droz (2006) describes in Kenya how '*The term 'street children' was felt to be too suggestive of irremediably broken family ties and unworthy parents abusing their offspring to the point of having them turn to the streets. The presence of unsupervised children in the streets would be living proof of the failure of both the urban middle class and the Christian ideal of the family: the children stand for the failure of this model of society, which would particularly be the case if they found new 'families' in the street.*' 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.' (p 353). In general, however, there has been a refocusing of research towards universal enforcement of children's rights (e.g. Pare, 2003) and away from the circumstances of particular children in urban streets. A recent development using this viewpoint, currently being steered into policy terrain by Save the Children and Plan International particularly in Africa, has been to merge 'street' children into the larger phenomenon of mobile youngsters under the collective banner 'children on the move' (Castle, 2009; Reale, 2008), explored in Part 2 below under the theme of 'Migration and Mobility'.

How might these definitions be problematic?

- Use of UNICEF’s ‘on’ and ‘of’ the street categories for policy-making: risks over-simplifying and compartmentalizing policies for children who have multidimensional lives (e.g. Thomas de Benítez, 2007; Ennew and Swart-Kruger, 2003).
- Alternative definitions: risk dispersing or ‘silo-ing’ knowledge and research of children’s shared experiences both thematically and geographically.
- Full focus on child rights: risks missing individual children’s mix of experiences and needs through universal or broad-based policy-making, while *‘Children themselves, of course, are still on the streets, easily visible in the great majority of urban centers.’* (Panter-Brick, 2002: 148).

1.3 CHARACTERISTICS



Photo: Marcus Lyon

Along with a more cautious approach to numbers and an increasingly shared understanding of children as active agents and subjects of rights, researchers are generally becoming more reluctant to attribute specific characteristics to street children. That said, Ennew and Swart-Kruger warn *‘there are now fewer attempts to describe a “typical street child” although such constructions do exist and are frequently replicated with a seemingly ruthless rhetoric in the media’* (2003).

1.3.1 Stereotypes and the Phantom of Victims Versus Delinquents

Summary: *Traditional stereotypes of street children as ‘victims’ or ‘delinquents’ reflect public attitudes towards them, rather than any realistic representation of characteristics of the children or their situations.*

In their early Latin American analyses of street children as ‘on’ or ‘of’ the street, 1980s researchers found street-living and street-working children seemed to display different characteristics, particularly in relation to their contacts with home and the time they spent on the streets (Scanlon, 1998: 1597). Much work focused on establishing ‘*the hallmarks of a street lifestyle and the characteristics of street children in terms of their use of public spaces and their links with family and public institutions.*’ (Panter-Brick, 2002) in order to understand the burgeoning urban ‘phenomenon’ of street children.

In these analyses, street children were typically represented as male, aged on average around 13 to 14, from extremely poor neighbourhoods, with violent or otherwise dysfunctional families. They took up various types of work – portering, street-vending, washing car windscreens, juggling etc – to earn erratic incomes in the informal sector. Substance abuse and early sexual activity were found to be common, particularly among street-living boys (children ‘of’ the street) – who also typically had less, if any, contact with their families and spent more time on the streets than street-working children (‘on’ the street) (Ennew, 2003; Panter-Brick, 2002; Scanlon, 1998). Numerous field studies in the 1980s and 1990s suggest this was indeed a dominant reality in many large towns and cities in Latin America during decades of rapid urbanization and extremely high income inequalities – but represented only part of children’s lives at best (Rizzini and Butler, 2003). At the time, Brazil was thought to have the largest number of street children on the continent as well as ‘*one of the most unequal distributions of wealth in the world: the top 20% of the population receive 26 times the income of the bottom 20%, and half the population survive on 14% of the national income*’ (Scanlon, 1998: 1597).

But media and public attention was drawn less to these structural causes and more to the stereotypical characterizations of the individual children – who could so easily be depicted as either victims or delinquents: helpless victims of hunger and violence or drug-taking criminals lacking morality and respect for the social order. Such rigid stereotypes of victimhood or delinquency depend, however, much more on the attitude of the observer than on children’s actual behaviours, a feature well recognized in recent literature (e.g. Butler, 2009; Ennew and Swart-Kruger, 2003; West, 2003). In some contexts, younger street children are likely to be perceived as vulnerable victims, transforming in the public mind into delinquents as they age into youth (Thomas de Benítez and Jones, 2008). Elsewhere all street children, irrespective of age, may be held by the state and the majority of society to be deviant criminals (e.g. Mkombozi, 2006, Tanzania; Beazley, 2003, Indonesia) while

simultaneously 'over-romanticized by the press and charity groups, and portrayed as the passive victims of a ruthless society' (in Beazley, 2003). Such ambivalence demonstrates how 'street children' can be constructed and understood differently by social and cultural groups.

How might these stereotypes be problematic?

- Street 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 (e.g. Wernham, 2006).
- Street children perceived as victims are more likely to be treated as passive objects of welfare rather than as subjects of rights (Ennew, 2003).
- Children whose characteristics fall outside the 'street child' stereotype may become invisible to policy-makers, service-providers, the media and public (Panter-Brick, 2002).

1.3.2 New Realities

Summary: *Characteristics of children's street lives are diverse, changing by location, by context and over time. Studies of characteristics can tell us much about children's environments, but little about the individuals who inhabit them.*

In the last decade 'street child' stereotypes have been overturned as researchers have found evidence of substantive and dynamic diversity among characteristics and conditions. In fact, street boys in Indonesia were found to actively "reject their 'victim' or 'deviant' label, and 'decorate' street life so that it becomes agreeable in their eyes. Instead of complaining about their lives (which is considered bad form), they reinforce the things that they feel are good about living on the street.[...] Over the months or years street children and youth learn to interact and comply with the expectations of their own group, and are more influenced by it. It is in this way that the Tikyan community enables a street child to establish a new identity, and is a means through which street children can voice their collective indignation at the way they are treated by mainstream society" (Beazley, 2003: 1).

Gender-based stereotypes have perhaps been most successfully challenged in recent years. Stark differences have been discovered even between cities in countries of the same region: 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' (Hatløy and Huser, 2005: 62). The authors suggest that many of the boys in Bamako had run away from their Marabouts at all-male Koranic schools. They find no convincing explanation as to why such a large proportion of children on the street in Accra would be girls, and although other researchers have not found such a large proportion of girls (see Payne, 2004: 17), some studies in Accra have shown significant numbers of girls to be surviving on the street, including

many young mothers, in diverse situations and using – sometimes in ways quite different to their male counterparts – a range of survival strategies (e.g. Boakye-Boaten, 2008; Payne, 2004; Shanahan, 2003). Research in many cities continues to find predominantly male street child populations (e.g. Muntingh et al, 2006 found 85% of street children in Zambia were male; Cheng and Lam, 2010, in Shanghai found around 90% children living on the streets were male; as did AFCIC, 2010, in Thika, Kenya; while Grundling et al, 2004 found around 80% of all street children interviewed in Namibia were male). But while earlier research – and social services – concentrated almost exclusively on these male majorities, street girls and gendered experiences have increasingly become a subject of study and concern (see Jones and Thomas de Benítez, 2010, gendered work in Puebla, Mexico; Benoit et al, 2007, health disparities in Toronto; Evans, 2004, gendered experiences in Tanzania; Hansson 2003, ‘strolling’ in Cape Town; Rurevo and Bourdillon, 2003, coping mechanisms in Harare). In some contexts, girls have been found to be better off than their male counterparts: Ayuku et al (2003) found evidence in Kenya of highly supportive emotional and material ties between street girls, in contrast with the competitiveness found between boys, a finding echoed in Tanzania (see McAlpine et al, 2009). At the same time, international agencies have directed considerable energy and resources towards girls in recent years, and there is a danger that support services in some countries can become skewed away from the majority of boys in the street (see McAlpine et al, 2009: 6). That said, street girls can remain largely invisible to services in countries where gender discrimination is deeply entrenched.

Conventional wisdom has also been successfully challenged in relation to other characteristics. While economic poverty, for example, has been mooted as *‘the major cause of street children’* (UNCHS, 2000: xvii) and has been found to play a key role in some contexts (e.g. Smith, 2006 in Sub-Saharan Africa; Evans, 2002, in Tanzania), natural disasters (Marrengula, 2010 in Mozambique), parental deaths (Csáky for Save the Children, 2009) and social factors, often including violence and abuse of children within households and communities have been found to lie behind street migration (e.g. Butler, 2009; Thomas de Benítez, 2007; Conticini and Hulme, 2006 in Bangladesh). These features are more suggestive of cultural and political forces, social exclusion or regional income inequalities, than of economic poverty *per se* (see Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009 on income inequalities; Reale for Save the Children, 2008, on migration; and ILO, 2002 on the three levels of causal analysis: immediate, underlying and structural). Research in Rio de Janeiro found that *‘those on the street are 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.’* (Butler, 2009: 16).

Similarly, many other supposed 'characteristics' of street life vary by context: street children – particularly boys – have shown low levels of mental illness in some research (e.g. Aptekar, 2004), whereas others have found evidence of high levels of depression and self-hatred (Ahmadkhaniha, 2007 in Iran; Kidd et al, 2007 in North America; Batmanghelidjh, 2006 in UK). And working activities can be very different: Hatløy and Huser found begging constituted the main economic activity for street children in (mainly Muslim) Bamako, but in (predominantly Christian) Accra the two most commonly held jobs were as porters and street vendors, and begging was rare (2005: 62). Very different findings have emerged from research into the prevalence of HIV and AIDS among street children in Africa and Europe (see e.g. UNICEF, 2010, Eastern Europe and Central Asia; and Ennew and Swart-Kruger, 2003;).

Despite the complexities, characteristics of street life continue to be of interest to researchers today, noticeably in contexts where: street children are a relatively new, or a newly visible, concern (e.g. Ahmadkhaniha et al, 2007 in Iran; Ali et al, 2004 in Pakistan), and specific information is sought to support policy-making (e.g. Ward and Seager, 2010 in South Africa for housing and educational policies; HRW, 2010 on the treatment of Talibés in Senegal) or service provision (e.g. Goulart, 2010 in Brazil for community work; Plummer et al, 2007 in Sudan, for effective targeting). Meanwhile, others have researched characteristics to establish: predictive factors of street-living (e.g. McAlpine et al, 2009 in Tanzania; Veale et al, 2003 in Rwanda); vulnerability to sexual exploitation and abuse (e.g. Gamble, 2009, in Romania); relationships between levels of family abuse/support (e.g. McAlpine et al, 2009); and representation of castes (Southon et al, 2005, Nepal, found that instead of representing so-called lower castes or ethnic groups, street children were of all castes, ethnic groups and backgrounds: 93).

Perhaps most notably, 'repeat' research has recently shown significant shifts in characteristics of street life over time in the same city. Two studies, eight years apart, of street children in Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh City found striking differences in drug use: *'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'* (1992), yet by 2000 at least 1 in 6 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.'* (Bond, 2004: 155). In the Kenyan city of Thika, numbers of street children were found to have decreased by as much as 40 per cent to 50 per cent over two years (2007 to 2009), and the proportion of street youth to have increased, leading to greater interest in skills training and support for business in the second study compared to the first – up from 20% to 67% (AFCIC, 2010).

And so as *'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' (Ennew and Swart-Kruger, 2003), research has moved away from a focus on *'dysfunction, pathology and psychological breakdown'* (ibid) to understand characteristics of children's street lives as changing in space, over time and embedded in multidimensional contexts. In this way, ongoing research into characteristics can tell us much about children's environments – and next to nothing about the individuals who inhabit them.

1.4 VOICES FROM THE STREETS



Photo: Aviva PLC

The paradigm shift in research informed by the New Social Studies for Childhood, together with a parallel move in development circles to a rights-based perspective in which children are seen as subjects and active participants, has led to a new emphasis on the importance of listening to children's 'voices'. These approaches *'reject the representation of them as passive vessels'* (Butler, 2009) and privilege children's own perspectives of their lives. This section explores how street children's voices have informed research and are changing the nature and findings of research.

1.4.1 Children's Voices as Illustrative

Summary: *Street children have been 'quoted' over the years in academic studies, policy documents and the media, usually to support messages developed and delivered by adults, based on adult preconceptions.*

The idea of listening to and transmitting street children's voices, as a means of telling life stories, is not new. In the 1850s Henry Mayhew's research of London street life was radical in its use of street-based interviews with 'costermongers', including 'street children', both boys and girls. Mayhew's reports of his street encounters and interviews mixed direct quotes with quirky descriptions and were intended to transmit to his (middle-class, liberal, newspaper-reading) peers an understanding of street life in London which, despite its high visibility, had been in terms of cultural representation '*invisible, silent, secret*' (Mayhew, 2010: xv). An eight-year-old girl selling watercress in the Farringdon market area was a compelling interviewee, quoted extensively over four pages, ending with '*I ain't a child and I shan't be a woman till I'm twenty, but I'm past eight I am. I don't know nothing about what I earns during the year, I only know how many pennies goes to a shilling, and two ha'pence goes to a penny, and four fardens goes to a penny. I knows, too, how many fardens goes to a tuppence – eight. That's as much as I wants to know for the markets*' (Mayhew, 2010: 50).

Mayhew seems to have devised a basic topic guide for interviews, then set out to invite as many subjects working in the streets as he could find willing to answer his questions and talk about their lives (ibid: xxvi). He exposed, initially through a regular newspaper column, '*the griefs, struggles, strange adventures [...] that exceed anything that any of us could imagine [...] Yes; and these wonders and terrors have been lying by your door and mine ever since we had a door of our own*' (Thackeray, 1856 cited in Mayhew 2010). For story-telling purposes, Mayhew added varnish, shaped fragments of testimony into coherent stories and controlled his material, revealing as much about the preconceptions of his class, sex and time as he did about children's lives. Fast forwarding to the 1970s and 1980s, we can identify a similar approach, with early Latin American research being *about* rather than *with* street children (Ennew and Swart-Kruger, 2003), reflecting not dissimilar perceptions of poor victims and potential delinquents to those held by Mayhew 150 years earlier. If children's voices were in evidence at all, they were usually deployed in the form of quotes reinforcing researchers' perspectives of children's neediness, weaknesses and dependency (Panter-Brick, 2002). Use of photos of street children, accompanied by quotes about tragic elements of their lives, is not uncommon in the fundraising literature today.

1.4.2 New Realities

Summary: Street children are recognized as key informants about their lives and aspirations, and as competent co-researchers whose perceptions provide valuable information, offering key pieces of the jigsaw of their lives.

The paradigm shift discussed in the above sections has taken firm root in this decade's street children research and children's voices now play a significant role. **Table 1** below (from Ennew and Swart-Kruger, 2003) shows how an understanding of children as active agents and subjects of rights has translated into child-centred participatory research – both as necessity and right.

