

CHAPTER I

Introduction

In every unit of our time we consume goods and throw away the used materials in garbage containers, we do not even think about using them again. However, a number of children in the urban areas have been surviving through collecting these garbage. Our technically equipped society and system has not taught children anything about the process of recycling garbage (CWIN, 1999). My thesis is a small unit of a larger developmental spectrum intended to contribute to the physical, cognitive and social wellbeing of children.

The thesis portfolio entitled " Child Advocacy: An Approach to Address the "Worst Form" of Street Child Labour and it's Adverse Affects in Kathmandu, Nepal" has basically been prepared to fulfill the requirement for a Master in Public Health degree from Chulalongkorn University. From my experience and knowledge, many child related projects in Nepal have been focusing their activities on rehabilitation, food, and income generation and out of school children programs. However, due to lack of cooperation and integration among projects, the status of children

remains unchanged. The focus of my study is to explore the safety, health, and moral issues as well as abuse and prostitution of street child workers in Kathmandu, Nepal. In order to do this we need to involve children from problem identification to the problem solving phases. A framework to involve the street child workers in different phases of problem solving could be a 'child advocacy approach'. The approach envisions involvement of both children and people in the community in the advocacy process. My past experience with the Social Awareness Center (SAC), a Non-Governmental Organization which had considerable involvement in advocacy approaches will assist me to implement this project in target area.

The portfolio comprises of six chapters: (1) introduction, (2) essay, (3) proposal, (4) data exercise, (5) presentation and (6) annotated bibliography. A brief description of each of these chapters is given in the following paragraphs.

The problem of street child labour has now been recognized as being a worldwide phenomenon. In Nepal, there are more than 30,000 children working on the street. They work 6-14 hours a day at least 6 days per week; thus it can easily stifle the physical, emotional and cognitive development of the children (ILO, 1995). The Nepalese Children's Act 1992 does not allow the employment of children more than 6 hours a day. However, to survive, street children are compelled to work for a longer time. It has been reported that child labour in Nepal is increasing by 18.1 percent each year (Kantipur, 1999). The payment of the street child workers is very low. They get 12 Nepali Rupees (NRs.) per day, which is equal to 0.17 USD (Gorkhaptra, 1999). In the market they need to pay 25 NRs. per meal.

The life style of street child workers is affecting their safety, health and moral, including the use of cigarette and alcohol to escape the cold during the winter season. WHO identified that 48 percent of the risk of chronic disease is due to life style factors (WHO, 1999). Because of the pharmacological sensitivity and their fragile body street work for children has been shown to be a greater problem (WHO, 1993). Moreover, the life expectancy of street child workers is reported to decrease on an average by 4 years (Toybox, 1999) Thus, there is a need to resolve the problem. A way to solve the problem is to involve the children and community people in the advocacy process. The essay explored the magnitude, etiologies, and consequences of the problem as well as a recommendation for intervention.

The proposal constitutes Chapter III of this portfolio. A child advocacy approach has been chosen as the intervention to deal with the problem described in the essay. It has been reported that CWIN's advocacy campaigns have woken up various people at different levels from the community to policy makers regarding child rights in some parts of Nepal (CWIN, 1999). The approach has been selected because literature indicates that NGOs are having success in advocacy. My personal involvement in NGO work and my experience in advocacy programs lead me to develop this intervention. Children themselves are also interested to participate in advocacy campaigns i.e. Rosemarie Gabot a Filipino child said " I like campaigning, singing and dancing" (International Save the Childrean alliance, Child Rights Asia Net, Child workers in Asia, Redd Barna, Save the Children UK, ILO/IPEC and UNICEF 1997). Street children in Nepal are performing street drama by their own efforts (CWIN, 1999).

Although the legal provision is satisfactory, the enforcement of the assigned laws, on behalf of children, is lacking. This intervention aims at creating awareness on child rights and encourages children to voice their basic rights. The proposal focuses 'on behalf of' rather than 'in behalf of' children. In brief 'on behalf' refers to those activities, that are responsible for and accountable to children. Whereas 'in behalf of' refers to actions that have no obligations to consult children. Further the advocacy project will be initiated for the benefits of the group, by mobilizing the group, so it is concerned with class advocacy rather than case advocacy. The proposal believes that regular exposure to knowledge, skills and existing services will empower the children and their immediate community.

The data exercise is placed on chapter IV of this portfolio. The exercise applies both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. Observations, in-depth interviews (IDI) and focus group discussions (FGD) have been conducted with street children in Kathmandu, Nepal. The main objectives of the exercise are: (1) to acquire knowledge and experience on qualitative data collection, (2) to refine and test the data collection instruments through practical implementation, (3) to explore causes of street child workers' existence on the street. (4) to explore the problems being faced by street child workers in dealing with their safety, health and moral, child abuse and prostitution. The total number of respondents during data collection was 32 (15 in IDI, and 17 in FGD).

Chapter V of this portfolio is a presentation. This chapter contains the various key points of a presentation as a requirement for the final examination. The presentation deals primarily with the problems of street child labour, an intervention

to address the problem and a preliminary exploration on a part of the situation in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Finally chapter VI of this portfolio is an annotated bibliography. This chapter contains a brief introduction of the literature consulted for the development of this thesis portfolio as a whole. The chapter deals with a selection of literature concerning (1) child labour, (2) advocacy and (3) research methodologies.

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