

Fall 2014

# Cracks in the Pavement: The Street Boys Of Kathmandu !

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## Recommended Citation

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# Cracks in the Pavement



## The Street Boys Of Kathmandu

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SIT: Tibetan and Himalayan Peoples Fall 2014

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# Acknowledgements

A special thanks to Lobsang Sangbo for advising this project, as well as Mahatma Parajuli and Lalit Pandey at WEGAIN Zone who guided me through my research process. Never to be forgotten are Milan and Pujan for always being there to beat me at carrom, teach me some Nepali, and go cycling for a few hours. Thank you to Nazneen Decler for planting the seed of this project and to Tenzin Choezam for introducing me to Lobsang. Finally, I am deeply indebted to all of the NGO affiliates, private caretakers, and former street children who shared their time and insights for this project.

# Introduction

The following report is the result of an internship with the WEGAIN Zone in Boudha, Kathmandu, interviews with a dozen NGO affiliates, and interactions with a number of males who either have or currently reside on the streets of Kathmandu. Focused upon breaking the cyclical nature of street life and inherent stigma facing the hundreds of street children living within the Kathmandu Valley, both organizations and individuals have sought out a multitude of techniques and philosophies to address the “sub-society” that is Kathmandu’s street population. The first section of this report highlights the reasons why hundreds of boys land on the streets of Kathmandu each year as well as the negative influence of well-intentioned generosity that keeps the boys stuck to the sidewalk. Next, this report explores the lifestyles of street boys by investigating the prevalence of substance abuse, the methods of income generation, the apparent dynamics of gangs, and the presence of sexual activity among the target population. Finally, the report delves into the obstacle of stigma and its coexistence with numerous combative intervention tactics employed by NGOs and private individuals.



Five boys, ages approximately 8-12 years old, distributing and sniffing Fevibond glue in Mitrapark. (11/15/2014 @ 11:12 am)

There are between 5,000 and 6,000 street children currently living in Nepal. Although the population is constantly fluctuating, the Kathmandu Valley’s street population generally hovers between 400-1,200 children.<sup>1</sup> It is nearly impossible to get an exact count of so-called

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<sup>1</sup>Jean -Christophe Ryckmans, *The Street Children of Nepal* (Belgium: CPCS International, 2012), 25.

“street children” in Nepal due to confusion with children who are simply *on* the street (yet supported by their families) and the existence of working children; however, both CWIN and CPCS reports indicate that boys comprise at least 90% of the population on the street. Nevertheless, children—particularly boys—do not land on the street without cause. Though most do *choose* to live their lives on the street, many of the children have homes where their siblings and parents still live; in other words, they are not orphans. Culminating instability in the family unit is often the tipping point at which a child decides to move onto the streets of the Kathmandu Valley. While they are living upon the city pavement the boys are introduced to substances, join a band of other street youths, and engage in inherently risky activities that set them apart from children who live a “standard” Nepali childhood.

The harsh realities of life on the street such as hunger and living situation are combatted with the unraveling of “sociable” behavior. The rules that apply at home are not conducive to the streets: stealing, begging, and using substances are neither uncommon nor frowned upon within the street community, and usually become necessary actions towards socializing among peers on the street. NGOs and private caretakers extend a helping hand towards the boys by offering food, shelter, clothing, and oftentimes some form of rehabilitation. At times, these services serve to provide the child an alternative to the street, an opportunity to teach the child a skill or craft, and even a chance to reunite the child with his or her family. On the other hand, the availability of basic needs free of charge inevitably empowers a hefty portion of the under-motivated or otherwise content street population to remain on the streets, living off the generosity of both organizations and individuals until they are too old to receive benefits.

The street gives the child freedom, while the home resembles a four-walled prison. The street appears to offer the child ample camaraderie, while school appears to offer the child only boredom. The street presents the child with a number of generous organizations and individuals willing to share their resources, while the home village presents nothing of the sort. In the short-term, children become stuck. They become stuck because they are unwilling, frightened, or too proud to return home. They become infatuated with drugs. They become immovable because they cannot leave their new friends. They become entrenched in the street lifestyle because they do not plan for the day when an NGO will turn them away. They become pinned down because they are either too young to understand the implications of their actions, or too old to readjust. They become invisible, like ghosts or shadows on the streets, unsociable and ignored. These are the lives of the street boys of Kathmandu—the cracks in the pavement—of which 60-70% will remain on the streets for the rest of their lives.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>CPCS Annual Progress Report, January – June 2014, p. 10.

## *Regarding the Term “Street Child”*

“Street child” is a term that is used in this study with the understanding that its very meaning is flexible. Among the population of children actively engaging with the street, the lack of homogeneity of its members is actually one of the key characteristics that makes any useful definition near impossible. Not all children begging on the sidewalks of Thamel are “street children,” while many of them certainly would be identified by tourists, foreigners, and locals alike as “homeless” or “desperate.” For the purposes of this study, children observed and interacted with fell under the category of children who specifically *live on* the street, distinct from “working children” and children simply *on* the street. In addition, this study attempts to treat street children as a concept of reality rather than a societal infection that must be scraped away.

Children who *live on* the street are very different from working children or children who are simply *on* the street. Though working children may have at one point lived on the street, a working child may be considered as an individual under the age of 16 years old—the legal working age in Nepal—who works for a living. The types of jobs that a working child engages in may include tea shop serving, bus conducting, trinket sales, handicraft creation, and dish washing.

Also distinct from children who *live on* the street are children *on* the street. Children *on* the street tend to come from a similar background as those who *live on* the street, though often these children maintain ties with close relatives and immediate family members. In general, children *on* the street either beg or engage in some sort of economic activity to generate income that is later brought home to be shared with close relatives (or squandered during the day on the street). These children then sleep at home beneath a roof with food and clothing, returning to the street the next day to enjoy the freedom of the sidewalks rather than attend school. Children *on* the street tend to exist as the result of a comparatively disadvantaged family background or social station; due to their familiarity with the street population, these children are considered by this study to be “at-risk” towards eventually taking lives on the street.

Children who *live on* the street are those who eat, sleep, and generate income on the streets. The population of children who *live on* the street is not uniform, though frequently its members can be associated with begging in tourist areas, rag-picking, varied drug usage, and a grouped, “gang”-like social context. In Nepal, these children are sometimes referred to as “khate”—“a word which once described plastic pickers only but which is now used for all the children who work, live, and sleep on the street”—a negative and derogatory term that is indicative of the degrading public opinion towards the street population.<sup>3</sup> In lieu of facing the impossible task of crafting a definition for this study, the term “street children” is used in this study to describe this final category of children—those who live directly on the streets.

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<sup>3</sup> Jean -Christophe Ryckmans, *The Street Children of Nepal* (Belgium: CPCS International, 2012), 19.



# Far from Home

## *Why the Streets of Kathmandu?*

In the Kathmandu Valley, the majority of the children who take to the streets are reportedly influenced by an unstable situation at home. Among the most challenging risk factors prompting children in Nepal to live the street life include paternal alcoholism or divorce, unrealistic expectations regarding urban life, and a friend also “escaping” to the city. In the words of Child Protection Centers and Services (CPCS) founder Jean-Christophe Ryckmans, “the kids are most of the time abandoning their family. People think that they are abandoned *by* their family, [but] most of the time it’s their choice...you think that you’re going to become rich and everything is going to become fun in the city.”

Regarding unstable family situations, there are a few common themes embedded within the stories of boys who decide to leave their homes. Govinda Koirala—program coordinator of Voice of Children (VOC)—explains that in his experience “the main cause is domestic violence. [Without domestic violence], if their parents are able to provide the basic needs for the child, at least they will stay in the family. Their level [of comfort] will be different, but at least they will stay with the family.” Other common reasons within the home reported by Dilendra Bhandari—program coordinator of Shangri-la Home’s Youth Rehabilitation Program—included intolerable or otherwise neglectful step-parents, financial instability, and even a child’s own stealing habit

“People think that they are abandoned by their family, [but] most of the time it’s their choice.”

*-Jean-Christophe Ryckmans*



Five street boys, ages approximately 6-12 years old, loitering on a sidewalk in Mitrapark after a glue purchase. (11/16/2014 @ 10:46am)

spiraling out of control. No matter what the reason is, the children eventually decide to abandon their home, village, and family in favor of the pavement in the Kathmandu Valley.

One former street boy shared that he had be lured to Kathmandu by the promise of money and comfort. At age 7, he was doing little in his village but tending to goats with his mother. The boy's father had died when he was only 3 years old. He would see people coming from Kathmandu every once and a while with nice clothing, with a music device, or with a vehicle; one day, a 25-year-old offered him a job in a carpet factory in the capital. Too poor to attend school and too young to understand what he was getting into, the boy ran away to the city and struck a deal that after one year, he would be returned to his home with a full year's salary in his pocket. The man promised to pay him in full at the end of his twelve-month stay in Kathmandu. In the city, he ate meat frequently and lived in comfort. He slept in a bed and had nice new clothes. Within weeks he reportedly became the factory's most skilled child. After his year of weaving carpets, the boy was 8 years old and demanded his salary. In lieu of his earned money, the boy was beaten, thrown onto the street, and abandoned. Without passage home, he saw multiple other children on the street collecting garbage to be sold for money, and he joined up with two of them to form a small group. Eventually their group grew to seven members, and his life on the street officially began. "I miss those days," he says, "we spent real time [together]... life was about filling your tummy and finding a place to sleep."

