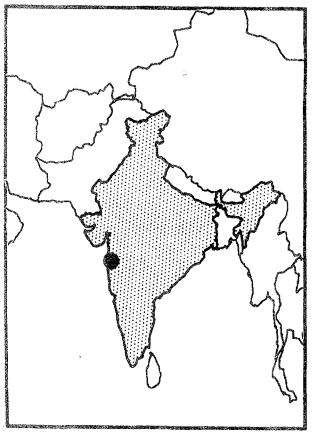

Street children, hotel boys and children of pavement dwellers and construction workers in Bombay - how they meet their daily needs

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I. INTRODUCTION

THIS PAPER PRESENTS the results of research on how street children, hotel boys and the children of pavement dwellers and construction workers meet their daily needs - for instance, where they wash, defecate, sleep and who helps them when they are ill. Section two describes the circumstances which lead to children being in such circumstances and the inadequacies of public provision in meeting their needs. Section three describes the organizations responsible for undertaking the survey and the unconventional means by which contacts were made with the children. It also describes how involving the children in the survey became a means of establishing better contact between the children and the government agencies and voluntary organizations seeking more effective public responses to their needs and problems. Section four presents the findings of the research.

Bombay is known as a city of migrants. During the 1960s and 1970s, the inflow of migrants increased and their composition changed as far more families migrated to Bombay, rather than single males. This led to a rapid increase in the number of families living in Bombay in very poor housing without basic amenities and services. Most migrant families could not afford adequate quality accommodation and, as the public authorities were not ready to ensure accommodation and services, these needs were met by other means.

In addition to these families, there has also been an increase in the number of children living alone in the city. These are children who have run away from home or institutions, or who have come to the city to earn money for themselves and their village based families, or who have been abandoned. The vulnerability of these children far exceeds that of children who live with their families since they lack this source of social, economic and emotional support.

This article identifies four groups of vulnerable children and, drawing from a recently completed study, seeks to understand their situation better.[1] The groups considered are: children of pavement dwellers, children of construction workers, children who live by themselves on the street (street children), and children who work in hotels and restaurants (hotel boys). Although the study concentrates on these four groups, the authors also recognize that there are other groups of children who are equally vulnerable.

Concern for the well-being of these and other children has led to special services, programmes and institutions being set up by both government

Sheela Patel was one of the founding members of SPARC and has worked with the organization for six years. During this time, the research work of SPARC has developed into a number of areas including pavement dwellers, resettlement areas, drug abuse, women's organization and, now, children in the city. In all these activities, SPARC has worked first to create an information base about each group, and then has worked with local community organizations in order to support the struggle for a just allocation of resources and free access to resources for the poor.

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1. *SPARC (forthcoming), Waiting for Tomorrow*, Available from SPARC by the end of this year.

and non-government organizations. But most children have remained outside such provisions. Non-institutionalized services have been too limited to reach all the children requiring support and institutional provision has not realized the rehabilitation first envisaged. In the 1990s, institutional care is not the preferred choice of either the government or the people.

The four subgroups which are the focus of this study are all victims of the process of migration, often initiated by changes in economic, agrarian and industrial development. Migrants (and the demographic impact of such moves) have been generally ignored in the planning of cities. The breakdown of traditional family structures and the economic stress faced by families have led to the breakdown of both urban and rural families.

The challenge is to identify the needs of the children, the services they need and how existing services and institutions need to change to be effective, and any additional support they require.

II. THE CHILDREN IN THE CITY

THE STORY OF these children begins in the villages where the lack of jobs and resources encourage many families to migrate to the city. Once in the city, at least half of the population lives in structures which do not meet the most basic standards of accommodation. Poverty and their inexperience of city life compounds the problems. For all the children in this study, their vulnerability is first a result of their abject poverty in the village which is then compounded by their migration to the city. Neither at home nor at work do they receive state protection.

a. Street Children

In the city of Bombay, the Missing Persons Bureau suggests that an average 200,000 people leave their homes annually. Half of these are not reported, but of the 50,000 who are listed, 45 per cent are minors below the age of 16. (Dec 1979). Of the some 250 children brought into custody each month by the Children's Aid Society, a large majority are boys. The Juvenile Justice Act offers a framework of institutional care for neglected children, but is unable to provide any non-institutional support for children living by themselves.

Street children are distinctly different from children of pavement dwellers and slum dwellers by the fact that they have chosen to leave their families. "*Sadak Chap*" is a term by which children refer to themselves. "*Chap*" means stamp, and "*sadak*" is street - the term aptly describes those who carry "the stamp of the street". The simplest definition is one the children have developed themselves, "without a roof and without roots...roofless and rootless". This not only describes their state, but separates them from other children of the poor. While street children share occupations and some characteristics with these other children, they are unique in that they have broken all contact with their homes. This, more than any other characteristic, separates the kind of help they need from that required by other groups.

The ICCW committee suggested the setting-up of health checks, immunization, nutritional assistance and functional literacy and recreation for street children.[2] In 1979, during the International Year of the Child, the Maharashtra government (Maharashtra being the state in which Bombay is located) initiated programmes for various deprived groups. In 1985, the Directorate of Approved Schools, the Judiciary and

2. This report was carried out by the Indian Council of Child Welfare, details have been quoted from an article in one of their regular bulletins, Vol. 30-31, Oct-Dec, 1982-3.

the police proposed the establishment of night shelters for street children in Bombay on an experimental basis. The responsibility for this was given to voluntary agencies. Officials and social welfare agencies expressed doubts about the scheme encouraging "irresponsible parents to shed their responsibility" and hence the project was shelved. By 1989/90, it is clear that children are living away from their parents in all cities in India. This phenomenon is a result of larger changes than a growth in "irresponsible parenting". Without even rudimentary dwellings, these children are known to live under bridges, on platforms of railway stations, working during the day, eating out of the wage they earn, and owning no more than what they wear on their backs. Their lack of permanent address, their wandering lifestyles, and their changing workplaces make them a difficult group to locate; the collection of information about this group, and the provision of state services, is an urgent need.

b. Hotel Boys.

