REFLECTING CHILDREN'S PRIORITIES IN THE
MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

my world my vision

A report of consultations on the MDGs
with Children outside of parental care
New Delhi, India, 2012

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Protecting and empowering children since 1989

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Consultation with Children on
Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)
Venue: ISI, New Delhi, India
Date: 12th, 13th , 19th and 20th September 2012

Organized by:
Butterflies, Programme with street and working children
New Delhi, India

Supported by:
Every child, U.K

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Acknowledgements

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Part One

Background of the study

Realizing the absence of any reference to children's care and protection in the current MDGs consultations with children organized across the world; particularly children without parental care and at risk of losing parental care, this study is significant to ensure voices of vulnerable children are heard in the global developmental debate. It is expected that issues and priorities of children in the aforementioned categories would be explored through consultations and incorporated in the post-MDGs agenda. In this context Butterflies, member of Family for Every Child Coalition volunteered to do this study with children in the above mentioned categories in New Delhi. 18 consultations with children have been organized as part of the initiative. It is expected that through this initiative, the voices of the 'voiceless' would be part of the developmental debate and incorporated into the post-MDGs agenda.

Outline of the study

The study is divided into six parts. The first part deals with the *background of the study objectives and research methodology*.

Response of children on things they like about their life and things that make their life safe, the second part tries to ascertain the response of children on things they like and things that make their life safe. Findings are thematically presented under sub-headings.

The third part delineates *Response of children on things they dislike about their life and things that make their life unsafe* in greater detail. Things that make children's life unsafe have been explained along with things children dislike about their lives.

Priorities of children for desired changes, the fourth part explores the priorities of children for desired changes. Findings have been classified into three sections. Big, medium and small priorities of children for desired change have been presented in detail.

Conclusion is presented in the fifth part.

The sixth part presents the *references* of the study.

The outline of the study is influenced by the following objectives;

General Objective

- To identify the priorities of children, either outside of parental care, or extremely vulnerable to a loss of parental care, for inclusion in the post MDG framework

Specific objectives;

- To understand things that make a child feel happy and safe

- To understand things that make a child feel sad and unsafe

- To document views of children on what needs to change in their personal and community lives and prioritize the needs identified

Definition of major concepts

- *Child:* The present study defines child as any person who has not completed 18 years of age as given in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 to which India is a signatory (UNICEF 2007).

- *Child outside parental care or at risk of losing parental care:* In the present study child outside parental care or at risk of losing parental care means child in the age group of 9 to 17years living in the following distinct contexts;

  (a) Living by themselves on street

  (b) Living with single parent on streets

  (c) Living with single parent in non-notified slums

  (d) Living with both parents on streets

  (e) Living with both parents in non-notified slums

  (f) Living with extended family care in non-notified slums

- *Non-notified slums*: Non-notified slums are inhabited by mainly temporary migrants, such as temporary construction workers or new rural migrants who find it extremely difficult to get any formal housing within their paying capacity. These non-notified slums or poverty clusters generally have low reach of services and civic facilities. There is frequent demolition of their temporary shelters and families separated by civic authorities. These are illegal settlements and in India such settlements are called non-notified.

Research Methodology

A Brief Background

The study is prepared as part of a wider initiative of Family for Every Child (FFEC), U.K across the world to explore the viewpoints and experiences of children without parental care on issues of care and protection in their everyday life. Two organizations, Butterflies, a child rights organization, New Delhi and Sathi, Bangalore have been assigned to do the consultations with children without parental care in India. Workshop based approach has been designed to elicit information from children. It was suggested that 12 workshops to be conducted in Delhi covering 72 children as part of this global research. A toolkit on the methodology to be used had been provided by FFEC to facilitate the workshops. Methods such as spider diagram and a 'gallery walk' for the age group of 8-12 years and group drawing and discussion followed by a 'gallery walk' for the age group of 13-17 years have been recommended for workshop (Consultations with Children on the Post Millennium Development Goal Frame Work, A Toolkit of Methods).

An in-house discussion was held in Butterflies and a few modifications have been made to the research methodology. Three distinct categories of children have been identified for the workshop by realizing the ground realities of children without parental care or risk at losing parental care in Delhi associated with Butterflies. Instead of the suggested two age groupers, i.e. 8-12 years and 13-17 years, three age categories, i.e. 09-11, 12-14 and 15-17 years have been taken for this study. Venn diagram, as a method to unfold gender differences and similarities in the perspective and experiences of children on care and protection has been added along with the suggested methods.

Composition of the groups of children in Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions are the vital part of the workshop. Here nature of the composition of children in focus group discussions needs to be elaborated. Although identified children for focus group discussions have been associated with Butterflies, most of them have not known each other very well as they come from different locations in Delhi and do not interact with each other on daily basis. In this regard the researcher constructed the groups[1] in accordance with common characteristics such as age and gender. Thus focus group discussions have been conducted with 'researcher constructed groups' (Mathew David and Carole D. Sutton 2011).

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[1] Considering the composition, two types of focus group, i.e. naturalistic and researcher constructed are used in social science research. The researcher conducts focus group discussion with pre-existing group where members are familiar is known as naturalistic group while the researcher constructed groups encompasses strangers arranged by the researcher based on common characteristics (Mathew David and Carole D. Sutton 2011).

Sources of data

Primary as well as secondary sources have been used for acquiring adequate information for the research study. Primary sources include information elicited from children through focus group discussions, drawings and images created by children in the workshop. Researches, articles, government studies and internet sources on international, national and location specific dealing with the subject matter have been used as secondary sources for the study.

