

Full Length Research

The Situation of Street Children in Urban Centers of Ethiopia and the Role of NGO in Addressing their Socio-Economic Problems: The Case of Hawassa City.

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This paper emphasized on the overall situation of street children living in Hawassa City and assessed the role of NGOs in addressing their socio economic problems. To accomplish its objective both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used. To identify respondent's, non-random sampling technique which includes both snowball and purposive sampling was used. [Interview schedule and in-depth interview with street children is the main instrument of data collection. Key informants interview with concerned government officials and NGO staff and focus group discussions with street children were also utilized to confirm the data obtained through the in-depth interview and interview schedule.] The study has revealed that the majority of street children in the study area were males and different causal factors have contributed for their streetism but, poverty was found to be one of major factors to push children to move to the street. The study further depicted that street children in Hawassa were vulnerable to wide range of violations of their rights. They were verbally, physically and sexually abused. Their situation became worse by the negative attitude of the general public who were insensitive to their problems. So that many children are still on the street of Hawassa and looking for help.

Key Words: Hawassa, Street, Street Children

INTRODUCTION

The problem of children living on the street is a global phenomenon. It has created countless problems to millions of children in all parts of the world (UNICEF, 2007). They live a transitory life style and lack basic necessities like food, health care, and a safe place to stay. In the world, street children exist on the margins of society, living in inhumane conditions, suffering from hunger, harassment and physical abuse, deprived of basic services such as education and health care

(Vanessa, 2007).

On the street they frequently survive by begging, stealing or working in the informal sectors in low paying jobs (Zena and Aneth, 2010). Consequently they faced different challenges while striving for their survival. The most complex challenge faced by children in the streets was dealing with the perceptions of those around them and the treatment they consequently afforded (OHCHR, 2011).

The society also threatens them as outsiders rather than as children to be nurtured and protected. Thus, they are both spatially and socially oppressed, through multiple forms of social control, marginalization, and powerlessness. As a result everyday life for a street child can be like living in an enemy territory (Hutchison, 2010). Most importantly they suffer from physical, sexual and psychological abuses and become victims of child trafficking for the purpose of labor and sexual exploitation. Their vulnerability to this wide range of problems and hazards represents a major feature of their everyday life. This is also a determining factor in developing their abilities to be able to cope with street life (UNICEF, 2007).

Although the phenomenon of street children is a global one, Latin American, Asian, and African countries are specially affected by the problem more than any other part of the world. A report issued by the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT 2002), a research organization in the Netherlands, states that out of the estimated 100 million children living and working on the streets of the cities of the world, the majority are in developing countries: 40 million in Latin America, 25-30 million in Asia, and 10 million in Africa (FSCE, 2003).

Since Ethiopia is a developing country, its urban areas are challenged by the growing intensity of street children (MoLSA, 1993). But, there is no comprehensive statistical information on street children in Ethiopia. According to some estimate, street children in Ethiopia have become a countrywide epidemic, with over 100,000 of them living and/or working on the streets of Ethiopia's cities and out of them about 2,555 are found in the streets of Hawassa (FSCE, 2003).

In (2007) MoLSA in a study supported by UNICEF has also estimated the overall numbers of children on the streets of Ethiopian cities are around 150,000 and about 60,000 of them living in the capital city (UNICEF, 2012). So in order to find a solution for the problem it is crucial to identify the factors that push and pull children into the streets. It is becoming clear that there is no single cause for children to become street children, rather, it is a combination of economic, social, political and cultural factors which force children into the streets (Vanessa, 2007). Kevin Lalor (1999) stated that children come to street life due to Economic reasons/poverty, family reasons, orphaned, join friends/peer pressure, pressurized by parents. Migration is also another factor which can essentially force a child into the street (Vanessa, 2007). In the city, much has not been done to study the situation of street children. From the available limited literature on street children in the study area, few have attempted to study the situation of street children such as FSCE (2003), Solomon Sorsa, Tesfaye Kidanemariam, Lopiso Erosie (1999) on health problem of women and street children. Research output and information on such topics and the role of NGO in

addressing the problem of street children is barely available in the study area. Thus, this study fill the information gap and therefore, attempted to show the existing realities of children living in the streets of Hawassa and the role of NGOs in mitigating their socio-economic problems.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of the paper is to assess the overall situation of street children in Hawassa city. In line with this, the specific objectives of the study are intended to:

- Identify the push and pull factors that expose children to street life in the city.
- Find out the major challenges and abuse street children faced in the study area.
- Identify the type of activities that street children perform for their survival.
- Assess the role of non governmental institutions in addressing the socio economic problem of street children.

Research Questions

To attain the above stated objectives, the study attempted to answer the following research questions:

- ✓ What are the major factors that expose children to street life?
- ✓ What are the major challenges and abuse which street children encounter while living or working on the street?
- ✓ What kinds of activities street children perform for their survival?
- ✓ What are the contributions of NGOs in mitigating the socio economic problem of street children?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Street Life: Choice or Compulsion?