Many inexpensive eating places, both registered and unregistered, have a preference for employing children; often those from outside the city, as they are less likely to know their legal rights and may be more amenable to taking orders. Officially, the employment of children in restaurants or other eating places is illegal. Such children are called "hotel boys".

It is estimated that 27 per cent of Bombay's child labour force is employed in such establishments.[3] Some 50,000 are employed in 11,750 hotels, restaurants, canteens, tea shops and eating places. Seventy five per cent of these children are migrants. The daily minimum wage for an unskilled child worker as prescribed in the Minimum Wages Act, is Rs 3.80 per day (less than 20 pence or US$ 0.40) or Rs 87.88 for a 26 day month.[4]

A 1977 study of working children, which included children working in tea shops found that several of the establishments were family enterprises, 80 per cent were unregistered, and 50 per cent employed children who were migrants.[5] Those employed were male, with 42 per cent under 12 years old. There was a high turnover of employment. In 77 per cent of the cases, children lived on the premises, while the owner lived elsewhere. Most children earned Rs 50 a month and worked more hours than legally allowed.

c. Pavement Dwellers

Pavement dwellers live on street pavements, their dwellings created from waste materials. The size of their accommodation is restricted by the width of the pavement and by the number of other occupants there. Four studies have been undertaken in Bombay - the first in 1959.[6] The most recent was by SPARC who, in 1985, developed a method to enumerate the pavement dwellers.[7] This study located around 6000 households (27,000 people) living in one municipal ward, along three arterial roads. It found that 67 per cent had moved to Bombay due to reasons related to poverty, landlessness, and lack of employment in their "native place". Fourteen per cent of household heads were not first generation migrants but born in the city, and 23 per cent had been living in the city for more than three decades.

Some pavement dwellers may have lived in slums before, and through further impoverishment, come to live on the pavements, while others chose the location because of its proximity to their place of work. Sixty four per cent of those working lived within walking distance of their place of work. The pavement dwellers are predominantly employed in the

3. Baig, Tara Ali (1975), *Our Children*

4. Many of the research studies mentioned in this report have been completed by students for the Masters degree in social work in Bombay. One of these studies was undertaken by Xavier and considered hotel boys in the city.

5. See note 2

6. The Economic Study of Greater Bombay and Trends in Urbanization was undertaken by the Tata Insitute of Social Sciences. It is referred to in Ramchandran, P (1972), *Pavement Dwellers in the City of Bombay*, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Series No. 26, Bombay.

7. SPARC (1985), *We the Invisible*

unorganized sector (for example as petty traders, hawkers, cobblers, tailors, handcart pullers, domestic servants, and scrap collectors). The SPARC study indicates the number of wage earners per family is higher than the national average, while the male and female employment levels are about the same.

Unlike slum and tenement dwellers who over the last two decades have been acknowledged as having the right (now backed by legislation) to civic amenities, pavement dwellers have no "rights". In fact, all present legislation works against them. The Bombay Municipal Corporation Act 1981 has several sections which legitimize the eviction of pavement dwellers from their residences, and which lay down the procedure to follow. Such acts of demolition further add to the insecurity of the family (and child) and erode the few resources that they have. The opportunities for obtaining secure shelter are further reduced by the fact that they are not recognized as a vulnerable category of the poor in the city, and hence receive neither housing nor land. By being employed in the informal sector, labour legislation offers little protection.

d. Construction Workers

Construction workers are skilled and unskilled workers employed in the construction of buildings in the city. This study focuses on those who reside on the construction "site". The industry is labour intensive and depends heavily on unskilled workers, about 10 per cent of those employed are women.

The construction industry is one of the fastest growing sectors in India. The nature of site management differs according to such factors as the size of the site and duration of the project. Most managers subcontract the hiring and managing of labour to *mukadams* and employment exchanges play no role in the recruitment of labour in this industry.[8] Construction work requires a specialist knowledge of several distinctive processes. This leads to a series of subcontractors being employed for each of such processes. These are managed and centrally supervized by the main contractor. The worker is at the very bottom of this exploitative process.

Most construction workers are unskilled labourers. Originally landless agricultural labourers who have left their village to earn a better living in the city, they are often recruited by subcontractors who come from the same area. Often these are persons to whom they are indebted, or who bring them to cities with the promise of a job. Workers live in makeshift houses on the site and, despite being in the city, are isolated from the mainstream of urban life. Working conditions are hard, and their living environment even harsher. Their homes are usually bricks stacked without mortar, with tin or thatched roofs, and mud walls and flooring. The availability of water differs from site to site, and sanitation and drainage are practically non-existent. Schools, ration shops, health centres and other amenities are either unknown or the people are not eligible or it is impossible for them to use the services because of the conditions attached, for example, opening hours.[9]

Perhaps more than any other, this labour force lacks any bargaining power. Most sites have workers from a particular area or district living together, and their relationship with the subcontractors excludes any possibility of negotiation.[10] There is no assurance of future employment and workers are expected to disappear from the site after they have constructed the building. It is easier to recruit fresh unskilled labour for the next assignment.