Pradeep Parajuli—psychosocial counselor of Shangri-la Home's Youth Rehabilitation Program—has found that in his experience children who originate from rural areas do so as a result of the aforementioned causes as well as the burden of household duties:

*"...in their village they have to work a lot actually. They have to engage in household activities a lot. In rural areas, people are implementing farming [for income], so their families go to the field and work and the children have to cook for them. And so, it is a double burden of work: they also have to go to school (if they go to school). And on busy hours, busy days, they are not permitted to go to school but instead they have to work in the house. So, when they see that some of their peer groups come from the Kathmandu Valley with good dress and a good mobile phone, some money, they are attracted to leave their home and come to the Kathmandu Valley..."*

Eventually, the pressures become overwhelming. For one former street boy, his father had been an alcoholic and became abusive. Another former street boy shared that he had been a part of a "street family"—an entire family that resides on the street—in Boudha, Kathmandu; one day, he simply wandered off, met other children, and became a street boy on his own. A third former street boy shared that his mother had remarried and that he no longer fit with the stepfamily. In all three of these cases the boy chose (either actively or unknowingly) to leave his family due to unstable conditions. These types of situations tend to arise in families that are stricken by poverty and are otherwise unable to provide the level of supervision necessary to

prevent a child from taking a life on the street. Furthermore, stories such as these are a reality for many of the street boys in the Kathmandu Valley, and though life on the streets is never quite as hospitable as they hoped, the street provides a freedom unlike anything the child has experienced before. No school, no parents, and no rules. The allure of the street lifestyle is approached with both wonder and apprehension; thus, many of the boys eventually decide that the sidewalk is preferable to their own homes.

## *Patterns of the Pavement*

Like any social group, street boys within the Kathmandu Valley all have a unique back-story. In general, children from far outside of the Kathmandu Valley will first reach another major city and survive for a few weeks or months before eventually finding an opportunity to travel to the Kathmandu Valley. Boys tend to be below the legal working age in Nepal (16 years old), so those who do not end up as working children are thrust into the daily routine of street children. In fact, CWIN reports that the vast majority of children leave home between the age of 9 and 13, though evidently the causes of his or her departure are not uniform.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, cities tend to be the target areas for street children, and within those cities the tourist areas and traffic points assume the role of home-base for the street boys.

APC Nepal's program coordinator Yam Lama reports that "we know according to our database that most of the children are coming from outside of the [Kathmandu] Valley...the majority from migrated families." Shuresh Bhandari—communications officer of Voice of Children—explains that at one time the Maoist conflict (which officially took place between 1996 and 2006) influenced many families to migrate towards urban areas for protection; however, today the aftereffects of the guerrilla warfare may no longer be considered a directly relevant factor towards the creation and steady inflow of street children to Kathmandu. Yam Lama corroborates this notion by adding that in 2006 when "Nepal was declared a republic, a peace was established. And then we noticed that the number of children was decreasing....After 2008, children coming directly from the remote mountains decreased." Even so, today when children are questioned at NGO drop-in centers about where they are from, many still report that they are "from the mountains." Why? Because their families have been lured to Kathmandu by the promise of opportunity, good jobs, and wealth in an urban environment. These families independently migrated without the pressure of the Maoists. Nevertheless, it is important to note that many of the major NGOs that conduct programs focused on street children management were founded during the Maoist conflict period when the number of migrating families peaked (e.g. VOC founded in 1997, APC-Nepal founded in 2001, CPCS founded in 2002).

The shared accounts of multiple NGO affiliates and former street children show that children originating outside of the Kathmandu Valley tend to arrive in the cities of Pokhara (Kaski District), Bharatpur (Chitwan District), and even Butwal (Rapandehi District) before arriving in the Kathmandu Valley. A CPCS 2012 quantitative study revealed that 15% of children interviewed originated in the eastern Terai district of Sunsari, followed by the Kaski district with 7%.<sup>5</sup> Development, ironically, actually increases the rate of children landing on the

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<sup>4</sup> CWIN, *Alcohol and Drug Use Among Street Children* (Kathmandu: CWIN, 2002), 13.

<sup>5</sup> Jean -Christophe Ryckmans, *The Street Children of Nepal* (Belgium: CPCS International, 2012), 23.

streets. “It’s linked, in my understanding, with the roads opening,” remarks Jean-Christophe Ryckmans. “When the roads are reaching somewhere (and they are building a lot of roads these days) suddenly modernity is coming...and then it becomes easy to come to the street. It’s not only attracting street kids, its attracting street families.” In these cities the boys become accustomed to the street life for some time, learning the methods of survival on the sidewalks. If they are a part of a “street family” or a family in which both the father and mother work, they may become socialized into groups of boys living directly on the streets during the day or, if they attend class, after school. When the opportunity arises, many of these children eventually succumb to the allure of the capital city, expecting greener pastures and greater experiences. At this time, the children themselves migrate to Kathmandu, finding a concentrated street population unmatched by any other major city as well as a bountiful NGO support system in place for children like themselves.

## *Kind-Hearted, Well-Intentioned, and Unfortunate Generosity*

The generosity of both kind-hearted locals and well-intentioned foreigners plays a key role in keeping street children in an unsafe, unstable environment. When an individual of means witnesses a seemingly desperate child on the street begging for food, scrounging for recyclables, or looking plainly unkempt, a natural empathetic response occurs. The individual feels obligated to “help” this child with a contribution of money, small sums of food, clothing, and other necessities to comfortable living. Declan Murphy, the founder of Just-One and the driving force behind the “Giving is Selfish” poster campaign, explains that by giving bite-sized donations directly to a child living on the street, “two things happen: one, you feel a little bit better because you’ve helped and you’ve got a lovely smile and a flash of recognition. And the other thing [is] that you’ve encouraged the kid to stay in a unsafe, insecure position on the street begging from passersby.”

The CPCS 2014 annual report spells out quite clearly that “giving money to a child does not improve [his or her] day-to-day wellbeing or [his or her] moral and physical health. On the contrary, it enables him and his friends to buy drugs (glue, tablets, alcohol, syringes or cigarettes) or to touch other ephemeral pleasures.”<sup>6</sup>



A boy, approximately 8 years old, receiving 10 rupees from a Nepali woman riding a micro-van on the Ring Road coming from Battisputali. (11/20/2014 @ 2:08pm)

<sup>6</sup> CPCS 2014 Annual Report, January—June, p. 12.



One of two posters from Just-One's "Giving is Selfish" campaign. The campaign is designed to inform tourists and locals alike that giving short-term "help" to a street child in the form of bite-sized donations will influence the child to *not* accept the long-term assistance offered by local organizations. The last line of the second poster reads "...giving something may make YOU feel a little better, but I promise you that it will NOT help ME at all."

It is an inconvenient truth that street children tend to thrive upon the generosity of others. Unlike "working children,"—kids who typically generate income by as a trinket salesperson, as a *khalasi* (bus conductors), or as a dishwasher in a restaurant or hotel—street children are entirely in the hands of foreigners and generous locals. However, oftentimes to support the behavior of a street child on an individual basis encourages the behaviors that make life on the street so appealing. Because basic needs, such as food and clothing, are readily available at NGO drop-in centers and sometimes from the hands generous strangers, the money that is directly given to the children is hardly ever used to purchase necessities.

One former street boy responded to the question, "What would you say to the foreigner who gave you 5 rupees on the street if you met him or her today?" by saying, "I would tell them never to come to Nepal again. I would never thank them." Now a man, the individual

**"I would tell them never to come to Nepal again. I would never thank them."**

*-Anonymous (Former Street Boy)*

expressed that in the heat of the moment getting that 5 NRs note made him very happy, but did nothing for his future. In fact, he said that the influence of those kinds of foreigners tempted him to stay on the street.

Overall, the boy simply does not understand that in a few years time begging will become dramatically more difficult. While generous foreigners and locals are sympathetic to children under the age of 13, it was observed that the beginnings of acne and pubescence cumulatively eliminate prospects of begged income. In their teenage years, rather than being given 10 rupees, a package of biscuits, or a small bar of chocolate, the boy receives a twisted and disgusted scowl from passersby. This can be an incredibly difficult moment of realization for the now-

teenage street boy, but not necessarily a moment of clarity; oftentimes, this shift will cause the boy to develop a dislike for the society which is now rejecting him and cause a further entrenchment in the street life. Nevertheless, the burden of this understanding does not necessarily rest with the children themselves: expecting a 9-year-old street boy to plan for his teenage years as a struggling beggar is a lofty goal, while expecting a kind-hearted 25-year-old foreign tourist to understand the damage that his or her well-intentioned generosity may have upon the child is far from unreasonable.



# Sidewalk Lifestyles

## *Substance Abuse*

The most commonly used and abused substances among street boys in the Kathmandu Valley are tobacco, solvents, marijuana, and alcohol. The children typically spend money gained from their various income generating techniques on these substances not only to cope with the difficulties of living on the street, but also to enjoy the intoxication that the substances provide. “They learn with their peer groups,” remarks Pradeep Parajuli, “if everyone in their gang sniffs glue and takes enjoyment from it...the newly admitted child? Of course [he will] sniff glue.” The social context of drug usage appears to be the impetus that prompts the hundreds of new street boys each year to become involved in substance abuse. However, while these substances may provide relaxation for an individual street child or camaraderie among many, the abuse of substances—a prevalent occurrence within the street population—is undoubtedly detrimental to the developing mind and body of the street child.

First and foremost is tobacco. CPCS reports that as much as 83% of street children smoke cigarettes regularly.<sup>7</sup> In the field, it was observed on multiple occasions that boys seldom buy an entire pack of cigarettes at once. Rather, the children tend to purchase cheap Pilot brand cigarettes at a rate of 5 NRs for two cigarettes, which can be found with ease at any corner-store in Kathmandu. Even boys in recovery reported smoking between 5-8 cigarettes each day, working out in total to between 35-56 cigarettes weekly. Thus, tobacco is the most difficult substance for the children to stop using in the long-term.

