



Street Children Statistics ¹

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Global

In 1989, UNICEF estimated 100 million children were growing up on urban streets around the world. 14 years later UNICEF reported: 'The latest estimates put the numbers of these children as high as 100 million'². And even more recently: 'The exact number of street children is impossible to quantify, but the figure almost certainly runs into tens of millions across the world. It is likely that the numbers are increasing'³. The 100 million figure is still commonly cited, but has no basis in fact⁴. Similarly, it is debatable whether numbers of street children are growing globally or whether it is the awareness of street children within societies which has grown. While there are understandable pressures for policies to be informed by aggregate numbers, estimates of street child populations, even at city levels, are often hotly disputed and can distract rather than inform policy makers.⁵

Africa

- A study in **Ethiopia** found that street working children reported that they commonly worked for an average of 2-3 hours a day on the streets, typically for an hour before school and for another hour in the evenings. 8% worked on the streets only at the weekends.⁶
- The average age at which children first become involved in street life in **Ethiopia** is 10.7 years. In a survey that carried out on fifty-one children in Addis Ababa in 1994, the average age of initiation to the streets was 9.95 years (with 9.96 for boys and 10.47 for girls).⁷
- The Government estimates that 150,000 children live on the streets in **Ethiopia**, around 60,000 in Addis Ababa, many arriving from rural areas looking for work. NGOs estimate that the problem is far worse, with nearly 600,000 street children and 100,000 of these in Addis Ababa.⁸
- Around 1 million children are believed to be on the streets of **Egypt**, most in Cairo and Alexandria.⁹
- An UNODCCP study in Cairo & Alexandria, **Egypt**, had street children citing the following direct causes for being on the street:
 - Child abuse (at home or at work) – 82%
 - Neglect – 62%
 - Peer pressure – 36%
 - Sensation seeking – 16%
 - Other brothers and sisters – 8%

Of these 50 children 70% had dropped out of school and 30% had never been to school.¹⁰

- The same study¹¹ also found the reasons for substance or drug abuse among street children:
 - Relief from the pressures of the street (70%),
 - Peer Pressure (60%),
 - To sleep easily (50%), and
 - To be able to endure pain, violence, and hunger (30%).
- There are several differing statistics about the number of street children in **Nairobi, Kenya**:

- In 1999 it was reported that there were over 50,000 street children in Nairobi, and the government estimated that their numbers grew at 10 % per year.¹²
 - In 2001 it was stated that conservative estimates indicated that 300,000 children live and work on the streets in Kenya, with over 50% of them concentrated in and around the capital Nairobi.¹³
 - In 2001 another report estimated that there were about 40,000 street children in Kenya, with about half concentrated in Nairobi.¹⁴
 - It was estimated in 2007 that there were 250,000-300,000 children living and working on the streets across Kenya with, with more than 60,000 of them in Nairobi.¹⁵
- In **Kenya**, in order to survive on the streets, young people often beg, carry luggage, or clean business premises and vehicles (...) A 15-year-old orphan who has been living in the streets for four years said that he used to collect garbage, and help load and unload market goods, earning him up to 80 KSH (US \$1) a day.¹⁶
 - In **Kenya** Girls are forced to resort to prostitution in order to get clothes or food. According to a 2004 report from The Cradle and The Undugu Society, they earn as little as 10 or 20 KSH (\$0.30-0.50) for each client.¹⁷
 - Over 95% of the children on the streets of Akwa Ibom State, **Nigeria**, have been stigmatised as "witches" by pastors and abandoned to live on the streets by their parents.¹⁸
 - One study in Pretoria, **South Africa** found that the average age of the respondents to a study on street children was between 13 and 14 years.¹⁹ A similar study also found street children in South Africa to be between 7 and 18 years of age, with the majority between 13 and 16.²⁰
 - A 'headcount' of street children and young mothers in the different parts of Accra, the capital of **Ghana**, has categorised the numbers as follows:
 - 21,140 street children
 - 6,000 street babies
 - 7,170 street 'mothers' under the age of 20
 - 14,050 urban poor children (most likely at high risk of coming to the street).²¹
 - There are an estimated 10– 12,000 homeless children in **South Africa**. Children find their way on to the streets because of poverty, overcrowding, abuse, neglect, family disintegration and HIV/AIDS.²²
 - More than half of the boys interviewed in a **Rwanda** study and more than three-quarters of the girls, including 35% of those under ten, admitted they were sexually active; 63% of the boys said they had forced a girl to have sex with them; 93% of the girls reported having been raped.²³
 - In **Malawi**, a 1999 study found that the word 'vagabond' was used to describe 8% of young offenders, which the study noted was "a term... representing obvious cases of street children."²⁴
 - In 2003, approximately 110 infants were abandoned on the streets of Khartoum, **Sudan**, every month, with 50% dying within hours.²⁵
 - Between 1998 and 2003, of 2,500 infants admitted to the organization Maygoma, Khartoum, **Sudan**, (the only institution for infants) only 400 survived. Mortality rate is of 75%. Those that lived suffered severe developmental delays and some suffered from chronic illnesses due to poor nutrition and lack of stimulation and individual care. The mortality