Children living on such sites (some of which are also expected to work) face many problems. Living on the construction site, amidst rubble,

8. See Mobile Creches (1986), *Under the Shadow of Scaffolding*, Bombay. This study was undertaken by Chauhan and Sinha as a part of their Masters degree in social work (see note 4).

9. See note 8. This original work was completed by Eklavya.

10. See note 8.

cement, stones and scaffolding, involves many dangers which are compounded by the lack of day care, education, health facilities and other social services. Women construction workers are known to leave their babies lying or playing in the mud, being cared for by older siblings who should be in school. The children do not stay long at any one site and therefore find it hard to attend school; they have neither knowledge of where the schools are located, nor the language necessary to seek admission, nor the stability needed for a successful school life. Malnourishment, disease, and other such manifestations of a hostile environment are major dangers to these children.

There are many studies indicating that the children themselves work on the construction sites. The School of Social Work in Madras undertook a study in 1975 which indicated that 72 per cent of children working on construction sites worked to supplement family incomes.[11] Of these 65 per cent earned less that Rs 300 per month, and worked 11-13 hours a day on average. Another study in Bombay in 1980 indicated that families (adults and children) were contracted to work for a fixed amount. Most families were in debt and earning a sum of Rs 500 per month.[12] Findings of this study and another undertaken later by the College of Social Work in 1984 indicated that this kind of arrangement is common.

11. See note 8.

12. See note 8.

There are two acts which should protect such workers: the Contract Labour Act 1970 and the Inter-State Migrant Workers Act, 1979. The first abolished contract labour under certain conditions, regulates it in others, and provides protection to labourers through other legislation. It seeks to make the principal contractor responsible for the provision of essential amenities and payment of wages. The second act attempts to provide protection to the migrant worker by maintaining a scrutiny on such workers. It demands the registration of contractors employing migrant workers, and the provision of certain minimum benefits. However, neither of these acts has had any impact on the accountability of employers, whether they are government agencies and departments or private enterprises.

III. THE STUDY

ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS those associated with this study are concerned about the plight of migrants in the cities. It is unquestionable that their lack of resources and inadequate preparation for urban living makes the transition traumatic and painful. Concern about the children of migrants, and about children who migrate alone, is ever present among non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

This report represents a special endeavour by a large number of individuals, groups, NGOs, and city and state administrators who have attempted to pool their resources to create an information base on such children from which alternatives can emerge. Welfare services have been inadequate both in their outreach to the needy and in their financial allocations. They are also often accused of not promoting the involvement and participation of the groups at which the programme is directed.

This study was commissioned by the Department of Social Welfare, Government of Maharashtra, and sponsored by UNICEF. The four non-government organisations (see box 1 overleaf) who have undertaken the execution of the study are: SPARC, National Slum Dwellers Federation, Mobile Creches - Bombay and Shelter Don Bosco.

Two interview schedules were prepared for use in the study. One was for the children, which included general questions asked of all respon-

Box 1: Some Information about the Participating Organisations

Department of Social Welfare, Government of Maharashtra: this department is in charge of all schemes for children devised by the state and central government. This project was developed by the department. Together with UNICEF and the four voluntary organizations, it developed a partnership where the gathering of information has been undertaken by four voluntary organizations. The department will actively circulate the report and conduct workshops and discussions to formulate services for the vulnerable groups.

UNICEF: the Western Zone Office of UNICEF is involved in an advisory capacity to assist the state government and its departments, and the municipal corporation to provide services to children in the city. UNICEF has sponsored the cost of the study and its officers are involved as advisors.

Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC): SPARC works on issues of urban poverty. It provides research, training and organizational support to groups of urban poor in the cities and has been working with families living on the pavements of the city of Bombay. SPARC has taken on the role of co-ordinator of the study because of its past experiences.[13]

Mobile Creches - Bombay: provides day care, non-formal education, nutrition and training to children of construction workers. Although deeply involved in the cause of construction workers and their children, this group has remained "invisible" in the service delivery plans of government. Mobile Creches sees its participation in this study as a means of highlighting the plight of families and their children in their isolated situation on construction sites, and of allowing the group to utilize its past experiences in service-delivery in developing alternative mechanisms.

Shelter Don Bosco: this unique experiment initiated by the Salesians attempts to provide 60 - 80 children living alone on the streets with support. As the number of such children increases, Shelter believes there is an urgent need to recognize this phenomenon, and to provide the children with the assistance that they need.

The National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF): several of the leaders of the slum communities first came into the cities as hotel boys and, in view of the invisibility of these children in the city, the Federation has participated in the study. The Federation has provided multi-lingual support to the research team.

dents and specific questions for each individual group. A sample size of 1,000 was aimed at for each group of children. The second schedule was for the families of pavement dwellers and construction workers; two hundred families would be interviewed to provide additional background information. The fieldwork was carried out between November 1988 and June 1989.

Every attempt was made to ensure that both girls and boys were equally represented in this study. However, some difficulties were encountered. Hotels do not employ girls and girls form a small proportion of street children. There are three main reasons for this: fewer girls run away from home, those who do are rapidly picked up by pimps or the police, and few girls are able to escape from prostitution. Most street children and hotel boys were between the ages of 11 and 20. It is at this age that they are compelled to earn a living. Among the

families of pavement dwellers and construction workers, it is around this age that children leave school and look for jobs.

To collect some of this data, novel methods of collecting information were needed. The remainder of this section describes how the process of contacting street children was initiated and developed. Following sections report on the living conditions of each group.