Table 1: Matrix showing the key elements of a paradigm shift in research and work with and for street children

Shifting from ideas that:	Through ideas of:	To the following consequences:		
		Theory	Research	Practice
Street children are homeless and abandoned victims	Space	Street Children create meanings for using street spaces and form supportive networks	A variety of triangulated methods is required to research street children's lives	Use the street as a space for programming; build on existing strengths and networks
Street children's lives are chaotic; they will become delinquents	Time	Street children have changing careers on the street, and their increasing age is an important factor	Longitudinal studies are vital	Age-sensitive, long term programming with follow-up to ensure the development of potential
Adults know best; adult control and supervision is necessary to ensure children's welfare	Social construction of meaning	Children are active agents in their own lives; they construct meanings and are subjects of rights	Children-centered participatory research is not only a necessity, it is also a right for children	Take a rights-based, children-centered approach; children should be involved as partners in all aspects of programming

Reproduced from Ennew and Swart-Kruger, 2003

Large scale mixed-method studies about street children today are careful to include techniques designed to hear from children themselves, such as focus groups and informal group discussions (e.g. CPCS, 2007, Nepal; Southon et al for Save the Children, 2003, Nepal) or extensive use of one-on-one interviews (e.g. HRW, 2010, with talibés in Senegal). Some research has focused on presenting children's accounts, offering little in the way of adult interpretation: *'we present accounts from*

16 children who were interviewed in the course of the Migration DRC research so as to highlight what children themselves think and say about their lives. Although we have provided some commentary on these children's voices, we have kept it to a minimum. There are many themes in the stories that readers can pull out for themselves' (Anarfi et al, 2005). This approach recognizes that by listening to children's own views and interpretations of their roles, relationships and experiences we can access new areas of knowledge and use them to help other children (Bautista et al, 2001).

Researchers have also extended the range of techniques they use to listen more closely and accurately to street children's voices, recognizing that they *'take on a myriad of relationships and roles, and behave differently in relation to different adults in different local settings who impinge upon their lives'* (O'Kane, 2003: 9). Informal in-depth interviews are sometimes combined with unplanned informal conversations in street-ethnographic or participant observation approaches which can require considerable prior contact between researchers and subjects, to hear children's opinions and life stories in spaces and at times when children are as much at ease, if not more so, than their researchers (e.g. Marrengula, 2010, Mozambique; Butler, 2009, Brazil; Smeaton, 2009, UK; Jones et al, 2007, Mexico; Van Blerk, 2005, Uganda; Payne, 2004, Ghana; Beazley, 2003, Indonesia; Rizzini and Butler, 2003, Brazil). 'Hidden' voices can be found and distinguished from 'public' voices, as Beazley described in her research with street boys or 'Tikyan' in Indonesia, who *'create a doctrine for themselves that it is 'great in the street'; a cod-philosophy which is constructed to make life more tolerable. It is [...] a means through which street children can voice their collective indignation at the way they are treated by mainstream society.'* (Beazley, 2003). Payne (2004) adopted a similar approach in Ghana, listening to nine street girls' stories to understand their 'hidden transcripts' of survival strategies, while also recognizing that *'it is only through listening to their voices that their dreams and plans for their futures, and the futures of their children, can be heard, understood and realised'* (p 70). Superficial listening to children's public discourse is recognized to have led researchers in the 1980s into believing (erroneously) that most street-living children had no families or had cut all ties with them – voiced by children who did not trust the researcher, were protecting themselves or could not access a NGO programme if they were known to have families.

Researchers increasingly understand street children's voices not only as expressed in words but also through active forms of self-expression using a range of participatory action research activities including role-playing, drama-improvisation and 'mental maps' drawn by children (Wiencke, 2008, Tanzania; Ataov et al, 2006, Turkey; Beazley, 2003: 182-183, Indonesia), drawings and paintings (e.g. Couch, 2010, India; Van Blerk, 2006, Uganda; ADB, 2003, in seven Asian cities; Evans, 2002, Zambia), photography by children (Bordonaro, 2010, Cape Verde; Thomas de Benítez, 2008, Mexico; Ataov et al, 2006, Turkey), mapping and building timelines using group-devised pictorial symbols (Van Blerk, 2006, Uganda), all methods conceived as *'catalysts for informal conversation interviews, and often led to further discussions*

about other aspects of the children's lives' (Beazley, 2000). Such techniques recognize street children as capable of constructing meaning (in ways difficult for adults to access), at the same time as potentially facing barriers of anxiety and disparities of power, while being more comfortable expressing themselves through fun, relaxing and creative activities (Couch, 2010).

Some researchers are committed to exploring ways to involve street children as co-researchers in their studies, particularly for research aimed at improving understandings of street children's perspectives of their own situations and for service design. Different ways have been found to engage and involve children in research: *'Each discussion began with a mapping exercise where children discussed the spaces they used for the selected activity and marked them on a map of the city. The map then acted as a prompt for the discussion, which the children controlled and ran themselves'* (Van Blerk, 2006: 50). In a larger, mixed team of researchers: *'Having different tasks and responsibilities, the research and coordinating team, field practitioners, and street children shared and collectively generated all methodological and analytical knowledge'* (Ataov et al, 2006: 133). And some research to improve services for street children has been *'based on the principle that as far as practically possible the research should be conducted and analysed by street children themselves.'* (Southon et al, 2003: 5, Nepal), premised on three assumptions *'that there is a significant gap between organisations' perception of their services and programmes and their target group's perceptions of them. Secondly, children are in the best position to assess services and programmes designed for their benefit. And lastly, children are capable of making such an assessment on the basis of research that they have conducted themselves'* (ibid: 5). Essentially then, researchers have come to understand that *'Living on the street is a combination of restrictions affecting the child and the child's own survival strategies, which will vary according to the situation. It is essential that these realities are characterised with the involvement of the children who experience them, rather than it being done on their behalf. That means that it is necessary to have qualitative tools that involve the children themselves.'* (Terre des Hommes, 2010: 8).

Ethical concerns have been raised about how to involve street children in research (Young and Barrett, 2001), derived from principles of consent, confidentiality and protection from harm relating to the particularities of street children's situations (e.g. Thomas de Benítez, 2008; Van Blerk, 2006) and to the complexity and diversity of their experiences (e.g. Langevang, 2007). Street children's participation throughout the research process can both raise and resolve ethical dilemmas and researchers have highlighted the importance of involving street children in accommodating and resolving these dilemmas in the research process itself (Young and Barrett, 2001). Fears have also been raised about the need to sensitize adult researchers to be willing to share power, otherwise children can have little influence on the research and become disillusioned (O'Kane, 2003: 7). In such cases there is a danger of street children's involvement in research being tokenistic instead of genuinely valued. A recent study by GCPS (2011) suggests that street child-centred research

by development practitioners has generated ideas for more responsive approaches, which in turn has contributed to the recognition of street children's issues in policy making.

Old Myths and New Realities – Gaps in the Research

- **Research on numbers and characteristics** of children in urban spaces at city/town level needs to be connected up (in terms of methods and definitions) to allow for meaningful sharing of data between urban areas and over time.
- **Differences in terminology** between street children, street youth, street gangs, children on the move etc, has silo-ed research and dispersed knowledge. Care should be taken to reach across terms, cross referencing to other disciplines or perspectives, to connect and draw on accumulating knowledge from research.
- **Increased attentiveness to children's voices** on a micro, 'modest' level of mundane, everyday life (see Nikitina-Den Besten, 2009; Kraftl, 2008), using child-centred techniques adapted to street children's experiences (see Young and Barrett, 2001a) will yield a richer understanding of how street children perceive their realities and possibilities for the future.
- **Child-centred research** is well-established in other fields and should be used more systematically in research with street children. In the field of HIV and AIDS, there are examples of research projects in South Africa (see CINDI, 2001) and China (Qiang, 2006) designed, implemented, analysed and interpreted by children living with HIV and AIDS. *'Although the research in Xinjiang and Yunnan was initiated by adults and the children's discussions in workshops were facilitated by adults, the principles and topics for discussion, and then the questions for research, methods and so on were decided by children. Children as researchers – question design, survey methods, implementation and recordings, met and shared on process as well as findings. [...] Children discussed how to disseminate their survey findings, covering report writing, what content the report should cover, and the target audience for dissemination. Because adults wrote the final report, before it was finalised, children's opinions with the report were consulted. The report was then revised and finished based on their feedback.'* (Qiang, 2006: 11–13, China). While street child-centred research methods have been developed (see Young and Barrett, 2001a), they are not systematically applied in studies of children with connections to the streets.

Part 2

Street Children and Everyday Lives: The Wider Picture

2.1 RELATIONSHIPS



Photo: Marcus Lyon

Summary: *Earlier research blamed families for abandoning or ‘pushing’ children onto the streets. There is still compelling evidence that street children do experience very turbulent home lives, but children’s relationships with their families are now understood as active, complex and sustained, often managed alongside informal on-street networks.*

2.1.1 Street Children and Families

Much research in Latin America in the 1970s to 1990s held family breakdown responsible for children taking to the streets (Scanlon, 1998). This view reflected comparisons between home-based and street-based children showing that the latter were *'less likely to come from a home headed by their father and less likely to have access to running water or toilet facilities; their parents are more likely to be unemployed, illiterate, less cooperative, and less mutually caring, with higher levels of violence.'* (Scanlon, 1998: 1597). Such findings emerged from studies conducted mainly in the streets with children perceived as isolated and disconnected from their homes. Families were under-researched and rarely central to research (Raffaelli, 2000). Studies focused on children as individuals, at the expense of people's 'connectedness' to extended family structures and social networks within their communities (see Evans, 2005; Lucchini, 1997).

Some researchers recognized structural violence as underlying immediate reasons for children leaving for the streets – the kind of societal hostility that *"naturalizes" poverty, sickness, hunger, and premature death, erasing their social and political origins so that they are taken for granted and no one is held accountable except the poor themselves'* (Scheper-Hughes, 2004: 13). More recently, in the paradigm shift towards recognition of children's agency and rights, studies have found that children make tactical – if not strategic – decisions to be on the street, whether to reduce harm or improve socio-economic options for their families or themselves (e.g. Smeaton, 2009 in UK; Ferguson on social capital, 2004 in Mexico; Ayuku, 2003 in Kenya; Invernizzi, 2003 in Peru; O'Kane, 2003 in India; Rizzini and Butler, 2003 in Brazil).

Recent research supports earlier evidence that factors causing street-connectedness are complex and multifaceted (see Terres des Hommes, 2010; UNICEF, 2010, Eastern Europe and Central Asia; Smeaton, 2009; Thomas de Benítez, 2007; Panter-Brick, 2002). But within this context the key role of deprivation of close, supportive and loving relationships with adult caregivers has been highlighted (Schimmel, 2008) together with domestic violence, mental health, alcohol and substance abuse problems of parents (WHO, 2006, Europe) as *'young people's difficulties in establishing family relationships that are solid, continuous, and lasting, seem to be the catalyst for their leaving home'* (Rizzini and Butler, 2003, Brazil). Detailed child/youth-centred research confirms the importance of family-based violence, abuse and neglect as important pathways to the street (e.g. Smeaton, 2009, UK Thomas de Benítez, 2008, Mexico; Baron, 2007, USA; Conticini et al, 2006, Bangladesh). At the same time, these and other authors have found young people setting great store by and continuing to invest in their relationships with at least some members of their families – particularly mothers and siblings – even when living away, through home visits, telephone calls, relayed messages or meetings outside the home. There is also evidence of children moving onto the streets, from home or

from alternative care, in order to search for family members (UNICEF, 2010, Eastern Europe & Central Asia; Smeaton, 2009, UK; Thomas de Benítez, 2008, Mexico).

Ennew and Swart-Kruger (2003) note that insights into street children's connectedness with families and communities have been influenced by Lucchini's use of Giddens (1984) theory of structuration, which considers spatial and temporal elements in combination with Weberian concepts of the social construction of meaning (Lucchini, 1996). This means that street children's worlds cannot be distinguished by a simple division between "home" and "street," but rather with respect to numerous private and public what Lucchini termed 'domains' (1996). Rizzini and Barker built on these ideas in Brazil to devise the notion of 'support bases' or '*formal and informal community and family maintenance systems that enable children and adolescents to develop their abilities and potential*' (cited in Rizzini and Butler, 2003). To emphasize fluidity in children's relationships, others have drawn on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) which recognizes that human beings operate within connected or nested environments: the home (primary relationships), the community and wider society, in what can be thought of as a '*constant process of reciprocal interaction*' (Jack, 2001: 185), see Thomas de Benítez, 2007 and Marrengula, 2010, as well as Ferguson, 2004 on the relationship between child street work and family or community social capital.

2.1.2 Street Children and Informal Support Networks

Recognition of street children's participation in on-street networks developed around more structured concepts of street gangs and street groups such as 'surrogate families' (Shanahan, 2003, Ghana) or 'Stroller' bands with fixed territories and internal hierarchies (Hansson 2003, South Africa), which are vital for sharing resources and information (Ennew and Swart-Kruger, 2003), protecting from outsider violence or harassment, and offering support during illness or injury (Aptekar and Heinonen, 2003). Street subcultures can provide both reference group and collective identity, with clear values and policing of norms (e.g. Gigengack, 2008; Beazley, 2003, Indonesia; Awad, 2002, Sudan). Such groups '*draw newcomers into the fold, teach them survival skills and socialize them*' (Ennew and Swart-Kruger, 2003), involving younger, newer street children putting themselves '*at the mercy*' of peer relations (Nieminen, 2010, Ghana) while perhaps embarking on a street subculture 'career' based on networks of solidarity and reciprocity (Beazley, 2003)

Some researchers caution that street children networks '*should not be primarily viewed as supporting gang and organized criminal behaviour, as is often implied in the public discourse. Rather, street children networks could be seen as a resource for developing a modern, democratic and ethnically diverse society in Kenya.*' (Ayuku, 2003:116). Smeaton also reminds from the UK that street gangs are very diverse in nature (2009), attracting 'detached' youth (often white males) '*because gangs confirm that sense of being detached whilst also providing some solutions to being*

detached and the avoidance of some of the perils of being detached.' (p 65). Other research has found looser, more informal networks which suggest greater spatial fluidity, temporal dynamics and autonomy in children's on-street relationships than previously contemplated. Butler and Rizzini found fluid membership of street groups in Rio de Janeiro (2003), as children maintained contacts with relatives and friends in home-based communities; Thomas de Benítez in Mexico found friendships that predated street life and transcended spatial boundaries, attracting others into temporary groupings for support, protection and entertainment, which dissolved as the friends returned home or moved on together (2008: 169); Jones et al (2007, Mexico) found close knit support networks converging and diverging around suicide and the rituals of death; Aptekar and Heinonen found street groups in Addis Ababa which were loose-knit and neither socially nor emotionally supportive, perhaps as children resisted giving up personal autonomy (2003); while Frankland in Kampala identified competition between individuals, temporary economic affiliations, and yet groupings which provide *'a critical network of mutual support that enhances the prospects of surviving on the streets.'* (2007: 47). In Accra, Mizen et al (2010) describes friendships on the street as informal networks suited to informal urban living, finding the notion of non-monetary exchange – *'an expressive form of reciprocity largely devoid of market transactions whereby one child relates to others in terms of a complex of asking, giving and receiving'* – as intrinsic to the act of making friends on the street. In these terms, survival is understood as dependent on a collective sense of reciprocity: *'looking to other street children for help, to offer something in return when this help is extended, to respond to requests from others with generosity and openness, and to accept the warmth and kindness held out by those others with humility and good grace'* (p 445).

