

**A STUDY ON STREET CHILDREN IN DESSIE WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO  
ADMAS CHILD REHABILITATION & DEVELOPMENT PROJECT**

**By**

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## **Intermediate Summary**

Streetism is a socio-economic phenomenon that has existed for years. Although its cause and magnitude varies from nation to nation depending mainly on the socio-economic structures, the phenomenon is prevalent in both developed and less developed countries and is one among the social problems that has gained international attention currently.

The term “streetism” and “street child” has been in popular usage since the UN declaration on the “year of the child” in 1979. The concept is vague or too broad and is not as such easy to define. This has caused controversy particularly in labeling a certain group of disadvantaged children.

According to UNICEF estimates, 100 million children live and work on the streets of the cities of the world. The majority of them are in developing countries: 40 million in Latin America, 25-30 million in Asia, and 10 million in Africa. Street children are mainly boys, but the number of girls is increasing (<http://www.Kit.nl>, 2002).

The phenomenon of street children is recognized as a major social problem throughout Ethiopia. A very high proportion of Ethiopia’s children live in or have experienced conditions which worldwide are recognized as pre-disposing factors to street-life involvement, namely poverty, natural disasters, family disintegration, aids, war and displacement of families. Given the basic data from UNICEF’s State of World’s Children, some 1.1 million urban children between the ages of 5 and 15, whose families live below the poverty line (UNICEF; 1992).

Dessie is the capital of South Wollo Zone of the Amhara National Regional State. The town has suffered the full consequences of recurrent drought, famine, and civil war for a prolonged period of time to become home to a multitude of acute socio-economic problems.

More and more people are exposed to acute urban social and economic poverty. Currently the phenomenon of streetism has become a major social problem. It is estimated that there are in excess of 5000 street children in Dessie. Nevertheless, social services geared towards alleviating the plight of street children are still non-existent.

This study was carried out with the purpose of studying the situation of street children's familial and socio-economic background, their involvement in street-life and their present life circumstances in Dessie. The findings of this research have indicated that the factors that contribute to the problem of streetism in Dessie are reflections of the socio-economic conditions of the country which is manifested in family breakdown, rural-urban migration, unemployment – its major causes being deeply rooted in massive rural and urban poverty.

Out of the thirty street children interviewed, the majority (63%) were fairly young boys in their teens or even younger. All children covered under this study have no access to services such as education, health and social welfare. The educational achievement of these street children and of their parents is very minimal. These children are with no marketable skill at all. Hence their chance of securing gainful employment is very little. The majority of the households earn below the income level required to meet the minimum essential needs of their family.

The study indicates that problem of street children cannot be ameliorated in isolation from the family setting where it exists. In order to bring permanent solutions to the problem, therefore, the study recommends programmes to target their help for both the children and their families.

## **1. Introduction**

Millions of children live and work in and on the streets of industrialized, developing, and underdeveloped countries, suffering daily from the consequences of poverty and family and community neglect.

The eighties and nineties saw a growing global concern for the rights and welfare of children. This culminated in the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 November 1989. This was closely followed by the adoption of the Organization of African Unity's Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government held in Addis Ababa in 1990.

In line with the general concern for the rights and welfare of children in especially difficult circumstances, is another growing international problem of the rising numbers of street children in urban areas. This has translated into the increasing number of governmental and non-governmental organizations throughout the world whose main activity is to help alleviate the plight of street children.

### **1.1 Why are street children receiving so much attention?**

One factor contributing to street children becoming more visible and to society becoming more attentive to their existence has been the steady growth of poverty at a time when it was expected to diminish. Children and adolescents constitute a large percentage of the poor, and street children are the most unprotected subgroup among the poor (UNICEF, 1993), causing indignation among many concerned citizens, social service providers, advocates for the poor, and movements for social change. For these individuals and advocacy groups, such poverty amid abundance is unacceptable.

Another factor contributing to the street children's high visibility was the denunciation by human rights advocates of a widespread wave of violence against these youth (de Oliveira, 1989).

According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children's basic human rights such as the right to an adequate standard of living (Article 27), the right to protection from economic exploitation (Article 32), the right to education (Article 28); the right to health and health services (Article 24); the right to protection from violence (Article 19), the right to protection from sexual exploitation (Article 3), are violated (Convention on the Rights of Children, 1991).

Even under less extreme circumstances, street children are usually denied opportunities for social advancement and are frequently discriminated against by social service agencies, the media, and the general public. Journalistic, academic and professional reports from social service agencies have examined and documented these phenomena (e.g., Davis, McCaul and Edward, 1991; Sherman, 1992; Thompson, 1991).

Street children's higher visibility has also been facilitated by the institutionalization of social services committed to serving and protecting the poor. In both the developed and developing world, it was not until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that many child welfare systems were able to play an important role in social development (Trattner, 1989).

A few other factors such as the development of a street subculture (de Oliveira, 1989), demographic changes such as the inversion of the ratio of rural to urban populations, (UNICEF, 1993) as well as various economic, cultural, political, and social changes have affected the distribution of wealth, family structures, values and belief systems. These include economic recessions in some parts of the world with high rates of unemployment, political instability (leading to discontinuity in social programs), as well as generational conflicts, which often have caused more children and youth to run away from home during

the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century than at any other time in history (Sutherland, 1976). All of these factors have helped to make street children the focus of much more national and international attention.

It is because street children experience violations of their rights in so many different ways that all over the world people have started to respond to their situation with a desire for action and change. We can use the Convention on the Rights of the Child not only to indicate where children's rights are being violated, but also to act as a guide to what to achieve for street children (UNICEF, 1989). In his famous book entitled *Great Expectations* Charles Dickens stated "children in their little worlds in which they have their existence, there is nothing so finely perceived and so finely felt, as injustice..."(Charles Dickens, 1982).

## **2. Objectives of the study**

### **2.1 General objective**

Cognizant of the mounting problems that street children are confronted with, the specific objective of the study is to assess, compile, consolidate and validate available information on the situation of street children in Dessie. It aims toward providing adequate information to promoting, protecting and fulfilling their rights. The study assesses effect of the problem of street children contributing to a greater understanding of the causes, and nature of and consequences of being a street child in Ethiopia by monitoring the need previous baseline information for the changing circumstances of street children in Dessie, South Wollo. As such the study strives to:

- Gather information on street children in Dessie from which comparisons can be made at woreda, zonal and regional level.
- Contribute to further development of policy and appropriate intervention and prevention strategies for street children in Dessie and promoting advocacy for and on behalf of the rights of street children.

## **2.2 Specific objective**

- To provide information on the familial, situational, socio-demographic and economic background of street children and their families in Dessie.
- To assess the role so far played by governmental and non-governmental organizations undertaking projects to assist street children in the study area with specific reference to one of the local NGOs service programs of street children in Dessie, to document the need for and successes/failures of the program, and assess the emerging gaps, concluding with possible strategies for intervening in the short- and long-terms and finally
- To create awareness about the plight of street children and thereby forward possible suggestions and recommendations to all those concerned.

## **2.3 Scope and coverage of the study**

Owing to various constraints the study undertaken essentially concerns itself with the study of identification of the root causes and major effects of the phenomenon streetism and living and working conditions of street children in Dessie. It deals with only those street children residing in Dessie, and more specifically covering only a sample of thirty street children, who have made the street their place of abode and means of livelihood.

## **3. Definition of concepts - street children**

The term “streetism” and "street child" has been in popular usage since the UN declaration of the "Year of the Child" in 1979. Looking at the concept streetism from a global or international standpoint, we are immediately faced with a problem of definition. For the most part, this is because there are certain factors or conditions that are invariably seen as major determinants of streetism. The concept is vague or too broad and is not as such easy to define. It could be perceived differently and is liable to different definitions depending on the interest of the individual and/or organization trying to define it rather than the concrete nature of the term itself. Not only is the term problematic to define but also to decide as to exactly from what government or social sectors it should be addressed. A discussion dealing with all those definitions and/or opinions aired regarding streetism would be, however, well beyond the scope of this study. For our purpose we can justifiably consider the following.

Most of the publications have asserted that defining the "street child" has raised controversy particularly in labeling a certain group of disadvantaged children under the category of street children. This is because street children needs, problems, aspirations, and level of denial seem to be more or less the same with other disadvantaged children who share a similar socio-economic background. Therefore, it should be noted that this group of children are not different from their counterparts and have all the rights like the other children (Tacon, 1991). Street children are not a different kind of children. The situation of street children simply dramatizes the more general condition of all children (Tyler, 1992).

Recognizing that the term street child is merely a collective label, UNICEF has proposed a definition that is popular among those who study the street child phenomenon.

Accordingly, UNICEF categorized street children as children at high risk, children "on the street" and those "of the street" and abandoned children (Angelli, 1986). In the 1986

classification system of UNICEF the above four categories were reduced to three and excluded children at high risk.

In this definition, Children “on the streets” are those who “live at home, which they leave most days, full-or part-time, to earn money.” Children “of the streets” include those “whose home ties have been seriously weakened and who essentially live in the street”(UNICEF, 1993,p.22). Hence, children “on” the streets are basically working children who sleep at home more or less frequently. For these children, their family home represents the basic group environment for their socialization. For children “of the streets,” significant social relationships are restricted to the immediate universe of the street. This typology of street children is broadly accepted in most of the publications. However, the majority of street children found worldwide are children on the street (Tacon, 1991).

The term “streetism” is relatively new, and refers to the psychological and behavioral aspects of street children. It does not refer, as defined in p.4 of Dec 1988 MOLSA/Radda Barnen report, “to mean children who for various reasons work and/or live in the street”. The term is also intended to indicate the way of life of the children who consider the street in its widest sense, with its own esoteric rules, customs and vocabulary as their world (Heinonen, 1988). Furthermore, an international group working for street children and in which Radda Barnen has been participating defined the term “street children” as “...a street child or street youth is any girl or boy who has not reached adulthood and for whom the street (in the broadest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become his or her habitual abode and/or sources of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised or directed by responsible adults”(MOLSA/Radda Barnen, 1989. p.68). This definition was formulated by Inter-NGOs in Switzerland in 1983.

These categories are used in this study for the purpose of clarification, and the primary distinguishing characteristic used to identify children of the street is location of sleeping. Such children may or may not necessarily be adequately supervised or directed by responsible adults and include the two co-existing categories referred to by UNICEF as those "on the street" and those "of the street"(Agnelli, 1986). Other researchers have also identified these two categories amongst different street children populations (e.g. Dube, 1996; Ennew, 1986; Scharf, 1988; Richter, 1988a). This distinction is important since "children on the street" have families to go to at night, whereas "children of the street" live on the streets and probably lack parental, emotional and psychological support normally found in parenting situations.

The MOLSA and Radda Barnen's survey on street children in Addis Ababa defined street children as "...those who are being materially and morally abandoned or neglected or who are exploited or who upon their choice for better chance of survival have joined the street life"(MOLSA, 1989).

As a reaction to the above debate then in progress, and still ongoing regarding the typology and 'legitimate' category of anthropological enquiry covering the study of children (as a distinct group), Elizabeth Munday in her essay (1979,p.1) entitled *When is A Child a Child?*, looks at this issue from a different perspective and questions the validity of considering children, as a distinct group, since a child's social world, although seemingly separate in relation to the adult world, is nevertheless dependent upon it. Children, Munday contends, cannot form a sub-culture since they do not constitute a static entity that can be incorporated into or separated from the adult world and childhood is nothing more than a transitory phase leading to adulthood (Munday, 1979). On the other hand, other scholars such as James (1979) fail to project a novel classification system based on a child-centered perspective. Hardman and James treat children as a rigidly bound static and homogenous

group, which obscures the different classes, and cultures children belong to, such as rural or urban, upper-class, middle-class and working class. Munday calls attention to the limits of such western conceptual classifications for providing an adequate theoretical perspective for the separate study of children. She suggests that academics who do not acknowledge the cultural diversity and economic reality of the category 'child' may make ethnocentric judgments about children because they endeavor to understand one culture in terms of another (Munday, 1979).

Munday's attempt to circumvent such western perspective on children was also devoted to pointing out the existence of an African view of childhood that is different, if not opposed to, that projected by Hardman and James. Such rejection of a Eurocentric methodology, which claims universal applicability, permeates more recent discourse on the study of children. The work of both Jo Boydon and Judith Ennew are devoted to pointing out the dangers of such misconceptions. They underscore the need to deconstruct the very ideas of the family, of childhood and of child labour. There are ample examples worldwide to substantiate their argument that there is no single universally valid category 'child'. Children's childhoods are differentiated with respect to age, physical capacity, gender, culture, ethnicity, religion and social class. The experiences of childhood and the concepts attached to the term 'child' are intimately tied up with culture and society and therefore not everywhere the same (Boydon 1990; Ennew & Milne, 1989). The specific characteristics of age-related changes in people's life cycles are not necessarily identical cross-culturally (Rogoff, 1975). As Hardman herself says, "puberty may for example seem an obvious end to childhood but in some societies the psychological aspect may be unimportant compared to the cultural aspect which defines adulthood, marked often by a "rite de passage" at anywhere from age eight to twenty or more" (Hardman, 1973(a), p.88).

Street children associate with a different category of unfamiliar adults. These are strangers who give them alms or small jobs, older beggars, unlicensed street vendors, shop keepers, taxi drivers, watchmen, the police and so on. Accordingly, the surrounding complex of familial and/or other social contacts and their daily routine will be where street children will find their moral codes of behavior. The task is therefore to describe the form this child/adults link takes in the home and in the street (Heinonen: 1998,p.13).

In light of the above and taking the situation of children in Ethiopia, it seems advisable and important, before embarking upon discussing street children, to know about 'the child' in Ethiopia. This is the basis of further discussions, and, if there is no clear understanding of the matter, the whole attempt would be a failure. Having more than 75 nationalities with different child-rearing practices and as a result differing perceptions of children, it would be unwise to talk about that typical and recent occidental explanation of childhood (Kefyalew, 1995).

The family provides the setting in which information pertaining to kinship concepts and appropriate codes of behavior is shared and constructed. In the developed world, this socialization process is increasingly being done outside the home in an adult organized world of schools, social and sports clubs and by the mass media (Boydon J;1990 Nestmann, F. & Hurrelmann K.; 1994). The image projected is one of a happy, carefree childhood in which children's emotional and physical needs ought to be well provided for by parents, and guaranteed by the state (Boyden J.; & Pat Holden, 1991; Ennew J.; 1994). Demarcating children by their biological and psychological, as opposed to social characteristics that are universally valid, has led to an elusive "globalization of childhood" (Boyden J. 1990, p.197). Boydon remarks, "International children's rights lawyers ignore the evidence that the conception of rights is intimately tied up with cultural values and the outlook of any given society" (Boyden, 1990,p.197). Boyden rightly points out that such an ideology

dictates that childhood is accompanied by a set of rights that can be easily enshrined in international law. Thus childhood as a fixed notion determined by biological and psychological facts, is explicit in all international children's rights legislation.