Secondly, solvents are by far the most common and accessible unconventional drugs used among the street population. CWIN reports that 95% of street children in Nepal sniff dendrite glue because of the influence of other street children and the pangs of hunger; furthermore, CWIN speculates that it would not take much to introduce glue sniffing to the remaining 5% of street children.<sup>8</sup> That inhaling glue staves off hunger and wards away feelings of cold does not exclude the fact that sniffing dendrite or other solvents also induces significant intoxication, hallucinations, and euphoria. One former street boy reported that upon coming to the streets of Boudha, one of his peers taught him how to sniff glue and pressured him by saying, “Take it. If you sniff you will not be hungry. You will not even be cold. You will feel like you are flying in the sky. You will see Gods in the sky. You’ll see miracles....sniff it, nothing bad is going to happen.”

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<sup>7</sup> Jean -Christophe Ryckmans, *The Street Children of Nepal* (Belgium: CPCS International, 2012), 92.

<sup>8</sup>Integrated Regional Information Networks. "NEPAL: Street Children Sniff Glue to Beat Hunger Pangs." IRIN. <http://www.irinnews.org/report/74899/nepal-street-children-sniff-glue-to-beat-hunger-pangs> (accessed September 24, 2014).



“Take it. If you sniff you will not be hungry. You will not even be cold. You will feel like you are flying in the sky. You will see Gods in the sky. You’ll see miracles.”

-Anonymous Peer

Glue is most frequently purchased in 50ml tubes costing just 50 NRs per tube, though each of these tubes are typically shared among groups of friends on the street. In a practical sense, the tubes are very convenient and can be hidden from authorities in pockets, waistbands, or wrinkles in one’s shirt. Nevertheless, Bijay Shrestha—the manager of ROKPA Children’s Home—noted that minuscule portions of glue can be purchased for “even less. Just for a little bit. You go to a cobbler and you ask for glue, stuff like that you will find it anywhere for 20 NRs or 15 NRs, in small quantities.” To collect the fumes, the glue can be squeezed into practically any type of small, sealed bag ranging from spent milk sacks to the empty remains of a Lays chip bag. The intoxicating chemical in dendrite glue is toluene, the excessive inhalation of which the World Health Organization reports will “lead to permanent neurological damage” and brain development stagnation in children aged 8-14.<sup>9</sup> While other solvents—for instance, paint thinner—are also sniffed by street boys, dendrite glue remains the cheapest, most widely available, most effective way to obtain a solvent high for the street boys.

Marijuana (commonly referred to among the boys as “ganja”) and alcohol are relatively counterintuitive substances used by the street boys, yet approximately 41% of the boys regularly smoke and 45% regularly drink.<sup>10</sup> Though it is either low in cost or easily attainable in fields, the smoking of marijuana makes the boys quite hungry—far from conducive with the street life. To cope with this resultant hunger, solvents are again used to mask the side effects of this drug. On the other hand, alcohol is easily purchased but can be very expensive. Nevertheless, this does not stop the boys from buying cheap, “bottom-shelf” spirits to dull their senses.

<sup>9</sup>World Health Organization. "Toluene (EHC 52, 1986)." *International Programme on Chemical Safety*, §1.1.5.

<sup>10</sup>Jean -Christophe Ryckmans, *The Street Children of Nepal* (Belgium: CPCS International, 2012), 92.

Substance abuse can also be closely tied to age. As a boy grows older, Jean-Christophe Ryckmans reports, “tensions in the mind also increase...the glue—which is apparently is not physically addictive but more of a social addiction—but the glue *effect* is not strong enough when the troubles in the mind increase, and you need something else. You need tabs, injections, things for your social prestige. Your need of money [also] increases.” As the boys’ pursuit of wealth increases in intensity, typically their substance abuse follows in suit. Dendrite and marijuana give way to harder drugs, and the boys cumulatively become able navigate the network of access to these substances. Thus, substance usage at all ages is seemingly pervasive among street boys in Kathmandu, possibly becoming more intense as the child becomes further entrenched in the street life.



## *Income Generation*

Four boys saunter slowly from the Bhandarkhal Jungle to the nearest junction in Gausala. Three of the boys are young, respectively 8, 9, and 10 years old. The fourth is older, approximately 14 years old, and will take no part in the coming activities. It is nearing 2 o'clock in the afternoon and traffic is beginning to pile up in Gausala. The youngest boy is dressed in a blue t-shirt and black sweatpants that are caked with dirt. The second is wearing a tattered blue fleece and torn jeans. The eldest of the young boys wears a filthy yellow shirt and grey sweatpants covered in week's worth of grime. All wear sandals or go barefooted. The elder boy is cleaner, wearing a blue track suit top and black sweatpants of a similar style; in other words, his look is clean, his hair is well kept, and he is in control. The cars on the street begin to slow, and the three young boys spring into action. Weaving between stopped cars, taxis, motorbikes, and micro-vans, the boys gently plead the passengers and drivers for money. They motion towards their mouths and stomachs, hands clasped together in apparent desperation. The windows, doors, and pockets all open. Between 5 and 10 rupees is given to one of the boys; he shows a meager smile, he delivers genuine thanks, and he moves onwards towards the next vehicle. In less than two passes of traffic the youngest boy has made nearly 70 NRs with ease. However, as the traffic begins to move and the boys scamper back up the sidewalk to the head of the junction, each one hands a small sum to the older boy. Too old to receive money from passersby, he is their leader. After forty-five minutes the eldest calls the boys off the pavement, and the four leap over a brick wall back into the Bhandarkhal Jungle.



A boy, approximately 10 years old, begging for money from a taxi in Gausala.  
(11/20/2014 @ 1:49pm)

Schemes such as this one are the backbone of income generation for young street children. As they grow older, other methods of generating income become necessary, such as rag-picking, stealing, or becoming a *khalasi*. Rag-picking involves the collection and sorting of plastic, metals, and other common recyclable goods to be brought to a junkyard. One former street boy reported that when he was growing up the rate per kilogram for plastic was around 2-3 NRs, while these days the price can be as much as 20 NRs per kilogram. Those who work hard can earn a sizable amount of money each day; for instance, Declan Murphy reported that he knew one rag-picker who could earn over 200 NRs daily. It is therefore unsurprising that over half of the boys surveyed by CPCS less than two years ago reported that, at the time, they currently generated income as a rag-picker.<sup>11</sup> Stealing and pickpocketing are methods employed by both individuals and gangs, oftentimes lifting small items or sums of money from open vendors and bags. *Khalasi* work is far less common among street boys than rag-picking, begging, or stealing, though sometimes provides a day or two's worth of work for the child. Less conventional methods of income generation observed included collecting firewood from funeral pyres and sifting through rivers with magnetized objects to collect loose coins.

Another interesting scheme mentioned by Inge Bracke of CPCS involves both a shopkeeper and a street boy. Some boys, Bracke reports, will have a deal set up with a shopkeeper where instead of asking for money, the children ask for food to be bought from a nearby shop. Motioning first to their stomachs, then their mouths, then to the shop (similar to the motions observed in the traffic-begging scheme), tourists and generous locals happily purchase a small item for the boy. The food is bought, the child looks on happily at the generous donor, and then proceeds to give the food directly back to the shop-owner to split the profit.

Not all the boys deplete their income on frivolous expenditure. A portion of them actually will give money back to support their families; for example, in Siphahel there are a group of three brothers who beg each day in order to fundraise for their mother, who is alone and in a difficult financial situation. The boys sleep and eat in a socialization center, reducing a portion of the financial burden on their mother; however, many of the children find it difficult to generate and maintain income due to the nature of living on the street. One former street boy reported that "the hardest thing is keeping the money you made." One good day of begging or rag-picking is can often become soured by another boy stealing that money, though often the depletion of funds actually comes at the hands of the boy's own friends: if he makes extra, it takes the tension out of earning for his companions who will then show him increased veneration in exchange for free meals or drugs. Therefore, most of the children are unable to save their money, adjusting to the lifestyle of near-empty pockets and day-to-day, minimalistic expenditure.

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<sup>11</sup>Jean -Christophe Ryckmans, *The Street Children of Nepal* (Belgium: CPCS International, 2012), 74.

## *Gang Dynamics*

For the majority of boys living on the streets of Kathmandu, their gang is the closest thing they've had to a family since abandoning their homes. In the words of Bijay Shrestha, "you sleep on the pavement, what could be more common than that? You want eat, you want to feel like yourself, what is more common than that? These two or three reasons, they are enough to bind you together." Gangs typically form under the leadership of one particularly strong or clever boy who gains enough social currency through strategy, resources, or violence to garner the adoration and respect of a handful of others. Typically the eldest, this boy is authorized to use violence and social pressure to guide his followers through the hardships of the street. The functions of the gangs are many and varied, but above all include protection, income generation, and camaraderie.

Gangs and organizational systems are what make the street boys in Kathmandu one of the most remarkable sub-units of the city's population. Like any exclusive grouping, street gangs are complete with internal tools and culture; for instance, the boys reportedly have invented words and phrases as a type of code when pickpocketing. "It's like a kind of sub-society," says Jean-Christophe Ryckmans, "they [even] have their own language, not a language but words—a dialect—that neither the police nor the common person can understand." Groups of boys under the command of an intelligent leader have techniques and methods that ensure the steady generation of income as well as a continuous sense of camaraderie that binds the boys together.

In the most positive of ways, the gang provides the children a social unit. Within this unit they may feel protected from the dangers of working at night, the hardships of living in an unstable environment, and the prospect of unfriendly contact with other gangs. Like a family,

"You sleep on the pavement, what could be more common than that?"

