

Social Inclusion Through Education for Children In Street Habitat

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Abstract

The article intents to explain the way 'street children' who form a society of their own with its own peculiarities get groomed to social life that is acceptable and responsible. Extreme exclusion feelings expressed by children and the consequences of exclusion which lead them to further exclusion has been observed. However, an educative presence of an educator can lead them to inclusion. The survival skills that they learn in street situation can help them in their mainstream life. The transformation process is the result of the educative presence spelt out by St. John Bosco an educator of the nineteenth century who revolutionised the field of education through the preventive system based on reason, religion and loving kindness. The descriptions of marginalisation in street situations are based on an ethnographic study. The study has been done by accompanying 'children in street habitat' for 15 years and 'upper class mainstream children' for 10 years as an educator.

Keywords: Street Skills, Life Skills, Vulnerability, Psychosocial, Psycho-spiritual

Every child is born into a society. It is necessary that children get socialised as they grow into adulthood to be able to build up and enhance society. The family is the first society. The children learn the basics of social life from the parents and are prepared to face the larger group in the family, neighbourhood and the society at large. The early interactions that are healthy can help children to develop close bonds with others which help them for social living.¹ The society has its role to play as it houses the family where children grow to become full human beings. The little village or township offers them chances to meet children and adults through various interactions such as study, games, recreation facilities, film and other group works. The children require role models. They develop self-concept and the development of the self is a lifelong process. It is a process that goes on enhancing with adept social interactions.² The growth process is stranded when the situations do not become conducive.

In a world that is growing rich there is the story of the poor. The poor are not able to provide for their children the basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter and human warmth. The parents due to poverty live miserable lives and that affect children's physical and mental growth. Deprivation haunts them and many suffer silently. Some die being denied of basic requirements. The world that upholds rights of children is not

¹ Henslin James M., *Essential of Sociology: A Down-to-earth Approach*, Massachusetss: A Pearson Education Company, 2000.

² Ibid.

able to help children to have their rights. India is a signatory to the UN resolutions and the number of Street Children in India is very high.³ “A street child or a street youth is any minor for whom the street (in the widest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become his or her habitual abode, and who is without adequate protection.”⁴ For them the street has become their habitual abode and/or source of livelihood; they are inadequately protected, supervised, or directed by responsible adults. Children in street habitat/street children refer to any child who is deprived of adult supervision and is forced to spend days and nights in street situations.⁵

Street Life and Exclusion

Street life is filled with adventures. Children in the streets as a whole face deprivations such as lack of food, shelter, sanitation and medical care; the most suffer from being unwanted.⁶ While continuing street life, children see their privileged peer group that is well provided with the riches they enjoy. In the streets they feel sad and hurt in deprivation experiences. They suffer marginalisation and struggle for survival feeling excluded. They dream of being included. However they do not express their desire in order to uphold their pride. They do not disclose themselves as poor and needy to known people or situations. To an apparently known person they boast of their plight. Only a close watch with close contact can reveal the miseries they suffer daily. They take to whatever that can offer them a meagre living. Once hunger is settled they take to easy entertainments such as films, drugs, sex and alcohol. At times they risk their lives for fun. Raju (name changed) on the first day experiences terrible loneliness having left his family. On reaching the railway station he is harassed by other children even physically abused. He faces hardships as he has had no other option. Initial days of harassment by some lead him to earn the sympathy of others and he becomes part of the street group. Soon he has to start fending for himself in a world that is quite alien to him. It takes time and trouble to get inserted and be one among them. Raju in his station situation expresses that he was happy. He looks shabby and sick. It is quite clear that he is suffering from malnutrition. Raju happens to be regular in the street classes that are conducted near the place he stays. After a few days of friendly human interactions he talks about his sufferings. He talks about his family, his departure from home and his life in the street. Eventually he leaves the streets for the offer of an open shelter and he makes his life gradually to the mainstream.

Streets with Open Doors

“The twenty-first century presents a hostile face to millions of children in many countries in the world. An increasing number of children are being forced to the streets as

³ George C.J., “Street Children’s March to Wellness”, in *Kerala Sociologist*, Volume 41, no. 2, (December 2013), pp. 144-156.