People often see research as useless. Such a view emerges from the experience of answering questionnaires with no evident useful result. SPARC has attempted to change this in all its work. Involving the people whose lives are the focus of the research in the research itself is possible, and often leads to valuable and immediate results. In the case of street children, the study involved street children at all levels - from creating the questionnaire to locating the children and administering the survey. The traditional medium of a "report" of findings is not useful to these children, and all those associated with the study looked for an alternative medium which would serve this purpose, and also initiate a process of dialogue between the children and the rest of the city.

In a decade of *melas* (fairs), the concept was quickly borrowed. A *Sadak Chap Mela* was conceived of as a programme to which all children could be invited. Children from different *addas* (areas) were contacted. Each evening, a van load of volunteers and street children went to various locations where the children sleep, to issue oral invitations. The fever caught on, children volunteered to paint walls saying "*Challo Wadala ... Sadak chap mele mein!*" They wrote posters in different languages and placed them around the city.

The activities of the *mela* were also suggested by the children. They wanted to sing and dance, watch movies, play, eat hot meals, and talk about their lives. What was added to this was that they would also interact with outsiders. Government officials, voluntary organizations and other people who are concerned for the children were invited and offered the opportunity to glimpse the reality of their lives. Through the discussions, there would be an exchange of research findings, and an attempt to examine what can be done for these children. The programme attempted to evolve mechanisms through which the interaction between us and the children could continue after this event.

A press conference was held in the Press Club on the 14th March 1989. Many journalists attended and provided press coverage before, during and after the event. The *mela* received support from different quarters - many organizations and individuals contributed money and goods in kind, even more came as volunteers to help in any way they could.

Children started coming into the football ground of the Don Bosco School, Matunga early on Saturday morning, 18th March 1989. At the gate, two street children who were volunteers, gave them a small ID card with their name on it, and they were enroled as participants. There was a square *mandap* with 10-12 feet of overshade on all four sides. This shaded space was covered with matting and served the multiple purpose of a place to sleep, eat, sit and play. A powerful sound system blared continuous music and there was a kitchen in which huge handees of simple, fresh food was cooked throughout the day. Meals were served at regular hours, and during the day the children danced, played games, watched video movies and, whenever the "mood" was right, broke up into different sized groups for serious discussions about their lives. Volunteers helped serve food, provide water, plan activities, aid discussions, and otherwise danced and sang with children.

The Honourable Minister for Welfare, Shri Sudhakar Naik came to see the children on the first day. This encounter was exciting for all participants for different reasons; everyone shared the feeling that his desire

The single most significant outcome was that nobody wanted to leave! For children it was the taste of childhood they left behind.

to chat with children, listen patiently to their stories, and understand their difficulties turned what could have been a dull formal speech into an event which provided for exactly the kind of sharing the organizers desired. Children sat around him, answered his questions and participated in discussions. The Principal of the Don Bosco School, Fr. Denzil inaugurated the *mela* by breaking a coconut on the converted stage. Throughout the three days, many members of the Salesian Order came and showed their support for this activity.

Well known film personalities whom the children wanted to meet also came: Neelam, Ratna Pathak-Shah, Naseeruddin Shah, Dilip Tahil, Vikram and Sunil Gavaskar, the legendary cricketer. Children burst out into screams of delight as they saw these personalities. The children were seated in small groups and the volunteers and personalities all spent time with them. The children chatted, shook hands, asked and answered questions and, of course, took pictures!

The three days of events were videotaped and much of this was seen immediately by children. Apart from the fascination of watching themselves on screen, the children had an opportunity to listen to other children talk about themselves and saw the event through a third person's eye. This also facilitated the group discussions which were held amidst the fun and dancing. Photographs were taken of the children doing different things, as well as with the visitors who came to meet the children.

The video and photo documentation of this event will serve many purposes.

First, it will provide a strong visual memory of an important moment of togetherness for the children and the organizations who made this happen. The documentation allows for the refreshing of memories and reflection. Secondly, it is a valuable tool for communication with other groups:

a. With street children who could not participate, the children can share this experience.

b. With street children in other cities. We believe that such problems occur in other cities too and the sharing of this experience with these children will further transcend regional and language barriers.

c. Voluntary organizations in Bombay and elsewhere concerned with street children: we believe this event to be an innovation which should be shared, discussed and developed.

d. With administrators and policy makers: at the city, state and national level, different administrators will be involved in creating a national policy on street children.

The main outcomes of the *mela* are the following:

1. A communication network to maintain contact in the future.

The single most significant outcome was that nobody wanted to leave! For the children it was a taste of childhood they had left behind. The organizations and the volunteers knew that there was no immediate solution to offer to children who spoke of police harassment and the problems of staying on the street.

Yet there was a bonding between everyone who was there. No one wanted to lose touch with each other in the future. As a result, discussions focused on how to set up a communication process which would ensure that children could keep in touch with each other and the organisations which worked with them. The discussions also attempted to focus on the main problems that the children felt required immediate resolution.

2. New mechanisms to create a legitimate identity for children.

The children demanded a legitimacy for their existence. It almost seemed as though they were being punished for being on their own in the city. They were harassed by the police for sleeping on the pavements or elsewhere, they were rounded up as suspects. It almost seemed as though the fact that they had no family identity made them especially vulnerable because no one took their side in times of crisis.

Since most of the children had no roots, no legitimate identity, they could neither turn to anyone for help nor could anyone who wished to help them come to their assistance. This would be resolved in the form of identity cards issued to children, with an address and telephone number to contact in emergency.

