CF/RAD/USAA/DB01/1997-03272

Expanded Number **CF/RAD/USAA/DB01/1997-03272**

External ID **E/ICEF/1986/CRP.0003**

Title

Exploitation of working children and street children

Date Created / From Date	*Date Registered*	*Date Closed / To Date*

Primary Contact

Home Location **Off of Secy, ExecBoard, UNICEF NYHQ = 3024**

FI2: Status Certain? **No**

3/14/1986   **1/1/1997**

Contained Records

Owner Location **Off of Secy, ExecBoard, UNICEF NYHQ = 3024**

Current Location/Assignee **Record & Archive Manage Related Functions=80669443 since 3/19/2001 at 1:54 PM**

Record Type **A04 DOC ITEM: E/ICEF 1946 TO 1997 EX BD**

FI3: Record Copy? **No**

d01: In, Out, Internal Rec or Rec Copy

Container

Date Published	*Fd3: Doc Type - Format*	*Da1:Date First Published*	*Priority*

Document Details **Record has no document attached.**

Notes

Document Format Series/Year/SubSeries/Number/Rev: E/ICEF/1986/CRP.0003;   Doc
Series/SubSeries/Year/Number/Rev: E/ICEF/CRP/1986/3
Doc Series: E/ICEF/CRP; Series Valid date on import: 01-Jan-1954; Doc Year: 1986 ; Doc Number: 0003 ;   Doc
Numb Short: 3 ; Doc Revision #:
English , L.Avail: E.. ; L.Orig: E-?
Document Alternate Media Store [AMS]: 005; Type AMS: MF
Note PDF or TIF: Chk_PDF: No; Chk_PDF_Prob: No;   Comment: ; Chk_TIF: No; Chk_TIF_prob: No;   TIF ID# Start
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Print Name of Person Submit Image	Signature of Person Submit	Number of images without cover
Upsara		36

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
Executive Board
1986 session

EXPLOITATION OF WORKING CHILDREN AND STREET CHILDREN

Summary

This paper expands on information provided in "Children in especially difficult circumstances" (E/ICEF/1986/L.3) and the accompanying overview (E/ICEF/1986/L.6). In describing the situation of working and street children, the paper distinguishes among various types of child work: that which is engaged in to earn a living and assist the family; that which prepares the child for a productive adult life; and that which is exploitative and harmful to the well-being of the child.

Part I analyses the situation of working children and street children in both rural and urban areas, and details the health problems and other negative effects on their development. Part II describes the following broad approaches to improving their lives: using legal instruments to limit and define the conditions under which the young should work; providing basic services in such a way as to facilitate development; and transforming the nature of work itself into a means, rather than an obstacle, to improving child growth and development. UNICEF experience in the field is also described.

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CONTENTS

I. THE SITUATION OF WORKING CHILDREN AND STREET CHILDREN

A. Work for livelihood

1.   Children have always worked. In rural areas, children tend livestock, gather crops and weave baskets. In cities, they hawk cigarettes, wipe windshields and recycle trash. Children everywhere carry water, care for their younger brothers and sisters, prepare meals and sweep out the courtyard.

2.   Most children work because poverty forces them to earn money, and the survival of their families depends upon it. In more prosperous societies, where survival is less precarious, children can be spared from some work to go to school or to play. But where families need their help, children will continue to work.

B. Work: socialization or exploitation?

3.   In the best of circumstances, children's work prepares them for productive adult lives. Through their work they gain increasing status as family members and citizens. They learn the skills of their parents and neighbours. Therefore, children's work can be an integral part of family life and can contribute to their healthy development. It can also build their confidence and self-esteem. "In agricultural and rural areas this age-old system can even be beneficial as an informal preparation and training for the tasks of adulthood - a painless and gradual initiation." 1/

4.   But children's work is not always "a painless and gradual initiation". When work, learning and play get out of balance, the child's future is endangered. Such a balance varies among cultures and over time. For example, the introduction of broader opportunities for formal education may change traditional child work into child exploitation. Even if the work remains the same, the fact that formal education is an option changes the perception so that child work becomes child exploitation if it prohibits children's access to that education.

5.   Some indices that can be used to define exploitative conditions are:

     (a) Starting full-time work at too early an age. In the earlier stages of industrialization in Europe, for example, nine-, eight- and even five-year-olds worked in factories for long hours. This is still the case in many countries;

     (b) Too many hours spent on work within or outside the family so that children are unable to attend school, where it is available, or to keep up with schooling because of lack of time and excessive fatigue. In some cases, children still work 12 to 16 hours a day;

     (c) Work that results in excessive physical, social and psychological strains upon the child. The extreme, but unfortunately not uncommon, examples are the sexual exploitation of children for commercial purposes and work in mines and sweat shops as well as work in dangerous situations, such as military service and fireworks factories. This is where damage to health and risk to life and limb are found;

(d) Work and life on the streets in unhealthy and dangerous conditions;

(e) Inadequate remuneration for work outside the family. An example is the case of child workers in a carpet-weaving establishment who are paid about $3.00 for a 60-hour work-week;

(f) Too much responsibility placed on the child. The obvious case is the common one of child-minding by older siblings when both parents have to work. Sometimes the "older" siblings are under 10 years old and only a couple of years older than the brothers or sisters for whom they are totally responsible during the day, which may be one more reason for their inability to attend school;

(g) Work that does not facilitate the social and psychological development of the child. This includes those dull, repetitive tasks in handicrafts and industries that neither stimulate the child's imagination and creativity nor permit enough time for their pursuit outside of working hours;

(h) Inhibition of the child's self-confidence and self-esteem. Bonded and slave labour as well as sexual exploitation are stark examples. Another example is the fact that society's negative perception of street children and their work adversely affects their self-esteem.

6. In less extreme cases, exploitation is more difficult to define. For example, street children are exploited by society in general when they have to work, live, learn and play literally in the streets. Clearly a highly developed, industrialized country with adequate provisions for the schooling of children, a full range of social services, and minimum age and minimum wage laws will perceive the exploitation of children differently from a primarily agrarian country with large numbers of rural workers and urban slum and shanty dwellers. Each country and community needs to examine its own labour laws and practices as well as its norms and standards for children in order to arrive at standards that are relevant and realistic for that culture and society, and to ensure the survival, protection and development of children even when they must work because of the poverty of their families.

7. A United Nations report gives a glimpse of the extent and nature of child exploitation. 2/ Other examples are included in a report prepared for UNICEF by the Anti-Slavery Society for the Protection of Human Rights, a non-governmental international organization. 3/ These reports indicate that the exploitation of children is not only a third world phenomenon; such exploitation exists in many areas such as the following:

(a) Agriculture - children as young as five years of age starting to work with their families and child labourers irregularly paid or not paid at all;

(b) Manufacturing - children working from the age of 12 for as long as 14 hours a day under hazardous, health threatening conditions;

(c) Mining - children working deep underground eight hours a day for low wages, often in dangerous - not to mention unhealthy - situations;

/...

(d) Carpet weaving - children sometimes starting from the age of six and working 10 to 12 hours a day, often with insufficient light and air;

(e) Commerce - children working in restaurants and shops until midnight, often 9 to 12 hours a day. Many of those children are also "street children" who often begin working at an early age in hazardous conditions, both in informal enterprises and on the street itself.

C. Health problems

8. The pernicious effects of exploitative working conditions upon children were first publicized in the earliest stages of industrialization in England. Labour-intensive manufacturing drew whole families from the countryside into the mills. In 1839, nearly half of the reported 419,590 textile factory workers in the United Kingdom were under 18 years of age. Children of nin., eight and even five years of age worked in factories from 14 to 16 hours a day, exclusive of mealtimes. They were often beaten and otherwise maltreated. 4/ Such scandalous working conditions in manufacturing establishments led to social investigations, as health workers found children with nervous disorders, deformities, stunted growth, digestive complaints and tuberculosis.