rate at Maygoma dropped to 33% by 2004, and to 10% by 2005. Admissions from the streets have decreased from 75% to 30%.²⁶

- In Brazzaville, **Congo**, almost 50% of street children are orphans.²⁷
- Most children living on the street in Lusaka, **Zambia** are orphans: 22% had lost both parents, 26% had lost their father, and 10% had lost their mother.²⁸
- A study conducted in **Eastern And Southern Africa** in 1999 in 65 towns and cities that interviewed 3,002 street children found that the ages ranged between 6–17 years, the majority being 9-14 years old; 74% were boys and 26% were girls. The majority of the children, 87%, work on the streets during the day and return to their home at night; just over 8% of the children work and live on the streets.²⁹

Asia

- UNICEF's estimate of 11 million street children in **India** is considered to be a conservative figure. The Indian Embassy has estimated that there are 314,700 street children in metros such as Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Kanpur, Bangalore and Hyderabad and around 100,000 in Delhi alone.³⁰
- A survey among 100 street children at the New Delhi Railway Station in **India**, revealed that 86% of boys in the age group 14 - 18 years were sexually active; however a very low number of them knew about safe sex protection and condom usage. Not one of them reported having ever used a condom.³¹
- A study in 2007 in **India** found the following:
 - 65.9% of the street children lived with their families on the streets. Out of these children, 51.84% slept on the footpaths, 17.48% slept in night shelters and 30.67% slept in other places including under flyovers and bridges, railway platforms, bus stops, parks, market places.³²
 - The overall incidence of physical abuse among street children, either by family members or by others or both, was 66.8% across the states. Out of this, 54.62% were boys and 45.38% were girls.³³
 - On a study in India, out of the total number of child respondents reporting being forced to touch private parts of the body, 17.73% were street children. 22.77% reported having been sexually assaulted.³⁴
- Of an estimated 400,000 street children in **Bangladesh**, nearly 10% have been forced into prostitution for survival.³⁵
- One study³⁶ estimated that there were 10,000-20,000 street working children in **Cambodia**. Another study³⁷ of 'vulnerable' children, including street children, in Phnom Penh found 88% had had sexual relations with tourists, and 70.6% of the children were currently involved in sexual relations with tourists.
- In **Cambodia**, Phnom Penh, there are an estimated 616,023 working children aged between 5 and 17 years and 2,000 street children in Phnom Penh. A further 15,000 children, while not homeless, spend more than six hours a day scavenging and begging.³⁸
- One NGO in **China** estimated in 2001 that there are 150,000 street children.³⁹

- In **Indonesia** it is estimated that there are 170,000 street children.⁴⁰
- In a study undertaken in the **Lao People's Democratic Republic**, 44% of street children interviewed reported incidents of physical abuse.⁴¹
- An NGO working in Dili, **East Timor** works with up to 250 street children, but says that the number is increasing.⁴²
- Statistics vary as to the numbers of street children in Hanoi, **Vietnam**. The Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs (MOLISA) estimates that there are 23,000 street children throughout Vietnam and 1,500 in Hanoi.⁴³
- It is estimated that between 15-20% of street children in **Vietnam** are HIV positive.⁴⁴
- Out-of-school and street children in **Nepal** say their involvement in sexual activities started within the first three months of their being on the street, while some reported exposure to sexual activities at home before coming to Kathmandu.⁴⁵
- In Pokara, **Nepal**, 80% of the boys living on the streets and 90% of the girls were sexually abused by hotel and restaurant owners and by people in places of work. Junkyard owners, older boys in the group, friends, local people, and tractor drivers were also among the perpetrators.⁴⁶