Methods of data collection

Focus group discussion has been used as major method to elicit information from children. Researcher constructed groups have been formed based on the common characteristics such as age and gender of children. A group consisted of six members which is an ideal group suggested for focus group discussions[2] (David Morgan cited in Mathew David and Carole D. Sutton 2011). Spider diagrams, drawings, creation of images and gallery walk have been used as part of the discussions. Discussions with heterogeneous group were also conducted as part of the workshop to draw out the differences in the perspectives and experiences of children. Venn diagram was adopted as part of this exercise.

Pre-test

A pre-test of methods was been conducted among 36 children in Delhi on 12th and 13th September 2012. Six homogeneous focus group discussions were conducted based on age and gender. The exercise has helped to understand how the methods can be used to cull out information from children and certain areas needed to give emphasis while using the methods. Children had been informed about the study and consent had been sought from them before starting the focus group discussions.

Data collection

Data collection took place on 19th, 20th and 28th September 2012. Six homogeneous focus group discussions based on characteristics of gender and age had been conducted. One heterogeneous focus group discussion comprising male and female was carried out as part of the data collection process. Children had been oriented about Millennium Development Goals and the research objectives through a power point presentation. Consent had been sought from children before starting the focus group discussions.

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2   According to David Morgan, in the conduct of social research, groups of 6-10 people work best.

Table: 1 **Common characteristic for focus group discussions and sample size targeted**

Pre-test workshops			
Focus group	**Homogeneous groups**		
	Gender	Age group	Number of children
1.	Male	09-11 years	6
2.	Male	12-14 years	6
3.	Male	15-17 years	6
4.	Female	09-11 years	6
5.	Female	12-14 years	6
6.	Female	15-17 years	6
Total			**36**
Final workshops			
Focus group	**Homogeneous groups**		
	Gender	Age group	Number of children
1.	Male	09-11 years	6
2.	Male	12-14 years	6
3.	Male	15-17 years	6
4.	Female	09-11 years	6
5.	Female	12-14 years	6
6.	Female	15-17 years	6
Total			**36**

Table 2: **Additional heterogeneous focus group discussions and sample size targeted**

Heterogeneous group (Additional)			
Focus group	**Gender**	**Age group**	**Number of children**
1.	Male and Female	09-11 years	6 (3 Male and 3 Female)
2.	Male and Female	09-11 years	6 (3 Male and 3 Female)
3.	Male and Female	12-14 years	6 (3 Male and 3 Female)
4.	Male and Female	12-14 years	6 (3 Male and 3 Female)
5.	Male and Female	15-17 years	6 (3 Male and 3 Female)
6.	Male and Female	15-17 years	6 (3 Male and 3 Female)

Table: 3 Distribution of category wise children participated in workshops

Category	Age group			Gender		Total
	09-11	**12-14**	**15-17**	**Male**	**Female**	
Living by themselves on street	1	3	3	7	0	7
Living with single parent on streets	2	5	2	5	4	9
Living with single parent in non-notified slums	9	10	9	14	14	28
Living with both parents on streets	2	0	1	1	2	3
Living with both parents in non-notified slums	9	2	4	4	11	15
Living with extended family care non-notified slums	1	4	5	5	5	10
Total	**24**	**24**	**24**	**36**	**36**	**72**

The homogeneous focus group discussions have been conducted according to the plan while all additional heterogeneous focus group discussions with the same population have not been carried out due to lack of time slot as allotted time for homogeneous focus group discussions had exceeded in most of the workshops. As a result out of six, two heterogeneous focus group discussions have been conducted. Venn diagram has been used as part of these focus groups to explore the similarities and differences in the perspectives and experiences of children.

Challenges and limitations of the study

● The first session in the workshop for younger children addresses research question of '*what makes a child feel happy/safe and what makes them feel sad/unsafe?*' In relation to this question, a few difficulties were faced in the workshops. Children have given different set of answers for the sub-parts in the questions. For example, with regard to things that makes them feel happy children have shared that "they feel happy while having ice-cream, playing, getting good clothes etc. while children have indicated that while staying with mother they feel safe. Likewise children have given different set of answers to the other parts of the question, i.e. things that make them feel sad and unsafe. . Thus four different questions had to be asked to elicit answers for the principal question. The exercise through one spider diagram had been found as ineffective to address four different parts of this one question.

● Other than aforementioned issue, likewise the second question for younger children, '*that I like and dislike about my life (and safe/unsafe)*' also encompasses four sub-questions. It was difficult to cull out information from children through one exercise.

- The first session in the workshop for older children addresses research question 'Things *that like and dislike about my life and safe and unsafe'*. Children got confused about the first part of the question, i.e. *'things that like'*. Most children have shared things that they would like to have in their lives and which are not accessible for them at present, while others have given answers which are selected from things that are actually available or accessible to them. Case in point such as….. children would like to have a safe shelter, new clothes, education in formal school, love and affection of parents are not accessible or available for children at present but they indicated these points as answers for the first part of the question.

- Traumatic issues such as incidents of sexual abuse on street or at home and forms of violence at home were not discussed by children in the groups as these were groups constructed by the researcher based on common characteristics. The children did not have a long standing relationship with each other and therefore we felt these issues should not be probed unless someone spontaneously spoke about it. Furthermore, sexual abuse, or and experiences of violence should not be part of a FGD for purposes of a research. Group therapies are organized when all participants are part of a psycho-social therapy. Therefore, the study limited its scope in indicating elements of such issues rather than delineating in greater detail.

- Although most of the children could write, a significant percentage of them have faced difficulties in putting their thoughts on paper as most of them do not have a habit or culture of writing except their regular class notes. This issue has stood as a problem in easily following methods such as 'gallery walk' in the toolkit. Consequently this limitation led to giving more emphasis on drawings and creating images in relation to the issues of discussion.