*-Bijay Shrestha*



members of the group may care for one another when one is sick, share food or income, and provide the kind of moral support system that is unavailable to a boy living alone on the street. However, the gang can also be responsible for involving children in inherently risky behaviors such as using drugs and engaging in fights with other gangs. One former street child shared that that while the

most common physical means of protection included chains and knives, far more often both fists and stones were thrown to fend off attackers. In some ways, the very existence of one gang necessitates the creation of others to match the former's collective strength.

Gangs form by necessity, but not without utility. Dilendra Bhanadari explains that when the boys start to live in a group, "one [who] has a habit of pickpocketing...if he successfully pickpockets, he can join the group and share the money. If one has drugs, or is a drug dealer—normally in a group they use drugs—if he has drugs, he shares. If some boys look small, they collect money through begging and share also. That way, everybody is dependent to their group." In this way, the gangs remain tight-knit communities that are difficult to disrupt. Regarding drug dealers, Shuresh Bhandari noted that "[the gangs] buy some amount of drugs, they divide into two or three parts, and one part they sell, they return that money to the [dealer to buy more drugs], and the other part they use. So they are drug users and suppliers." In this way, the gangs are a functional unit: not only do they provide physical protection and fraternity, but also (to a degree) financial stability.



A group of four boys, often together at Pashupati, aged 9-13 years old sharing glue with a 5-year-old boy in Mitrapark. (11/22/2014 @ 10:43am)

However, one practice that is particularly unsettling is that the gangs are at times responsible for internal forced drug usage. To clarify, this type of behavior is different from peer influences or taking drugs to "fit in." Declan Murphy recounted times that he saw "kids being woken up in the morning, kids being held by three guys. One guy holding a bag of glue to his face and another guy holding a lighter under his hand and another guy holding his hand. And being told, 'breathe, breathe, breathe or I'm gunna burn!' So then [if] he won't breathe, they light the lighter. Then there's screams, 'breathe! He'll stop it, breathe! Sniff the glue, sniff the glue.'"

In other instances, new recruits to the gang are woken up from their spot on the sidewalk or mattress with other gang members to a plastic bag placed against their lips; awoken to the fragrance of glue fumes stinging their nostrils and clouding their minds, within minutes the child is intoxicated, he is handed a cigarette, and his day has begun. Of the 302 boys surveyed by CPCS in 2012, 31% reported at some point being forced to use drugs.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, the allure of gang or group dynamics among street boys in Kathmandu is one of the primary factors contributing to the perpetuation of the street cycle. Be it for protection, income generation, drug usage, fraternal camaraderie, or simply a group of people to rely upon, when a boy comes onto the street and is not quickly picked up by an NGO, a private caretaker, or an individual, his gang of other boys quite literally becomes his family.

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<sup>12</sup>Jean -Christophe Ryckmans, *The Street Children of Nepal* (Belgium: CPCS International, 2012), 92.



## *Sexual Activity and Abuse*

Sexual activity among street children oftentimes commences at a very young age either to a member of the opposite sex also on the street, a fellow gang member, or a foreigner. Once being co-opted into a gang of other street children, pressure to engage in sexual activity among gang members is not uncommon. Sexual activity begins at a particularly young age among street boys in Kathmandu, sometimes as early as 10 years old and dramatically increasing in frequency past the age of 14 years old.<sup>13</sup>

Commercial sex work and exploitation at the hands of foreigners and locals is by no means uncommon. Mustafa Lawin reports that two out of five children on the street are exposed to sexual abuse, oftentimes at the hands of both Nepali and foreign pedophiles.<sup>14</sup> A more startling report comes from Govinda Koirala—the program coordinator at Voice of Children—who reported that “research published in 2008 jointly between VOC and CPCS.... [showed] that more than 85% of children were sexually abused while staying on the street.” Culprits are typically male, though Lawin also reports that there exist women who sexually abuse street boys. The frequency of sexual abuse among the street population effectively normalizes the practice internally, though as a taboo subject in Nepali culture it is very difficult to discuss, analyze, and cope with.

Though his anecdotal information was admittedly a few years old, Declan Murphy shared the concept of a “bahini” within a gang as a medium of sexual activity among street boys. The newest member of the gang, typically a young boy new to the street, was nicknamed “bahini,” which can be translated directly in Nepali to “younger sister”:

*“...the new, the 10-year-old kid who wasn't found by the shopkeeper, the middle-class person, but rather found by the 14-year-old assistant gang leader is brought into the gang and his nickname becomes “bahini.” The 9-year-old who was “bahini” up until yesterday is very relieved that he's no longer “bahini,” ... “Bahini” does, I mean, you can imagine, why would a gang of boys call a new kid “little sister?” And the most ruthless protagonist of the role of “bahini” would be the previous “bahini,” who would be quite happy in engaging in this newfound freedom of no longer being “bahini,” the sex-toy to the gang members...”*

Though this is obviously not uniform for all gangs of boys in Kathmandu, in this scenario the newest member of the gang fills the role of a sexual object for the other members of the gang. Like any hierarchical system, the the gang leader is given first priority when exercising his

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<sup>13</sup> Jean -Christophe Ryckmans, *The Street Children of Nepal* (Belgium: CPCS International, 2012), 121/140.

<sup>14</sup> Mustafa Lawin. “Shadows of the Street” *Theses in Social Services*, no. 8 (Diak South: Diaconia University of Applied Sciences, 2010), 85.

privilege of sexual activity with “bahini,” followed next by the second-in-command and later the other members of the gang. Nonetheless, Murphy also noted that in the past 5 or 6 years the number of girls who have landed on the streets of the Kathmandu Valley has greatly increased; thus, the role of a male “bahini” may no longer be as prevalent as it once was.

In response to Murphy’s proposition, Govinda Koirala confirmed that while the role of a male “bahini” was still existent, the increased presence of females on the streets in the past few years has now allowed for gangs of boys to have repeated sexual interactions with a female “bahini.” Much of the time this girl is from a similar background as the boys, and while she may be referred to as “little sister” by the gang, their relations with her can be considered very similar to the situation described with a male “bahini.” Koirala also noted that a single group of boys might share multiple “bahinis,” while the role of a male “bahini” is singular.

# Intervention

## *Too Little, Too Late*

In terms of intervention, it is an unfortunate truth that street boys often fall into one of two categories: either they are too young to understand the long-term ramifications of their living situation or too old to receive meaningful assistance from the support structures in place. As boys typically arrive on the street between the age of 9 and 13 years old, the newfound perks of living on the street are often more appealing than the semi-structured lifestyle required when aligning themselves with an NGO or private caretaker. “They like the freedom,” says Tenzin Dolma—an educator employed by Many Faces of Karma—, “and they don’t want a confined environment to be their life.”

When the street boys are young, they do not understand the long-term ramifications of their newfound lifestyle. Often the street life is largely a distraction from understanding the future; for example, Lalit Shahi—the founder of Volunteer Foundation Nepal—explains that around age “9 or 10, then they have [the ability to understand] captivity and the law, but they are not able to think about the future. They can beg for the money easily,” and acquire the necessities for life in turn. At this point life on the street is enjoyable, somewhat comfortable in comparison to an unstable family situation. Intervention at this age is reportedly possible if the child is new to the street, though very difficult if the child is young but has ample experience on the street.

Other times, it is simply too late to intervene. In some cases, the boy has become entrenched in a gang. In other cases, the boy is unwilling to reintegrate with society. Most of the

“They like the freedom, and they don’t want a confined environment to be their life.”

*-Tenzin Dolma*



time, a boy who has simply lived on the street for too long requires an incredible amount of time, effort, and funding to rehabilitate. Psychosocial counselor Pradeep Parajuli describes that “when they cross [the age of] 15 or 16 years, so many shelters will turn them away because they are already old enough [to work]. If they beg, people do not give to them because they look mature.” Jean-Christophe Ryckmans stated that although it sounds strange, “the only chance for some of them, the really *street* ones at 15 or 16 [years old], is to have an accident. A life accident. Losing your best friend, getting severely beat up by someone. Breaking your leg. Something strong... [and] at that time you really need to catch them quickly.” Such an event can trigger a moment of clarity in the teenage street boy’s mind, a sudden realization that the lifestyle that is familiar to him is unsustainable.

Without intervention, many become career rag-pickers, long-term beggars, and sometimes even involved in larger level criminal activity. Furthermore, the 8-year-old boy who originally leaves home does not foresee his 18-year-old self becoming constrained by the stigma surrounding the street youth of Nepal, a powerful social force with paradoxical constraints. If he is too young, the boy may not realize that such hardship is entirely avoidable; if he is too old, the child (or young adult) may realize that he ought to have made a change or feel angry with Nepali society, but at this point it may be past the time of plausible intervention.



A 13-year-old boy sitting in front of the junkyard where he sleeps near Boudha. His group is comprised of boys who no longer live in a shelter. (11/23/2014 @ 2:29pm)

## *Stigma*

“Khate” is a derogatory term that is used to describe the street boys negatively, evoking the conceptions of disaffiliation and “marginal economic duty.”<sup>15</sup> In other words, the boys are considered pariahs to the social order of Kathmandu and Nepal. In a very cyclical fashion, Nepali society abhors the street boys because they are perceived as detached from the community, and in turn the boys *become* detached from the community because Nepali society rejects them. The term “street child” itself carries the connotation of delinquency and dissociation, implying that the boys are like a societal disease that must be cured.