The Push Factors

Poverty: is one of the push factors for an increasing number of children on the streets. In some instances it is parents or guardians send the children to work on the streets to support their families. Others are forced on the streets to find food and shelter which is not forthcoming from their families (Kopoka, 2000). A UNICEF report also states that children who work on the streets often come from slums and squatter

settlements, where poverty and precarious family situations are common, where schools are overcrowded and poor, and where safe places to play simply do not exist (UNICEF, 1997).

Few researches done in Addis Ababa and some other major cities also indicate that family poverty is the major cause for children to join the street (FSCE, 2003). The appearance of street children in Addis Ababa (and to a lesser extent in the other towns of Ethiopia), is integrally tied to the phenomenon of urban poverty. Therefore reduced income forced street children to work on the streets to earn money for themselves. Some children need to work to support their families. Some children may have been denied a chance to go to school or have dropped out of school and have nothing to do. They can earn money by begging, carrying or bearing, car washing, drug trafficking, juggling, performing music, running errands, scavenging, sex work, and shoe shining or vending (WHO, 2000).

Family disintegration: The family institution is going through a lot of upheavals. Fewer and fewer children have stable and caring family environments. Many families have broken up with children left to fend for themselves. Many families are also increasingly characterized by absentee parents, lack of communication between parents and children, alcoholism and domestic violence. Many children run away to the streets to avoid violence and abuse in the family (Kopoka, 2000). Thus family disintegration is a significant push factor that force children to the street life. In most cases, street children come from broken families due to divorce, separation or imprisonment of the parents. A lack of economic and emotional support, coupled with a loss of communication between parents and children, often forces them to escape or leave home (Vanessa Asensio, 2007).

Violence at home: Many children feels that living on the streets is better than coping with problems in their homes. These problems can include conflicts with parents, physical or sexual abuse or neglects (e.g. an abandoned disabled child). Some children are forced to leave home by their families because; the family does not approved child's behavior or its consequences, e.g. pregnancy, homo sexuality or substance use (WHO, 2000).

UN report on violence against children also indicates that children who have been sexually abused, or extremely neglected, or who have experienced violence at home, may run away or drift into a street life which exposes them to the risk of sexual abuse or exploitation (UN, 2006).

The Pull Factors

In addition to the above mentioned push factors,

perceived freedom and a perceived better life on the street are some of the pull factors that exposes children to street life. Study conducted in Nepal in (2013) on street children indicates that urbanization, peer influence, hope for employment, and false information about city life etc. are some of pull factors that attract children to street life. Moreover charitable donations given by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and private individuals also act as an additional pull factor to attract children to come to and stay on the streets.

In the same vein study conducted in (2011) by Mekonnen Mangesha on policy frame work for street children in Addis Ababa revealed that the service provided to street children by different NGOs attract children to street life. This means some organizations are simply engaged in providing basic services for the children while they are living on the street. Such services make life easier for the children on the street and force them to remain on the street or more seriously it might serve as a pull factor for attracting other children to street life. Beside one can identify spatial freedom, financial independence, city glamour and street-based friendships or gangs as other pull factors. These can develop over time into strong street connections that, combined with social stigma and prejudices, make it difficult for children to find desirable options off the street (OHCHR, 2011).

Challenges and Abuse Which Street Children Encounter

Street children are the casualties of economic growth, war, poverty, loss of traditional values, domestic violence, physical and mental abuse and constitute a marginalized group in most societies. They do not have what society considers appropriate relationships with major institutions of childhood such as family, education and health. The continuous exposure to harsh environments and the nature of their lifestyle make them vulnerable to substance use and this threatens their mental, physical, social and spiritual wellbeing. In many regions, most of these children use alcohol and other psychoactive substances. In addition, these children are confronted with discrimination and view health and social services with suspicion (Ojelabi and Oyewole, 2012).

They also faced different kinds of violence on the street but, the most obvious forms of violence associated with street children – extra-judicial killing, tortures, beating by police, security forces and private security firms employed by local businesses to 'keep the streets clean' are an ongoing problem of the utmost urgency. CSC works to protect street children through advocacy with governments via an 'urgent action' procedure (Marie, 2001).

The working conditions of these children also described as dirty and dangerous. They do all sorts of manual work and do not find any profession that could ultimately lead them to skilled profession. Children on the streets suffer both physically and psychologically. Their exposure to unhealthy living and working conditions, vulnerability to physical and sexual abuse, drugs and indulgence in criminal activities are some of the physical threats. They have exposure to potentially or actually hazardous working environment, a source of cheap labour leading to exploitation, vulnerable to worst forms of child labour involving violence and sexual abuse & exploitation and they lack protection mechanisms against exploitation and abuse (Amir. and Rana, 2002).

Coping and Survival Strategies of Street Children

In this sub-topic, the researcher will be looking at some of the survival strategies that street children employ in their lives to earn an income and to deal with challenges and adversities. To cope with their day-to-day challenges, street children resort to several coping strategies to avert their adversities. These survival strategies include ways they use to make money, acquire food, and other basic needs. The lifestyle inherent to living on the streets exposes children to a range of harmful situations and hence their survival is often dependent upon engaging in risks to their health and general well-being” while on the streets, they have to battle fiercely to keep alive. Some of them survive by selling whatever they can find. Some even sell themselves, some beg, some steal and so on (Sherman et al, 2005).

