

**THE EDUCATIONAL AND  
OCCUPATIONAL STATUS OF  
INSTITUTIONALIZED, SLUM,  
AND STREET CHILDREN  
AND THEIR ASPIRATIONS  
FOR THE FUTURE**

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# ABSTRACT

The main aim of the study was to determine the educational and occupational status of institutionalized, slum and street girls and boys and also, to understand their career aspirations for the future. The purpose of this study was to formulate specific intervention strategies based on the needs expressed by the subjects.

The study employed the use of an interview schedule. The interview schedule comprised of questions that tapped the educational and occupational status of the respondents, their choice of vocational training and their aspirations with respect to learning of vocational trades and choosing a career.

The sample consisted of 571 participants out of which, 223 were girls and 348 were boys. All participants belonged to one of the following categories: Institutionalized girls, Institutionalized boys, Girls from slums, Boys from Slums, Street Girls, and Street Boys.

A majority of respondents had received some kind of formal education. A considerable percentage were studying and working simultaneously. They were engaged in various occupations like tailoring, domestic work, wadi work, selling goods, rag picking and many more. A high percentage of respondents were involved in occupations that paid daily wages. Many saved some of the money they earned to fulfill their long-term plans. With respect to future educational aspirations, a substantial percentage of respondents in all categories aspired to learn computers. In relation to several occupations mentioned, many respondents hoped to be a part of the medical profession. This was followed by skilled work, the field of education and fashion and personal care. The occupations least aspired for were the religious profession, jobs in the film industry, social work, jobs in the hotel industry, and jobs in sales and marketing. In order to achieve their career goals, a majority of the respondents stated that they would study hard, work hard or even enroll in relevant courses that would help buffer their career.

Explanations for the findings were given. Some areas for future research were recommended.

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# **I. INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

## **Introduction**

Adolescents are often one of the most neglected and voiceless groups within our society. They are either treated like children, or nudged prematurely into adult roles. Their desires and hopes for the future are now emerging from a status of childish dreams and being subjected to the often harsh scrutiny of reality. Many youth must relinquish their childhood dreams as a result of the restrictions of their personal situations. In India, this issue is especially grim since many adolescents are forced into work by economic pressures, have no stable family life, and are ignored or shunned by society. Their wishes wither as they struggle for their own and their family's survival. This tragic loss is one that perpetuates and worsens the cycle of poverty and marginalization. The first step toward addressing this dilemma is to seek out the youth themselves, and give voice to their hopes and aspirations. Gaining insight into the minds of these young people may help us progress towards solutions. The future of any nation depends on the state of the next generation and thus, if there has to be hope for our country's future, the responsibility rests with our children, adolescents and youth.

The Salesians of Don Bosco are a religious group whose primary focus is in working with children and youth. Added to this, is the special emphasis they place on working with "children and youth at risk." This is one of their many efforts to cater to them.

## **The Current Socio-Economic Status of India**

Three out of every ten residents of Mumbai reside on the streets or in the slums. Millions of Indians are still illiterate, live in poverty stricken environments, and suffer from various health problems. The average Indian earns only about a dollar a day (D'Souza, 1995).

This reality does not apply to India's upper classes, whose lifestyles seem to mirror the technology boosted ease of the West. Luxury cars, cell phones, computers and upscale malls are as ubiquitous as the dusty shanties that seem to line every street.

If these material luxuries are the measures of progress and development, then India is second to very few countries on the top rung of the ladder of development (Panicker, 1993).

Very few, however, actually enjoy the benefits of such opulence. For these few people, India works just fine. For the vast majority of the country, the situation is not so positive. Development in India and in fact around the world, has become a process that is extremely selective – it benefits and improves the quality of life for only a privileged few. For the masses, there is no end to the bleak realities, and no break from the cycle of poverty and ignorance (Panicker, 1993).

According to the United Nations, India is home to nearly one-third of the world's poor. "India has to run to stay in place on poverty because there is so much to be done" (Chatterjee, 1997). Some 360 million of India's billion people are estimated to earn an income which provides less than adequate daily nutrition.

Urbanization and considerable advancement in the communication sector, combined with increasing migration to the big cities in search of work, takes its toll on the most basic unit of society – the family. Besides this, other elements such as natural calamities and the negative influence of media have contributed to the break up of many families in rural and urban India. In addition to these external factors pulling the family unit to the brink of disintegration, internal upheavals like the break up of the joint family system, the increasing incidence of single parenting and dual career families, the heightened need to be individualistic, and many more factors have contributed to a stressful life. This has left many homes dysfunctional or floundering on the edge of survival (Thomas, 1995).

With a majority of India's population not being able to meet all their basic needs, it is of paramount importance to improve the situation in any possible way.

### **The Phenomenon of Marginalization in India**

The genesis of 'Marginalization' lies in the lack of access to opportunities and resources. It is apparent even in rural areas. Migrant laborers, street youth, pavement dwellers, destitutes, and other such groups form a significant part of the economically weaker and disadvantaged sections of society. Many of them migrate from various regions of the country, and find themselves confronted with a multiplicity of attitudes,

beliefs, values and behaviors, some of which seem very much opposed to their own culture and traditions. The strain of attempting to improve living standards and to convert to a new lifestyle has increased stress levels, eventually contributing to increased use of tobacco, drugs and alcohol, a greater incidence of crime, molestation, rape, divorce, sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS, etc. All these factors have, either singly or in combination, hampered the younger generation's potential for the realization of their needs and aspirations, ultimately leading to them becoming disadvantaged. The visible differences in lifestyle between the classes, the double standards that prevail in society and other disparities further affect the socialization of these groups and their ability to adapt, adjust, and grow positively (Mehta, 1997).

Any person forced into emotional, social, intellectual, or economic seclusion, or driven to survive on the very fringes of society is bound to be affected adversely in one way or another. Experiencing prejudice and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, social class, gender, and/or sexual orientation, especially at a young age, foils the development of a sense of competency, control, identity, and connectedness to societal institutions (Spencer, 1987). The presence of prejudice and discrimination means that some youth must cope with experiences of group rejection, in addition to the more generic insecurities and identity pursuits inherent in the adolescent era (Spencer, Swanson, and Cunningham, 1991).

These powerful social forces effectively usher people to the margins of society, where their sense of security is threatened. The immediate and long-term repercussions range from mental illness, poor levels of physical health, and anti-social behavior, to low self-esteem and a confused self-identity. This may cause the adolescents to recede entirely into their own world, feeling deprived and exploited. They must constantly confront their dearth of privileges chiefly because of their membership in a devalued group. Youth who have encountered discrimination and prejudice have reported experiencing frustration, confusion and bewilderment, leading to feelings of anger, distrust, lack of connectedness with the larger society, and feelings of helplessness and hopelessness (Chestang, 1972).