A young street boy in tears on the ground after being hit with a bamboo prod by a shopkeeper near Jayabageswori. (11/22/2014 @ 10:39am)

The stigma surrounding street boys in Kathmandu is present in both adults and children. Lalit Shahi explains that the street boys are generally “neglected by society. Neglected by other people. Neglected by other normal children. The street children have money, they want to go to the cinema, but it is difficult for them to get a ticket. They want to travel from Boudha to a stadium to see a football match or [go] swimming, but the transportation (the bus)... for the street children, they cannot take it.” Shahi elaborated on his final point later by explaining that early in his career, street boys would ask him to pay a *khalasi* directly when they needed to take public transportation; otherwise, they would be unable to ride the bus or micro-van themselves. Shunned from public life, street boys are raised in the shadow of a self-fulfilling prophecy, a paradoxical and inescapable expectation of so-called “delinquency.”

<sup>15</sup>Catherine Panter-Brick, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 31 (Durham, Annual Reviews, 2002), 150.

In the field, it was observed that Nepali children and adults (assumed to be in stable family situations) hold the street boys in low regard. In one instance, six street boys were walking towards Pashupatinath, the youngest of whom was 5 years old. Three well-dressed Nepali children (assumed to be in a stable family situation) sitting inside of a shop took notice as the youngest boy lagged behind the group. One of the Nepali children spotted a stone lying on the brick road before him, and slowly reached down to grasp it firmly in his palm. Five of the six street boys were now well down the street, while the youngest had stopped to inspect a piece of plastic lodged between a crack in the bricks. In a flash, the Nepali child wound up and flung the stone directly at the young boy, striking him hard in the left shoulder. The young street boy was simultaneously enraged and saddened as the Nepali children ran away. It was later learned that the Nepali child who threw the stone was the son of the owner of the shop in front of which the event had taken place. Along with two adult friends, his mother had watched the entire exchange take place and did nothing. In fact, when the five additional street boys came to console their young friend, she shouted at them for crowding in front of her shop and demanded that they leave. In another instance, a young boy walking towards Jayabageswori was shoved outside of a shop and caned with a bamboo prod by the shop's owner. The shop owner then yelled at the child as he lay on the ground for a few minutes, eventually disregarding the boy entirely. Over the time that the boy cried on the sidewalk, dozens of passersby ignored him as if he were a ghost.

The separation goes both ways. On the days leading up to the 2014 SAARC Summit schools in Kathmandu declared holiday; thus, dozens of school children took to the fields and open areas where the street boys normally reside. At this time, the street boys were observed to strictly avoid these areas, only returning immediately after the school children departed for their respective homes.

“As they wear dirty clothes, use bad language and deny most social norms, they are considered social parasites, young criminals, and drug addicts.”<sup>16</sup> The boys are ostracized from Nepali society, and oftentimes this can affect them for the rest of their lives. Unable to become socialized into the routine lifestyle of a Nepali, some of the most successful recovered street children have reportedly moved outside of the country to sever the link between themselves and their past. Frequently, Jean-Christophe Ryckmans reports, they even change their name for legal reasons or to assign themselves a higher caste. Essentially, the boys who do manage to leave the street often seek to distance themselves from their old lives as much as possible. Dilendra Bhandari even noted that some boys currently in rehabilitation do not want to associate with their old friends on the street, turning away when they see them in public. In essence, the boys are socialized to adopt the stigma—the assigned negative identity—of being one of the “khate”; in turn, the boys shape their internalized identities in relation to this expectation.

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<sup>16</sup>CPCS Annual Progress Report, January – June 2014, p. 11.

## *NGO Impacts: Intention vs. Actuality*

### Intention

The Kathmandu Valley is home to over 200 NGOs who “work with street children,” though their actual target audience, services, and facilities differ greatly. Among these NGOs, there generally exist three types of services and three types of centers. Prevention, street children management, and rehabilitation typically categorize the services offered by these NGOs. Centers also tend to fall into three categories: drop-in centers, rehabilitation centers, and transit homes. At times, children’s homes also selectively accept children from a “street background,” though this study found that these children tended to be more closely fitting the category of children *on* the street (or from a street family) rather than children *of* the street. The population benefitting from these centers and services inevitably differs due to variance in philosophy of those operating or funding the NGO; nevertheless, all NGOs considered in this study in some way organized programs aimed towards serving the needs of street children with both short- and long-term risk-reduction strategies.

Prevention programs offered by NGOs involve discovering the target areas from which a considerable portion of current street children originate, traveling to those areas, and supporting the communities or “at-risk” families whom the NGO deems likely to produce street children that will eventually land on the sidewalks of Kathmandu. Some organizations even attempt to support the communities of reintegrated street children by creating financial incentives to keep the reintegrated child at home and in school. CPCS, for example, has recently launched a program that provides schools in these communities with conditional financial support; this support strategically persuades the school’s principal to ensure that the child remains in class long after reintegration, else the funding will cease. CPCS’s “Back to School, Back to Home” program has already benefitted twelve children, and after one year CPCS plans to pay for a library to be built in the community. Another strategy employed by Just-One involves sponsoring the education of the reintegrated child as well as his or her siblings, providing support for the whole family as to not “reward” only the reintegrated child for having left home in the first place.

Street children management programs are centered on providing necessities such as food, medical care, and shelter as a part of their risk-reduction services. Outside of the shelters, NGO social workers roam the tourist areas and congregation points of street children in Kathmandu. In the field, these social workers provide risk-reduction services such as information about drugs and diseases, first-aid medical care, and an invitation to a drop-in center. Inside of the drop-in centers, organizations typically provide food, medical care, informal education, and counseling for children who have taken the first step towards leaving the street. Some centers provide space for the child to sleep, even if he or she only wants to stay for one night. Every drop-in center

visited during the course of this study maintained an “open-door policy,” meaning that at any time during the day a child would be able to come and go without fear of being detained.

Rehabilitation programs are characterized by long-term residential care as well as imparting some form of education upon the child before attempting to reintegrate that child with society. The children tend to live in a communal space where other children of their own age group, experience, and interests surround them. The children all tend to receive either formal or informal education as deemed necessary by the particular NGO. If possible, some NGOs will send their children to a government school, though this is usually quite a difficult adjustment for children who once lived on the street. If the child is nearing the legal working age in Nepal, many rehabilitation programs have established either internal or external vocational training contacts. In fact, programs like Shangri-la Home’s Youth Rehabilitation Program receive “remarkable” children through referrals from NGOs like CPCS, VOC, and APC-Nepal to participate in vocational training. Just a few of the vocational opportunities for the children include pottery, carpentry, painting, driving, automotive repair, and cooking. Some rehabilitation programs believe that although the family may originally have been the problem, the family is also the solution. “Sometimes families are very happy to find their lost son,” says Yam Lama, but “sometimes the families are not happy when their children come back. In the case of a second marriage, a stepfather or stepmother, they don’t care for the [stepchild].” In this case, job placement and housing are often facilitated to ensure that the effort and funding spent on the child is not lost.

Supplementary services offered by NGOs frequently serve the day-to-day needs of the boys in a more practical fashion. For example, CPCS offers an “Educational Ticket” system, which is a creative method of teaching the children social entrepreneurship by offering any child who attends a class one “ET”; in exchange for ET’s, the children can purchase personal items, giving them an incentive to stay off the streets and in class (e.g. 5 ET for a toothbrush, 12 ET for sandals, 40 ET for a shirt). In another case, at the VOC drop-in center there is a handicraft training center where children can actually earn real money. If they participate in the day’s training, they get paid. If they produce things, VOC will buy them. Shuresh Bhandari explains that “we decided that if you are able to prepare a pen holder, then [you’ll] get maximum 20 NRs. And if they are able to prepare a very nice house in one day, [they] will get 100 NRs.” Money is then stored in an internal banking system (a service that is also offered by CPCS) where children may deposit their money for the future, safekeeping it from outside threats such as robbery.

## Actuality

In the grand scheme of the streets, it is an unfortunate fact that the support which is provided by NGOs actually may sustain the lives of some street children. With their food, clothing, and shelter provided for, a drop-in center may function as a loose safety net when the



child gets into trouble while still enabling the child to travel outside of the shelter by day and live the street life. Though these children are not allowed to bring tobacco products or solvents within the centers themselves, it was observed in this study that boys would simply dig a hole or find a crack in a wall to store their substances overnight. However, prohibition within centers is not uniform. Regarding tobacco, multiple participating NGOs allow children to smoke within a designated section of their shelter or take quick breaks just outside of the gate. One NGO even reportedly facilitates the use of solvents, tabs, and other drugs under supervision if it is deemed absolutely necessary to continue the child's rehabilitation. This type of facilitation typically does not occur more than a few times, though tobacco cessation within rehabilitation centers is sometimes impossible.



Two boys, known to routinely sleep in an NGO drop-in center, begging for money among the stopped traffic in Gausala. (11/29/2014 @ 11:48am)

At the moment, some street boys are simply taking advantage of the services that are offered by the NGO rather than aiming eventually towards rehabilitation or reintegration. Inge Bracke even mentioned that there are a small percentage of boys living in Kathmandu that are the “champions” of “NGO shopping.” This means that the boys rotate between NGOs, traveling from one place to another to benefit from the days each week when a particular NGO serves meat, when one center distributes nice clothing, or when another screens a movie. While the NGOs themselves are aware of “NGO shoppers,” these children are never turned away. This is because while some children are simply taking advantage of drop-in centers for their own personal comfort, they have taken one step in the direction towards rehabilitation by traveling to

an NGO. At the very moment that (or *if*) he or she decides it is time to change his or her lifestyle, the NGO social workers are poised to catch the child and offer rehabilitative services.