Begging for Survival

Begging is one of the ways which street children used to meet their daily needs. According to (Abebe , 1999), Children engage in begging either full-time or part-time as a way of livelihood or supplementing their income from begging with that from other activities.

The main justification for many boys and girls to be involved in begging is horrible household poverty. In such contexts, begging ensures their basic needs are meeting and that it also enhances their capacity to be significant contributors in terms of family income. Thus, by begging and supporting their households, child beggars fulfill a socially meaningful and valuable role in everyday life (Tatek, 2009).

Children mostly beg for money, but they may be given help in kind, including clothing and items of stationary. People also give the children equipment like shoe shining box to work with in order to encourage them take up a small-scale job rather than beg. In difficult circumstances

and when they are hungry the children may rely on leftovers of food which they collect from hotels, restaurants and cafeterias (Tatek, 2009). When they beg children uses different approaches. One of the primary methods for begging is to be brave and persistent. Being persistent is not only the key to success but is also an indication that the children do not take ‘No’ for an answer (Girmachew, 2006). If people do not give them coin, they ask them politely over and over again. If they still do not respond, they tell them why they beg, and about their poverty: ‘Brother, please buy me bread?’; ‘Dear sister, give me some coins?’ ‘My mother, give me one birr, so that they can have money to buy lunch’ and the like ... That is the way they persuade people to give money to them, but if they find nothing, they may change the site of begging, and perhaps go to the other side of the city (Girmachew, 2006).