There is also evidence that diversity in children's networking activities responds to differences in children's characteristics. Research has, for example, highlighted differences in street girls' and boys' experiences of family and on-street relationships. Compared to boys, girls have been found to experience more trauma at home and to maintain less contact with their families after moving to the street (Wernham, 2001: 8, citing 2000 research from Kenya, Senegal, Bolivia, Brazil and Guatemala by Barker and Rizzini; also Raffaelli, 2000). In Kenya, girls were, however, found to be relatively better off than boys, developing and sustaining more supportive emotional and material ties on the street, in contrast with a more fractured competitiveness found between boys (Ayuku, 2003, echoed in Tanzania by McAlpine et al, 2009). Different groupings as well as positions within groups are reported elsewhere for street girls (see Payne, 2004, Ghana; Beazley, 2003, Indonesia; Hansson, 2003, South Africa) demonstrating the gendered nature of street space and children's wider relationship networks.

2.2 MIGRATION AND MOBILITY



Photo: Marcus Lyon

Summary: *New research interest in child migration and mobility mirrors two trends: recognition of the importance of street children's movements between places and over time; and new understandings of many 'trafficked' children as independent migrants. 'Children on the move' emphasizes children's agency – perhaps at the expense of emotional and other needs.*

Panter-Brick (2002) referred to street children as a '*mobile population of children*' (p153), reflecting much of the literature on street children in the 1980s and 1990s, in which mobility tended to be used to describe the movement (and elusiveness) of children *within* public spaces. Migration in the street children literature has more frequently been understood as referring to linear single moves of children from rural or peri-urban homes to city centres, echoed in recent studies for example in Ghana, where street children have been found to have migrated to escape poverty from poor rural areas to the streets of growing urban conurbations (UNICEF, 2009), finding jobs there in the informal sector as street hawkers or porters and, in doing so, reducing rural poverty levels (see for example Ghana's 2002 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper cited in Anarfi et al, 2003). Until recently there were fewer acknowledgements of street children as having a more fluid mobility, as

being *'involved in wider geographies, moving across greater distances and adapting to changing surroundings and environments'* Van Blerk and Ansell, 2006: 449.

Two strands of research have become evident in recent years: the first derives from the paradigm shift in research informed by the New Social Studies for Childhood and explores the importance of the spatial and temporal aspects of street children's lives; the second emerged from interest in the trafficking of children which was discovered to represent a fraction of more complex and multi-dimensional migration practices by children.

Looking first at the spatial and temporal aspects of street children's lives, in other words their movements between different places – not just within the streets – and over time, street children's mobility has been identified: as a coping strategy for survival; as bound up in identity development; and a transition to other livelihood forms. Migration to the street was found to be an effective coping strategy by children leaving extreme poverty in Ghana's northern provinces for Accra and Kumaso who had no prior foothold in the city (Kwankye et al, 2007) and by children forced out of AIDS-affected households in Tanzania (Evans, 2005, also see Van Blerk, 2005 in Uganda) who learned to negotiate to meet their survival needs. Children's use of mobility for survival in these circumstances implies choice of the street as site of opportunity in response to adverse home conditions. Beyond satisfying immediate survival needs, street children's mobility has evidenced processes of empowerment through which children develop innovative coping behaviours, exercise personal agency (Conticini and Hulme, 2006 in Bangladesh) and interact with others to develop complex social networks over time to live with peers on the street (Evans, 2005), processes which can be understood as contributing to the formation of personal and social identities (see Van Blerk, 2005: 18). Jones and Thomas de Benítez (2009) detected a shift over time in individual street children's negotiation of space from that of a 'reluctant' to a 'harnessed' mobility, reflecting changes in their relationship with the street over time from one of perceived powerlessness to a certain mastery of their surroundings – with undoubtedly diverse effects for children's sense of identity. Researchers have also begun to explore migration to the street as a temporary stage in children's 'careers' over time (Ennew and Swart-Kruger, 2003). Children interviewed in Nepal perceived their time living on the streets as transitional (Southon and Pralhad, 2003), a period between leaving a difficult or unpalatable home-life and accessing training or good employment opportunities, in which children were keenly aware of shortcomings of street life in the long-term (p 23). In South Africa, Cross and Seager (2010) found homeless youth had not spent their childhood on the streets, suggesting that children transitioned out of street life as older youth, responding to a different set of conditions, transitioned in. Van Blerk's fieldwork in Uganda identified three types of move that street boys there typically engaged in over time (both nomadic and episodic): between spaces in the city; between street and non-street locations; and between Kampala and other towns (2005), meaning that while children may

transition to off-street life or careers, they can also continue to have transient or fairly permanent on-street careers. Jones and Thomas de Benítez (2009) found navigation of city streets in Mexico gave some street youth confidence and experience to negotiate international independent migration to off-street careers, while others became locked for years into local mobility patterns between street, family and institutions.

The second strand of research on street children's mobility and migration emerged from recognition in the development field that mobility has become one of the defining issues of the twenty-first century (Bakewell, 2008). This interest led to discoveries of child exploitation and trafficking across international borders, which drew media, institutional and policy attention in the early 2000s. Subsequent research has, however, found relatively few trafficked children and yet many child migrants travelling independently of family units (see Castle, 2009 in West Africa; Black et al, 2004; Young, 2004 in East Africa; and Subedi for ILO, 2002 in Nepal). There are indications that a focus on child trafficking as a criminal act has had unintended, sometimes negative consequences for other children on the move (Reale, 2008), including legitimizing forcible round-ups by police of street children in Nepal (Subedi, 2002) and Rwanda to protect them from exploitation for labour or abduction by rebel militia (Black et al, 2004). And yet the relationship between street children and trafficked children is at best tenuous. For example Subedi (2002) found 14 (including 1 girl) of 100 street children interviewed for an ILO study in Nepal were once forced or tricked to leave home and could be regarded as trafficked children; but 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.

When viewed through the lens of independent child migration, research has highlighted the complexity and multidimensional aspects of street children's migration (GCPS, 2011) and of identities – for example as migrant, student, family member, sexual partner, consumer, beggar etc (Castle, 2009), as explorations of the impacts of changing social, spatial and temporal conditions on street children's movements show that their journeys are far more than just single processes (Young, 2004, Uganda). Diverse effects of migration have been observed for street children with some finding improved livelihoods through illegal migration across international boundaries (Castle, 2009, West Africa; Jones and Thomas de Benítez, 2009, Mexico) while other researchers caution that migration does not automatically lead to *'social mobility and many young people find themselves moving around with little reward'* (Langevang and Gough, 2009: 752) and may increase street children's vulnerability (GCPS, 2011: 41).

Importantly, research in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Bangladesh and India has identified a significant gap between how children see their own experiences of migration and the way that child migrants are often represented (Whitehead et al, 2008). Such a

gap, together with particularly complex migration processes over time and space attributed to street children, suggests a need to listen closely to street children's voices and to elicit their experiences, in order to consider how and when they can be understood as 'independent child migrants' or 'children on the move' for policy and programme purposes. Proposals to develop frameworks which subsume street children into 'children on the move' have taken a critical activist approach towards child rights (see e.g. Reale, 2008), propelling to the foreground children's empowerment and realization of agency. Researchers who find street children's turbulent home lives serve as a catalyst for empowerment through autonomous mobility and migration (see e.g. Bordonaro 2010; Van Blerk and Ansell, 2006), suggest the importance of fine tuning the balance between *'the background and the foreground, making agency and constraint, resilience and suffering, fit (even if in contrast) into the same picture'* (Bordonaro, 2010: 6).

2.3 EXPERIENCES ON THE STREETS



Photo: Marcus Lyon

Summary: *Rather than simply describing street children's characteristics, new research seeks information about their everyday lives, improving our understanding of children's coping mechanisms, how they negotiate power and risk, and how street-connectedness affects identity formation and livelihood opportunities.*

There has been a gradual but clear shift in the research since the 1970s and 1980s away from an emphasis on observing and describing street children's characteristics and situations, towards developing richer understandings of children's 'everyday' lives. This reflects a shift of attention away from the street as unhealthy environment and towards the children who live and work there (Panter-Brick, 2002) together with a recognition of the right of street children to be involved in research about themselves. At the same time researchers have acknowledged serious limitations in the information produced by extractive research techniques such as surveys and semi-structured interviews, and the added value of studies which are '*informed by street children and their legitimate representatives*' (Scanlon et al, 1998: 1599) to elicit children's perceptions, behaviours and understandings. Ethnographic and participatory methods are increasingly used to explore meanings of children's experiences on the streets for identities and livelihoods.

Experiences of work on the street show resourcefulness and enterprise (Evans, 2005; O'Kane, 2003; Young, 2003) as children sometimes juggle several jobs throughout the day in response to shifting demands from morning to night (Thomas de Benítez, 2008, Mexico), use opportunities presented by seasonal agendas, cultural festivals and tourist centres (Bordonaro, 2010, Cape Verde) or develop canny tactics for survival such as 'blagging' (persuading people to give food or other support) reported by Smeaton (2009) on UK streets. Work experiences can be much more constrained if they form part of a ritualized tradition, such as forced begging by Talibés (Human Rights Watch, 2010, Senegal) or when available opportunities are heavily gendered, such as acting as guides and carrying shopping in Kampala as male preserves (Frankland, 2007) and sex-selling in Nairobi as a female domain (Aptekar, 2000). Even in these circumstances, work can be recognized as just one element of children's on-street experiences, alongside socialization, recreation, personal enrichment, situated learning, survival, adventure, development of livelihood opportunities, and other purposes (Abebe, 2009; Smeaton, 2009; Southon and Gurung, 2005; Ennew and Swart-Kruger, 2003; van Beers, 2003). These diverse processes have been described as constituting individual 'careers' on the street (Beazley, 2003; Butler and Rizzini, 2003; Ennew and Swart-Kruger, 2003; Invernizzi, 2003), and in the diversity of children's survival strategies as reflecting mainstream society, rather than being all-resisting to dominant ideology (Payne, 2004, Ghana).

Other research cautions against reading as much autonomy or agency into street children's working choices as 'careers' might suggest. Street children can be understood as displaying 'tactical agency' (Honwana, 2005) or 'thin' agency, (Klocker, 2007) referring to "*decisions and everyday actions that are carried out within highly restrictive contexts, characterised by few viable alternatives*" (Klocker, 2007: 85 cited in Bordonaro, 2010), which draws attention to the conditions of sometimes extreme adversity in which children make decisions to move onto the street and take up work there. Evans (2005) notes the complex ways children and young people exert

their agency in coping with such adversity, noting, however, that this does not correspond to the literature on resilience, since moving to the street environment, which is characterized by a high level of risk, *'is not considered a "successful outcome" from a child development perspective'* (p 122) even in response to parental death and serious abuse at home. Work then can be understood as an experience which carries different meanings – as forced labour, survival, coping strategy, opportunity and 'career' – to individual children depending on variables such as age and sex, their street situations, local conditions and individual aspirations.

Agency is embedded in other research questions about street life, and from the recent research can be understood as 'tactical', operating within constraints imposed by adults and wider global processes, and therefore bound up with power and risk. Recent research into street children's subjective well-being in China finds for example that study participants' considerable appreciation of freedom in their street life could not make up for the hardship they have to suffer, and although they showed resilience in finding work and building their own sources of support, their sense of well-being was generally low (Cheng and Lam, 2010). Exploring a characteristic attributed to street children in many countries around the world – a high or increasing use of drugs (see Scanlon, 1998; Bond, 2004; Kissin et al 2007; to Robbins et al, 2010) – research shows that experiences of drug use and their meaning for children's lives can be very diverse. Under one reading, children use drugs as a coping strategy – a form of positive agency involving assessing risks – for example in UNICEF's story from the Ukraine *'Yana was just eight years old when she started living on the streets. Her father, an alcoholic, died young and she was separated from her mother who was sent to jail. Originally from Moldova, one of the poorest countries in Europe, Yana wandered through several towns and eventually ended up on the streets of Odessa, Ukraine. Her 'home' was a makeshift shed in a park. A group of 20 street children built the hideout themselves, the youngest only six years old. They begged, stole and prostituted themselves to survive. Drugs helped them cope with their lives...'* (UNICEF, 2010: 31). A more nuanced picture is presented in Indonesia, where the 'Tikyan' get high together to perform *'a kind of collective ritual of escapism. Taking drugs and alcohol within the Tikyan culture, however, is not only a form of diversion and enjoyment, but 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.'* (Beazley, 2003a: 195–6).

On the other hand, Gigengack (2008) discusses his own change in understanding over time of street children's agency in their use of drugs in Mexico City, from that of a survival strategy to a strategy for self-destruction, recalling that in the early years of his street ethnographic research *'I was able to overlook street children's devastating, self-destructive capacities because of two reasons: first, the paradigmatic*

dominance of the activist critique in the literature, and second, my own relatively brief exposure to street children' (p 212), suggesting that children's agency can easily be misunderstood. At the extreme, the suicide of Carlos, a street youth in Mexico, was variously interpreted by close friends as triggered by an argument with his girlfriend, a sense that life had been 'pretty shit' lately, or a recent addiction to crack, each explanation presenting a different clue to the exercise of agency within a wider context of despair (Jones et al, 2007). Many forms of violence are present and often normalized in street children's lives (McAlpine et al, 2009; Thomas de Benítez, 2007), as Smeaton found in her UK research '*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'* (2009: 116). The diversity of children's and youths on-street experiences – manifest in the ways they use public spaces to survive, show preferences and display personalities – suggest multiple possibilities in the use of agency at the margins. But research has yet to adequately consider variables such as gender and age in the analysis of street children's experiences, individuality and agency, as they interact together within what is recognized as a unique relationship to the urban environment (Van Blerk, 2006:47).

