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live in a deplorable condition trying hard to work out a living and facing all kinds of dangers on a daily basis. They only live in an unhealthy environment but also pose threats to society in various ways.

The scale, magnitude and dimensions of the problem are increasingly being felt, giving rise to the need for devising ways of rehabilitating the floating population in general, and the street children in particular with a view to improving their socio-economic conditions.

#### Reassures for Being Street Children

Table 1: Distribution according to reasons of becoming street children (n=95)

Type of reason	Male (n=72)		Female (n=23)		Total (n=95)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Poverty	27	37.5	10	43.48	37	38.95
Job search	30	41.67	6	26.09	36	37.89
Annoyed with parents	6	8.33	-	-	6	6.32
Land erosion	3	4.17	2	8.7	5	5.26
Family conflict	2	2.78	1	4.35	3	3.16
Trafficking	3	4.17	3	13.04	6	6.31
Run away	1	1.39	1	4.35	2	2.11
Total	72	75.79	23	24.21	95	100

Source: Author's survey results

Out of 101 respondents interviewed, 95 (94.06%) had migrated to Dhaka for various reasons the remaining 6 were born in Dhaka. Among them 72 (95.00%) were male and 23 (88.46%) were female. Most male 30 (41.67%) children migrated to the city for employment and most female 10 (43.48%) street children migrated to Dhaka due to poverty. Thus either poverty or unemployment were the prime reasons for migration to Dhaka city.

The study, it found out that various reasons force children to arrive in Dhaka from different parts of the country, and they end up on the streets, finding no other shelter.

One of the main reasons of living on the streets is poverty, as mentioned by 38.95% of the street children interviewed. In most cases, these children do not have parents and have to feed for themselves. In cases, where parents are present, they are engaged in low paying jobs and cannot make ends meet. So, children are

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compelled to engage in odd jobs, such as selling flowers, newspapers, books and water, or do scavenging and other street-centred works. 37.89% of interviewees came to the capital because of economic reasons. This can be attributed to the search for employment opportunities, better livelihood, more income, attraction of city life, and its facilities.

Bangladesh being a disaster-prone country, floods, land erosion and cyclone are annual phenomena every year there is a rise in the number of homeless, landless and helpless people because of them. 5.26% of street children interviewed cited these reasons.

Breakdown of families due to death or divorce, polygamy etc. force children to live with step-parents. Often tortured by their stepbrothers, or, stepsisters, trifle or no mistakes at all, or unhappiness and bitterness in the family, force the family into an uncertain future. Besides, various forms of family conflicts led 3.16% to come to Dhaka city.

It was found from interviewing urchins that they were tempted by others to leave their families through offers of well-paying jobs, marriage etc. by traffickers, drug dealers, pimps, friends and acquaintances with ill motives. 6.31% children fell into these traps and ended up in streets with broken dreams, unable to return to normal lives because of such people.

Illiteracy, ignorance, large family size, poverty etc. often lead to ill treatment and harsh behaviour by rural people. 2.11% of respondents said that they had run away from home to get respite from such maltreatment.

#### SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION OF THE STREET CHILDREN

The data for this research was been collected through field surveys conducted in 16 locations of Dhaka city, where the concentration of street dwellers is high, namely Sadarghat Launch Terminal, Gabtoli Bus Terminal, Kamalapur Railway Station, different market places, Mazars, traffic signals etc. A total of 101 street children were interviewed of whom 75 were boys and 26 were girls. Besides, Focus Group Discussions were held with another 20 children and 6 officials of 'Aor Bhuban', a Drop-in Centre for boys (a centre used by street children for rest, recreation etc.) in Karwan Bazar and 4 officials and 15-20 girls of 'Tara Bhuban' drop-in centre in Mirpur run by Padaksh Manabik Unmayan Kendra aided by PCAR. Also, discussions were held with concerned officials of the Ministry of Social Welfare and Ministry of Women and Children Affairs.

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## STREET CHILDREN OF DHAKA CITY : WHERE THEY ARE HEADING TO ?