### 3.1 **The question of definition**

The “of” / “on” categorization of street children has its problems. One difficulty is that the children may not always reveal their origins and family ties. A child who is angry with his or her family or feeling neglected and/or abused may deny the very existence of a home. Others, temporarily lost to their homes, may be labeled as “of” the streets, thus curtailing the possibility that they will later find and be reunited with their family home.

Categorizing street children as “on” and “of” the streets presents other problems. There is the question, for example, of what home/family ties consist of? Should these terms refer only to the concrete presence of the family, such as when the child sleeps at home? Or should they include the internalized presence of the family in its physical absence, for example, when even though the child is not in direct contact with the family, she or he is still strongly psychologically attached to them?

Another confusing factor in defining “lack of home/family ties” is the development of “street families” where not only “street fathers” and “street mothers” are found, but children in the group call themselves “street brothers and sisters.” As a result, the youth reproduce a distant or non-existing family, developing strong group ties. The presence of these substitute family ties may (or may not) fulfill both practical (e.g., security) and psychological needs. The “street family” becomes, from a psychological standpoint, a reference group for the child.

In another dual membership example, children alternate between periods of total detachment and reconnection with their original homes. Defining these children in the “on”

or “of” category can be situational, depending on the particular moment at which the categorization takes place.

Yet, the importance of the definition is not to be overlooked. By labeling a child as “of” the street, one can possibly lose sight of both the inner self and/or of concrete possibilities of family and community reunion. Assuming, that the child is definitely lost to her or his community of origin may prevent him or her from being reintroduced to the original or another community. Such labels tend to be internalized by the youth as well as by institutions and individuals providing services to them. From the point of view of the children, such internalization may lower their self-esteem, create or intensify feelings of self-contempt, and serves as a self-fulfilling prophecy. From the perspective of the providers, it may facilitate stigmatization.

UNICEF has also proposed the phrase “children in especially difficult circumstances” which encompasses children in a variety of adverse situations, including homeless street children (Espert & Myers, 1988). The term is too general, however, and thus fails to reflect the requirements of authorities, which usually need to categorize groups served by agencies and programs more specifically. As a result, this definition becomes useless in the practical world of social services, but many prefer to use it as a politically correct alternative, in an effort to avoid discrimination against the youth.

While the distinction between children “on the street” and “ of the street” has been useful, some overlaps and grey areas still remain. Some children “of the street” may have been abandoned and rejected by their own families while others may have left their families due to prevailing circumstances. Muchini (1994) noted that in a “sense they abandoned the family”. Other children may stray and wander the streets, becoming involved in street activities with other children.

The debate on street children, in Ethiopia as elsewhere touches on the issues of childhood and community norms. The Ethiopian National Children's Commission (Proclamation No. 288,98) defines 'child' as a person from birth to the age of fourteen. There are no laws or penal institutions dealing with the problems of 14 year old or under age groups. There are nevertheless clearly defined laws making parents or guardians responsible not only for the moral behavior of children in their care, but also for the consequences of delinquent actions on their part.

However, examples of ethnic or otherwise based concepts of childhood are seldom provided. NGOs and international governmental organizations (IGO) reports concerning street children are interspersed with references to: the need to adhere to 'social norms'; the importance of using [non western derived] culturally appropriate research methods; and of ethical considerations' which take account of 'childhood and community norms' (Heinonen, 1998). The terms social norms, culturally appropriate methods of research, or ethical considerations are nevertheless left undefined and unexplained.

#### **4. Characteristics of street children**

##### **4.1 Can we draw street children's profile?**

As has been discussed above, trying to draw a profile of street child is misleading because street children, although often sharing some common economic backgrounds, are individuals who come from many different communities and social environments. They do not come into one package. As stated above, UNICEF (1991) has tried to classify street children into three major categories based on the degree of their family contact. Though there has not been a hard and fast count regarding the estimates as well as the typology of street children in Ethiopia to date, it is expected that all the above categories do exist in the country.

However, the above classification is too rigid and does not correspond with realities found in most big cities. If this criteria for classifying street children is any child who has any kind of remunerative activity in the street on a regular or part time basis-then the definition of street child would have to be reformulated to fit into the Ethiopian context (Heinonen, 1998).

On the other hand, the street lifestyle and the subculture of the streets determine many common characteristics that are generally shared by street children, runaways, and other homeless youth. Therefore a profile may not be accurate, but certain common characteristics of street children can be noted that cannot escape being based in the problems lived by street children. These problems overshadow other characteristics of their living in the streets.

## **4.2 History and Magnitude of the problem**

### **Historical background of the Street Children Phenomenon**

Regardless of definition, the phenomenon of street children is not new and neither is it restricted to certain geographical areas (Connolly, 1990). The street urchin, the runaway, the street waifs and stray children were part of the "urban landscape" during the process of industrialization and urbanization in post-war Europe (Agnelli, 1986; Swart, 1986). This has also been the case in many populations that have undergone political, social or economic upheaval.

During the European industrialization period, in the nineteenth century, the number of street children was increasing at the same time with expansion of cities (Larsson, 1988). UNICEF estimates that there are 100 million children who live on the street either all or part of the year. Whether we apply a simple standard of social justice or an international agreement such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the poverty, abuse, and neglect to which these children are subjected constitute a clear violation of their

human rights (Ehiemere, 2000). Without access to services that can address basic needs such as food, shelter, education, and access to health care, these children have the most minimal opportunities to access their potential and become fully functioning adults (Figueiras, 1992; Inciardi & Surratt, 1998). They are unsupervised and unprotected, with substance abuse, HIV risks, and violence are common at home, school, and on the streets (Anarfi, J., 1997; Notto, et al., 1997; Ramphele, 1997). HIV/AIDS has already orphaned 1 million children in Ethiopia (Integrated Regional Information Networks, 2005).

Primarily, it is from the presence of warm and supporting parents that the child learns the reciprocity of love which form the basis of latter's ethical behavior. That is why the family is commonly viewed as the best place for the child to grow and develop. Conforming to this reality, the United Nations convention on the Rights of the Child clearly recognizes:

...that the child for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality should grow in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding (United Nations, Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1991, p.12). This is so important because the entire conscience is so securely rooted in loving and reliable personal relationships within the family group.

### **4.3 Magnitude of the problem**

The evolution of street children situation is extremely difficult to trace, not only qualitatively but also quantitatively. Indeed, the number of children on the streets cannot be estimated because of lack of agreement on defining this population which is, moreover, very mobile. So, for the sake of convenience and hard-hitting, the majority of organizations quote the figure of 100 million street children in the world, stated by UNICEF nearly

twenty years ago. The most anxious organizations build up on this figure, as the statement says it increases with each passing year. So street children have, it seems, the amazing gift of multiplying while remaining 100 million.

According to UNICEF estimates, 100 million children live and work on the streets of the cities of the world. The majority of them are in developing countries: 40 million in Latin America, 25 -30 million in Asia, and 10 Million in Africa. Street children are mainly boys, but the number of girls is increasing (Kit –Information, street children, 2002).

In Africa, where an estimated 70% of the population lives the poverty line, the specter of street children is an increasing one. Though accurate demographics are difficult to obtain, estimates on Nairobi's street child population run as high as 130,000. As stated above, these are children who cannot meet such basic needs as food, clothing, shelter and education from the society, which spawned them. Such children have no option but to adopt survival strategies, which too often lead to petty theft, drug abuse and sexual deviance. It is sad, but a reality we must deal with the sight of neglected children roaming the streets, searching for food in dustbins, while sleeping on the pavements, or under cardboard and polythene structures. This is a tragic paradox of modern African society, as compared with traditional ways of life, where a child was valued as the greatest asset of a nation. Children then were deemed to belong not to individuals, but rather all members of society were required to care for them (Undugu society of Kenya, 1993).

UNICEF estimated that one in every five boys and girls throughout the developing countries live in "extremely difficult circumstances". These are the children who are the victims of war, children who are orphaned, the children of migrant workers; displaced children, the children caught in natural disasters, the socially disadvantaged and exploited children. Amongst the most vulnerable children are the street children"(UNICEF, 1985).

Various publications confirm that street children exist in almost every country in the world. The vast majorities of these children work and live in large urban centers of developing countries. Some of them are orphaned or separated from their families; still others are born on the street, often to older street girls. Whatever their individual circumstances, street children constitute one of the most marginalized groups in most societies (Lalor, 1999). These are the highest risk street candidates who may easily or who have already have began the dangerous journey which begins with working on the street, passes along to dropping out of school, to going home less frequently, to losing one's family, and to finally becoming completely marginalized from society (Tacon, 1991).

#### **4.4 Data from the Third World**

A few studies explored the magnitude of the phenomenon of street children in developing countries. In Manila, the capital of the Philippines, street children were estimated to be from 1 to 3 percent of the city's child and youth population by the late 1980's, an estimated 50,000 to 75,000 street children and three quarters of the population were living below the poverty line in 1991(Black, 1991).

In 1980, it was estimated that about 10% of all families in Mexico were living in cramped conditions with at least one other family in the same living quarters. Close to 29% of the houses had no drinking water, and 62% of the families had constructed homes with structural deficiencies, placing them in danger. The situation was later aggravated because of the economic recession (UNICEF, 1987b), which added strain on children and adolescents who, for the most part, have faced poor conditions for their upbringing and in many cases have been forced to go to the streets to help with the family income.

#### **4.5 Street children: Problems/needs**

“Millions of street children who live alone, undernourished since birth, who are denied affection, education and help, who live without love;...Children who are used

unscrupulously by others, mistreated, imprisoned, even eliminated. Children who the world tries to forget or ignore. Tomorrow they will be men and women.” (Angelli.1986, p.1).

The above quotation by Susanna Angelli clearly describes the realities street children in general are confronted with in a very touchy way. Many of the fate and experience street children in Ethiopia share is not far from the above stated reality.

Life on the street is fast-paced and pervaded by tension, suspicion, violence, fear, courage, negotiation, humiliation, and compassion. It is where socio-economic classes and professional and ethnic cultures meet, mix, connect, and clash, where emotions, attitudes, passions, ideas, and behaviors are strong and contradictory, and where millions of children grow, learn, live, and work (de Oliveira, 1989).

Children of the street suffer. They endure the stresses of everyday life in the street; they are not given fair access to education, health care, and other necessary social services. Most of them do not enjoy the comfort of a warm bed or running water. The presence and supervision of caring and responsible adults are absent from their lives; they are victims of neglect, discrimination, and much violence, including beatings, torture, and even murder. These youth, mostly the homeless sons and daughters of the poor, are living testimonies to society’s failure to distribute wealth fairly, to establish competent social welfare systems, and to assure equal opportunities for all. They constitute a metaphor for the collapse of society. (de Oliveira, 1989). Although their prevalence and degree varies depending on the socio-economic development of a given country, many studies indicate that street children throughout the world face almost similar problems and usually signify a break down in some part of the social system. As Dr. Minas Hurry of Hope Enterprise once stated in one of the workshops proceedings on street children in 1992, street children’s plight is in indeed a “silent emergency, unnoticed but painfully real”(Hurrury, 1992).

#### **4.6 Causative Factors: Why they are on the streets**

Many studies have clearly shown that, in many developing countries the plights of children are “ a natural outcome of reflections of the socio-economic factors, rural-urban migration, incipient revolutions and other social unrest, whereas in developed countries, the plight of children is related to moral abandonment.” (MOLSA, 1988; Radda Barnen, 1988. p.6).

In the same token, in a developing country like Ethiopia two thirds of its household are regarded as being below the economic level required to meet the minimum essential needs of a family. One third of them struggling on the brink of physical survival, approximately and 15% of the people have been off and on victims of drought, famine and war in different parts of the country over several years. Poverty has a pushing impact on forcing children to the streets because 70% of the families, all said to have one of the lowest per capita income of mere USD120.00, are incapable of providing care to their children. It is estimated that about 45% of its population is living below the absolute poverty line (Integrated Regional Information Networks, Ethiopia interim report, 2003).

Situations such as family disorganization or disintegration, unfavorable home environment, parental death, loose control or absence of adult supervision and parental pressure to start work, and rural-urban migration, which negatively affects the stability of families is another force causing streetism to grow at an alarming rate.

War, poverty, natural disasters, family disintegration, AIDS and violence are the major reasons why children live and work on the streets. They are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, and have little opportunity to claim their rights.

#### **4.7 Street Children: The Public Image**

The various ways of determining “what” constitutes a street child creates a social construct which influences the perception of the children by the community at large, usually providing a partial, stereotyped view of street youth in which individual personalities,

competence, resilience, and living conditions are ignored. The general vision is of dirty, aggressive, obtrusive, incompetent, dysfunctional, dangerous, and recalcitrant youth.

Most significantly, street children were associated on the public mind with crime, being popularly regarded as youthful delinquents in the process of becoming hardened criminals as adults. They spend the nights anywhere in the streets, stay up late, get little sleep, are exposed to passers-by as abandoned, homeless, tramps, thieves or juvenile delinquents (Glaser, 1990). Consequently, the growing contingent of street children end up until sometime being treated largely as a public safety issue, where as a result the police periodically remove them from the streets, often placing them in closed institutions presumably as delinquents or homeless. They even sometimes face constant violence, even from the authorities, especially the police.

According to various survey findings undertaken in Ethiopia, street children are wrongly understood and are referred to as delinquents, hopeless cases, hooligans, good for nothings, thieves, etc. Generally speaking, society does not seem to have understood the problem of street children; hence, the attitude of the general public, towards the street children is not positive. According to various survey findings, however, not all people see street children negatively. There are various groups and individuals in our society who see street children all the way from angelical to diabolical. "...those who see them [street children] most negatively tend to blame their existence upon the government, upon their parents or even upon themselves. Those who see them most positively, tend to thank god that there are still some sane and courageous survivors left in our world...the media with unfortunate knowledge and understanding, has all too often pictured them as "dead end kids" or "children without hope" (Tacon, 1991,p.12).