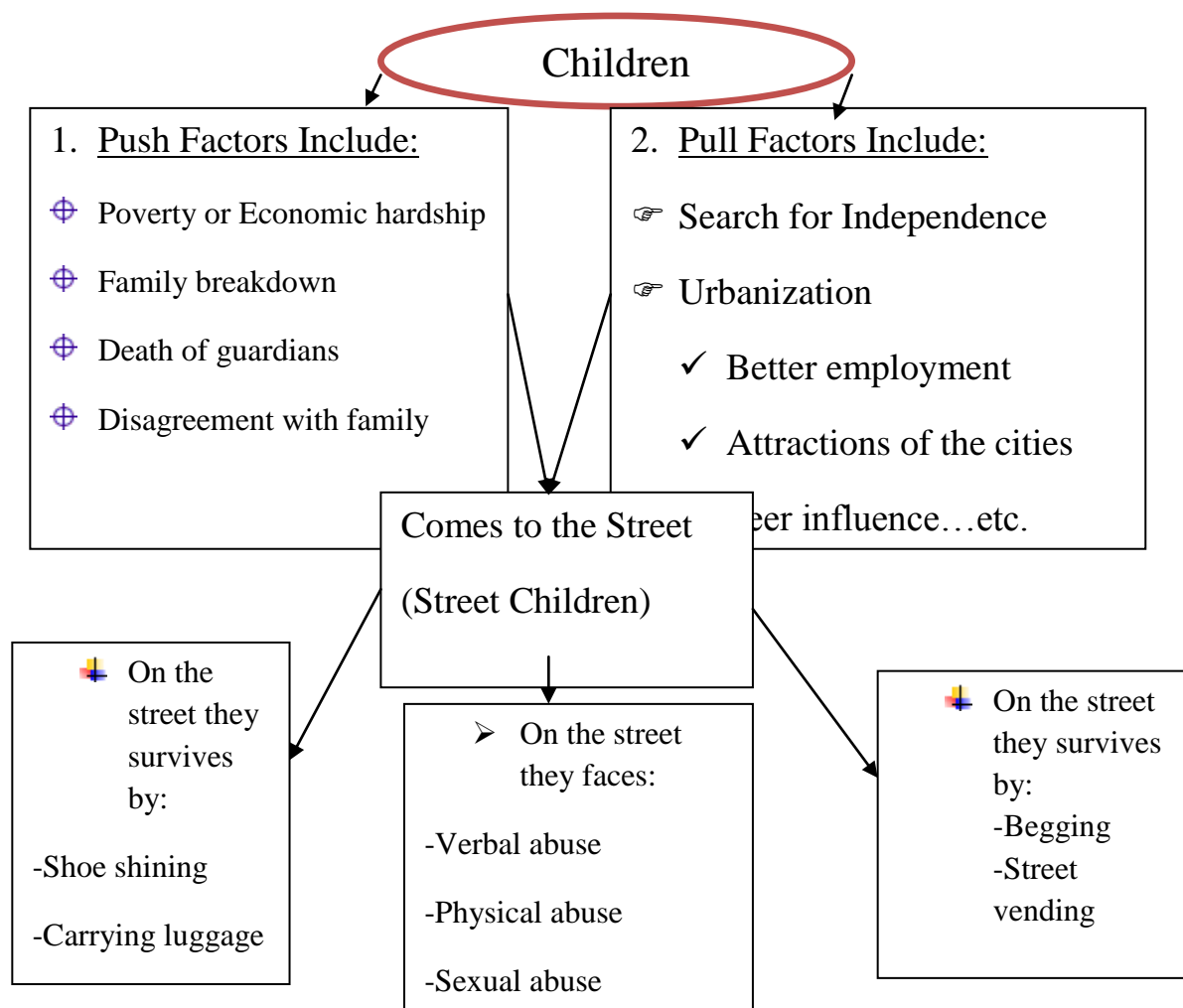
Shoe Shining

On every street corner of the city there are some children looking for someone’s shoes to shine. Thus shoe shining is the most popular job for the street children. Many boys have a fixed place and others are mobile in the city. Street children are supposed to pay taxes in order to get a fixed work space in major streets of the city. Mobile shoe shiners are move from place to place in order to get customers. They attract fewer customers because many people do not trust these boys as they most often are perceived and accused for using less quality creams in the name of good ones. Lack of fixed work space exacerbates this accusation (Girmachew, 2006).

Non-governmental Organizations and Children

Non-governmental organizations have no long history of service to the people of Ethiopia. Their involvement in the economic and social life of the country began in early 20th century. Their forceful involvement in the development efforts of the country however, starts with the drought induced famine of 1973/74. Initially their operations focused on relief that saved millions of lives. Since then they have become a permanent feature in the country’s development process.

The reoccurrence of the 1984/85 drought gave a further boost to the growth of NGO operations (CRDA, 2004). The number of NGOs continued to grow after the overthrow of the military regime (Derg) in 1991. However, their activities were principally limited to relief and rehabilitation before they became more development oriented (CRDA, 2006). As the NGOs were increasingly pulled into the development front, their role and areas of intervention changed. The growth of NGOs in Ethiopia has been robust over the last two to



Source: Girmachew A. (2006)

Fig 1: Conceptual Frame Work

three decades. The number of NGOs, especially indigenous NGOs has been rising. Their capacity to play a discernible role in the country's development agenda has been steadily growing (CRDA, 2004).

Institutional care of children in Ethiopia is introduced by missionaries and increased significantly as a response to needs of unaccompanied children at emergency feeding centers during the droughts and famines in 1984-85 (John Williamson, 2000).

Children are not always able to speak for themselves or to assess their own needs. NGOs have a responsibility to ensure that the short-term and long term interests of children are effectively addressed in any relief and development programme (Eade et al, 1995). Non-governmental organizations are playing very important role in promoting the welfare of disadvantaged children by planning, financing, managing and providing advices and counseling services for various projects set up to help poor children in general and street children in

particular (Dessale, 1998). In Ethiopia, children welfare responsibilities and overseeing the implementation of various programmes targeted at mitigating the problem of street children in especially difficult circumstances has been given to MoLSA. Since the economy of Ethiopia is not strong enough to generate resources for the needed social investment, assistance from both local and international NGOs will be essential to alleviate the various problems connected with destitute children (Hope Enterprise, 1997).

According to a report on the implementation of CRC in Ethiopia (2005), more than fourteen NGOs are involved in addressing the problem of street children throughout the country. A local NGO has been providing transit shelter to protect street girls from being exposed to sexual abuses. The programme mainly focuses on provision of temporary shelter, washing facilities, counseling, education and family reunification (Country Report, 2005). Figure 1

METHODS AND MATERIALS

In order to achieve its objectives, the research employed both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. The data incorporated both primary and secondary sources of information from different sources. The primary data were collected via interview schedule, in-depth interviews and focus group discussion. Parallel, the researcher gathered primary data through key informant interview from different concerned bodies. These were officials from Hawassa Women, Children and Youth Affairs, Social and Labour Affairs Office (eight participants, four participants from each office). Two NGOs staffs from "Center of Concern" an NGO working on street children in the city were also interviewed. The selection of sample for this study was based on non random samplings which are snowball and purposive sampling techniques because it was not easy to find an accurate number of street children from which the researcher could select a proper scientific sample by random method because of lack of current statistical data in the study area. The snowball sampling technique are used to identify street children and helped to begin with those who were familiar and volunteer to cooperate with the researcher previously to create relation, and then use them to find other respondents who they know. The main objective of using snowball sampling technique for street children was only to identify them. After identification, the informants were selected through purposive sampling based on their age. Those street children whose age is below 9 were excluded because of their immaturity to understand and express the phenomenon under investigation. To this end 170 street children out of which 31 females and 139 males- children were selected through purposive sampling technique based on their age. Twelve and four children were involved on focus group discussion and in-depth interview respectively. Self administered questionnaire or interview schedule is distributed to 170 street children. The data collected from interview schedule method was analyzed and presented descriptively through the statistical analysis which is limited to descriptive statistics, i.e. description of frequencies and percentages. Whereas the data gathered through in-depth interview, key informants interview, focus group discussions and document analysis were analyzed by making use of descriptions, interpretations and summarization of the data.

RESULTS

This section is devoted to present the data obtained from 170 street children and interviews with officials from concerned government office and one NGO working on street children in Hawassa City. It was concerned with discussion and analysis of the data obtained through

qualitative and quantitative method based on the objectives and research questions set at the beginning of the chapter. The discussion begins with background information on age structure of respondents and then focuses on the causes of streetism as well as exploitation and abuse commonly experienced by street children. Finally, it deals with survival strategies of street children and the roles of NGO in addressing the socio economic problems of street children.