⁴ Rashmi Agarwal, *Street Children*, Delhi, Shipra Publications, 2003, p. 19.

⁵ Neela Dabir and Naina Athale, *From Street to Hope*, New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2011.

⁶ *Ibid.*

a result of poverty, abuse, conflict, trafficking, and HIV/AIDS⁷. Denial of basic education and legal rights including the right to life, liberty and security are now features of the world's socio-economic landscape.⁸ India as a growing economy is making its mark in the world. The cities of India are growing. Due to the growing poverty stricken situation of the villages a large number of people are migrating to the cities, some for a better life and others for survival. Many become migrant labourers or slum dwellers with unstable economic conditions. Sometimes children go to schools but situation turns difficult; they become school drop-outs and that add to the number of child labourers.⁹ When they find difficulties in surviving many take to street situations adding to the number of children in street habitat.¹⁰ The numbers are increasing due to widespread recession, political turmoil, civil unrest, increasing family disintegration, natural disasters and growing urbanisation. It is stated that the world has over 100 million while India has 18 million.¹¹

When situation reaches extreme the children have no option but to look for risky and challenging possibilities to survive. At times families too are in such predicaments. They come to know about the cities that are glowing in richness with immense possibilities through media or others who have visited such places. They come to know the glories of city life. Not knowing the full story of city life of a poor person they head for the streets.

Migration and Social exclusion

Children leave their kith and kin in search of basic needs giving heed to their survival instinct. Their plight leads them to exclusion and it is complimented with poverty and insecurity. Exclusion is a phenomenon of non-integration of those who are unable, no longer able or not yet able to benefit from the exercise of their rights: right to education, healthcare, housing work, the support of a family. The term indicates that every human being should enjoy rights which is considered as a fundamental right but seems impossible. The shocking aspect is that exclusion affects children more than the others. It is linked to progress in as much as children are not given sufficient possibilities for growth as the country is developing.¹²

⁷ Gurung Hitman, *Study of Policies and Programmes Addressing the Right of Street Children to Education*, Pokhara Child Welfare Scheme, UK, 2004, p.10.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Wadia Sherna, *Report on Inclusive Classroom, Social Inclusion/Exclusion and Diversity: Perspectives, Policies and Practices*, Delhi, Deshkal Publication, 2010. <http://www.deshkalindia.com/pdf/Reports/2.%20Report%20on%20Inclusive%20Classrooms,%20Social%20Inclusion%20Exclusion%20and%20Diversity.pdf>, (Accessed on 10.04.2016)

¹⁰ George C.J., "Street Children's March to Wellness".

¹¹ Sharma Narayan and Joshi Suresh, Preventing substance abuse among street children in India: a literature review, *Health Science Journal*, vol.7, issue 2, 3013, <http://www.hsj.gr/volume7/issue2/721.pdf>, (Accessed on 10.04.2016)

¹² Vincent Joguet, *Street Children: From Individual Care to the Introduction of Social Policies*, Paris, Agence Française de Développement & Samusocial International, 2012. <http://www.afd.fr/webdav/shared/PUBLICATIONS/THEMATIQUES/savoirscommuns/12-Savoirs-communs-VA.pdf>, (Accessed on 11.04.2016).

People are migrating in large numbers to the streets. Many families come into cities from slums and find a job to survive. Some grow rich and most remain poor. The wealthy become less concerned about the poor. The poor suffer more at the hands of the rich as they make use of them. Children become victims of abuse. Children in street situations feel marginalised due to their deviant characteristics and homeless status. They have a street space which is separate from the adults' space in the city. Children move fluidly on and off the street and their experiences are varied.¹³ Children spend their lives largely outside the spheres typically considered appropriate for children, such as home, school and recreational settings. They have made street their home. They lack protection, supervision or direction from responsible adults. Strong emotional overtones, pity and hostility by the public are the reactions faced by children in street situations.