In defying such wrong concepts, however, Peter Tacon at the opening of the workshop proceedings on street children in 1992 remarked to have found these very special

youngsters to be “worth heroic and prophetic”: heroic in the sense that they are the tenacious veterans of a silent undeclared urban war, and prophetic because, in their lives and testimonies, they predict, for at least the half of our human family which will live in cities, a future for brighter and more decent if we stand behind them, or an urban apocalypse in the next century if we ignore or reject them” (Tacon: 1992).

## **5. Street Children in Ethiopia**

Ethiopia with a per capita income of about \$120 is one of the poorest countries in the world. Chronic poverty is a way of life for at least half of the population in both rural and urban areas for decades. Poor economic performance and rapid population growth are considered to be the major reasons for the existing poverty and social deprivation (World Bank, 1992).

A survey on National Human Settlement Situation Assessment (NHSSA) and Plan of Action, February 1966 by Ministry of Works and City Development states that in 1995 the people living in urban centers in Ethiopia is estimated at 8.9 million (about 15.3% of the total projected population of 56.7 million). Various other studies and surveys also indicate that over 60% of these urban dwellers live below poverty line without enough resources to meet the minimum food requirements (Ministry of Works and City Development, 1995).

The problem of street children in Ethiopia is not a new phenomenon. The first observations of street children in Ethiopia were made in Addis Ababa as early as the 1940s (Andargachew, 1993) although it is probable that they have existed as long as the urban centers in which they are found.

As in many other African countries, the scale of the problem of street children in Ethiopia has reached unprecedented levels. UNICEF’s 1991 Annual Report (Ethiopia) noted with concern that in almost all the major urban centers of Ethiopia, the number of children

needing assistance to achieve their basic needs had recently doubled (MOLSA/UNICEF, Ethiopia, 1993).

Given the basic data from UNICEF's state of world's children report of 1991, there were in Ethiopia, some 1.1 million urban children between the ages of 5 and 15, whose families or what is left of them live below the absolute poverty line" (UNICEF, Tacon, 991). On the other hand, a previous study carried out by the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) indicates that the estimate of street children throughout the country before the fall of the military regime was about 100,000. As the sample survey conducted by MOLSA in 1995 showed, the majority of street children (45.9%) were found in Addis Ababa. According to the estimates of the RRC, since the downfall of the DERG, 9.8 million people have been displaced and of these populations, 5.8 million are estimated to be women and children" (Minas Hurray, 1992, p.3). The victims of this displacement forming about a fifth of the population by then, have raised the problem of street children to new heights of severity and magnitude.

A relatively recent statistics released by UNICEF estimated that the number of street children in Ethiopia to be around 100,000-200,000/UNICEF, 2003). Forum on Street Children Ethiopia (FSCE, 2003) also cited UNICEF's estimation of the number of street children in Addis Ababa to be 50,000-60,000 out of which 15,000 were children on the street and around 25% were girls. Addis Ababa is mainly affected by the problem because, as many studies show, children exposed to the highest risk of involvement in streetism are likely to be found in the towns with the largest size of population and the greatest economic activity (MOLSA, 1995; FSCE, 2003).

The contemporary situation appears to have grown since the time of the famine of the 1960s and probably reached its peak in the early 90's. A UNICEF Ethiopia estimate of 1996 still claimed a growth of around 5,000 children and mothers going to the streets each year. No count of street children has ever been carried out, although there was an estimate made

by UNICEF consultant, Peter Tacon, in 1991 that referred to approximately 100,000 of whom about 20% were children of the street, that is to say, living much of their lives on the street. The same estimate showed 500,000 urban children at extremely high risk and a further one million at high risk of going to the street. On reflection these figures appear to be rather pessimistic although periodically there has clearly been fluctuation in the numbers of children to include refugees from war areas, internally displaced persons (IDPs) from drought and famine afflicted rural areas and increasing numbers of HIV/AIDS orphans.

The most significant survey of street children carried out in Addis Ababa was carried out in 1988 by MOLSA in conjunction with Radda Barnen. In comparison with the findings of the 1974 survey, this indicated a dramatic change in the extent of the street-child phenomenon and its profile and causes (MOLSA/UNICEF, 1991). The survey indicated that a high proportion of children were pushed to the streets because of economic reasons while still living with their parents. Most street children were a product of urban poor families. In 1993 MOLSA, UNICEF Ethiopia and University College of Cork, Ireland carried out a survey in four cities. The total sample size was 1000/760 boys and 240 girls aged seven to 17 years and distributed as 400 in Addis Ababa and 200 in each of Bahir Dar, Mekele and Nazareth. The study was undertaken mainly for updating the findings of previous studies, monitoring changing trends and to examine new facts of the problem and has helped greatly for a better understanding of the phenomenon in the country (MOLSA, 1993). In 1995 MOLSA conducted a national study on street children. A sample of 10,000/7,497 boys and 2,603 girls) aged five to 17 years in 25 major towns and cities in all regions were surveyed. This study was undertaken mainly for updating the findings of previous studies, examining new facts on the problem. It has helped greatly in providing useful information and has tried to put some kind of proportion to the understanding of the situation (MOLSA, 1993).

## **5.1 Situation of street children in Dessie (study area)**

Dessie is the capital of south Wollo zone of the Amhara National Regional State. It is more than 400 kilometers North of Addis Ababa at 2500 mts above sea level along Addis Ababa-Assab tarmac road. The city was created as a defense Station, during the Italian invasion of Ethiopia because of its almost impenetrable location in the mountains. It is believed to have been founded in 1885 by the then feudal lords and has been serving as a capital town for Wollo province during the imperial regime, and during the Dergue regime. Presently, it is a capital town for the southern Wollo Zone.

The 1994 census, which was conducted at National Level., indicates that the total population of Dessie is 97,314 with a female male ratio of 53:47. The people are predominantly Amhara origin (about 93%) and Amharigna is the main language spoken in the town. Official estimates claim that the population has swollen over the past few years to as many as 250,000 persons. It would appear that internally displaced peoples fleeing from rural areas suffering from drought and famine, refugees from the war with Eritrea and other people attempting to escape severe rural poverty have moved to the city. It has neither the infrastructure nor physical growth potential to support further expansion. At times, the city can be cut off by extreme weather conditions and there are often periods when water becomes short.

Approximately 46% of the populations are followers of Islam; Ethiopian orthodox Christians make up most of the remaining population although there are very small numbers of people who have recently converted to small Protestant sects and Roman Catholics through missions in the area, allegedly there are a few remaining Falasha Jews and very few followers of other religions. There is no hostility or segregation between religious groups. The town is organized under city council consisting of 20 (local grassroots administrative units) known as Kebelles.

The population of children below 18 years of age (here using the CRC definition of a child that corresponds with the official Ethiopian 0-17 years of age definition) is considerably over 50% probably closer to 60%. There are however, no exact census data available for Dessie. The town has suffered the full consequences of recurrent drought, famine, and civil war for a prolonged period of time to become home to a multitude of acute socio-economic problems. The main stay of the overwhelming majority of the people in Dessie is small scale petty trading activities which includes, food processing, local drink production, peddling, metal and wood works, shoe shining, etc. A recent study conducted on 7 major towns in Ethiopia by Economics Department of Addis Ababa and Gotebourg Universities indicates that Dessie entertains the highest percentage of poor households followed by Mekele. Fifty nine percent of the households in Dessie are said to live under poverty line. Studies undertaken indicate that the recent influx of people from Assab and Eritrea has aggravated existing problems of high population. More and more people are being exposed to acute urban social and economic poverty.

## **5.2 Streetism in Dessie**

The streets of Dessie are absolutely teeming with children and young adults. While some are clearly engaged in economic activities such as vending goods, many others are engaged in gambling games, conversation, a few street games but in general many of them are sitting doing very little. The distinction between a street child with a home and street living children or those from better off homes who do spend much time on the street is vague. Some of the children permanently there are well dressed whereby children from extremely poor but stable family homes may be wearing old, tattered and quite dirty clothes. Nonetheless, by visiting and revisiting short sections of the main street it is easy to establish who remains quite consistently in one place. That especially applies into the night. Whilst the street population gradually diminishes, quite soon after dark each evening the street living

population settles for the night. Currently, the phenomenon of streetism has become a major social problem in Dessie and nearby towns such as Haik, Combolcha and Harbu. The report from the office for Labour & Social Affairs indicates that there are estimated 5000 street children, over 3000 prostitutes and 583(14% children) beggars. Nevertheless, social services geared towards alleviating the plight of street children are not still beginning to exist in Dessie.

It is in view of the above stated circumstances, therefore, that it has become the purpose of this research paper to look into the situation of street children in Ethiopia in general and that of their peers in Dessie in particular.

## **6. Methodology**

### **Sample Size Selection**

Those street children, both boys and girls, who were fully engaged in the activity of working on the street as well as those who were forced to work and live on the streets occasionally due to certain circumstances were included in the sample. Since there is no census for the total population of street children in Dessie that can be used as a base, it was difficult to determine the sample size. In agreement with the approval of the research proposal submitted initially, however, for this short study it was found practical to take a smaller sample consisting of 30 street children with cross-sectional distribution including gender, the sex composition, and the street occupation of the target group. Data collectors were instructed to take respondents with different street occupations in order to include shoe-shiners, street sellers or peddlers, carriers, car washers and beggars as well as children in other street activities. This sample was distributed over the areas selected for data collection

based on the findings of the preliminary assessment. Accordingly, 5 street children was allocated to the five areas with slight variations in consideration of the high concentration of street children. These were selected using both systematic and random sampling techniques.

In addition to the survey of 30 street children, the study also included other four children who were beneficiaries of an existing street children project who came from different areas of the town. In order to be able to collect data on the general situation of most destitute sector of the population on the street in the town, two family heads were also interviewed.

For the purposes of collecting complementary and corroborative information interviews and discussions were held with senior officials responsible for NGO (MOLSA, DPPC, City Council, the Police, community representatives) and reporting in Dessie. The project manager, 3 of the social workers, both vocational trainers and the bookkeeper made themselves fully available to me.

The method of data collection used for the survey was stratified sampling. This method was selected because of the advantage it has in insuring the inclusion of each essential group in the sample.

To avoid double counting due to the mobile nature of the street children it was arranged to collect data from the selected areas within two days time by grouping and assigning the data collectors at different areas.

The data collectors were also told to be very careful not to give false promises to the respondents, as there could be high expectations of aid or assistance from the other party.

Pre-testing was done with a sample of 5 street children and based on the feedback questions that were not clear or ambiguous had been revised and modified. The time it took to fill out the questionnaire was from 30-45 minutes on the average and was more or less found acceptable for the interviewees.

## **Developing the survey questionnaire**

In designing the questionnaire reference of different related studies conducted by different agencies (MOLSA, UNICEF, UCC, 1993, Dawson, 2002) have been made. Following this a first draft questionnaire was prepared. Later this draft questionnaire was revised and modified. However, this questionnaire had to be trimmed and condensed in accordance with the revision/comments given by my advisor. Therefore, in line with this it was decided to select the most important questions, which were more relevant for the study. The questionnaire for the interview was designed to examine children's origins, background, familial and socio-economic circumstances, educational background, initiation to street-life, and nature of relationship with family and present life circumstances.

## **Interview development**

A structured interview schedule was prepared and administered to the selected sample group within the areas of study. Interviews were conducted right on the streets where the children lived and/or worked during the daytime using the interview questions prepared for the purpose of data collection.

## **Methods for Supplemental Interviews**

The assessment was carried out using qualitative methods. A simple interview schedule was thus written (Appendix 3). The questions were written for project beneficiaries, who had graduated from the vocational training to leaving the program and their parents. All questions used were open-ended and were freely phrased in context with each person and situation. Each questionnaire was used in the presence of a single child and generally lasted one hour and half in each instance. Six beneficiaries (4 ex-street children and 2 parents) of the project were interviewed. No names or personal data was required other than age; gender was also noted. The final part of the questionnaire 'observations' was used for random questions in the form of a short open discussion in order to gather additional information that

were not included earlier in the interview. Using data gained from the survey and interviews to convert into discussion topics proved effective.

During the visit to Dessie a very small amount of time was given to observation. Since participant observation requires a lengthy preparation on the part of the researcher, it was only possible to use observation as a rapid appraisal tool without attempting to create a position of familiarity that is less invasive. It was thus used to see the rapport between the social workers and beneficiaries and vocational skill trainers, to also see the interaction between the children themselves and to gain a sense of their participatory exercise was attempted with the graduates of the vocational trainings.

Finally, I made a small number of visits to homes, street working places, the family shelter and two income generating projects in order for me to both see local outreach and meet parents and siblings.

### **Selection of Study Site**

On the basis of the preliminary assessment study Six different Sites with high concentration of street children in Dessie were selected for data collection. The selection was made after consultation with experts from the Zonal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs Department and the Dessie City Council and after visiting the various centers in the town. This included areas located in different parts of the town, public squares, main roads, church and mosque yards etc. The selected areas included, Segno Gebeya, Buanbua Woha, Shell, Melaku Desalegne and bus station, Mariam Sefer area that is located at the tip of the town adjacent to the St. Mary Church.

### **Method of Data Collection**

During the training it was agreed that while approaching the interviewees data collectors should introduce themselves and explain the objective of the survey in order to

avoid suspicion of any kind. This approach was tried during the pre-test and found to be a better way of gaining the confidence of the respondents.

A total of 30 street children who were found around the six selected areas and the surrounding streets were interviewed within two days time. Suitable time for collecting data from around the selected areas was also arranged.

As a whole there were no fixed places for conducting the interviews in any one of the places. In almost all the places interviews were conducted right on the streets while the children were either working or loitering around.

A minimum amount of money (ETB 10/each interviewee) was given to the street children as compensation for the time spent for the interview. In comparison to the daily income they generate from their work on the streets, the amount of money given as an incentive seemed reasonably adequate. As a researcher, I think the incentives provided might have affected the quality of the data obtained through the interviews. Data collectors were instructed to be cautious in selecting interviewees because the incentive could easily attract non-street children as well.

### **Recruitment and training of data collectors**

Six social service workers were selected to conduct the interviews. One was a graduate from the Addis Ababa University, the rest had good backgrounds, were experienced at interviewing in difficult circumstances having previously participated in studies on begging, child prostitution, harmful traditional practices and on the pandemic HIV/AIDS.

The selection of data collectors was done after various meetings and discussions with selected individuals. It was decided to use social workers who render social services on voluntary basis in an existing local organization called NIGAT Association for the Prevention of Harmful Traditional Practices affecting the well being of children in Dessie.