Demographic Analysis

The age of respondents ranges from 9 to 17 years with a higher proportion of sample children in the age group of 12-14: 85(50%) followed by 9-11 age group 44(25.9%) and 15-17 age group were 41(24.1%). The data on the gender composition of sample children reveals that the overwhelming majorities who have participated in the study are male children living on the street (81.7%) while female constituted a small proportion of the total (18.3 %). Table 1

The result of interview with officials of Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs and Office of Women, Children and Youth Office of Hawassa City also shows that, most of the time girls do not use psychoactive substances like cigarette and chat. Thus, they do not made conflict with their family members like boys. So that they were not exposed to street life like boys and even those girls who are exposed to street life were involved in prostitution than staying on the street. As a result street girls are less visible than boys in the city.

Kevin Lalor (1999) explains the reason as to why numbers of female street children are small in comparison to male street children as follows: The true incidence of working girls may be hidden by the nature of their work, which tends to be less visible than the work of street boys. For example, females may work as maids in bars, back street hotels and private houses. Street boys, on the other hand, typically engaged in more visible activities such as car washing, shoe shining and peddling.

The findings of this study show that, there are a higher proportion of street boys than street girls in the study area.

Contributing Factors for Children's Leaving Home

Different causal factors contributed for child streetism in this study. Some studies that were carried out on street children in the country shows a multiplicity of factors that lead to the emergence and development of street life. Among them are: poverty, unemployment, family breakdown, parental death, child abuse and neglect, dropping out of school, child labor, the influence of peers,

Table 1. Children Living on the Street by Age
Street children were asked about their age and the result shows that majority of these children are male.

Age group	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
9-11	41	24.1%	3	1.8%	44	25.9%
12-14	68	40%	17	10%	85	50%
15-17	30	17.6%	11	6.5%	41	24.1%
Total	139	81.7%	31	18.3%	170	100%

Source: Own Survey 2014

Table 2: Factors that Expose Children Street Life

Main Reasons for Leaving Home	Frequency	Percentage
Family Poverty	51	30%
Disagreement with family	34	20%
Death of parents	31	18.2%
Peer pressure	31	18.2%
Family Breakdown	23	13.5%
Attracted by City Life	0	0%
Total	170	100%

Source: Own Survey 2014

migration, and many other reasons related to the social environment. The Table 2 illustrates the reason as to why children move to street life.

The result of this study from Table 2: reveals that numbers of factors have contributed to children's joining the street life. The most common factor was family poverty 51(30%), followed by disagreement with biological parents 34(20%), death of parents 31(18.2%), peer pressure 31(18.2%) and family breakdown 23(13.5%). So family poverty takes the lead for children's decision to leave home and followed by conflict with family. The story taken from the following two children illustrates this point very well.

S is a 15 years old girl from Tulla. She came to Hawassa looking for a job to support herself because, her family was poor and they couldn't fulfill her foods, clothe and school requirements. Contrary to her expectation, she didn't find a job easily and she was forced to beg on the street of Hawassa even though her dream is to take a job.

Another boy G left home and came to the street because of conflict with his biological parents. His idea was stated as follows:

G made a decision to go to the street after being severely beaten by his father. Four days later his parents came to look for him and they took him home but a week later he was beaten for waking up late and he ran away again to come to the street. His mother came to look for him but he

went to hide himself as soon as he heard that she was coming.

The above two case studies are good examples of how poverty and conflict with parents force children to join the street life. From Table 2: we observed that poverty was the leading factor that exposes children to street life. Finding of focus group discussion has also confirmed that their involvement to street life were to support the economy of their families as well as to support them.

Furthermore, according to interview with Officials from Women, Children and Youth office of Hawassa City, poverty takes the prime role for child streetism in the city. Additionally large family size and lack of parenting skills were a significant push factors that expose children to street life. More over peer influence and the growth of the city were significant pull factors.

Activities which Performed by Street Children for their Survival

Their survival or livelihood strategies involves drawing all sorts of skills, knowledge, labor resources and social networks. Street children center on income-earning activities mainly in the informal sector either as wage employees or self employment or other illegal means such as begging and carrying luggage (Girmachew, 2006).

The ongoing discussion shows that children involved in all portfolios of activities in order to diversify their source of income for their survival. To cope with their day-to-day

Table 3: Livelihood Strategies of Street Children

Livelihood Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Carrying luggages	72	42.4%
Begging	65	38.2%
Shoe shining	20	11.8%
Street vending	13	7.6%
Total	170	100%

Source: Own Survey 2014

Table 4: Children Living on the Street and Sources of their Daily Meals

Source of Daily Meal	Frequency	Percentage
Left over buy from cafes and restaurants	83	48.8%
Left over free from cafes and restaurants	39	22.9%
Buying cheap food	48	28.2%
Total	170	100%

Source: Own Survey 2014

challenges, street children resort to several coping strategies to avert their adversities and to acquire income for survival. These survival strategies include ways they use to make money, acquire food, and other basics needs.

