



STATE OF STREET CHILDREN IN PAKISTAN

By SPARC



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Acronyms

FGD (Focus Group Discussion)

IDI (In-depth Interview)

ILO (International Labor Organization)

National Commission for Child Welfare and Development (NCCWD)

NFE (Non-formal Education)

NGO (Non- Governmental Organization)

SPARC (Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child)

UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child)

Executive Summary

Street children is a term used for children for whom the street has become a habitual abode. The abundance of street children across all major cities of Pakistan is a worrying sign, however, they seem to have become the visibly invisible segment of our society. A 2010 SPARC survey estimated the number of street children in urban centers to be between 1.2 to 1.5 million¹, a figure that has likely increased by now.

Street children are vulnerable to all kinds of hazards including; sexual abuse, street violence, psychological trauma, drug addiction, and falling victim to communicable diseases.

In order to highlight the plight of street children, and to raise this neglected issue, SPARC conducted a survey across 3 provinces of Pakistan, namely Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. By targeting over 100 households, the survey aimed to assess the state of health, education, access to basic utilities, safety and security of these children. During the survey both children and their parents were interviewed to gather qualitative and quantitative data to identify key issues.

The information gathered from this survey presented some appalling results. The children interviewed for the survey included street children enrolled in SPARC's Centers for Street Children. The survey helped identify major hurdles leading to a wide range of hazards affecting street children, as well as allows SPARC to analyze what affects had transpired in the wake of its decade long quest to improve the state of street children. Comparing the current and former state of street children enrolled in SPARC's CSCs, along with views from their parents and government officials interviewed for this survey. This allowed us to identify interventions which can help improve the state of not only the children, but entire households.

The key findings, observations and recommendations in this survey are meant to highlight the neglected issue of street children and to provide civil society organizations with essential advocacy and programme interventions, as well as to aid the government in identifying measures to improving the state of street children in Pakistan.

During the survey, 80% of adult female households were found to be unemployed, whereas the average number of employed individuals (including children) were found to be 2 per household.

The average number of depends per household were 7. Among the interviewed children, 48% were found to be engaged in child labour, whereas the most common reason cited by parents for engaging their children in work was identified as poverty. The survey results revealed that 73% parents believed that children should not work, however, financial constraints were a major hurdle in pulling their children out of work. The average household monthly contribution of children to (monthly) household income was calculated at Rs 1315.

Malnutrition was one of the major health concerns identified during the survey (56%), whereas 51% children were found to be deprived of 3 meals a day. The prevalence of kidney diseases, Hepatitis C, and Tuberculosis in the targeted communities was another major issue identified. This was hardly surprising considering 53% people were found to be deprived of any proper source of clean drinking water, whereas 57% people complained about inadequate conditions of sanitation in their area of residence.

During an assessment of the reading and writing skills of children compared to historical data, it was discovered that 87% children could not read and 96% children could not write in even a single language before joining SPARC's Centers for Street Children. Illiteracy was also found to be a major issue for parents

¹ <http://www.sparcpk.org/2015/Other-Publications/streetchildren-bro.pdf>

of street children as the collected data revealed that 92% of parents interviewed could not read or write in a single language.

The percentage of exposure of street children to violence was also quite high (72%), including domestic and street violence. The overall acceptance of corporal punishment among parents was also found to be quite high (79%).

During the survey a wide range of issues were identified which require immediate attention from government bodies, as well as a coordinated response from civil society organizations in order to safeguard the future of underprivileged children engaged in child labour and exposed to various hazards on the streets; as well as to control the rate of an increase in the phenomenon of street children.

Introduction

Background

The most common definition of a street child or youth is “any girl or boy who has not reached adulthood, for whom the street (in the broadest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wastelands, etc.) has become her or his habitual abode and/or sources of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised or directed by responsible adults” (Inter-NGO, 1985).

While this definition helps us distinguish between “on the street” and “of the street” children, it is not sufficient to describe street children very comprehensively. This is because the definition does not adequately account for children abandoned by their families, runaways, or children who might have become street children due to other underlying causes such as drug abuse.

While street children are often found alone or in small groups on the streets, they aren’t always unsupervised, as many children that derive their livelihood by doing some sort of work on the streets are many a times accompanied by adults. This might include the child’s parents, mentor or someone manipulating the child for indulging him/her in illicit activities.

While there are no comprehensive statistics to determine the number of street children in Pakistan, in 2010 SPARC estimated the number of street children to be between 1.2 million to 1.5 million in urban areas of Pakistan.

In an attempt to highlight the plight of street children and to determine the various causes leading up to their life on the streets, SPARC conducted a baseline assessment of street children targeting 100 households from four cities. The children and parents interviewed were engaged via SPARC’s Centers for Street Children in Rawalpindi, Multan, Peshawar and Hyderabad. The aim of this assessment was to determine the major issues tied to street children and to estimate various indicators to determine the percentage of violence against street children, their access to healthcare and education, engagement in child labour (including hazardous work) and various psycho-social problems associated with communities and children surviving on the streets.

Introduction to SPARC’s Centers for Street Children

During 2010 following the devastating floods, SPARC conducted a study entitled ‘Surviving the Streets’ to assess situation of street children in major cities, including Multan. Most of the children interviewed were living with their families; however, approximately 20% of the children were living on the streets. Most of

the interviewed children were illiterate and only a small number of children had undergone primary schooling.

SPARC regards any child a street child who has not reached adulthood, and for whom the street has become his or her habitual abode and/or source of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, directed, and supervised by responsible adults. Street children generally fall in two main categories: children of the street and children on the street.

‘Children of the street’ are homeless children who live and sleep on the streets in urban areas. They are totally on their own, living with other street children or homeless adult street people. On the other hand, ‘children on the street’ earn their living or beg for money on the street and return home at night.