In order to introduce the data collectors to the objectives of the research and the format of the questionnaire, a one-day training was given to the data collectors before the fieldwork. Accordingly, 7 data collectors (4 male and 3 female) were selected and given both theoretical as well as practical training. The theoretical training included:

- Interviewing methods and techniques
- How to approach the target group and develop good rapport
- Whom to include on the study/survey
- How to fill out the questionnaire
- The general ethical conditions governing the interviewer (data collector)

The practical training covered:

- Role-play by some trainees and comments by the trainers and the rest of the trainees
- Pre-testing the questionnaire and giving on the spot training to data collectors right on their places of assignments.
- Discussion sessions had also been held after each day's data collection based on the feedbacks and experiences of data collectors.

### **Analysis of survey/interviews**

The research method used in this study was mainly description, analysis and comparison. To set the context, the main method used by the study was the descriptive method. The study sought to describe the street children's situation in Dessie and the nature of the service delivery system of the project under discussion.

Analysis was used in the critique of the selected project's work options and practices, and also in the review of the perception of beneficiaries and representatives' of the local line departments.

The study has also tried to draw lessons from selected international best practice through the use of the comparative analysis method. In order to be able to analyze data, thus

draw conclusions and reach recommendations, it was necessary to use triangulation of those data with existing data on Ethiopia and, within the bounds of possibility, comparatively with data on similar programs and projects worldwide.

Since the sample size taken in the study was very small, a basic knowledge of statistical techniques was used in the analysis of the interviews that required counting the responses and reproducing them (frequency count). Utmost care has been given in order not to have missing answers in the count. In the final report, the responses have been worked out by converting frequency counts to percentages, which were then further calculated against the total number of respondents.

A number of coding boxes appropriate for the questionnaire were arranged. During the data collection and after its completion the responses were thoroughly edited and crosschecked. Following this, responses for the closed -ended questions were categorized and given codes according to the coding manual prepared. Important variables were determined for cross tabulation. Corresponding to each question, results were then put in demographics, in tables and used to describe the findings. Apart from describing the findings, attempts have also been made to find out if there was a connection between one variable and a number of other variables to the extent possible.

### **Monitoring and Supervision**

Intensive supervision has been carried out during the survey undertaking at the field level. Almost all questionnaires were checked to correct contradictory responses and unfilled questions at the spot. Close monitoring and supervision activities were carried out throughout the survey undertaking through formal and informal contacts with the data collectors in their area of assignment.

### **Secondary Sources**

As far as the secondary sources are concerned, consultation of several relevant literature reviews, text books and magazines, reviewing published and unpublished official or non-official reports of various agencies currently working on children's rehabilitation services, documentary researches, United Nations publications, discussion papers presented on various workshops and seminars on street children, NGO publications and periodic reports, as well as my own personal observation based on long years work experience in the related field were considered to supplement the study.

## **7. Research findings and discussions**

In this chapter, an attempt is made to present the analysis of the research findings on the demographic and socio-economic conditions- living and working conditions, needs, hopes and aspirations of the street children based on the responses obtained from the interviews conducted with the sample group of thirty street children randomly selected from the area of study.

The data have been classified and tabulated in tables wherever deemed appropriate. Pertinent information is then presented and discussed in terms of frequencies of responses.

### ***Number of children interviewed by site***

The survey covered a total of 30 street children comprising of 19 boys and 11 girls. The surveyed sample was divided in age groups of 7-9, 10-12, 13-15 and 16-18 years. However, since it was practically difficult to get respondents in the 7-9-age range the distribution was slightly altered. This also indicated that there are a smaller proportion of 7-9 year old street children than previously assumed. Thus the actual distribution was 3 from the age group 7-9, six from the age group 10-12, thirteen from age group 13-15 and four others from the age group 16-18. In total they were 19(63.3%) boys and 11(36.7%) girls.

The sample taken from the different areas in the city were also proportionate depending on the concentration of street children in each site. Having the highest concentration 7 children were interviewed from bus station, followed by 5 from Arada/piazza, 4 from Segno Gebeya, 5 from Maraiam Sefer area, 6 from Melaku Desalegne and 3 from Buanbawoha area. These are business areas in Dessie.

***Categories of street children***

Fifty percent of the 30 street children interviewed were children on the street, and had homes to go to at night. Seven of them (23.3%) of the street children worked and slept on the street. Most were staying with at least one biological parent while others were staying with members of the extended family. The rest 26.7 % ( 8) were children who slept both on the streets and at their homes (Table 1).

***Table 1: Where the street children slept***

|                  | <b>Female</b> | <b>Male</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|------------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|
| Home             | 6             | 9           | 15           |
| Streets          | 2             | 5           | 7            |
| Home and streets | 3             | 5           | 8            |

There are children in a gray stage or transitional stage other than the usual characterization of children as “of” the street and children “on” the street. Individual and group interviews with street children indicated that this was a process most street children “of” the road had gone through. Sleeping both at home and on the street, the child finally chose the street when home conditions were no longer supportive due to the death of a parent or guardian or due to increasing poverty.

Seven children “of” the street, who were interviewed in Segno Gebeya, shell and around bus stations, appeared more unkempt and dirty, with poor access to shelter, water,

and sanitation and health facilities. They sleep individually or in groups on the street or rented shacks in high-density suburbs such as Mariam Sefer. The study areas in and around Melaku Desalegne area, Arada, Shell and Buanbua-Woha had relatively fewer street children on the road. Mariam Sefer had the majority of children who slept “both at home and on the streets”. Fifteen of the children “on the street” who had access to shelter or slept at home with parents appeared to be smarter than “children of the street”, and mainly sold wares while a few washed and guarded cars. This category had better access to shelter, water, and sanitation and health facilities. This is mostly because those children on the streets had families to go to at night whereas those of the streets work and sleep on the streets.

**Table 2**

**Respondents by Age and sex**

| Age group | Male |      | Female |      | Both sexes |     |
|-----------|------|------|--------|------|------------|-----|
|           |      | %    |        | %    |            | %   |
| 7-9       | 2    | 6.6  | 1      | 3.3  | 3          | 10  |
| 10-12     | 4    | 13.3 | 2      | 6.6  | 6          | 20  |
| 13-15     | 10   | 33.3 | 7      | 23.3 | 17         | 57  |
| 16-18     | 3    | 10   | 1      | 3.3  | 4          | 13  |
|           | 19   | 100  | 11     | 100  | 30         | 100 |

As shown in the table above, out of the 30 sample groups selected 63.3 %( 19) were boys and 36.7 %( 11) were female street children.

**Table 2(a): Proportion of Street Children Categories by Location**

| <i>Category of Street children</i> | <i>Selected study areas</i> |                         |                         |                  |                            |                        |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
|                                    | <i>Marian-Sefer (%)</i>     | <i>Segno-Gebeya (%)</i> | <i>Buanbua Woha (%)</i> | <i>Shell (%)</i> | <i>Meleku Desalegn (%)</i> | <i>Bus Station (%)</i> |
| <i>Children on the street</i>      | 6.7                         | 10                      | 6.7                     | 10               | 3.33                       | 23.33                  |
| <i>Children of the street</i>      | 6.7                         | 3.33                    | 3.33                    | 6.7              | 3.33                       | 26.7                   |
| <i>Home and street</i>             | 3.3                         | 3.33                    | 6.7                     | 3.33             | 6.7                        | 3.33                   |
| <i>Percentage of total</i>         | 19.8                        | 16.66                   | 16.73                   | 20.03            | 13.36                      | 53.36                  |

Thirty children, aged 7 years to 18 years, 19 males and 11 females, constituted the sample for this study. The sample's average age was 13 years. Ten percent of the sample were below the age of ten, 6(20%) were aged ten to twelve, 17(56.7%) were aged thirteen to fifteen, and four 9(13.3%) were 16 to 18 years of age (Table 2b).

**Table 2(b): Proportion of Sample by Age**

| Ages (years) | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|
| 7-9          | 10         |
| 10-12        | 20         |
| 13-15        | 57         |
| 16-18        | 13         |

The majority (47.1%) of children “of the street” and the majority of (50%) who slept “both at home and on the street” were aged 11 to 15 years. Similar proportions (43.9%) of children” on the street” were aged 12 to 15 and 16 to 17 years. Table 2a shows that children” of the street” tended to be older than children from the other categories, followed by those who slept” both at home and on the streets”. Children on the street were the youngest.

As could be easily identified from the age group column of table 2b, most of the street children are fairly young, in their teens or even younger. The data on age group was

from seven to eighteen (7-18) out of which 3(2male and 1 female) were between age 7 and 9 (10%). Seventeen fall between the age gaps of 13 to 15 constituting the majority (57%). The second highest age groups, i.e., 6 children are from 10 to 12 years of age (20%). The rest (4) were in the age group 16 to 18(13%). According to the study, the street way of life is dominated by male children and consideration of the most common age group that are vulnerable to the street situation are those between 13 and 15 that constitute the majority (56.6%) of the street children.

As far as the sex combination is concerned, there are one-third female street children. By and large, this gives an indication that the majority of street children are likely to be mostly male.

### ***Table 3***

#### ***Children's schooling***

Five children (16.7%) of the street children had never been to school. Slightly over thirteen percent (13.3%) had some basic skill of reading and writing, 43.3% had some primary education (Grades 1 to 6) while 16.7% had some higher primary education (Grades 7-8). Around ten percent (3) had had one to two years of secondary education.

Children of the street were the least educated, followed by those who slept at home and then those who slept both in the streets and at home. 3.3% of children on the street had never been to school while 13.3% of the street had no school experience. Twenty-six percent (26.7%) of children of the street had some primary education while 10% of children who slept at home and on the streets, and 6.6 % of children of the street had some primary education (Table 3).

#### ***Table 3(a): Street Children's Educational levels***

| Schooling level | All street Children (%) | Children of the Street (%) | Home and Streets (%) | Children on The street (%) |
|-----------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Never           | 16.7(5)                 | 13.3                       | -                    | 3.3                        |
| Read & write    | 13.3(4)                 | 6.7                        | 3.33                 | 3.3                        |
| Grade 1-6       | 43.3(13)                | 26.7                       | 6.66                 | 10                         |
| From 7-8        | 16.7(5)                 | 3.3                        | 3.33                 | 10.1                       |
| From9-12        | 10(3)                   | 3.3                        | -                    | 6.7                        |
|                 | 100                     | 53.3                       | 13.3                 | 33.4                       |

### Educational Status of respondents

*Table 3(b)*

| EDUCATIONAL STATUS |           |                       |           |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------------------|-----------|
| ILLITERATE         | LITERATE  |                       |           |
|                    | Dropout   | Still going to school | Total     |
| FR                 | Frequency | Frequency             | Frequency |
| 5                  | 9         | 16                    | 30        |
| (16.7)             | (30)      | (53.3)                | (100)     |

**\*Figures in parenthesis are percentages**

### Respondents By highest grade completed

*Table 3(c)*

| Educational status | Frequency | %    |
|--------------------|-----------|------|
| Illiterate         | 5         | 16.7 |
| Read and write     | 4         | 13.3 |
| Grade 1-6          | 13        | 43.3 |
| 7-8                | 5         | 16.7 |
| 9-12               | 3         | 10   |
| Total              | 30        | 100  |

The educational status of the street children has been assessed on the basis of three major categories – illiterate, can read and write and by grades completed, which again is still further sub-divided as elementary and secondary. As can be observed from the table 3a and 3b, five (16.7%) are only able to read and write. thirteen (43.3%) are from grades 1 to 6. Three (10%) are from grades 9-12 and there is no one above grade 12. Generally speaking, the educational achievement of street children is minimal. Most of these children are deprived of educational services. For instance, from the total number of these children, the majority are school dropouts (including those who only can read and write but are not currently attending regular schools). Only sixteen of the children are still going to night or day school. Again five children out of the thirty, (16.7%) respondents have not been to school at all. Therefore, the general assumption that most street children are school dropouts is true, at least as far as this small study is concerned.

**Table 4**

**Reasons for dropping out from school**

| Reasons for giving up schooling |                 |                       |                 |                           |                       |       |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-------|
|                                 | Lack of support | To make my own living | To help parents | Poor academic performance | Due to health problem | Total |

|           |             |             |             |             |             |            |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Frequency | 4<br>(44.4) | 1<br>(11.1) | 2<br>(22.2) | 1<br>(11.1) | 1<br>(11.1) | 9<br>(100) |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|

**\*Figures in parenthesis are percentages**

Table 4 above indicates that of the nine school dropouts interviewed, four (44.4%) left schooling because of lack of financial and/or material support, two (22.2%) replied saying they stopped going to school with the view to look for a job in order to help their parents, one was expelled due to his poor academic performance, one street child gave up schooling to make his own living while another one child reported to have left school due to health or medical problems. This finding indicates that those children who are victims of poverty are the ones who are unable to continue their education and are subjected to drift to the street way of life. Once that happened, due to the nature and characteristic of street life, which is unreliable and unstable, the post street life period is not conducive to classroom education, particularly on a regular basis. This is so because, such children on the street way of life are always in search of means of survival and the earning derived from such street occupation is not enough to provide for the necessary materials of education such as cost of text books, school fees etc beyond covering daily needs of food and lodging. Due to such shortage of financial resources, therefore, most of these children are left handicapped in terms of access to schooling. As a result, they are forced to live outside of the school environment where they are supposed to get not only academic education but also proper socialization, and proper mode of conduct that enable them to fit, integrate and thereby adjust themselves to the social life. If given the chance, however, they all replied saying that they are willing to make use of the opportunity.

***Table 5***

**Distribution of Respondents by Family Condition**

| Family condition   | Frequency | %     |
|--------------------|-----------|-------|
| Only mother alive  | 5         | 16.66 |
| Only father alive  | 3         | 10    |
| Both alive         | 16        | 53.33 |
| Both dead          | 2         | 6.7   |
| Divorced/separated | 4         | 13.3  |
| Total              | 30        | 100   |

Five (16.7%) of the street children covered by the research came from a home where only mothers are alive. In three cases (10%) only the fathers were alive. Parents of the majority, 16 (53%) of the children were both alive. Parents of two other children (6.7%) were reported to be dead while the remaining four (13.3%) cases came from a divorced family. In sum, fourteen (46.7) of the street children interviewed have incomplete families. In 16 cases (53%) both parents of children are alive and live together. The incomplete families have only one of the parents living either due to death, divorce and/or separation.