The result of this study shows that significant size of respondents were involved in carrying luggages 72(42.4%), begging 65(38.2%), shoe shining 20(11.8%) and the remaining 13(7.6%) were involved in street vending (selling small items). Table 3

Focus group participants indicates that most of the time they are involved in carrying some ones luggage if available and if it is not available they beg money from a person who have good dressing. From focus group discussion and in-depth interview the researcher have been found that most street children were engaged in two or more economic activities in order to ensure high income as much as possible and there is no fixed time frame of working hours and time for street children. If they are lucky, they can work for longer hours in a day. At other times, they may be engaged for only an hour and there might be sometimes no work at all for them to do the whole day.

Their life style does not allow them to follow strict and structured hours of work. This is a factor that determines the number of hours they work every day. Such life style, in general, is reflected not only on the number of hours they work or engage in begging but also in the number of hours they have for entertainment, sleep, play or meal. For instance, a child who has stayed late at night may not be able to wake up in the morning to look for the work of the day. This can affect the number of hours he/she would be able to stay in the work that is available to him/her. A story obtained from a 17-year- old boy illustrates this point well.

We sometimes stay very late in the evening while we chew chat. We sit and chat without even noticing the number of hours we sat. The next day we sleep the whole morning and misses some paying opportunities such as washing cars, carrying luggages and etc.

Access to Food

Daily bread is the major problem for most of the population of the developing world. The problems get worse when viewed from the point of view of vulnerable groups like street children (FSCE, 2003). Thus, the following table illustrates sources food for street children.

An attempt has been made to examine as to how and where street children get their daily meals. According to the result indicated in Table 4: majority of respondents 83(48.8%) Buy leftover food from cafes, 48(28.2%) Buy cheap food from small cafes and the remaining 39(22.9%) Get leftovers free food from cafes and restaurants.

A further analysis of this finding shows that over a half of them 124(71.7%) of the children depends on leftovers, whether it is free of charge or bought.

FGD result also confirms that leftover food is more accessible and cost effective even when it is bought from cafes or restaurants. Participant of FGD have also felt that leftover food is far better than that of food bought from small cafes because leftover food contains ingredient like meat, vegetables, pasta, rice, etc. However, the freshness and cleanliness of leftovers worry the children involved in the FGD.

Abuse of Street Children

Living on the street, with no supervision, protection or

Table 5: Types of Abuse Street Children Face

Types of Abuse	Frequency	Percentage
Verbal and Physical Abuse	71	41.7%
Physical abuse	62	36.5%
Verbal abuse	27	15.9%
Sexual abuse	10	5.9%
Total	170	100%

Source: Own Survey 2014

guidance often makes street children vulnerable to a wide range of problems or hazards. Accordingly, street children have been asked to unveil the type of abuses they face on the street of Hawassa. Nearly forty two percent 71(41.7%) of informants experienced both verbal and physical abuse; about 62(36.5%) reported physical abuse and nearly sixteen percent 27(15.9%) states a verbal abuse. The remaining 10(5.9%) were sexually abused. Table 5

Interview result from department of Women, Children and Youth Office also indicates that verbal and physical abuses are very common among street children of the City. Moreover they point out that there is some sort of homosexuality among street children. People give money in return for sexual intercourse with male street children. Therefore, the researcher is convinced that homosexuality is practiced among them. And hence boys are also sexually abused. They also argue that some of the street children of the City had involved in crime like theft. This has been proved by incidences of police arrests. But, according to the officials from Bureau of Labor and Social Affairs in Hawassa City sometimes there is police brutality on the children without any sufficient cause. If a problem arises among them, then they are considered as trouble makers by vast majority of the society.

Most of the street children work and live alone on street without parents or legal guardians. And these children have reported that they suffer in their sleeping places much due to cold, verbal abuse and physical abuse by gang groups. FGD results also reveals that being beaten by older street boys is very common. All FGD participants have reported that they have been injured from stabbing and slashing from blades on regular basis. Such injuries are most often inflicted during fights with other street boys.

The following case deals with 13 years old boy. K is 13 years old boy from Gorche. He explains the type of abuse he suffers on the street as follows:

Life on the street was very hard. Many times I used to get beaten by police for no reason. Sometimes also older street boys beat us for no reasons and snatch our clothes and money. They also frighten us without any reason and steal what we have and generally for me life in

the street is very dangerous.

From the above explanation it was so easy to understand how much street children suffered from both physical, verbal abuse and exploitation. Data from FGD participant further reveals that the most common problems among the street children included harassment by police and hunger. The problem of harassment may consequently give rise to other psycho-social problems such as aggression, fear of society, suspicion, unruliness and theft. Such problems prevent street children from leading peaceful lives (Philista et al., 1991). The problem of hunger also has its consequences and implications. Probably to meet the need for food and to prevent hunger these children are forced to take part in deviant acts. This may explain as to why some of them end up being juvenile delinquents. Further, the problem of hunger may also be associated with many other problems like poor health condition. In general the finding of this study indicates that street children are unprotected working children who are highly vulnerable to exploitation by the work itself and by others. Their lives on the streets leave them with few opportunities to access basic needs like food, shelter, education and basic health services.