Joint Secretary Shabeen Khan, ndc

### INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is among the most densely populated countries in the world and has a high poverty rate. Recent estimates of Bangladesh's population range from 142 to 159 million, making it the 7th most populous nation in the world. With a land area of 144,000 square kilometers, the population density is remarkably high.<sup>1</sup> Dhaka was ranked the 24th most populous city in the world in 1991 with an estimated 6.5 million population according to a report by United Nations (UN). It is believed that the city would become the sixth largest in the world by 2010 with a population of 18 million. With the increase of landlessness in rural areas and consequent large-scale rural urban migration, the number of 'floating' people, especially street children is increasing rapidly (approx. 2,49,200).<sup>2</sup>

The children of today constitute our future. Proper upbringing and guidance will enable them to become assets for Bangladesh. However, the sights of pavement dwellers, especially half-clad malnourished children reveal their plight. The inability of street children to integrate mainstream society leads them to engage crime and anti-social activities that have far reaching adverse consequences on society. The purpose of this paper is to develop a proper understanding of their socio-economic condition, and account for their coming to the street, the extent of adversities they face, and the consequences for society, the economy and politics and national security. The study will also look into the need for devising ways of rehabilitating them, improving their socio-economic conditions, assessing the negative impacts and future scenario.

Social issues that arise out of the situation include insecure streets, vulnerability of street children, violence, exploitation, pollution and health risks. The greatest social problem with street children is their inability to remain within mainstream society. Political parties' use children by in the street are waste of a precious resource since they are used for processions, picketing, attendance in

<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia, available at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics\\_of\\_Bangladesh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Bangladesh) accessed on 12-09-2008.  
<sup>2</sup> Estimation of the Size of Street Children and their Projection for Major Urban Areas of Bangladesh 2005 commissioned to BIDS by ARISE

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Table-2: Distribution according to age and sex. (n=101)

Age group (Years)	Male (n=75)		Female (n=26)	
0-5 years	N	%	N	%
6-10 years	36	48.00%	12	46.15%
11-15 years	35	46.67%	11	42.30%
>16 years	04	5.33%	-	-
Total	75		26	

Source: Author's survey results

The above table shows the distribution of street children surveyed in prime areas of Dhaka. Among 101 street children 75 (74.25%) were male and 26(25.75%) were female. Considering the specific age group, highest number of male 36 (48.00%) and female 12 (46.15%) street children were in the age group of 6-10 years. No male children were found in 0-5 years of age group and no female children were found in >16 years of age group. The reason for non-availability of girls above 16 years is an indication of the lack of safety in the streets for adolescent girls. These girls apparently have no other choice but to engage in prostitution.

Table 3: Distribution according to dwelling place (n=101) -

Particulars	Male (n=75)		Female (n=26)	
	N	%	N	%
Slum	15	20	9	34.61
Road side	14	18.66	1	3.84
Park	4	5.33	-	-
Railway station	13	17.33	10	38.46
Bus terminal	11	14.66	5	19.23
Market place	8	10.66	-	-
Launched terminal	8	10.66	-	-
Club/Mazar/workshop	7	9.33	1	3.84
Total	75	74.27	26	25.75

Source: Author's survey results

This table shows that the highest number of female 10 (38.46%) street children dwell in the Railway station followed by slums 09 (34.61%). They prefer covered overhead to open sky due to security concern. On the other hand, highest number of male children dwell in slum followed by those living on road side.

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meetings etc all for politicians' selfish gains. Children on the streets create economic losses as potential resource turns into burden for the society due to lack of proper upbringing and education.

Very few researchers have undertaken an in depth study on this issue. Future policy makers' intent upon addressing these issues may consider the findings of this paper useful. Future researchers may also be benefited from its research findings. The data for this study comes from the existing literature, newspaper reports, government documents, publications, internet search, focus group discussions with key stakeholders, interviews with concerned officials of the Ministries of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA), Social Welfare (MoSW), Primary and Mass Education (PMEd) and other related organisations as well as through case study and field survey conducted in selected spots of Dhaka covering 101 children.

### Profile of Street Children

Dhaka city was chosen as the study area because of several reasons. Dhaka is the capital and largest city in Bangladesh. Almost 12 million people live in this city. An estimated 7 million of them live below the poverty line. Poverty family disintegration, natural disasters, lack of jobs, and the belief that Dhaka city has lot of opportunities for improving the standard of living continuously lead a large number of people to migrate from villages to the city.