Street children live in exceptionally difficult circumstances and are a highly vulnerable group. They are especially at risk of abuse, and discrimination and stigma. Furthermore, street children often lack access to education, healthcare, food and adequate living conditions.

Currently Active Centers for Street Children

SPARC has been working with street children in Peshawar since 2006. During a span of three years (2009-2011) and with Kindernothilfe’s support, SPARC was able to establish three more street children centers at Rawalpindi, Hyderabad and Multan. Later, a center for children of liberated peasants was established in Sikandarabad Hari Camp with the help of Good Neighbors International (“GNI”). The funding for the Sikandarabad center came to an end in December 2015 whereas SPARC is running CSC Multan through its own resources. It also looks up to philanthropists to join the noble cause of protection of vulnerable children. More recently, SPARC inaugurated its fifth Center for Street Children in Wahidabad, Islamabad in February, 2017.

Objectives of SPARC’s Centers for Street Children

The objective of CSCs is to improve the quality of life of street children; and in this regard the CSCs offers the following services to the children visiting it:

- Health and Hygiene sessions
- Entertainment
- Indoor Sports
- Recreational Trips
- One meal a day & refreshments
- Non Formal Education
- Mainstreaming into the Government Schools
- Skills Training
- Medical Care
- Psycho-social Counseling & Life Skill Guidance
- Reunification
- Referral of Runaway Children to the Child Protection Bureaus

Each CSC has been benefiting approximately more than 2,000 children annually. Some of the children were runaways from homes and SPARC reunited them with their families. Many of the children receiving non-formal education have been main-streamed by getting them admitted in the local schools. Children doing

skill training were many a times given sewing kits and other related stuff to help them continue with their work at home.

The CSCs, apart from establishing close contacts with the Street Children through a team of its social mobilizers, has established linkages with the Child Protection and Welfare Bureaus in the Provinces, Schools, Dar ul Aman (a government run center which provides support to female runaways), and police.

The CSCs staff also conducts lectures in the community to apprise them about the functioning of the Center, about health and hygiene and about the effectiveness of getting children educated.

SPARC has a long association with the civil society organizations and continues to maintain these contacts and network with them.

Research Methodology

Methodology

The research was conducted using survey questionnaires, FGDs and interviews from street children, their parents and concerned government officials.

The survey data was collected using both qualitative and quantitative methods. There were 2 survey forms created for data collection, one for children and the other for parents. The aim was to target 100 households to identify the various issues related to street children including health and hygiene, barriers to learning, child labour, violence against children, etc. The conclusions are largely based on the experiences of children and families in the targeted areas.

The methodology included using questionnaires, for which data was gathered via survey questionnaire, FGDs (including children, parents and government officials dealing with children's issues), and individual interviews. For the purpose assessing the reading and writing ability of students, a written and oral test was prepared with set indicators for rating child's proficiency in at least one language. The selected languages for testing children included Urdu, English, Sindhi and Pushto. Children were allowed to pick a language they were most proficient or comfortable with.

Research Questions

1. What are the key issues affecting street children?
2. What measures can help improve the state of street children?
3. What impact do household level constraints have on the well-being of street children?
4. Have the Centers for Street Children been able to have a meaningful impact in improving the lives of street children?

Target Area

While it is relatively easier to identify problems plaguing street children, there is a dire need for coming up with solutions to help mitigate the issues faced by children on the streets. This is why SPARC chose to conduct a survey of street children from communities engaged with SPARC's CSCs in Rawalpindi, Multan, Hyderabad and Peshawar. Such a survey was meant to not only identify the problems but also meant to measure the effectiveness of CSCs in helping street children.

Limitations

Since the interviewed children and parents were linked to SPARC's CSCs, the scope of the survey was limited by the households engaged with CSCs. Moreover, among the targeted areas, the report does not include an area from Balochistan.

It is also worth mentioning here that since SPARC has been working on improving the conditions of these street children, the condition of street children across the country not being helped by such interventions might even be worse off than the figures indicated in this research. Furthermore, using a larger sample size might reflect a more detailed overview of some indicators related to education, healthcare, violence against children and other key issues.

Despite limitations, this report can still be a good mechanism to understand the plight of street children in Pakistan and to highlight a neglected issue which requires immediate intervention. Moreover, the report includes comparisons with larger scale surveys conducted by government bodies and international organizations to help offer a more comprehensive analysis of the gaps that make affect the well-being of children, particularly street children.

Child Labor

Pakistan is among the countries with a high prevalence of child labour, with an alarmingly high (22.6 million)² out of school children. The ratio of out of school girls is higher than males, further endangering their chances for economic empowerment. The last Child Labour Survey in Pakistan was conducted back in 1996, which estimated child labour to be at 3.3 million³. Since then, there has been no nationwide child labour survey.

Based on the national Labour Force Survey 2010-2011, a publication titled Understanding Children's Work (UCW) in South Asia by ILO, UNICEF and World Bank indicated that 5.7 million 10-17-year-olds, representing almost 20% of all children in the age group are labourers⁴. Among these children, more than two-thirds of those engaged within the agricultural sector in Pakistan. A similar proportion were estimated to be doing unpaid family work.

Of the 15-17 year age group, 13.5% were estimated to be engaged in hazardous work. Article 11 (3) of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan prohibits the employment of children below the age of 14 years in any factory or mine or any other hazardous employment. Federal and Provincial child labour prohibition laws set the age bar at 14 years, with the exception of Punjab (15 years), while The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Prohibition of Employment of Children Act allows 'light work' at the age of 12.