- Time frame of the exercises had exceeded in most of the workshops due to difficulties of children in putting their thoughts on paper. Consequently this issue distracted children's attention after a certain point of time.

Part Two

Response of children on things they like about their life and things that make their life safe

Workshops conducted with children in different categories under the general heading of children without parental care or at risks of losing parental care have revealed varying aspects of care and protection regarding everyday life of children in the context of Delhi. The methodology of the research has helped to gather information quickly from the field without compromising the quality of information. It is important to note that by adopting this strategy, the study has explored the plural lives of children in relation to care and protection. Age and gender are found as vital variables in influencing the everyday life of children in different categories. The following analysis tries to present the major findings with regard to the response of children on things they like about their life and things that make their life safe without closing the eyes to the differences in their opinion.

Relationship and staying with parent(s), siblings, extended family members and friends

Cross cutting the different age groups and gender, almost all children have shared that they would like to stay with parent(s), siblings and extended family members[3]. Children do believe that staying with family members or extended family members would provide care and protection to them. In this regard children do consider this as a safety net for them. Other than this general finding, children who are living by themselves on street have indicated their strong desire to stay with family members; all of them have their families in different provinces in India. It is worthwhile to note that none of them are orphans. They have
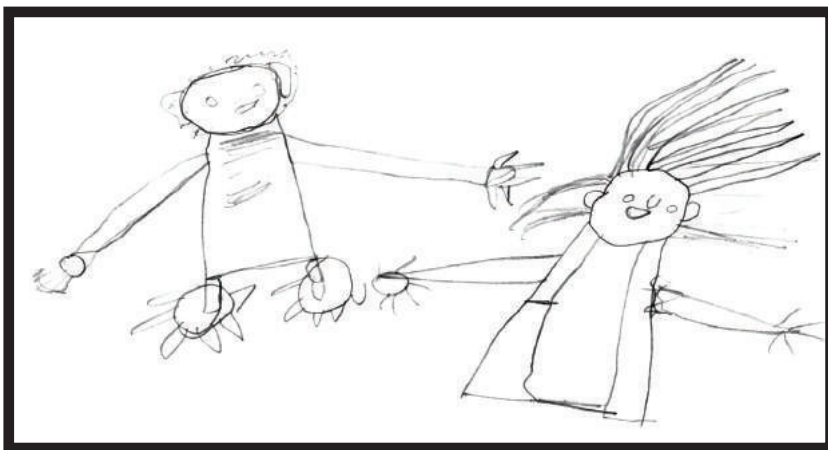
'Father and mother'-Drawing of a 9 year old boy

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3   In the present study, extended family members' means grandparent, grandfather, stepmother, uncle, aunty and close relative of the child.

migrated from different parts of India either with or without the consent of their parent(s) in search of employment to supplement their family income. Here the sharing apparently mentions the element of compulsion in the decision of children who stay on street by themselves. Children who stay with single parent (in majority cases with mother) have shared their aspiration to stay with both parents as a significant percentage of mothers have been deserted by their husbands. As against the general trend, a male and female child in the age group of 15-17 years has expressed their interest to live independently. Alcoholism of parent and domestic violence has been shared as reasons for their decision.

Children in the age group of 12-14 and 15-17 years have emphasized the role of friends in their everyday life. They feel happy and safe while staying with their friends. Female children in the age group of 15-17 years have underscored this point. Spending time with their friends makes female children in the aforementioned group happy.

Children have revealed that warm relationship and interaction with parent(s), siblings and extended family members as important elements that make them feel happy and safe. Irrespective of gender, children, particularly younger groups, highlighted their inclination towards love, affection and care with regard to things they like about their life and things that make their life safe. Almost all have agreed polite communication of adults with children as an important thing that makes them feel happy and safe. Communication in different contexts such as household, street, work place was discussed in the groups.

Employment of parent(s) has been raised by children as a vital aspect to be safe in their life. According to children, lack of regular employment of parent(s) or elder siblings does explicitly and implicitly influence their lives. Children who are living by themselves have highlighted the prevailing unemployment and poverty in rural areas and how the situation compelled them to migrate to urban areas for livelihood and support their families. Although there is an element of compulsion exist in their decision to continue with the survival activity, all of them have expressed that they like to 'work' and earn more.

Children who are staying with their parent(s) have also shared the same line of thought. A section of children in these categories have indicated they are forced to involve in any kind of survival activity[4] along with schooling to supplement their family income. A ten year old female who is involved in a survival activity at Vegetable Market has said in the workshop that *"My mother is not getting employment on regular basis, that's why I work"*. Another female child has complained that *"my brother is doing nothing and asks money from mother, and the*

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4   By considering the problematic usage of the term 'wok' in relation with marginal (beggary and prostitution) and illegal (robbing) activities, which are often indulged by a mere fraction of street children, the study follows the term survival activity instead of work. French word for work *travail* comes from the Latin word *tripalium* which referred to a tool used to shoe horses as well as an instrument to torture. The conception of the term implied by the word was marked with the idea of constraint and suffering (Jacob 1994 cited in Manfred Liebel, Bernd Overwien and Albert Recknagel 2001), while the modern conception related to economic aspect, which is linked to production and a waged activity. It is therefore to avoid the negative connotations of the term 'work' particularly using among children, the study follows survival activity instead of the term 'work'.

demand often ends in fights between my brother and mother, in this context I have to 'work to support my mother".