Europe

- A report by the Children's Society in the **UK** found that:
 - 100,000 young people run away in the UK each year.⁴⁷
 - 1 in 6 young runaways sleep rough.⁴⁸
 - There are only 10 registered refuge beds for young runaways in the UK⁴⁹
 - There are at least 66,000 first-time runaways per year in England.⁵⁰
 - Just over 12% of females had run away overnight compared to 8% of males. The peak age of first running away within the sample was 14.⁵¹
 - 6.7% of UK runaways had both birth parents, 13% had only a single birth parent, 18% had a step family, and 30.8% had 'other family form'.⁵²
- The number of Moroccan minors entering **Spain** has risen steadily since the Spanish Interior Ministry registered them for the first time in 1998. From 811 that year, the number more than quadrupled to 3,500 in 2002.⁵³
- A report⁵⁴ estimated that the number of working street children in St. Petersburg, **Russia**, to be between 10,000-16,000, broken down as follows:
 - 50-70% of the total number of street children are under 13;
 - They collect bottles and refuse, picking and selling berries and mushrooms.
 - 10-30% are involved in illicit activities.
 - Working street children under 18 involved in prostitution account for 20%.
- The same report⁵⁵ in **Russia** also found that:
 - Two out of five working street children only worked in order to buy food (42%). One in four worked to help his or her family (22.1%) or brother/sister (3.5%).

- The average duration of a street child's working day is 5.9 hours, but street children generally have to work longer hours. Of the street children interviewed, 55.5% said they sometimes had to work 6 to 8 hours a day; 33.8% could remember a situation where their working day lasted 8 to 12 hours (33.8%); and 11.8% sometimes had to work more than 12 hours a day.
- 77.9% are involved in labour which is dangerous to their health.
- According to local authorities in Kharkiv, **Ukraine**, it is estimated that there are circa 600+ children sleeping on the streets. It is estimated that 300,000 children are outside the school system in Ukraine and no one knows where they are. Some of the teenagers have been on the streets for 7-8 years. Orphanages in Ukraine say that 97% of children leaving their institutions become homeless.
- About 2,500 children in **Georgia** have turned to the street to earn money either by begging or prostituting themselves.⁵⁶
- There are at least 2,000 street children in Bucharest, **Romania**, and 5,000 in the whole country. 42% of the children were sexually abused between the ages of 6 and 12.⁵⁷

Americas

- Street-involved youth in **Canada** are typically runaways with a history of sexual and physical abuse and they are highly vulnerable to sexual victimisation. They are often actively recruited by pimps and coerced into the sex trade, and to support themselves many engage in begging, drug trafficking, theft, prostitution or survival sex (offering sex in exchange for food, shelter, drugs).⁵⁸
- In one study conducted in Toronto, **Canada**, 82% of street-involved youth reported being a victim of crime. Of these, many reported the crime to have involved violent physical or sexual assault.⁵⁹
- There are an estimated 1 to 2 million street-involved youth in **USA**.⁶⁰
- In Lima, **Peru** it is estimated that around 3% of children living on the streets are under 6 years old. 250,000 children are working on the city's streets. In San Juan de Lurigancho and Cercado de Lima districts, over 25,000 children are considered to be at very high risk of taking to a life on the streets.⁶¹
- A study in **Peru** found that 90% of street children come from rebuilt (with step-father or step-mother) or monoparental families, or from rural families that had 'given' their child to other people (relatives or not) to be raised by the latter in the city.⁶²
- The same study also found that more than half of the children had abandoned schooling several months before leaving home⁶³, and that 97% of the street children population uses drugs.⁶⁴
- A report⁶⁵ in **Bolivia** found that:
 - There are over 2,500 children living on the streets of major cities such as Cochabamba, La Paz and Santa Cruz, Bolivia.
 - 75% of street children are 12 years old, 25% aged 3 to 11.
 - 20% of street children in Bolivia left home because there wasn't enough to eat, 20% were abandoned by their parents, and 60% were physically abused.