NGOs Role in Meeting the Needs of Street Children

The growing role and importance of NGOs in development are recognized and supported by the political bodies though they view and justify their importance in different perspectives. Broadly, there is consensus and pragmatic argument that NGOs are contributing to the social development and improving the condition of the life of their target groups (Girma, 2005). Non-governmental organizations are also playing a very important role in promoting the welfare of disadvantaged children by planning, financing, managing and providing advice and counseling services for various projects set up to help poor children in general and street children in particular (Dessale, 1998). Hence, the following table shows the distribution of children who have received and not received aid from the NGO.

Street children have been asked as to whether they received any support or not from some NGOs. Out of the

Table 6: Children Living on the Street Supported by the NGO

Support from NGO	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	48	28.2%
No	122	71.8%
Total	170	100%

Source: Own Survey 2014

total sampled street children, about 48(28.2%) have responded that, they were getting support from NGOs. However, not all of the children living on the street had established contact with the existing service providers NGOs for necessary support. Even majority of street children have no contact with any kinds of NGOs working on street children. Thus, nearly seventy two percents respondents 122(71.8%) have reported that they were not receiving any support from NGOs. Table 6

However, during FGD with street children, the participants have reported that they are getting some kinds of support from the NGO. The kind of support they received from the organizations varies. The most common support stated by FGD participant are cash money, education/training, advice; health service; shower & toilet services; soap and job opportunities. In line with the above idea interview results with the NGO staff (Center of Concern) also shows that their organization offers some support like, education, trainings on life skill and advice against the negative side of use of drug, health services, recreation & sport, vocational trainings and others. They also facilitate things for the children to involve on income generating activities like organizing them under small scale enterprises, street vending (selling small items) and etc. According to them in 2013 out of 660 street children about 65 children have got vocational trainings and 50 children were involved in small business or income generating activities. Above all, the rehabilitation program and creating favorable conditions for the children to reunite with their families were also among the services provided for the children. However, food support was not provided to the children believing that if children are provided food they will not leave the street, rather they will prefer to stay on the street. Furthermore, the aim of the organization is to help the children to have a better life and get relief from street life. Due to this fact food support was not provided for the children. Based on the interview result from NGO staff of "Center of Concern" in Hawassa City they have been followed curative approach to deal with destitute and vulnerable children: which focuses on face-to-face work with those children already on the streets. That means they emphasized on rehabilitating projects for street children: either by reunifying them with their families or providing training of different skills and helping them to involve in different income generating activities. That means the NGOs focuses only on the short term needs of the children than providing long term solutions

for their problem. From this the researcher conclude that even though, preventive approach is advisable to address the long term problems of the street children, the NGO only emphasizes on curative approach which focuses only on short term needs of the children.

DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study show that boys were more visible to street life than girls. The data on the gender composition of sample children reveals that the overwhelming majorities who have participated in the study are male children living on the street 139(81.7%) while female constituted a small proportion of the total 31(18.3 %). The result of interview with officials of Bureau of Labour and Social affairs and Office of Women, Children and Youth Office of Hawassa city also shows that, most of the time girls do not use psychoactive substances like cigarette and chat. Thus, they do not make conflict with their family members like boys. So that they are not exposed to street life like boys and even those girls who are exposed to street life are involved in prostitution than staying on the street. As a result street girls were less visible than boys in the city. In explaining this sex breakdown among the street children, Rizzini attributes the small proportion of girls on the street to the fact that families attempt to keep girls at home, where they help with household chores (Rizzini, 1991). Kevin Lalor (1999) also explains the reason as to why number of female street children is small in comparison to male street children as follows: The true incidence of working girls may be hidden by the nature of their work, which tends to be less visible than the work of street boys. For example, females may work as maids in bars, back street hotels and private houses. Street boys, on the other hand, typically engage in more visible activities such as car washing, shoe shining and peddling.

According to the findings of this study the basic factors pushing children onto the street life were family poverty followed by conflict with biological parents. Thus, economic and social factors appeared to be primary in pushing children onto the streets. From the finding of this study one can understand that, an examination of the factors explaining as to why one was on the street are due to circumstances beyond their control which is due to socio-economic problems. Many children live and work

on city streets and still many choose street life as the alternative to poverty or violence at home. It is a harsh choice - with constant threats of hunger, exploitation, violence, abuse and even death. Different literatures also confirm poverty as one of the major causes for child streetism. Poverty forces children to the streets to support themselves and their families. It is poverty that is limiting the family's capacity to meet their children's needs forcing children to go to the street to fend for themselves. It is rural poverty that is forcing rural population migrate to urban centers, including children with a hope of better future. Poverty causes malnutrition resulting in poor health and reduces a family's ability to work thus creating a condition for children to move to the streets' (Kopoka, 2000).