There is hope that positive experiences in the family, community, and youth organizations may be able to counteract and neutralize the negative effects of discrimination.

## **The Life Stage of Adolescence**

Adolescence is the period of transition between childhood, and life as an adult – it comprises the teenage years. Biologically, it is characterized by the onset of puberty. After puberty, a person is sexually mature and could potentially parent a child. Socially, adolescence is heralded by an increasing independence from parents as the young person prepares to complete his/her education, to form sexual partnerships, and to seek some vocation or employment. From a cultural point of view, the age set by a given society for the rites of transition to adulthood could be perceived as marking the end of adolescence. In general the ages between eleven and eighteen may be regarded as the adolescent period (Hurlock, 1978).

The stresses and strains of adolescence have become particularly acute in modern urban society. Adolescents show a vast potential uncertainty and ambivalence towards the adult world. This ambivalence is manifested, on the one hand, in a striving to communicate with the adult world and receive its recognition; on the other hand, it appears in certain dispositions to accentuate differences between them and adults, and to oppose various roles allocated to them by adults. It is therefore necessary to provide a context within which adolescents can develop confidence, curiosity, self-control and capacities to communicate and relate to others in their own special, distinct way (Hurlock, 1978; Wolman, 1998).

## **The Indian Youth**

The problems of adolescents in India are comparatively contemporary in origin. In the earlier, agrarian setup, it was imperative that those who attained physical maturity should play an active adult role as rapidly as possible. Therefore, childhood merged quickly and unconsciously into adulthood, almost bypassing adolescence in the process.

Now however, conditions are very different, and contemporary urban Indian society does not find it practical to accept the adolescent into an adult social role. The work experience of the parents no longer provides apprenticeship for the training of youth – the urban industrial society has, therefore, largely nullified the advantage of transmission of occupation from parents to children. The type of education imparted

in schools, colleges, and universities does not substantially equip the youth to get appropriate jobs, and children drop out early because they find the information irrelevant and inapplicable to their customary lifestyle. Self-employment opportunities are also not very convenient or remunerative in an Indian society entrenched in poverty and illiteracy. Unemployment creates stress, disturbs personal identity, and weakens the sense of self-esteem. It also upsets social support networks and relationships. Acute financial stress causes many to withdraw from social interaction. Issues of caste, religion, ethnicity and gender are common, giving rise to unprecedented complexities.

### **The Reality of Working Children in India**

‘Childhood’, for a multitude of children in India, lacks its characteristic, carefree happiness. Children belonging to disadvantaged groups have no choice but to begin working at a young age in order to fend for themselves, and to merely survive. In rural India, children are seen working in fields, tending to cattle, and doing allied jobs. In many parts of urban India children weave carpets; craft glass bangles; handle dangerous explosives and chemicals making fireworks; and toil long hours in small hotels and teashops. They also repair vehicles; pick waste items from the city dumps and rubbish bins; run errands as domestic servants; or simply beg just to stay alive (Manihara, 1997; *The Asian Age*, November, 1997). These children grow up into adolescents deprived of a childhood, developmentally stunted, and burdened beyond their years with responsibilities that seem too overwhelming and insurmountable for their age, and which they are usually ill-equipped to handle on their own. They never experience this vital life phase of exploration, creativity and learning (Panicker, 1993).

The appalling neglect to which adolescents are exposed is a tragic reality that pervades our society. We see them rummaging in garbage for a scrap of food or groping in the darkness for a place to sleep. Some of these children/adolescents, irrespective of sex, are forced into addiction, prostitution, etc. Others, many of them as young as five or six, are forced to spend long, exhausting days laboring in filthy workshops as rag pickers, scrap collectors, hotel workers, etc. Many others work under conditions of slavery or semi-slavery, with no legal or medical protection

(Panicker, 1993). They suffer from infectious diseases, injuries or amputations, and endure abuses of every kind (Sharma & Hiramani, 1988). In the cities, adolescents are murdered for small ransoms or kidnapped and killed so that their organs can be sold to the world's laboratories. The pain and the cruelty to which these adolescents are condemned is beyond measure (Personal Communication, Dr. N. Ravichandran, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2002; Panicker, 1993).

These adolescents have been so mistreated that in their eyes we discern, not the natural innocence of childhood, but the fear and the deep, eternal mistrust of those forced to spend their earliest years without parents, family members and loved ones, causing them to be disadvantaged. The horrors of their early years scar them for life. These adolescents, irrespective of gender, know nothing of the magnificent feeling that is experienced by those of us able to contemplate a future filled with possibilities (Personal Communication, Dr. N. Ravichandran, 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2002).

Millions of adolescents around the country die of hunger or a lack of opportunities, in the most wretched misery. Therefore, the care of adolescents cannot be regarded as just another task. It must be understood as the essential and only way for a faltering humankind to recover its way (Rao & Kumar, 2000).

### **Slum and Street Children**

Among the disadvantaged children may be included street and slum children. Often there is difficulty in defining them precisely and their categories tend to get blurred. The Oxford English Reference Dictionary defines a slum as, "an overcrowded and squalid back street, district, etc.; usually in a city and inhabited by very poor people" (1996, p.1366). Ford (1936, p.11; in Arokiasamy, 2000), defined a slum area as, "A residential area in which housing is so deteriorated, so substandard, so unwholesome that it is a menace to the health, safety, morality or welfare of the occupants."

In the Indian context, a slum may be looked at as a conglomeration of dilapidated physical structures, built with the cheapest, readily available and easily perishable materials, needing repairs more often, but receiving them rarely if any. All these definitions tend to emphasize the physical aspect as a defining criterion, but a slum also relates to the social fabric of society, infinitely complex and mysterious.

Slum dwellers are not merely from the lowest rung of the economic hierarchy, but also usually belong to the lowest caste groups. This results in a complex array of economic and social disadvantages. One distinguishing feature of slum children as compared to street children, is that they stay with their families in temporary shelters. On the other hand, street children frequently comprise runaways and therefore do not usually maintain constant contact with their family. They have little or no supervision from elders and caregivers and often stay on the streets or pavements, with no roofs over their heads. As a result, in the absence of a support system, street children are more susceptible to exploitation than are slum children. Trust in another is a quality the street child rarely exhibits, whereas slum children show quite a good level of group cohesiveness (Parakonath, 2000).

### **The Development of Disadvantaged Youth**

Education is a critical factor in development. Currently, illiteracy and ignorance is hampering the process of development. Education creates people who are more conscious of the problems prevalent and can show better commitment than others in development initiatives.