Vulnerability

Street life is rough and tough. When children are forced into the street situation they struggle to survive. They do not have an adult figure to guide their growth to adulthood. The regular struggles for survival lead them to unwanted behaviours. The normal street situation is not for human living yet they have no option. They have no place to sleep peacefully as they sleep in street corners, under the trees, platforms, shantis, shunted trains, buses and Lorries. They are exposed to rain, storm, dust, dirt and whatever that can be experienced when people have sky as their roof. They survive on tourists, travellers, rich, and garbage-waste besides city job possibilities. The city life offers them various opportunities – films, hotel life, petty jobs, rag picking and others.

Children experience extreme forms of poverty. They live beyond the usual notion of 'poverty'. They are extremely vulnerable group of children facing extreme violations. They face gross violations of their human rights due to violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, chemical addictions and numerous other human rights violations.¹⁴ As a consequence of street life children turn rude and crude. Some look forward to possibilities while others end their life in misery. They forget or leave aside human ways of dealing with others.

The Challenge - Inclusion

Social inclusion is enabling people who are marginalised to obtain the minimum standards of living, access to services and the social life that is regarded as the norm for the majority of people.¹⁵ The solutions for getting children off the streets are neither simple nor linear. They require time, professionalism, tact and patience. The approach must be multidisciplinary, based on deliberate and constructive collaboration between the

¹³ Barret Hazel and Young Lorraine, 2000, *Adapting Visual Methods: Action Research with Kampala Street Children*, Uxbridge, Department of Geography and Earth sciences, Brunel University, <http://www.streetchildrenresources.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/adapting-visual-methods-uganda.pdf>, (Accessed on 10.04.2016)

¹⁴ Nagaseshamma S., *Street Children of India, a Socio-legal Study*, New Delhi, Anmol Publications, Pvt Ltd., 2010.

¹⁵ Dunne Allison and others, *Office for Social Inclusion*, Dublin: The Economic and Social Research Institute, 2007, http://www.socialinclusion.ie/documents/children_socialportrait.pdf, (Accessed on 14.01.2014)

actors involved, be it NGO or government agencies, national or local.¹⁶ Street children are considered homeless or neglected and they live chiefly in the street. Two peculiarities found in them are the place they occupy and the absence of proper contact or link with adults in society.¹⁷ Exclusion keeps them away from formal citizenship, from labour market, from participating in civil society and from different social arenas.¹⁸ Any responsible adult can challenge the child towards inclusion. They need opportunities for job and soft skill training. Invitations of responsible people are welcomed as they offer them possibilities for a reformed life. Through various interventions and events they can be trained to be acceptable human beings. They can be well placed and even excel in their family and professional life.

Inclusion Strategies

Preventive system of education propagated by Don Bosco speaks about the educative presence in which the young enjoys the presence of an adult who is reasonable, accepts religious values and extends loving kindness. For children who are marginalised the inclusion process is proved possible as seen from the life of Don Bosco himself.¹⁹ The young people look for love. When they experience love in their dealing with responsible adults they feel included.²⁰ To analyse the strategies or interventions that make children take a U-turn from street to main stream it is important to understand the minds of the children that have led them to the street or that which keep them in the street. Children are in the street due to their families being there or as they are brought to the street by others as street workers or for any other purpose. There are some children who make a decision to be in the street due to their own particular situations as discussed above.

In all these the children face initial struggles and make their way or break their life in the streets. To make a way forward they need to form a mind-set of accepting the reality, accepting the society that is left behind and that which harasses them as they struggle with life. They develop mental energies to live in parallel to the mainstream society having a world of their own. Being in such situation they develop low self-esteem, hatred, anger and many more negative emotions which affect their mind. They survive with a negative mind expressing a positive attitude for apparent happy survival. To help such children in street situation they need to be assisted psychologically, psychosocially

¹⁶ Vincent Joguet, *Street Children: From Individual Care to the Introduction of Social Policies*, Paris, Agence Française de Développement & Samusocial International, 2012. <http://www.afd.fr/webdav/shared/PUBLICATIONS/THEMATIQUES/savoirscommuns/12-Savoirs-communs-VA.pdf>, (Accessed on 14.01.2014).