### ***Place of origin and cause of migration of children***

***Table 6***

The majority, 16 children (53.3%) of street children came from Dessie while 7 (23.3%) came from nearby towns and rural vicinities of South Wollo. Two children (6.78%) migrated from Tigray in the northern region, another 2 children from Gonder and Gojjam. These findings confirm what other studies and organizations such as FSCE, MOLSA have discovered, that street children originate from rural areas. In the Dessie case, they pointed out that seven children (23.3) are from the nearby towns and other provinces.

### ***Place of origin and cause of migration of children***

| Original homes        | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-----------|------------|
| Dessie                | 16        | 53.3       |
| Haiq, Ambasel, Gelsha | 3         | 10         |
| Delanta               | 4         | 13.3       |
| Tigray                | 2         | 6.7        |
| Gonder, Gojjam        | 2         | 6.7        |
| Raya                  | 3         | 10         |
| Total                 | 30        | 100        |

The fact that many street children came originally from rural areas was confirmed in individual and group discussions with street adults and interviews with street child-care workers. Increasing poverty levels in rural areas, the impact of HIV/AIDS on rural people and other socio-economic factors impacting negatively on rural folk, has had the effect of decreasing rural families (households) and communities' ability to provide adequately for their children. Rural folk are adversely affected when their members, who used to work in towns and used to remit funds, fall ill and have to in turn be cared for by rural people with little resources. When many adult members die due to HIV/AIDS, children often head households and seek employment in urban areas to help them fulfill their new responsibilities.

The data presented in table six indicates that majority of the respondents, 23(76.7%) are from Wollo, including Dessie. Those born in Dessie town alone count 53.3% of the total, 7(23.3%) others came from the nearby towns such as Haiq and Delanta. The remaining 7(23.3%) migrated from the northern region (Tigray, Raya) and Gojjam and Gonder. Taking the aggregate, Twenty-five came from the Amhara ethnic group, followed by the rest five who are from Tigray. Concerning the reasons for migrations, out of the 14 children who came to Dessie from the nearby towns and regions, 7 children reported that they came in search of employment and/or to look for better opportunities, 3 said they came to Dessie

looking for educational opportunities and 3 respondents said reason for their migration was due to displacement because of drought and poverty. One came being affected by what other migrants of her origin told her what life in the town looked like. Availability of communication and transport service facilities in the zone also contribute to a larger extent in accelerating the rate of migration. As can be easily observed from the table, the number of street children coming from near by towns (nine children) is relatively higher compared with the number of street children coming from contingent when coming from remote provinces like Tigrai and Gojjam. The largest contingent thus came from rural and nearby urban towns in South Wollo. Most of those who join the street way of life from within the rural vicinities and region came mainly due to poverty.

**Table 7**

**Street Children’s Economic Activities**

| <i>Ser NO.</i> | <i>Kind of Occupation</i>                     | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>%</i> |
|----------------|---|------------------|----------|
| 1              | <i>Shoe -shining</i>                          | 5                | 16.6     |
| 2              | <i>Port erring</i>                            | 2                | 6.7      |
| 3              | <i>Selling illicit items</i>                  | 12               | 40       |
| 4              | <i>Car washing/watching</i>                   | 3                | 10       |
| 5              | <i>Taxi boy/“Weyalla”</i>                     | 2                | 6.7      |
| 6              | <i>Weighing scale machine service renders</i> | 2                | 6.7      |
| 7              | <i>Begging</i>                                | 4                | 13.3     |
|                | <i>Total</i>                                  | 30               | 100      |
|                |   |                  |          |

The street children interviewed are involved in a number of street occupations such as shoe-shining, carrying goods in market places and bus or taxi stations, selling illicit items or door-to-door vending. These activities are generally less harmful than begging because among other things, the work may be enjoyable and the children are, in the main, self-employed. But, even though such odd street work can offer some advantages over other form of petty employments, it is poorly remunerated, providing only small, irregular income.

Thirteen percent (13.3%) of street children were beggars while the vast majorities 40% were vendors, 10% guarded/washed cars, and 16.6% were shoe shining boys.

The research confirms that the majority of vendors are children on the street (40%) followed by those who were shoe-shining boys. Those who worked as taxi touts (6.7%) were mostly children who slept both at home and on the streets.

Two of the street children interviewed are porters. The highest majority group of the children (12) are itinerant street vendors who usually earn their living by selling items like quollo (roasted grain), cigarettes, chewing gums, newspapers, lottery tickets and three are porters. Another two wash or watch parked cars, two work, as mini bus criers to attract customers and the rest four are beggars. Two street children were observed renting weighing scale machines for those passers-by who need to know their weight. Most of the street children are engaged in marginal occupations like the ones discussed above providing only irregular incomes. The majority of street children reported that they are engaged in the business part-time. Unlike the street shoeshine boys, the itinerant street vendors are called “Suk Bederettie”(persistent hawkers). These are commonly given this name because they usually carry their wares in a box like apparatus hung from their necks. The young girls don’t actively carry such wooden hanging boxes filled with various illicit items. The girls rather sit on pavements or on the verandahs and sell their goods. Most of these children are with no marketable skill at all hence their employment opportunity is very minimal.

### ***How Street Children Obtain Food***

The majority of children “of the street” (60.1%) bought the food they ate, 7.2% ate leftovers from restaurants and bins, while 11.2% ate from drop-in centers. Many of children “on” the street and those who slept both at home and on the streets also bought their own food.

***Table 8: How children obtain food***

| How they get food                      | Percentage |
|--|------------|
| Buying                                 | 60.1       |
| Eat leftovers from restaurants         | 7.2        |
| Eat by collecting food through begging | 11.2       |
| Eat from home                          | 19.3       |
| Other                                  | 2.2        |

### ***How street children spent their money***

The vast majority of street children (60.9%) reported that they spend their money on food. A little over fourteen percent (14.2%) reported they bought own clothes while 22.7% spend it on meeting family expenses and paying for school fees.

Children of the street mainly spent their earnings on themselves while the majority of the children on the street and those who slept both at home and on the streets, reported that they spend their money on meeting family expenses.

### ***Duration on the streets***

The majority (43.3%) of the street children had spent one to three years on the street. Almost a quarter (23.4%) had spent four to six years. Smaller numbers had spent seven to ten years (13.3%). However over 20% had spent under a year, and were relatively new to the streets (See table 9).

### ***Length of Time Children out on the Streets***

***Table 9***

| Duration<br>(Years) | Percentage |
|---------------------|------------|
| <0.5                | 13.3       |
| 0.5-1               | 6.7        |
| 1-3                 | 43.3       |
| 4-6                 | 23.4       |
| 7-10                | 13.3       |

### ***Needs, Hopes and Occupational Aspirations***

The children's most pressing needs were security, food, shelter, medical care, education, clothing and money to run business on their own. The majority expressed that they hope to save an adequate amount of money and move on into a more profitable business to become settled and open a small shop. Some of them aspire to become government employees (6), doctors (2), pilots (1), driver mechanics (2), priests (2), teachers (6) and police (2). They replied that they would like to obtain a permanent job, which does not involve being constantly on the move. Those who still are going to school part time replied that they aspire to continue their education even up to going to college and/or university level.

### ***Educational Background of Parents***

Regarding educational status of their parents, 15 fathers and 20 mothers are reported to be illiterate, followed by another 6 fathers and 4 mothers with the ability only to read and write. Five mothers have attended grades one to six and only one mother is said to have attended above grade six. Four of the fathers have attended grades 1-6, two from 7-9 and two others grade nine and above. The educational background of two of the fathers was not known. Overall, the educational achievement of their parents is very minimal.

### ***Parents' monthly income and size of Family***

The finding revealed that out of the thirty respondents, nineteen responded that their parents' income was below Birr 50/month, six between ETB 51 to 100/month and three others above ETB 100/month. The remaining two parents being farmers and daily laborers, the children were not able to indicate the specific incomes or salaries of parents because most of the respondents do not know what level of income their parents used to have or still have.

From the nature of occupation of their parents, however, we can safely conclude that majority of these children are from economically unprivileged families. Because of this fact, yes children need to work to earning their daily bread and also to contribute toward their family budget.

### ***Occupational Distribution of the Respondent's Family***

The findings concerning occupational distribution of the parents of the thirty street children interviewed revealed that almost all of the occupations - farming, daily laborers, petty sellers, guarding - to mention but a few, in which parents of the street children are engaged are of very low economic return. This reflects the fact that poverty contributes to the root cause of the problem of street children. Above 95% of the families earn below the minimum wages (below Birr 150/month) of the country.

The occupation of most fathers of these street children is farming (11%), guard (1), daily laborers (5), 2 are pensioners; three are ex-soldiers, three are petty traders, two are government employees and the remaining three are beggars. On the other hand, ten of the mothers are housewives; seven are daily laborers, 5 petty traders (street sellers), 2 house maids and another one a cook. In general, the occupations indicated a monthly income that is not sufficient to support the family. As reported by children, the child belonging to such a family is thus forced to join the streets in order to contribute to the family income.

### ***Work done by Children's Guardians/Parents***

According to the findings of the study, the vast majority of the street children came from very poor family backgrounds, and the Work done by the children's guardians or parents were domestic workers (13.1%), vendors (18.5%), peasant farmers (19.6%), self-employed (21.2%), and industrial daily workers (12%).

Taking into account the increasing number of families of these children surviving under extreme poverty, unemployment, lack of opportunity for social mobility and strained family relationships, reasonably, it seems that poverty was one of the causes for pushing children onto the streets. Hence no amount of intervention programming designed for street children can be successful and bring permanent solutions unless the community is prepared to respect, protect and provide opportunities to street children and their families.

### ***Habit and Addiction***

Nearly ninety-three percent (28) of street children reported that they don't take any kind of intoxicants while only two out of the interviewed children reported that they have habit of smoking and chewing chat. The two children using chat and smoking appeared more vulnerable to a number of risks due to their apparent lack of experience and street wisdom. The use of intoxicants by street children can be viewed as a risk factor in a number of areas including sexual abuse and infection with HIV.

### ***HIV/AIDS/STDs Knowledge, Attitude and Practices***

Twenty reported they have been sick while living and/or working on the streets. Ten reported they have never been sick. Concerning the kind of illnesses, six reported they had severe headaches (6); Stomachache (10), and malaria (4).

Almost all of the street children reported they hadn't had sex within the previous months, while two of the young girls reported that they were forced to do sexual acts by adults on the streets. The majority of street children (85.7%) reported that they had never had sexually transmitted diseases.

Twenty-two (73.3%) of the children interviewed could identify at least three ways one can become infected with HIV, while the rest eight could not. The majority of the street children (39.9%) said everyone is at risk for getting HIV, while 10.1% felt it was only commercial sex workers, Thirty-two percent (32.4%) identified commercial sex work as a practice that accelerates the spread of STDs. Forty-two percent (42.6%) identified at least three ways of preventing AIDS, while the majority 57.4% could not identify three ways of preventing HIV/AIDS. Twelve (40%) of the street children identified use of condoms as a measure to reduce the spread of HIV; two mentioned that they did not know what could be done to reduce the spread of AIDS. Eleven children (39.6%) mentioned that they usually call their peers when they get sick; Fourteen street children stated that they call upon their biological mothers, relatives (5), Parents/guardians (3). One of the respondents reported saying that “he does not call any one” when he gets sick. Nineteen of the children mentioned municipal clinics and 11 mentioned traditional healers as places where they would get treatment, if seriously sick. Close to half (46.7%) stated easy access and low cost of treatment as the reason why they would seek treatment where they said they would.

### ***Child Abuse***

Two street children mentioned that there have been times street adults have forced them to sexual act, while 9 children (30%) mentioned that they have been beaten or hurt by adults while living/working on the streets. None of the respondents reported to have had any sexual intercourse with someone for the sake of money.

Four children reported that they have been caught by the police for having quarreled with their peers, during an accident while riding a bicycle (1), and conflict with adults while working on the streets (3).

### ***Public's Perception of street children***

Street children were questioned as to what they felt were the general public's opinions about them as "street children". More than a third (35.1%) felt that the general public disliked them, 28% mentioned they were seen as hooligans and that they should be forcefully removed from streets, while 36.9% reported that the general public was very supportive.

### ***Street Children's Perception about Street Life***

Asked about how they perceived their lives on the street, 28.5% of the street children felt hopeless and helpless; they mentioned that they had no other option concerning what to do about their lives except live on the street. Nearly twenty-six percent mentioned that their lives on the streets were tough, 20.8% felt fatalistic and mentioned that their lives were bleak and without a future, 11.3% said their lives on the streets are temporary and 13.4% mentioned that they enjoyed living on the streets. The majority of children in all three categories felt that their lives were tough and that they had no future.

## **8. Analysis of Causal factors**

A careful analysis of the street children phenomenon reflected a number of immediate, underlying and basic causes. Available literature on street children in Ethiopia from academic presentations, journal articles, books by researchers and situational analysis and survey reports, shows that a plethora of casual factors and effects to the street children problem.

The phenomenon of street children in all countries seems to be a social institution with basic social, economic and environmental causes (Auret, 1995; Bourdillon, 1991; Dube, 1991). It appears to have basic causes in the polity, the economy and other basic social factors such as public social policies about employment, housing and land ownership.

Following the two recurrent droughts and famine, more rural poor families together with their children came onto the streets due to the inability of the Ethiopian economy to create sufficient formal employment. The 1974/1978, recurrent drought periods and the civil wars between Ethiopia and Eritrea had displaced many thousands of families, mainly children and women.

Research had demonstrated that no amount of intervention programming designed for street children can be successful unless the community is prepared to respect, protect and provide opportunities to street children (Tacon, cited in Schurink & Rip, 1993) This study shows that only slightly higher than a quarter of the community is supportive of street children. In the interviews, street children mentioned they were treated violently, scorned and subjected to hostility by adults. This indicates that programmes for street children should be directed at the general public and those charged to enforce the law to address negative attitudes and violent practices against street children..

**Table 10-: Reasons for Being Street Children**

| Reasons                                 | Percentage |
|---|------------|
| Orphan hood                             | 26.7       |
| Abused by parents/guardians/care-givers | 6.6        |
| Seeking food and employment             | 39.4       |
| Inadequate care and support             | 27.3       |
| Earning income for family               | 13.3       |

The reasons given in the interviews with children for becoming street children were confirmed in the focus group discussion with street children and adults families. (See table 10). They identified poverty, seeking food and employment and being orphaned as the reasons why children moved onto the streets. Social and economic factors appeared to be primary in pushing children onto the streets. Poverty, disability (mostly blindness) and death

of parents appeared to be the key factors resulting in families' inability to look after their children properly. Children of blind parents, primarily girls, were observed assisting their mothers in begging and moving around town. Deaths of parents resulting in orphan hood, and poverty, have created a vacuum in child-care responsibilities by removing and/or incapacitating those with duties to provide for children's basic needs.