Within this unique relationship, children's diverse on-street experiences are recognized as significant to formation of identity. Using the concept of a street child's life as a 'career' and employing Turner's (1985, 1994) 'self-categorization' theory, Beazley (2003) examined boys' socialization into the Indonesian street child subculture of the '*Tikyan*'. She found that a street boy's '*individual identity construction and performance entailed a continual interaction with the Tikyan collective identity [...]. Over the months or years street children and youth learn to interact and comply with the expectations of their own group, and are more influenced by it. It is in this way that the Tikyan community enables a street child to establish a new identity...*' (Beazley, 2003: 1). She draws attention to the length of time and complexity of process involved in socialization of newcomers by seasoned street children to the *Tikyan's* norms and values; a process which occurs '*through the construction and protection of individual and collective street child identities, which are essential to a street child's survival*' (Beazley 2003a: 182), in which new boys (girls are excluded from the *Tikyan*) '*received peer and survival skills as well as a "collective identity that assists them in their construction of a new, positive self-image"*' (Beazley, 2003a: 185). This includes specific styles of dress, hair styles, tattoos and body-piercing, as well as sexual practices, use of drugs and alcohol, and the music they play and listen to (p 187).

Such 'embodiment' of identity has also been found in much looser street groupings where, although a collective street child subculture identity is less discernable and behaviours are not enforced for collective belonging, individual children adopt similar bodily practices in attempts to control and understand their lives through control of and identification with their bodies (e.g. Herrera et al, 2009, Mexico). Other research has drawn attention to the role of violence in street children's

identity construction, explored to devastating effect at individual level by Lockhart (2008) in Tanzania, and collectively by Butler (2009) in Brazil, who draws attention to experiences of 'revolta' – of revolt or rage – which channel aspirations for freedom and frustration of not being considered a citizen, of powerlessness in a society that continues to discriminate and curtail possibilities for social mobility. Street children in Morocco are presented as 'poetic' daydreamers surrounded but not corrupted by violence (see Gugler, 2007), while children in research in Nepal were found to internalize strong negative images of themselves, mirroring society's view of them as delinquents or *bigreko* (Southon and Pralhad, 2003), developing a sense of blame for their own situations and their inability to leave street life (p 23) leading to an increasingly passive, fatalistic approach to the future as children get older, in contrast to the active 'rage' sensed by Butler in Brazil (2009).

Children's on-street experiences can, then, be understood as contributing to building children's identities in a myriad of ways – at both individual and collective levels – in response to socio-cultural contexts of violence and inequality, as well as differing by variables such as age and gender. Recognition of street children's relationship to the urban environment as unique, suggests that on-street processes of identity formation will also differ from those experienced by other urban children, and perhaps can be usefully understood as constituting a 'street-connectedness', which makes its particular contributions to development of children's values, beliefs, aspirations, behaviours, practices and future livelihoods. It is clear from the research, however, that children's everyday on-street experiences are not readily available: they emerge from trusting relationships built over time and from an intellectual receptivity by researchers (Gigengack, 2008).

2.4 AGEING INTO YOUTH



Photo: Marcus Lyon

Summary: *Research about street children is increasingly focusing on youth in recognition that experiences, roles, needs and future prospects change, sometimes dramatically, as children age into youth on the streets.*

Youth have recently become a focus for international policy research, as their numbers have grown dramatically in many countries of the Global South, where 15 to 24-year-olds (these age boundaries were established by the UN although are not shared by all countries) now make up a very significant proportion of national populations. When Scanlon wrote about street children in Latin America in 1998, ageing and youth did not feature in his review of the research. When the term 'street youth' was used, it was as a synonym for 'street children' (see for example Panter-Brick, 2002; and Raffaelli, 1999). More recently, 'street youth' has become the term of choice to describe young populations living on the street in the USA, Canada and Eastern Europe (see e.g. Kidd and Carroll, 2007, USA and Canada; Kissin et al, 2007; and Osborn, 2005, both Russia; Karabanow, 2004, Canada), although in the UK 'detached' or 'homeless' young people are more common (see Smeaton, 2009). Researchers are also beginning to talk about street youth (and street adolescents) in countries and cities of the South whose populations of street-connected young people are clearly beginning to age, for example Latin America (e.g. Morais et al,

2010; Butler, 2009, both Brazil; and Jones et al, 2007, Mexico). However, 'child' and 'youth' are still used interchangeably in some of the literature, while in other studies 'youth' is used to explore links with the wider literature on youth subcultures (e.g. Butler, 2009; Beazley, 2003a). In Kenya, Droz (2006) argues that these and other terms are euphemisms which serve political purposes, citing for example 'street families' which include *'not only children but the entire street population, including lone elderly vagrants, street mothers, street gangs or families of refugees moving through the city streets'* (p 353), and *'does not reflect any relevant social characteristic of the people concerned: it does little else than articulate the ethos of the policy-makers for whom the street dwellers' way of life is a problem.'* (p 354).

Nevertheless, development practitioners and researchers are detecting older children and young adults whose experiences, roles and possibilities are different to those of younger children in apparently similar situations. Action for Children in Conflict (AFCIC)'s 2010 census in Thika, Kenya noted different life experiences and expectations: *'a distinct class of older youth is present. When comparing results of those under 18 to those 18 and above, we find that the older "youth" group are: more likely to be from slums, more likely to be orphans and less likely to have their parents together, almost certain to have totally dropped school, almost certain to have been arrested, very likely to have been beaten, may sleep in a rented room with friends, and are more likely to want work-related assistance or "other" assistance rather than more traditional school, home, or residential care.'* (p 24). AFCIC's survey does not confirm or disprove the popular assumption that street youth are street children who have simply stayed on the street and aged into youth, and research to date suggests a more complex picture. Some studies have found street children ageing into youth on the street (e.g. Gigengack, 2008 on Mexico's Banda; and Beazley, 2003a, on Tikyan in Indonesia): *'With a few exceptions, all the street youths and young adults that I have known had joined street life in their childhood. Reading their life course backwards, one can say that they had come to stay. [...] It is my impression that the individual life courses of street children tend to follow the street life cycle: 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...'* (Gigengack, 2008: 13). Other studies have found that children and young adults appear to be different populations on-street: Kok et al (2010) in South Africa found homeless adults were mainly rural migrants while children appeared to leave the streets at adulthood, blending into shack housing populations perhaps to live with relatives or off-street gangs; studies in the USA and Eastern Europe point to children ageing out of institutional or foster care, or finding themselves on the streets as young adult drug users (e.g. HRW, 2010a in California; and Robbins et al, 2010 in Ukraine). Such diversity in life histories has implications for policies and programmes, as discussed in Part 3.

Research has found that child and youth experiences on the street diverge in response to personal development combined with changes in public/state

perceptions towards them and in their legal rights – including gaining access to identity cards and ageing out of juvenile penal systems. On-street youth are generally found to be more heavily involved than street children in crime, drug use and gang leadership on the streets (Covey, 2010; Gigengack, 2008; Beazley, 2003) and may be under increased pressures from urban governance policies to become less visible (Van Blerk, 2011; Samara, 2005). Some types of work can become more difficult to access, for example begging (HRW, 2010, Senegal; Abebe, 2009, Ethiopia) and may become heavily gendered among youth who have children of their own (Jones and Thomas de Benítez, 2010). Research is lacking on transition experiences from childhood to adulthood within the street, and how these processes relate to identities and future livelihoods.

Also under-researched are transitions away from the street by children ageing into youth, although Toro et al (2007) note from the USA that progress has been made in longitudinal studies on youth “aging out” of foster care. Existing research suggests there are many pathways off the street although it is clear that some remain as street dwellers into late adulthood, while other children and youth die on the streets. Several studies have reported deaths of street youth: one young man was shot and killed on the streets of Cape Town during a researcher’s fieldwork, one of some fifty participants in the study (Van Blerk, 2011); in a Canadian study designed to determine the incidence and risk factors for HIV infection among street youth, several of the 1,000 recruits died during the first few months, prompting investigators to add mortality to the study objectives: current heavy substance use and homelessness were found to be factors associated with death among street youth and HIV infection was an important predictor of mortality (Roy et al, 2004). Omar, a street youth in Mexico City’s centre died suddenly from glue sniffing (Gigengack, 2008). Lockhart explores the life and death on the street of 14 year old street boy ‘Juma’ in Tanzania, who died before becoming a youth as a result of brutal violence, rape and beatings in prison (2008). A few studies also report street youth suicides (Jones et al, 2007, Mexico; Kidd, 2004, USA) and suicide attempts (Kidd and Carroll, 2007, USA). Other street-exits include prison and organized crime. But there are also exits into shack housing and peri-urban communities (e.g. Cross and Seager, 2010; Kok et al, 2010, both in South Africa; Strehl, 2010, Peru) as well as through NGO interventions into off-street work, further education or international migration (e.g. Rodrigues, 2010, Brazil; Jones and Thomas de Benítez, 2009, Mexico; SKI, 2002, Zambia).

Street Children and Everyday Lives – Gaps in the Research

- **Longitudinal research into relationships** of street children with families and carers over time. Also, how on-street groups and networks change – including membership or reliance on adults on or near the street.
- **Research into ‘Children on the Move’** exploring comparative experiences of street children and others considered mobile. Again, longitudinal research could offer information about post-mobility/migration.
- **Experiences** focusing on underexplored characteristics and contexts, for example the experiences of disabled children, or religious contexts. Developing the concept of ‘street-connectedness’ for identity.
- **Longitudinal research into ageing off or onto the streets** – repeat situation analyses are useful, together with longitudinal ethnographic research – for example to explore changes in state of subjective wellbeing as children stay longer on the street (Cheng and Lam, 2010, China); and to explore transitions from children to youth and adult – both on and off the streets.

Part 3

Policies and Interventions for Street Children

3.1 POLICIES



Photo: Marcus Lyon

Summary: Research has identified policy approaches towards street children and draws attention to conflicts between street children's experiences and 'targeted' policies designed to help them. Researchers recommend paying greater attention to street children's voices, personalities and experiences. They recommend flexible long-term packages of social protection and support, and coordinated policies based on empirical research evidence. Broad-based policies – from social welfare to education – are found to miss street children, while others, such as

urban renewal, can criminalize them. 'Universal' policy frameworks provide a useful context within which to develop targeted policy proposals. Nevertheless, the literature on policies and street children is thin. Recent research examining links between knowledge production and policy-making may help the field to advance.

The literature on policies in relation to street children is thin considering that street children have been a research topic for over 30 years. In 1994 the Council of Europe was the first institutional body to propose a categorization of the policy approaches evident in state practices towards street children. Three policy approaches were recognized: repression-oriented; protection-oriented and human rights-based (CoE, 1994). A slightly different classification was proposed by Rizzini and Lusk (1995) for Latin America: correctional model; rehabilitative; outreach strategies; and preventive approach. By 2003, policy approaches had not made significant advances, as reactive, protective and rights-based models dominated the policy landscape around the world (Thomas de Benítez, 2003). Each policy approach is based on different conceptualizations, assumptions or social constructions of street children, as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Classification of Policy Approaches evident towards Street Children

Policy Approach	Conceptualization or Social Construction of street children
Correctional, reactive or repression-oriented model	Deviants – threats or potential threats to public order whose deficient characteristics differentiate them from other children assumed to be 'normal', inviting a repressive response to individual children
Rehabilitative or protection-oriented model	Victims – in which the deficient conditions of street life are emphasized, those whose basic rights to food, shelter, education and health are continuously violated, inviting a more protective approach towards the children in these situations
Human-rights based model	Citizens whose rights have been violated – A group of people who are discriminated against and whose access to rights as citizens and as children are denied or unsecured by society

**Sources: Thomas de Benítez (2003); Rizzini and Lusk (1995); CoE (1994)
Reproduced from Thomas de Benítez (2008: 86)**

Staller (2010) takes up the social construction argument in the USA, demonstrating how young people can be variously constructed as 'runaway youth' or as 'missing children', each producing a different kind of 'social problem' from which 'two diametrically opposed sets of solutions emerged. [...] The runaway youth movement was framed from the youth's perspective and took a rights-based approach. [...] Conversely, the missing children movement took a parent-rights perspective.' (p 169), leading to different policies, in which runaway youth are treated under the

Runaway Youth Acts of 1974 and 1978; while young people identified as 'missing children' are addressed under the Missing Children's Acts of 1982 and 1983 (Staller, 2010: 160). Droz (2006) also draws attention to the highly political nature of policy-making towards street children elsewhere, arguing that policy-makers in Kenya have adopted the language of children's rights, including abandoning the term 'street children' in favour of 'street families', to appeal to the international community while at the same time legitimizing control over the urban marginal population and adopting a public security, or repressive, agenda towards children on the streets (p 355). In other countries, policies directed at street children are more overtly concerned with public security: '*As unequivocally stated in a billboard that recently appeared on the streets of St Petersburg, taking children off the streets is seen as an issue of home security*' (UNICEF, 2010: 34), reflecting changing social attitudes in Russia from perceptions of street children as destitute and needing help, to '*the predominant perception today is that they are outcasts, beggars and petty criminals that society needs to 'clean up.'*' (ibid: 34).

For the purposes of policy design, research in Russia (Balachova et al, 2009) proposes adaptation of a medical-based policy framework for street children. Balachova divides policy-making approaches into: *Primary Prevention*, including universal prevention efforts that target the general population regardless of risk; and selective prevention activities that target population subgroups identified as being at higher than average risk of developing the specific illness or social problem; *Secondary Prevention*, including strategies aimed at minimising the effects of a problem in its early stages through early detection and treatment to prevent the condition from becoming chronic; and *Tertiary Prevention*, including efforts aimed at rehabilitating the affected persons – which in the case of street children would focus on '*reducing the effects of street life, such as school problems, sexual behaviour problems, post-traumatic stress disorder and delinquency, involving long-term care and management for children to prevent them from returning to the streets*' (2009: p 28). Alternative frameworks to the 'social problem' approach have been proposed based on principles of social development and social inclusion (e.g. De Venanzi, 2003; Ferguson, 2002) and some researchers claim a more prominent role in policy-making for the people who have been or still are on the streets themselves, whether perceived as 'clients', 'consumers', 'survivors' or 'peers' (see e.g. Barrow, 2007: 98, USA).

Research has drawn attention to conflicts between street children's experiences and targeted policies apparently designed to help them. In China, Cheng (2009) discusses the "protective" policy model which aims to send children back to their birth families by forceful measures. Cheng's ethnographic study found that the current Chinese welfare policy failed to effectively help street children. From Latin America, De Moura (2005) concurs, on the basis of ethnographic fieldwork which found that Brazilian welfare policies focused on reintegrating street children into their original families and communities were not feasible because they did

not respond to the realities of children, their families or communities. Thomas de Benítez (2008) and Lefeh (2008) found that welfare policies designed to help street children in Puebla, Mexico and Johannesburg, South Africa signally failed to reach them. These and other studies (e.g. Rizzini et al, 2010, Brazil; Smeaton, 2009, UK; Van Blerk, 2006, Uganda) recommend that policy makers pay greater attention to street children's voices, their personalities and their life experiences, taking note of differences in experience by gender, age and ethnicity, in developing targeted policies.