¹⁷ Panter-Brick Catherine, *Street Children, Human Rights, and Public Health: A Critique and Future Directions*, Durham, U.K.: Department of Anthropology, University of Durham 2002, [.http://leadership.depaul.edu/secure/downloads/Brazil/annurev%5B1%5D%5B1%5D.anthro.31.040402.pdf](http://leadership.depaul.edu/secure/downloads/Brazil/annurev%5B1%5D%5B1%5D.anthro.31.040402.pdf) - (Accessed on 10.01.2014)

¹⁸ Rawal Nabin, "Social Inclusion and Exclusion: A Review", *Dhauagiri Journal of Social and Anthropology* Vol.2, 161-179, - <http://www.cmi.no/file/?589> - (Accessed on 06.01.2014)

¹⁹ Braido Pietro, *Prevention, not Repression; Don Bosco's Educational System*, Bengaluru, Kristu Jyoti Publications, 2013.

²⁰ Coelho Ivo, 2006, *The Preventive System as Philosophy and Method*, Divyadaar; *Journal of Philosophy and education* 17/1, pp .67-80.

and psycho-spiritually. Psychological refers all that help children to turn from negative mind-set which give them negative outlook to oneself, others and God to a positive attitude and outlook. Psychosocial refers to all that help children to be integrated social beings. Psycho-Spiritual refers to the interventions that help the children to meet and experience the Divine who is considered their creator. Victor Frankel talks about an optimism that one needs to learn from his or her tragic past. That optimism can flow to one's future with a personal dedication to a cause which can make happiness and success happen.²¹

Psychological

The mainstream society considers the children in street situation as misfits in society. They are unwanted, hated and even harassed. The social worker needs to understand this negative aspect and treat with finesse to heal them of the wounds that they suffer. It is said that poverty stings and finesse heals.²² Fine ways of behaviour experienced on a daily basis heals them of their mental hurts and they take on a new mind-set.

With various forms of assistance received, the children are revitalised and their negative outlook turn more positive. They are not lonely anymore as earlier and they do not feel deprived. Signs of hope instilled they get psychologically healed. They focus on their brighter future experiencing inclusion in the society.

Surprise Kindness

Young people in the street situation feel deprived of all assistance from the mainstream society. They do not have anyone to refer except those who are in street situation. There exists mutual fear between the society and the street society. Children are afraid of any social intervention of assistance as they view society with all their negative experiences. They resist and reject any offer of help. However children are helpless at times, especially in moments of sickness and they long for support and assistance. If educators or care givers are available in such situations and present him/her as non-threatening they are accepted. The help most appreciated is medical or legal. The children get surprised initially but accept and slowly change their attitude towards people and society at large.

Assistance and Friendship

Every help offered and accepted leads to a relationship. Appropriate support offered at right time by responsible adults can open the new world of the street youth. Once they begin to trust they begin to talk about their life. The experience of the researcher is that the initial difficulty they share is the harassment that they face in life. Raju talks about the days that he had to be hungry which led him to save something. Then he

²¹ Frankl Viktor E., *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy*, New York, Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1984.

²² Chempakathinal George, *Child Policy – Poverty Stings... Finesse Heals, Howrah*. Don Bosco Ashalayam, 2010.

talks about his sad experience of sleeping in the railway station premises losing all his savings. Someone had cut open his pocket to take away the money that he had saved. He is strangely shocked about the new person (social worker) who is trying to be friendly. Slowly he accepts help. Street rejection experienced by him is contrasted with affection of the adult who makes him smile. He eventually cherishes the friendship developed.

Basic Needs and Finesse

Children born with lots of hope, develop antisocial/unsocial behaviours through various interactions in the family, social environment and more in the street situations. They are not able to have nice ways as expected of children; those do not bring them survival necessities. They struggle for basic needs. As the educator offers need-fulfilment supports the children feel consoled with compassion and kindness. Such repeated and random actions of kindness help the person to be healed of the past ailments that are more mental than physical. They learn fine ways of living which give them social acceptance.

Street Corner Meetings

Regular meeting in street corners get them organised as a society. They do have their own way of sharing their resources of mind, heart and materials. Adult presence brings them confidence and that facilitates relationship. In such meetings children experience freedom and acceptance. They feel stronger as a social group and the presence of the adult instils hope.