Considering the high prevalence of child labor within the country's major urban areas, SPARC's CSC's spanning across some of Pakistan's major cities present a useful snapshot of the state of child labor in such areas. The survey focused on the employment status of these children's parents, the relative number of dependents in their families as well as the total number of children involved in some form of child labor to help ascertain the effects localized poverty and unemployment may have had on the lives of these children.

a). Occupation and Employment of Parents of Street Children

According to the below table, it was learnt that in the majority of the households surveyed, the role of key provider was taken up by the children's fathers, 88% of whom were employed. Similarly, 80% of the mothers were found to play the role of housewives and were not employed anywhere. Out of these only

² <http://library.aepam.edu.pk/Books/Pakistan%20Education%20Statistics%202015-16.pdf>

³

http://kpcode.kp.gov.pk/uploads/2015_19_THE_KHYBER_PAKHTUNKHWA_PROHIBITION_OF_EMPLOYMENT_OF_CHILDREN_ACT_2015.pdf

⁴ http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/--sronew_delhi/documents/publication/wcms_440164.pdf

18% of the mothers were reported as doing some kind of work; mostly home based work (e.g. tailoring or bangle making), or as housemaids in other people's homes.

It is interesting to note that both Peshawar and Hyderabad showed considerable differences with regard to unemployed mothers, suggesting perhaps a regional and/or cultural divergence. Nearly all of the mothers surveyed in Peshawar reported as being unemployed (96%). Whereas, in Hyderabad nearly half of the mother surveyed (44%) reported as being employed.

City	Mothers Employed	Mothers Unemployed/ Housewives	Fathers Employed	Fathers Unemployed
Rawalpindi	20%	80%	92%	8%
Multan	12%	88%	96%	4%
Peshawar	4%	96%	84%	16%
Hyderabad	44%	56%	80%	20%
Total	20%	80%	88%	12%

b). Average Number of Dependents Per Household

A common pattern observed during the research was the high percentage of extended and joint families that these street children were a part of. This means that there are often a large number of dependents, including very young or very old individuals in the household being financially catered for by usually 1-2 people. The average number of family members employed per household in all surveyed areas was 2, whereas the average number of dependents was 7. This trend was noticed across all the centers indicating the financial burden and onus of responsibility on the breadwinners within these households. It also shows how hard it is for these children and their families to climb out of this vicious cycle of poverty, by focusing on any form of savings and/or increases in wealth.

City	Average Number of Family Members Employed Per Household	Average Number of Dependents Per Household
Rawalpindi	2	6
Multan	1	7
Peshawar	1	7
Hyderabad	2	6
Total	2	7

Note: During calculation figures were rounded to the nearest whole number.

c). Percentage of children found to be engaged in child labor

According to the study's findings, it was learnt that nearly half of all the children being served by the CSCs (48%) were employed in some form of child labor. The highest incidence was reported in Rawalpindi that accounted for nearly 9 out of 10 children to be engaged in some form of employment. On the other end of the spectrum was Multan where 96% of the participants stated that they were not subject to any form of child labor.

City	Yes	No
Rawalpindi	88%	12%
Multan	4%	96%
Peshawar	28%	72%
Hyderabad	72%	28%
Total	48%	52%

e). Prevalence of child labour

When asked why parents send their children to work, the most common cause was identified as poverty or the lack of interest of the child in studies. The study also focused on the parent's attitudes towards child labor by posing the question of why they think their children should be put to work.

The results cited mainly poverty/financial constraints and a lack of interest of the child in studies as the primary causes given by parents. Once again however, it was poverty that stood out as the primary reason why parents thought their children should work. This argument is further supplemented by the previously discussed data, particularly the dependent to breadwinner ratio discussed above, which is a clear indication of the poverty trap faced by the families of these children.

City	Poverty / Financial Constraints	Child Not Interested in Studies	Child Does Not Work
Rawalpindi	72%	16%	12%
Multan	4%	0%	96%
Peshawar	28%	0%	72%
Hyderabad	72%	0%	28%
Total	44%	4%	52%

f). Level of parental acceptance of child labour

When parents were asked if children should work (engage in child labour) 73% believed that children should not work. Most parents of CSCs were against child labour with the exception of Peshawar, where 52% parents considered child labour as acceptable. Regional and cultural differences aside it was gauged that given the choice; respondents would rather prefer that their children focus on their education rather than be employed in some form of work or the other.

Should Children Work?		
City	Yes	No
Rawalpindi	28%	72%
Multan	28%	72%
Peshawar	52%	48%
Hyderabad	0%	100%
Total	27%	73%

g). Household monthly income and financial contribution by children in the household.

Building on the previous data, the above table gives a monetary overview of the average household income of these families, as well as the average monetary contribution of these child laborers. It is worth mentioning here that each family has an average of 7 dependents and 2 bread winners. Hence, even though the above mentioned contributions of these children seem relatively small in comparison, they nevertheless form a key source of income for these families.

While on average these children account for nearly 12% of their families' total monthly income, their contributions often account for a significant share within their households. As depicted by the data from Peshawar for instance, the contributions of these child laborers to their monthly household incomes can even amount to as much as 26% of their total household incomes.

City	Average Household Monthly Income	Average Contribution of Child / Children in Household Income
Rawalpindi	Rs 19333	Rs 1272
Multan	Rs 8820	Rs 1200
Peshawar	Rs 10040	Rs 2640
Hyderabad	Rs 7020	Rs 1294
Total	Rs 11110	Rs 1315

Key Observations

It is no surprise that the prevalence of child labour among street children was found to be quite high; as was its acceptability among parents. Considering we are talking about the individuals situated at one of the lowest quintiles of income distribution, an average contribution by a child to the household of Rs 1,315, against an average monthly income of Rs 11,110 evidently shows the opportunity cost for poor households by substituting work with education for their children. It is worth pointing out that the children in SPARC's CSCs are only a reflection of the street children syndrome prevalent in the country. The average monthly income calculated in this survey might be higher than children in remote areas of Pakistan. Nonetheless, with an average of 9 individuals per household and an average of 2 of the 9 engaged in some type of work, average daily household income of Rs 365 (\$3.47) stands at \$0.38 per member of the family. This is way below the international poverty line of \$1.90 per day⁵.