Street children interviewed suggested that many of the children had lost a parent, either through death or divorce their biological parents. such children selected to move onto the street, rather than staying within stepparents settings-with either a male or female step-parent, and/or from staying in extended family settings. This was especially true for children of the street. In the discussions held with street children, it was reported that some stepparents or extended family members physically abuse such children. Poverty alone was not seen as a sufficient factor in pushing children onto the streets. Street adults and child-care workers mainly saw the antecedent factors as family dysfunction and/or disruption. Such factors, as already noted above, include abusive families, child headed households, death of a primary caregiver and inadequate cares and support of parents and families.

#### **9. Intervention for street children in Dessie**

Like in many other countries, the problems of street children are not properly addressed in Ethiopia. There is no government organization or ministry that explicitly deals with the problem of this category of children to date. This, however, does not mean that no efforts have been made at all to alleviate problems facing street children. There are a few governmental organizations working directly or indirectly to ameliorate problems related to children in difficult circumstances. Many surveys on street children have been carried out jointly with some non-governmental agencies with conclusions that urged immediate response. But, very little has been done in the way of concrete programmes for the target group.

In order to assess the role so far played by governmental and non-governmental organizations undertaking projects to assist street children in the study area, interviews have been conducted with beneficiaries of the ADMAS street children project, senior government officials, NGO staff, the Police and community representatives.

Based on the interviews with beneficiaries and organizational directors, the following discussion attempts to give a general highlight of the responses so far given to ameliorate the problem of street children by governmental and non-governmental organizations operating in South Wollo zone in general and that of the ADMAS street children's project in Dessie in particular.

### **Governmental organizations**

The zonal Ministry of Labour & social Affairs department (MOLSA) and the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC) are mandated to carryout various activities related to children in difficult circumstances. The MOLSA is mandated to offer technical guidelines to NGOs in planning, programming, coordination and implementing programs of children. The ministry, however, does not have an exclusive project, which deals with or directly addresses itself to the problems of street children. Presently, the department of MOLSA is running an intervention programme for street children in collaboration with UNICEF.

The other governmental organization that is closely related with the problem under discussion is the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC). It does not however, directly work with street children. It plans and executes activities for children affected by the disasters of drought and famine. Through its NGO coordination desk, however, it does carry out and coordinate programmes in collaboration with NGOs operating in the zone.

There are also a number of organizations in South Wollo that provide multifaceted services to vulnerable children and destitute families. In Dessie, there are 11 Non-Governmental organizations, which are based in the town of Dessie, and yet only 3 local NGOs, viz, HOPE Enterprises, Forum on Street Children Ethiopia (FSCE) and ADMAS CRADO are operating with specific and limited target groups of destitute children. The remaining NGOs operate in the surrounding rural areas and do not directly work with street children.

This following section of the paper attempts to explore the services and activities of one of the existing local NGO called ADMAS that directly works with street children and their destitute families and find out what benefits it had provided to the beneficiary children in its care. The questions that arise are: "Is service delivery of the project effective?" What improvements has the project brought to the beneficiaries of the projects? Did the program as a whole produce positive outcomes and benefits to the children in its care? (By positive outcome and benefits I am referring to the economic aspect, i.e., improvements in the standard of living of the children under the care of the project, fair and rewarding employment and regular income, whether or not it is a " community development program, which seeks to integrate the delivery of economic, social and environmental objectives"); Have any social or economic changes occurred as a result of the project? Is the project meeting its overall objectives? and so on.

### **Background information on the project**

ADMAS Child Rehabilitation & Development Organization is an independent, local Non-Governmental Organization established in December 2002. It has signed a project agreement with the collaborating agencies (DPPC & MOLSA) in order to rehabilitate destitute children in South Wollo Zone, Dessie town after having fulfilled all the legal

requirements. The organization has the following organizational goals and missions stated in its main project document.

2.1 VISION: ADMAS works to contribute towards developing productive, sustainable and self-governing, and self-supporting people in their respective society. (ADMAS, 2002)

2.2 MISSION: To ensure sustainable development and improved quality of life of the marginalized people through need based, integrated, family based & participatory development approaches. (ADMAS, 2002)

Goals: Secure an appropriate socio-economic status for 300 street children and their destitute urban-poor families that allow them to permanently and appropriately support themselves without external assistance.

**Target group:** ADMAS is currently assisting 300 street children, siblings and their destitute families.

### **Specific objectives**

ADMAS has three key objectives for provision and support of beneficiaries and a monitoring and follow up process: Planned activities and services consists the following (ADMAS, 2002).

### **Social welfare services:**

The project has a welfare program designed to provide a good quality social service and amenities that support and usually help to recover physical, psychological and social development and well being of the beneficiaries. Those activities and services include on the main:

- Provision of one regular meal each day for the primary target group
- Providing shelter by means of cash for renting houses or rooms to children who previously lived on roadsides, church and mosque grounds in Dessie;

- Providing clothing, shoes and basic health services, showering, laundry and latrine facilitates (through an outreach programme), advisory and guidance and counseling services - individual, group & family counseling;
- Access to regular education in state schools inclusive of extra tutorial periods where they are required;
- Provision of play, sport and other leisure activities, and
- Vocational skill training for street children:
- Family support programme: Credit facilities in the form of cash grants for the elder children in order to: Provision of technical support and training in business and financial management to income generating activities of present and previous target group and Child Rights Advocacy

### **Interviews with key persons**

Five individuals working in various governmental organizations were interviewed as key persons. These are people holding senior positions in agencies concerned with the social and economic well being of the population in general and that of children in particular. Three of them are heads of the offices they belong. Out of the remaining, one is a department head and the other one is a crime prevention police officer. During the interview the main theme of questions raised and used as a framework for discussion consisted the following: What does the situation of street children look like in Dessie? What is the magnitude of the problem? What is being done to alleviate the problem? How do you see the effort of ADMAS street children's activities? What is going well and what is not? What is your perception with regard to the street children?

The key persons were drawn from the South Wollo Zonal Labour and Social Affairs Department, the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Bureau, Dessie City Council, the Zonal Police, and a representative of community leaders.

Since these organizations and the key person's are expected to have some contact with target population of the study they were interviewed using questionnaires with open-ended questions. However, there was much flexibility and additional questions raised and discussions depending on the responses given. These individuals also gave most of the information on Dessie and the situation of street children in relation to the services offered by the organizations they represented.

Perception/impression of key informants regarding effort/services of the project

**Table 11**

|   | Key informant representing | General impression towards Services of the project |
|---|----------------------------|--|
| 1 | MOLSA                      | Positive   |
| 2 | DPPC                       | Positive   |
| 3 | Dessie City Council        | Positive   |
| 4 | Zonal Police               | Positive   |
| 5 | Community Representative   | Positive   |

All the informants stated that in Dessie, they are observing that many thousands of families including their children are joining the streets due to abject urban and rural poverty. Asked about the magnitude of the problem, the representative from the DPPC stated, “we don't actually have substantial knowledge and information in this regard. We understand and are aware of the severity of the problem. According to the survey undertaken in 1998 there were around 5000 street children in Dessie alone. This problem is further exacerbated by the increased rural-urban migration and due to the pandemic AIDS”. He added, “ There are only two non-governmental organizations that are currently working around this particular social problem. These are Forum on Street Children Ethiopia and ADMAS Child Rehabilitation and Development Organization”.

One of the key issues during the interviews was whether or not ADMAS is changing the face of Dessie. Asked about the impact of the ADMAS street children's project on 'streetism' in Dessie the representative from MOLSA stated " In terms of the outcome of their work at street level it would appear only to make an almost imperceptible impression on the real situation. The phenomenon 'streetism' is vast and would require an enormous effort to completely eradicate. However, the programme has never, unlike many other projects set up to attempt to begin the process, into that sphere". He further stated " Based on the project agreement signed on Feb 2002, ADMAS works on an entirely different and unique basis that works within the limitations of its size, especially in terms of personnel, and also within its budgetary confines. In real terms, measurement of the programme is not only limited to the number of direct beneficiaries, but the knock on into the community particularly through the assistance to families and the community in general".

In responding to the magnitude of the problem of streetism, the representative of the Community stated "According to the information we had from the social affairs department, these children have come to the town due to various reasons that are directly associated with poverty. It was estimated that there are around 5000 street children in Dessie. We know for certain that the phenomenon is increasing from time to time". In response to the question concerning what is being done to alleviate the problem, he replied, " The Labour and Social Affairs Office is trying to assist street children through the provision of clothing, financial support, vocational training, reunification of children. This support was obtained from UNICEF, Christian Adoption (CA) and Teachers Training Institute (TTI)". He also stated "there are two local NGOs (ADMAS and FSCE) that are working with street children and their destitute families. Although not particularly child-focused, there are also other NGOs that work with orphans. These NGOs assist children through skills training, reunification, advocacy and HIV/AIDS". He added, "The organizations, be they government run or

supported by NGOs, lack adequate funding and skilled personnel and suffer problems with co-ordination between similar organizations”.

The Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Department representative mentioned, “DPPC greatly appreciates the work undertaken by the local NGO. As we have already specifically pointed out its strengths in our terminal report, it would be wise and appropriate to refer to the evaluation reports, which are readily available for consultation. In general, however, we are very much impressed and have a positive outlook and good impression about the activities of this particular project. According to our observation, the project offers multifaceted social services and amenities and strives to respond to the basic survival needs of the beneficiaries in its care. Generally speaking its social support programs are highly visible in the public eye”. However he strongly commented that “we strongly believe that the number of children being assisted compared to the degree and magnitude of the problem of streetism in the town is minimal”. He suggested that “the project’s activities and interventions need to be expanded and diversified and should strive to include other children in similar situations”.

Asked about the public’s image on street children, he responded saying that “our perception towards the street children is positive. These are children whose needs are not met whose rights are not respected”. He added, “The attitude of the general public, however, is not positive. This is what the researches we have undertaken indicate”.

The representative from the Police stated that “within the police department, starting from the regional office up to woreda level (although not in every woreda), Children's and Women’s Affairs Departments have been established and already have become operational. This was not the case few years ago. Thus children who have been abused by adults or their own peers are given guidance and counseling and legal protection by the police”. He added “the Police are jointly working with courts and are following children’s cases and render

assistance to the abused children to the extent possible. Besides, we are exerting efforts to sensitize the public whenever we get opportunities to meet people during public gatherings”.

In response to the question regarding the attitude of the Police towards street children, he stated that "attitude of the police toward street children until recently was negative. We used to connect them with crime; to suspect them of theft and robbery. Nowadays, things have changed dramatically. We have developed positive attitudes towards them and have even streamlined their problem with our activities and have even established child protection units in some of our police stations”.

The police officer expressed his attitude toward the ADMAS project and appreciated their child rights advocacy and public awareness raising campaign as well as the effort to integrate the children into the larger society. According to the interviews with key persons in Dessie, the local administration and the police force are very well acquainted with this programme and appear both support it and to have learned from it. For instance, the representative from the Police stated “the Police have become far more sympathetic to the real situation of street children and now rather than criminalizing them as a matter of procedure; their work is supportive of the ADMAS approach”. Interviews with the other public officials during the research undertaking give sufficient evidence of their cooperation and support for this project to satisfy this enquiry.

He stated, however, that there is a need for collaborative approach. “There has to be coordination between the NGO and the police and should work jointly especially on aspects related to child protection”, he said.

Asked about the role his organization has played to ameliorate the problem of street children, the representative replied “there is nothing that the zonal DDPC is undertaking to ameliorate the problem of street children presently. We know that there are some program

initiatives that have been developed by the zonal labour and social affairs department. They could provide with the necessary information and detail of activities undergoing currently to help street children in Dessie”.

With regard to the role played by NGOs, he stated, “one of them, ADMAS, is working directly with street children through provision of social welfare services and amenities such as food, clothing, shelter, education, health, income generation and skills training and reunification programs. FSCE is working on formal education, child protection and awareness building as well as income generation for families of street children in many of the kebelles in the town”. He added, “I have been one of the evaluators of ADMAS's project activities. During the evaluation process, I had observed that the project is executing its program activities as per the plan of action, which was jointly signed in February 2002”. He expressed his concern that the initial capital provided to the target group in form of establishment cost seems a little bit small in amount, compared to the current increase in prices of goods and services and need to be raised a little bit higher so that the target group could engage themselves in petty trade activities and operate at full scale.

The representative from the community on his part said, “There has not been much work or intervention undertaken by the communities thus far towards ameliorating the problem of street children. To the extent possible, we have assisted the Labour & Social Affairs Department through data collection, through identification of the children's needs, problems and provided the necessary information. We also report to them about the seriousness of the phenomenon, periodically. As the children are living in community, we are aware of the kind of social welfare services offered to them. We work closely with both the governmental and NGOs especially on the advocacy work. We believe that the project has performed a lot and had brought significant changes in the life styles of the target population under the project's care. However, the phenomenon streetism is really a huge social problem

in Dessie hence we don't believe that such a social problem could easily be addressed". Asked if there is any community initiative currently underway to assist the street children in the town, he replied saying, "nowadays, there are task forces and different committees that have been established within each local administrative unit. In line with the new civil service structure, one of the primary duty and responsibility of such task forces is to help the poor and work around prevention of social problems. We hope that we will consider the problems of street children seriously". In order to be able to solve the problem, he suggested for a need to have "a clear picture and profound knowledge on the type, nature and extent of the problem in the first place". Five of the respondents gave similar estimations of the population of street children in Dessie as being 5000.

### **Interview with Ex-beneficiaries of the project**

The three main areas introduced as topics for discussion with the ex-beneficiaries of the project were: what was the situation they were before the intervention (past); what are important interventions (present) and what is their benefit; what are the ones that have to be addressed (future).

#### **Interviewee 1. (Male)**

I was born in Dessie. Before joining the program, I used to try to make a living from selling roasted grain (kollo), lemon and chewing gums. Life was very difficult. We have a large family and mother was the only breadwinner. I was thus forced to live on the streets in order to meet my basic necessities. I could not go to school because whatever money I made was not enough and therefore priority was given to my stomach. I also had the responsibility of assisting my families. It was very difficult unless everybody in the family helps.

