

## ► *The causes most usually considered for action*

It is admitted today that the phenomenon of street children is not simply a consequence of poverty; rather it is the sum of different phenomena that explains it. When actions must match operational needs, the following causes are currently put forward:

- rapid and uncontrolled urbanisation ;
- population explosion;
- family disintegration;
- unemployment and insufficient income;
- inadequacy of educational and social systems;
- maladjustment of formal education systems leading to school failure, drop-out or rejection;
- insufficiency or lack of institutions to take care of children who have dropped out of school, etc.

## ► *What are their needs?*

Like any child, street children need to have board and lodging, they need to be protected, they need to be taught how to live in society, to be educated and to have vocational training. They also need everything that makes education possible.

## ► *Who helps them?*

People of goodwill, religious or state institutions, Non-Governmental Organisations, ministerial departments, the United Nations System (UNESCO, UNICEF, ILO, WHO, UNAIDS, etc.) all try to respond to the needs of these children. According to their motives, their interventions take the form of speeches in their defence, survival projects with a preventive or curative approach to the problem, rehabilitation, education, legislation or repression.

These different actors often come up against problems due to their limited knowledge of this phenomenon, denial of it by some governments, lack of qualified staff, dispersion of efforts and the shortage of resources.

***To help restore hope in these children through education is the goal of UNESCO's Programme for Education of Children in Difficult Circumstances, Street Children***

**UNESCO / Division of Basic Education**  
Programme for the Education of Children in Difficult Circumstances, Street Children  
7, place de Fontenoy - 75352 Paris 07 SP, France  
Tél. : 33 (0) 1 45 68 21 18 / 09 44 / 11 73  
Fax : 33 (0) 1 45 68 56 26  
e-mail : f.migeon@unesco.org  
a.tay@unesco.org  
m.dorkenoo@unesco.org  
Internet : <http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog>



***Street  
Children***

## ► *The street*

In the expression «**street children**», the word «street», is a wide concept covering all the odd places which have become these children's abodes, day and night, permanently or for most of the time.

So, the «street» can mean:

- poor slum quarters (such as the "favelas" in Brazil);
- grounds around cinemas, hotels, department stores...;
- railway, lorry and bus stations;
- car parks;
- wasteland and isolated areas (such as unoccupied dwellings or buildings under construction which will never be finished), which suit the development of survival strategies;
- staircases and abandoned cellars in "disadvantaged quarters" as well as sewers in European and Latin-American towns.

## ► *Who are the street children?*

***They are children*** whose home has become the street. They are in temporary, partial or total break-up with their families or with society. They look for a substitute for family security from their companions or from specialised institutions. In hostile, repressive and violent contexts, street children who have experienced social exclusion for a long time, organise or join gangs to defend themselves.

***They are school age children*** (5 to 18 years old), who attend neither primary nor secondary school, or any reinsertion institution. They are thus partially or totally out of reach of social control provided for children of their age. The majority are boys, but that does not exclude the presence of girls.

***They are children*** who have more or less lost the usual references of social life and their individual identity

***They are children*** in difficult circumstances, who struggle to survive in urban or suburban areas and who, in their search for help, often fall foul of the law.

## ► *Where do they come from?*

*These children come from:*

- urban families, generally poor or in marital crisis;
- more and more the rural areas (rural exodus);
- minority ethnic groups from neighbouring countries;
- nomad communities who have settled on the outskirts of towns - shanty towns - who have fled from natural disasters;
- political or religious minorities excluded from their own country or rejected by formal schools due to the rigidity of the school system.

## ► *How many children are in the street?*

It is hard to give the exact number of street children, essentially because of the difficulty in finding reliable criteria to define the nature of the links that exist between a child and the street. However, there is consensus that in the world today there are around **100 million street children**.