On the other hand, NGOs have recently come under fire for participating in the institutionalization of children, allegedly behaving like businesses while not serving the real, long-term interests of the children themselves. “Collecting children in a center is socially not good,” says Yam Lama, because children who grow up in centers are unlikely to ever learn the tasks associated with daily life in Nepal. In one example, Lama noted that upon returning two siblings home to their family, neither was able to make tea for their guests. Financially, one major critique of long-term care facilities is the method of “sponsorship,” in which a foreign donor makes an monthly or annual contribution to support one child. Therefore, the center or home has a vested interest in *not* reintegrating that child with his or her family because the loss of the child is also the loss of a steady sponsorship-based donation.

By treating the process of prevention, risk-reduction, and rehabilitation as separate stages in the evolution of the street cycle, NGOs have taken a large step towards sorting between boys who would like to be reintegrated into Nepali society and those who do not. On the whole, the boys are not necessarily “delinquents,” and so the NGOs accordingly do not function like prisons. All of the NGOs considered in this study aimed towards quality rehabilitation programs, expressing that a poorly executed rehabilitation was more detrimental to Nepali society and to the individual street boy than not intervening at all. “When you send a kid [back] badly,” says Jean-Christophe Ryckmans, “with all the freedom he enjoyed here he will convince some of his friends from his village and bring them back on the street.” The children enjoy the freedom of the streets more than anything, and thus confining them to a center too early or too forcefully can lead to runaways and aversions towards future contact with NGOs.

Though the impact of NGOs upon street boys is not always statistically promising, the existence of these services is a strong ladder upon which motivated boys may climb off the street. The flaws in the NGO safety net that perpetuate the existence of street children are clear, yet the long-term and informed assistance of an NGO is far preferable to short-term damage provided by kind-hearted passersby. Acknowledging that the majority of the boys do not choose the path towards institutionalized rehabilitation, the few who do so quite literally receive a second chance to step away from the street and towards Nepali society through NGO intervention.

# Conclusion

Are they stuck, or is the street life a self-imposed reality for the street boys of Kathmandu? Paradoxically sustained by charitable organizations while living in the shadow of stigma, the street boys of Kathmandu are in abundance as the result of a largely transparent yet under-acknowledged cycle.

Boys who take to the streets tend to do so of their own accord. However, this does not mean to imply that they do so without regard for their past. Be it domestic violence, intolerable step-parents, paternal alcoholism, or a self-imposed cause, the boys all choose to leave home and travel to an urban environment. In this urban environment their expectations of wealth and prosperity go unfulfilled, yet the freedom-oriented lifestyle of the streets (supported by well-intentioned, generous passersby) is preferable to their past.

On the streets, the lifestyle of the child is entirely different than that of children who live in their own homes. This study found that substance abuse was not only common, but also open on the streets; in other words, the boys exercised minimal discretion when using drugs. Furthermore, while passersby are content to give the boys money or food, they are seldom interested in holding the boys accountable for their respective drug usage. Income generation tended to differ based on the age of the boy, the younger boys more frequently engaging in begging while the more mature boys engaging in rag-picking or criminal activity. Gangs are the realm in which substance abuse and income generation meet, where boys are encouraged to share their income and expertise for the mutual beneficence of their gang. The social context of substance abuse is, in the findings of this study, the aspect of the street lifestyle that allows the boys to pass their time in comfort. In the gang environment a fair amount of sexual abuse also takes place, though the patterns of sexual abuse *among* street boys appears to have evolved in the past 5 years to incorporate the proportionally increasing female street population.

The street boys are supported by dozens of NGOs. These NGOs are responsible for providing prevention, risk-reduction, and rehabilitative services. One of the major obstacles inhibiting intervention is age, where either the boys are too young to understand why someone is attempting to get them off the street or too old to readjust to Nepali society. The hallmark of many of these organizations is a drop-in center or field team focused on risk-reduction, which in some ways sustain the lifestyle of the street boys. By providing basic necessities, the income that the boys are able to generate from their daily routine on the street may be spent on substances rather than used for food. In the same way that kind-hearted, well-intentioned foreigners and locals provide the boys with the physical means of encouragement to remain in an unstable and unsafe environment, these centers encourage some of the boys to persist in the street lifestyle; however, these types of centers also play a vital role in providing a long-term foundational space

upon which a child who seeks meaningful rehabilitation or reintegration will find support. For these boys, the drop-in center is the first phase towards re-socialization into Nepali society.

The street boys of Kathmandu are more than just cracks in the pavement, unnoticed and uncared for. They are a “sub-society,” an exclusive yet open community within themselves. Complete with dialect, hierarchical organizational systems, and recognizable patterns, the street boys are by no means lesser members of society due to their disregard for social norms. Nevertheless, foremost in addressing the existence of the street boys appears to be educating the public and commercial spheres of Kathmandu that giving money or selling substances to the boys is unacceptable. Utilized properly, the support system set up by NGOs can house and feed a significant portion of the current street population. Educated properly, shopkeepers (who make a minuscule profit by selling solvents or cigarettes to the children) can be made aware of the need for effective and community-oriented cooperation to restrict the access street boys enjoy to substances, a crucial component in reducing the number of children who remain on the street in the long-term.

Thus, though they appear to be self-sufficient, the fate of the street boys of Kathmandu is entirely reliant upon the very society that rejects the street boys of Kathmandu: their lives are in the hands and pockets of everyone around them.

# Methodology

Over the course of this study the majority of the data collected was procured through field observation, interviews, and interactions with former street children. Field observations took place mainly in Mitrapark, Siphel, and Pashupatinath, though shorter periods of observation were also conducted in Thamel, Basantapur, Jorpati, the Bhandarkhal Jungle, Gausala, Kalanki, and Jawalakhel. Field observation sessions primarily produced data regarding the ways in which street children generate income, the locations where the street children tend to congregate, and the types of shops or businesses that are responsible for selling dendrite glue to the street children.

Interviews were formally conducted with a dozen NGO affiliates. Different NGOs each explained their relationship with the street cycle differently. Because the numerous NGOs in Kathmandu all serve the needs of street children in a variety of ways, these interviews exposed the ways that NGOs may discourage and other times enable the very existence of street children. NGO interviews were mainly conducted with founders, managers, and program coordinators of existing NGOs, but some interviews were conducted with staff from previously-existing NGOs or specifically employed communications officers. Volunteers were not considered in this study.

In addition to these interviews, some of the most straightforward research was conducted during daily interactions with former—sometimes referred to as “recovering”—street children in a supervised setting. Many of the children openly share past experiences unprompted as well as numerous accounts of their interactions with current street children. In fact, at times it was possible to see their open, unprompted recognition of the stigma associated with being a street child in comparison to their current lives.

Regarding visual sources, taking and gathering pictures of street children was a component of the research. At times these photos depicted children using or high on drugs, drinking alcohol, and purchasing dendrite glue from hardware stores. All photos published in this study have been altered by blurring faces and distinguishing features in order to maintain anonymity among those who were photographed. Furthermore, all photographs of children published in this report depict children who are either currently or who have at some point been affiliated with an NGO drop-in center or field worker.

Physical data collection was recorded in a research log detailing each day’s events chronologically as well as a small field journal. Every interaction and sighting of a street child was recorded in the field journal, noting the number of children, approximate ages, actions, possessions, and drug usage. Regarding interviews, all conversations that were recorded were later transcribed into encrypted digital documents. Sensitive information was always handled with written consent, while general information and interactions were handled with verbal consent.

# Limitations

The limitations of this study included time constraints preventing original quantitative data collection, language barrier, and the inconvenience of expanding the target group.

The amount of time afforded to conduct the research allowed only for meaningful quantitative data to be gathered from previously published written sources and from interviews. While some quantities were gathered within this study (e.g. quantity of cigarettes smoked each day by a street boy on average), the majority of the quantities given in this report were derived from publications of the last five years. These publications typically were the result of the cooperative efforts of NGOs and independent research in Nepal. These quantities were more than adequate to create this report. Unfortunately, the ability to build a relationship with a specific (and likely large) organization to the point of creating a unique questionnaire to be completed by their children within the given time frame was impossible. Doing so, in the experience of the researcher and other consulted researchers, would also have been largely inappropriate in the given time frame.

Language barrier was an inevitable difficulty to navigate during this study. Though Nepali research colleagues readily provided translations of exchanges and interactions among street youth in Kathmandu, inevitably the subtleties of these exchanges were at times unrecorded. Understanding Nepali language fluently, for example, poises one to understand when a dialect or uncommon phrase is being used, a faculty that was not afforded in this study. Furthermore, while the language barrier facilitated distance between the researcher and the target group, such distance inevitably impacted the results of this study. In addition, the ability to communicate with police and regional security forces without a medium may have proved useful in gathering firsthand accounts of street patterns and the boys' relationship with criminal activity.

Finally, scope of this study was limited by the availability of the target group within the given time frame. The target group of this study was originally street children (both male and female), though was later narrowed to street boys due to the difficulties of involving female street youth in the research. The fact is that more than 9 out of 10 street youth observed during the research period were male. Furthermore, though this study attempts to create a holistic view of Kathmandu and its points of congregation for street boys, the majority of field observation was conducted in the Northeastern areas of the city as well as Thamel and Basantapur. With a greater amount of time, it is expected that research would have continued to expand further into Kalanki and Kalimati with greater intensity. In addition, with time the ability to visit centers for women would hopefully have become possible.

# Consent Protocol

## *Defining Sample Groups*

Crafting an effective and meaningful profile of street boys in Kathmandu called for four unique sample groups: NGO affiliates, caretakers, street boys (below the age of 18 years, supervised by caretaker), and former street boys (preferably beyond the age of 18 years). Before pursuing any individual in the sample group, the ISP advisor was consulted and a caretaker or NGO social worker was asked to supervise all non-NGO interviews. Sample groups were defined by qualities such as profession, age, and living situation; thus, question sets were tailored to each of these sample groups and reviewed by SIT, an ISP advisor, and (where applicable) the caretaker/social worker involved.