Asked about how he was recruited to become direct beneficiary of the project, he stated "I was contacted and interviewed by one of the street educators in Dessie while

working in the streets. I was then immediately recruited to become one of the beneficiaries of the program in February 2002. I was only 14 by then”. Asked about his health status, he stated, “ He has not had major health problem. However, he sometimes used to suffer from stomachaches”. He is one of the graduates of the cookery and catering training program.

At this juncture, my livelihood is based on the saleable skill I obtained from the skills training in cookery and catering. I am employed in one of the private cafeterias in Dessie. The money I earn in form of salary has helped to improve situations at home. I live with my parents in a rented house. Now my siblings and myself are going to school on a shift basis. All family members eat 3 meals a day. My family has improved on basic necessities.

He stated, “ Benefits I have gained from the project are a lot. The facilities available to my family and myself were very important and beneficial in improving our way of life. He stated lunch was included because of her request as a need. I used to wash my clothes once a week. I had free medical examination and treatment. Besides, my mother has access to a loan scheme through which she is able to initiate income-generating activities”.

In general, “the services that are offered by the project were quite beneficial to improve my way of life”. During my stay with the project, I have learned good discipline, love of people, value of work, etc. I have good memories of the play and recreation, music, participation in drama that depicts life on the street and the day-to-day relationships I had with the social workers. All these are the good memories that I could not forget till now. In future, I have a plan to upgrade my skills, become a good professional and continue working and be employed in one of the big hotels.

### **Interviewee 2. (Female)**

Asked about her situation before the intervention, she said, “Both of my biological parents are dead. I was born in Dessie. I live with my uncle who lives in a rented house. There were a number of other members in the family and had little to eat. For lack of other

alternatives, I decided to work on the streets in order to earn money and fulfill my basic necessities. I was 14 yrs old when I first joined the street life. By then, I was going to school half time as it was on a shift basis. I used to work on the streets in the morning and go to school in the afternoon. I used to feel embarrassed to go to school in rags”.

She said she was “recruited to become one of the target groups of the project in February 2002”. While working on the streets, one of the social workers contacted me and conducted a short interview right on the street. Few days later, I was able to register and became a beneficiary of the program”.

In explaining the benefit she gained from the intervention she said, “Upon my first entry, the project bought me clothes and school uniforms and I began to feel on equal status with other children of my age. It was important. I was provided with educational materials, school fees and uniforms and happy to be a student at last.

“Supported through the financial assistance and skills I learned from the cookery and catering, training, I have been able to obtain or secure a job in one of the private cafes. Now I am able to lead an independent life on my own. In response to her present health status now, she replied, “I am healthy and have no health problem”. Asked about her future plans she said “I would like to develop the skill and become a professional cook in order to be able to work in the big hotels, which pay better salary”. She mentioned that she has continued attending school and is now going to school with decent clothes and necessary school materials, which she covers, on her own. In general, she replied that the type of social services that were given to her while being a beneficiary of the project was beneficial.

### **Interviewee 3. (Male)**

His father is dead and mother had no income at all. He was born in Dessie. When joining the street he was 15 years of age. Asked what factors forced him to join street way of life, he said, “When I had nothing else to do, I finally decided to work on the street as a last

resort. It was by chance that the street educators met me on the streets. I was a school drop out by the time the social workers first approached me in February 2002”.

Asked whether he was attending school by then, he said “Even though I wanted to continue education, I could not go forgoing food. It was very difficult to follow in class when I was so hungry. Besides, I had no money to pay for school fees and to buy educational materials”.

He further stated that supported with the seed capital and basic tailoring skill he has acquired, he was able to immediately start working on his own as a tailor. He said “I started sewing and selling children’s clothes which I make my self during market days. Gradually, the business started to generate money and become profitable. Now that I have regular income, I eat on regular basis. I have got the chance to continue education. The services provided were very beneficial and have changed our way of life. I am working hard so that I will not face problems anymore. I am living with my mother in a rented house”. Asked about his health status he replied saying “I have no major illness “. In response to his future plans he said, “I want to develop my skill and open my own shop”.

**Interviewee 4: (Female)**

I was born in Dessie. My parents were very poor and were not able to cover my basic needs such as food, clothing and educational materials. I live with my parents in a small house rented from the kebele. I was 14 years old when I first joined the streets. While working on the streets, I was contacted and interviewed by the street educators of the project. During my stay with the project, I had the chance to participate in the leather craft skills training programme. Upon successful completion of the course, I started to work on my own. All the necessary materials and financial requirements were made readily available to me . Now I have started to make a good income and have started to lead my own life. I make and sell sandal shoes; leather belts, money purses, bags of different models. I have also opened a

small retail shop of my own. Services of the program have changed my life style and brought substantial improvement on the economic situation of the entire family. I am confident in myself and confidence of being successful.”

Asked about their participation and involvement in the project the children stated that “The project has tried to work with them in its work as far as possible, As children, we have shared in decisions, including financial planning, general administration and planning, we have been very much involved in discipline and peer group organization processes. Our families, including siblings, who are indirect beneficiaries in most cases, also have opportunity to have their views and wishes considered. We were also encouraged to participate with the organization in media events that address and describe the dilemma and personal experience of street children”.

Four of the children interviewed suggested,” It is important to give priority consideration to the amount of seed capital given to them and proposed for increment of the amount. This issue needs to be addressed.

### **Interview with parents of the ex-beneficiary children**

An interview was also held with 2 of the families who were available around during the research undertaking. Hereunder is summary of the responses of the interview.

#### **Parent 1.**

I used to work as a daily laborer washing clothes, grinding mill, injera baking etc. My children and myself used to live in a temporary shelter. As the money I used to get was very minimal, most of the time we went without food. When everything else is lost, we even used to beg when we could not get anything to eat. There were days when we slept without eating. My children even used to beg. When the project staff was screening children working on streets, they found my child begging. Few weeks later, I was contacted and advised to participate in the income generation scheme together with other urban poor women whom I

knew well. Together with the group, I participated in a business-training programme for 11 days and received initial working capital amounting to ETB 1500. I started to work selling edible oil, soap, sugar, grain etc. Within a very short period of time, I started to earn good amount of income on a regular basis. As a result, my life started to improve gradually. I am now able to feed all the family, we eat –even injera, like other people, I am able to clothe the family, to pay my house rent. At the beginning there were a lot of problems with regard to management of money. Now I am familiar with cash management. The support we have obtained from the project has greatly strengthened the family cohesion and paved the way towards good relationship among family members.

Asked about her present situation, she said “ Now I have a good earning capacity. All my children are enrolled in government school. Even the youngest ones who never went to school have started attending class. I am able to provide them with the necessary school materials, school fees and uniform. They are healthy. Even when they get sick I am able to pay for their examination and treatment. I have moved to a better area and have rented a 1-room home at ETB 25/month”

## **Parent II.**

Hereunder is the summary of the interview held with the other biological mother of one of the beneficiary children.

I am from Ambasel. Our means of survival was not good & my children and myself used to face serious shortage of food. Upon my arrival in Dessie, I used to beg on the streets. I then started to live in temporary shelter. At the beginning, I used to worry and feel guilty when I had to go to the shelter at night empty handed, knowing that my children are hungry and most of the time sleep with an empty stomach”. Asked whether the project kept the promises they made to her, she replied, “As the result of the intervention, especially the income generation scheme, I started to work on my own and have started to make regular

income. My children and myself are happy and grateful - at least we are now able to eat – even injera, like other people. I get some profit out of my business, which I use for food and to meet other family needs”.

## **Assessment of project services and activities**

### **Service delivery**

Going through the plan of action of the project and interviews with the project staff and concerned line departments who are project signatories, attempts have also been made to

assess the role so far played by the organization undertaking projects to assist street children in the study area. I have been able to observe that services and activities initially planned have been implemented as scheduled.

### **Benefit to the children in its care & Achievement of set objectives**

The beneficiaries independently stated that their existing leather work skill remained as a back in the event ambitions could not be achieved or in other situations, including whilst studying as a means of earning income to cover living and study costs. Each also had normal ambitions such as owning a family and their own home, but their mutual priority were security of future fore conventional personal lives.

Many of them showed a great deal of confidence in what they had learned from ADMAS and in future support they may receive to ensure their future.

Two of the original cookery and catering graduates, plus one from the tailoring and embroidery, described their careers in Dessie working in hotels and a little more about their lives as an outcome of the ADMAS programme. They were proud of the fact they had a job, and moreover, having been on the street at about 14 years of age went through three years with the project and is managing their own life. The latter point is a mark of her respectability.

The sample of the ADMAS alumni I met presented a highly convincing affirmation of the integrity of the NGO's record keeping. According to the responses given by the beneficiaries of the program themselves, the overall achievement of the target group is outstanding and was stated and restated by the children and parents interviewed as due to the support given to them, plus counseling and encouragement and consistent monetary and materials support.

As could be noted from the discussions held with the beneficiaries, the project has been successful in helping the target group, raise their educational standards as well as

complete training. Because of the skill each has learned being a reserve occupation where they might have gone of to other training, their chances of overall survival in the face of Ethiopia's situation has been very much reinforced and should be sustainable.

Children's participation in the programme:

In child focused work and development oriented programmes, participation of children in the programme and enabling them to enjoy their rights in civil society is becoming a major concern in research, training and evaluation of programmes with a diversity of issues that concern children in almost all countries. According to the interview and assessment of project activities, ADMAS most certainly has tried to apply an appropriate interpretation of those principles of children's participation.

Four of the children and both mothers interviewed mentioned that in practice they are regularly consulted and informed. They share in many levels of participation in project actions and decision-making, including use of funding. There are children's meetings, but children are able to take part in many meetings normally considered adult meetings and are most certainly the key part of any disciplinary process that arises. An important question that the study tried to examine was whether or not participation is something practiced within the parameters of a programme or that extends beyond. When either interviewing or generally discussing the outcome of their experience with ADMAS all the children interviewed, especially the graduates from the vocational skill training who are now living and working independently reported that the program's approach being non-institutional, does not remove children from family and community. Instead, it teaches children how to fend for themselves in their lives outside of the programme. In the process of the interview, the children presented themselves as mature and competent people who are broadly aware of their rights and obligations as citizens.

**Interview with project staff**

Asked about the overall impact of the project on the target population, the project manager stated, “The impact of the project is best measured through its outreach beyond the direct beneficiaries. Most families consist of two parents, although there is a substantial number of single parent headed households, the average number of children, is six per household. That would represent the beneficiary plus at least six. Where 300 children are directly benefiting from the programme one can estimate a wider effect of the work that reaches in the region of 2000 individuals or so”.

The project manager stated that the main points with regard to project impact are seen in the improvement in living standards, health and education. “With the direct assistance of ADMAS to the 300 children or indirectly to their families not only the direct beneficiaries themselves but also their siblings attend school regularly. It is in this respect that the real achievements of ADMAS can be seen rather than the process of simply removing children from the streets”. He added, “The knock-on effect of the large number of secondary beneficiaries has a positive outcome within the community. The project does not directly promise a great deal at any stage. However, the two-way relationship has created confidence that is noticeable in local attitudes to the project”.

## **10. Analysis and conclusions**

As can be noted from the responses of the interviews conducted with the target group and representatives of collaborating agencies, the ADMAS street children project is fully operational in its use of the exact definition of streetism in that it works with both economic and psychosocial dimensions of the lives of its clients and in its methods of selection of children as beneficiaries. Causality and effect of streetism are particularly well integrated

into the strategy to effect family rehabilitation and in the assistance given to families to prevent further children from each household needing to go to the street.

The programme works on a non-institutional or residential basis, with full recognition of individual and familial needs to progressively move children off the street rather than attempting a single stage replacement in the family that does not recognize root causes of the need for street careers. The intervention methods chosen by the ADMAS programme are progressive and give good example of an approach that is successful in its own working environment. It has chosen to work with its beneficiaries rather than the phenomenon and does so according to individual and familial needs in a child focused and comprehensively participatory fashion.

According to interview conducted with the beneficiary children, three of the graduates from the vocational skills training program have moved on to generally successful careers. In most cases the graduates are maintaining the option of the skill learned through the vocational training programme with an alternative. It needs to be recognized, however, that placing children in a situation where they are trained and employed on a regular basis does not automatically change their lifestyles. The gap between their unplanned, informal street activities and regular productive activities is a large one. The transformation process must take into account minute details and must move not just step-by-step, but inch-by-inch (SCF, 1988).

#### Specific Recommendations on the NGO

- Based on the findings through observation and review of existing action plans of the project coordination office and periodic reports, one of the priorities is the absolute necessity for long-term planning. At this point in time there appear to be neither long-term business nor strategy plans.

- It is highly advisable that in terms of projected diversification of its work the local NGO should join as many networks as possible. The organization should be able to work within the Ethiopian NGO network hence membership is undoubtedly essential.
- The project staff (street educators, supervisors, coordinators and vocational skill trainers) should be given very precise training in the application of participatory rights as they are given in the CRC and in the culturally adaptable form appropriate to the local reality and needs.
- Different funding sources should also be sought to those street children who are viewed as the primary concern of the local NGO.
- It is highly recommended that a detailed situation analysis of the city be carried out that would gather information and present a clearer picture of demographic and economic trends. The need to know more about the situation, characteristics, feelings and problems in the everyday life of street children arise from an increasing urge to take action on their behalf (Glauser, p.138). Besides, situation of children and youth in the nearby towns should also be examined in a similar way.
- To insure the sustainability of the program, the organization should continue to make utmost efforts to link every component of the project and activity with existing public sector structures and facilities within the area of operation. The project at the same time should seriously consider its service provision modalities. Direct service provision creates dependency. As Fabio Dallape stated any project working with street children should “Be cautious in presenting itself as “father Christmas” with your hands full of gifts. Nothing is free in life and they know it. They experience it daily. Don’t put them in a world of your dreams (Dallape, 1988,pp 23 and 51).

## **11. Summary and General Conclusion**

The phenomenon of street children is correlated with the more general phenomenon of poverty and homelessness. Thus in order to find solutions to the problems posed by the existence of street children, society must seek solutions for these more general problems on different societal levels, including the social policy level.

As clearly shown in the study, very few families in Dessie are able to feed and clothe their children adequately, let alone provide them with the necessary funds for school and leisure activities. The street is where street children are able to supplement or replace their parents' inability to cater for their everyday needs. It affords them with a place and the opportunity to beg, trade or work, so that they can feed and clothe themselves, keep their families and subsidize their school or leisure activities.