Adoption of the method, Venn diagram, has revealed gender difference in the perspectives of children. In the mixed group discussions on involvement of children in any kind of employment after their schooling resulted in a heated debate. Irrespective of gender, all children agreed that everyone has to work and earn after their formal education. But a few female and male children strongly have opposed to this thought, although some of them are involved in some kind of survival activity. According to this group, female children are expected to stay in the sphere of household and help mothers in doing household chores rather than involve in any kind of outside work/employment. A 12 year old female said that *"girls should perform the role of girls not boys"*. On the other hand majority of children who agreed with the idea of children being involved in any kind of employment after formal education have also shared their difference in opinion regarding the nature of the employment which males and females should do in their lives. Generally the mixed group has suggested that females should do light work and male children could involve in any kind of 'work'.

It is crucial to note that majority parents of children do wok as unskilled laborers in unorganized labor sector in Delhi. Shedding some light on the economic dimension, most of the children who are living with parent(s) on street or non-notified slums have indicated a history of migration of their families to the urban space of Delhi to find employment and to escape from the cycle of poverty. In this regard the finding points out how structural factors[5] implicitly affect the lives of children in different categories. The study of Butterflies also finds an overwhelming majority of parents of children are working in informal sector (Butterflies Unpublished). It is apparent here that employment of parent(s) and elder siblings influence the life of children.

Basic needs and health care

Irrespective of age and gender children would like to access basic needs and health care in their everyday life as only a few basic needs are available to children now. It is apparent that likes of children with reference to basic needs, health and nutrition are closely linked to the things that make children's life safe. In general children in all categories have shared that they would like to stay in a safe shelter or house. According to children,
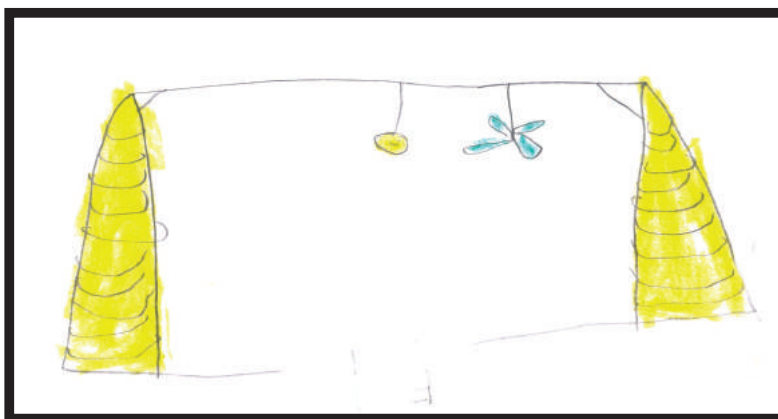

House- Drawing of a 12 year old boy

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5   Uneven development coupled with the downturn of agrarian economy and destruction of traditional occupations have been identified as sole reasons for this migration of children either alone or with families (Butterflies Unpublished).

house or shelter would give a place for leading safe life rather than a difficult life on street or non-notified slums without any civic services. Frequent demolishment of temporary shelters in the non-notified slums by civic authorities has been indicated by children to corroborate their wish.

Except a few children, majority children think that accessing safe drinking water and sanitation facilities at their residing area would make their life safe. Generally children fetch water from sources such as hand pumps at nearby notified slums and public pipes. A few children have to buy bottled water particularly during summer season. On the other hand, to be and feel safe children have mentioned access to clean toilet facilities as one of the basic demands in their life. Open defecation and paid toilets have been mentioned by a significant section of children with regard to sanitation facilities at their area. Similar difficulties have been noted by the recent studies of Save the Children and Butterflies in Delhi on street children (Save the Children 2011 and Butterflies Unpublished).

A few children mentioned that having electricity in their neighborhood (non-notified slums) would make their life safe. Children clarified this point further by stating that the extreme weather of Delhi...tremendous heat in summer and cold winters make it difficult to survive under tin/asbestos sheet roofs.

House- Drawing of a 12 year old boy

Adequate food and clothes have been noted by children as basic needs which ensure a safe life. Further studies should be carried out to explore the food habit of children and its impact in their life as most of them are spending a significant amount of time on street and consume street food rather than food prepared at home.

Children expressed the need to have a clinic either in their neighborhood or close to it which would make their lives safe. Children have shared that such health clinics should be accessible and doctors and other paramedical staff need to take care of them. In general children have a good opinion of the behavior of the medical staff and treatments given in government hospitals, but a few have disagreed who did not have a positive experience. The result of the discussion goes along with the study finding of Butterflies among 'street children' which reveals that 88.10% of children have been treated sensitively by hospital staff including doctors (Butterflies Unpublished).

Children and development: Education and play, recreation and cultural activities

All children agreed access to education makes them feel happy and safe. Children in the age group of 09-11 and 12-14 years would like to attend formal schools for education, although most

of them have been enrolled in National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS)[6] and continuing their education. According to children, other than the benefit of knowledge, education will open new horizons for them to find a comfortable job in future hence would make their life safe.

On the other hand although children in the age group of 15-17 years would have liked to go to formal school, considering their present realities they have spoken about vocational training. Irrespective of gender the age group would like to attend vocational skill training classes and would like find a job and anticipated this would make their life safe.

Irrespective of gender children in all age groups like to play and freedom to move around the city. Children in the age groups of 09-11 and 12-14 years have emphasized this. Female children, particularly in the age group of 15-17 years have shared their desire to spend time outside the sphere of family and visit places in the city but their movements are curtailed and parents insist they stay at home and do household chores. Male children in the age group of 15-17 have not expressed their enthusiasm to spend time playing. But they would like to explore the city.