Lack of growth, diseases and malnutrition

9. The health of exploited working children is still being endangered today almost 150 years later. A World Health Organization (WHO)/Defense for Children International (DCI) joint report on child labour states that "normal growth spurts during puberty and adolescence are adversely affected by the poor nutrient intake and increased manual work". In 28 countries, the average per capita intake of calories is 73 to 89 per cent of what is required; but it is lower for the poorer segments of the population, from which most working children come, even though their work raises their nutritional requirements. Working children are also more susceptible to infectious diseases, including tuberculosis, if they suffer from malnutrition, anaemia, fatigue and inadequate sleep. The report cites instances of other physical health hazards, including bony lesions and postural deformity, attributable to work such as carpet weaving, embroidery and lifting heavy weights. "The eyesight of young girls working for 12-14 hours a day in micro-computer factories or ... embroidery ... is reported to be damaged within a period of 5-8 years." 5/

10. Bonded labour, an extreme case of exploitation, is especially prevalent among landless peasants. In one form "children were pledged to landlords, often as domestic servants as part of a debt, for all of their lives". A study in India shows these "bonded child labourers were in the poorest classes with the highest incidents of severe protein calorie malnutrition, anaemia, tuberculosis and parasitic diseases". 6/

11. While these health hazards to children are evident, the report recognizes that the observations are derived from studies which were not all of a rigorous scientific nature. It also recognizes the need "to study the health hazards of child labour; the critical age when children are prone to

health hazards; the type of work and working environment which adversely
affects health, growth and psycho-social development". WHO is currently
involved in a child-labour action/research programme and has developed a
training manual and facilitator's guidelines to study the health aspects of
child work (personal communication).

Occupational accidents and hazards

12. In sweatshops, which are often completely unregulated, occupational
hazards and risks can be enormous. Long hours often lead to accidents,
especially when children are working with poorly maintained and dangerous
machinery. When overloaded, young growing bodies can suffer from strain since
the bone structure, especially the spine, is soft. In addition, in small
workshops and mines, there are increased dangers of tripping, resulting in
broken bones, or head injuries. Child workers in city streets are also under
constant threat of injury from traffic accidents and street violence.

Environmental hazards

13. The work environments of exploitative workshops often have especially
pernicious effects on children's health. Excessive noise can lead to hearing
loss, and hot, damp or dusty conditions to the transmission of communicable
diseases. 7/ Since many work places have neither running water nor toilets,
gastro-intestinal diseases also flourish.

14. Exposure to toxic substances used in manufacturing is extremely dangerous
to working children. Some of the documented consequences have included lead
poisoning and paralysis caused by the use of toxic glues and chemicals in the
absence of adequate ventilation. In addition, the extreme air pollution in
more and more cities is damaging to the health of children working and living
in the streets.

Sexually-transmitted diseases and drug addiction

15. In cases of extreme exploitation, such as child prostitution and
pornography, children's work can have disastrous consequences upon their
physical and psychological health. Increasingly, young children, boys as well
as girls, work in brothels or on the street. In the large cities of more than
one region of the world, "sex tours" for foreigners are a flourishing trade.
In addition to sexual, physical and emotional abuse, there are also the
constant threats of sexually-transmitted diseases, which are on the increase
world-wide, a possibility of reduced fertility in girls and a general
debilitation of their physical and psycho-social health. The drug trade also
uses children, both as intermediaries and couriers, and the children
themselves often become addicted. 8/ In many cities, glue sniffing and the
abuse of soft and hard drugs is common among street children.

D.   Other negative effects on children's development

Separation from the family

16.   In many poor communities, large numbers of working children face the
unhappy reality of increasing separation from their natural families. Because
of socio-economic pressures accompanied by increasing stress, both within the
home and in the community, families are often forced apart and the support of
parents for their children weakens. Frequently, marriages and less formalized
adult relationships break down and one parent or guardian leaves, placing an
additional burden upon the remaining single parent - often the mother - as
well as upon the children who may be forced to work for the family's
survival. Home relationships and the economic situation may continue to
deteriorate to the point of the child's abandoning the family, or becoming
abandoned by it.

17.   Concomitantly with increasing separation from the family, the child
becomes increasingly "at risk" (see diagram 1). Once under way, this process
is very difficult to hold in check. As children's contacts with their
families weaken, they lose even their limited access to basic services, such
as health, education and recreation. In urban areas, children who work daily
on city streets may encounter a freer and more adventurous lifestyle than at
home, but at the same time, they encounter a much higher level of risk and
less access to services and support.

Diagram 1. The separation and risk factors
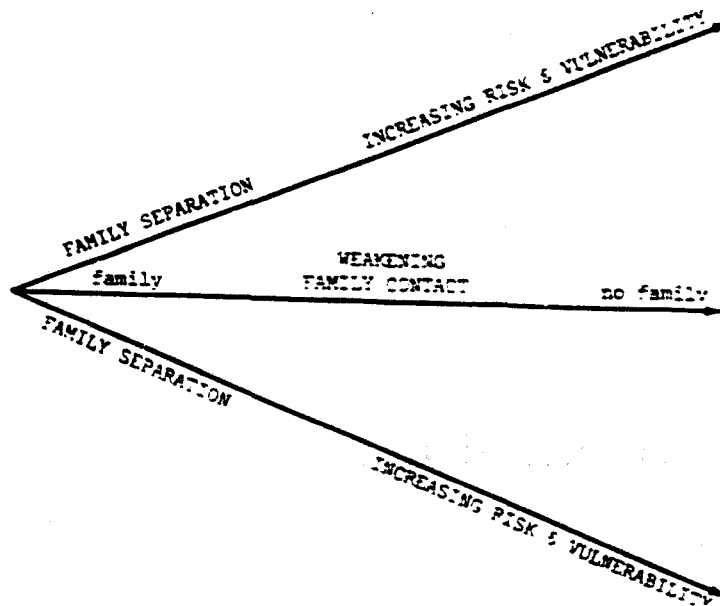
Adverse effect upon psycho-social development

18. Psycho-social development may also be adversely affected by excessive or stultifying work during childhood. Play and recreation are essential for the socialization and development of children, and children whose social interaction with their peers is restricted because of long working hours suffer in their social and emotional development. 9/ Street children habitually faced with negative behaviour toward them have serious problems in maintaining healthy self-esteem.

Restricted access to education

19. When children work long hours, their chances for any kind of schooling are diminished. In most countries, formal schools operate during daylight, working hours. Therefore, a large proportion of child workers do not attend school. School fees, books and uniforms are too costly for poor families, and, in any event, the curriculum of most schools is inappropriate. "Lack of schooling perpetuates a bleak and hopeless status quo, barring the way to any sort of advancement of a better life." 10/

20. Meaningful apprenticeships might at least compensate for some disadvantages. "But all too often apprenticeship is itself a form of severe exploitation in which the child acts as a virtual servant to the craftsman at very low pay, running errands and performing menial tasks with no relation to the trade." 11/

Restricted access to life chances

21. The life options of working children in rural areas exclude more than education. Income-producing alternatives to agricultural work are frequently non-existent, as are education opportunities. Adult males without sufficient land increasingly seek employment in urban centres or out of the country, and thus heighten pressures of premature responsibility on their children left behind.

22. Urban working children may benefit from the presence of a wider variety of employment options, but they are also more likely to find themselves at higher risk of exploitation, with lower protection. Industrial and traffic hazards abound in cities, as do illegal activities. Urban working children are frequently separated from their families during the working day and in transit to and from the work place. Although social services such as schools and health centres may exist nearby, poor people's access to them is often limited by social, economic and psychological barriers.

E. Number of working children

23. How many children work? The answer is shocking - hundreds of millions world-wide. Various authorities have attempted to develop global estimates of the number of working children. Most start with the 1979 International Labour Organisation (ILO) figure of 52 million. However, in 1983, a report published by ILO called this figure a conservative estimate. 12/ For one thing, it included only full-time workers.

/...

24. The Anti-Slavery Society estimates that the actual figure is closer to double the 1979 ILO estimate or over 100 million. 13/ A lengthy 1981 report to the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities goes even further. It suggests that a world-wide total of 145 million working children between the ages of 10 and 14 is certainly more realistic. 14/ A major difficulty in estimating the number of working children comes from the fact that most of these children are in the "informal sector" or are unpaid family workers. Therefore, they are not included in labour force statistics. 15/

25. As noted in the United Nations report, "Child labour is concentrated in Asian, African, and Latin American countries ... The situation is expected to improve considerably in South-East Asia ... to remain stationary in southern Asia, but to become dangerously more acute in Africa ...". 16/ No prognosis is given for the industrialized world.