- 80% of street children in Bolivia inhale "clefa" (glue) and some adolescents are alcoholics.
 - More than 40 babies live on the streets of Cochabamba, Bolivia
 - Most street children in Bolivia are functionally illiterate because they left school. They can read and write with difficulty
 - 90% of street children in Bolivia use solvents as a form of escapism.
- In 2008-2009 a child was abandoned in **Guatemala** City every 4 days. Most were babies. ⁶⁶
 - NGOs working in **Guatemala** say that street children have an average life expectancy of around four years on the street. ⁶⁷
 - Of 143 homeless children interviewed in **Honduras**, 100% had at least one sexually transmitted disease, and 48.1% had been sexually abused by a member of their family. ⁶⁸
 - In **Brazil** 4,611 street children were murdered between 1988-1990. In 1993, eight children and adolescents were killed in a shooting near the Candelaria church in Rio. Between 1993-96 juvenile court statistics showed over 3,000 11 to 17 year olds met with violent deaths in Rio. The majority believed to have been murdered by death squads, the police or other types of gangs. In Sao Paulo, for example, 20% of homicides committed by the police were against minors in the first months of 1999. ⁶⁹
 - In **Brazil**, when the body of 9-year-old Patricio Hilario da Silva was found on a main street in Ipanema in 1989, there was a handwritten note tied around his neck. "I killed you because you didn't study and had no future," the note read. "The government must not allow the streets of the city to be invaded by kids." ⁷⁰
 - Death squads in **Brazil** can earn up to \$50 for killing a street child. ⁷¹
 - Port-au-Prince, **Haiti**, 3,000 children are estimated to live in the streets and are severely marginalized by the population. Not infrequently, they are the target of vigilante groups. ⁷²
 - According to a report from the Inter-American Development Bank approximately 7 million children and adolescents who wander in the streets of different countries of **Latin America**.

¹ These statistics were gathered from June-August 2009.

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² UNICEF (2002), *State of the World's Children 2003*, p.37.

³ UNICEF (2005), *State of the World's Children 2006: Excluded and Invisible*, pp. 40-1.

⁴ See for example Ennew, J. *et al*, (1989), *The Next Generation*, London: Zed Books; Hecht, T. (1998), *At Home in the Street*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Green, D. (1998), *Hidden Lives*, London: Cassell.

⁵ All of the above cited in Thomas de Benitez, S., (2007), *State of the World's Street Children*, p. 64 [online], available at <http://www.streetchildren.org.uk/reports/State%20of%20the%20World's%20Street%20Children-Violence.pdf>. For further discussion on the issue of defining 'street children' and its impact on statistics and research see pp. 65-6.

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⁶ Schrader, A. *et al* (1999), *Prevention of Street Migration: Resource Pack*, (Consortium for Street Children and University College Cork) p. 10. Available at <http://www.streetchildren.org.uk/reports/CSC.UCC%20Prevention%20of%20Street%20Migration%20Pack.pdf> [Accessed 24 July 09]

⁷ Veale, A. *et al* (1996), *An Empirical and Conceptual Analysis of Street Children in Sudan and Ethiopia* (Ph. D Thesis, National University of Ireland), cited in *ibid*, p. 51. Available at <http://www.streetchildren.org.uk/reports/CSC.UCC%20Prevention%20of%20Street%20Migration%20Pack.pdf>. [Accessed 24 July 09]

⁸ IRIN (2004), *ETHIOPIA: Child domestic work rampant in Addis Ababa*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=50255> [Accessed 01 August 09].

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¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 22.

¹² US Department of State: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Kenya' (1999) [online] available at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/1999/252.htm> [accessed 3 August 2009].

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¹⁴ Human Rights Watch (2001), *Kenya, Rights at Risk: Issues of Concern for Kenyan Children A Report Prepared for the Committee on the Rights of the Child by Human Rights Watch*, p. 2. [Online] Available at: <http://www.crin.org/docs/resources/treaties/crc.28/HRW-Kenya.pdf>. [Accessed 01 August 09].

¹⁵ IRIN (2007), *Youth in crisis: Coming of age in the 21st century – 'KENYA: Nairobi's Street Children: Hope for Kenya's future generation'* [Online] Available at: <http://www.irinnews.org/InDepthMain.aspx?InDepthId=28&ReportId=69987&Country=Yes> [Accessed 11 July 2009].

¹⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁸ Stepping Stones Nigeria, 'A Beacon of Hope - Stepping Stones Nigeria's Partnership with the Child Rights and Rehabilitation Network' [Online] Available at: <http://www.stepsstonesnigeria.org/crarn> [Accessed 12 July 2009]

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²¹ Street Child Africa, *School Fundraising Pack*, p. 4 [online]. Available at: <http://www.stretchchildafrica.org.uk/site/documents/SchoolsFundraisingPack.pdf> [Accessed 12 July 2009].