Peace in neighborhood and environment

Children in the age group of 09-11 and 12-14 years particularly female have emphasized the relevance of peace in family and community to lead a safe life. According to them, issues such as alcoholism, domestic violence at household, communal tension between Hindus and Muslims in non-notified slums and conflicts in neighborhood destroys the peace and make their life unsafe.

Tree and house - Drawing of a 13 year old boy

Clean surrounding has been raised by children as a point to be taken into consideration to live safe. Children have pointed out that dumping waste in the surroundings might spread diseases and makes life difficult. Being healthy is important to lead a safe life. Apart from clean surroundings a few children in the age group of 12-14 years have shared the importance of trees in their life. They have pointed out that trees give us oxygen and assure pure air to breath. In this regard plantation of trees makes life safe. Drawing has been used by one boy to express his ideas as he faces difficulty in putting his thoughts on paper (*Refer the drawing of a 13 year old boy, Tree and house*). The emphasis on tree and the green leaves in the drawing apparently underscores the sharing of the group.

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6 NIOS was established in November, 1989 as an autonomous organization in pursuance of National Policy on Education 1986 by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India. NIOS provides academic courses at elementary, secondary and senior secondary level. In addition NIOS offers number of vocational, life enrichment and community oriented courses ('National Institute of Open Learning Schooling' available at http://www.nios.ac.in accessed on 29th September 2012)

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Part **Three**

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Response of children on things they dislike about their life and things that make their life unsafe

Things that children dislike and make life unsafe for children are interlinked in number of instances. The following part deals with the response of children shared in the discussions on dislikes and unsafe. Findings are presented under sub-themes without ignoring the diverse opinions of children.

Staying alone

Children who stay on streets have mentioned fear of staying and sleeping alone on streets. Male children who are living by themselves have indicated that while sleeping alone on street their money is often stolen and they are always under the fear of adults and police. Police harassment has been noted as one of the common issues for these children. The finding corroborates earlier observation of studies in relation to police brutality (R. Panicker and Praveen Nangia 1992; Human Rights Watch 1996; Lori Mc Fadyen 2005; Save the Children 2011 and Butterflies Unpublished). On the other hand female children who do stay with parent(s) on street have pointed out fear of adults particularly drug addicts while sleeping on the street. A 14 year old female said "*they might do something 'wrong' with me...I don't like them...*" Children who do stay in non-notified slums have also shared the fear of being alone in the absence of parent(s) in the household. A 14 year old female said "*while my mother goes to our native place, I feel scared and unsafe*" Children expressed that staying alone in different contexts/situations makes their life unsafe.

Relationship and communication with family members and adults at locality

Issues of verbal and physical abuse, domestic violence and alcoholism

Majority children who do stay with parent(s), siblings and extended family members have shared varying problems which make their life unsafe. Scolding and beating of mother and elder siblings has been indicated as the common issue which children do not like. It is believed that forms of physical and emotional abuse are the effective methods in disciplining children in the context. However it is apparent in the response of children that they do not like such methods of disciplining. In addition, lack of care and affection from the side of parent(s) and

other family members have been noted in the discussion. The finding substantiates the recent studies of Save the Children and Butterflies (Unpublished)[7]. Domestic violence and conflicts in the household either between father and mother or mother and elder siblings have been found as important issues which make children's life unsafe. Alcoholism of father, elder brother or mother has revealed as underlying factors of domestic violence and conflicts at home. Female children, particularly younger children have highlighted the issues of alcoholism. The finding corroborates the recent study of Butterflies (Butterflies Unpublished)[8].

Closely linked to the aforementioned issues, a section of fathers or elder brothers of children do not indulge in any kind of employment on regular basis and this affects the household economy. Pressure is borne by mothers and consequently younger children have to get involved in any kind of survival activity to support family. Other than this, inadequate earning of parent(s) to run and manage family needs is also a decisive factor in the decision of children to indulge in any survival activity. In this regard it is evident that lack of regular employment of parent(s) or lack of involvement in employment explicitly and implicitly makes the life of children unsafe.

Majority children have criticized the communication pattern and behavior of adults in the neighborhood. Verbal and physical abuse of adults, particularly drug addicts and alcoholics was shared in the discussions. Female children have shared that they often get scared by the comments of adults especially by substance users.

Gender inequality

Gender inequality as a matter of concern has been raised by a section of female children in the age groups of 12-14 and 15-17 years. Female children dislike and feel unsafe the way parents and male members in the family discriminate them. Work distribution in household has been highlighted as a classic example in this regard. It has been said in the discussions that female children are expected to assist mothers or do household chores while male children are always exempted from these 'duties'. In addition to this, a few female children had mentioned the lack of freedom in their lives in comparison with male children. They have criticized their parents for restricting them within the household. Their desire to spend time outside the household has been a common and significant issue that girls brought out in their discussions. Apart from this the female children have mentioned that their parents do scold them even for the mistakes of

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7   The study of Save the Children reveals more than 50% of the boys and 31.4% of girls out of the total are physically abused by parents, guardians, police and relatives (Save the Children 2011). Going along with the same trend, the study of Butterflies finds that parents (44.25%), elder siblings (8.62%), a combination of parents and siblings (18.97%) and relatives (1.72%) in other words family members and relatives constitute the majority out of the total persons who abused children.

8   The study finds that a vast majority of children's family members (93.91%) do use different kind of intoxicants in their lives in particular alcohol. In addition the study also reveals that more than 80% of children's homes are a space of conflicts between parents or children.

their male siblings. The finding sheds some light on the role of family in constructing gender. Studies of Lewis Aptekar[9] and Butterflies[10] (Unpublished) also observed the role of families in constructing gender.