NGO affiliates were defined as the staff of a registered non-governmental organization in Nepal who are (a) beyond 18 years old, (b) had worked with the NGO for over half a year, and (c) had been pre-determined to comprehend the specific information and subject matter pertaining to the study. NGO interviews were mainly conducted with founders, managers, and program coordinators of existing NGOs, but some interviews were conducted with staff from previously existing NGOs or specifically employed communications officers (always satisfying the above conditions). Volunteers were not considered in this study, in part because of their (often) transient status with NGOs and also due to internal restrictions concerning volunteers disclosing information about the NGO itself.

Caretakers were defined as either former NGO staff or independent individuals who were (a) beyond 18 years old and (b) had formally taken custody of “street children” (defined on pp. 6) either at the time of the interview or in the past. Locating individuals who were *specifically* grassroots caretakers was notably difficult and as a result, the caretaker questions set was used very few times.

“Street boys” were defined as (a) being between the age of 5 and 17 years old, (b) meeting the UNICEF “children of the street” definition, and (c) most importantly, having been in contact or received assistance from an NGO. Specific lengths are further explained in the section *Regarding the Term “Street Child”* (pp. 6). The saturation of the Kathmandu Valley with both street children and NGO services to manage the street population makes the street population difficult to steadily define, and thus consultation with a social worker and ISP advisor was crucial. “Street boys” in and on the street were never interviewed. Four former “street boys” in rehabilitation programs who were under the age of 18 participated in interviews conducted through a social worker and supervised by both a caretaker and myself.

Former street children were defined as (a) being beyond 18 years old, (b) having lived on the street for at least three months, and (c) no longer living on the street. Meetings with former street children occurred in in NGO settings as well as private meetings arranged by the respective former street child himself. Before interviewing any former street child, consultation and confirmation was vetted through the ISP advisor.

## *Consent Protocol*

While conducting interviews and collecting data with adults, consent was always acquired either verbally or with a written informed consent form. Sensitive information was always handled with written consent, while general information and interactions were handled with verbal consent. Data collected through the observation of public behavior was vetted through my process of results management (see below).

Though the research itself called for very little direct interaction with minors, the presence of an NGO affiliate or social worker made it possible to conduct research with a handful of young people who have at one point lived on the street. As stated earlier, no interviews were conducted with “current” street boys. To acquire consent, the NGO affiliate or social worker would give the subject an understanding of the researcher, the nature of the research, the expected role of the subject, and state the *requirement* of anonymity for the subject. After subject confirmation, written or verbal consent was then once again acquired from the NGO affiliate, social worker, or (in two cases) caretaker to confirm that they had reviewed the interview questions and all parties felt fully comfortable proceeding. After these conditions were satisfied, responses were recorded without audio to ensure anonymity.

All interviews and data collected from adults was acquired through verbal or written consent. Verbal consent was acquired by giving the subject an understanding of the researcher, the nature of the research, the expected role of the subject, the documents of compensation the subject would receive, and a clear offer for preferential anonymity. Then the subject was asked for permission to audio record the interview or data collection session. After terms were agreed upon, data was recorded within the field journal and then, if applicable, confirmed through the audio recording. Written consent was acquired through a written consent form, a copy of which was submitted alongside my approval to the SIT Institutional Review Board. Presented to the subject prior to the start of the formal interview or data collection session, the written consent form outlines the same terms as the verbal consent procedure, as well as allowing for a space to write in special terms and conditions before the researcher and subject co-signed the form (e.g. sending highlighted selections for proofreading and approval before a certain date).



## *Results Management*

Results management protocols varied by three source types: interviews, public behaviors, and visuals. Many individual sources were compiled on different sets of terms, all of which were logged and/or coded in a confidential field journal.

After receiving consent, the majority of interviews were chronicled via audio recordings and results were later transcribed into encrypted digital documents. As stated above, verbal consent was noted in my field journal and again through audio record. The audio record transcriptions were coded and then encrypted as to protect the identity of subjects from unexpected digital exposure. In cases where a request was made to delete the audio recording after transcription, such action was taken; otherwise, audio recordings were encrypted and placed in a password-protected folder.

Public behavior data collection was recorded in a research log detailing each day's events chronologically as well as a small field journal. Every interaction and sighting of a street child was recorded in the field journal, noting the number of children, approximate ages (assisted by social worker), actions, and visible possessions. Over the course of this study the majority of the data collected was procured through field observation. Field observations rotated between in Mitrapark, Siphah, and Pashupatinath; as stated above, shorter periods of observation were also conducted in Thamel, Basantapur, Jorpati, the Bhandarkhal Jungle, Gausala, Kalanki, and Jawalakhel. Field observation sessions revealed the ways in which street children generate income, the locations where the street children tend to congregate, and the types of shops or businesses that are responsible for selling dendrite glue to the street children. This data was coded and kept confidential until approval was received from the ISP advisor to confirm its authenticity.

All visual sources considered by this study were gathered and appended under the supervision of a social worker and/or ISP advisor. Taking and gathering pictures of street children was an approved component of the research, though always from a distance and never in a prompted setting as to ensure a genuine observation of public behavior. At times these photos depicted children using or high on drugs, drinking alcohol, and purchasing dendrite glue from hardware stores. As a requirement for all visuals published in this study, faces and distinguishing features were blurred in order to maintain anonymity among those who were photographed. Any and all photographs of children published in this report depict children who are either currently or who at some point have been affiliated with an NGO drop-in center or field worker, even if the setting in which they are depicted is not within the NGO drop-in center.

# Ideas for Further Study

- Why do so many working children (e.g. tea shop helpers, micro-van conductors, shop assistants) exist in Kathmandu?
  - How are their lives different from those of children in the educational system?
  - How are their lives different from those of street children?
  - What NGOs and services exist that either prevent or perpetuate the existence of working children?
- How does divorce affect a family in Nepal, and what are the main reasons for a divorce?
  - How does a child navigate a divorce in Nepal?
  - How does custody and legal interpretations of a family play into a divorce in Nepal?
  - What is the variation in frequency of divorce in rural areas versus that of urban areas?
- What are the types of addiction that are most prevalent among adults in Nepal?
  - How prevalent is alcohol abuse among men and women in Nepal?
  - How prevalent is tobacco usage among men and women in Nepal?
  - How prevalent is drug (i.e. smoked, inhaled, intravenous) abuse in Nepal?
  - What, if anything, does the government of Nepal do that either reduces or promotes addictions in Nepal?
- Why do girls take to the streets of Kathmandu?
  - How does this relate to the sexual trafficking market in Nepal?
  - Are girls at a greater or lesser risk of becoming street children in urban environments?
- Why is adult homelessness rampant in urban environments of Nepal?
  - What are the main causes of adult homelessness?
  - How do tourists and NGOs either intervene or perpetuate adult homelessness in Nepal?
  - How does stigma affect upward mobility among those who are homeless in Nepal?

# Participant Information

## *NGOs*

APC-Nepal

Participant: Yam Lama

Date of Participation: November 13th, 2014

Email: [apcnepal.direction@gmail.com](mailto:apcnepal.direction@gmail.com) /

Mobile: +977-9851054578

Child Protection Centers and Services

Participants: Jean-Christophe Ryckmans & Inge Bracke

Date of Participation: November 18th, 2014

Email: [cpcs\\_direction@yahoo.com](mailto:cpcs_direction@yahoo.com) / Mobile:

N/A

Heartbeat

Participant: Juju Kaji

Date of Participation: November 18th, 2014

Email: [kajjuju@hotmail.com](mailto:kajjuju@hotmail.com) / Mobile:

+977-9851050299

Just-One

Participant: Declan Murphy

Date of Participation: November 12th, 2014

Email: [info@just-one.org](mailto:info@just-one.org) / Mobile:

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ROKPA

Participant: Bijay Shrestha

Date of Participation: November 8th, 2014

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+977-9841406212

Shangri-la Home Youth Rehabilitation Program

Participants: Pradeep Parajuli & Dilendra Bhandari

Date of Participation: November 19th, 2014

Emails: [pradip70@hotmail.com](mailto:pradip70@hotmail.com) / [bhandari-dilendra@hotmail.com](mailto:bhandari-dilendra@hotmail.com)

Voice of Children

Participants: Shuresh Bhandari & Govinda Koirala

Date of Participation: November 20th, 2014

Emails:

[communication@voiceofchildren.org.np](mailto:communication@voiceofchildren.org.np) / [govinda@voiceofchildren.org.np](mailto:govinda@voiceofchildren.org.np)

Volunteer Foundation Nepal

Participant: Lalit Shahi

Date of Participation: November 7th, 2014

Email: [info@vfnvolunteer.org](mailto:info@vfnvolunteer.org) / Mobile:

+977-9851087670

## *Street Children (Current and Former)*

Anonymous (Kopan)

Age: 15 years old

Time off the street: 10 months

Anonymous (Tinthana)

Age: 14 years old

Time off the street: 2 months

Anonymous (Krishna Mandir)  
Age: 13 years old  
Time off the street: N/A (Current)

Anonymous (Boudha)  
Age: 24 years old  
Time off the street: 18 years

Anonymous (Kopan)  
Age: 12 years old  
Time off the street: N/A (Current)

Anonymous (Outside of Kathmandu Valley)  
Age: 33 years old  
Time off the Street: 24 years

### *Other*

Dolma, Tenzin  
Title: Many Faces of Karma (Former NGO Educational Staff)  
Dates of Participation: November 12th, 2014  
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Pandey, Lalit  
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Sangbo, Lobsang  
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November 30th, 2014  
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# Interview Questions

## NGO Affiliate

1. Background: Name, Age, Home Village/City, NGO Name, Affiliation, Number of years working with the NGO
2. Why does your NGO work with street children in Kathmandu?
3. What services does this NGO offer the street children of Kathmandu?
  - 3.1. What makes this NGO distinct from others?
4. Can you walk me through what you believe to be the daily routine of a street child?
  - 4.1. How do street children organize themselves?
  - 4.2. How do unsupported street children generate income?
  - 4.3. What do you believe to be the most difficult aspect of living on the street for the children in Kathmandu?
5. Does this NGO deal with dendrite glue sniffing?
  - 5.1. If so, how does this NGO approach the issue of dendrite glue sniffing?
6. How do you feel that the existence of this NGO affects the existence of the street children themselves?
  - 6.1. How is the nature of the relationship between NGOs and the street cyclical?
7. What are the greatest challenges you have found working with the street children of Kathmandu?
8. What are the greatest accomplishments you have experienced working with the street children of Kathmandu?