Disadvantaged adolescents frequently lack education and those who do attend school, rarely finish. They tend to leave or, are forced out from home early in search of a job or a better life and frequently end up on the streets. Often their families do not place a high value on education or lack the financial resources to keep them in school. Frequently they try to pressure their children to take up jobs to add to the family income. The issue is further complicated by the fact that there are jobs available for youngsters below 18 years – such jobs are meaningless, poorly paid, exploitative in nature, often under hazardous conditions, and lay no stress on academic ability or development of skills. For many young individuals, embracing these jobs is the only way to aid their struggling families.

Vocational development includes education, occupation, skills, and conducive living conditions. The life stage of adolescence, among various other tasks, involves the fundamental tasks of gaining skills necessary for economic independence and for establishing a career. Decisions have to be taken in relation to academic pursuits or vocational goals. True intellectual growth begins at adolescence and its continued development and sustenance requires an intellectually stimulating environment. Only

then can an adolescent become aware of his own potentialities for reflective, imaginative, and abstract thought. Since occupation is a crucial aspect of an individual's identity, making career decisions is an important priority during adolescence. This decision should take into account the adolescent's interests, abilities, willingness to study, financial resources, etc. The most critical choice facing adolescents is whether or not to finish school. Those who do finish, stand a higher chance of obtaining employment, education or training. However, career goals for many adolescents are badly affected by irrelevant education, a lack of jobs, and intense competition at school and in the job market.

### **The Role of NGOs**

Until now, governments do not seem to be doing much to assist the process of development. They have typically favored macro solutions without being able to control the small scale consequences at the micro level. This is where Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) come into the picture.

NGOs attempt to facilitate the development process of groups and communities by using a variety of interventions. During the last two to three decades, the accomplishments of many NGOs have established their credibility to such an extent that in a number of countries the governments have started encouraging, supporting and even funding NGOs. These organizations are playing an important part in facilitating the process of sustainable development. NGOs that are directly in touch with individuals and groups at the grassroots level, can operate more effectively than 'top-down' mechanisms (Dharmarajan, 2001).

NGOs can effectively transmit information to their members. They can also convey the people's concerns to the government. In a number of cases, NGOs have greatly enhanced public participation in worthy causes (Rajhans, 1999). Thus, NGOs lie at the interface between the individual (e.g., adolescent) and group (e.g., larger society), and aim to enhance the development of the country.

### **Shelter Don Bosco**

Shelter Don Bosco is a non-governmental organization under the umbrella of the Salesians of Don Bosco, and has been working with 'rootless' and 'roofless' street

children in Mumbai for the past 15 years. Over these years in keeping with their mandate of catering to the welfare of children and youth, various projects for roofless & rootless street children have been initiated. Each of these programmes emerged in response to a need expressed by the children. In order to help them address these needs, Shelter keeps its doors open 24 hours daily, so that children and youth can walk in any time to rest within a safe environment. In addition, Shelter offers the following facilities:

- ❑ **Bathing and Washing** - Any street boy can come in for a bath or to wash clothes at any time of the day or night.
- ❑ **Medical Aid** – Any street boy found ill or with injuries, is given first aid and the necessary medical care.
- ❑ **Scrap shop** – Scrap from the road is collected and brought to Shelter, where it is separated. Recyclable material such as paper and plastic is recycled or reused to make paper bags, or for other art and craft activities. Scrap that cannot be used is usually sold.
- ❑ **Canteen** – The canteen is managed by the boys living in Shelter. Wholesome food is provided at a subsidized rate.
- ❑ **Counselling** – Every street child has his/her unique reason for being on the street. Every boy's unique problem is tackled individually by trained personnel.
- ❑ **Non-formal and formal education** – Formal education is a distant dream for many street children. They all have a desire to learn but not all of them are prepared to enter the existing formal education system. Inspired and interested children who aspire for formal education are encouraged and supported.
- ❑ **Self-employment** – The boys by nature are industrious and ingenious in earning their living. They are encouraged with finance in the form of small credit facilities and are provided with the know-how of venturing into small businesses.
- ❑ **Skill training** – Most street children are very interested in picking up simple and practical/ technical skills. Keeping this in mind they are placed in small functional and practical workshops where they learn trades like welding, carpentry, printing, tailoring, banner painting, motor mechanics, etc.
- ❑ **Monthly melas (fairs)** – These are monthly festive gatherings of street children, organized with the primary objective of creating fundamental social change by building fellowship among street children, making them aware of existing services, providing healthy recreation/ entertainment and facilitating group work.

These melas are frequented by at least 250 to 300 street children from within and outside Mumbai.

Besides this, Shelter Don Bosco (Mumbai) has 3 other branches within its establishment:

1. A Drop-in centre at Dadar
2. A Drug Rehabilitation Centre at Khandala
3. A Research and Documentation Centre at Matunga

The most recent addition to the 'Shelter' family is its Research and Documentation Centre which aims to amass and provide factual information regarding marginalized youth, through printed material and research.

### **Objectives of the Survey**

The specific objectives of the current survey were:

1. To ascertain the educational status of the participants (whether they had received any formal education).
2. To ascertain the occupational status of the participants (whether they were engaged in any work, paid or unpaid, how much they earned, details about savings, etc.).
3. To explore any future educational or occupational plans of the participants.
4. To compare the various categories of participants (i.e. institutionalized girls, institutionalized boys, slum girls, slum boys, street girls, and street boys), and highlight any significant inter-group similarities and differences in their educational and occupational status and aspirations.

## **II. METHOD**

The study was descriptive in nature, aiming to ascertain the current educational and occupational status of the participants (institutionalized, slum, and street, girls and boys) as well as explore their aspirations for the future.

### **Sample Details**

The sample was to consist of 6 groups of girls and boys between the ages of 10 to 18 years. These were:

1. Girls from Institutions
2. Girls from Slums
3. Street Girls
4. Boys from Institutions
5. Boys from Slums
6. Street Boys

### Sample Size

The number of participants obtained from each group was varied. Overall, the sample consisted of 571 participants. Table 1 (see Appendix B) shows the distribution of participants over each group. A point to note, is that the researchers were able to contact only 29 girls who led their lives purely on the street. Most of the others returned to their families at night and were therefore classified as girls from slums. The miniscule number of full-fledged street girls can be explained by the views of Lewis Aptekar (2000). Dr. Aptekar is a professor of San Jose University, California, and has reviewed many researches on street children, across various countries and cultures.

According to Aptekar (2000), girls begin street life much later than boys, usually after the age of ten years. Boys are expected to contribute to the household income, and thus, many go to the streets to do so, while girls are expected to stay at home and help out with household chores. Generally street boys leave home and take to the streets because they have been brought up to be independent, while street girls

take to the streets chiefly as a means to flee from a very difficult domestic situation. Thus boys usually leave home of their own volition (which may be due to the 'push factors' present in the home environment, and the 'pull factors' present on the streets), whereas girls leave home only when they feel forced to, and see no other viable option to. Thus, the number of street girls visible, are much less than the corresponding number of street boys. Other scholars (Agnelli, 1986; Nixon, 1991; Tacon, 1981a; UNICEF, 1986; as stated in Aptekar, 1994), are of the view that fewer girls are visible on the streets because they are quickly taken off the streets to become prostitutes.