Other research, much available in the development literature, has explored street children's experiences of wider policy areas including: selective policies for groups of disadvantaged children which include street children such as those in the juvenile justice system and in social welfare; and policies for the general population such as education, housing, and urban management. Findings from the Consortium for Street Children's international project on Juvenile Justice found that the vast majority of street children processed through justice systems were either children in perceived (rather than actual) conflict with the law (arrested for begging, vagrancy, commercial sexual exploitation, truancy or running away from home) or children in need of care (detained 'for their own protection' and not on suspicion of committing a criminal activity), (Wernham, 2004: 15). Wernham found that most juvenile (in)justice systems violated street children's rights to survival and development (2004: 112). Social welfare and development policies aimed at protecting vulnerable children have been found to be inadequate for street children, whose multiple deprivations and street-connectedness overwhelm service capacity (see e.g. Lefeh, 2008, South Africa; Thomas de Benítez, 2008, Mexico; Staller, 2004, USA).

Within the broader field of education, commitments to ensure educational access for all children by 2015 have been found by researchers to miss many street children. A study by Child Welfare Scheme (CWS) and UNESCO (2005) found that despite an acceptable policy framework (adequate legislation, a National Plan and previous consultation) and good results in the wider population, the education for all policy was failing to get street children into school because of: weak implementation; poor monitoring and evaluation of school practices; competing centralized development priorities (p 10). In South Africa, as in many other countries, affordable housing policies miss street children who are *'a clear exception to the rule that such housing is accessible to people at risk – as an informal safety net – since children can obtain neither subsidised housing nor shacks in their own right'* (Cross and Seager, 2010: 154). Also from South Africa, research shows that street children are not benefiting from urban renewal policies which seek to reconcile tensions between addressing high crime rates, increasing inequalities and stimulating economic growth (Samara, 2005). Through an examination of the politics of urban renewal in Cape Town's Central Business District and the authorities' efforts to control the presence of street children there, Samara argues that *'In defining street*

children primarily as a threat to social order, local elites, including the media, police and renewal authorities, are reproducing deeply embedded and recurring notions of a 'black menace' that emerge during times of real or perceived social upheaval and threats to social 'order'. This criminalisation of street children raises serious doubts as to how well new progressive approaches to both crime reduction and development will survive urban renewal efforts that many feel reproduce the city's division into developed and underdeveloped areas! (Samara, 2005: 209). Cape Town's urban management policy has, according to another study (Van Blerk, 2011), 'through a combination of displacement, dispersal, localisation and marginalisation' (p 24) brought about by tough security measures, reduced the visible presence of street connected youth – but they are merely located out of sight and are possibly in even greater danger.

Academic studies into overarching child development and protection policies rarely explore children in particular circumstances, whether on the street, on the move, at war or in institutions, although street children are sometimes mentioned as an illustration of policy failures (e.g. Fottrell, 2000). Leading research into child development policies has focused on poverty, inequalities and child rights (see e.g. Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010; as well as Townsend and Gordon, 2002; also Franklin, 2001) and has argued that for prevention to become effective, a range of coordinated policies needs to address: social security; employment and minimum earnings; child benefit; access to basic health and education services; affordable housing; redistribution of resources; (fair) trade; company law; and tax administration; among others (e.g. see The Manifesto for International Action to Defeat Poverty in Townsend and Gordon, 2002: 433). Leading research into child protection policies (e.g. Wulczyn et al, 2009; Munro, 2002) has drawn attention to the importance of links between laws, policies, standards, regulations and mechanisms, to coordinate across and within service sectors, and propose a systems approach to child protection, based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological perspective of the nested, interdependent nature of children, families, and communities. Research at these overarching levels provides universal policy frameworks within which targeted policies for groups of marginalized children such as street children can be conceptualized and developed.

Many of the recommendations for policy-making generated by recent research about street children do not focus narrowly but straddle: policies targeting street children; broader policies for marginalized children; and overarching policy frameworks for child development and protection. Recommendations from the literature around the world for policies targeting street children emphasize developing flexible long-term 'packages' of social protection and support (e.g. Cross and Seager, 2010; Lefeh, 2008, both South Africa; Balachova, Smeaton, 2009, UK 2008, Russia) that recognize the traumas children have experienced, are capable of listening to and accepting their views, and can respond to diverse, complex experiences. In a related vein, other researchers highlight the need for policies that are coordinated across sectors, are evaluated for their efficacy and

are based on empirical research evidence (e.g. Marrengula, 2010, Mozambique; Muntingh et al, 2006, Zambia; West, 2003, China). There is, then, some consensus in the research around designing policies for street children that take full account of children's voices, experiences and identities. This also implies inclusion of: support for children's families and other support bases in the community (e.g. Rizzini et al, 2010); mechanisms to ensure street children's rights are not overpowered by competing urban agendas (e.g. Van Blerk, 2011); services sensitive to gender, disability ethnicity and other forms of discrimination; and services appropriate to incoming youth as well as to street children ageing into youth (e.g. Kok et al, 2010; Sauv , 2003). A current example of more coordinated policy-making for street children has been described in a recent research paper from Brazil (Rizzini et al, 2010). A working group of NGO social workers, academics and local policy-makers from the Municipal Council of Childhood and Youth in Rio de Janeiro took a year to formulate and design a new policy for street children in Rio, centered on evidence-based indicators of vulnerability and in consultation with street children and youth, which was approved on June 22, 2009 (resolution 763/09).

Recommendations from the wider literature that aims to include street children using a broader policy lens include: building on existing indigenous protection mechanisms that are susceptible to being strengthened (De Coninck, 2009 from the Poverty literature); ensuring that targeted initiatives do not 'crowd out' larger sectors of marginalized children, encouraging cooperation and partnership initiatives, and involving children in policy-making (Reale, 2008 from 'Children on the Move' research); shifting policies and resources towards supporting children in their families, and good quality family-based care options for children who need alternative families (Cs ky, 2009 from Children in Institutions research); and securing transnational corporations' compliance with children's rights to protect vulnerable children through internal corporate policies (Comprosky, 2002 from the Legal Human Rights literature).

There has been recognition in recent years that research-based knowledge about street children has not translated well into policies relevant to street children. Knowledge generated by academic research about street children has been under-utilized or 'cherry-picked' for policy-making. In this respect, recent research that has examined links between knowledge production and policy-making is helpful: for example current understandings of the links between knowledge and policy in development are being explored, see for example Jones, H. (2009) for a theoretical overview of the knowledge-policy landscape, and Jones N. et al (2009) for a more in-depth exploration of key areas of the knowledge-policy interface which is aimed at helping to *'stimulate more nuanced debates and the development of tailored tools for actors involved in knowledge translation processes – as knowledge generators, brokers or users.'* (p 3). Research from Australia with respect to child-focused policies has explored *'how we can improve the uptake of sound research evidence into government policy and into service provision. [...] How can research knowledge*

be brokered to achieve effective decision making and action that improve children's wellbeing? (Bammer et al, 2010). Finally, leading researchers encourage the use of systematic reviews of relevant evidence to inform policies and, citing their use, report growing respect for empirical research evidence (see e.g. Chalmers, 2005).

Research gaps in the area of policies and street children include: exploration of the research-to-policy processes and the take-up of evidence in decision-making; systematic and comparative policy reviews; identifying indicators of street-connectedness and vulnerability to contribute to policy-making; application of research from related fields with system approaches (e.g. Wolraich and Worley, 2007 on disability and mental health); understanding street children's experiences and impacts of targeted policies; exploration of the evidence of broad-based policy effects such as health and education on street children; exploration of the effects of policy tensions on street children such as urban renewal and public security; exploration of policies within transnational corporations (e.g. Comprosky, 2002 on use of addictive solvents in glue) and within NGOs (Magazine, 2003 on combining neo-liberalism with social empowerment policies).

3.2 INTERVENTIONS AND MODELS OF CARE



Photo: Marcus Lyon

Summary: Recent research offers preliminary findings on: evaluating and assessing impacts of interventions on street children; understanding how ideological approaches affect the nature of interventions; and relationships between interventions for street children and wider child development and protection systems. Research is emerging on interventions with respect to families, mobility, 'ageing out' and 'street-connectedness'. There is a potential 'body' of academic and development research coming together around ideas of interventions for young people on the street as: personalized, accepting, flexible and participatory; and as specialized, professional and collaborative. There is considerable scope for improving the take up of academic findings for interventions and for improving the usefulness of academic research to planning and evaluating interventions.

Much of the material available on interventions and models of care for street children has been published in the development literature – describing or categorizing existing service provision, often advocating for a particular approach, and written by or on behalf of UN agencies (e.g. Volpi, 2002, offering suggestions for interventions and examples of 'promising approaches'; UNCHS, 2000), international NGOs (e.g. Csáky, 2009 for Save the Children and Reale, 2008) or NGO networks (e.g. International Network of Social Street Workers INSSW, 2008; Wernham 2004 for Consortium for Street Children). Meanwhile, in the academic literature, targeted interventions have been criticized on the one hand for stigmatizing children by labeling them as 'street children' (Panter-Brick, 2002) and on the other for their inability to scale up: in Brazil successful programmes for street children were some time ago branded as 'jewel boxes' (Myers, 1991) on the grounds that they reached only a tiny proportion of street children and the few replications tried on a large scale were not successful (Klees et al, 2000). However, interventions have not yet been subjected to systematic review and there is little academic research available that has analyzed or compared interventions or models of care in any detail. Indeed some researchers now suggest exploring a 'best process as best practice' approach which *'starts from a premise that – in most cases – no practice is universally best'* and foregrounds local learning about the unique, the specific, and the non-generalizable (correspondence between Payne and Bell and the CSC, 2010). Payne and Bell point to lessons learned about interventions to foster community security by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), as being potentially helpful for designing interventions for street children: *'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 and Rudnick, 2008: 31).

Existing research on interventions with street children – whether good practice or good process – is fragmented: for example in his 2005 published article, Dybicz noted that *'An extensive search of the literature yielded a total of 26 research articles*

on street children in developing countries' (2005: 764). Dybicz's study of current best practice interventions did not consider a number of articles which had been published by 2003 and can be seen to fit Dybicz's criteria for analysis (including Ennew, 2003; Magazine, 2003; Veale et al, 2003; West, 2003; Young, 2003; Jones, 1997; and Gigengack and van Gelder, 2000). It seems likely that Dybicz was unaware of these and other academic papers because they were spread across several disciplines, and therefore published in different journals – some more difficult to access than others, even using academic search engines. And just six or seven years ago, trawling through the academic literature was a more time-consuming and logistically complex task: one which free search engines such as Google Scholar and Informaworld, with their alert features, have made a good deal easier.

A recent survey conducted in parallel to this review asked 24 NGOs and INGOs directly managing or supporting interventions for street children how they used research to inform their work (GCPS, 2011). The findings were that 86% of the organisations participating in the study used research in their work: 66% used their own studies; 74% used research by other NGOs; but only 50% used research from either government or academic sources (GCPS, 2011: 31). The report notes that *'The predominant source of research used by organisations is the Internet'*, and concludes that *'The limited use of journals means that organisations working with street children probably make very little use of the wealth of academic research that exists on street involved children to inform programme design'* (p 31) and *'It seems that most practitioners use development research to some degree to inform their work, but academic research is used to a very limited extent.'* (p 52). If take-up of academic literature for planning interventions for street children in the field in general is as low as this survey suggests, there would seem to be considerable scope for improving the take up of academic findings for interventions and for improving the usefulness of academic research to planning and evaluating interventions.

Meantime, research into street children's experiences of interventions and their impacts on street children's futures has developed and diversified in recent years, including through the studies explored here. Raffaelli and Koller (2005) in Brazil examined future expectations of adolescents surviving on the streets of Porto Alegre who were participating in day centres and drop-in shelter interventions for street children. They found that *'life on the street shapes and constrains how youth see their futures'*. When asked about their hopes for the future, participants expressed vague hopes regarding personal success and attainment of material possessions *'responses that were quite different from those reported in research with general populations of adolescents conducted in different countries [...]. When youth were asked to predict what they would be doing at age 18, few generated predictions that matched their hopes, suggesting a mismatch between hopes and expectations. Mismatches between hopes and expectations are thought to be linked to developmental challenges'* (e.g. Yowell, 2002). The study suggests that street youth are highly aware of their lack of educational and vocational opportunities and

have indifferent, ambivalent or negative visions of the future given their present conditions. Nalkur (2009) in Tanzania compared the lifestyle priorities of current street children with those of non-street children and former street children in (re) integration programmes, finding that after one year's participation in residential interventions, former street children's priorities (education, family etc) were more similar to school-going children's than they were to current street children's, suggesting that quality rehabilitative care may be instrumental in enabling children to prioritize preparing positively for the future. Nalkur's additional finding that *'obtaining good advice from adults was one of the most important events for street children and confirms Schimmel's (2008) contention that supportive adult relationships should be considered a basic need for street children, along with shelter, clothes and food.'* (Nalkur, 2009: 330).

Other intervention evaluation and impact studies of interest include one by Harris et al (2010) who assessed impacts of 2 model interventions in Brazil and Peru in terms of street children's *'successful reinsertion into the community'*. Harris and her colleagues determined common characteristics of street children in the programs and predictors of community reinsertion success. Their results suggest that the programs were successful: 56% of the Brazilian intervention's residents and 48% of those in the Peruvian intervention were *'successfully reinserted into the community at the time they left the program. For both programs, the majority of former residents that were successfully reinserted into the community returned to the homes of their families. Source of referral to the street children program, length of stay in the program, and prior formal education were important predictors of successful reinsertion.'*

Also in Brazil, Rodrigues (2010) used ethnographic case studies to explore *'how the pedagogical approaches and non-formal education (NFE) programs provided by two NGOs foster the potential educational sites for today's street youths in Sao Paulo, Brazil, to become empowered socially, culturally, economically and politically'*. McAlpine et al (2009) used repeat surveys to assess the impacts of outreach work in two urban areas of northern Tanzania and to enhance interventions of the NGO Mkombozi. The data collected is reported to have *'proven quite helpful to the Mkombozi NGO in assessing the effectiveness of their outreach efforts in limiting the number of children migrating to the street, focusing them on what could help families and communities identify vulnerable children before they migrate to the street, and thus doing more to prevent children from migrating to the street in the first place. In this respect, the knowledge gained has already proven to be extremely helpful in initiating services that better engage communities to support local families and the children that are vulnerable.'* (McAlpine et al, 2009: 6).