The observations in following chapters show a similar bleak picture. The rates of malnutrition, prevalence of diseases, and inadequate hygienic conditions can all be linked to the poverty evident from the above calculation.

During FGDs with government officials, the core reasons identified for child labour were uncontrolled inflation, illiteracy, family background, urbanization poverty and unemployment are the key reasons for child labour. During our FGDs with labor department officials from various districts, it was revealed that the prevalence of children working at auto workshops, transport vans, service stations, hotels and selling different item on the roads is the general acceptance of child labour, along with extreme poverty contributing to the plight of street children.

Talking about the challenges to control child labor, officials said most of the time when children are inquired about the reason for them working, the employed or children mostly respond that they are working with the consent of their parents. Labor departments across the country often face the conundrum of 'rescued children' returning back to work. Even if action is taken against an employer employing children in child labour, the children usually shift to other premises.

Another major issue worth pointing out is the lack of coordination between departments such as the education department, child protection units, social welfare departments, Bait ul Mal, etc.

⁵ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/brief/global-poverty-line-faq>

On September, 2016, SPARC conducted a seminar on child labour with the title 'A child employed is a future destroyed'. This seminar included members from Labour Department, Sindh, who were presented with recommendations by SPARC to conduct a child labour survey in the province, enact a comprehensive law related to child labour, and address the large number of out of school children in Sindh. In following months, the The Sindh Prohibition of Employment of Children Act was enacted, whereas by June 2017, preparations for a province wide child labour survey began. Furthermore, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on March, 22nd, 2017 promised to overhaul the public education system through unprecedented measures aimed at reforming the system; declaring an 'educational emergency'⁶.

⁶ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1322167>

Health

Meeting global standards and targets for health remains a herculean task for Pakistan, as indicators remain abysmally low. Included in the ambit of health are problems of food insecurity leading to under nutrition and the continued prevalence of preventable diseases. According to the Director of World Food Programme about 43% of the country's citizens remain food insecure with 18% facing a severe shortage⁷. The Global Hunger Index ranks Pakistan 107 in a ranking of 118 developing countries, making it worse than most its South Asian counterparts⁸. Consequently, Pakistan fares poorly in maternal and infant health as the Maternal Mortality Ratio Index records a staggering 276 deaths per 100,000 births while Infant Mortality Rate stands at 74 deaths/1000 live births which means 1 in every 14 Pakistani child dies before reaching age 1⁹.

In addition chronic malnutrition and food insecurity have led to 44% of children being stunted, 15% being wasted and 32% being underweight¹⁰. To add to the nation's woes communicable and non-communicable diseases abound. It is reported that pneumonia kills approximately 92,000 children annually¹¹, Polio continues to exist in parts of Pakistan while diarrheal diseases claim the lives of many children¹².

This poor state of health in Pakistan can be attributed to an interaction of poverty, socioeconomic constraints, lack of financial commitments to the health sector by the respective national and provincial governments and inaccessibility of health services in remote and rural areas.

In order to gauge some of the common health problems faced by street children in Pakistan SPARC undertook a survey of its CSCs pertaining to issues of common diseases, incidents of malnutrition and accessibility of healthcare facilities. The data collected can help shed some light on common trends and patterns of health indicators among street children.

Food and Nutrition

a). Does the child get 3 Meals a day?

The survey revealed that 45% of Children are able to enjoy 3 meals a day (regardless of the quality of the meal) including Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner, 51% get only 2 meals and 5% get only 1 meal a day. Peshawar was reported to have the highest number of respondents who had 3 meals a day while Multan and Hyderabad reported unfortunate percentages of children who received 3 meals

⁷ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1187846/despite-surplus-43-pakistanis-remain-food-insecure/>

⁸ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1289693>

⁹ <http://www.pide.org.pk/pdf/Seminar/Agonizing%20State%20of%20Maternal%20-%20235%20.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://www1.wfp.org/countries/pakistan>

¹¹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1285181/the-poor-state-of-pakistans-healthcare-system>

¹² <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-health/diarrhoeal-disease/>

a day. Given the socio-economic background of the households poverty and food insecurity remain the main reasons why these children are unable to attain proper nutrition. In some cases, the meal children receive at the Centers for Street Children is their only substantial nutritional intake for the day.

Does the child get 3 Meals a day (Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner)?			
City	3 Meals	2 Meals	1 Meal
Rawalpindi	72%	28%	0%
Multan	0%	92%	8%
Peshawar	80%	12%	8%
Hyderabad	28%	72%	0%
Total	45%	51%	4%

b). Percentage of malnourished children.