### Inclusion Criteria

An effort was made to see that all the participants were between 10 to 18 years of age. This was done because of three reasons:

1. A prior study in Mumbai by D'Lima and Gosalia (1992) revealed that most street children (and disadvantaged children) fell in the age group of 11 to 18 years.
2. The need to avoid excess variation due to age.

The other inclusion criteria varied depending on the group the participant belonged to. Operational definitions were used as guides to decide how to choose the participants.

### Sampling Method

The respondents for the study were chosen using purposive sampling which is a non-probability sampling technique. In purposive sampling, the participants for a study are hand picked by the researchers according to some initially decided criteria, to serve the purpose of the particular study.

### Sample Characteristics

The sample characteristics of the entire sample (N=571), are presented in Table 2 (see Appendix B).

## Gender

On the whole, the sample consisted of **223 female participants** (39% of the total sample) and **348 male participants** (61% of the total sample). The study by D'Lima and Gosalia (1992), also had a similar gender distribution with fewer females (29%) than males (71%).

## Age by Gender

The **mean age of all the participants was 14.56 years** (Mean Age for Males = 15.1 years, S.D. = 2.34; Mean Age for Females = 13.72 years, S.D. = 1.85). The ages of the participants ranged from 10 years to 26 years with the **age range for male participants** being 10 to 26 years and the **age range for female participants** being 10 to 18 years.

The Independent Samples t-test showed a significant\* difference in the mean age of these two groups with boys being significantly older than girls (mean difference = 1.38 years;  $t = 7.446$ ,  $df = 564$ ;  $p = .000$ ).

## Age by Category of Respondent

The **mean age of girls from institutions** was 14.49 years with a standard deviation of 2.05 years. The ages of these girls ranged from 11 to 18 years. The **mean age of boys from institutions** was 15.03 years with a standard deviation of 2.11 years. The ages of these boys ranged from 11 to 19 years. The Independent Samples t-test showed no significant\* difference between these two groups with respect to age.

The **mean age of girls from slum-based households** was 13.20 years with a standard deviation of 1.55 years. The ages of these girls ranged from 10 to 18 years. The **mean age of boys from slum-based households** was 14.47 years with a standard deviation of 2.01 years. The ages of these boys ranged from 10 to 19 years. The Independent Samples t-test showed a significant\* difference in the mean age of these two groups with boys being significantly older than girls (mean difference = 1.27 years;  $t = 5.223$ ,  $df = 216$ ;  $p = .000$ )

The **mean age of street girls** was 13.32 years with a standard deviation of 1.44 years. The ages of these girls ranged from 10 to 16 years. The **mean age of street boys** was 15.70 years with a standard deviation of 2.63 years. The ages of these

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\* Significance assumed if 'p' value is below .05 level

boys ranged from 11 to 26 years. The Independent Samples t-test showed a significant\* difference in the mean age of these two groups with street boys being significantly older than street girls (mean difference = 2.38 years;  $t = 4.636$ ,  $df = 153$ ;  $p = .000$ ).

#### Original Place of Stay of Respondents

Table 2 (see Appendix C) and Figure 1 (see Appendix B) indicate the states from where the participants originally came. A large majority of the participants (65.2%) originated from Maharashtra. Of these, a considerable majority (89.4%) were from Mumbai itself. Bihar (5.08%) and Uttar Pradesh (4.38%) were the two other areas from which more than 20 children originated.

#### Current Place of Stay of Respondents

Table 2 and Figure 2 indicate the present places of stay of the respondents. All the Institutionalized children lived in institutions (34.15%), and the children from slums lived in slums (38.18%). The street children however, had a variety of habitats such as the footpaths, bus depots, railway stations, market places, under bridges, and even, a boat.

#### Number Of Family Members

Overall, the participants had an average of 5 family members ( $M = 5.21$ ,  $S.D. = 2.35$ ) beside themselves (Mean Number of Family members for Males = 5.08,  $S.D. = 2.40$ ; Mean Number of Family Members for Females = 5.06,  $S.D. = 2.30$ ). The number of family members ranged from 0 to 21 members, with the range for males being 1 to 21 members and the range for females being 0 to 13 members (See Table 2 for further information). This indication of large family sizes could be due to the fact that many of these children live in extended family environments, increasing the size of their families beyond the realm of the nuclear family.

#### Number of Siblings and Ordinal Position

On the whole, the participants had an average of 3 siblings ( $M = 3.14$ ,  $S.D. = 1.70$ ) beside themselves (Mean Number of Siblings for Males = 3.10,  $S.D. = 1.77$ ; Mean Number of Siblings for Females = 3.20,  $S.D. = 1.60$ ). The number of siblings

ranged from 0 to 11, with the range for males being 1 to 11 siblings and the range for females being 0 to 10 siblings.

There were quite a number of participants (35.9%) who had between four to seven siblings indicating large family sizes. A few (2.6%) had no siblings while still fewer (2.1%) had between eight and eleven siblings.

Most of the participants were either the first (30.3%), second (30.5%) or third (22.2%) born (See Table 2 for further information). Percentages were seen to be the highest among slum children, particularly boys (See Table 3).

Among the groups lacking family support (i.e. institutionalized and street children), it was seen that most boys were the first-borns and most girls were second-born. A possible explanation may be that eldest boys do not mind taking a risk and leaving home, sure that they would be able to manage somehow. First-born girls however, may give more thought to the risks involved in running away, and may be engaged in the management of household duties.

## **Procedure**

### Method of Data Collection

The participants were interviewed in order to understand their current educational and occupational status and aspiration for the future.

### Rationale for Using the Interview Method

This study was conducted on a sample that hailed from the lower socio-economic strata of society. The interview method (as opposed to the questionnaire or survey method) enables one to reach out to illiterate subjects who cannot read or write. It also facilitates probing, provides opportunity for clarification if needed, facilitates motivation of the subjects to respond and helps ensure that the subject has responded to all the items. It also gives the interviewer an opportunity to observe non-verbal cues and reactions to specific questions.

## Procedure of Data Collection

### Instructions to the Children being Interviewed

Prior to starting with the actual interview, each participant was told the following:

- a) Reason for the Interview – To learn about their educational and occupational status and their aspirations for the future, so as to see if any interventions could be planned to facilitate their achievement of the same.
- b) Time likely to be taken – approximately 10 minutes.
- c) The respondents had a choice of whether or not to answer the questions.