F. The correlates and causes of child work

26. Statistics about working children are highly unreliable, but it is clear that child work, lack of schooling and nutritional deprivation are correlated. In calculating the rates of illiteracy, school enrolment and malnutrition, the same United Nations report concluded that "the countries with the highest illiteracy rates and the most backwardness in school enrollment are in general those that suffer from malnutrition and have the greatest child labour problems." 17/ The WHO/DCI study states that, "child labour is a part of underdevelopment and ... it persists in inverse relation to a country's degree of economic advancement". 18/ Poverty and inequity lead to child labour, and the greater the poverty and inequity, the more the child labour, and the greater the risk of its being exploitative.

27. Indeed, child exploitation is not an accident. Many children are employed because they can be hired for the same rates as adults but at much lower rates. In some situations "they (are) preferred to adults because it can be argued that their smaller bodies require less food and they can be paid proportionately less". 19/ In certain industries like carpet-making or electronics assembly, it is preferable to employ children because of the dexterity of their small fingers. In any event, because they are unprotected, children are more likely to be overworked and underpaid:

> "Because of the kind of employment (casual and without safeguards) and the status of those employed (young, unprotected, and most often needy), the employer tends to turn to his advantage, and almost invariably without restraint, the 'good old law' of maximum profit. There is exploitation because the financial remuneration, or payment in kind, is systematically less than would have been made by the employer had he been dealing with adult employees organized in trade unions, capable of defending themselves and insisting on their due, having regard to the laws of the country. It is more than likely that if employers had to pay the same remuneration to children as adults, they would not make use of the services of young persons." 20/

28. The situation of exploited child workers is analogous to that of other relatively powerless groups, such as women workers and new immigrants, who accept lower wages and poor working conditions because of their need to work.

29. The situation of child workers is also affected by world economic changes such as the recent world-wide recession. Unemployment rates rose, reaching 51 per cent of the urban labour force in one African country. Sharp increases also occurred in Latin America. 21/ The effects of these economic trends, including increased poverty, inequitable distribution policies, adult unemployment and deteriorating income, directly affect child work. Child work in industrial wage employment outside the family has increased as children are forced to work both for their own survival and that of their families. In addition, as stated above, such work often precludes access to schooling, health, nutrition and other essential services. 22/

30. It is necessary to understand more about who these children are and what they do, in order to understand how to help them to meet their needs for healthy development.

G. Working children in rural areas

31. Most child work is in rural areas. According to the ILO report: "In most developing countries and in many developed countries as well, child workers are found mainly in rural areas. In India and the Philippines, for example, as many as 87 per cent of the working children aged 10 to 14 were working in the rural areas". 23/

> "In rural areas, ... children are accustomed from an early age to working with their parents, either on the family plot or for a third party. When they work on the family holding, they begin by carrying out light tasks such as looking after animals, collecting firewood and fodder and drawing water; later, they learn to sow and to reap. In commercial agriculture ... children commonly form part of the work team composed of the whole family; they are kept busy on jobs such as weeding, spreading fertilizer and tending plants, but often they share in the heavy work done by the adults – ploughing, sowing
> and reaping." 24/

32. In addition to this work in the fields, there is work at home. Food must be prepared, younger siblings cared for, utensils cleaned and clothing washed. Frequently these chores fall to young adolescents, primarily to girls. Even at this early age, girls take up their double burden of work – in the fields and in the home – which characterizes the lives of poor rural women everywhere. The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations has been analysing the contribution of women and children to both household and agricultural activities. In a Nepal study, children aged five to nine years were found to work three hours a day, and those aged 10 to 14 years, six hours a day. Females worked more than males in all age groups. Further, the study asserts that "neither the cost of education nor the conservatism of the parents is the main cause (of lower female school enrollment). Rather it is the family's dependence on girls' labour at home and in the fields ...". 25/ Whatever the causes, these girls' access to life chances is significantly restricted.

33. Characteristically, no wages are paid by these parents to their working children. 26/ In fact, in most cultures, rural children who earn some money contribute to the family income, from which their own needs are met.

H. Working children in urban areas

34. A DCI report describes working children in urban areas as follows:

"Child workers are highly visible in many (cities), not only at the marketplace but on almost every street corner; from shoeshine boys to newspaper or magazine hawkers, from cigarette vendors and all manner of peddlers to messenger boys, from waiters in virtually every restaurant or coffee house to helpers in all sorts of shops or establishments. They can be seen guarding parked cars, collecting garbage, transporting materials at construction sites, working at automobile repair shops or gas stations, sweeping floors in office buildings. Even more significantly, they work in many places less obvious to the public eye; in the myriad of small factories or industries tucked into back streets or alleys of the cities, weaving carpets and performing all sorts of other tasks. 27/

35. The spectrum of working children's relationships with adults in urban areas is much more diverse than in rural areas, where most of them work with their families. In cities, it ranges from the same intra-family work to apprenticeships outside the family, domestic service, wage labour, odd jobs and errands and independent activities in the street. A visit to any slum or shanty-town shows one end of the spectrum - young children working with parents on such income-producing tasks as making hand-rolled cigarettes, weaving straw and packaging home-made products. Many of these children are, indeed, "protected" by their parents. But this protection may also mean isolation - from peers, school, play or the rest of the city outside the immediate compound. This can be exploitation - even when it is unconscious or unintended.

36. The other end of the spectrum is almost invisible. Some children are virtually sold into slavery. One example of this phenomenon is the pattern of sending girls from rural areas to capital cities to become "entertainers" and prostitutes. This is a case where extreme poverty and "market forces" join in the exploitation of children.

37. Less dramatic, but even more pervasive, is the plight of youthful domestic servants who may well be the third or fourth generation of houseboys or housemaids sent from a rural family to urban middle-class homes. In some cases they are the children of poor rural relatives, "the country cousins" who become virtually unpaid or poorly paid domestic servants in exchange for their room and board.

38. Ranging between these extremes are more typical urban child workers living with their families on construction sites, working in factories, weaving carpets and working in small shops and restaurants. (See table below for a categorization of the types of child work in relation to the family and to possible levels of intervention.) Children are also "finders of raw

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Table. Types of child work

Types of child work	Rural	Urban	Comm.	Fam.	Emp.	Chld.
A. Within the family (unpaid)						
1. Domestic/household tasks (cooking, cleaning, child-care, fetching water, cleaning utensils, washing clothes, poultry, etc.)	X	X		X		
2. Agricultural/pastoral tasks (plowing, weeding, harvesting, herding, livestock, etc.)	X		X	X		
3. Handicrafts/cottage industries (weaving, basketry, leatherwork, wood-work, household industries in the urban "informal sector")	X	X	X	X		X
B. With the family but outside the home						
1. Agricultural/pastoral work						
a. Migrant labour	X			X		
b. Local agricultural labour (full time or seasonal)	X		X	X	X	
2. Domestic service	X	X			X	
3. Construction work (buildings, roads, etc.)	X	X	X	X	X	X
4. "Informal economy" (laundry, recycling/trash)						
a. Employed by others		X		X	X	X
b. Self-employed		X		X	X	X
C. Outside the family						
1. Employed by others						
a. Tied/bonded/slave	X	X				
b. Apprentices		X	X		X	X
c. Skilled trades (carpets, embroidery, brass and copper work)	X	X	X	X	X	X
d. Industries/unskilled occupations/mines		X	X	X	X	X
e. Domestics ("maids of all work")		X		X	X	X
f. Commercial (shops, restaurants)		X	X	X	X	X
g. Begging		X			X	X
h. Prostitution and pornography		X			X	X
2. Self-employed Informal sector work (shoe-shining, car washing, recycling trash, running errands, selling newspapers, etc.)		X	X	X		X

NOTE: Comm. = community; Fam. = family; Emp. = employer; chld. = child.

materials, intermediaries between product and purchasers, or retailers or
purveyors of petty services". 28/ Others are independent "entrepreneurs",
scrabbling for a meagre income in the street.