3. Developing leadership amongst the street children themselves.

The children were quick to acknowledge that even if there were many organizations like "the shelter" all the children living on the street could not be helped. Given that they did not want residential institutions, they would have to develop their own collective capabilities to find long-term solutions and deal with immediate problems and crises. This required that the children form a strong collective force within each locality. A wise and strong collective leadership must make this happen. The children decided to nominate three children from all the areas in which they lived. These nominated children would meet every month with volunteers from all four organizations.

During these meetings there would be leadership training, the exchange of information and discussions about important issues. This group would also take up the needs of children who wish to go home, follow a training course or experiment with a new skill. The children planned to increase the strength of their association by contacting children from other areas. Once their initial training was complete, they would seek meetings with the police, state government officials and other administrators. Three or four times a year, they would host further *melas*. These they would organize themselves and more children would be invited to join. The children of each area would meet once a month with some members of the organizations supporting this research. These people would assist the children nominated to act as leaders and continue the educational process.

IV. THE LIVES OF THE CHILDREN - HOW THEY MEET THEIR BASIC NEEDS

a. Street Children

Street children lead an independent existence, and we asked them what arrangements they had for sleeping, eating, bathing, toilet and water. This information serves a twofold purpose: to understand how the city's resources are used by the children and to plan for future interventions to help them. This information is presented in Table 1 overleaf.

The largest number, 48 per cent of the respondents, said they sleep on footpaths; 16 per cent use railway stations, and 6 per cent sleep in dargas (or mosques) throughout the city. Cinema theatres, the seaside, parks, below bridges, next to flower stalls and a myriad other places are also reported, though none of these are significant in terms of numbers. Over 60 per cent of respondents bought their food from small restaurants and food stalls, a further 8 per cent received free food at the dargas. Many children have obviously learnt to use the resources of these

Table 1: How The Street Children Meet Their Daily Needs - Sleeping, Eating, Bathing, Toilet and Water
(Sample size 1,000)

Sleeping	%
Roadside/footpath	46.7
Railway stations	15.7
Dargas, temples	7.7
Cinema theatres	4.9
Seaside/parks	3.0
Miscellaneous	3.9
No response	18.1
Total	**100**

Eating	%
Hotel	62.5
In our hut	6.1
Dargas	7.9
Where we beg	5.0
At Workplace	3.4
Miscellaneous	0.5
No response	14.6
Total	**100**

Bathing	%
In the sea	29.6
Railway station	6.4
Pipes/water taps/ tanks/well/canal	11.7
Dargas	2.1
Hotel	1.4
Miscellaneous	5.3
Anywhere we can	9.2
No response	34.3
Total	**100**

Drinking Water	%
Hotel/restaurants	69.1
Dargas	7.8
Pipes/water taps	15.6
Wells	1.2
Miscellaneous	2.6
No response	3.7
Total	**100**

Toilet	%
Railway station	29.1
Seaside	26.4
Roadside/ railwayline	18.7
Municipal toilets	4.3
Other	5.9
No response	15.6
Total	**100**

religious institutions.

Bathing is not a priority for most street children - many said they do not bathe at all. Thirty per cent use the sea as their bathtub, while small numbers use railway stations, pipelines and the dargas. Most of the children - 70 per cent - get drinking water from the restaurants and food stalls where they purchase food. Municipal water taps and pipelines are also an important source. Railway station latrines are the most widely used toilets, used by almost 30 per cent of respondents; 26 per cent use the seaside and 19 per cent the roadside. Over 16 per cent did not respond to this question.

Table 2: Number of People Staying with You
(Sample size 1,000)

	%
No one/lives alone	33.8
One other person	10.1
Two other persons	14.1
Three other persons	17.1
Four other persons	6.4
Five other persons	10.4
Six other persons	3.2
Seven or more people	3.8
No response	1.1
Total	**100**

Considering that street children have broken away from their primary kinship groups, we thought it would be interesting to study the socialization pattern of street children.

In general, street children tend to prefer small groups to large gangs; many live alone. This last point may be important, indicating that the children may have problems in dealing with relationships.

Street children are faced with two kinds of emergencies in their lives - sickness and police harassment. With no family or other formal structures for support and protection, we were interested in how they handled these

situations. Table 3 shows the kinds of illnesses suffered by the street children during the previous three months. Seventy per cent said that they had not been ill are therefore excluded from the table. Table 4 considers the help received by children during illness and the source of treatment sought.

Of those who had fallen ill in the previous three months, only 171 could provide details about their illnesses and the causes. Just under 30 per cent were looked after by friends, nearly 15 per cent simply fended for themselves. Over 40 per cent said they had gone to municipal or government hospitals and clinics for treatment, indicating a wide knowledge of these services. Only 7 per cent had sought private medical care.

According to those who work with street children, harassment by the police and other civic authorities is a daily hazard. This is amply substantiated by our data, in which 39 per cent of respondents reported having been caught by the police at least once. Of these, 77 per cent gave the reason for their arrest as "round-up", which is common parlance for routine arrests under the Vagrancy Act or picking-up of suspects. Most of them, 81 per cent, were released "automatically" after some period of detention.

The street children were also asked about why they had left home and whether they maintained any links with their families.

The single largest group (39 per cent) left home because of problems with his/her family. The second most common reason was the need to earn money or the acute poverty of their families.

