Introduction

The Consortium for Street Children (CSC) is the leading international member-based network dedicated to realising the rights of street children. We are committed to creating a better and sustainable future for some of the most disadvantaged and stigmatised children by working together to inform and inspire research and action that influences policy and best practice worldwide.

CSC also acts as the Secretariat to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Street Children which is chaired by Baroness Miller of Chithorne Domer, Russell Brown MP and Craig Whittaker MP and currently has sixty members.

Street children

Definition of street children

There are various definitions of street children. The label, street children, is increasingly recognised by sociologists and anthropologists to be a socially constructed category that in reality does not form a clearly defined, homogeneous population or phenomenon. Research and practice have surfaced an enormous variation in children’s experiences and considerable overlap between different groups: for example some children live on the streets all the time, others only occasionally or seasonally, while others move between home, street and welfare shelters. Some retain strong links with their families; others have broken or lost all contact. ‘Runaways’ in rich countries, such as the UK and USA, include children sometimes described as ‘detached’ who in poorer countries would be considered street children. A recent definition to encompass the variety of experiences children have with the street focuses on the connections children make to the street and relationships formed there: a street-connected child is a child for whom the street is a central reference point – one which plays a significant role in his/her everyday life and identity.

Numbers of street children

Estimating numbers of ‘street children’ is fraught with difficulties. In 1989, UNICEF estimated 100 million children were growing up on urban streets around the world. Fourteen years later UNICEF reported: ‘The latest estimates put the numbers of these children as high as 100 million’. Even more recently: ‘The exact number of street children is impossible to quantify, but the figure almost certainly runs into tens of millions across the world. It is likely that the numbers are increasing’. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights’ (OHCHR) study on the protection and promotion of the rights of children working and/or living on the street highlights the difficulties in determining numbers of street children and advocates for greater combined efforts to collect data of street children.

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1 For more information on CSC, please visit, www.streetchildren.org.uk
2 This definition is informed by Sarah Thomas de Benitez’s Global Research Paper on street children which informed the UN OHCHR study on the protection and promotion of the rights of children working and/or living on the street
3 CSC was appointed as lead consultant for the study, the final report of which can be accessed at: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Children/Study/Pages/childrenonthestreet.aspx.
Street children in Brazil

The presence of street children in Brazil has become strongly evident since the late 1970s. Despite the difficulties expressed in the OHCHR study on the practicalities of consistent data collection of street children worldwide, recent research in Brazil by the Secretaria Nacional de Direitos Humanos (National Department for Human Rights) has found that there are 23,973 children working or sleeping on the streets of 75 Brazilian cities with more than 300,000 inhabitants. 23.2% of these children sleep on the street, 45.1% are between 12-15 years of age and 71.8% are male. 13.8% of the children do not eat every day and this figure rises to 28.4% amongst the children that sleep on the street. Amongst the children aged between 6-11 years of age, 38.9% do not attend school, which rises to 59.4% for the group aged 12-17 years old. 65% of street children work on the streets. Common activities of street commerce undertaken by the children include car cleaning, rubbish collection and shoe shining. 29.5% of the children have said that they beg.

Despite legislation which guarantees the rights of all children, a significant part of society continues to see street children as unentitled to rights and protection. There are a number of non-governmental organisations, governmental agencies, private institutions and churches working with street children in Brazil. Some organisations are local, others regional, national or international.

The World Cup 2014 and the Olympic Games 2016

The major sporting events that are to take place in Brazil over the next few years present challenges for street children. Preparations for the events are affecting the lifestyles of street children and, commonly, the survival behaviours of street children are criminalised. This echoes the findings of the OHCHR study on street children.