Haven of Hope

Open shelter is the first offer accepted by children who do not have a place to sleep. Once they accept the facilities of a shelter with their basic needs met the new era begins and the children open themselves to a world of education, foster care and socially acceptable living. The children get the possibility to meet peer group in a non-threatening situations; adults become friendly and concerned. The children who feel the loss of parents are compensated to a certain extent. The shelter turns out to be a haven of hope initiating positive attitudes.

Assistance to Meet Emergencies

Children suffer when they are sick, meet with accidents or face rough and unfriendly situations. On Such occasions they look for support and care. Raju was injured once. There is no one to assist him. Noticing this the following day the social worker takes medicine along during the railway station visit. The child accepts to be treated, and the treatment opens the world of new relationship initiating a new phase of life. His lonely feeling is reduced. He feels that he is wanted and that he too can have a chance for support systems of the society.

Growing in Self-sufficiency

As the days go by the children who stay in street situations come to know the places of interest to meet their basic necessities: the river for bath, the long distant trains for trash that can fetch them an income and food. They also come to know the places where free distribution of food is organized. They even learn to borrow money as they gain contact with others. Thus the children grow in self-sufficiency.

Psychosocial

Psychosocial takes care of all that can help children to be mentally healthy and get socially integrated. Children in street habitat are social rejects. Society does not accept them and they are considered marginalised. While they sleep in slums, shanties or railway station yards, people do not care. People are of the opinion that they cannot be helped. They are considered anti-socials. Social cognition affects their developmental process. The ability to reason about the possible, impossible and hypothetical as opposed to their real situation can inspire them for a better future.²³ Welcoming such children by the social workers and getting them inserted into the mainstream through the open shelter, foster care home, schools and other facilities, they get socially healed of the wounds of the past.

Social Interactions and Self-Confidence

Children in foster care home are exposed to numerous social institutions and situations. The family set up of the home, schools, training centres and the places that they visit give them confidence to face the world around them. They develop self-worth as they learn more and experience acknowledgement. Performance of street experienced children from the foster care home, as per experience of the author, outshines the children from the mainstream. It could be due to the fact they grew resilient in their hazardous past. Outings, picnics, cinemas, and household activities bring more joy to them as they grow to maturity. Participatory life style which is right based instils sense of dignity to their life. As they enjoy foster home life they are given the possibilities to invite children from the streets to share their own experience in the shelter and the in foster care situations. Confident as they are, they strive to rescue other children living in street situations.

Right Based Approach

Right based approach following the convention for children's rights, enables the children to discuss with peers their issues and find apt solutions. The presence of adults enables them to understand and seek their rightful place in society. Children are helped to lead their own life. They are assisted for matters that they are not able to manage as they are in the developmental stage. However they are helped to be responsible which enable them to have better understanding of social life.

²³ Montemayor Raymond, Adams Gerald R. Gullotta Thomas P. (eds.) *From Childhood to Adolescence: A transitional Period?* New Delhi, Sage Publications, 1990.

Group Spirit to Social Living

Children leaving the street join the social group of the shelter, foster care home and other places where they find the need to belong to as they are in the process of education and development. The peer group becomes very understanding as they require mutual support and help. Group spirit grows in them and that help them for social integration. The peer group life with guidance of adult leads them to social life where they accept hierarchies and find their rightful place to be responsible individuals. As the children leave the street, the first place they find is the open shelter. Basic facilities are offered. Freedom of expression is encouraged as long it helps or at least does not harm others. The open shelter becomes the first social institution where they get retrained or trained to social living. The stage after open shelter normally is the foster care home where there are adults as guardians. There are elders and younger ones to love, to be loved, respected and sought for assistance. This gives them the possibility of living life in common. They share openly without fear. They are inspired with hope for a bright future as responsible persons in society.

Social Settings

Being participant members of social groups such as schools, training centres, cinema halls, banquet halls, and other common gathering places the children get varieties of possibilities to relate to different kinds of people. The various meeting experiences familiarise them with various social groups and trains them for the future with full-fledged membership in a society. Various social interactions tame or groom them for good social living.

Care Receiving Experiences

Care givers play a vital role in the lives of children. They receive affection in plenty and they grow in it and with it. Concerned adults' presence bring them joy and satisfaction in being part of a society where they can excel, have freedom of expression and the possibilities to move ahead to be mainstreamed. They grow in love and promote human living.