Most children do not retain links with their families. Only 12 per cent have revisited their native place, less than 10 per cent write letters home or send money. The study asked about why the children did not return. Such information is useful in understanding the child's perspective and assessing follow

Table 3: Illnesses in the Past Three Months
(Sample size 301)

	%
Fevers	18.9
Injuries/accidents	34.9
Aches and pains	1.7
Other ailments	1.3
Don't know/can't say	43.2
Total	**100**

Table 4: Help in Illnesses and Sources of Treatment
(Sample size 301)

Helped by	**%**
Friend	27.6
Self	15.0
Relative	7.6
No response	49.8
Total	**100**
Source of treatment	**%**
Municipal/govt. dispensary or clinic	41.9
Pivate doctor	7.3
No response	50.8
Total	**100**

Table 5: Reason for Leaving Home
(Sample size 1,000)

	%
Problems/fights with family*	39.1
To earn money/ family poverty	20.9
Forced to go to school	8.3
Death of one or both parents	9.7
Wanted to see the city	3.6
Other reasons	2.2
No response	16.2
Total	**100**

* "Problems" include fights and physical abuse by parent/s, stepparents, insufficient food, being thrown out by parents because of bad behaviour etc.

up work.

One third said they would not return unless they had a good job and 27 per cent were "not interested". Fourteen per cent of the children either have no parents or no home to which they can return, or still regard the quarrels as too significant.

b. Hotel Boys

Most hotel boys have access to shelter, food, water, bathing and toilet facilities in the hotel premises. This may appear to be an advantage but, in reality, it increases the vulnerability of the hotel boys. They are at the mercy of the hotel owners and none of the facilities are free. They may have their salaries reduced because of these "benefits" and their wages are often kept below subsistence level. They do not leave the hotel premises and remain isolated, thus making them an even more difficult group to organize.

The hotel provides beds and baths for 80 per cent of the boys. In answer to the question "Who sleeps with you?" most boys replied other workers in the hotel. Many boys admitted that they have been sexually abused by older workers who also live in the hotel. In many instances, the child was unable to cope with this situation and was forced to change jobs. It was difficult to obtain accurate responses to this question, especially

Table 6: Links with Home/ Family
(Sample size 1,000)

	%
Have visited home	11.8
Write letters	7.5
Send money	6.8
No contact	73.9
Total	**100**

Table 7: Reasons for not returning home

	%
Don't have good job	33.9
Not interested	27.1
No parents, no home	8.5
Quarrels with family	5.7
Using brown sugar (heroin)	4.2
No money	1.9
No response	18.7
Total	**100**

Table 8. Daily Needs
(Sample size 1,000)

Sleeping	%
Hotel	87.7
Own house	7.0
Friend's house	0.9
Relative' house	1.5
Footpath	0.7
No response	2.2
Total	**100**

Toilet	%
Hotel toilet	48.4
Public toilet	28.9
Open places	10.6
Others houses	3.1
Own house	1.2
No response	7.8
Total	**100**

Bathing	%
Hotel bathroom	83.4
Own house	4.3
Owners house	3.8
Public places	3.4
Friends/relatives	1.8
No response	3.3
Total	**100**

Who Sleeps with You?	%
Other workers	77.4
Friends	9.3
Family	7.0
Relatives	1.8
Alone	1.2
No response	3.3
Total	**100**

since the interviews could not be conducted in private. However, many boys hinted at sexual harassment.

Only 50 per cent of the boys said they used the hotel toilet - this low number is probably because many such places do not offer this facility. About 30 per cent of the boys use public toilets and 10 per cent use whatever open places they can find. In this respect, they are very similar to other migrant children.

We asked about both occupational hazards and general health problems faced by hotel boys, how they coped when they were ill, the treatment they sought and the expenditure incurred.

Only 19 per cent of the children said they had been ill during the past three months. Three quarters of these had had fever, 10 per cent had suffered from infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, typhoid and jaundice. These answers were drawn directly from the children, rather than a medical examination, which may explain why their health appears to be so good. Just over 100 boys specifically talked about injuries they received during their work. Ninety per cent suffered injury to their hands due to spillage of hot tea and cuts while washing up.

Table 9: Health Problem
(Sample size 186)*

	%
Fever	75.8
Infectious disease	9.7
Aches and pains	7.0
Accidents	6.5
Diarrhoea	1.0
Total	**100**

**only 186 hotel boys answered in the affirmative*

Two separate questions on assistance during illness were asked: "Did anybody help you?" and "Who took you for treatment?" It emerged that the boys did not perceive the latter as "help". For example, in one-fifth of the cases, the hotel owner took them for treatment. But only five per cent of the boys said they got any help from hotel owners. Obviously, the owners have to ensure that the boys are treated soon so that they may continue to work and do not infect other workers. Understandably, the boys do not see this as "help".

The main source of help seems to be friends in the boys' own network, mentioned by 44 per cent of respondents; 29 per cent said that friends took them for treatment. One-third of boys had no help when they were ill and a quarter were not taken for treatment. Relatives offered help in 4 per cent of cases, and took the sick boy for treatment in 23 per cent of cases.

More than 70 per cent of the boys sought treatment from private sources, which is a comment on the inaccessibility of public health institutions and the failure of the public health system. This may also be due the fact that hotel owners who help them get treatment want "quick" solutions. Another factor is that the street child may be able to wait for long periods in a municipal dispensary but the hotel boy is constrained by the demands of his occupation. One-fifth of the boys used municipal or state facilities.

More than one-third of boys spent less than Rs 25 on treatment for their illness. A further 30 per cent spent between Rs 25 and 50. Forty five per cent of them spent their money, while one-third said hotel owners paid for the treatment although the boys may later have to pay through direct deductions from their salaries.

