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Research Article

SOCIAL SERVICE FOR CHILDREN: A STUDY OF POSSIBILITIES OF BETTER CARE FOR STREET CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

The definition of street children is a boy or a girl who has not reached the age of adulthood and he/she lives on streets for his/her survival and it may be the case that he/she is taken care by an adult while still living on streets. This paper studies eighteen possibilities of care regarding the development of street children based upon four basic rules which are: Pledge to Equality, Defending Every Child, Providing Access to Services, Constructing Special Solutions. Upon these four basic principles, the author discusses various ways through which we can change the world of street children and make it better.

Key Words:

Human Rights Council, reintegration,
Informal Education and Help centers.

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INTRODUCTION

The definition of street children is a boy or a girl who has not reached the age of adulthood and he/she lives on streets for his/her survival and it may be the case that he/she is taken care by an adult while still living on streets. Many organizations and institutions have defined this term in many different ways and to understand it comprehensively, some of them are quoted below:

Humanium, an international organization whose aim is to stop violations of children's rights, explain in their article "Street Children":

Street children are minors who live and survive on the streets. They often grow up in public landfills, train stations, or under the bridges of the world's major cities. Because of conflicts with their family, these children don't want to or can't return home. (par.2)

Human Rights Council in their report entitled, "Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Children Working and/or Living on the Street" write:

The term "street child," used by the Commission on Human Rights in 1994, was developed in the 1980s to describe "any girl or boy [...] for whom the street (in the broadest 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." At that time, "street children" were categorized as either children on the street, who worked on the street and went home to their families at night; children of the street, who lived on the street, were functionally without family support but maintained family links; or abandoned children who lived completely on their own. (4)

Shahina Parveen in her article entitled, "Conceptual Meaning and Definition of Street Children: Worldwide" writes:

There are two main definitions of street children that are recognized internationally. The UNICEF Definition: UNICEF has defined and segregated 'street children' into three categories:

- ✓ Street Living Children: Children who have run away from their families and live alone on the streets.
- ✓ Street Working Children: Children, who spend most of their time on the streets, fending for themselves, but returning home on a regular basis.
- ✓ Children from Street Families: Children who live on the streets with their families.

The Inter-NGO definition: There is another definition for 'street children' given by Inter-NGOs which states that a street child is any girl or boy who has not reached adulthood, for whom the street (in the broadest sense of the word, including unoccupied

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dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become her or his habitual abode and/or sources of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised or directed by responsible adults. (78)

Possibilities of Better Care

Lifting of restrictions on the use of medically or religiously approved contraceptive devices and birth control pills, with addition to making such devices and pills freely available to every person. This will reduce the number of children living on streets and will reduce the load on their parents as well.

Collectively educating people about the causes and impact of this having higher number of children while living on streets. Making people aware and educating them is compulsory for any person in general belonging to reproductive age.

Punishment for rape and related assault crimes in an objective manner, regardless of class or group is to be applied and made swift and transparent as well.

For orphans with no legitimate guardians, it is the duty of the respective governments to establish, subsidize, and fund orphan care of adequate quality in order to keep the children off the streets and offer them with reasonable opportunities for their growth. It also includes certain amount of rescuing them from organized crime gangs or rings and similar other unpleasant measures.

There are children whose guardians or parents deliberately, or with no one to support them financially, send these children to work on the streets instead of sending them to school. The issue is harder to speak about without placing further afflictions on those people who are already suffering, as they are desperately poor. One of the steps that might be offered is to provide welfare payments to certain families that are tied to the school attendance of their children, so that their children study and grow.

Save the Children in their article entitled "Top 5 ways in which you can help street children" write:

Donating is the easiest and fastest act of support you can participate in. The equivalent of a cup of coffee or the next movie you are watching can go towards giving a child a better future. And, you can also sign up and be a part of an NGO's various fundraising initiatives - either on social media, or in on-ground activities at malls, kiosks, and public places. (par.5)

This donation can be added to such projects that aim to provide informal education to the children. One of African organizations for street children named Chance for Childhood has written a paragraph on this issue, i.e., informal education and they write on their website under the title "Informal Education":

Most street children have missed out on years of school attendance, if they ever went at all. Reintegrating them into mainstream schools isn't a viable option for many street children, at least in the short-term. Informal education projects help them catch up on their basic literacy and numeracy skills, but also teach them 'soft skills' like self-expression, patience, self-discipline and sharing - which are social skills that children would normally pick up in a nurturing home environment. The discipline and routines of mainstream schools are often too much for street children who have lived very chaotic and

traumatic lives. That's why informal education projects are a vital stepping stone. (par.1-3)

Opening help centers where street children are offered access to food and hygiene facilities with addition to medical and psychological care. These centers should plan to impart non-formal education, life skills that include informing them about child rights, effects of drugs, cautions about organ trafficking, information about HIV and reproductive health, and other recreational activities. Children who come into these help centers are often or have been through extreme violence and abuse, and it is the duty of these centers to establish themselves as places where these children can find safety, sympathy and support. These centers should have a complete open-door policy because only then children can come to these centers anytime and stay as long as they wish.