Arriving in this overcrowded, competitive and complex city the migrants face the harsh realities of life. Jobless and homeless they often end up in the streets. Children are the worst sufferers, and constitute a large portion of the floating population. A study conducted by Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) in 2004 showed that out of the 6,74,178 street children in Bangladesh approximately 36.96% live in the streets of Dhaka. The variety and complexity of the problems faced and work done by the street children of Dhaka are why it has been chosen as the study area.

### Street Children

Street children can be defined children below 18 who pass their days and nights on streets. They may or may not have parents or guardians. These children

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Table 4: Distribution according to occupation (n=101)

Type of occupation	Male (n=75)		Female (n=26)		Total (n=101)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Porter(Coolie)	12	16	-	-	12	11.88
Hawker	2	2.66	-	-	2	1.98
Peedler	3	4.17	7	26.92	10	9.87
Beegar	4	5.33	-	-	4	3.96
Car cleaner	7	9.33	-	-	7	6.93
Shoe shiner	3	4.17	-	-	3	2.97
Hotel boy	1	1.33	-	-	1	0.99
Workshop labourer	2	2.66	-	-	2	1.98
Shop worker	4	5.33	-	-	4	3.96
Garbage picker	3	4.17	9	34.61	12	11.88
Flower seller	2	2.66	2	7.69	4	3.96
Others	-	-	2	7.69	2	1.98
Total	75	74.26	26	25.75	101	100

Source: Author's survey results

This table shows that the highest number of males 12 (16.00%) worked as porter (coolie) and highest number of 09 (34.61%) females were garbage pickers followed by 7 (26.92%) beggars.

Table 5: Distribution according to working hours (n=101)

Work Duration (in hours)	Male (n=75)		Female (n=26)		Total (n=101)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
4 hours	7	9.33	5	19.23	12	11.88
6 hours	19	25.33	11	42.3	30	29.7
8 hours	41	54.66	7	26.92	48	47.52
12 hours	4	5.33	3	11.53	7	6.93
Above 12 hours	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	75	74.25	26	25.75	101	100

Source: Author's survey results

This table shows that 6 hours working duration was found in 11 (42.30%) female street children and 8 hours was found in 41 (54.66%) male children. More than 12 hours working period was found in 04 (5.33%) male children.

Table 6: Distribution according to daily income (n=101)

Income (in Taka)	Male (n=75)		Female (n=26)		Total (n=101)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
20-50	21	28	12	50	33	33.66
50-80	17	22.66	6	23.07	23	22.77
80-100	15	20	2	7.69	17	16.83
100-200	16	21.33	3	11.53	19	18.82
>200	6	8	3	11.53	9	8.91
Total	75	74.25	26	25.75	101	100

Source: Author's survey results

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The above table shows that 21(28.00%) male street children earn 20-50 Taka daily. On the other hand 13 (50.00%) female children earn that amount of taka daily. Only 06 (08%) male children and 03 (11.53%) female street children earn more than 200 Taka daily. These figures represent their solvency characteristics.

Table-7: Distribution according to income spending (n=101)

Particulars	Male (n=75)		Female (n=26)		Total (n=101)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Spent for self	41	54.67	10	38.46	51	50.50
Spent to parents	7	9.33	11	42.3	18	17.82
Beats expenses of brother/sister	1	1.33	5	19.23	6	5.94
Given to relative	1	1.33	2	7.69	3	2.97
To save for future	5	6.66	2	7.69	7	6.93
Total	75	100	26	100	101	100

Source: Author's survey results

This table shows that 61 (81.33%) male street children spend their earnings on themselves and 11 (42.30%) female street children spend their earnings for their parents. Only 2 (07.69%) female children and 5 (6.66%) male children usually save their earnings for the future. This indicates that most street children do not earn enough to save anything after meeting their living expenses.

## EXTENT OF ADVERSITIES FACED BY STREET CHILDREN

Street children continue to struggle with grit and determination to stay afloat in spite of many hardships. The study has found out that street children grow up confident and independent in their struggle for existence but are constantly faced with exploitation, maltreatment, abuse and harassment by law enforcers, employers and society in general. Interviewing focus groups, observation of the street children, discussion with relevant authorities and review of existing literature have led to the following findings on the adversities faced by them.