Hotel boys do not have very much time for leisure. Nonetheless we asked them what they did during their free time. More than two-thirds pass their time watching movies. On average they seem to watch movies once a week. Smoking *beedi* (small, very cheap cigars) and chewing *pan* seem to be the other common habit. Less than one per cent take alcohol

or other intoxicants. Very few of them indulge in gambling.

The main reasons for leaving home are given below.

Seventy per cent of the boys left home for economic reasons. Only ten per cent of them left home because of problems with their families or because their families were coercing them to attend school. A minuscule two per cent said that the city beckoned them or that their friends lured them to it. Other reasons included the need for their own freedom.

Table 10. Reasons for Leaving Home
(Sample size 1,000)

	%
Not applicable	8.4
Economic reasons	70.1
Problems with the family	10.5
Attraction to Bombay	2.0
Other	3.7
No Response	5.3
Total	**100**

Unlike street children, more than two-thirds of hotel boys retain contact with their homes through visits and regular letters. Two-thirds visit their homes at least once a year. This is largely because they have been sent to the city by the family for better economic prospects. Moreover, these boys work in tight regional groups, thus maintaining their links with their homes.

c. Pavement Dwellers

The size of the dwellings and the materials used to build them are indicative of the kind of shelter and comfort they provide. Half the sample of 375 families live in huts of less than 50 square feet, a further 32 per cent measure between 50 and 100 square feet. Over 85 per cent of families use a combination of wood, plastic, tin sheets, gunny cloth and mats to construct their home; these makeshift materials are mainly drawn from industrial waste. About 4 per cent use only wood and a similar number only plastic.

Water, electricity, fuel, bathing and toilet facilities are the basic requirements of any family. The following tables show access to these amenities. The main source of water for 80 per cent of pavement families are the nearby *chawls* and houses, probably the homes where the women work as domestic help. The Bombay Municipal Council supply water to only one-fifth of the families. The majority of them do not pay for water. Most families get municipal water from others' homes or directly from pipes, and the quality of potable water, in particular, is reasonably good.

Table 11: Access to Basic Amenities
(Sample size 375)

Source of Water	%	Toilet	%	Garbage disposal	%
Nearby *chawls**	56.3	Public toilet	64.0	On the road	39.2
Nearby house	24.3	Railway tracks	30.4	Opposite the hut	11.7
Municipality	9.6	Near building	1.1	Garbage *dabba* (box)	41.9
Nearby hospital	0.3	Near hospital	0.8	Railway track	4.8
Nearby building	6.7	Near *chawl*	1.6	No response	2.4
No response	2.8	No response	2.1		
Total	**100**	**Total**	**100**	**Total**	**100**

* *Tenements*

The majority of families use nearly public toilets, paying a nominal charge each time. The myth that pavement dwellers use the streets as their latrines is therefore belied. Forty two per cent of families have access to garbage boxes or dabba, while the rest dispose of garbage on the roads or nearby railway tracks. Needless to say, the vast majority of

Table 12: Daily Needs of the Children
(Sample size 375)

	Sleeping %	Eating %	Play %
Outside the house	85.9	92.8	13.2
Inside the house	3.7	-	9.6
Road	4.0	0.8	57.7
Maidan (open space)	-	-	10.1
Neighbour's house	-	-	0.9
No response	6.4	6.4	8.5
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

	Study %	Bathing %	Toilet %
Outside the house	57.6	67.5	-
Inside the house	4.3	4.3	-
Road	5.3	22.1	10.9
Municipal toilet	-	-	53.3
Railway track	-	-	24.8
Neighbour's house	-	-	2.4
No response	13.1	6.1	8.6
Response not applicable	19.7	-	-
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

pavement huts do not have electricity. Almost 80 per cent of families use kerosene as cooking fuel.

When the mothers of children under six were asked about the problems of staying at their present location, all mentioned the problem of the toilet and over 90 per cent noted the difficulties in obtaining water. Just over 50 per cent said that the "house" was a problem. Twenty two identified problems experienced during the monsoon as being of particular importance and a slightly smaller number (19 per cent) mentioned the lack of electricity. No other problem was identified by more than 7 per cent of the sample.

The government has introduced several facilities for the underprivileged which are implemented by the state and municipal authorities. Access to any of these facilities requires proof of identification. A majority of families had ration cards (78 per cent) which, even if temporarily, are useful as proof of residence and acceptable by the courts. About 66 per cent of the parents have their names on the electoral rolls. Letters (received by 57 per cent of respondents) not only maintain links with their villages, but, being sent to a particular address, also establish where the families have been living and for how long. Thirty five per cent of families said that they had savings and 28 per cent had loans with banks. In general, most pavement dwellers know where to obtain ration cards, where the local police station, hospital, banks and schools are. Just over three-quarters of children born to pavement dwellers were born in Bombay. Of these, 74 per cent had been born in municipal hospitals, 4 per cent in private hospitals and 23 per cent in the family home. Just over half the children attend school; 86 per cent of those attending school went to primary school. Many of the children help their

parent obtain basic amenities; 50 per cent collect water, just under half do the shopping and a similar number help to wash clothes. Thirty six per cent do some of the cooking and 34 per cent look after their younger brothers and sisters. The data below refer to how children are able to meet their own daily needs.