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Henry et al (2010) identified the following three promising *'models of practice'* in work with street youth, from their evaluation of street work training by the NGO StreetInvest: Street Mapping and Head Counting to understand community context and measure work scope;

Listening Points or pre-designated areas where young people can gather and gain support; and Peer Support constituting a process of young people mentoring other young people (Henry et al, 2010: 6). In China, Lam and Cheng (2008) explored the effectiveness of the government-run Protection and Education Centre for Street Children Programme, using children's perceptions and experiences based on a 7-month ethnographic study of street children in public streets and at the Shanghai Centre. Lam and Cheng's study found that most of the street children disliked the high security of the centre and many had rejected going home – which ran counter to the Centre's ultimate goal of restoring them to their families. So children tended to keep away from the centre even though it could provide them with lodging and food. The study recommends that consideration be given to *'street children's family situations and the children's own thoughts and preferences.'* (2008: 575).

Other researchers have sought children's voices and their experiences to explore the effectiveness of social work and of access for street children to health, education and shelter services (e.g. Salo, 2009, Mozambique; Huang and Huang, 2008, Bolivia; Tjahjorini et al, 2005, Indonesia; and Southon and Pralhad, 2003, Nepal). There are, then, a number of research studies and methods in development for assessing the effectiveness and impacts on street children of interventions and varying models of care, most requiring close collaboration between academic researchers and development practitioners.

There are also analytical critiques of the effects of ideological approaches on shaping interventions for street children. Nieuwenhuys, 2001 (Ethiopia) found that use by NGOs of a human rights-based approach to services for street children had, by focusing on children's empowerment, inadvertently enticed children into *'accepting self-exploitation as the price to be paid for what they expect to be the key to a 'decent' childhood'* (2001: 539). Thomas de Benítez, 2008 (Mexico) explored differences in street children's experiences of interventions in Puebla, shaped by distinctive views of their clients as *'vulnerable'*, as exhibiting *'antisocial behaviour'* or as *'street children'*, finding implications for children's access to rights and approach towards family: *'children considered as 'antisocial' were unable to secure access to formal education, while those categorized as 'street children' could be confident of securing such access. Access to therapy in general and drug rehabilitation therapy in particular was also dependent on children's classification: 'antisocial behaviour' guaranteed access to one of several therapeutic options available (including, bizarrely, the use of drug rehabilitation therapy for children who had not used drugs), but 'vulnerability' did not secure access to therapy.'* (2008: 266). Ferguson (2004), one of few researchers to have undertaken comparative studies about street children, draws attention to radically different philosophical approaches informing social work interventions by affiliated NGOs sharing the same mission: Covenant House in the USA which Ferguson finds to draw on a micro-perspective such as the cognitive behavioural model targeting the individual and their immediate relationships; while its

counterpart Casa Alianza in Latin America takes a macro-perspective, drawing on social justice and empowerment models.

Exploring the structural level, Magazine (2003) uses another lens to explore the conflicting political contexts in which NGOs operate in Mexico, by looking at a well-respected NGO for street children called Ednica. Magazine finds Ednica *'innovatively combining aspects of neoliberalism with elements of state corporatism. In its effort to improve the lives of street children and impoverished families, the organization borrows from neoliberalism its distrust of government and other potentially paternalistic institutions. Meanwhile, it rejects neoliberalism's reliance on the market and attempts to empower families and communities to act as intermediaries between individuals and the ravages of global capitalism.'* (Magazine, 2003: 243). These are among the academic studies which take a step back from interventions for street children to examine the influences that shape them, gaining a distance that can be helpful for practitioners to reflect on their daily development work.

The development literature has, taking a different approach, contributed a wide range of training manuals and 'toolkits' developed using action-based research and designed for use in interventions with street children. Publications have included: *Life Skills: An active learning handbook for working with street children* (Hanbury, 2002); *Police Training on Child Rights & Child Protection: Lessons Learned and Manual* (Wernham, 2005); *Street Children, Drugs and HIV and AIDS: The response of preventive education* (UNESCO, 2003); *Working with street children: monitoring and evaluation of a street children project: A training package on substance abuse, sexual and reproductive health, including HIV and AIDS and STD* (WHO, 2002); and an *International Guide on Methodology of Street Work* (INSSW, 2008). The use of cinema (e.g. Gugler, 2007, Morocco) and socio-documentaries (e.g. Mustafa, 2010, Nepal) for advocacy around street children are also emerging themes in academic research. Such studies draw in some way or another on academic framing and research methods.

Other research has explored the nature of intervention strategies for street children. A theme of recurring interest is how interventions address links between street children and families. Recent academic findings and the development literature agree that investment in and support for families is important both for helping prevent children from leaving home and as a reintegration pathway for street children preferable to institutional care (see e.g. Rizzini et al, 2010; Roberts, 2010; Csáky for Save the Children, 2009; Schwinger, 2007; CWS and UNESCO, 2005; and Save the Children, 2003). Some also draw attention to the role of traditional community mechanisms in support of family reintegration, including extended families and chiefs (e.g. Nieminen, 2010; and De Coninck and Drani, 2009 from the poverty literature). There are, however, cautionary notes in the academic literature about: negative effects of forceful or poorly-planned reintegration into original families (e.g. Cheng, 2009, China; Thoburn, 2009, UK; West, 2008, Asia); practical

difficulties involved in finding original families (De Moura, 2005); recognizing the importance of close, supportive and loving relationships with adult caregivers (Smeaton, 2009; Huang and Huang, 2008; Schimmel, 2008); the importance of involving fathers (Schwinger, 2007); and the skilled therapeutic investments required over time to help families retain or reintegrate children (e.g. Roberts, 2010).

Additional areas of interest for research are connected to the themes of children's mobility, on-street experiences and ageing into youth covered in Part 2. In response to street children's mobility, street outreach services have been developed using 'social patrol' networks of mobile outreach workers in Eastern Europe (UNICEF, 2010:34), and working with children's mobility is a key tenet of the International Network of Social Street Workers' (INNSW) methodology (INNSW, 2008). Reale (2008) and others advocate development of international, national and local support structures for children on the move with the idea of including mobile street children. Attention has been drawn to proposals for measures to allow working/migrant children to access safe accommodation and drop-in centres (Reale, 2008) school, non-formal education and/or training (Anarfi et al, 2003). Van Blerk (2005) on the basis of her research suggests that organisations seeking to support street children should consider both daily and long-term mobility within their interventions, which could involve both mobile outreach strategies and networking with organisations working in other parts of a city or in other towns as a means for providing support. Some studies about interventions and children's on-street experiences draw attention to the need for flexible and personalized support services that take full account of differences in experience by such variables as gender and age, to address experiences accumulated through what this paper is calling 'street-connectedness', (see e.g. Lefeh, 2008; Van Blerk, 2005). Within this approach, some researchers have emphasized the importance of specialized interventions to address trauma and violence (see e.g. Roberts, 2010; Smeaton, 2009; Huang and Huang, 2008; Schimmel, 2008; Thomas de Benítez, 2007) and drug use and addictions (see e.g. Balachova et al, 2009; Kissin et al, 2007; Bond, 2004; Comprosky, 2002).

At the same time, researchers have found that interventions may be well placed to contribute to changing social conditions which provoke street-connectedness, through active collaboration between stakeholders to include NGOs, academics and local policy-makers (see e.g. Rizzini et al, 2010; Railway Children, 2009; Lefeh, 2008; Sauv e 2003), including interventions between NGOs and schools to change exclusionary teaching into inclusive learning environments (see e.g. JUCONI Ecuador, 2010; Gurung, 2004). Other research has examined interventions for older street children, or street youth, who have traditionally 'aged out' of interventions for children (see e.g. Cross and Seager, 2010, South Africa; Toro et al, 2007, USA). Ahammed (2009) has explored the experience of Bangladeshi NGO Padakhep in providing street youth with access to financial (including credit and savings) and

non-financial support services, finding that flexible terms and conditions were essential components for effective interventions with older children (Ahmed, 2009; also Serrokh, 2006). Railway Children (2008) conducted a study across India on the status of livelihood training programmes, including descriptions of intervention models for that purpose, finding that for livelihood programmes to be useful for street youth they need to: be tailored to need; build on children's strengths; offer respect and affection; provide specific and broader skills training; and understand entrepreneurship as a process. Methods advocated for conducting effective outreach with street youth in recent literature (and linking neatly into the mobility research) are those which respect and respond to young people's agency (see e.g. Henry, 2010 DRC; Marrengula, 2010, Mozambique; and INSSW, 2008).

There is, then, potential for a 'body' of academic and development research to coalesce around ideas of interventions for young people on the street. On the one hand, as personalized, accepting, flexible and participatory (related to the new social studies of childhood paradigm), and, on the other, as specialized, professional and collaborative (related to a growing interest in system theories and systemic approaches). There has, however, been less analysis of the relationship between these paradigms. Similarly, research is scarce on the organizational arrangements that house and shape interventions for street children, despite the evident impacts of political and cultural influences on the nature of interventions for street children (see e.g. Ferguson, 2004; Magazine, 2003). Some researchers have drawn attention to the importance of management systems and human resource capacity as vital mechanisms for translating policies into viable implementation for street children (see e.g. particularly ChildHope, 2004; Gurung, 2004; and Thomas de Benítez, 2001), but no studies in the data collection for this review were found which had been carried out from Organizational Development or Human Resource perspectives on interventions for street children.

Relevant research studies are, however, beginning to emerge on national child protection systems which have been introduced in a number of countries aimed at articulating policies and coordinating interventions for children (see e.g. Balachova et al, 2009, Russia; and West, 2006, Mongolia and 2008, Asia). International organizations such as UNICEF and Save the Children are reportedly focusing on supporting the development of comprehensive and holistic child protection systems (see Wulczyn et al, 2009), including for example in Bangladesh, where the Protection of Children At Risk (PCAR) project is being implemented by government in collaboration with local NGOs and UNICEF (GCPS, 2011). Research focused on street children in Russia recognizes that for street children, a child protection system '*works efficiently only if adequate laws and policies are in place, services for child victims and offending and non-offending parents are available and public awareness and community support are adequate.*' (Balachova et al, 2009: 38) and finds that these conditions are yet to be met in Russia. West (2006), who has written a number of publications on street children, addresses national child protection

systems using a wider lens, reminding of the importance of looking at the ‘whole picture’ of child protection in order to tackle, through comprehensive responses, the broader issues and concerns that affect not only street children but also other groups of marginalized young people. West’s recommendations from Mongolia are for an integrated child protection system that includes: a legal framework to protect and prevent children from all forms of abuse; a lead, proactive child protection agency with statutory powers for coordination of multi-sectoral policy and multi-agency work; a linked and coordinated service directed and statutorily empowered to act on and for violations of child protection rights; a service competent and empowered to monitor, inspect and take appropriate action on quality of practice in child protection (West, 2006: 39).

Research on interventions for street children, then, offers a range of findings with relevance for: evaluating and assessing impacts of interventions; relationships between ideological approaches and the nature of interventions; relationships between interventions and wider child development and protection systems. At the same time, empirical academic research has lagged behind development advocacy for wider interventions and broader child protection systems aimed at including street children. Key gaps in the research on interventions include: undertaking systematic reviews and comparative research to assess interventions and models of care for street children, including how to engage families and communities for effective prevention and social inclusion of street children; conducting research into the contribution of interventions to changing wider social practices; conducting research into both local learning processes and ‘good practice’ for street children, to help improve intervention design; exploring the application of academic research in interventions and the framing of research to respond to practitioner requests, as well as conducting joint academic and development research to produce training manuals and tool kits; conducting research into interventions as experienced by street children with respect to: characteristics such as gender, age, sexual orientation, disabilities, ethnicity, mental wellness; and experiences such as violence and drug addiction; conducting longitudinal research to track street children/youth over time, to improve understanding of causes and effective responses to their situations; generating studies of the organizational structures and cultures which deliver interventions and models of care to street children, to improve understanding about how design, monitoring and evaluation processes, funding, advocacy and human resource development relate to intervention quality, effectiveness and sustainability; conducting research into street children’s experiences of national child protection systems and interventions aimed at wider sectors of marginalized children such as ‘children on the move’ or ‘children in institutions’ and which are intended to include street children; and exploring the interface between sociological theories of childhood and systems approaches for interventions with street children.

Policies and Interventions for Street Children – Gaps in the Research

- **Development of a coordinated body of academic and development research literature** on policies, child protection systems, interventions, models of care and organizations relevant to street children, including young people's experiences and views.
- **Exploration of the research-policy nexus and the research-intervention design nexus**, critical to understanding how knowledge is generated, brokered and used for policy-making and to design interventions for street children.
- **Evaluations and systematic reviews of impacts of policies and interventions** experienced by street children (and sub-groupings), street youth and their families. Includes *selective* policies, systems and interventions designed to reach larger groups of young people (e.g. children on the move) as well as *targeted* interventions for street children.
- **Analysis of investment in families, communities and organizations** as duty-bearers in relation to the benefits to (street) children.

Part 4

Street Children's Rights, Laws, Budgets and Funding

4.1 Laws and Enforcement

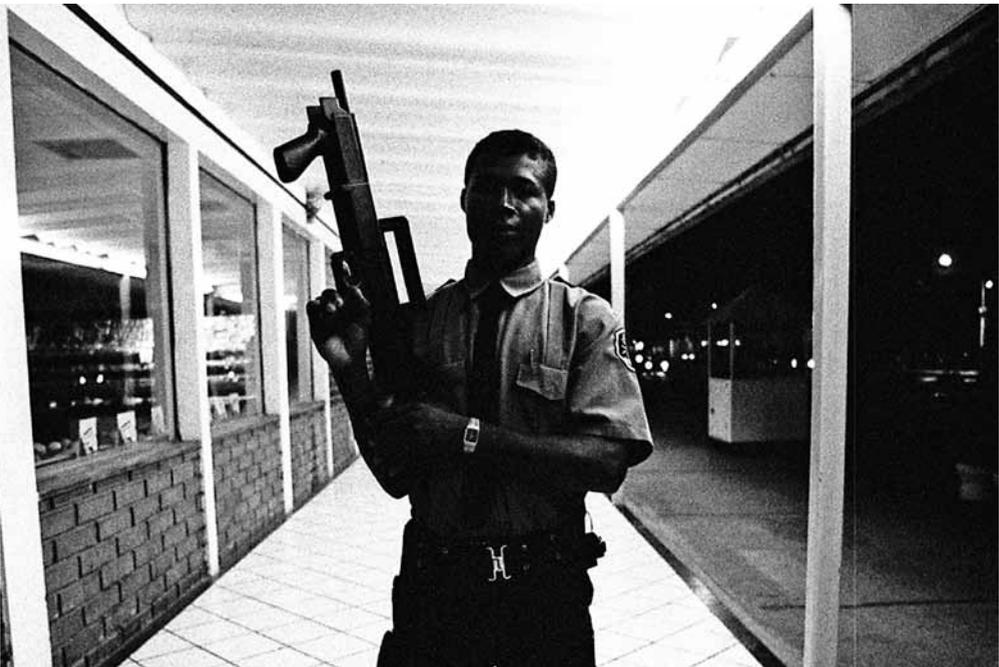


Photo: Marcus Lyon

Summary: Researchers have critiqued the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other international instruments for failing to protect street children's rights. Advances in national law-making to recognize children's rights have been reported but implementation and enforcement of national legislation to protect street children has been found in recent research to suffer from systemic weaknesses. Law enforcement has been identified as partial, as public security and economic development are given precedence in policy-making

and resource allocation over street children's rights. Street children are also routinely criminalized, their rights abused systematically and opportunistically by authorities in many countries. However, surprisingly little use of the courts on behalf of street children has been reported in the legal research.