The participants' consent was then obtained and each interviewer proceeded with asking questions pertaining to their personal and family background. This gave the participants a chance to feel comfortable and relaxed before moving on to more detailed questions on the topic of concern. On an average, each interview was completed in ten minutes.

### Data Collectors

The data collectors consisted of 25 undergraduate students (Third Year Human Development) from SNDT University, Matunga. They were given a thorough briefing about the research. They were informed about the objectives of the research, the sample to be covered (categories of respondents and the minimum number of respondents required), the approximate time for each interview, the timings during which the research would be carried out, and about the pilot testing that was conducted prior to the meeting. Each question was then thoroughly examined, clarifications were made, and doubts were cleared.

## **Operational Definitions**

Institutionalised Girls and Boys are those between the ages of 10 to 18 years who live in an institution or organization. These children do not go back to their families or relatives at night. Almost all their needs are met by the institution.

Girls and Boys from Slums are those between the ages of 10 to 18 years who live with their families in chawls, slums, on pavements, or in huts. These children may avail of the services of an institution, but do not live in the institution itself. They may work on the streets or study during the day, but return to their family at night.

Street Girls and Boys are those for whom the street is a 'home'. They are rootless (i.e. they have no one to belong to) and roofless (i.e. they have no permanent place to call their own). They also do not live with parents or family, and therefore have little or no adult supervision in their lives.

### **Tool for Data Collection**

The tool consisted of two parts. The first, consisted of ten items eliciting information about the respondents' personal and family background, and the second, consisted of 8 main items eliciting information related to the topic under study. A copy of the tool is provided in Appendix A. Representative items from the tool are presented in Table 4 (see Appendix B).

### **Pilot Study and Experts Feedback**

The tool was initially developed through a process of brainstorming, by a few researchers from the research and documentation centre. After this, it was handed over to a few experts (working with disadvantaged children) for their comments and suggestions. Their feedback was taken into account and a few changes were made in the tool. A pilot study was then carried out on five children using this tool.

## **Plan of Analysis**

Data analysis was done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 10.0). The Objective wise analysis was as follows:

Objective 1 and 2: To ascertain the educational and occupational status, simple frequencies and percentages were calculated.

Objective 3: To explore any future educational or occupational plans of the participants, responses to the open ended questions, were categorized and then frequencies and percentages were computed.

Objective 4: Comparisons between categories of participants were studied through frequencies and percentages.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study and the explanations for the same are organized under this section:

#### Current Educational Status

The main objective of this area of questioning was to see how many of the participants had ever been introduced to formal education since, for many children in India, education is but a distant dream.

On the whole, more girls (91.48%) than boys (78.16%) had been introduced to formal education (See Figure 3 in Appendix B). This finding was consistent across all the categories (institutionalized, slum, and street children – see Figure 4 in Appendix B). With the increasing importance given to education and the fact that primary education is free, many more parents are probably finding it easier and more convenient to send their children to schools. According to Begum Latif (Paper presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Asia Regional Literacy Forum), “the schools provides an opportunity to interact with others, and is therefore preferable to staying at home. therefore, if a parent sends a girl to school, she remains there and gets educated.”

Among those with no formal education, street boys (38.8%) constituted the highest percentage and slum girls (7.4%) the lowest (see Figure 4 in Appendix B or Table 5 in Appendix C). Quite a few street boys are known to come from villages in the less developed parts of the country and may hence, never have had the opportunity for formal education. It is also possible that some of them ran away from home or were abandoned at an early age and hence, had no one to help them get enrolled in schools. Many parents from the lower socio-economic strata of society often engage their children in some form of work so as to increase the meager income of their family. They do not see the relevance of educating their children because, in their opinion, the current system of formal education does not include the imparting of vocational and trade-related skills that will come in use in their everyday life. Many parents may not realize the importance of education and may hence not give it much of a priority.

Figure 5 (see Appendix B) shows further details about the levels of education that both boys and girls had reached. No major difference was noted between the percentage of girls and boys who had the opportunity of getting some primary education. More girls (71.3%) continued into secondary schooling as compared to boys (54.6%). A point to note however, is that the dropout rate after secondary schooling seemed to be much higher for girls (98% of the girls as compared to 88% of the boys who had some secondary schooling, never went on to study in college). Slum girls may have to drop out because, as they matured, their families insisted on them taking up household chores and other duties including looking after their younger siblings. Girls from institutions usually dropout from school because they take up skilled/vocational training that they see as relevant and assuring them some kind of livelihood and economic security. Another possibility is that by the time they reach an institution and are enrolled to continue school, they are already much older than required for their respective class and cannot identify with the other children of much lower age groups. A reason for girls of all categories dropping out at a later stage of schooling could be the increased restrictions placed on them based on their entry into puberty.

Very few of the participants in the study pursued education after the high school level. This could be because higher education involved monetary expenses that they/their families were not able to afford. Many of them may also not view their careers in professions that require much education and training because they do not have as much opportunity to be exposed to role models in similar scholastic/academic careers. Besides, only those who complete higher secondary education successfully, can pursue further studies. However, we must also keep in mind that only about 22% of the participants were above the age of 16 years (i.e. old enough to pursue education beyond schooling) and this too may account for a lower percentage pursuing higher education.

### **Training Received in Vocational Trades**

This question sought to understand the areas of vocational trades in which participants had received any formal, non-formal, or informal training. Vocational trades were considered important because they were a means of income and also

implied the knowledge of some kind of skilled work that would contribute to the generation of income.

As is evident in Table 6 (see Appendix C), participants from each category, had received training in a variety of trades ranging from tailoring to carpentry to home nursing, driving and so on. On the whole, many of the participants seemed to have received some form of training in tailoring (28%) and art and craft activities (21%), with a majority of these being girls. Other areas that quite a few had received some kind of training in, included domestic work (16%), cooking/wadi work (16%) and computers (15%). Table 7 (see Appendix B) shows the three most common areas in which each of the groups of participants had received training. Domestic work was mostly the domain of girls rather than boys whereas an almost equal number of girls and boys had received training in computers. The domains of training that were mostly taken up by boys included welding, printing, hotel work, garage work, home wiring, mechanics, carpentry, and driving. The domains of training frequented by girls included embroidery, beautician courses, home nursing, cooking, etc.

The most common form of training received was in tailoring, especially among girls across all groups. Among boys, 32% of institutionalized boys were trained in tailoring as it was one of the vocational courses offered by quite a few institutions. Art and craft was also more popular among girls of all groups and among institutionalized boys (27%). Embroidery and typing skills were seen among institutionalized girls, and where cooking and domestic work were concerned, girls across all groups were well-versed – most did cooking chores themselves. Approximately 26% of street boys were engaged in wadi work (washing and cleaning utensils and other such items at weddings) which is a popular seasonal source of income for them. Training in electrician work and wiring was availed of mostly by institutionalized and slum boys. Computer training was availed of by quite a few from all the groups except street boys.