I. Groups of working children and street children

39. In order to discuss approaches to assist working children and street
children, the following categories have been used: Group A - children with
continuous contact with their family; Group B - children with occasional
contact with their family; and Group C - children without contact with their
family. As can be seen from diagram 2, the less the contact, the smaller the
group.

40. The term "family" is used here to describe a household with two or more
generations, united by marriage (including common law marriage), kinship or
fictive kinship that fulfils certain functions for the members, such as the
addition and socialization of new members, protection, maintenance, love and
affection. Such a definition permits the inclusion of such widely varying
forms as traditional nuclear and extended families as well as "self-formed" or
institutionally-formed families of street children and adults.

Diagram 2. Groupings of children
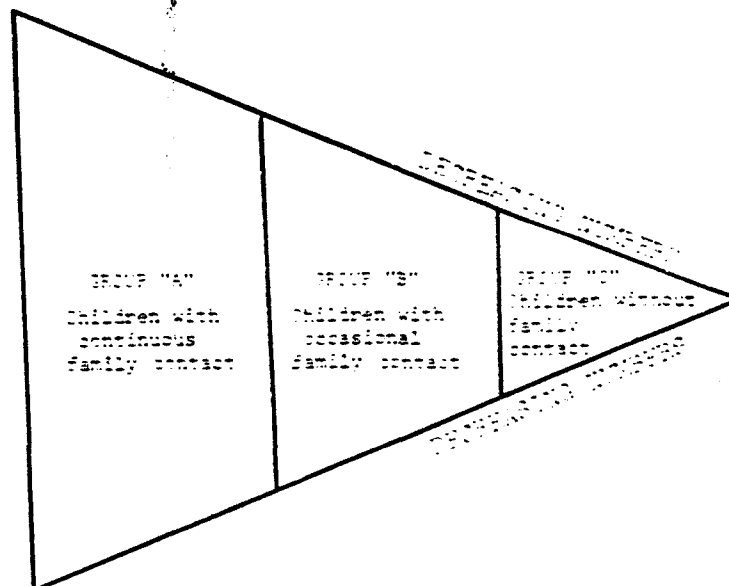
Children with continuous family contact (Group A)

41. Despite the hardships which daily assault families in poor communities, the majority of children have continuous family contact. Most rural working children are in this group, since most children's work in agriculture is intimately related to family and community. Most families in rural areas are able to stay together even in situations of extreme adversity because the family itself is the basic economic unit. This is true even of many landless agricultural labourers and migrant farm labourers who work seasonally as family units. A high proportion of the working child's time is spent in the company of his or her parents, whether at home or in the fields, even when the family is employed by a third party. In a very real sense, the parent is employer, skill-trainer and supervisor. The United Nations report states that, in family farming, "child labour is not differentiated, but is part of an overall system and cannot be dissociated from other family ties". The work of the child can be "an apprenticeship for adulthood, a factor in social integration and in reaching maturity". 29/ But when the tasks are too heavy, the hours too long and the opportunities for overall psycho-social development too few, the work may force the child into premature adulthood.

42. Despite stereotypes to the contrary, the majority of urban child workers, like rural children, spend most nights with their families or relatives. However, unlike most rural child workers, many urban child workers are either under the supervision of employers who are not family members or are in business for themselves on the streets. A category of children particularly at risk are those whose families make their homes on public pavements.

Children with occasional family contact (Group B)

43. A minority of these children do not have continuous family contact. Extreme poverty, combined with the transient and insecure conditions of economic and family life, often threaten a family's ability to care for its children. For these children, the home ceases to be their centre for play, socialization and daily sustenance. While their family relationships may be weakening, they are still definitely in place, and these children continue to view life from the point of view of family members. They still strongly identify with their parent(s) and siblings.

44. In urban areas, a growing percentage of working children from poor communities spend all of their days and some of their nights on the streets and in public places. They may be described as being "children on the street". Their families have not abandoned them, nor have they abandoned their families, but extreme poverty has forced them out of their homes to become at least partially self-supporting.

45. These street children can be spotted easily in the central city selling shopping bags, candy, chewing gum or cigarettes, shining shoes, or caring for automobiles. Sometimes their work is seasonal or related to special days of the week or year. The work they perform to support their family's and their own survival is not always lawful and morally appropriate. A number become involved in petty thievery, pickpocketing, drug trafficking, prostitution or

pornography. However, such children often consider these income-generating
activities to be their "work". Many children in this group are increasingly
vulnerable to the abuse and exploitation of street life and develop an
increasingly negative view of themselves.

Children without family contact (Group C)

46. Most poor communities have a much smaller number of children who daily
struggle for survival, without family contact. However, some countries, such
as Mozambique, which has suffered from a series of both man-made and natural
disasters, have a large proportion of children in Group C. A recent seminar
in Maputo estimated that as many as 33 per cent of the street children in that
city might be without any family support. In the most severe circumstances,
the child is separated from his or her family through such persistent
practices as bonded labour and slavery. In rural areas, the child is
sometimes literally sold by parents who are heavily in debt, and who believe
that this will improve the child's life prospects. Sometimes this category of
children is referred to as "abandoned". It includes orphans, runaways,
refugees and displaced persons. Whether declared "abandoned" or not,
abandonment is deeply felt by the child. Street children in this situation
might be described as being "children of the street".

J. Problems of street children

47. A careful review of the literature and consultation with leading experts
strongly suggest that the term "street children" often highlights a certain
set of working and living conditions rather than personal or social
characteristics of the individual children themselves. Too often, children in
these conditions are victims of stereotypes such as "juvenile delinquents" on
the part of the public and the authorities. More than the place of work, the
important criterion for programmatic action is the level of family support
received by the children. For purposes of this discussion,
therefore, the term "street children" will refer to all children who work in
the streets of urban areas, without reference to the time they spend there or
to the reasons for being there.

48. Street children are found in all three groups discussed above, but is is
conventional wisdom to consider them as a group with particular personal and
social characateristics. "Street children" is a valuable categorization for
programme purposes because it suggests a place of intervention. It is also
useful because children who work in the street share certain common problems
arising directly from the street environment and the kinds of jobs they do.

49. This definition differs from that used by the INTER-NGO programme on
street children and street youth which would apply more precisely to Group C
above - children without contact with their families: "Street children are
those for whom the street (in the widest sense of the word: i.e., unoccupied
dwellings, wasteland, etc.) more than their family has become their real home,
a situation in which there is no protection, supervision or direction from
responsible adults."

50.   That broad definition of street children as a sub-category of working
children is important as a counter balance to popular stereotypes. "Everyone
knows" what a gamin is in Colombia, a street sparrow in Zaire, a pelone in
Mexico, a canillita in La Paz and a pajaro frutero in Lima. Public knowledge
of this kind is fed by the media, which includes a wide variety of films, both
documentary and commercial, of which Bunuel's Los Olvidados and the more
recent Brazilian film, Pixote, are the most notable examples. One of the most
significant consequences of negative stereotypes is the effect on the
self-image of street children themselves. Another is the danger of assuming
that all of them have no contacts with their families, thus limiting
interventions to those appropriate for Group C. In reality, most children
have links with their families; probably 75 per cent of street children in
Latin America belong to Group A.

51.   How many street children are there? Some estimates of the numbers of
street children in both developing and industrialized countries today are as
high as 80 million, with approximately one half in Latin America. However, to
date no satisfactory means of determining the global numbers has been
developed. The overview document (E/ICEF/1986/L.6) represents an attempt at a
more systematic projection of numbers by the Anti-Slavery Society, which
estimates that street children number about 31 million.

52.   Girls, who are evident among street children in some places, are
particularly vulnerable and certainly more susceptible to physical and sexual
exploitation. Frequently too, because of their lower profile and visibility,
together with society's embarrassment at their street presence, girls are
ignored or simply coupled with boys in local street-child projects.