In the decade up to 2000, considerable research in the legal sphere was dedicated to interpretation and use of the new UN Convention on the Rights of the Child alongside other regional and international treaties to protect and defend street children when national laws failed them (see for example Byrne, 1998). In 2000, however, Judith Ennew wrote a chapter in *Revisiting Children's Rights: 10 Years of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* (Fottrell, 2000) entitled 'Why the Convention is not about street children', noting that as the CRC makes no explicit reference to street children, it is for governments and service providers to be held to account – to provide, protect and most importantly enable street children to participate. Since then, legal researchers have critiqued the CRC for the lack of protection it affords street children, using a range of arguments. These include: its evolution from a 'best interests standard' to a 'rights framework' has resulted in a CRC which '*fosters neither the legal rights of children nor what is best for any child*' (Kohm, 2009); street children do not belong to a vulnerable group whose special situation is recognized in international law and therefore their special needs are not addressed (Pare, 2003); and there is no enforcement mechanism to guarantee the principle of children enjoying their rights without discrimination or distinction (see e.g. Bessler, 2008, exploring street children's rights and HIV and AIDS; and Comprosky, 2002, focusing on street children's access to drugs and to drug rehabilitation programmes).

In spite of these and other critiques of the CRC, there is recognition of the CRC as the most powerful international voice of concern for children, and one which compels signatory states to regularly evaluate implementation and enforcement of laws and policies towards children including street children (see e.g. Veeran, 2004). The CRC is also acknowledged to have added momentum to the paradigm change from street children as social problem to children whose rights have been violated (Ennew and Swart-Kruger, 2003), giving legal support to new and seemingly radical proposals such as protecting street children's socio-economic rights (Bessler, 2008); children having the right to work in order to take control over their own livelihoods (e.g. Sauv e, 2003); and children having the right to choose to live on the street (Pare 2003; Shanahan, 2003). Some legal researchers have argued for inclusion of street children within groups of vulnerable children such as 'social orphans' (see e.g. Dillon, 2008, who argues for a Social Orphan Protocol to the CRC) in order to address their special needs (Pare, 2003). This view has been supported by academics working on street children and AIDS in Africa, such as Evans (2002) whose concern is to include children whose parents are unable to provide for them, as well as orphaned children, in order for them to gain access to assistance (2002: 126). Others, however caution that legal labels such as 'social orphans' can be counterproductive when translated into policies and programmes for street

children. For example Schwinger, writing about street children in Brazil notes that *'the concept of 'abandoned social orphans' serves to justify a long-term, all-embracing, institutionalised type of care – care that excludes parents or families – which hardly stands up to closer inspection'* (Schwinger, 2007: 801).

An update on international and regional legal frameworks relevant to street-connected children is available (see GCPS, 2011), which includes international standards on alternative care and juvenile justice as well as instruments concerned with child labour and trafficking. The paper concludes that: *'Given the paucity of specific references to street involved children in the international human rights instruments, it is recommended that the Committee on the CRC develops a General Comment on "Non-discrimination and Street Children" in order to provide more detailed guidance to States Parties. It is proposed that the General Comment contain guidance on prevention and how the economic, social and cultural rights of children should be respected, protected and fulfilled. It should also include guidance on how the autonomy of children to react to their circumstances can be reconciled with their right to protection.'* (GCPS, 2011: 29).

Recent research shows that while countries vary widely in the degree to which their domestic legislation is in harmony with the CRC (GCPS, 2011: 29), advances have been made both in bringing new national legislation into effect which recognizes children's rights and brings domestic legislation into line with the CRC, and also in developing national legal frameworks for child protection (HRW, 2010b). The Russian authorities for example have signed more than 140 relevant laws and acts since the beginning of the 1990s *'designed to bring Russian legislation concerning prevention of street children and juvenile delinquency into line with the European Convention on human rights'*, and providing the basis for a legal framework for child protection (Balachova et al, 2009: 32). The Bangladeshi government has prepared a draft national child policy to consider the ratification of international and regional treaties to which it is not yet a party and to harmonise national legislation with the CRC and other international standards for children (GCPS, 2011: 29). Researchers however caution that new national laws are still needed to protect street children, for example McAlpine et al (2009) draw attention to the lack of child protection laws in Tanzania; Wexler (2008) and Drane (2010) argue for street children entering the USA to be considered as a special interest group to afford them protection and asylum from particularized persecution; and Marrengula (2010) notes that laws are insufficiently clear about the meaning of 'child' in relation to local cultural patterns, leading to a range of interpretations about street children and their position with respect to juvenile justice, social development and welfare laws across Mozambique.

Implementation and enforcement of national legislation with the potential to protect street children and to prevent children from becoming street-involved are recognized in recent research to be systemically weak in many countries. At the

extreme, extra judicial executions of street children in Honduras (McHale, 2006) have highlighted the effects of inadequate resourcing and supervision of the legal investigative system for protecting children's fundamental right to life. More mundanely, street children do not have legally secured access to social security, health, educational or welfare systems which are non-comprehensive and limited in scope, or whose laws do not attribute the financial resources and regulatory mechanisms to make them operational (see e.g. Balachova et al, 2009; Bessler, 2008; Thomas de Benítez, 2008). At the more traditional end of law enforcement, there is considerable evidence from the development literature that street children are routinely criminalized, even systematically and opportunistically abused, in countries which have ratified the UN CRC. Violations by law enforcement agencies across the world include reports of street children being: arrested and held as 'vagrants' in Rwanda (HRW, 2006) or as children 'vulnerable to delinquency' in Egypt (HRW, 2003); rounded up, detained and harshly treated in 'Social Protection Centres' in Vietnam (HRW, 2006); subjected to police and military abuse and to political manipulation in DRC (HRW, 2006); and harassed more than any other marginalized group by police in Ukraine (Busza et al, 2010). Street children have been reported as risking state violence much more frequently than other children – from Bulgaria to Guatemala and India to Kenya (Wernham, 2004; HRW, 2001). Academic research meanwhile has drawn attention to the partial nature of law enforcement, for example when laws to protect public security and stimulate economic development are given precedence in policy-making and resource allocation over laws to protect children's rights (e.g. Van Blerk, 2011; Bessler, 2008; and Samara, 2005, all in South Africa). Samara (2005) notes from her research in Cape Town that *'trends in the city reflect broader emergent patterns globally, both in the practice of security and in its often complicated relationship with socio-economic development.'* (2005: 212) and concludes that *'street children are experiencing much of the law enforcement side of social crime prevention and not enough of the social or developmental side.'* Such concerns are echoed by Terrio (2008) who argues in a rich country context that scarce resources and political priorities have biased the judicial process in France, leading to a re-categorization of young migrants from 'unaccompanied children' to 'criminal vagrants' (p 876), leading them to experience disproportionate prosecution and relatively severe punishments.

There has been relatively little use on behalf of street children of the regional mechanisms established in Africa, Latin America and Europe to protect human rights. The most famous case brought 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 (GCPS, 2011: 28), and awarded damages totalling US\$508,865.91 against Guatemala in favour of surviving relatives of the murdered street children (Ewelukwa, 2006). Ewelukwa notes that *'The Villagrán Morales case was significant for two reasons. It was*

the first case involving street children ever to come before an international adjudicatory body. It was also the first case in the history of the Inter-American Court in which the victims of human rights violations were children' (2006: 87). Somewhat surprisingly, since 2000 no cases brought on behalf of street children/youth were found in the academic literature search for this review. Nevertheless, legal researchers have encouraged child rights advocates to file cases on behalf of street children. In South Africa, Bessler (2008) has argued that the country's Constitutional Court is competent and authorized by law to define and insist on compliance with street children's socio-economic rights. In the USA, Cutts (2007) has sought legal action to define child sex tourism conducted by a US citizen overseas as an 'act of slavery', praising the work of Cambodian NGOs in bringing legal cases on behalf of street children against foreign child abusers. At international level, Comprosky (2002) has argued for recognition of the legal responsibility of corporations to protect street children's rights by requiring them to stop production of glues in addictive form and to finance drug rehabilitation facilities for addicted street children; more widely, McHale (2006) has proposed that the international community should use the creation of the UN Human Rights Council to insist that governments introduce appropriate systems specifically to protect street children.

Gaps in the academic research at present include: a lack of systematic reviews on the application of international instruments and national judicial processes to protect and defend street children's rights; exploration of law-implementation-enforcement processes as they affect and are experienced by street children; and analysis of cultural and political relationships between law and policies experienced by street children.

4.2 Economics, Budgets and Funding



Photo: Leo Borg

Summary: Economic researchers propose ‘pro-poor growth’ and ‘pro-poor social investment’ policies plus measures to reduce inequality within and between countries for significant child poverty reduction. As a targeted mechanism, Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) Programmes might be adapted to reach street children effectively. Researchers on street children consistently recommend increasing very limited social welfare and development budgets in order to be able to restore street children’s rights. Preliminary evidence suggests that investment in some targeted programmes for street children can produce net public savings. Innovative strategies include: child and youth participation in municipal governance and budget management; and NGO use of microfinance and income generation with street youth; although little evidence of impacts for street children from either types of initiative has yet emerged.

‘Economic policies matter for child wellbeing. Though, on the surface, economic policies seem far removed from children’s everyday lives, they are the root cause of much of the poverty that children face’ (Marcus, 2004: 1). Nevertheless, academic economic research has rarely focused on children and less still on children in poverty (Schmidt, 2003). No academic economic studies were found for this review which directly targeted street children, although some included street children as part of larger populations. A lack of focus on street children is not surprising given the lack

of consensus on definition and the difficulties posed in collecting economic data about a group of children whose position is ambiguous and often unknown with respect to 'the household' – the base unit of much economic research. There is also concern that a specific focus on street children at economic policy level can detract attention from deep-rooted, systemic problems affecting much larger numbers of children (see e.g. Marcus and Marshall, 2004: 68 on children in poverty). This section explores the findings of economic research relevant to street children from the perspectives of poverty and inequality, before turning to the issues of public budgets and other funding for street children.

Economic researchers who have explored the social effects of economic policies on children in poverty have found that early investments in children produced a very high rate of return in terms of economic income possibilities in adult life, and are cost-effective (see CEPAL, 1995; Heckman, 1996; Karoly et al, 1998; Harper et al, 2003). Economic research has also found that to reduce childhood poverty significantly a combination is required of: general development policy to promote the livelihoods and wellbeing of the poorest groups; and specific services and support programmes to promote the social development and wellbeing of children and young people (see e.g. Harper and Marcus, 2000; Mehrotra and Jolly, 1998).

On the first of these – general development policy, Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) and later Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) have played a central role in development assistance and planning in many countries and donor agencies, and as such are of potentially '*enormous significance for children living in poverty*' (Marcus et al, 2002: 1). And yet most PRSPs have given absolute priority to economic growth for poverty reduction while, surprisingly, '*given the growing consensus on the importance of reducing inequality for effective poverty reduction, there is very little discussion of how to bring about 'pro-poor' or equitably distributed growth*' (Marcus et al, 2002: 2). Street children have been specifically mentioned as a priority vulnerable group in PRSPs for Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia, but the main approaches taken are essentially charitable or social work based and largely at the expense of, rather than complementary to, a strategic poverty reduction strategy for children (Marcus and Marshall, 2004: 2). Fukuda-Parr's recent (2010) analysis of relationships between PRSPs, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and donor funding policies, confirmed Marcus et al's 2002 findings and concluded that few current PRSPs, contain a consistent strategy for 'pro-poor growth' or for pro-poor social investments that will reduce child poverty effectively. He found that PRSPs are aligned with the MDGs but not with the Millennium Declaration's call for a more inclusive globalisation where the benefits would be more widely shared, and rooted in the ethical values of global solidarity and equality. Fukuda-Parr proposes that to reflect the spirit of the Millennium Declaration, MDGs post-2015 need to include a Goal on reducing inequality within and between countries (Fukuda-Parr, 2010: 8). Recent research in richer countries exploring the effects of income inequalities confirms that income inequalities produce a range of costs in terms of

children's development, relationships, social mobility, experiences of violence and intergenerational transmission of poverty (see e.g. Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010).

On the second element of childhood poverty reduction – targeted services for children, a major strategy since the late 1990s has been the use of Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programmes, launched first in Latin America and now spreading through Asia and Africa, aimed at reducing child labour and increasing school attendance (see e.g. Cardoso et al, 2004). More than 20 countries have adopted a CCT programme and another 20 countries have expressed interest in starting one, based on a proven track record for not only reducing poverty, but also for improving various educational, health-related, nutritional, and other welfare-related outcomes (Barrientos and DeJong, 2006; Adato and Hoddinott, 2007). CCT programmes target poor households and the cash transfers are usually paid to mothers, making them accessible to children who live with their families and are in school (see Cardoso, 2004); the only known programme aimed explicitly at including street children is reported in Bangladesh, where a small CCT programme targeting the hardest-to-reach children increased primary school enrolment by 9 percentage points, noticeably only in those schools where grants were also provided to improve school quality (see Adato and Hoddinott, 2007: 1).

Turning to national budgets for children in poverty, researchers on childhood poverty demonstrate, within an international developmental context of low economic prioritization of children's needs, that national public expenditure is not distributed equitably enough to reach children in poverty (see e.g. Marcus and Marshall, 2004; Minujin et al, 2002). Many researchers from other disciplines have noted from their analysis of street children's experiences that social welfare and social development resources, from national to local levels, are severely limited in both relative and absolute terms, including in countries with significant CCT programmes – see e.g. De Moura (2005) in Brazil; Schmidt (2003) in Ethiopia; Balachova et al (2009) in Russia; Ferguson (2002) in Brazil and Mexico; Lefeh (2008) in South Africa; Thomas de Benítez (2008) in Mexico; Neiminen (2010) in Ghana; Cross and Seager (2010) in South Africa. Indeed, much of this decade's research on street children has included proposals that welfare and development budgets need to be increased for wider prevention and for targeted interventions with street children. Since, in many cities, numbers of street children are relatively small, even high individual costs per child might represent small investments by a city (see e.g. Cross and Seager, 2010 in South Africa). And preliminary evidence from the UK and North America suggests that savings in the criminal justice system are likely to be at least as high as investments in targeted programmes for street children and street youth (see e.g. Smeaton, 2009 in the UK; and Cohen and Piquero, 2007 in the USA). Analyses of costs of interventions for street children are rare and not comparable, although a study in Eritrea and Benin has suggested that the average annual economic cost per child of institutional solutions seemed to be high relative to family-based solutions (Prywes et al, 2004).

