
PROGRAMME ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE

A two-way street?

Report on Phase II of the PSA Street Children Project



DIVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH AND
PREVENTION OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

ABSTRACT

The WHO/PSA Street Children Project began in 1991, and in 1992, a meeting was held in Geneva with participants from the initial participating sites from seven countries: Brazil, Egypt, Honduras, India, Mexico, the Philippines and Zambia. A report on the work to date was prepared in 1993 'A one-way street?'. Phase II of the project was initiated at a meeting in Geneva in 1994, where there was participation from various UN agencies, other international governmental and nongovernmental agencies, governments and research and training institutions. The focus of Phase II was to: continue the development and implementation of the WHO/PSA methodology; develop and pilot a training package for street educators; develop and pilot a monitoring and evaluation manual for street children agencies.

This report 'A two-way street?', evaluates Phase II of the project. Approximately seventy governmental and nongovernmental agencies directly participated in the project representing seventeen countries (Australia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, the Czech Republic, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, Honduras, India, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia). Additional countries have participated in certain components of the project.

Local data has been collected from at least 2500 street children through focus groups and other rapid assessment techniques, and over 5000 street children have been directly involved in project activities, with many more indirectly involved.

Over 700 individuals have received training based on the WHO/PSA methodology, mostly using the training package, sections of which have been translated into Czech, Hindi, Marathi, Russian, Spanish, and Swahili.

The evaluation found that a number of revisions were required to the training package, information flow needed to be improved, community advisory committees needed strengthening in some sites, more attention to monitoring and evaluation activities was required, as were more opportunities for exchange among the participating sites and for the increased participation of street children in all aspects of project functioning. In addition, there was the need to develop a more regional structure, possibly by greater involvement of WHO regional advisers, establishing regional training and research centres or networks, and model programmes.

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Who taught you to beg?: *"Hunger - the street taught me how to beg."* (Cairo street boy)

"We have vices, but we work very hard. We cannot expect the government to take care of us, we need to do something for ourselves." (Mexico City street boy)

Song: *"Twabonabona nnyo Kukubera Kukasasiro Bangi netu daaga Lwwabutamanya. Singa twamanya netutajja Kusariro Osanga te twandibbye."* (*"We suffered a lot when we came to scavenge on the garbage heap. Many of us suffered because of ignorance. If we had known we wouldn't have come to the streets."*) (UYDEL Kampala)

"Children attribute harassment by the security personnel to lack of shelter. The boys often get arrested as thieves when they go to the verandas at night, while the girls have to save themselves from arrest by consenting to sex demands by the security personnel." (Report from UNOGT Kampala)

About substance use: *"Everything gets too big...the noise gets too loud, crowds get too much, it gets even hotter...it really is not worth it...but it passes the time."* (Mumbai street boy)

"You can see the moon this small and then see it grow and then not see it anymore." (Mexico City street boy)

"You are not hungry, cold or alone... you can't imagine how boring the world is without drugs." (Prague street boy)

Poem: *"Woe to you street kid, sun scorched, rain soaked, relying on the garbage can for food, fellowship and warmth. Because people call you a wild cat - muyaye."* (UYDEL Kampala)

"It was death I was trying to escape, but it is death I have found." (HIV+ Mumbai street boy)

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