Table-8: Distribution according to diseases suffered (n=101)

Types of diseases	Male (n=75)		Female (n=26)		Total (n=101)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fever/ headache	17	22.67	3	11.53	20	19.80
Cough and cold	32	42.67	15	57.69	47	46.53
Respiratory difficulty	2	2.67	7	26.92	9	8.91
Diarrhoea	11	14.67	5	19.23	16	15.84
Jaundice	3	4	-	-	3	2.97
Gastric disease	1	1.33	1	3.84	2	1.98
No suffering	15	20	-	-	15	14.85
Total	75	100	26	100	101	100

Source: Author's survey results

The above table shows that the highest number of street children suffered from common cold. Among them 32 (42.66%) were male and 15 (57.69%) were female children. Only one female child had gastric disease and 15 (20.00%) male children reported no health problems. Most children suffered from multiple diseases and this reflects previous six month's suffering from the study period.

Table-9: Distribution according to treatment sought (n=101)

Particulars	Male (n=75)		Female (n=26)		Total (n=101)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Treatment by Place	75	100	26	100	101	100
No treatment	21	28.00	13	50	34	33.66
Medicine from pharmacy	31	41.33	12	46.15	43	42.38
Hospital visit	-	-	1	3.84	1	0.99
Quack doctor	1	1.33	-	-	1	0.99
Medicine taken from free health centres	3	4	-	-	3	2.97
Total	80	106.67	26	100	106	104.55

Source: Author's survey results

This table shows that out of 75 male street children, 60 children received treatment when they became ill. Highest number of male 31 (51.67%) street children received treatment from pharmacy while 25 (41.67%) male children and 13 (50.00%) female children took no treatment for their illness. Only 01 (03.86%) female child had to go to hospital for treatment.

Table-10: Distribution of problem faced during work (n=101)

Problems faced	Male (n=75)		Female (n=26)		Total (n=101)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
No Problems	16	21.33	1	3.84	17	16.83
Problems faced	59	78.67	25	96.15	84	83.16
Particulars of problem	59	78.67	25	96.15	84	83.16
Delay in getting wages	16	27.11	4	15.38	20	19.80
Over work	26	44.06	7	28.33	33	32.28
No rest	20	33.33	10	40	30	29.70
No meal	34	57.69	12	46	46	45.54
Beating	41	69.49	17	68.33	58	58.41
Police atrocities	38	64.4	18	72	56	56.86
Miscellaneous money	23	38.38	3	12	26	26.85
No recreation facility	2	3.38	4	16	6	6.41
Work stop due to Harass	24	40.67	7	28	31	30.9

Source: Author's survey results

This table shows that out of 101 street children, 84 (83.16%) faced multiple problems while working. Among them, 59 (78.67%) were male and 25 (96.15%)

were female children. In case of male, beating (69.49%) was the main problem faced followed by police atrocities (64.4%), no rest (61.01%) and overwork (44.06%). Females faced disturbance by police the most, (72%) followed by beating (68%), and no meal 48%.

Table-11: Distribution according to risk faced (n=78)

Face any risk	Male (n=75)		Female (n=26)		Total (n=101)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Face no risk	24	32	4	15.38	28	27.72
Face risk	51	68	22	84.62	73	72.28
Particulars of risks	51	68	22	84.62	73	72.28
Accident	33	64.7	19	80.36	52	51.23
Road accident	19	37.25	8	30.36	27	26.96
Smuggling	14	27.45	1	3.84	15	14.85
Drug addiction	9	17.64	-	-	9	8.91
Trafficking	7	13.72	4	18.18	11	10.90
Sexual Abuse	6	11.76	1	3.84	7	6.93
Sexual disease	13	25.49	5	22.72	18	17.82
Sexual disease	9	17.64	-	-	9	8.91
Crime record	3	5.88	1	3.84	4	3.96
Broken health	32	62.74	18	81.81	50	48.49
Stunt/High/Thrift	17	33.33	4	18.18	21	20.79

Source: Author's survey results

The above table shows that out of 101 street children, 73 (72.28%) faced risks. Among them, 51 (68.00%) were male and 22 (84.62%) were female children. Highest incidence of risks were from accidents where 33 (64.70%) male children and 19 (86.36%) female children suffered from. Among other risks faced, 09 male children (17.64%) were drug addicts, 13 (25.49%) were victims of sexual abuse, 09 (17.64%) contracted sexual diseases and 03 (5.88%) acknowledged their role in crime activities. On the other hand, 22 female street children faced risk 19 while, 05 (22.72%) were sexually abused.