53.   Street children are a phenomenon of burgeoning cities with their growing
slums. Since the inception of UNICEF 40 years ago, the size and shape of many
third world country populations have altered markedly. An increasing tide of
rural-to-urban migration has sent millions of families to the metropolis in
search of new hope and a share in the city's prosperity. Since 1945, the
urban populations of Brazil, Colombia and Mexico have increased from about
30 per cent of the total population to about 70 per cent today. At least half
of the present growth is due to natural increase. In that same period, the
population of Manila has increased fivefold and that of Bangkok sevenfold.
Large city slums such as Nairobi's "Mathere Valley" (population 120,000) and
Rio de Janeiro's "Rocinha" (population 130,000) have become cities unto
themselves, but with few basic services. Indeed, huge cities such as Mexico
City, where approximately 1,500 rural in-migrants come daily, find their
capacity to serve new residents taxed beyond their limits. In such
circumstances, children of the urban poor too often find themselves active
participants in the survival of the whole family. If the family cannot hold
together, they seek survival by themselves - in the street.

II. APPROACHES TO IMPROVING THE LIVES OF WORKING CHILDREN AND STREET CHILDREN

54. UNICEF is concerned with the protection of all working children and street children, whether they work in rural or urban areas, in their homes or in other people's homes, in the fields, markets or factories, in service occupations, in manufacturing or commercial establishments, in the "informal sector" or on the streets. This concern is in accord with the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1959, which affirms the right of the child to special protection, to the opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy and normal manner, to the benefits of social security including adequate nutrition, housing, recreation and medical services, to education and to protection against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation. The Declaration specifies that "the child shall not be admitted to employment before an appropriate minimum age; he (sic) shall in no case be caused or permitted to engage in any occupation or employment which would prejudice his health or education, or interfere with his physical, mental or moral development". 30/

55. Clearly, many types of child "work" are by their very nature highly exploitative and must be abolished, because they directly endanger the survival as well as the social, emotional, and physical health and development of the children engaged in them. The involvement of children in any form of slavery, prostitution, pornography and the drug trade, in bonded labours and oppressive forms of domestic service, in military service and in any other such intolerable situations must be opposed.

56. Some other work done by children may or may not be exploitative, depending upon the conditions under which it is performed. The way the work is done, as well as the nature of the work itself, determine whether it is injurious to young people.

57. Three broad approaches to improving the lives of working children and street children have emerged: (a) using legal instruments to limit and define the conditions under which the young should work; (b) providing basic services to working children and street children in such a way as to facilitate their development; and (c) transforming the nature of work itself into a vehicle, rather than only an obstacle, to the child's growth and development, which is the most recent approach.

A. Legal approaches to protection

58. Some exploitation may be prevented or diminished by the adoption of new regulations or the enforcement of existing regulations. Protection and support are needed especially for younger children because of their greater vulnerability and the greater urgency for meeting their support and development needs. For many years, organizations such as ILO and the Anti-Slavery Society have focused on the regulation of child labour:

"It is now over 60 years since the International Labour Conference
adopted the Minimum Age Convention 1919 (No.5) - the first in a long line
of such Conventions - which fixed a minimum age of 14 for admission to
employment in industry. It is ten years since the adoption of the more
comprehensive Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), a general
instrument aimed at the total abolition of child labour. Over all this
time, the progress made towards the elimination of child labour has been
in many ways impressive." 31/

59. The last minimum age convention requires that ratifying States "pursue a
national policy designed to ensure the effective abolition of child labour and
to raise progressively the minimum age for admission to employment or work to
a level consistent with the fullest physical and mental development of young
persons". 32/ But relatively few States have ratified this convention. Only
33 countries have ratified Convention No. 138, the majority adopted a basic
minimum age of 15 years.

60. As stated in the United Nations report, however, there is a "great gap
between the legal instruments and the actual state of affairs". 33/ UNICEF
should support efforts to ratify appropriate conventions as well as efforts to
ensure that they are implemented. However, legislated abolition is by no
means a total solution to the exploitation of children's work. In addition,
even though legal protections have been useful instruments for eliminating the
worst child labour abuses in most industrialized countries, they have not been
very effective in developing countries where the problem is concentrated today.

61. Those organizations most concerned with regulating child labour realize
that legal restrictions may tend to increase exploitation, because the
children who must work are forced to work in small, unregistered enterprises
which escape all government inspection and control in terms of safety
regulations, minimum hygiene standards and ventilation requirements. 34/ It
is also possible that once legislation is passed, under-age workers may simply
disappear from official labour-force statistics. For example, when
legislation was enacted in one country barring work for children under
14 years of age, such working children were no longer reported as being part
of the labour force.

62. ILO, for decades one of the most outspoken advocates of legislation
prohibiting child labour, now takes a more pragmatic view of this aspect of
children at work:

"Effective policies aimed at the protection of children at work and the
gradual elimination of child labour must be adjusted to the
socio-economic situation of each country ... when work by children is
truly part of the socialization process and a means of transmitting
skills from parent to child, it is hardly meaningful to call it child
labour. Nor can such work be divorced from the poverty and
underdevelopment and the absence of alternatives to child work which
together generate and sustain it. For the overwhelming majority who
assist and work with their parents at home or on the farm, it is almost
impossible to address their situation through formal measures as such,
nor would such measures, if successful, necessarily be in the interest of
many child workers and their families." 35/

63. Another type of legal approach seeks to improve working conditions. In 1973, the International Labour Conference also adopted Recommendation 146, which indicates steps that should be taken by States to guarantee safe working conditions for working children. For example, it is recommended that children should receive equal pay for equal work, be allowed 12 hours off at night and have weekly rest days, paid annual holidays and medical care. These recommended standards, even though they have been adopted by only a few States, provide a starting point for activities that would ameliorate children's working conditions and protect them while they work.

64. UNICEF has documented a large community programme in Brazil which for a long time has been able to maintain up to 1,000 youths in jobs that meet these recommended standards. This is the result of excellent programme management, which involves carefully studying and cultivating the labour market and adapting the programme to meet its needs. As a result, employers hire these youths not because they are cheap labour, but because they are dependable and productive workers. As they become of age, many are taken into their employer's organization as permanent employees.

B. Improved access to basic services

65. A second approach to improving the lives of working children and street children focuses on providing them with basic services such as health care, nutrition and education; both through services that are made available to the community as a whole and through special activities directed specifically to them (see diagram 3).

Diagram 3. The working children and street children matrix
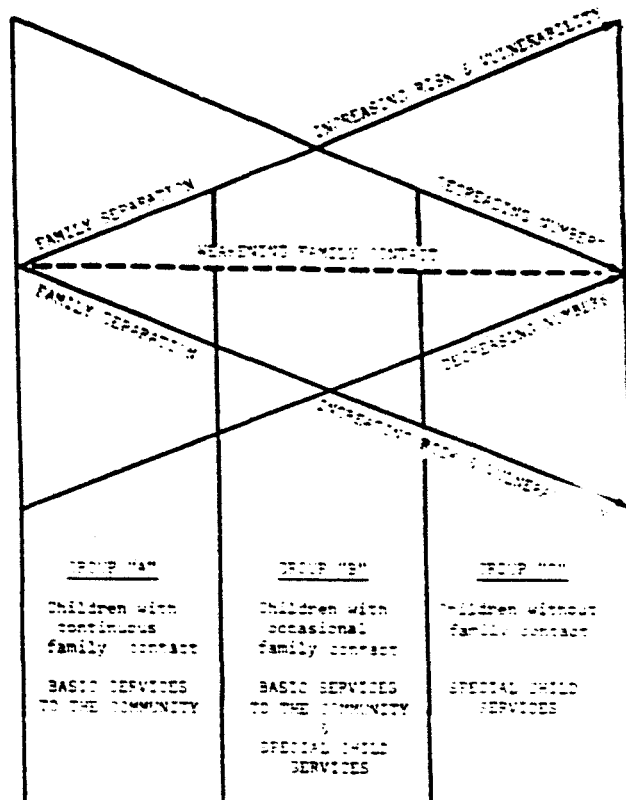
Services to the community as a whole

66. Basic services directed to the community as a whole would be adequate to
meet the needs of working children and street children who enjoy continuous
family contact (Group A). Unfortunately, the coverage of such services is far
from complete in many countries.