The pavement in front of the house is where most children eat, sleep, study and bathe, obviously because their homes are too small. About 60 per cent of the children play on the road, especially in their own area, or in places where they have friends. Apparently half of the children use the municipal toilet near their homes, while about 25 per cent use the railway tracks.

d. Construction workers

In general, the families of construction workers live in small, insecure structures. Almost three-quarters of the houses were between 51 and 100 square feet, clearly inadequate for the entire family. A further 12 per cent were less than 50 square feet and only 8 per cent exceeded 100 square feet in size. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of the homes were built with bamboo, *chattai* and industrial waste such as plastic, wood, tin and sacks. The nature of their work and the lack of permanent employment meant that the workers had little incentive to build more solid structures of cement, brick or wood.

Just under one in five houses had electricity (although it is possible that these respondents simply meant that they lived near a street lamp). About 80 per cent of the families used wood as cooking fuel, a quarter of these also use kerosene. The remaining families use only kerosene. A quarter of families have a washing place.

Table 13: Access to Basic Amenities
(Sample size 286)

Source of water	%	Toilet	%	Garbage disposal	%
Municipal tap	36.8	Open places	62.9	In front of the hut	42.7
From the site	34.9	Municipality	30.5	On site,	
Nearby *chawl**	11.7	Contractors	6.6	far from the hut	31.8
Tanker	15.7			Elsewhere	21.0
School tap	1.1			Dustbin	4.5
Total	**100**	**Total**	**100**	**Total**	**100**

** tenements*

It is evident that construction workers have scant access to basic amenities. Only a third are provided with water from municipal sources. Another third make do with whatever sources are available on site - sometimes a tap or a well, often at the discretion of the owner. Two-thirds of the families use any available space such as railway tracks or maidans near their sites for their toilet needs. The response to this question was "forests", "mountains" and open spaces, clearly depicting the proliferation of construction sites in areas of the city earmarked for development. The majority of the families disposed of their garbage outside their own huts. About a third of them took it far away from their huts. Only one in five families had access to a dustbin. Eighty per cent said that the garbage outside their huts was never swept away.

To understand whether construction workers use the city's resources, we asked them two questions: whether they were aware of the existence

of a particular resource,and/or whether they had visited it. Less than 20 per cent knew of, or had visited any ration office, ward office, police station, clinic, bank or municipal school. Only 27 per cent had knowledge of a government hospital, and only 17 per cent had visited it.

Not surprisingly, not even one family in ten had either a ration card or their names on the voters' list. However, approximately 70 per cent of them receive letters, showing that they maintain links with their homes in the rural areas. About 8 per cent hold savings. The few who already possess ration cards seem to have gone to the ration office for renewal or update. Very few families seem to have visited the ward office, where they go to pay the rent for their huts. Visits to the police station are mainly to settle disputes between neighbours. Surprisingly nearly one-fifth of the families are aware of the bank, and claim to have visited it to deposit money in their accounts. However, they do not use it as a source of loans. The families have been to local municipal schools largely to secure admission for their children. However, only 13 per cent of the children interviewed said that they were currently attending school.

In the family interview, it was reported that 16 per cent of the children were employed, most of them working on the site as manual labourers. Sixty per cent of the children interviewed were employed (as masons, stone-breakers, and manual labourers). They stated their main problems to be aches and pains, low wages and no holidays. Most children also contributed to the household chores, such as collecting water and going shopping for food. Half the girls and a quarter of the boys were expected to look after their younger siblings. The table below shows how the children of construction workers meet their needs.

Table 14: Daily Needs of Children
(Sample size 286)

	Sleeping %	Eating %	Bathing %	Playing %
In the hut	91.9	95.2	30.9	31.4
Outside hut	-	-	7.9	55.4
Compound	6.3	2.6	18.5	10.0
Footpath	0.4	0.3	0.3	1.4
Elsewhere	1.4	1.9	2.4	1.8
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

A majority of the children sleep and eat in their own homes and play either outside or in the building compound. Half of them use the area outside their homes to bathe since their homes are too small to meet the daily needs of the entire family.

IV. CONCLUSION

THE GROSS INADEQUACIES in the provision for the basic needs of street children, hotel boys and the children of pavement dwellers and construction workers are evident from the figures reported above. These inadequacies, in terms of access to clean water, bathing and toilet facilities and health care, clearly have a serious impact on these children's health. They add to other areas of vulnerability - inadequate incomes (and often inadequate nutritional intake), inadequate protection from exploitation at work and ineligibility for social services (for example, schools) and social programmes (for example, ration cards which allow cheap food purchase). Most hotel boys and street children

face additional problems in having no adult family members to whom to turn for advice and support, and in being much more vulnerable to physical abuse.

It is not easy to identify the best outside interventions to ensure their needs are met. It is perhaps easier to consider the needs of the children of construction workers and pavement dwellers; meeting the housing, basic service and health needs of their parents would do much to also meet the children's health needs while a dialogue with these families will often make clear the form of creche, day care and school that is most appropriate.

For children who have left home, the most important intervention would be to lessen the pressures which force children to do so. How can families be assisted to reduce the pressure which ejects children from the home? Many believe that children just leave home for petty reasons - a mother scolding for poor examination results, a father not giving money for the purchase of any item the child wants. A deeper study of the child's history, and a sensitive analysis of these circumstances, indicates that the particular incident which a child narrates as the cause of leaving home is usually only the culmination of many factors and pressures. Children do not easily decide to leave home. Many of the pressures forcing them to leave are not the fault of the parents or the child but linked to the economic pressures and social environment in which the family resides. These are factors not easily changed, especially in nations undergoing severe economic problems. While interventions to reduce these pressures on children are obviously important, so too are interventions which help meet the most immediate needs and priorities of street children and hotel boys. This paper has sought not only to report on the findings of the survey but also to outline how contact was established with these children and the means set up for a permanent dialogue with them about their needs.