The following case study narrates the life story of Rekha, a victim of trafficking, who later got involved in drugs and prostitution-

Rekha, a 14 year old girl came to Dhaka with one of her distant relative leaving behind her parents in Bhola. She lives near New Market. She refused to talk without payment as everything has a cost. She also expressed her grievance by saying what the use of knowing all these things was and it only helps to sell their history. Constant quarrel between her parents forced her to leave her home behind. Now she enjoys her freedom and does not care anything.

From the above table, we can see that majority of the street boys (93.42%) and girls (96%) do not have the desire to study during their leisure time. When asked if they wanted to improve their condition through education they said that though they would like to see a better future, but they did not have the means or the spare time required to do so. Also, they mentioned the lack of opportunities and awareness about existence of facilities such as, night schools for the underprivileged. Out of the small number of children who wanted to study, few actually had access to such facilities while others were unaware of their existence.

Table-13: Distribution according to place of study

Particulars of Response (NGO School)	Male (n=76)		Female (n=25)		Total (n=101)	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Boys Club	1	1.31	-	-	1	0.99
UCEP	2	2.63	-	-	2	1.98
Aparajejo Bangla	2	2.63	-	-	2	1.98

Source: Author's survey results

The respondents who were studying mainly went to Boys Club (drop in centre), Aparajejo Bangla and UCEP run schools.

Table-14: Distribution by involvement in criminal activities (n=43)

Respondent	Male (n=75)		Female (n=26)		Total (n=101)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Involved	33	44	12	46.15	45	44.55
Not involved	42	56	14	53.85	56	55.45
Type of involvement	42	56	14	53.85	56	55.45
Stealing	18	24.32	12	46.15	30	29.66
Snatching	4	5.33	-	-	4	3.96
Pick Pocketing	3	4	-	-	3	2.97
Drug trafficking/Selling	8	10.67	-	-	8	7.92
Others	2	2.67	-	-	2	1.98

Source: Author's survey results

This table shows that out of 101 street children, 45 were involved in criminal activities. Among them 33 (44.00%) were male street children and 12 (46.15%) were female children. The females who admitted to being engaged in unsocial activities said that also they occasionally resorted to stealing. However, although they did not admit to this, some of these girls have had to resort to prostitution against their will sometimes finding no other option. 18 (24.00%) males admitted to stealing, 4 (5.33%) were involved in hijacking, 03 (4.00%) in pick-pocketing and 06 (8.00%) in supplying drugs. The following box offers one such case history.

Kamal is 17 years old and lives in a park near the Mirpur Zoo. He told that he does not know his parents whereabouts. His earliest memory is that of Dhaka and so he claims it to be his home. There have been many ups and downs in his life. At one time he was even engaged in making bombs. He did his work with a group of boys when bombing was a regular affair during harals, strikes and unrest in Dhaka city. It included mixing iron pellets, sulphur, coal and other material in tin cans and sealing with red tape. They did this work in the roadside shanties near the zoo making 20/25 such bombs each night, which were then taken away by unknown individuals in the morning. It yielded good food as well as money. However, now he claims to have dissociated himself from such risky job.

When he was younger, Kamal fell in the hands of child traffickers who transported him up to Aricha but his constant crying and fainting attracted attention of others when the traffickers left him there and fled. He stayed in Aricha for several years working as a hotel boy but a chance meeting with an old friend Bozlu made him return to the zoo area. Now he smokes cigarette, marijuana and engages in sex and spends all he can on these. His income increases when there is any game in the stadium as he engages in selling tickets. He says that vagrants like him do not have any future. Only those who have a past have a future but he has no past, so he has no plans for the future. He asks "Is there anyone in Bangladesh who can tell me who are my parents?" When told that he could take the aid of organizations that help street children like him, he replied that now it was too late. His destination is in the streets.

## FUTURE SCENARIO OF THE ISSUE

The following tables reveal that majority of the children do not want to return to their villages. This is due to reasons such as the inability to integrate into village life, poverty, lack of family bondage and a sense of lack of security.

Table-15: Respondents' desire to return to the village (n=101)

Responses	Male (n=75)		Female (n=26)		Total (n=101)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	26	34.66	4	15.38	30	29.7
No	49	65.33	22	84.61	71	70.29

Source: Author's survey results

From the above table we can see that majority of boys (65.33%) and girls (84.61%) do not want to return to village life.