At city level, research has explored a limited number of innovative experiences of children and youth participating in local governance and municipal budgets around the world (e.g. Satterthwaite, 2002), such as those supported by UNICEF in Brazil (see e.g. Guerra (2002) on Children's Participatory Budget Councils (CPBCs) in Barra Mansa and Fuentes and Niimi (2002) on Municipal Seal awards in Ceará (adopted most recently in 2011 in El Salvador according to UNICEF's website and Youth Councils promoted in Southern Africa (see e.g. Shaw et al (2002) in Swaziland.) These schemes are acknowledged to have involved only small budgets, have not yet been evaluated in terms of impacts on children, and their institutionalization is as yet not secured (see Guerra, 2002), but increased budget transparency and mobilization of child/youth participation have been positive experiences. However, although Barra Mansa's CPBC is understood to continue a trend of child participation established by street children at national level who *'were joined by children who did not live on the streets but who wanted to help their peers escape from the situation'* (Guerra, 2002), young people elected to the CPBC must attend school, thereby excluding street-living children, and no evidence has been presented of street children benefiting from the CPBC. Other research has recognized that while city budgets for street children have been small to non-existent, NGOs have found resources from other sources and provide most services for street children (e.g. Neiminen, 2010, Ghana) through partnerships with international NGOs (see e.g. Comic Relief, 2010; Niewenhuys, 2001), with the private sector (see e.g. Pell, 2008) or by working with bilateral and/or multilateral funders (see e.g. James-Wilson, 2007; and Coen, 2006 in Tanzania, for USAID's funding for street children interventions). Using NGOs as a principal conduit for social services, however, can have unexpected political effects (see e.g. Magazine, 2003 in Mexico) particularly when the sums involved are large (e.g. Coen, 2006 in Tanzania).

A final strand of research acknowledges that economic structures and policies work against the interests of the poor and that there are limited job opportunities for marginalized youth in a formal market which has high educational demands (Rodrigues, 2010, Brazil). This research emphasizes the agency of children and youth in developing their own economic livelihood opportunities (e.g. Railway Children, 2008; Sauvé, 2003, India). Some research suggests that loans, savings and credit facilities for street children, with flexible terms and conditions, can reduce their vulnerability to risk and shocks (see Ahammed, 2009, on the Padakhep model in Bangladesh), although street children have rarely been targeted for micro-credit schemes (Hulme, 2000) and that such services can become financially sustainable (Serrokh, 2006 exploring the same model in Bangladesh). Serrokh found that street children's demand for microfinance was high and that supply was likely to be most effective through NGOs serving youth, rather than directly to microfinance institutions. Street Kids International (SKI) (2002) has described innovative experiences in income generation and microcredit (street business start-up) in Zambia, in Peru (a credit program and credit management training module given by youth workers), and Ecuador (a business training program for unemployed

youth in Quito). Ferguson (2006) cautions, however, that research on the impacts of microfinance and income-generating initiatives on street children is scarce.

There are important gaps in the academic economic research for street children. These include: exploration of the effects of macroeconomic structures and national economic policies on street children's wellbeing; exploration of the potential for application of CCT programmes to reach street children; research into social development, welfare and other government budgets, particularly the amounts and proportions allocated for street-connected children within and outside of established households; comparative research into the costs and impacts of interventions targeting and including street children; and evaluation of the impacts of income-generating activities, livelihoods training and microfinance for street children and youth.

Children's Rights, Laws, Budgets and Funding – Gaps in research

- **Systematic reviews of use of international instruments and national judicial processes** to protect and defend street children.
- **Exploration of the process of law-making, to implementation, to enforcement** as experienced by street children.
- **Exploration of relationships between macroeconomic structures** and street children's experiences of governmental protection and supports to restore their rights.
- **Analysis of government budgets:** proportions and sums allocated for street children and the use to which they are put at national and local levels.
- **Comparative research on cost-effectiveness of NGO and government interventions** in terms of impacts on street children.
- **Evaluation of impacts of income-generating activities, livelihoods training and microfinance** for street children and youth.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Advances and gaps in the research since 2001 have been identified throughout this report in the four thematic parts and their respective sections (12 in total). Here I conclude by focusing on three key strands running through the paper and make recommendations for each of these three strands.

1) Time – the life cycle

Street children have personal histories. They also have futures as youth and adults, as parents and workers, migrants, criminals, street vendors ... lives (and deaths) about which we know little. Modern research shows that children's accounts of their lives, coupled with observation of their experiences, provide richly textured life stories, which in turn are valuable for advocacy, policy-making and intervention-design.

Researchers point to the need to improve our understanding of street children's 'careers': how they age and transform into youth and young adults; how opportunities, risks, choices play out in the longer term; how gang membership, prison and drug use affect adult lives (are they as destructive as they seem?); how migration, work and relationships – as couples, friends, parents and children of ageing parents – affect adult lives (are they transformed or do they repeat patterns?); how children use their experiences of social interventions in their adult lives (what are the long term effects of substitute homes, family reintegration or livelihood training for example?). As Gigengack suggests, this requires '*researching street children with ethnographic depth and vision*' (2008: 205).

Recommendations to take account of time

Longitudinal research following children into youth and adulthood will improve our understanding of how street children see their world and their position in society, and how their perspectives are structured through power relations. Such research can illuminate changes over time in resilience and agency, how children

learn to navigate tactically to circumvent or use state and corporate strategies. It can, then, illuminate long term impacts of structural inequalities, of policies and models of care on individual lives at the margins, providing a wealth of information for advocacy, policy-design and for the ingredients of effective models of care.

Repeat research (e.g. surveys and interviews or capture-recapture and respondent-driven sampling) has also proved useful in providing snapshots over time capable of identifying changes in numbers and characteristics of street children in specific places (e.g. a town or city) as well as changes in behaviours such as mobility, work and drug-use. Such trends can be useful indicators of effects of policies and interventions on street children, as well as suggesting changes in needs to be addressed.

2) Geography – differences and similarities

Differences can seem very stark between ‘street children’ in Eastern Africa and Western Europe; or South America and Southern Asia. The reasons behind becoming connected to the streets, their experiences while on the streets, and the services they need to restore access their rights and well-being can all seem quite literally a world apart.

But striking commonalities have emerged from modern research

- Children’s connectedness to the street is related to turbulent, weak or broken connections to family and community, within a context of poverty, income inequality, social exclusion and weak child protection systems – whether events are triggered by HIV and AIDS, natural disasters or domestic violence. Street children can be understood as having already experienced multiple deprivations of their rights.
- Once on the streets, children everywhere are subjected to a more volatile environment of violence, stigmatization and discrimination – their range of coping mechanisms reflect and respond to this reality and affect their responses to interventions. Their street connections are therefore a key feature to understanding children and to designing responsive interventions and policies.
- Street children’s multiple deprivations and street-connectedness together require approaches that are responsive to the specific individual, to restore access to the multiple rights of which they have been deprived and to support them in trying to secure their future wellbeing.
- In any country, numbers of ‘street children’ are small relative to the total number of children in poverty. This means that even if targeted interventions require a relatively large investment per child over time, total costs of investment in ‘street children’ across a city, a state or a country are likely to be relatively small. Prevention is likely to require smaller investments and produce larger savings for society over time.

Recommendations to respond to geographical differences and similarities

Comparative research is needed to identify common and distinguishing features of the experiences of street-connected young people within and across regions. This can help to identify underlying structural and other factors causing children to become connected to the streets, to stay in the streets, to leave the streets etc. (following for example Ferguson, 2002 and 2004). Such research can also help to distinguish street children's specific requirements broader within political and policy agendas for children.

Comparative research can identify commonalities in and differences between conceptual approaches, policy processes, budgetary allocations, child protection systems and intervention impacts. Such research can help identify those more or less successful in integrating children into communities in sustained ways, and those processes (preventive and inclusionary) that are more cost-effective for children and society in general. It can also identify the different terms used to describe children with common experiences, to connect and delimit different areas of study and street children research e.g. children on the move, street youth, street gang members.

3) Fragmented Research

This 'mapping and gapping' exercise has highlighted the fragmented nature of research around street children within academic research and between academic and development research and has distinguished where the main gaps currently lie:

- More than 400 abstracts, articles, chapters and books were found – produced or published in English since 2001 – to include 'street children' or 'street youth' in the title, or at least to have used the term as a key word and addressed street children and/or youth substantively in the text. Articles were traced to academic journals in disciplines as diverse as nursing and medicine, anthropology and sociology; psychology and law; geography and the environment. Development literature was found through academic references, web searches and access to CSC's library catalogue – focused on human rights abuses, gangs and small arms and child migration. Linkages across sites and journals were rare. Few academic pieces found were interdisciplinary. Policy-oriented documents 'cherry picked' a few academic references, with the main emphasis on their own publications. Since 2001, with some notable exceptions, academics and development specialists have not set out to develop and generate new knowledge about 'street children' across disciplinary boundaries, but rather have moved within their own disciplines to other areas of research.

- Several hundred more documents were found for the same period which made only occasional or no reference to the terms 'street children' or 'street youth' but nevertheless addressed larger populations of children implicitly including some if not all street-connected children. For example: working children; children in difficult circumstances; children in conflict with the law; independent child migrants; sexually exploited or trafficked children; children and violence; gangs; children on the move; runaways or missing children; orphans and vulnerable children; socially excluded or marginalized children; children in poverty; children affected by HIV and AIDS ... the list goes on. The search for these terms was not systematic and the hundreds of documents found are likely to represent a very small proportion of the total literature of relevance to street-connected children published in the last decade. A preliminary search of Spanish-language literature for '*niños calle*' turned up hundreds more documents – mostly unrelated to the English research with the exception of a few of the best known articles often a decade or two old. The same seems likely to be applicable to many other languages not least French (West Africa), Arabic (Middle East), Portuguese (Brazil) and Chinese.
- Some studies of relevance to 'street children' avoid use of this term to distance themselves from what is sometimes seen as a stigmatizing or unhelpful phrase. Other studies aim to present a wider picture of children's circumstances and are wary of being seen to focus on a relatively 'small' interest group. This means that literature of relevance to street-connected children from fields including international development, economics, social policy and civil society is unlikely to be readily found by researchers interested in 'street children' – even though the subject matter includes such children under another name.
- There is growing recognition that research about street children must include a wider range of disciplines than the traditional focus on individual children, their immediate environments and relationships. Sociologists identified many years ago structural causes as responsible for the presence of children on the streets. And yet very little research is known from: economics, social policy or finance about social welfare or development budgets for street children or the cost-effectiveness of child protection systems for street children; media studies or political science exploration for example of the astonishing gaps between political discourse and street children's realities; organizational development about organization of movements and services for street children; criminology or peace studies on the implications of violence for street children.
- Knowledge-production about street children is so dispersed it appears in a mapping exercise as hundreds of poorly-populated islands scattered across a sea, in which boats (and phones) are scarce and some islands are unaware of the existence of even close neighbours. There is no central or regional forum or system through which inhabitants can distribute information and develop

knowledge collectively, although there are regional networks developing collective approaches to street youth work (see e.g. INSSW, 2008). This fragmentation is likely to have contributed to a waning appeal in recent years of 'street children' in development and policy agendas, which have not been able to call on a concerted body of research able to inform policymaking effectively.

- A recent survey by GCPS (2011) of UK-based NGOs working on issues related to street children showed that while a majority of respondents used their own studies and those of other NGOs to inform their work, only half used any research from either government or academic sources. At the same time, few respondents felt that academic researchers would benefit from accessing NGO research. Publications that respondents said they would recommend to others included very little academic literature; and the predominant source of research information used by organisations within any category was gleaned free from the internet or through NGO networks. The implication is that findings reported in academic books or subscription-only journals do not reach development practitioners and NGO literature does not reach academic researchers.

Recommendations for drawing together research on street children

- Bring together existing academic research in order to inform new research and to engage with policy-makers, designers of child protection systems and intervention developers. This process should draw on existing writings from the range of disciplines of relevance to street children, including law, finance, economics, public policy, criminology, social policy, media studies, political science, social work, urban planning etc, as well as from disciplines associated directly with 'street children'. The current mapping and gapping exercise has produced an initial database of citations, held by the Consortium for Street Children, which can be expanded and updated. The database should aim to bring together available literature in English systematically, keep it updated and make it available in a pro-active way to relevant audiences.
- Build a body of academic and development research aimed at developing knowledge strategically for advocacy, policy-making, child protection systems and interventions. Generation of new research and systematic literature reviews in areas of interest to a 'strategic vision' around street children could be stimulated by small research grants. Translation grants could be offered to outstanding abstracts in English of research papers in other languages, in order to make strategic papers available in English. Transdisciplinary research and joint research projects between academics and development practitioners should be encouraged, to develop links between academic and development practice. A space – perhaps an annual forum – should be hosted to challenge sacred cows and elevate the quality of thinking and research around street children. Such discussion spaces should aim to attract those NGOs planning to

conduct research to inform their understanding about street involved children and to address linkages between street connected children's issues and broader child rights agendas without diluting impacts on street children (suggested by GCPS, 2011). This body of research needs to be driven by a high profile vehicle – perhaps in the form of a 'Street Connections' research centre – capable of building a good reputation for generating research useful for advancing academic and development agendas. Investment would be needed for strategic development of a street children knowledge base with the involvement of law-makers, policy-makers and development practitioners, to focus on restoring street children's rights and preventing the conditions which cause both multiple deprivations and street-connectedness.

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The Consortium for Street Children is the leading international network dedicated to realising the rights of street children. We are continually expanding and currently have over 60 network members working across 130 countries. We believe that collectively our voices are louder and have more impact. We provide our network with leadership and support in the areas of Advocacy, Research, Capacity Building and Best Practice.

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A high-contrast, black and white close-up photograph of a child's face, focusing on the eyes and forehead. The child's eyes are looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The lighting is dramatic, with deep shadows and bright highlights.

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State of the World's Street Children: Research brings together a comprehensive collection of literature about street children from the last decade. It draws on over 400 pieces of research, determining where advances have been made in the knowledge about this often over-looked group and dispelling some unfounded assumptions. It also identifies where the gaps are in current knowledge to reveal areas where further exploration is needed. The book is aimed at scholars, researchers, practitioners, NGO's and anyone with an interest in street children.

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