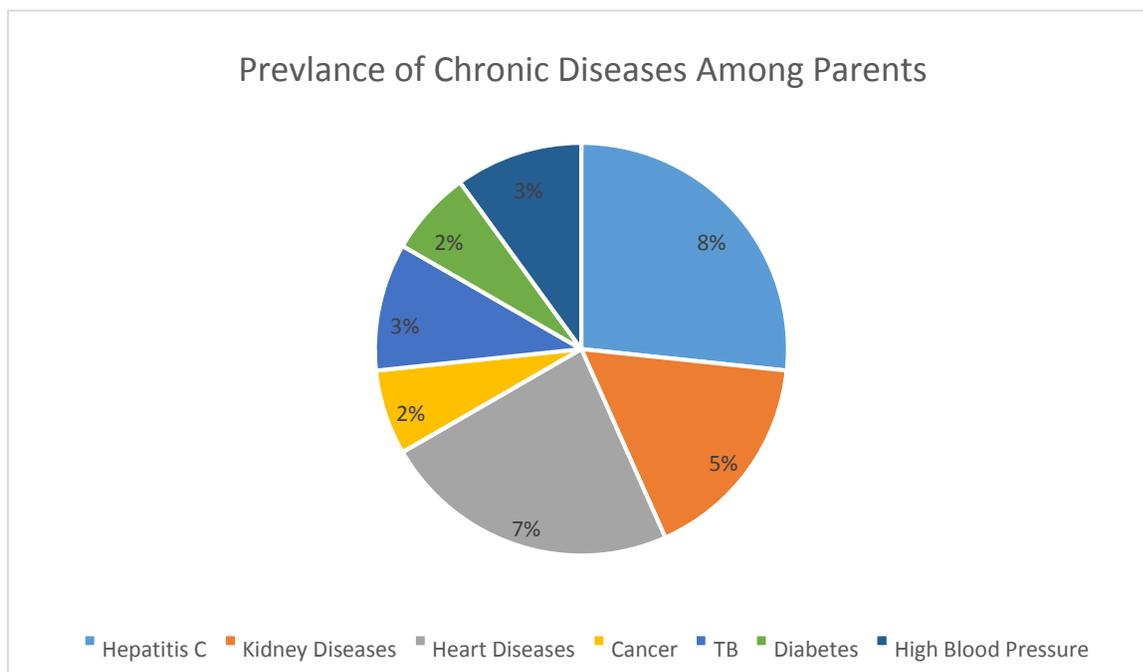
The survey also identified more than half of the children being interviewed as being malnourished. While Rawalpindi fared favorably by having the fewest reported cases of malnutrition the figures show Hyderabad and Multan with the highest instances of malnutrition. These figures are consistent with and correspond to the aforementioned findings on the daily number of meals the children get in the respective cities. While food insecurity is the primary cause for malnutrition, these problems are often times compounded by lack of education about daily nutritional intake for growing children along with untimely care and treatment of childhood illnesses which can have long-term debilitating effects on children’s health.

City	Yes	No
Rawalpindi	32%	68%
Multan	64%	36%
Peshawar	56%	44%
Hyderabad	72%	28%
Total	56%	44%

Healthcare, Sanitation and Clean Drinking Water

a). Chronic Diseases Prevalent Among Parents of Street Children

The survey included questions regarding the parents' general health and whether or not they suffered from any chronic diseases. The chart below shows the most common type of diseases that parents of street children from all four regions were found to be suffering from. Among the parents suffering from a major/chronic disease, Hepatitis C was the most prevalent (8%), followed by heart (7%) and kidney diseases (5%). Other diseases (not mentioned in the chart below) included asthma, joint related ailments, various types of stomach ailments and night blindness.



b). Access to Healthcare Facilities.

The study included questions on availability and access to healthcare facilities to the respondents. The data collected revealed that the respondents in Peshawar enjoyed nearly complete access to healthcare facilities. A similar trend was observed in Rawalpindi where there was found to be adequate availability of such services by a significant proportion of households. Multan and Hyderabad showed a dismal state with the former showing 12% of households with satisfactory access to healthcare services and the latter having no access. It should be noted however, that access to healthcare facilities does not necessarily imply access to quality health services and variations and shortfalls are still likely to exist.

City	Yes	No
Rawalpindi	76%	24%
Multan	12%	88%
Peshawar	96%	4%
Hyderabad	0%	100%
Total	46%	54%

c). Access to Clean Drinking Water

One of the major deprivation of basic facilities for families of street children was identified as the lack of availability of clean drinking water. While 53% households were deprived of access to sources of clean drinking water, the situation was worst in Hyderabad, where the availability of clean drinking water in the vicinity was non-existent. Multan painted a similar grim picture with only 28% households reporting availability of access to clean sources of water. Among the targeted areas, Peshawar fared the best, where all interviewed families had access to at least some source of acquiring clean drinking water, followed by Rawalpindi.

These statistics point towards a major problem for street children and households suffering from extreme poverty, i.e. lack of access to clean drinking water. During the research the prevalence of kidney diseases, among other common ailments were identified as a product of the unavailability of clean drinking water.

City	Yes	No
Rawalpindi	84%	16%
Multan	28%	72%
Peshawar	100%	0%
Hyderabad	0%	100%
Total	53%	47%