Table-16: Reasons to return to village (n=30)

Responses	Male (n=26)		Female (n=4)		Total (n=30)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Desire to live with mother/parents/ family	12	46.15	1	25	13	43.33
Desire to do small business	3	11.53	1	25	4	13.33
Do agricultural work	3	11.53	-	-	3	10
Purchase land and make house	4	15.38	-	-	4	13.33
Communicate/meet with family members	2	7.69	2	50	4	13.33
Arrange marriage ceremony of younger sister	1	3.84	-	-	1	3.33
Treatment/Father/mother	1	3.84	-	-	1	3.33

Source: Author's survey results

From the above tables, it can be seen that only 29.7% of the street children interviewed want to return to village life. The main reason for returning to their roots is the presence of some kind of bonding with the village ranging from desire to live with their family (43.33%), to start their own business, purchase land, build house and maintain links with the family (13.33%), commence agricultural work (10%) etc.

Table-17: Reasons for not returning to village (n=71)

Responses	Male (n=49)		Female (n=2)		Total (n=71)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Land less parent	4	8.16	1	50	5	7.04
Orphan	14	28.57	3	150	17	23.94
Do not like village	4	8.16	1	50	5	7.04
Poverty	4	8.16	4	100	8	11.26
Home less	5	10.2	1	50	6	8.45
Parents stay in Dhaka	8	16.32	-	-	8	11.26
Like living in Dhaka	3	6.12	-	-	3	4.22
Father's second marriage	4	8.16	-	-	4	5.63
No response	3	6.12	1	50	4	5.63

Source: Author's survey results

From the above tables, it can be understood that majority (70.29%) of the street children do not want to return to the village. This is because of the absence of any kind of bonding or opportunity to make a living in the village being landless (22.53%) or an orphan (23.94%), or poverty on because they have parents living in the city (11.26%), homelessness (8.45%), not liking the village (7.04%) etc. Most orphans complained of ill treatment and mental torture by step-parents or elder brother and sister-in-law.

Once she was trafficked to Jessore from Dhaka when she was only 10 years old. She was tranquillised to get unconscious. She managed to shout and attract people when she regained her consciousness in Jessore. The traffickers managed to escape and with the help of others Rekha came back to the city again. Now, she herself takes drug, smokes regularly and resorts to different sexual activities. Neither is she ashamed nor afraid of all these wrong doings rather it helps her to earn a living.

Rekha does not have any contact with her parents and spends the nights at parks, footpaths, railway station or any other place whichever is convenient with her companion or sex workers. Once she was allured to make video of her sexual activities which she declined

## CONSEQUENCES OF IGNORING THE PLIGHT OF CHILDREN

Children should be allowed to develop their full potential. Since the ultimate resource of Bangladesh is its human resource, proper nourishment of children, and their education, health care, clothing and housing should be prioritised in national planning.

This research shows that city streets cannot provide an environment conducive to the growth and development of Children. The insecure and unsafe surroundings of the streets have a profound impact on street children. Because of a perilous atmosphere, these children suffer from a sense of insecurity. This has an adverse effect on the physical and mental well being of these unfortunate children.

Due to their young age, children are very vulnerable to all sorts of negative influence. People take advantage of their vulnerability and them. Moreover, the harmful street environment deprives them of fair childhood, obstructing their growth. They are denied a happy family life and the warmth and care of a loving and supportive family.

Table 12: Desire of respondents to study during leisure time-

Responses	Male (n=76)		Female (n=25)		Total (n=101)	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Yes	2	2.63	-	-	2	1.98
No	71	93.42	25	100	96	95.02

Source: Author's survey results

Another major issue is security, as it threatens the quality life of not only of these individuals but also because of security, the security of the society and the country.

Security is a comprehensive concept. At the root of human security, lies the need for protection from disease, hunger, unemployment, crime, social conflicts, political repression and environmental hazards. So neglecting the individual security of street children, threatens societal, national, regional and international security. What might seem to be a small problem in the present context could become a serious threat in future, if neglected.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study found that street children face many obstacles in their fight against poverty. Many, if not all of these problems, can be minimized if not completely, eliminated with a little effort from the government, the private sector and other people. It is hoped that the following suggestions will improve the condition of street children and provide them with a better and safer future by integrating them with mainstream society.