It is encouraging to see that a majority of participants are aware of the importance of having some skill that will help them generate some income in the future. Participants under the care of an institution are at a slight advantage if the institution persuades them to take on training in a skill that will be of economic use to them at a later stage in life. In this aspect, street children are at a disadvantage since

they only avail of informal training or hands-on experience in a particular area. Slum children are better off in this aspect if they avail of the services of a community centre or neighborhood school.

### **Vocational Trades in which Training was Aspired For**

The participants were asked about vocational trades in which they would like to receive training. Figure 6 (see Appendix B) reveals that a majority of the participants (28.02%) aspired to receive training in computers, while 27.67% wished they could learn driving. Other trades that quite a few participants aspired to be trained in were, typing (15.24%), tailoring (13.66%), and beauty related courses (11.73%). Across all the categories of respondents, learning computers featured as one of the top choices. For more detailed information about this area, see Table 8 (see Appendix C).

Training in a beauticians course was one of the top aspirations of quite a few girls from all three groups whereas many boys across their three groups aspired to learn driving. Training in tailoring was a priority for quite a few slum girls (41.67%) and street girls (24.14%). Not many institutionalized girls aspired to learn tailoring, but quite a few (26.74%) were keen to learn typing.

Among the boys, besides wanting to learn computers and driving, some institutionalized boys expressed a wish to learn motor mechanics (12.84%) or take on an electrician's course (11.93%). Some boys from slums too (14.55%) looked forward to an opportunity to get trained as electricians. Some street boys (11.63%) expressed a wish to learn garage work.

### **Current Educational/Occupational Involvement**

Table 9 (see Appendix C) shows that over 69% of girls and boys across all categories, except for street boys, were currently studying. Most street children are runaways and while they are on the streets, they have no facilities for education unless they associate themselves with an organization/institution. In order to fend for themselves, they take up small jobs, usually on a daily-wage basis. Among the street boys participating in this study, about 30% of street boys were engaged in wadi work

( menial jobs like cleaning and scrubbing dishes during weddings), while 8.5% were porters.

A significant percentage of boys in each category took up any work that came their way due to pressure to earn a living and stand on their own feet. Over 17% of institutionalized girls were engaged in tailoring, which was a common vocational skill taught in institutions. 25% of slum girls and street girls were employed in domestic work. Street girls and street boys together accounted for almost 37% of those not doing anything in particular. A glance at Table 10 (see Appendix C) reveals the most common occupations that each of the groups were currently engaged in.

### Overall Educational and Occupational Status

Figure 7 (see Appendix B) shows us that the highest percentage of those who were solely studying was found among slum girls (62.04%), followed by almost 60% each of institutionalized boys and girls, indicative of the fact that education was a top feature on their priority list. This is a highly encouraging finding. Street boys however, accounted for less than 4% of those pursuing only studies, since a significant majority of them (74.4%) were working, while a little less than 20% did nothing in particular. Through experience in working with street children, we have seen that most street boys are runaways. Those who are lost or abandoned are fewer in proportion. When they land on the streets, in the beginning, they have no means of livelihood, no one to care for them, and no skills since they have only some minimal formal education. Many seem to enjoy the unlimited freedom on the streets – a life free from restrictions of any kind. Their natural instinct leads them to fend for themselves by begging, collecting scrap, or engaging in some kind of daily wage work. Thus, we see that each of the categories, except that of street boys, had more than 10% of the respondents combining studies with work, with slum children together accounting for about 33%. Street children accounted for the highest percentage (36.6%) of those doing nothing in particular – the comparative percentages among institutionalized children was much less. Most institutions tried to keep the children occupied through either educational or vocational training.

### Earning Patterns and Amount of Money Earned

This question applied to those respondents who were engaged in work of any kind. A total of 227 participants were engaged in work out of which, most (105) were street boys (see Table 11 in Appendix C). Of all those engaged in work, 56.39% were daily-wage earners. Most of these daily wage earners were street boys. It is a well-known fact that all street children depend on the street for their livelihood. Since they are on the streets, they engage in temporary, unskilled occupations like sweeping of trains, cleaning vehicles, begging, etc. These occupations provide them with varied incomes on a daily basis. The institutionalized girls were the group least involved in daily-wage work. Quite a few others (23.35%) earned their pay on a monthly basis which, in mainstream occupations, is the commonest mode of earning. There were a few who claimed that they received some kind of pocket money (1 institutionalized boy, 2 slum girls and 1 street girl) although it seems highly unlikely that this was the case for the institutionalized boy and street girl. Maybe they considered a bonus earning as pocket money. A little more than 2% worked only during vacations/seasonally. Since these were institutionalized and slum children, we assume that they are studying and/or immersed in other activities during the academic year and take up work only when they are not in school.

Among the daily wage earners (who made up 56.39%) of those working, 22.03% earned between Rs.51 and Rs.100 daily, while 21.59% earned between Rs.11 to Rs.50. Only 1 street boy claimed to be earning more than Rs.1001 on a daily basis. We are not able to pinpoint what his occupation was. The only other possible explanation is that he faked a response. As Aptekar (1994) commented, and Felsman (1989) and Leite and Esteves (1991) noted, street children frequently lie about their ages, family background, current circumstance, etc. "Presenting information about themselves is part of their survival skills which, like those of nomadic entertainers, rests on their ability to manipulate their audiences" (As phrased in Aptekar, 1994). For them, it is a way of creating an impression, or just having fun by 'playing the fool' on someone else. As Aptekar (1994) reiterates, the manipulation of information fulfills a psychological need for these children to get back at a society that devalues them.

A little more than 6% earned between Rs.11 to Rs.50 per week, most of these being institutionalized girls and boys. Only 1 slum boy claimed to earn more than Rs.1001 per week. Approximately 7% said that they earned more than Rs.1001 per month (most of who - 17.14% - were slum boys).

### Use of Earned Money

About 44% of street boys revealed that they spent all the money they earned (see Figure 8 in Appendix B). This is probably due to a lack of safe place to keep the money in or the fear that it would be stolen, or because they had scarcely anything left to save. About 20% to 21% each of slum boys and girls, spent all they earned probably due to similar reasons as mentioned above.

Not a single institutionalized girl reported spending all the money earned as opposed to about 11% of institutionalized boys who spent it all. Girls probably begin considering long-term advantages of saving, a little earlier than boys. This is also reflected by the fact that not a single street girl reported spending all the money earned while about 44% of street boys did spend all that they earned.