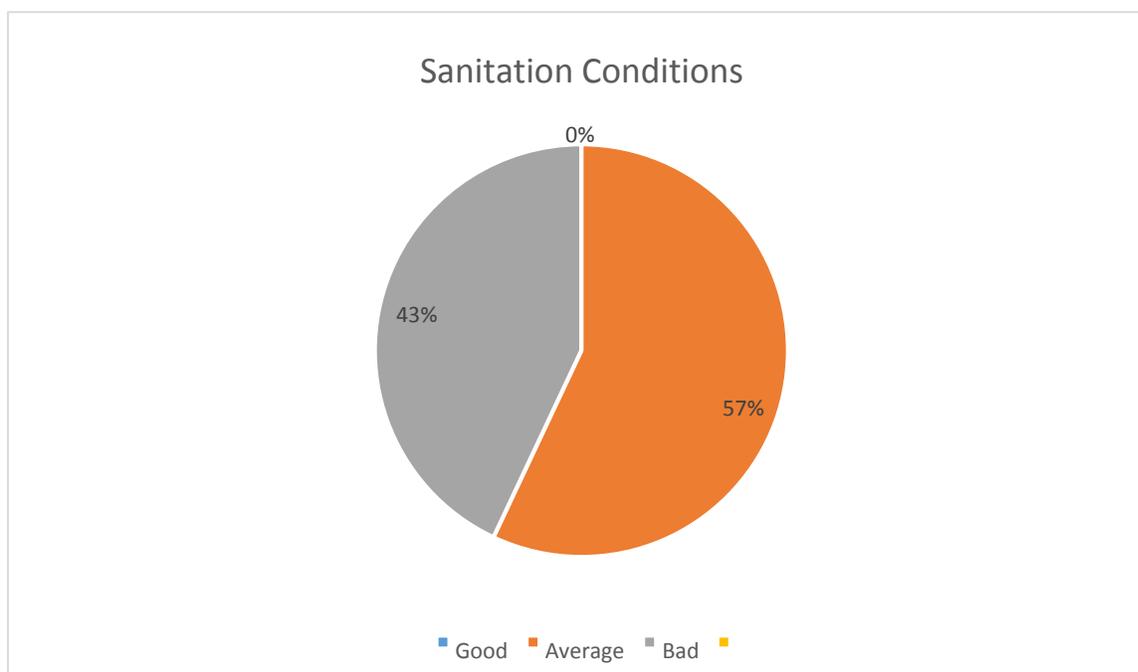
d). Access to Toilets

11% of the interviewed households did not have access to toilets, whereas a large number of households had some type of access to a toilet for daily use. However, it is worth mentioning here that a 2016 report by WaterAid rated Pakistan among the 10 countries where most urban dwellers lack access to safe and private toilets, with 68 million people deprived of access to adequate sanitation in Pakistan¹³.

¹³ <http://www.wateraid.org/where-we-work/page/pakistan>

City	Yes	No
Rawalpindi	100%	0%
Multan	88%	12%
Peshawar	88%	12%
Hyderabad	80%	20%
Total	89%	11%

When asked about the overall sanitation conditions in the area, 43% respondents considered the conditions to be bad, whereas 57% considered them average, no respondent considered the state of sanitation near their abode to be of satisfactory quality.



Key Observations

Despite SPARC's initiative to provide free meals to CSC children, it was observed that 55% of children are unable to complete 3 meals a day. The percentage of malnourished children was found to be 56%, which is hardly surprising considering the National Nutrition Survey estimates present a similar picture. According to the National Nutrition Survey 2011; 58% of the households are food insecure, 18% of Women and girls aged 15-49 years are underweight including 31% of children are underweight, with 17% wasting and 24% severe stunting in children. Anemia has worsened among both pregnant and nonpregnant women and pregnant women in urban areas have more iron deficiency anemia¹⁴.

The access to toilets, quality healthcare, and clean drinking water was found to be alarmingly low. The prevalence of Hepatitis C, kidney, tuberculosis, heart and other major diseases was found to be

¹⁴ http://www.resdev.org/files/policy_brief/41/Policy%20Brief%2041%20-%20Nutritional%20Status.pdf

common. A lot of parents complained of stomach ailments, however, the nature of the ailments were hard to diagnose (e.g. whether it was due to IBS or frequent exposure to unhygienic conditions).

Education

For households who are unable to meet daily meals for their children, education is anything but a priority. This means that a large number of street children are unable to read and write. The few children on the streets who are able to read or write usually do so with the help of non-government organizations focused on teaching street children. From the research data collected from street children by SPARC, it was observed that neither the children nor their parents had acquired even basic reading and writing skills.

Reading and Writing Capabilities of Street Children

Section (a) to (d) below deals with determining the reading and writing capability of street children. For the purpose of this analysis, a standard test was used to gauge the reading and writing ability of students.

a). Percentage of children who could read in at least one language before joining CSC.

87% children could not read in even a single language before joining the CSC. Only 13% children had some ability to read in at least one language; often lacking fluency.

City	Yes	No
Rawalpindi	12%	88%
Multan	20%	80%
Peshawar	20	80%
Hyderabad	0%	100%
Total	13%	87%

b). Percentage of children who could write in at least one language before joining CSC.

96% children could not write in any language when joining the CSC. In all surveyed areas, more than 90% children could not write in any language.

City	Yes	No
Rawalpindi	4%	96%
Multan	0%	100%
Peshawar	8%	92%
Hyderabad	0%	100%
Total	4%	96%

c). Current ability of children to read (including new admissions).

It was observed that children joining SPARC’s Centers for Street Children saw a marked improvement in their reading skills within a few months after induction. Most children were able to develop average to good reading skills, whereas 15% children seemed to face learning difficulties.

City	Good	Average	Bad (Learning Difficulties Identified)	Learning to Read
Rawalpindi	36%	48%	12	4%
Multan	24%	52%	24%	0%
Peshawar	28%	36%	24%	12%
Hyderabad	60%	32%	0%	8%
Total	37%	42%	15%	6%

d). Current ability of child to write (including new admissions).

It was observed that children were able to acquire average to good writing skills within a short time span at the Centers for Street Children. However, in terms of percentage, more children had writing rather than reading difficulties (20%), with most children belonging to the Rawalpindi CSC. This is perhaps due to the prevalence of high number of Pakhtun children in the Rawalpindi center, which teaches children in Urdu and English languages only. This also points towards another important issue, i.e. the need to provide street children with an educational environment that can best cater for the language they are most used to. For civil society organizations working with street children, this often results in various constraints which limit the scope of the number of languages that can be taught to children, since customizing curriculum to each child’s needs can be difficult and less cost-effective.