²² Save the Children (2005), *Global Submission by the international Save the Children Alliance, UN Study on Violence against children*, p 43. [online]: Available at: http://www.crin.org/docs/resources/publications/violence/Save_Alliance_Global_Submission.pdf [Accessed 19 July 2009]

²³ *Ibid*

²⁴ Centre for Youth and Children's Affairs (1999), *A Survey Study Report on the Juvenile Offenders in Malawi Prisons and Approved Reform Centres*, p. 16, cited in Pinheiro, P. (2006), *World Report on Violence Against Children*, Chapter 5, p. 194. Available at <http://www.violencestudy.org/a553>. [Accessed 24 July 09]

²⁵ Mulheir G (2005), 'De-institutionalisation in Sudan: Preventing Violence Through Transforming Services to Children and Families', cited in *ibid* p 214.

²⁶ *Ibid*

²⁷ Nkouika-Dinghani-Nkita, G (2000), *Les déterminants du phénomène des enfants de la rue à Brazzaville* [The causes of the phenomenon of street children in Brazzaville], UERPOD, Brazzaville, Congo, cited in UNICEF (2003). *Africa's Orphaned Generations*, p. 25 [online] available at http://www.unicef.org/sowc06/pdfs/africas_orphans.pdf [Accessed 26 July 09]

²⁸ Concern/UNICEF (2002), *Rapid Assessment of Street Children in Lusaka*, cited in *ibid*.

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³³ *Ibid*, p. 63.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 82.

³⁵ US State Department (2005), quoting a 2002 report by Government news agency Bangladesh Shongbad Shongsta [online], available at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41738.htm> [accessed 4 August 2009], cited in Thomas de Benitez, S. (2007), *State of the World's Street Children: Violence*, p. 9.

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³⁸ Child Welfare Group *et al*, *Stop Violence Against Us*, p. 26 [online] Available at [http://www.globalempowerment.org/PolicyAdvocacy/pahome2.5.nsf/allreports/6CA8A2FBB1685F8B8825714D007D4E50/\\$file/Stop%20Violence%20against%20Us!2_web.pdf](http://www.globalempowerment.org/PolicyAdvocacy/pahome2.5.nsf/allreports/6CA8A2FBB1685F8B8825714D007D4E50/$file/Stop%20Violence%20against%20Us!2_web.pdf) [accessed 5 August 2009]

³⁹ UNICEF (2005), *Regional Assessment on Violence against children in East and the Pacific Region*, p.40 [online], available at: http://www.violencestudy.org/IMG/pdf/EAP_2005_Assessment_on_VaC.pdf [Accessed 26 July 09].

⁴⁰ Irwanto P. *et al* (1999). *Situation of Street Children in 12 Cities in Indonesia*, Monograph Report for the Asian Development Bank, TA No. 3043 INO. Cited in Pinheiro, P. (2007), *World Report on Violence Against Children*, Chapter 7, p 295. Available at <http://www.violencestudy.org/a553>. [Accessed 26 July 09]

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⁴⁵ Save the Children (2005), *Global Submission by the international Save the Children Alliance: UN Study on Violence Against Children*, p 44. [online] Available at: http://www.crin.org/docs/resources/publications/violence/Save_Alliance_Global_Submission.pdf [Accessed 19 July 2009].

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⁴⁹ *ibid*, p. 8.

⁵⁰ *ibid*, p. 7

⁵¹ *ibid*, p.8

⁵² *ibid*, p.11

⁵³ Miller, S. (2 May 2003), 'Spain to Morocco's child migrants: Go home', The Christian Science Monitor [online], Available at <http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/0502/p07s01-woeu.html> [Accessed 11 July 2009]

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⁵⁹ Gaetz, S. (2004), *Safe streets for whom?*, Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice, pp. 423 -455, cited in Covell, K (2005), *North American Regional Consultation, Violence Against Children In North America*. [online], available at: http://www.violencestudy.org/IMG/pdf/Desk_Review.pdf [Accessed 26 July 09]

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⁷¹ *ibid*

⁷² Amnesty International (2005), *Haiti: Disarmament Delayed, Justice Denied* [online], available at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AMR36/005/2005/en/64967b18-d4dc-11dd-8a23-d58a49c0d652/amr360052005en.html> [Accessed 05 July 09].

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