75% of institutionalized girls and almost 63% of institutionalized boys spent some money and saved the rest. This could be explained in that, most of their basic needs are looked after by the institution in which they live. Besides this, institutionalized children may be offered information about the usefulness of saving and are also more likely to be given an opportunity, and a facility for saving their money, in addition to being encouraged to save. Close to 50% of street boys and 63% of street girls, saved a portion of their earnings, while 37.5% of street girls saved all their earnings probably in a drop-in centre or similar place where such a facility was available for their use.

Only very few slum girls (3.57%) and street boys (1.90%) said that they gave some money to their parents. They probably do so because they see it as their duty to help their parents in a genuinely difficult situation. They may be working just to add to the family income. With respect to the majority who do not give any money to their parents, it is possible that most of these children do not feel that they should support

their parents since it is their parents' duty to support them. It is also possible that many earn just enough for their own expenses and cannot, as yet, consider giving that money to another. Besides, many of these children may see the money they earn as their only source of security, and are not so willing to give that up. For those who are living in institutions or on the streets, they may have lost contact with their parents or choose not to maintain any contact with them it is possible that they blame their parents for their current condition and lifestyle.

#### Reasons for not Saving Money

This question was applicable to all those who revealed that they did not save any of the money they earned. Approximately 25% of the respondents who didn't save money said that they couldn't, because they earned too little to save anything (see Table 12 in Appendix C). About 16% said they didn't have any information about how and where to save, while 7% responded that they had no facility at which to save. Most of those who did not save any money were street boys (approximately 44%). Their reasons for justifying the same, in addition to those reasons mentioned above, were, the fact that they enjoyed spending, that they wanted to spend on drugs, that other boys stole the money from them while they were sleeping, and one boy also rationalized that he had no reason to save by saying, "*mere aage peeche koi nahi hai.*"

#### Places where Money is Saved

This question was applicable to all those who revealed that they saved some or all of the money they earned. Many of the participants (33.54%) said that they sent the money home/gave the money to their parent(s). Most of these were the boys and girls from the slums (See Table 13 in Appendix C). This fact was not revealed in the earlier, related question, probably because they didn't see giving the money to their parents as equivalent to their saving it since their parents would use it for household or other expenses. Others (21.12%) said that they kept the money with themselves, while fewer (14.29%) said that they saved it with their employer. Most giving this response were street boys. These are most probably boys who have no information about any other facility or organization that offers a saving facility. They could also

be boys who choose not to save in an institution because they do not trust the institution to take care of their money, or, to stay away from the rules of the institution that they may have to follow, which, in their eyes, may be a threat to their 'freedom' on the streets. A few of the participants saved their money in the institution they lived in/were associated with (10.56%), or in a bank account (10.56%) which may also be a facility provided through the reference or help of an institution.

### Use of Saved Money

The respondents who saved some or all of the money they earned, used it for a variety of purposes (see Table 14 in Appendix C). These could be classified into various categories (see Figure 9 in Appendix B) such as, for immediate personal use (for example, buying food, going for movies, buying new clothes and accessories), family use (for example, buy a sari for one's mother, get a family member married), long term plans (for example, build a house for the homeless, buy a house), emergency use, etc.

Most respondents (39.13%) said they would use the money they saved to fulfill long term plans. It is encouraging to see that Quite a few said they would save money for their immediate personal use (26.71%) or for the use of the family (23.60%). About 14% had not yet thought about or decided how they would use their money, while only one (a street child) thought about keeping some money for use during emergencies.

25% each of institutionalized girls and street girls and about 14% of slum girls indicated their desire to build/buy a house with their savings – probably indicative of their need for stability, security, and permanence. Almost equal percentages of institutionalized boys and street boys (about 23%) wanted to give/send the money they saved, home. Almost 29% of girls (a combination of both institutionalized and slum girls) wanted to set aside some money for educational purposes. This was not the case among street children or institutionalized boys, probably because their immediate intention was to earn as much, as soon as possible. 19% of slum girls and 12.5% of street girls wanted to spend their money on clothes and accessories for themselves – needs which were not so much expressed by institutionalized girls since they were taken care of by the institution. Significant percentages of institutionalized

and street children were undecided about how they would use their savings – either due to a lack of long-term strategy on the part of the institutions, or due to the common street children’s policy of living for the day and not making any plans for their future.

### Occupations Aspired for in the Future

Among girls, the top-most occupational aspirations were in the areas of medicine, education, and fashion/personal care. This was seen across all categories of girls (See Figure 10 in Appendix B or Table 15 in Appendix C). The attraction towards medicine (among girls) may be due to their exposure to the medical fraternity during regular health camps and their appreciation for the doctors’ and nurses’ efforts in healing people who were ill. It is also the natural instinct of girls to be ‘nurturing’ since they are, in a way, destined to prepare for ‘motherhood’. This instinct may also express itself in their motivation towards the ‘helping’ professions. Besides this, the medical profession has always been a very desired one since it carries with it respect, esteem, and adulation.

In the area of education, becoming a teacher was important, especially for slum girls (28.4%). The teaching profession in India, for many years now, has been largely dominated by women. As the saying goes, “Educate a man, you educate a person; educate a woman, u educate a family.” Teaching too, is a quality that is dear to women since it is a part of their ‘nurturing’ personality. Besides this, in India, the position of a teacher is also one that carries with it a lot of respect. Also, it is an occupation that ensures security and women can accommodate it along with household responsibilities without much extra effort.

In the area of fashion and personal care, tailoring was a common aspiration among both slum girls and street girls. Institutionalized girls were being taught tailoring in the institution itself. Besides this, tailoring used to be considered the domain of women since they were assigned household duties of cleaning, cooking and stitching. Now however, tailoring, as a profession, is taken up by a large number of males as well.

Among all the boys, top occupational aspirations were in the field of skilled work, armed forces, and technical work. Skilled work (for example, driving) was preferred, particularly by institutionalized and street boys (about 20% each), followed by service in the armed forces (preferred by about 15% of institutionalized boys and 17% of boys from slums). Technical work (for example, electrician, mechanic, etc.) was aspired for by about 15% of institutionalized boys and 17% of street boys. To some extent, institutional efforts may have helped the boys realize that engaging in skilled or technical work would give them a better pay and stability. Technical and skilled work may also be preferred because it does not require high levels of education. This is especially advantageous for street children who have dropped out of school and have to take up some kind of work to fulfill their basic needs and survive on the streets. The influence of media (in the form of films and television serials) may have been the main factor in attracting the boys to a career in the armed forces, besides the attraction towards respect, power and prestige associated with the same. (For the graph showing gender differences in choices of occupation, see Figure 11 in Appendix B)

#### Methods of Achieving Career Goals

Across almost all categories, girls and boys mentioned studying and working hard as ways of achieving career goals (See Figure 12 in Appendix B or Table 16 in Appendix C). However, only about 11% of street boys were in favor of studying hard. This is probably because many of them had never had any formal education, preferring to work instead. Enrollment in the required course(s) was the next most commonly mentioned way of achieving career goals (mentioned by 20.5%). A little over 24% of street girls said they would ask someone/the institution for advice – these were probably girls who were being covered by one or the other non-governmental organization through either their street classes or outreach programmes. A significant percentage of street boys (33.3%) did not know how to go about achieving their goals, but about 10% of them suggested earning and saving enough money for the same. Looking at it from the gender perspective, more girls (about 20%), were in favor of studying hard while pursuing their goals, whereas boys (about 15%) advocated hard work. This could be because boys invariably started earning sooner than girls and frequently opted not to study further. About 13% of boys as compared to 7.4% of

girls, suggested enrollment in courses – probably because boys knew that they would have the freedom to attend courses even if they had to travel further, whereas girls knew they would not be allowed to do so.