City	Good	Average	Bad (Learning Difficulties Identified)	Learning to Write
Rawalpindi	8%	52%	32%	8%
Multan	52%	24%	24%	0%
Peshawar	28%	36%	24%	12%
Hyderabad	60%	32%	0%	8%
Total	30%	43%	20%	7%

Reading and Writing Capabilities of Parents of Street Children

Section (e) below provides data on the reading and writing capabilities of parents of street children.

(e). Among the surveyed individuals, 92% could not read, whereas the 8% who were capable of reading in at least one language, usually had average reading and writing skills.

City	Can Read & Write	Can't Read or Write
Rawalpindi	1%	99%
Multan	28%	72%
Peshawar	0%	100%
Hyderabad	0%	100%
Total	8%	92%

Key Observations

The statistics above highlight the cycle of illiteracy prevalent in poor households. Furthermore, the inability of parents to read also means that they are incapable of imparting. It was observed that parents usually had or were incapable of both abilities simultaneously. For example, the 8% were found to be capable of reading and writing in at least one language, whereas 92% seemed to be incapable of both.

Over the years there has been a large influx of IDPs from FATA and areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This has led to an increase in street children in major cities across the country. These children are not familiar with major languages spoken in these cities (e.g. Urdu). This means that catering for the educational needs for street children requires formulating a strategy that can account for teaching these children in a language that they are most comfortable with, even if additional languages are to be taught in the long run. While such a task can be difficult for non-government organizations due to various constraints that make the provision of teachers teaching in multiple languages difficult, a plan of action by the government to educate street children can be chalked out to make up for this constraint. This can not only include a direct intervention but also cooperation between civil society organizations and the government to mobilize resources for educating street children.

It is also imperative to initiate a program for adult education to educate the parents and adult siblings of street children who are deprived of the very gift of education due to extreme poverty.

Violence Against Street Children

Corporal punishment in homes, schools and places of work is one of the most pervasive forms of violence against children. A common definition of corporal punishment is the use of physical force with the intention of causing a child to experience pain, but not injury, for the purpose of correction or control of the child's behavior. Street children are extremely vulnerable to violence. Not only does their prolonged daily (often unaccompanied) presence on the streets make them victims of abuse but the ratio of falling victim to physical abuse at home is also quite common.

a). Percentage of Children known to be Victims of Physical Abuse

A large number of children (72%) were found to be victim of physical abuse, of which 22% were found to be victims of street violence. Among the surveyed parents, 79% approved of corporal punishment.

City	Percentage of Children known to be victim of physical abuse	Street Violence
Rawalpindi	72%	4%
Multan	84%	60%
Peshawar	80%	20%
Hyderabad	60%	4%
Total	74%	22%

b) Parents who believe corporal punishment is an effective tool for disciplining children.

The highest percentage of parents in favour of corporal punishment were found to be in Peshawar (and Rawalpindi (92%), whereas the results were not too encouraging in other areas as well. Overall, 79% parents approved of corporal punishment.

City	Yes	No
Rawalpindi	92%	8%
Multan	60%	40%
Peshawar	92%	8%
Hyderabad	72%	28%
Total	79%	21%

c) Parents who believe in Harsh Vs Light Punishment

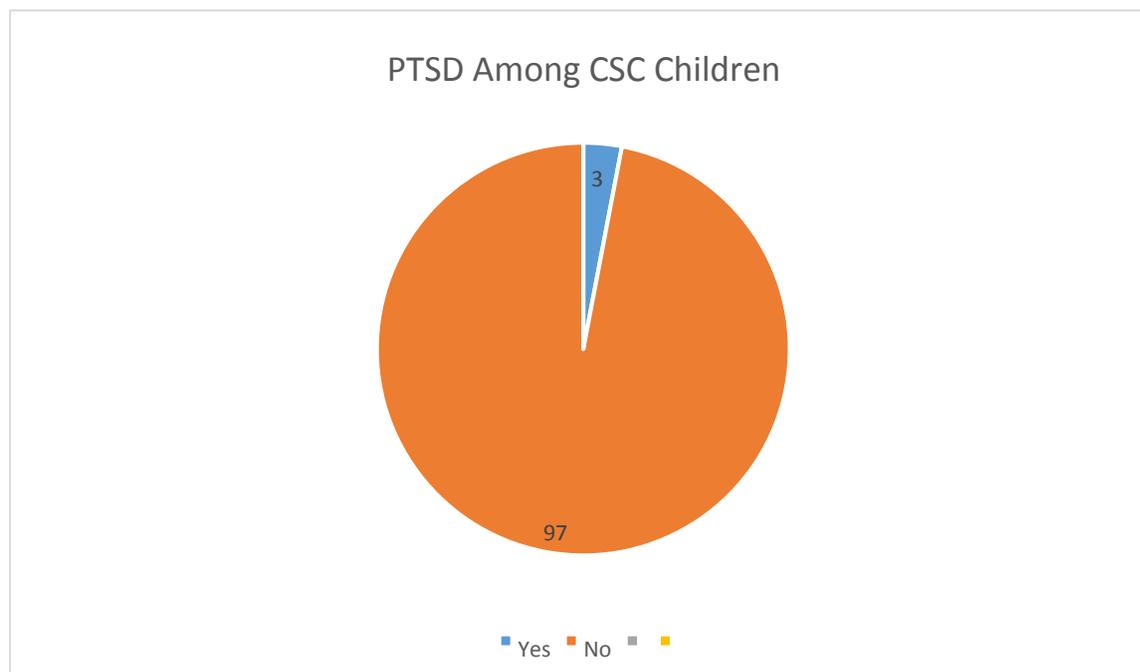
Of the parents who believed corporal punishment was an effective tool for disciplining children, a small number was seen to resort to harsh forms of punishment. These included beating with sticks, beating or slapping the child due to parents' own stress, irritability or inability to control anger. Also included in harsh

punishments are making the child do “difficult chores” and a frequent level of beatings such as once daily. While light punishment here includes infrequent instances of beating or slapping lightly with the hand.