Help centers should have the multi-perspective facilities and should include a team leader and other social workers with addition to medical staff, psychologist, teachers and supporting staff as well. The staff team should monitor closely the street children of their respective locality with the help of local community to strengthen the center's social environment.

Help centers need to be upgraded in order to offer accommodation in a safe and secure environment to street children. It may include open day and night access which can be voluntary so that children themselves are free to decide how long they want to stay and are free to leave at any time.

Help centers have a duty to make their internal environment like a home that offers a family-like atmosphere including permanent social workers available to offer much-needed care and constancy.

Establishing help centers is a practical approach where street children can be involved at every level largely. These centers acting as 'quasi-home' can offer access to child friendly education programs, with vocational training as well. Social workers who also live in those very centers can run these centers. Furthermore, caregivers and the presence of security staffs also necessary within such centers, plus the centers can be used as an emergency shelter for those children who need immediate medical attention or any other social emergencies.

Establishing child-friendly schools will help to bridge the gap between life on the streets with no rules and a formal classroom. The non-formal education in these classes should be simple, child centered and entertaining so that learning basics is made easy without fear of punishment. The aim of such schools should be focusing more on the goal of development of street children rather than being oriented towards certificates. The aim is to instill the desire to learn. It aims to upgrade the educational levels of the street children to reintegrate them into public schools.

The reintegration of each child into society should be one of the most challenging and top priorities of help centers. They should provide a comprehensive support plan keeping view of adapted to the child's holistic needs. Together, the social worker and the child set specific life goals with progressive and achievable steps. They work closely with the families to understand and solve the initial reason of why the child is on the street. This also includes providing support to families to

start an income generating micro business to prevent the child from returning to the street.

Teaching and education is one of the basic requirements and most important act that street children need apart from food and shelter. Even if a person who wants to help but is not the artistic type, it is still possible for him/her in getting the street children involved in a impulsive 'arts and crafts' session. These sessions are a great way to get their creativity and increase and help them in their development. Michaela Lola in her article "10 ways you can help street children without giving money" writes:

Small projects such as showing them some cool Origami techniques (or paper airplanes) or making simple bracelets with some string will be a mutually inspiring activity. If you'd like to do something more in-depth, you can also check out a charity organizations that specialize in this field.(par.24)

Donating and helping local organizations who are active in helping street children is yet one of the best ways where an individual can help if he directly cannot participate or because of his/her busy schedule. A person can head over to the local schools or organizations and donate books, coloring materials and other learning paraphernalia. This is in accordance with the famous lines of Dr. Loretta Scott quoted by Elisabeth Gifford in her book *House of Hope: God's Love for the Abandoned Orphans of China* as she says that, "We can't help everyone, but everyone can help someone." (116)

Income generating activities will be more helpful than a patronizing attitude towards these children. Helping them in learning and in earning their livelihood is a much better charity. Extreme poverty is often the underlying reason why most street children run away from home or were kicked out. So giving children and/or their families the skills and opportunity to earn a decent income is the key to a long term and sustainable route off the streets. To help in giving older street children the vocational skills that enable them to live independently, or providing the parents of younger children the skills and means to earn an income which will enable them to keep their kids well fed and in school. As well as offering vocational skills training, we also provide small loans to set up their own shop or small business.

The approach to deal with the problem regarding street children must be aimed at plummeting and eliminating the influences that cause children to leave their home or force them to stay on the streets, reducing the time and negative effects of living on the streets and preventing children from returning to the streets. One of the principal anticipations should address the risk factors before these children leave home. There can be a range of programs which are affordable like day care and public awareness campaigns which help in alerting public attitudes to street children. These recommendations may be suggested to decrease recognize dhazardous elements for children to leave home.

To practice social work with respect to street children, there is a need of passion and motivation. These two factors are the key of persisting as a social worker, without political or economic support from the government or any other institution. The advantage of lack of support from the government makes it possible for social work to be practiced in a more creatively way since the work is more flexible without government

involvement and does not depend on the policies of the government but rather it allows creativity of new approaches.

CONCLUSION

The eighteen points above mentioned derive their methodology from four basic principles, which are

Pledge to Equality: Which says that we need to check and compare various nations regarding their laws of human rights and specifically to street children and then we need to give care and promote equality and rights to these street children.

Defending Every Child: It lays stress on the fact that street children need protection from violence, abuse and it must be ensured that these children have access to justice whenever they are harmed.

Providing Access to Services: This factor enables access to the basic essential services to street children such as hospitals and schools; therefore with this factor, they can reach their full potential and develop in a good way.

Constructing Special Solutions: This factor stresses the importance of delivering special services as well as opportunities to street children which will be tuned into unique needs and challenges of life for street-connected children.

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