Eviction, demolition of slums, issues regarding basic needs and health care

Eviction and demolishment of non-notified slums have been repeatedly raised by children as an issue in all the workshops. Families in non-notified slums are often evicted and their houses are demolished by civic authorities. The sharing goes with the study finding of HAZARDS Centre[11] on demolition of sub-standard houses and resettlement and subsequent issues in Delhi.
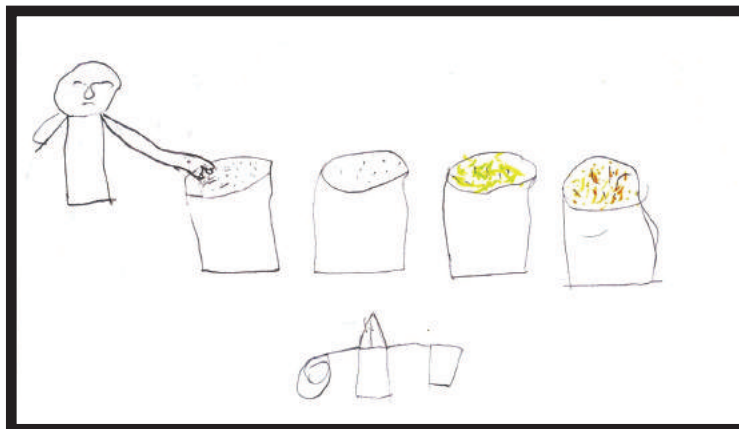
Eviction: Drawing of a 13 year old boy

Lack of availability of potable water on streets and slums has been raised by children as an issue that makes their life unsafe. A few children have to buy bottled water. At present most of the children access water from nearby sources such as hand pumps in non-notified slums, public taps. The issue of lack of toilet facilities had also come up in the discussions. Open defecation, unhygienic public toilets ("*which are dirty*"- a 14 year old girl) and paid public toilets have been noted by children in all categories. The finding corroborates the researches of Save the children and Butterflies (Save the Children 2011 and Butterflies Unpublished).

Majority of children, who were part of the study, stay either on streets or in non-notified slums without any services of Municipal Corporation of Delhi. The study of HAZARDS Centre identifies 7 million families living in unauthorized colonies in Delhi (HAZARDS Centre 2004), who are forced to live in sub-standard housing. It is clear that, lack of shelter with basic services makes the life of children unsafe.

Formal education and vocational skill education

Although most of the children have been enrolled in NIOS, they expressed their desire to continue their education through formal schooling. Children in the age groups of 09-11 and 12-14 years have shared this in the discussions. Involvement in any kind of survival activity to supplement their family income stands as major hindrance to achieve this dream. Children believe that

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9   Aptekar, Lewis, (2000) A world wise view of street children in the year 2000, available at http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/laptekar/download/streetchildrenfinland.pdf accessed on January 15
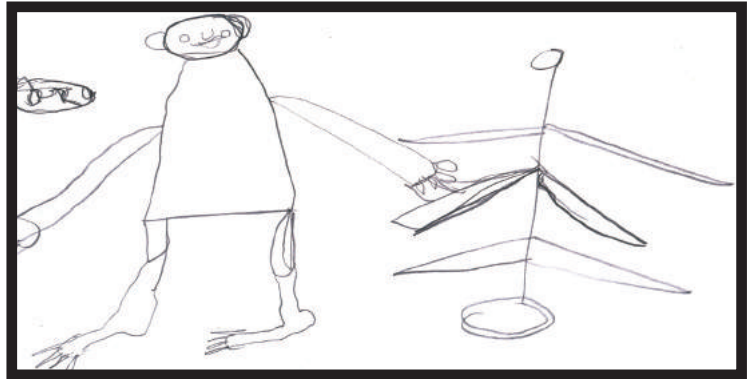
10 Child Rights and 'Street Children' in New Delhi: An Enquiry into Situations and Perspectives, Butterflies (Unpublished)

11 Hazards Centre (2004) Pull to Push to Shove, The Changing Face of Delhi. HAZARDS Centre: New Delhi

through formal schooling they could learn things systematically and find a job in future. In this sense children do consider lack of opportunity to attend formal school would make their life difficult and unsafe.

Children in the age category of 15-17 years have shared their misfortune due to lack of opportunity to enroll or continue their education in school. A few of them have shared that they don't like their present

Welding as a vocational skill – Drawing of a boy

survival activity, i.e. scrap picking, street vending etc. They consider these survival activities are unsafe as there are no skills required for doing such activities. Lack of opportunity to learn vocational skills with adequate support have been pointed out by them as an issue that makes their life unsafe. The drawing of a male boy (*Refer the drawing of a male boy who welds iron braches of the skeleton of tree*) evidently underscores the sharing of male children in the discussions.

A few female children have highlighted lack of involvement in any kind of survival activity makes their life difficult and unsafe as they are compelled to depend on their parent(s) or guardian for money even for meeting their small requirements.
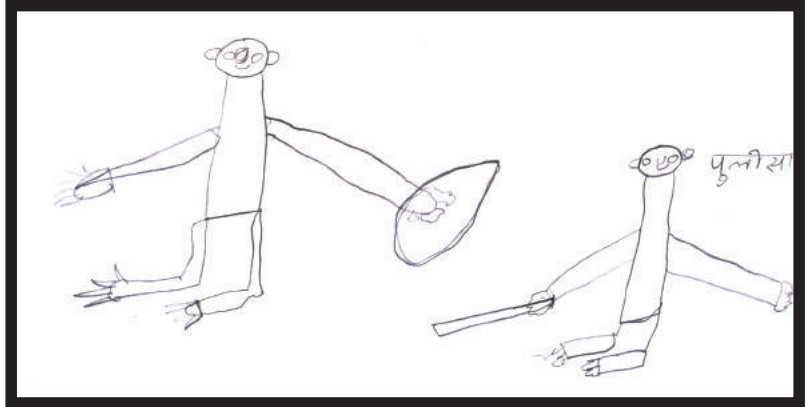
Children and Police harassment