67. The basic services strategy is also relevant for children of Group B.
Most of these children are still a part of families and communities, even
though greater separation may be threatening. This fact is particularly
relevant for programmes developed for street children. In the past, because
many private and governmental projects on behalf of these children have
considered them to be without families, they were placed in closed
institutional settings, such as orphanages, which further isolate them from
their families and communities. Often the most severe difficulties of the
families of these children, such as illness, are temporary. Working with the
families provides a chance to work with the communities of which they are a
part, potentially benefiting an entire neighbourhood.

68. In many urban and rural localities of such countries as India, Pakistan
and the Philippines, the approach to the problems of access to basic services
has been to strengthen community links with the formal service system through
the use of community volunteers supported by paraprofessionals. Advocacy at
the political level so that the public sector fulfils its responsibility has
also been important. When the exploitation of children is linked with the
exploitation of families, it is necesary to seek allies among national or
state voluntary organizatons or elected officials.

69. Many communities have focused on the need to maximize employment and
income-generating activities for the poor to guarantee sufficient income to
meet family needs. For example, effective income-generating programmes for
women have as a potent side effect, the reduction of dependence on child
labour to maintain the family. (For some recent efforts, see Urban
Examples 10 on income-generating activities for women, published by UNICEF
Urban Section, June 1985.) In some cases it may be desirable for public
employment schemes to provide suitable types of work for older children.

70. Among the services made available to the community, education may be the
most viable means of reaching working children and street children. Schools
are the most widely available and accessible public service. Moreover, they
can be one of society's most important gateways to economic and social
opportunities. After all, schools are intended to be places for children to
prepare for work and to receive help in the acquisition of intellectual,
cultural and social skills. Furthermore, schools can serve as places for the
delivery of services to which all children have a right, including nutrition
and health services.

71. However, many schools are in the wrong place or they operate at the wrong
times. These logistical rigidities need to be unfrozen, bringing schools (or,
more accurately, schooling) into work places. School schedules must
accommodate daily and seasonal working times.

72. Schools also need to develop curricula that are germane to working children and street children. The lessons that helped drive the non-formal education movement - the need for children to participate in developing their own curriculum and the need to teach skills that assist in income-generation - need to be learned again and again. Schooling must be so immediate, accessible and relevant that children will come and stay, instead of leaving. Such locally relevant schooling will vary from community to community - in curriculum, in approach, in focus, in provision of services. Local planning must play a part so as to provide what is needed by the children, not what is imagined.

73. Finally, these schools need to provide some of their own financial support. Rare is the developing country with enough funds to provide schooling that is within the reach of every child. However, there are examples of schools that support themselves - from farming, from small manufacture, from providing services. These models need to be emulated.

74. A recent article in **Prospects**, a review published by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, analyses non-formal education and proposes that formal education systems should introduce some of the principal lessons derived from experience in non-formal education:

(a) Where primary-level education is one of the very few public services or even the only one that reaches the disadvantaged groups, it must become a versatile vehicle for change ...;

(b) Post-primary programmes ... to be effective and in order to mobilize resources other than those provided from the government budget, must combine in a flexible way general education with occupational and vocational training geared to economic opportunities rather than functioning as a centrally managed rigidly structured uniform programme;

(c) The care of the young ("pre-school") child ... has to be viewed more as a non-formal family and community enterprise supported primarily with resources that can be mobilized in the community;

(d) Combining productive work and learning within educational programmes (meets two aims. First ...) to enhance the relevance of the educational programme for the learners through their participation in real-life production experiences. (Second), the augmentation of the resources for education - generating income from the production activities. 36/

75. The article describes a community learning centre that serves meeting the multiple learning needs of the community as well as children's educational needs. The centre might incorporate such activities as adult literacy, health and nutrition education, agriculture extension, training in useful skills and discussion of political and civic matters. 37/ Such activities in community-based, largely self-supporting institutions might go far towards improving the access to basic services of working children and street children.

76. Some educational programmes that follow all or some of these principles
already exist. In a district of Maharashtra, India, a programme to
universalize public primary education uses voluntary teachers from the
community to educate working children in the evening. The community itself
decides whether it wishes such a school and contributes to its modest cost.
One tin trunk with two kerosene lamps and reading and writing materials
constitute materials for the group as a whole; no child has to buy materials.
The school's curriculum is similar to that of traditional schools but the
teaching methodology is radically different because it is based on the facts
and events of the children's own environment rather than on standard school
texts. After a two-year period, the children take the standard seventh grade
examination. In 1979, the pass rate was 80 per cent. 38/

77. In Burkina Faso, communities are developing garderies populaires. These
centres provide schooling and draw together developmental activities such as
water, sanitation, poultry raising and milling grain, which benefit
communities as a whole.

78. "Brigades" in Botswana provide a model of cost-effective general
education/vocational training. Established some 20 years ago for adolescents
who had left school, the brigades are administered by local Boards of Trustees
"to ensure ... (their) ... 'autonomy' ... in terms of local decision-making,
participation and flexibility". Trainees in the brigades work while they
learn with "about 50 per cent of their time being devoted to production in 15
trades and crafts, including building, carpentry, welding, farming, electrical
trades, dressmaking, textiles and mechanics. The proceeds of this work
provide financial support for the brigades, and although the brigades are not
fully self-supporting, "their contribution to the financing of their
activities represents an important 'saving' for the Government". 39/ It also
has been shown that this work-with-education model is conducive to learning
standard academic subjects such as math and languages. In an extensive
analysis of educational programmes that include productive work on both the
primary and lower secondary levels, the same report also describes programmes
in China, Ethiopia, the Philippines and United Republic of Tanzania, which
innovatively and cost-effectively combine learning and work.

Services especially for working children and street children

79. Working children and street children with occasional family contact
(Group B) frequently require supplementary services because the services
available to them in their home or community are inappropriate or inadequate
for their needs. Nutrition programmes are often essential. Some city
governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operate subsidized lunch
programmes where these children receive a nutritious meal in return for a
token payment. In fact, some projects for street children use the lunch
programme as the contact mechanism to discover needy children and to provide
other services to them.

80. Health care is another service much required by working children and
street children, who often have chronic ailments. If they are working in the
informal sector, or as irregular workers in the formal sector, they cannot
participate in any private or public medical insurance schemes available to
registered employees. If children are employed in tasks potentially injurious
to their health, it is unlikely that their employers will provide assistance
or even permit on-site health monitoring. As reported at a conference held in
in Montreal, Canada, in 1985 on the subject of "Education and social change in
India":

> "Neglect and indifference were the usual reactions when child workers
> fell sick. Although medical care facilities were available for the
> children who joined the Holiday Schools, the medical officer and social
> workers felt that the children did not take medicines regularly and they
> did not care about their own health. The apathy on the part of parents
> and the employers to the problem of health care is another factor which
> adds to the difficulties of the medical staff and the health care
> programme was found to be ineffective." 40/

81. Some of these children may require special help to enable them to make
use of educational activities. In the Philippines, for example, some
programmes assisting street children provide the funds needed to purchase
school clothes and study materials without which the child cannot attend the
available public schools.

82. The undertakings which have had the most impact upon the lives of working
children and street children have involved education appropriately adapted to
the child today and to his future adult needs tomorrow, as well as income
generation as a protected, dignifying experience. Many enlightened project
leaders have seen work and education evolve as a single process. Community
programmes often offer access to either wage or self-employment. For example,
in about 300 community programmes for street children surveyed in Brazil, the
vast majority offer some type of help with children's income needs.

83. In addition, two examples of successful efforts in India have been
reported. 41/ The first deals with child rag pickers aged 5 to 14 years. It
is being run by a voluntary agency in Bangalore, the Indian Council for Child
Welfare (Karnataka State Branch), with support from the Government. The
Council attacks the basic issue of poverty directly by buying the rags from
the children at a higher price than that of the usual middlemen. In addition,
it offers a range of services: medical examinations and treatment; personal
hygiene instruction and non-formal education; recreational facilities; and
counselling. Counselling services are also extended to parents.