## Awareness Building

There is an urgent need to change social attitudes and raise awareness about the rights of street children. Public awareness should be created to develop a sympathetic attitude towards the plight of street children. The whole-hearted efforts of all can improve the condition of street children. The media can play an important role both by sensitizing the public and by making these children aware of available services, existing children development funds and other facilities. A little sensitivity such as, helping street children by buying things they sell on the streets gives them not only a chance to survive but also helps them to avoid the adverse consequences that emanate from neglecting their cause.

## Legal Protection

Hostility, violence, physical torture and sexual abuse by defilement sections of the society, including law-enforcing agencies, deprive these children of their rights as citizens of the country. There is an urgent need to take immediate steps to remedy such conditions. In this regard, implementation of existing provisions of the law should be given priority. A step towards that end would be the simplification of the legal system.

### Reintegration with Family

Children who leave the family due to abuse or fear and take to the street can be reintegrated with their parents through counselling. Counselling and advocacy for the children as well as family members help both parties to make adjustments, which have proved to be instrumental in solving these problems.

### Education and Training

Education and training, especially night schooling and vocational training can help these children to gain confidence in building their rightful place in society. Some NGOs like Building Resources Across Community (BRAC) and Aparajeyo Bangla have already taken steps to help such children and dropouts from regular schools. Practical and flexible programs with friendly teachers like those employed by the ARISE project will induce street children to learn useful skills and obtain employment in future. This requires greater mobilization of resources both by the government as well as the private sector.

### Motivational Programmes

Street life makes young children courageous, independent and freedom loving. They prefer to roam about instead of taking advantage of Drop in Centres. So motivational programs should be taken to persuade street children to leave the streets. Budgetary allocation for addressing programmes targeted at these children should be increased.

### Healthcare Facilities

The unhygienic and disease prone environment of the streets, slums and public places as well as pollution from smoke, noise and chemicals adversely affect the growth of street children. Their health is worsened by lack of knowledge about healthcare and sanitation. The healthcare facilities that have been provided to these children is not sufficient. As most organizations have resource constraints program intervention and strategic planning, they are unable to address the multifarious problems. There is an urgent need for wider coverage through concerted efforts of the government, society and the community as a whole.

### Planned Urbanization

To minimize unplanned urbanization and rural urban migration, the rate of migration should be slowed down by creation of employment in rural areas in agriculture and agro-based industries. Simultaneously, satellite towns and growth centres with adequate facilities must be made to provide alternative destinations for

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migration. Roads and communication systems have to be linked with these growth centres, while healthcare, education, housing and other welfare services also have to be provided.

### Government Approach

Street children in particular have not been the focus of government policies and programmes until recently. The plan documents have not specifically addressed children's issues, although sectoral allocation of funds has been provided for education, health, family planning and social welfare related to children.

Street children are being covered as per Children Act of 1974 and Rules of 1976, where provisions were made for punishment against cruelty to children, juvenile court for shelterless and destitute children, penalty for employment of children for begging or giving intoxicating liquor or dangerous setup drug to child, exploitation of child applied employees forbidden etc. In 1989, the Government ratified the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child which has provided an impetus for formulating the National Children's Policy. However, no legal provision has been made and no new law has been enacted to cover street children as special case, except NCP.

### Programme Implementation

Although there are a number of policies, strategies and programmes for the betterment of street children, the implementation process has not been effective. The state as well as the government has to consider the issue seriously and adopt a coordinated and integrated approach to implement existing policies. Current programmes have to be expanded to cover larger number of children and new programmes should be initiated based on the above recommendations.

### CONCLUSION

Bangladesh's youth account for about half of the population of the country. They constitute untapped resources and wealth, if developed properly, can turn into valuable assets. However, they remain utilised due to lack of proper guidance, motivation and the basic necessities of life. Devoid of opportunities, many resort to the streets, gaining the identity of street children.

As street children live in miserable conditions, they struggle to survive. Hardship, uncertainty, deprivation and detrimental environment have had a profound impact in shaping the lives of street children. These adversities lead them to the path of crime, addiction, theft and various anti-social activities. The Government and various non-government organisations have been working to mitigate the sufferings of street children so that they can be provided with a future full of opportunities to lead a dignified life. However, these initiatives are highly

inadequate. Considering that the children of today are our future citizens, coordinated initiatives should be taken to aid the children to overcome their problems so that they can contribute meaningfully to society, and ultimately to the nation.