Almost all children have opined that harassment of police is one of the major threats in their everyday life either on street or non-notified slums. Besides the general statement, it is essential to reveal the differences in the response of children with reference to police harassment. It is found that male children, in particular children who are involved in any kind of survival activities, do face police harassment in forms of apprehension and beating frequently. Children mentioned that the meager amount earned by children is taken away by the police personnel. Often male children have been beaten up by police while working on railway platforms and premises of railway station or markets. Two children have delineated in the discussion that they have been taken to police station and forced to clean the floor. Although it is difficult to generalize the behavior of police based on the aforementioned case, the incident sheds some light on how children who are involved in any kind of survival activities are treated by the police in the city The finding confirms the studies on street children in Delhi (R. Panicker and Praveen Nangia 1992; Lori Mc Fadyen 2005; Save the Children 2011 and Butterflies (Unpublished).

Going along with the experience of children who are involved in survival activities, children in other categories have also shared police brutality in discussions. Children who do stay in non-notified slums have indicted the role of police with civic authorities in eviction and demolishing slums. Children have mentioned that they have been beaten along with their family members

by the police. It was shared that their utensils, clothes and other belongings have been thrown away by the police during the time of eviction.

Apart from the dimension of physical abuse of police, a female child in the age group of 15-17 years has mentioned that a few police men do *'wrong things'* with female children in her neighborhood. Although she has not delve deeper into the topic, implicitly indicated the involvement of police in sexual abuse of female children in the locality. Butterflies took cognizance of this issue and did have series of meetings with the community members on what

Police harassment: Drawing of a 14 year old boy

mechanisms have to be put in place to ensure the safety of girl children. Of course the first reaction was to deny it, but we reassured them that this meeting was only to take care and be on guard about such incidents. As we did not disclose who had mentioned it to us. One of the suggestions was that if such an incident happens, a complaint would be lodged at the police station and if necessary a call would be made to child helpline services. During our informal meetings with girls after the workshops no one could share a verifiable incident where a girl in their neighborhood has been a victim of abuse. However, we have mentioned to them that they should inform us so that we could give all the necessary support required. With reference to a question on observation of child sexual abuse on streets, the study finds that out of the total respondents, 04.31% of children observed police personnel as perpetuators (Butterflies-Unpublished). In short it is evident that police harassment makes the children's life unsafe on street as well as non-notified slums.

It is important to note that the consultation with children have been conducted with 'researcher constructed' groups based on age and gender. In this regard traumatic issues like sexual abuse, commercial sexual exploitation etc has not been dealt. However like the aforementioned indication, often children have mentioned issues of sexual abuse in discussions in general. Male children have also hinted incidences of sexual abuse on streets, while female children have highlighted the misbehavior of drug addicts, alcoholics and male adults at their localities. Most of these issues were part of general discussions. Female children have added that they are being scared by the adults and drug addicts. According to female children the misbehavior of police, adults, drug addicts and alcoholics do make their life unsafe. However, close studies need to be conducted to explore the subject in greater detail.

Risk behavior: Habit of substance (ab)use[12]

Male children in the age groups of 12 to 14 and 15 to 17 years have indicated that in spite of their understandings about the consequences of usages, often they consume substances such as glue. The recent study of Butterflies and Save the Children accede to the result. The study of Butterflies finds that out of the total respondents, 64.17% of children are aware about the implications of the usage of substances (Butterflies Unpublished). It has been said by the majority of substance users that they dislike the habit and know that the behavior makes their life unsafe. But all of them have expressed their inability to give up the habit. A few female children in the age group of 15-17 years have mentioned that they dislike their habit of chewing tobacco and *paan*[13]. While analyzing the kind of substances they are addicted to, it is clear that male children are addicted to sniffing glue and some of them are habituated to heroin. However further studies are required to explore the linkage between the concepts of masculinity and the usage of kind of substances among the children without parental care.

Peer group pressure and influence pushes most of them to take to substance abuse. The sharing corroborates the recent study of Butterflies. The study finds that 86.67% of children initiated the habit due to the influence of their friends (Butterflies Unpublished). Although children are not able to give up the habit of substance use, feel that the behavior would make their life unsafe.

Fights, older children and violence on streets

Fighting with older male children has been shared as one of the major threats by male children in the age group of 12-14 years in the discussions. Younger male children are afraid of older children and feel unsafe while fighting with them. In addition one older male child has mentioned that he feels unsafe as he is weak and finds himself incapable to fight back. More studies are essential to find out the influence of the concept of masculinity among male children and violence on the street between children and male adults.

Child Marriage and perception on gender

Closely linked with the children's families' perception on gender and lack of safety on street, majority female children in the age groups of 12-14 and 15-17 years have expressed that their families intention of child marriage make their life unsafe. Female children dislike the attitude of parents and shared their feelings of helplessness.

Communal tensions and children

A few children have shared that communal tension is an issue in their slums. Tensions between Muslims and Hindus occurred in the past, it began with issues of day-to-day affairs and

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12 Misuse of any substances for stimulation instead of its actual use is defined as substance abuse.