## SUMMARY

The study aimed to determine the educational and occupational status of institutionalized, slum, and street, girls and boys. In addition, the study also attempted to understand their future aspirations, the purpose being, to formulate specific intervention strategies based on the needs expressed by the participants.

The objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To ascertain the educational status of the participants (whether they had received any formal education).
2. To ascertain the occupational status of the participants (whether they were engaged in any work, paid or unpaid, how much they earned, details about savings, etc).
3. To explore any future educational or occupational plans of the participants.
4. To compare the responses of the various categories of participants (i.e. institutionalized girls, institutionalized boys, slum girls, slum boys, street girls and street boys).

The sample consisted of 571 respondents. All respondents belonged to one of the following categories.

<b>Categories of Respondents</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Institutionalized girls	86
Institutionalized Boys	109
Girls from slums	108
Boys from slums	110
Street girls	29
Street boys	129
<b>Total</b>	<b>571</b>

The interview method was employed for data collection. The interview schedule comprised of questions that highlighted educational and occupational status

of the respondents, choice of vocational training and aspirations of the respondents with respect to learning of vocational trades.

The objective-wise summary of findings is as follows:

### Objective 1

With reference to current educational status, a majority of respondents did have some formal education. A higher percentage of girls were observed to have some formal education as compared to their male counter-parts. However, this pattern was not observed for higher educational qualifications as almost all the girls (98%) did not continue with college education. On the whole, many of the participants seemed to have received formal or non-formal training in tailoring, and art and craft activities, with a majority of these being girls. Other areas that quite a few had received some kind of training in, included domestic work, cooking/wadi work, and computers. The domains of training mainly taken up by boys included welding, printing, hotel work, garage work, home wiring, mechanics, carpentry, and driving.

### Objective 2

With regard to the occupational status of the participants, a considerable percentage of them were studying and working simultaneously. They were engaged in various occupations like tailoring, domestic work, 'wadi' work, selling goods, rag picking and many more. However, results also revealed a small percentage of respondents who were not involved in either educational or occupational pursuits and stated that they did nothing in particular that could be mentioned.

A high percentage of respondents were involved in occupations that paid daily wages ranging from Rs.10 to Rs.100. Approximately two-fifths of the respondents saved their money to fulfill their long-term plans (for example, to pursue a career in the medical profession, to buy a house, to start a business, etc.). Notably, there were a few respondents who were undecided on the ways to utilize the money they earned.

### Objective 3

With respect to future educational aspirations, a substantial percentage of respondents in all categories aspired to learn computers. In relation to several

occupations mentioned, many respondents hoped to be a part of the medical profession, which had the highest percentage of respondents. This was followed by skilled work, the field of education, and the area of fashion/personal care. Occupations aspired for the least were, the religious profession, the film industry, the hotel industry, social work, and sales and marketing.

In order to achieve their career goals, a majority of the respondents stated that they would study hard, work hard or even enroll in relevant courses that would help buffer their career. However a point to be noted is that a considerable percentage of respondents also claimed that they were unaware of the methods that they could use to achieve their goals.

#### Objective 4

Comparisons between boys and girls regarding their current educational status, revealed that a relatively higher percentage of girls had some formal education compared to boys. A noted finding was that more than one-third of the street boys had no formal education as compared to less than one-fifths of the boys from slums and institutionalized boys.

Stark differences were observed across the categories with respect to overall educational and/or occupational involvement. More than half the number of institutionalized girls, and girls and boys from slums, as well as street girls focused only on their studies as opposed to a very small percentage of street boys who did the same.

When respondents were questioned on their top three choices of a profession that they aspired to be trained in, a majority of institutionalized and slum girls expressed their interest to learn computers while a slightly higher percentage of street girls preferred to do a beautician's course. Tailoring was also preferred by a considerable of slum girls and street girls but not by institutionalized girls. More than one-third of boys in all three categories aspired to learn driving. However, only institutionalized boys aspired to learn motor mechanics. Slum boys expressed their desire to learn typing and also do an electrician's course, while a small percentage of street boys wanted to learn garage work.

Though a small percentage of respondents in all categories revealed that they did nothing in particular, this trend was observed highest among street children as

compared to institutionalized or slum children. A very low percentage of institutionalized girls and slum girls stated the same as compared to street girls. Quite a high percentage of street boys and institutionalized boys were only working and not simultaneously pursuing education.

With reference to the earnings and expenditure patterns of the respondents, other than slum girls and street boys, none of the others mentioned giving their earnings to their parents. A majority of the institutionalized children handed over their earnings to the institution itself for safekeeping. Differences were also observed between street girls and boys wherein street girls preferred to keep the money with themselves while street boys entrusted their money to their employers.

When asked the ways in which they would utilize their savings, a higher percentage of girls belonging to all three categories expressed their desire to buy/build their own house. Boys on the other hand saved money to send to their families. When questioned about future aspirations, surprisingly none of the slum girls mentioned their desire to get married and have a family whereas few of the respondents in the other categories expressed this wish.

The choice of future occupations for a majority of girls was the medical field, education or fashion/personal care whilst for boys, it was technical work, skilled work or, aspiring to be in the armed forces. Only boys considered the fields of business, journalism and printing as a choice of occupation. It was also noted that a higher percentage of institutionalized girls and street girls were unsure about their future career as compared to slum girls.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

1. To make the findings of the current study available to people from various institutions working for children and youth, so as to enable them to plan and implement appropriate intervention strategies to meet the educational and occupational needs of their respective target group(s).
2. To provide a basis for other organizations to carry out similar studies to assess the changing patterns of needs of the target groups they cater to.
3. To initiate a process of encouraging service providers to evaluate their services to see if they actually meet the needs of the concerned target group(s), and if not, to revise and/or build on the existing services.

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