84. The second example is the holiday schools programme which has 12 schools
in 10 wards in Calcutta. Run on a larger scale by the Institute of
Psychological and Educational Research with Government support, it is meant to
reach 10 per cent of the total population of working children in the city.
The action programme aims to improve the level of general education of working
children, thereby improving their vocational skills; provide regular medical
check-ups, clinical treatment and medicines; provide food supplements to

combat nutritional deficiencies; improve service conditions at the work
places; set up facilities for cultural and social participation in an effort
to infuse self-confidence in working children and to help them develop a more
healthy personality; and detect and treat personality disorders. The centres
have timings which are convenient to wage earners, part- and full-time
household servants and self-employed children. With regard to 50 per cent of
the children in the programme who are domestic servants, neither their
employer nor the child workers were interested in programmes meant for
improving children's vocational efficiency.

85.   In addition to the need for basic services normally offered through
communities, those working children and street children who are without family
contact (Group C) need in particular special services such as health,
nutrition, education and income-generation. They may also need to find some
sort of new family context.

86.   The most successful local experiences in working with children without
family links seek the best solution possible under existing local
circumstances. When adoption and fostering are possible, they are carefully
and effectively promoted. When these options are not possible (usually for
cultural reasons), family-like groupings such as group homes within a regular
community, or caretaker families within children's villages are arranged.
Nevertheless, there is still much creative thinking needed to develop "new
families" for these children. For example, in Sao Paulo, street children,
organized themselves into a new family and sought out a favoured street
educator to be their house parent. Such arrangements may not conform to local
interpretations of a family unit, but they often provide the essential support
and protection that a family can offer as well as its most essential
contributions to the child – someone who really cares and a personal identity
for each young person.

C.   Transformation of the nature of children's work

87.   Recently, a few programmes have brought an entirely new approach to
activities seeking to help working children and street children. Rather than
trying to limit the opportunities open to children, as the legal protection
model often does, or to simply offer supplementary services to compensate for
the disadvantages these children suffer, these programmes seek to transform
the work itself, so that it becomes a vehicle for, rather than an obstacle to,
child growth and development. By tightly controlling working processes and
conditions, these programmes go far beyond merely "sanitizing" work so that it
does not injure children. The programmes seek to enrich and humanize it so
that it becomes an experience for providing income to the child workers, and
to prepare them for life by forging a strong connection between work and
education.

88.   In Brazil, for instance, one non-governmental programme involves over
200 children and youth in the fabrication of highly creative home furnishings
that reflect traditional local styles and use local materials. Production is
organized to facilitate learning and broad experience as well as to be
economically sound. Young people are found in virtually all roles, including

supervision. Quality of workmanship is stressed since it is considered to be closely identified with the self-esteem of the worker. In addition, the production of beautiful articles is considered essential to the programme strategy of teaching both creativity and self-respect. Self-confidence and esteem grow as the young people find they can make beautiful, high-quality items which are sought after and produce a good income. A joint UNICEF/Brazilian Government team has documented this programme and found it both educationally and commercially successful. It suggests the feasibility of humanizing work for children in ways that are also economically practical. 42/

89. In other countries, such sheltered workshop approaches have been associated with private schools, but the concept can be adapted to the more general service of children who must work. This approach seems to be one that strikes very directly at the problems of exploitative work and the alienation of children who engage in it.

D. Reaching working children and street children

90. Like their peers who do not work, working children and street children are entitled to adequate education, nutrition, medical services and housing. However, many working children are invisible, underground and out of reach. Access is often a problem for children in widely-scattered rural areas, but it may also be a social problem in densely populated urban slums. Mere proximity is not enough. A child in an urban slum may be denied access to a school that is within eyesight, for lack of "school readiness" preparation, lack of money for school fees, books, and clothes or because of the necessity to work during school hours. In this sense, access is limited by economic, psychological and social barriers. Services must be brought to working children and street children where they work, with the co-operation of their employers and their parents.

91. In rural areas, parents are obviously the principal influential adults in their own children's lives. In urban areas, parents are still the primary channel for reaching most working children and street children, even though they can be reached more directly than rural children, especially through mass media. Other possible channels are public officials, including teachers, and social welfare workers. In addition, of course, most urban areas benefit from the presence of a myriad of non-governmental social agencies from neighbourhood to city-wide organizations, many of which, like the Young Women's Christian Association, and the Salesians, have a long history of relationship with working children and street children in cities.

92. Employers must also be approached if children are to be reached at the work place. According to an ILO report: "There is a particularly urgent need to focus on those groups of child workers who are especially vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Among those are bonded labourers, domestic servants, work or 'apprentices' in small factories and workshops, and children in the street trades." 43/

93. The ILO report goes on to cite the clear need not only for police measures and legislation but also for a more effective dissemination of information to employers, to create greater awareness of the potential damage that inappropriate work, poor working conditions and insufficient education or training can do to children.

94. An interesting project, part of a comprehensive rural development programme called Social Inputs in Area Development (SIAD), was begun in June 1984, for children working in match factories in Sivakasi, Tamil Nadu (South India). The project involves the collaboration of the State Government, the owners of the match factories and UNICEF. The approach is multisectoral with the Ministry of Social Welfare co-ordinating the inputs of nine other relevant departments.

95. This programme differs from other programmes in that it has a multi-dimensional approach which is essential for resolving the problems pertaining to child labour. The salient features of the Sivakasi programme include the provision for integrated services for working children, such as health, education, environmental hygiene and nutrition, and developmental measures, such as improving the drinking water supply and providing drainage and environmental sanitation through toilets and mosquito control measures. 44/ An interesting aspect of this project is that the situation of child workers in Sivakasi first came to public attention as a result of the situational analysis for the SIAD project.

96. Existing programmes for urban working children are not well documented. However, the lack of information does not mean that programmes are lacking. In fact, in most regions of the world, local urban government organizations, and especially local NGOs, have been pioneering attempts to assist working children. UNICEF has co-sponsored such studies of three successful projects for urban working children in Brazil. In each case, a local NGO has developed a programme that combines work and both formal and non-formal learning.

97. An unpublished manuscript entitled The Wayside Mechanic: An Analysis of Skill Acquisition in Ghana describes the training of apprentices by masters at roadside service stations. A Canadian volunteer mechanic was taking "expert technical know-how directly to (wayside automobile mechanics) in the same manner that agricultural extension officers assist farmers". The expert mechanic and his Ghanaian counterparts travel from site to site in the city of Accra, in a truck that houses a complete mobile workshop. 45/ At each stop, the "extension team" offers troubleshooting, skill instruction and expert advice to masters and apprentices. Services to workers are thus really and inextricably linked with services to employers.

98. This innovative intervention is consistent with the principles of technical assistance provocatively described by John Oxenham in "Education for the urban informal sector" (Prospects, 1984). Citing research in Central America and West Africa, Oxenham writes:

"The fact that learning in the informal sector has been effective ...
argues that no new institutional procedures were needed for the
apprentices. What would be helpful is assistance to the masters to
improve their conditions of work, their own understanding of their trades
and management and their skills in training." 46/

99. Reaching working children and street children who have little or no
family support can present special problems. It is often necessary to seek
them out. For reasons emanating from work place and home alike, many of these
youngsters have lost all confidence in adults. Because of constant abuse and
exploitation, it is impossible for some children to believe that an adult
approaching them has anything but an ulterior motive in mind - offering
something but wanting as much or more in return. For this reason, initial
contacts, the offering of friendship, and the building of acceptance and
confidence require great skill and sensitivity on the part of the adult.