### **Programme Level**

It is difficult to run effective intervention programme for street children since street children are manifestations of profound social and economic situations that are constantly changing. Failure has characterized many programmes that have not considered the children's rights, personal needs and freedom of choice in the provision of services and those that have addressed the symptoms rather than the causal factors...the children themselves are the experts:they know what their concerns are and how they see their own future (Connolly, 1990,p.10). Failure has also characterized programmes that address street children singularly without looking at the wider contents of family, community and the internal external developments. We have to be flexible...capable of changing and adapting, because the societies in which street children live are constantly changing as a result of internal and external environments and we must, in turn, respond to these changes if we are to provide relevant assistance (Dallope, 1988,p.11).

The underlying philosophy is that the phenomenon streetism cannot be effectively and permanently combated in isolation from the family setting where it exists. Since the

family is the most ideal environment for the child to achieve maximum development and well being, all intervention measures should be designed to give priority for assisting children in their family setting. Under situations where children are separated from their families for different reasons, family reunification should be sought. We have to remember, however, that it is not a reunification between their families and ourselves. It is their reunification, which implies a firm decision from both the families and the children. Such a decision will only be taken if the cause for the separation has been removed (Dallape, 1988,p.41). Other strategies such as institutional responses should be avoided and/or applied only in cases where this could not be practical. One of the reasons why street children are on the streets is to escape the confines of their overcrowded homes and therefore they do not want to trade this for the confines of an institution (Reddy, 1992,p.98). Children should only be placed in homes or foster placements as a last resort.

There is need to conduct a best practices survey or study of responses to street children and to share this with all stakeholders.

### **Community Level**

The children live in communities. Street children associate themselves with certain geographical areas where they perceive resources to be available for their survival. The problem of community relationships with destitute children turns out to be a set of interlocking issues such as the following: Whose children are these? Who has moral responsibility for them? What are the legitimate professional roles to take with them? Where does public support for legitimate ethical and professional action with street children come from? Is prevention of this phenomenon of street youth feasible? If so? How?

What should be the responsibility of administrators and outreach social service workers in any model of community-based youth-work with street children? Whenever we envisage undertaking a child-focused work at community level, these questions are intertwined with the other issues involved in the phenomenon of street children and need to be taken in consideration, if permanent solutions are to be found.

There is need for research to be conducted to fill the information gap on the effects of street environment on child development.

### **Policy Level**

The approach to addressing the problem requires the presence of an appropriate social-policy, programs and strategies. It requires a multidisciplinary rehabilitative and preventive measures, approach and collaboration of secular organs of the government as well as various sectors of the society.

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Questionnaire designed to collect information for an assessment of  
Situation of street children in Dessie

Name of interviewer/youth educators \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Area the interview was conducted \_\_\_\_\_

1. PERSONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF THE STREET CHILD

- 1.1 Name of respondent \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.2 Age \_\_\_\_\_ yrs.
- 1.3 Sex: Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.4 Present address: Higher \_\_\_\_\_ kebekle \_\_\_\_\_ H/NO \_\_\_\_\_ (if any)
- 1.5 Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.6 Ethnic group \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.7 Religion \_\_\_\_\_

2. EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Have you ever attended school? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
If yes, what kind of school? Regular \_\_\_\_\_ Informal school \_\_\_\_\_  
If formal, highest grade completed. \_\_\_\_\_ Grade.

- 2.2 If you have never been enrolled to school, what factors hindered you from attending it?  
 Family poverty/Financial constraints \_\_\_\_\_  
 No school available nearby \_\_\_\_\_  
 Family did not attach value to education \_\_\_\_\_  
 Had to remain home to help the family \_\_\_\_\_  
 Others (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2.3 If you are school dropout now, why did you give up schooling?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Family could no longer afford school fees  
 \_\_\_\_\_ I had to work to supplement family income  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Poor academic performance  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Health/medical reasons  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Expelled because of conduct  
 \_\_\_\_\_ To make my own reading  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Others (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2.4 If you are given the chance to continue your education now, are you willing to and happy to make use of the opportunity?  
 Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
 If no, give reasons for not wanting to continue?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### III. FAMILY BACKGROUND OF THE INTERVIEWEE

- 3.1 Do you have parents? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ Yes No \_\_\_\_\_
- 3.2 Are your parents alive?  
 a) Both alive \_\_\_\_\_ b) both are dead \_\_\_\_\_  
 c) Only mother alive \_\_\_\_\_ d) only father alive \_\_\_\_\_  
 e) Do not know \_\_\_\_\_
- If both are still alive, what was/is the marital status of your parents?  
 a) Marries and living together  
 b) Divorced due to bad marriage arrangements  
 c) Circumstantial separation (war, work displacement...)  
 d) Widowed  
 e) Single parent  
 f) Separated because of death  
 g) Don't know  
 h) Others (specify)
- If divorced, what in you opinion was the cause of the divorce?  
 a) Poverty  
 b) father left home to look for a job  
 c) Bad habit  
 d) others (specify)

3.3 What is/was your mother's means of livelihood? This should match the categories below for father's job.

\_\_\_\_\_ informal daily worker  
\_\_\_\_\_ petty seller/trader  
\_\_\_\_\_ skilled worker/self-employed  
\_\_\_\_\_ house servant  
\_\_\_\_\_ beggar  
\_\_\_\_\_ house wife  
\_\_\_\_\_ other (specify)

3.4 What is/was your father's means of income/livelihood?

\_\_\_\_\_ farming  
\_\_\_\_\_ Informal daily labourer  
\_\_\_\_\_ Trader  
\_\_\_\_\_ Government employee  
\_\_\_\_\_ private employee  
\_\_\_\_\_ beggar  
\_\_\_\_\_ soldier/x-soldier  
\_\_\_\_\_ a guard  
\_\_\_\_\_ other (specify)

3.5 Where do your parents live now?

In Dessie \_\_\_\_\_ In other urban town \_\_\_\_\_ In rural  
areas \_\_\_\_\_ Don't know \_\_\_\_\_

If in Dessie, please state residential area, i.e., Higher, Kebelle & House Number? (If any)

3.6 Who supports the family now?

Father Only \_\_\_\_\_ Mother only \_\_\_\_\_ both mother &  
father  
Extended family \_\_\_\_\_ Myself \_\_\_\_\_  
Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

3.7 If your parents are migrants, why did they leave their place of origin?

What was their place of origin? \_\_\_\_\_

Drought/famine situation \_\_\_\_\_

To look for a job \_\_\_\_\_

For medical treatment \_\_\_\_\_

Don't know \_\_\_\_\_

Others (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

3.8 What is your parents' monthly income? Approximately.

| <u>Mother</u> | <u>income range</u> | <u>Father</u> |
|---------------|---------------------|---------------|
| _____         | < Birr 50/month     | _____         |
| _____         | Between Birr 51-75  | _____         |
| _____         | Birr 76-100         | _____         |
| _____         | Birr 100-150        | _____         |
| _____         | Birr 150+           | _____         |

3.9 What is the educational status of your parents?

| <u>Father</u> |                         | <u>Mother</u> |
|---------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| _____         | Illiterate              | _____         |
| _____         | can read and write      | _____         |
| _____         | highest grade completed | _____         |

3.10 In what type of a house are your parents living now?

|                   |                       |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Brick stone _____ | Bamboo sticks _____   |
| Mud house _____   | Plastic/scrap _____   |
| Tin _____         | Other (specify) _____ |

#### IV. PRESENT LIFE STYLE/CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE CHILD

4.1 What factors forced you to resort to street way of life?

To look for employment \_\_\_\_\_ War situations \_\_\_\_\_  
Drought/famine situations \_\_\_\_\_ Quarreled with parents \_\_\_\_\_  
In search of food \_\_\_\_\_ Forced \_\_\_\_\_  
Encouraged \_\_\_\_\_ Loss of parents \_\_\_\_\_  
Family disorganization \_\_\_\_\_  
Failure of family to support me \_\_\_\_\_ Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

4.2 Do you work? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If your answer is no, how do you survive?

\_\_\_\_\_

4.3 What is your street occupation?

Begging \_\_\_\_\_ Shoe shinning \_\_\_\_\_ coffee cleaner \_\_\_\_\_  
peddler \_\_\_\_\_ Porter \_\_\_\_\_ Taxi boy \_\_\_\_\_  
Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

4.4 How much do you get on the average per day?

ETB \_\_\_\_\_

4.5 How do you spend your daily income?

- Food \_\_\_\_\_ shelter \_\_\_\_\_  
 Cloth \_\_\_\_\_ school fee \_\_\_\_\_  
 Help family \_\_\_\_\_ Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4.6 If you are contributing to the family budget, what is your parents attitude towards your contribution?  
 Happy \_\_\_\_\_ Unahppy \_\_\_\_\_  
 Indifferent \_\_\_\_\_ Don't know \_\_\_\_\_
- 4.7 Is your daily income reliable? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
- 4.8 How much do you spend for food and logging every day?  
 ETB \_\_\_\_\_ for food ETB \_\_\_\_\_ for logging
- 4.9 Do you beg on the streets? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_  
 If yes, how often? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Always \_\_\_\_\_ often (usually) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Sometimes \_\_\_\_\_ rarely \_\_\_\_\_ never \_\_\_\_\_
- 4.10 For how long have you been engaged in street way of life?  
 Length of time on the streets: \_\_\_\_\_ Months \_\_\_\_\_ years
- 4.11 If a migrants, where did you stay upon your arrival in Dessie at the beginning?  
 In church yards \_\_\_\_\_ In mosque yards \_\_\_\_\_  
 With relatives \_\_\_\_\_ On verandas \_\_\_\_\_  
 In cheap hotels \_\_\_\_\_ Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4.12 Do you have brothers/sisters? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_.  
 If yes, how many brothers? \_\_\_\_\_ and how many sisters? \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4.13 Where do you come in the family?  
 I am the only child \_\_\_\_\_ I am the eldest \_\_\_\_\_  
 I am the youngest \_\_\_\_\_ Middle \_\_\_\_\_
- 4.14 Do you have a stepmother? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
 Do you have a stepfather? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
 If yes, why did you stop living with them?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- 4.15 With whom were you living before you resort to street life?  
 With both parents \_\_\_\_\_ with my mother \_\_\_\_\_  
 With father only \_\_\_\_\_ with close relatives \_\_\_\_\_
- 4.16 With whom are you living now?

With my mother \_\_\_\_\_ with both parents \_\_\_\_\_  
With relatives \_\_\_\_\_ with father \_\_\_\_\_  
Alone \_\_\_\_\_ with peers/friends \_\_\_\_\_

4.17 Who helps and protects you while you are on the street?

No one \_\_\_\_\_ siblings \_\_\_\_\_ peer groups \_\_\_\_\_  
Parents \_\_\_\_\_ close relatives \_\_\_\_\_

4.18 How often do you usually see/visit your families?

Everyday \_\_\_\_\_ at least once in a week \_\_\_\_\_  
Once in every month \_\_\_\_\_ only few times in a year \_\_\_\_\_  
Rarely \_\_\_\_\_ Irregularly \_\_\_\_\_ Never \_\_\_\_\_

4.19 If rarely, irregularly or never, why so?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4.20 Do you think your parents or guardians approve/disapprove of your living and/or working on the streets?

Approve \_\_\_\_\_ Disapprove \_\_\_\_\_ Don't care \_\_\_\_\_ Don't know \_\_\_\_\_

4.21 How many times a day do you eat? Once \_\_\_\_\_ twice \_\_\_\_\_ trice \_\_\_\_\_

4.22 What kind of food do you usually eat?

\_\_\_\_\_

4.23 Where do you usually go to sleep?

Home \_\_\_\_\_ church yards \_\_\_\_\_ mosque yards \_\_\_\_\_  
Bus stops \_\_\_\_\_ on verendah \_\_\_\_\_ cheap hotels \_\_\_\_\_

4.24 What are the major problems that you currently encounter in your day-to-day street life?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4.25 Have you ever been sick while living or working on the streets?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, what kind of illness? \_\_\_\_\_

4.26 Whom do you usually call on when and, as you get sick?

\_\_\_\_\_

4.27 Do you have any kind of habit/addiction? If yes, what kind?

\_\_\_\_\_

4.28 Have you ever been caught by the Police? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

What charge? \_\_\_\_\_

- 4.29 Have you ever been beaten or hurt by adults while living/working on streets?  
 Yes\_\_\_\_\_No\_\_\_\_\_.
- 4.30 Has anyone forced you to do any sexual act? Yes\_\_\_\_\_NO\_\_\_\_\_
- 4.31 Have you ever had any sexual intercourse with someone for the sake of money?  
 Yes\_\_\_\_\_No\_\_\_\_\_
- 4.32 Which of the following is your immediate need?  
 Food\_\_\_\_\_cloth\_\_\_\_\_shelter\_\_\_\_\_Education\_\_\_\_\_
- Family support\_\_\_\_\_Cash assistance\_\_\_\_\_Get reunified\_\_\_\_\_
- Other (specify)
- 4.33 What is that you would like to become in the future?  
 \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4.34 What do you personally think or believe is the most appropriate intervention measure/s that must be undertaken right now in order to help you improve your way of life?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## ANNEX I

### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE STUDY

#### DATA COLLECTORS:

|                  |                          |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| Alem Yilma       | social worker            |
| Saifu Asress     | sociologist              |
| Menlik Teferri   | social worker            |
| Ali Mohammed     | social worker            |
| Sissay Bezie     | vocational skill trainer |
| Kalkidan Berhanu | social worker            |
| Meaza Dinkneh    | social worker            |
| Tadese Hailu     | student, GSSW            |

## Appendix II

### QUESTIONNAIRE: Ex-beneficiaries of the project

1. When was it that you were recruited as direct beneficiary of the project?
2. What age were you when you joined the project?
3. How were you contacted upon your entry into the project?
4. Were you attending school by then? If not, why not?
5. What factors forced you to join street way of life initially?
6. Where is your place of origin? Are you from the town or from the rural areas?
7. How is your health status now? Where do you live now?
8. What is your means of livelihood presently? What are you doing right now?
9. What are your futures plans?

10. What benefits did you gain from the project/were you happy with the services of the project?
11. What exactly did you learn during your stay with the project?
12. Do you have any good or bad memories while you were a beneficiary of the program?
13. Did the project keep the promises they made to you? If not, what promises were not kept?

### Appendix III

#### QUESTIONNAIRE: Key Informants

1. What does the situation of street children look like in Dessie?
2. What is the magnitude of the problem?
3. What is being done to alleviate the problem?
4. How do you see the effort of ADMAS street children's activities?
5. What is going well and what is not?
6. What is your perception with regard to street children?
7. Did the project execute its work as per the signed project agreement?