The Brazilian Government has recognised that factors related to the World Cup [and by extension, the Olympic Games], such as large-scale infrastructure projects and a high concentration of people, can increase the vulnerability of children and young people. However, it has been reported that one government programme, the ‘Choque de Ordem’ (Order Shock) operation that aims to promote law and order in preparation for the World Cup, has targeted the street population, including street children. People living on the street have been evicted from the places where they sleep and their belongings have been confiscated. Furthermore, there are

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reports that families who had occupied empty buildings are being evicted following the refurbishment of certain areas for the World Cup.\textsuperscript{9} This increases the possibility of children living on the street.

It has been reported that operation ‘Choque de Ordem’ is responsible for increased violence towards the street population. For instance, police repression, including physical violence, is reported to have increased towards street vendors, an activity typically taken up by street children. Some municipalities have also forbidden street vending, particularly in touristic areas.\textsuperscript{10} This criminalises the actions of street children who are street vendors.

In Rio de Janeiro, under Resolution 20 of the SMAS of PCRJ 2011, street children can be institutionalised for their own protection by the Special Service on Social Approach, and kept secured in those premises.\textsuperscript{11} Some institutions report having seen a considerable increase in the number of children they look after and there are concerns about the use of Resolution 20. It has been reported that children are taken to the police station, often under unfounded suspicion of criminal activity, where they are then identified as needing to be placed in institutions for their own protection.\textsuperscript{12} Under the Statute of the Child and Adolescent, the power to place children in institutions is reserved for the judiciary and the Councils of Guardianship. The children cannot be kept in an institution against their will. However, the institutions are under a duty to dissuade the children from raising concerns about being kept there. Consequently, there are concerns that boundaries between the social services and police are blurred for street children, and that this is exacerbated in anticipation of the major sporting events.\textsuperscript{13} Concerns have also been raised that children may not be able to access health services whilst in these institutions.\textsuperscript{14}

This situation is similar to the police round-ups of street children which took place prior to the World Cup 2010 hosted in Durban, South Africa.\textsuperscript{15} Round-ups of street children are not uncommon\textsuperscript{16} and with the pressure of entering the spotlight of the international community, there are fears that street children will be rounded-up in Brazil in anticipation of the World Cup and the Olympic Games.

\textsuperscript{9} Dossiê da Articulação Nacional dos Comitês Populares da Copa. Megaeventos e Violações de Direitos Humanos no Brasil, p. 24, \url{http://comitepopulario.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/dossie_violacoes_copa_completo.pdf}
\textsuperscript{10} Ibidem pp.39 and 69
\textsuperscript{11} Ibidem, p.70
\textsuperscript{12} Pronunciamento do CEDECA RIO DE JANEIRO contra o recolhimento e internação compulsória, \url{http://www.cedecarj.org.br/noticias/124}
\textsuperscript{13} Práticas de recolhimento compulsório em Abordagem Social vão a contrapelo da Política Nacional para a População em Situação de Rua, \url{http://www.crprj.org.br/noticias/2011/0622-praticas_de_recolhimento_compulsorio.html}
\textsuperscript{14} Ibidem
\textsuperscript{15} \url{http://streetchildworldcup.org/about-us/faqs/}
Street Child World Cup

The Street Child World Cup (SCWC) is a global campaign for street children to receive the protection and opportunities that all children are entitled to. The aim is to provide a platform for street children to be heard, to challenge the negative stereotypes of street children and to promote the rights of street children. Ahead of the FIFA World Cup, SCWC unite street children from across five continents to play football and participate in a unique international conference. In 2014, SCWC will be in Brazil. Brazil will host teams of street children from up to 20 countries, drawing from a network of outstanding projects, all campaigning for the rights of street children. This will ensure that street children’s voices are heard and they will have the chance to play in the festival of football.

CSC network members in Brazil

- Action for Brazil’s Children Trust: www.abc-trust.co.uk/
- Jubilee Action: www.jubileeaction.org/
- Street Kids International: http://uk.streetkids.org/

\[37 \text{ The Street Child World Cup is a joint venture by Amos Trust, Momentum Arts and Action for Brazil’s Children Trust. This joint venture is called Street Child United. For more information visit, www.streetchildworldcup.org} \]