13 Paan, the word came from pama, Sanscrit means leaf or feather is a stimulating, psychoactive preparation of betel leaf combined with areca nut and orcured tobacco mostly consuming in Asia.

later became communal in nature. Children are afraid of communal tensions based on their experiences and mentioned that the possibilities of such incidence in future make them feel their life unsafe.

Unhygienic environment: A matter of concern

Cutting across the various age groups and gender, a vast majority of children have highlighted unhygienic environment and surroundings which make their life unsafe. Dumping garbage anywhere in their neighborhood has been pointed out by majority children in group discussions. A few children have indicated that unhygienic surroundings might spread diseases and make life difficult. Poor drainage system in the city, deforestation and attitude of people has also been brought out by the children in relation to the issue.

Part | Four

Priorities of children for desired changes

This part tries to ascertain the priorities of children for desired changes in their lives and the lives of other children in their community and elsewhere. *Gallery walk* has been used to gain information from children. Priorities of children's have been divided into three, i.e. big, medium and small priority. Grounded on the method, findings are presented under the aforementioned sub-headings. It is important to note that the priorities of children are found as varied in accordance with their age and gender. However the following part tries to present the priorities of children without ignoring the difference in their opinion. Priorities are presented thematically and related points are incorporated in the themes.

Big Priority

- Nature of relationship with parents and older siblings

  Almost all children would like to change the nature of relationship with their family members. A few children have wished to stay with their families as at present some of them are living with their extended family members in urban area while others spend most of their time on streets. A significant section of children desire to change the behavior of their parents in relation to disciplining as most parents verbally and physically abuse children to discipline them. Children long to be loved by parents and seek affection from them. In addition to this, a section of children have wished to change the behavior of their older siblings as they too verbally and physically abuse them.

- Gambling and alcoholism of parents

  Children would like to change the aforementioned habits of parents. The habits influence the spending pattern of parents and make lives of children difficult.

- Lack of accessibility to basic needs – Shelter, safe drinking water, toilet facilities and electricity connection

  Children who are staying on pavements, parks and non-notified slums have desire to change their residence. They dream to have a house with basic facilities. Unhygienic toilets were another issue. A few children would like to have access to free toilet, bathing and safe drinking water facilities in their neighborhood. Moreover a few children would like to get electricity connection in their houses.

- Children want civic authorities to stop eviction of families from pavements and non-notified slums

- Aggressive attitude of people who fuel tension between Hindus and Muslims in slums

- Gender inequality

  Female children spoke in great detail about gender inequality. Distribution of household chores and parents restriction not allowing them the freedom to move around freely and forced early marriage were some of the things they would like to change.

- Older male children who are involved in survival activities such as scrap picking, vegetable picking, and street vending at traffic signals desire to change their survival activities. They have expressed their interest to learn a vocational skill. Similar to the interest of older male children, older female children have also shared their aspiration to join in any vocational training program.

- Habit of substance (ab)use

  Children would like to give up the habit of consuming substances. It is important to note that although majority of substance users were aware about the implications of the usage, they found it difficult to give up the habit. (Children who have expressed an interest to quit the habit are at present in contact with the organization for assistance)

- Exclusive nature of education policy and poor quality of education in schools

  A few out of school children have expressed their desire to enroll in formal schools along with involving in any kind of survival activity. (At present they are enrolled either in formal school or open school. Children who are enrolled in NIOS will be mainstreamed). Quality of education in schools was also questioned by children.

- Lack of employment opportunities to parents

  Children have mentioned that due to lack of employment opportunities for parents children are compelled to work in any kind of survival activity. In this context children have expressed that government should provide employment opportunities to parents.

- Government should ban alcohol and other stimulating substances (Government policy on alcohol and other substances)

- Misconduct of police

- Lack of accessible government clinics for treatment

- Misconduct of doctor and supporting staff in public health care system

- Drainage system in the city

According to children the poor drainage system in the city makes the surrounding unhygienic.

Medium Priority

- Habit of substance (ab)use of adults in the neighborhood.

  Establishment of de-addiction centers has been suggested by children to change the habit of adults.

- Behavior of teachers

  According to children, verbal, emotional and physical abuses are used by teachers to discipline children.

- Misconduct of adults in the neighborhood.

- Unhygienic surroundings

  Garbage bins in each house has been suggested by children to mitigate the issue.

- Restriction to entry into parks,

  Children mentioned that they should have easy and free access to parks. In addition children wanted more facilities in parks and desired to build it child friendly

- Poor quality of food items provided in restaurants and street food vendors.

Small Priority

- Behavior and attitude of girls

  A few children wanted to change the attitude and behavior of girls. They would like girls to be bold and responsible rather than passive and obedient. According to children this change could help them to address some of the protection issues they face on the streets

- Misconduct of alcoholics in the neighborhood.

Part | Five

Conclusion

The consultation, first of its kind, has explored diverse responses and priorities of children without parental care or at risk of losing parental care in detail. Children have mapped issues and priorities not only based on personal life and experiences but also on the lives of other children and even issues in the community as well. The exploration has revealed children's inclination towards family, parents and their care and protection is important to their lives. Children have also been honest about their short comings especially in reference to substance use. Children pointed out the irresponsibility of parents, adults, state and its apparatus which make their life unsafe. The priorities indicated by children have to be addressed to ensure the rights of children without parental care and at risk of losing parental care in the city. There should be a synergy of effort between community, civil society and the state and its apparatus to address the priorities. However it is expected that through the study the voice of the children would be part of the developmental debate and the post-MDGs agenda.

Part Six

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Butterflies

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U-4, Green Park Extension, New Delhi-110016
Tel:91-11-26163935,26191063 Fax: 91-11-26196117
Email: butterflies@vsnl.com
Website: www.butterflieschildrights.org