The findings of the study also indicate the most popular and usual sleeping places for street children were roadsides and verandah. And these children have reported that they suffered in their sleeping places a lot due to cold weather, verbal abuses and physical abuse by gang groups. FGD results also reveals that being beaten by older street boys is very common. All FGD participants have reported that they were often injured from stabbing and slashing from blades on regular basis. Such injuries are most often inflicted during fights with other street boys. Data from FGD participant further reveals that the most common problems among the street children included harassment by police and hunger. The problem of harassment may consequently give rise to other psycho-social problems such as aggression, fear of society, suspicion, unruliness and theft. Such problems prevent street children from leading peaceful lives (Philista M. Onyango, et al, 1991). The problem of hunger also has its consequences and implications. Probably to meet the needs for food and to prevent hunger these children are forced to engage in deviant acts. This may explain as to why some of them became juvenile delinquents. Further, the problem of hunger may also be associated with many other problems like poor health condition.

Thus, street children are unprotected working children who are highly vulnerable to exploitation by others. Their lives on the streets leave them with few opportunities to access basic needs like food, shelter, education and basic health services. They face many risks in the streets that can jeopardize their normal growth and development. Being away from their families, they lack the normal protection and supervision most children get from their families. Hence, they are exposed to exploitation by adults and young person's as well as by police and security guards. Studies have reported that street children face a lot of insecurity while in the streets. For example, most street children express lack of food, shelter and clothing and harassment as their major problems. Frequent fights and police arrests have been reported as the usual experiences of street life. All this

aggravates the situation of street children and may deny them the opportunity to grow and become useful members of society (Philista, et al, 1991).

The finding of this study further indicates majority of street children in this study are engaged in menial jobs like, carrying goods, shoeshine and street vending (selling small items). And some of them turn to begging as a survival option when they have no other means of activities to sustain themselves. Their life style does not allow them to follow strict and structured hours of work. The work of street children falls into that of informal economy. It is irregular and low paid (ILO, 2002). Their survival or livelihood strategies involved drawing all sorts of skills, knowledge, labor resources and social networks. Street children center on income- earning activities mainly in the informal sector either as wage employees or self employment or other illegal means such as begging (Girmachew, 2006). In this study though the role of NGO in alleviating the socio economic problems of street children is undeniable, it is not as expected because, it is only one local NGO which works on street children.

CONCLUSION

The primary aim of this study is to uncover the overall situation of street children in Hawassa City and the role played by the NGO to address their socio-economic problems. To this end the study depicts the push and the pull factors that exposed children to street life and assesses their livelihood strategies. It also attempted to understand the kinds of abuse which street children encountered on the street. The profile of street children in the study indicates that the proportions of boys who have joined street life were more visible than girls and most of the children were migrants from the surrounding rural villages and small towns. The phenomenon is strongly associated with economic and social factors. The majority of these children have come to the street because of poverty and conflict with their guardians. Death of parents, family breakdown, peer pressure, large family size and lack of parenting skills were also another significant factors contributing to street life as found in this study. The results of this study also indicates that, majority of children were exposed to street life because of push factors than pull factors.

Street children faced a wider range of challenges and experienced incalculable exploitations and sufferings while they were working and living on the street. So they are more vulnerable to physical, verbal and sexual abuses. Harassment by police and by older street boys is common problems faced by the street children. The results of this study also show that majority of street children faced physical abuse followed by verbal abuses. They also face a challenge of finding decent secured

sleeping places for sleeping. Most of them sleep outside, exposed to weather elements that might cause health problems.

Street children use several strategies to survive the difficult conditions of the streets. From the findings it is clear that they used different means of acquiring money, foods and other necessities. On the street majority of children were engaged in menial jobs like, carrying goods, shoe shining and street vending (selling small items). And some of them turned to begging as a survival option when they have no other way of sustaining themselves.

The street children in this study have also reflected that there is an inadequate commitment by the government in prioritizing the problems they faced. They expected more attention and responsibilities from the government to rehabilitate and enable them to live a normal life.

Programmes to address street children problems exist and are run by NGOs and in cooperation with Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs of the City. The majority of these programmes were remedial and hence supportive and emphasis on curative approach, i.e. face-to-face works with those children already on the streets. That means they emphasized on rehabilitating projects for street children: either by reunifying them with their families or providing training of different skills and helping them to involve in different income generating activities. The programmes don't include preventive approach which emphasizes on long term solution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher proposes the following recommendations to alleviate the problems of street children:

➤ The findings of this study show that street children are children who are denied the rights to all basic necessities. They are struggling hard to meet their basic needs. They are also becoming more and more vulnerable to a wide range of problems. Therefore, the mass media should work a lot in raising awareness about the strains of street life. So that potential street children will be discouraged.

➤ According to the finding of this study, though the problem of street children is understood as an urban phenomenon, the factors exacerbating the problem have rural origin. So the problem is not alleviated only through the effort of Hawassa City administration. Rather through the concerted efforts of all stake holders and major efforts need to be done by concerned government offices at grass root level to solve the problem from its source.

➤ This study indicates that many children are already on the streets of Hawassa. Therefore, two fold programs should be designed by the concerned

government offices, consisting of short-term and long-term programs. Short-term program should be rehabilitative, while long-term program should be preventative.

➤ Above all awareness raising program, should be given for the general public to bring about effective and sustainable change in the lives of these innocent children because streetism is viewed as a negative phenomena by the majority of the societies.

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