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### CHALLENGES TO MARITIME SECURITY AND ROLE OF THE POLICY MAKERS: OPTIONS FOR BANGLADESH

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#### INTRODUCTION

The influence of power on the history of mankind cannot be overemphasized. Both land and sea theatres are important. However, in the post-cold war era geo-strategy is increasingly being replaced by geo-economics as a measure of National Strength. Since nearly three-quarters of the world is now covered by seawater. This great common area provides the opportunity to both good and evil in accessing different parts of the world. On the one hand, maritime trade is responsible for almost 95 per cent of the total world trade. On the other hand, many security concerns have also emerged in the maritime domain, affecting the states' security. Sea based resources such as oil, gas, and fish have become crucial for the economic success of littoral states and hence must be supervised and administered. Besides, the extensive use of sea as the cheapest and easiest means of mass transportation has contributed to the internationalization of world trade and commerce. Maritime security is that component of national security which deals with sea and matters related to it.

The concept of security has undergone a paradigm shift as globalisation and developments of information and communication technologies obliterated much of the geo-political boundaries of the nation states. Unfortunately, the spread of asymmetric conflict have emerged as the defining paradigm in the changing contour of politics, economics, military strategy and technology. The exploitation of sea resources plays an important role in the economic prosperity and the development of a nation and ultimately contributes to its defence. Every maritime state acknowledges the significance of its maritime assets and exploits the resources optimally.

Despite having direct access to the sea, Bangladesh has not been able to use it and its resources fully mainly due to lack of maritime awareness. Bangladesh's maritime sector is a vital component of the national economic and military power. But Bangladesh's security considerations continue to be dominated by developments on land; maritime affairs are perceived merely as an extension of these activities. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea III (UNCLOS III) has opened up opportunity of having 1, 03,000 square kilometres of sea space as the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) for Bangladesh. This is nearly two-thirds of her land area, which is only 147,570 square kilometres. The EEZ is

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rich with living and non-living resources. According to UNCLOS III, Bangladesh has the right to possess 350 miles of Continental Shelf for exploration and exploitation of non-living resources. Preservation and exploitation of all these maritime resources are major challenges for Bangladesh in affecting its total security environment.

#### Aim

The aim of this paper is to identify the maritime security challenges of Bangladesh, highlight the role policy makers should play and recommend viable options for Bangladesh.

#### Maritime Interests of Bangladesh

Maritime security has gained a strong foothold in the overall security paradigm of Bangladesh mainly due to its dependency on the sea. The increasing sea dependence of Bangladesh emanates from its pressing need of generating more wealth for benefit of its huge population. Given limited resources in the land area, optimum exploitation of the marine resources is very important in the national interest. The two Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) connected with the two seaports are the lifelines of the national economy. Since the country land-locked by only two countries on three sides, the Bay of Bengal provides direct access to the outside world and facilitates vital trade links. Any disruption of these activities and SLOC whether in peace or war will have a disastrous effect on its economy. Along the long coastal belt, millions of people survive on fishing, forestry and salt production. Thus, Bangladesh needs to secure its maritime interests from all kinds of threats. The maritime interests of Bangladesh are briefly described below:

- a. **Sea Areas.** Under the Law of the Sea, Bangladesh has an Exclusive Economic Zone<sup>1</sup> (EEZ) extending up to 200 nm from the baseline<sup>2</sup>. The area of her EEZ is approximately 40,000 square miles. Bangladesh has a long coastline of about 710km (385 nm). The legal provision for the extension of the continental shelf is up to 350 nm by the year 2011. If the preliminary settlement of the extended area is completed, it will provide an additional area of about 30,000 square miles to the country.

<sup>1</sup> M. Khasruddin Alam, Commodore (Retired), Bangladesh's Maritime Challenges in the 21st Century, Pathak Shamshad, Dhaka, 2004, p-40

<sup>2</sup> The Law of the Sea, United Nations Publication (Sales No.E.83.V.5, Printed in USA 1983) P 18

<sup>3</sup> The normal baseline is the low-water line along the coast as marked on the large scale charts officially recognized by the coastal state.