## Caretaker

1. Background: Name, Age, Home Village/City, Affiliation (if any), Number of years as a caretaker
2. How long have you cared for street children (or a street child) in Kathmandu?
  - 2.1. How did these children (or child) come to you?
  - 2.2. As a caretaker, what services or aid do you offer the children?
3. As a caretaker of street children in Kathmandu, have you had any interaction with dendrite glue sniffing?
  - 3.1. If so, how do you approach the issue of dendrite glue sniffing?
4. How do you feel that your generosity affects the existence of the street children themselves?
5. What are the most challenging and rewarding aspects of being a caretaker for street children in Kathmandu?
6. What do you see as the future for the children who have been or are currently under your care?

### Minor (under 18 years old)

1. Background: Name, Age, Home Village/City, Number of years on/off the street
2. Why do you live on the streets of Kathmandu?
  - 2.1.How did you get here?
3. When you want to buy something, how do you get money?
  - 3.1.What do you buy?
  - 3.2.On the street, what don't you need to buy?
4. Have you ever bought or sniffed dendrite glue?
  - 4.1.Why do or did you sniff dendrite glue?
  - 4.2.[if applicable] How did you get your dendrite?
5. On the street, how do you protect yourself?
6. If you need food, water, clothing, or shelter, what are some places that you can go?
  - 6.1.Are there any NGOs that you have been to (e.g. drop-in centers, transit homes, children's homes) or benefitted from?
  - 6.2.What places have you stayed at, and for how long have you stayed?
7. What do you like about living on the streets of Kathmandu?
  - 7.1.What do you miss when living on the streets of Kathmandu?
8. What are your plans for the future?

### Former Street Child (above 18 years old, no longer on the street)

1. Background: Name, Age, Home Village/City, Number of years off the street
2. Why did you live on the streets of Kathmandu?
  - 2.1.How did you get there?
3. While living on the streets, what did you do to generate income?
  - 3.1.What did you buy?
  - 3.2.On the street, what didn't you need to buy?
4. Did you ever use drugs? Why?
  - 4.1.Have you ever bought or sniffed dendrite glue?
5. On the street, how did you protect yourself?
6. If you needed food, water, clothing, or shelter, what are some places that you can go?
  - 6.1.Are there any NGOs that you have been to (e.g. drop-in centers, transit homes, children's homes) or benefitted from?
  - 6.2.What places have you stayed at, and for how long did you stay?
7. What do you miss about living on the streets of Kathmandu?
  - 7.1.[if applicable] What would you say to the foreigner who gave you 5 rupees today?
8. How and why did you leave the streets of Kathmandu?

# Annotated Bibliography

Baker, Rachel. *PLA Notes Issue 25* (London: International Institute for Environment and Development, 2001), pp. 56-60.

*This text titled “PRA with Street Children in Nepal” outlines the field methods used by Rachel Baker, one of the few scholars who participate in the study of Nepal’s street boys. Baker outlines how she inquired about the social/health status of children (boys aged 10-16 years old) appropriately and created participatory methods of research that facilitated mutual ownership over the research process. Baker also gives clear descriptions of the limitations and boundaries that inhibited some of her research, such as inquiring into certain sensitive aspects of the children’s health.*

Baker, Rachel. *Cultural Survival Quarterly vol. 24* (Cambridge: Cultural Survival Inc., 2000), pp. 1-49.

*Rachel Baker’s “The Importance of Being Connected: Perspectives from Nepali ‘Street Children’” provides insight into the daily lives of rag-picker children, the scrap dealers with whom they exchange plastic, and the inalienable stigma associated with this work. Baker notes that in some ways, the life of a rag-picker is filled with the same level of happiness and camaraderie as any other profession, though fills a specific social role—that of the “khate”—symptomatic of societal reclusion.*

CPCS Annual Progress Report, January – June 2014

*As the most recent annual progress report published by CPCS, this document gives a summary of the children, services, and accomplishments of CPCS’s various locations during the year 2014. In addition to giving brief descriptions of the basic services provided by CPCS (education, food, shelter, medical care), the report also offers descriptions of the creative services that CPCS has created; these include the incentive programs such as the Educational Ticket system, the Street Bank, and the Children’s Central Government.*

CWIN, *Alcohol and Drug Use Among Street Children* (Kathmandu: CWIN, 2002).

*This report from August of 2002 by Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre (CWIN) is a follow-up report to their 2001 publication “Alcohol and Drug use in Nepal with Reference to Children.” In this report, CWIN provides quantitative data regarding caste/ethnicity patterns, street practices, and drug/alcohol usage among street children in Nepal, though mainly centered in the Kathmandu area.*

Himalayan News Service. "Kathmandu Street Kid Now an Author, Activist." *Himalayan Times* [Kathmandu] 24 Sept. 2014: 2.

*“Kathmandu Street Kid Now an Author, Activist” tells the story of Basu Rai, once a street child in Kathmandu and now an author. The Himalayan Times hails his transformation from “begging, pickpocketing, getting into fights, facing brutal attacks and exploitation” to becoming an entrepreneurial success. The article contributes his rise from poverty to the actions of the NGO Child Workers in Nepal (CWIN), reporting that Basu himself would like to open a shelter for street children.*

Integrated Regional Information Networks. "NEPAL: Street Children Sniff Glue to Beat Hunger Pangs." IRIN. <http://www.irinnews.org/report/74899/nepal-street-children-sniff-glue-to-beat-hunger-pangs> (accessed September 24, 2014).

*This article from Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) specifically addresses the issue of rampant dendrite addiction among street children in Nepal. IRIN reports on the dangers of toluene, the desired drug in dendrite based glue, citing CWIN's statistical information regarding the addiction among street children. In addition, the article touches upon the health problems associated with dendrite usage.*

Kharel, Rupa. "Street Children in Nepal Struggling with AIDS" [http://english.ohmynews.com/ArticleView/article\\_view.aspmenu=A11100&no=292067&rel\\_no=1&back\\_url=](http://english.ohmynews.com/ArticleView/article_view.aspmenu=A11100&no=292067&rel_no=1&back_url=) (accessed 17 November 2014).

*This article discusses the findings of a Child Nepal study which discovered that as a result of two independent tests organized by an NGO in Kathmandu during 2002 found HIV and AIDS among the street children population. "In these tests, 25 out of 80 (31 percent) street children were HIV positive, and 16 out of 32 (50 percent) 'high-risk' street children were HIV positive."*

Lawin, Mustafa. "Shadows of the Street" *Theses in Social Services*, (Diak South: Diaconia University of Applied Sciences, 2010).

*Mustafa Lawin's thesis is the result of multiple months of anthropological study in Kathmandu with the intention of producing a documentary to raise awareness about the topic. Lawin brings light to feudal, geo-political, and socio-economic factors that cause children to take lives on the street. In addition, Lawin discusses the many internal and external abuses that boys face on the streets, such as in-depth accounts of sexual abuse.*

Panter-Brick, Catherine. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 31 (Durham, Annual Reviews, 2002), pp. 147-171.

*Catherine Panter-Brick's article "Street Children, Human Rights, and Public Health: A Critique and Future Directions" makes an attempt at showing the generic nature of the term "street child," addressing the stigma attached to this label in multiple countries, one of which being Nepal. Panter-Brick argues that the stigma surrounding the homeless children living on city streets prevents them from building personal resilience and, in turn, discourages future career opportunities.*

Ryckmans, Jean-Christophe. *The Street Children of Nepal* (Belgium: CPCS International, 2012).

*Self-described as an "Anthroposociological Study of Social, Cultural, and Communicational Practices," this 2012 publication of CPCS provides quantitative, qualitative and firsthand account-based research regarding how children arrive on the streets, the working conditions of the streets, drug usage, sexuality, gang activities, police involvement, and cultural practices among the street population in Nepal.*



United Nations, "Legal and Policy: Concerns Related to UDI Harm Reduction in SAARC Countries." (Geneva: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2007).

*This United Nations report outlines specific drug abuses and control methods used in SAARC countries. The report compiles information regarding drug usage in Nepal under section 3.E.1. The report in its entirety discusses the issues in SAARC countries with many drugs, one of which being dendrite glue used as an inhalant drug (among other abused drugs such as cannabis, alcohol, and buprenorphine).*

World Health Organization. "Toluene (EHC 52, 1986)." *International Programme on Chemical Safety*, 1986.

*This World Health Organization report investigates the chemical properties, toxicity, and environmental impacts of toluene—the active ingredient in dendrite glue. Section 1.1.5 of the study reports that extended exposure to toluene via inhalation may immediately cause disorientation, mood liability, convulsions, and even coma. However, in children aged 8-14, toluene has been found to also “lead to permanent neurological damage.”*