City	Harsh Punishment	Light Punishment
Rawalpindi	9%	91%
Multan	20%	80%
Peshawar	13%	87%
Hyderabad	5%	95%
Total	12%	88%

d). PTSD & Violent Impulses: Child known to exhibit violent behavior.

5% children (accounting for all CSCs) were found to be suffering from behavioral issues which the CSC staff considers challenging. Among the children with behavioral issues, 3% were found to be suffering from signs of PTSD.



Key Observations

The approval and prevalence of corporal punishment was found to be quite high for street children. It appears that corporal punishment is often an accepted fact of life for these children and the parents too believe in at least some form of ‘light’ punishment which amounts to physical abuse.

Impact of SPARC's Centers for Street Children

Built on an ideology of providing vulnerable and at-risk street children a wholesome and friendly environment, SPARC's Centers for Street Children have had substantial positive impact.

This can be gauged by the increased levels of happiness which 95 percent of the children reported after having joined the centers. The project strategy has been one of creating a stabilizing influence on the lives of these young people by providing them with a few hours of learning new skills, acquiring education, spending leisure time and having access to food, water and sanitation facilities. The assessment for the impact lies on qualitative and quantitative indicators of children's improved social and interpersonal skills, literacy and social well-being.

While SPARC's Centers of Street Children have been active for more than a decade, over the past 3 years alone, more than 5000 were given non-formal education at SPARC's CSCs.

Children find a safe haven for expressing their creativity

It was found that SPARC CSCs provided the children with safe spaces conducive for healthy physical and social growth. The survey found children actively engaged and excelling in one or more of the designed activities according to their individual strengths and interests and the freedom to practice and improve at them. The activities included but were not limited to sports, indoor games, learning activities including reading and writing, skills development and interactive games. Developing these interests at an early age has helped shape their personalities, improved their behavioral and social skills and instilled in them a sense of confidence and achievement which they had severely lacked.

CSCs addressing issues of street children

The survey found that the CSC staff is well-equipped to cater to the needs of the children as the respondents found their method of addressing pressing issues satisfactory. Only 5% of the children claimed that the staff was unable to deal with their problems, which mainly involved problems of mental stress and challenging domestic circumstances. It was also found that included in these cases were children who were showing signs of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Views of Parents

According to the survey, all of the parents interviewed appeared satisfied with the performance of the CSCs. They found the centers to be safe environments for their children's health and well-being and expressed faith in the centers' ability to improve the children's standard of life. The centers according to them have provided children protection from the ills of street life and a suitable environment for learning, which is made sustainable by the subsequent assistance for mainstreaming them into formal schools.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of child labor seems to have evolved in a more troubling form, i.e. street children. No longer are children merely limited to establishments and indoor facilities, as a rapid rise in urbanization, extreme poverty, internal migration due to conflict and bad governance has resulted in a pool of vulnerable children found abundantly across the streets of urban centers of Pakistan.

The majority of children in the survey seem to be employed not because lack of willingness on their behalf or that of their parents to educate them. Instead, employing children is a coping mechanism for poverty stricken households. A common counterargument of parents employing their children in labour is that 'at least it's better than begging'. At the same time there is a budding 'begging industry' which is increasing employing trafficked children for which there are inadequate laws in the country¹⁵.

While there have been a number of federal and provincial laws enacted to curb child labour, they not only need to be harmonized but the lack of coordination between various child protection bodies in the country too is troubling. The domain of child protection often dwindles between different ministries and departments, with no clear and coordinated response for putting in place concrete mechanisms and strategies which can have a long-term effect.

Child protection bodies are often asked to round up street children, which results in their temporary removal from the streets and makes the children even more vulnerable in the wake of hasty measures which do not meet child protection standards. Many a times this type of removal is done using police officials, which have been notorious in abusing little children. Furthermore, there is no proper governmental strategy to addressing access to basic utilities for poor households, including children on the streets. The rehabilitation process for victims is often barred with red tape, as many civil society organizations often find it hard to get much needed protection and psycho-social support for children without appropriate care.

The entire blame however cannot be placed on government bodies, as there is an inherent lack of sympathy for street children and children engaged in labour. This collective ignorance is imperative to address to bring about real change in the lives of impoverished children and households. Furthermore, the average educated individual seems to lack even basic information on child rights and child protection. Majority of people have no idea about the age bar set in state laws for child labour or a clear idea regarding which child protection institutions to turn to in the wake of the discovery of a victim. This is why many cases of such victims are immediately referred to civil society organizations like SPARC by the concerned citizens.

¹⁵ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1302825/alarmed-150-trafficked-children-murree/>

In order to sensitize the general population, it is necessary to include the subject of child rights on a mandatory basis in the curriculum of educational institutes, as well as to harmonize national laws and functioning of child protection bodies across the country. Poverty alleviation is another important aspect of addressing the plight of street children. This can include stipend programmes for educational initiatives, mobile healthcare vans to offer free healthcare to children on the streets, robust child protection units across all districts of Pakistan with a well-coordinated response between provincial and federal child protection bodies, as well as coordination between other relevant ministries and departments tasked with the provision of child protection, healthcare, education, etc.

Improving the state of street children in Pakistan is a collective responsibility which needs a coordinated response from government bodies, civil society organization, and volunteers to raise awareness, formulate concrete strategies and assist in its implementation.