100. Street educators have played a singularly important role in some
successful local initiatives on behalf of children working in city streets.
Although this kind of activity goes back at least to the last century, when
Don Bosco began to work systematically with Italian street children by
engaging them in educational activities in the street, recently it has been
growing primarily in Latin America. The street educator is often a former
street child, and has as his/her initial objective the establishment of a
trusting relationship with street children. Even so, this can be a very
difficult process. The ultimate aims are to help them deal more effectively
with their situations and to increase access to essential services and
contacts. The street educator goes to where the child lives and works, in the
street, works around the clock according to the street child's accustomed
routine, and offers comfort, understanding and protection (often at some
personal risk). Respecting rather than patronizing, the street educator
gradually seeks to gain the trust of the street children. The next step is to
help them to become involved in a programme they help to design and develop.
Services such as non-formal education, counselling and job support are
delivered on the spot. Here also, the key relationship between work and
education can be nurtured along with the child's self-esteem. When well
implemented, this approach shows considerable promise of being able to assist
such young people with survival and finding ways of meeting their basic
needs. However, it cannot always satisfy the fundamental emotional needs for
identity and love. Moreover, it presents formidable organizational
obstacles. Since the activities involved are complex, success depends very
much upon the competence, sensitivity and dedication of the staff. At the
same time, the street education approach is similar to and consistent with the
basic services approach. It is participatory in nature, stresses the
convergence of services, requires programme flexibility in response to
people's needs and is based upon respect for the person. This approach to
reaching street children at their work place should be explored for all
working children with one caveat: it is a means, not an end in itself. It is
important to avoid the fallacy of "institutionalizing the street" itself - or
the workplace of the child.

E. UNICEF experience

101. Until recently, UNICEF experience with programmes on behalf of working children has consisted mainly of support for a number of approaches to assisting children working in the streets in Latin America. NGOs have frequently been in the lead, but there are some notable Government and combined Government/NGO interventions as well. The best approaches aim to help individual children, support and restore their families and develop strong active communities which can protect and support their children more effectively. Many of these projects assist the children to meet their needs of income generation, education and vocational preparation. Prevention of further family separation for children who have families, as well as the re-incorporation of homeless children into new families, are the real marks of the success of any initiative. While the number of children reached is frequently used to assess the impact of such projects, qualitative evaluations of the impact upon their lives is often more important. This is difficult to assess and very often the children and their parents are the best judges of how valuable the action on their behalf has been. Such information is difficult to systematize and analyse, but it frequently provides the best answers to questions. Thus, the challenge to social scientists is to develop more relevant, sensitive and reliable qualitative indices of success and human "impact". An attempt to do this is being undertaken in Brazil with UNICEF assistance.

102. Perhaps the most effective role which UNICEF has played to date has been that of an advocate on behalf of street children and as agent for changing attitudes and ideas. The Brazil experience is a good example. In 1982, through the identification and systematic study of existing community-based projects, the Government/UNICEF team was able to show that there were viable alternatives to institutionalizing street children, or not taking action at all. This was done by documenting these successful experiences and sharing their principles and techniques with the media and representatives of other communities in a series of workshops, seminars and exchange visits. It also involved working closely with the Church and key NGOs. This has given rise to more hope and more community action. Today the team has contact with more than 300 local groups throughout the country. The Brazilian Government, through its central child agency, the National Foundation for Child Welfare, has incorporated this community-oriented, preventive approach into its operating policies - and even applied it, to some degree, in working with children in other areas of its programme mandate.

103. In Latin America, through inter-country exchange visits, communications networking and regional seminars in Brasilia (November 1984) and Bogota (September 1985), there are the strong indications of a movement on behalf of street children. Closely linked to such advocacy actions has been the technical assistance role of UNICEF. In Brazil, Colombia and Mexico, UNICEF worked closely with national, state and local government authorities in the development of more effective alternative community models for working with street children and potential street children. This Latin American experience has also had an important interregional impact on a number of countries including Kenya, Mozambique, the Philippines and Thailand.

104. UNICEF has helped to raise approximately $2,000,000 for "noted" projects over half of this through UNICEF Canada. In addition, general resources were approved by the 1983 Executive Board to finance the three-year Latin American regional programme in the amount of $500,000, and the Children's Stamps Foundation of the Netherlands provided an additional $100,000 for direct support to street children projects in Cali and Bogotá, Colombia.

105. UNICEF has also been instrumental in the development of special techniques to facilitate local initiatives. Situation analyses of street children have become particularly effective as a starting point for projects in the Philippines, and in determining appropriate places to begin actions on behalf of street children in several departments in Colombia. Micro-planning as a tool has proved particularly effective in designing local projects in Bucaramanga, Colombia, and Cuatzacualcos, Mexico, while observations of local projects have contributed to the development of the national programme in Brazil.

Notes

1/   I. Dogramaci, "Child labour: an overview", in Child Labour: A Threat to Health and Development, P.M. Shah and N. Cantwell, eds. (Geneva, Defense for Children International, 1985), p. 10.

2/   A. Bouhdiba, "Exploitation of child labour" (E/CN.4/Sub.2/479/Rev.1), (New York, United Nations, 1982), paras. 10-26.

3/   Anti-Slavery Society, "The exploitation of child labour", unpublished manuscript, London, 1984, excerpted.

4/   F. Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in England (California, 1958), p.170.

5/   P.M. Shah and N. Cantwell, eds., Child Labour: A Threat to Health and Development (Geneva, Defense for Children International, 1985), p. 39.

6/   D.C. Pitt, "Child labour and health", in Child Labour: A Threat to Health and Development, P.M. Shah and N. Cantwell, eds. (Geneva, Defense for Children International, 1985), p. 30.

7/   Ibid., p. 27.

8/   Ibid., p. 30.

9/   Shah, op. cit., p. 39.

10/   Dogramaci, loc. cit., p. 9.

11/   Ibid.

12/ F. Blanchard, Report of the Director-General (Geneva, ILO, 1983), p. 7.

13/ Anti-Slavery Society, The Exploitation of Child Labour, p. 7.

14/ Bouhdiba, loc. cit., para. 31.

15/ E. Mendelievich, ed., Children at Work (Geneva, ILO, 1979), p. 23.

16/ Bouhdiba, loc. cit., para. 42.

17/ Ibid., para. 44.

18/ Dogramaci, loc. cit., p. 9.

19/ Anti-Slavery Society, The Exploitation of Child Labour, p. 5.

20/ Bouhdiba, loc. cit., para. 36.

21/ A. Bequele, Towards an Action Programme on Child Labour (Geneva, ILO, 1984), p. 45.

22/ Ibid., p. 47.

23/ Blanchard, op. cit., p. 9.

24/ Mendelievich, op. cit., pp. 30-31.

25/ M. Acharya, "Time use data and the lining standards measurement study", LSMS Working Paper No. 18 (Washington, D.C., Development Research Department, World Bank, 1982) (FAO correspondence); also see M. Acharya and L. Bennet, The status of women in Nepal (Nepal, UNICEF, 1981).

26/ Anti-Slavery Society, The Exploitation of Child Labour, p. 16.

27/ Dogramaci, loc. cit., p. 8.

28/ J. Oxenham, "Education for the urban informal sector", Prospects, vol. XIV, No. 2, (UNESCO, 1984), p. 192.

29/ Bouhdiba, loc. cit., para. 96.

30/ United Nations "Declaration of the rights of the child, Principle 9".

31/ Blanchard, op. cit., p. 3.

32/ ILO Convention No. 138, Article 1.

33/ Bouhdiba, loc. cit., para. 177.

34/ Blanchard, op. cit., p. 19.

35/ Ibid., p. 18.

36/ M. Ahmed, "Critical educational issues and non-formal education",
Prospects, vol. XIII, No. 2 (UNESCO, 1983), p. 38-40.

37/ Ibid., p. 49.

38/ C.N. Naik, Action Research Project on Universal Primary Education
(Pune, India, 1979).

39/ M. Ahmed, Productive Work Within Educational Programmes (Paris,
UNESCO, 1981), p. 41.

40/ Usha Naidu, "Child labour and education in India: a perspective",
presented at a conference on "Education and social change in India", Faculty of
Education, McGill University, Montreal, 1985, p. 12.

41/ Ibid.

42/ M. Tavares and W. Myers, "I need to work", unpublished study, Rio de
Janeiro, 1983.

43/ Blanchard, op. cit., p. 36.

44/ Naidu, loc. cit., p. 12.

45/ S. McLaughlin, "The wayside mechanic", unpublished dissertation,
Amherst, 1971, p. 229.

46/ Oxenham, loc. cit., p. 201.

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