Psycho-Spiritual

India has a rich religious culture. People take part in religious ceremonies and feasts irrespective of their religion. They do have sense of the Divine as part of their inheritance. The children who are in street situation do not experience the Divine due to their life that is mostly unpleasant, unwanted and difficult. However soothing support given to them can lead them to the Divine. This touch of the Divine eventually helps them to accept the mysterious ways of the Creator and grow in faith in Him. This enables them to cope with difficult situations, trusting in the Divine. They receive mental energy through the presence of the Divine. Children who spend time in meditation and prayer

irrespective of their religious beliefs grow in reverence for the Divine. With this a new mind-set is developed to accept the Supreme Being which adds meaning to their life.

Prayer Experience

Practices to experience and respect the Divine is very commonly seen in especially in the Indian context. Temples, Churches, Mosques and other places of worship are commonly visited by people. The children who have lost touch with their kith and kin, cultural and religious background regain religiosity as they are taught to acknowledge and accept the presence of the Divine in their life. Regular meetings and prayer session lead them to accept the role that the supernatural plays in their life. They find the Divine as the reason for their growth requirements which they receive from unknown people. They appreciate being owned up and nurtured. They feel the need for prayer experiences which comfort them.

Religious Tolerance

Need based or knowledge based, more than faith based, visit to various religious centres and life with children of different religious faiths enable them to grow as tolerant human beings or more accepting the diversity seen in other religious practices. They need to be trained to see everyone as individual human persons having differences that can complement to unite and not divide. Every difference is explained as positive and growth oriented for social harmony.

Street Skills Turn Life Skills

Children living in street situation develop skills of survival which may look negative. However a positive approach can enable them see those skills as life skills which help to stand up in the competitive society. Above mentioned interventions assist children to be personally and socially skilful and make them more adept for their social and family living.

Absence of Education to Survival Skills

Children in the street do not have the possibility for regular schooling. They may be lucky enough to be part of a city-school at some time or other. But survival needs do not allow them to be regular and they become school drop-outs. But they learn skills to earn a living. Multiple skill theory of Gardener is proved relevant as they develop different skills in the given environment.²⁴ Many of them shine as magicians, artists, actors, cooks or any other to earn their livelihood. All their learning becomes their assets as they proceed to the mainstream.

²⁴ Berk Laura E., *Development through the Lifespan*, Delhi, Dorling Kindersley (India) Pvt. Ltd., 2007, p. 296.

Caring Attitude

Children suffer in the absence of parental care. They turn to other adults who may be offering apparent care but making use of them as errant boys, rag pickers or any other. However they enjoy companionship and parental/adult care. They learn to adapt to situations taking roles of adults as well as children. This in turn becomes part of their asset as they enter into mainstream. They learn to look after their wives and children. They learn the art of caring for others.

Gaining Resiliency

Children in street situations struggle due to different types of difficulties. In spite of their problems they seem to be happy. The author in his ethnographic study found children living in railway station platforms are shabby, battered and dirty; however they look joyful. The attitude of joy becomes useful in their life as they face the normal difficulties of living in a society. They gain resilience to suffer joyfully.

Immunity and Health Hazards

Initially children get sick especially as they get into unhealthy situations. Some of them find life very difficult. However they develop immunity and get acclimatised to street hazards: dust, smoke, dirt, noise, poor drinking water, insufficient clothes and poor quality or unhygienic food. Raju, 'a street boy' at times is found eating from the street dumping pit. The creatures with which he had to struggle were the dogs and pigs that too were living on the wastes of the society. However it is seen that his body becomes more resistant.

Child Rights to Human Rights

With growth of NGOs in the cities children are made aware of their rights more than ever. With the awareness government is making all the efforts possible to complement the efforts of the NGOs. Right consciousness leads them to demand for their right and even live with their rights. Child right convention is ratified by India together many other countries. This becomes a training ground to demand and respect human rights.

Social Skills

Children living in the streets have a group to live with as they form a society of their own. When they get mainstreamed they walk into the mainstream through accompaniment which teaches them social skills.

Reconciliation Process

While in the railway station environment it is noticed that two children had a serious fight. One of them seems badly wounded. They part ways angry with each other. As the observation continues the boys are seen playing. The two who had had a fight join the

teams. Once game is on they are friends again. They are able to accept and forgive. They begin a new life together. Such misunderstanding and quarrels become part of their life and they have to get back to friendly living as they need to fight greater uncertainties.

Child Friendly Police and Empowerment

Fear of police and other legal systems is part of and parcel of most of the people especially in villages. It is more evident with people who are illiterate. Initial days of children in streets are difficult as they are threatened or harassed. However as the days go by they get enlightened. They learn from their seniors to dare and face the legal set ups which curb their freedom. Many of them become comfortable in using the system in place for human welfare. They even learn basic laws that can protect them. They come to know the legal hurdles and the ways to free themselves from arrest, accidents or even being blamed being innocent. Once they are mainstreamed they are able to assist themselves and their neighbours who may be less enlightened about legal systems and procedures.

Care for the Weak and Social Concern

The children in living with deprived situations are able to understand the poor better. While being in the foster care home Kesto (name changed) used to bring boys and girls regularly especially as he finds them new in the street situations. He does not want them to have the bitter experiences that he had in his initials days. Like him many children grow in concern and once in the mainstream they become socially conscious and concerned.

Life Skills

To be life smart is necessary for a successful living. Children living in the street learn many skills that make them successful in the mainstream life.

Street Smart and Life Smart

It is mostly seen that children who land up in the street are smart. When they leave their families they need to perform better than their peers who live miserable lives in deprived situations. The less smart ones suffer a lot while the smart ones look for brighter life. In the street it is a daily struggle for survival. The children need to use all their possible skills to be safe and to be self-sufficient with the presence of the complex society that is constantly at war with the children while living in and with the streets.

Adaptability

Children in the streets are not able to plan their life. They enjoy good food whenever available and they go hungry in the absence of food. They mostly live on the wastes of the society. They accept different types of people and that help them in the future to meet various types of people in the mainstream. Tolerance leads them through life out

of necessity. In the later stage tolerance assists them to live more adapted to people in a complex world.

Live with Minimum Standards

Life in the street is not a luxurious one. They may have luxury food at times. Being invited to be a torch bearer for marriages becomes a boon which is customary in some cities. Ram (name changed) says that marriage season is good for them as they enjoy varieties of food. They are the human machines to carry torches but it always end with a sumptuous meal. They struggle a lot during the rain, strikes and sickness. In 1989 when the researcher met Rajan (name changed) he tells him that he spend 2.50 paisa for a meal and at times another rupee and fifty paisa more for another plate of rice and dal. They do not forget such meagre survival situations and that help them in difficult days especially when they may not get enough job or money. They learn to spare and spend frugally, planning every bit of their earning as they foresee other human necessities.

Complexity to Wide Possibilities

Street life is educative as they come across the various facilities available for people. Hospitals, schools, legal assistance, and community support systems. Children are not able to pay for most requirements. They seek government facilities and become aware of their rights that lead them to easier life while mainstreamed. Joy (name changed) called me and told me that he would like to get his wife's name registered even in the first month of pregnancy. He is aware that it is important as he requires support in the course of time.

Conclusion

Children in the street have to struggle for daily survival. They develop resourcefulness, self-reliance and independence and other survival skills in a hostile environment. They do not enjoy social status. They are tolerated in the larger society and at times rejected. They are not trusted as they are unknown or insignificant. They do not trust non-street people. They do get support from peer groups or gangs. They are not able to meet their emotional and psychological needs.²⁵ However, children in the street develop street skills and the right motivation and guidance can channel them to life skills. They normally can do well in society in different situations as they are trained in the worst possible situations. They need guidance, support systems and right based accompaniment. Children living in deprived situations are a challenge for a responsible society that is able to accept inclusion as a right of every human being.

²⁵ Wadia Sherna, *Report on Inclusive Classroom, Social Inclusion/Exclusion and Diversity: Perspectives, Policies and Practices*, Delhi, Deshkal Publication, 2010. http://www.unicef.org/india/13._National_Report_on_Inclusive_Classroom.pdf, (Accessed on 4.01.2014).

