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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by the Consortium for Street Children, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[14 February 2011]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Street children: what data and research are needed for effective policies?*

The exact number of children working and/or living on the street remains unknown, although UNICEF estimated the number to be 100 million in 1989. However, that figure has remained surprisingly static for more than 20 years - while the global population has grown over the same period by more than 30% - from some 5.2 billion in 1989 to 6.8 billion in 2009 and urbanisation continues apace, with over half the world's population now living in cities. This worldwide lack of joined up and longitudinal data and research around the issue of street children often result in rushed and short term policy measures being developed and implemented at national and local levels, with no tangible long term benefits for street children.

A recent 'mapping and gapping' literature review¹ of international research studies about street children, commissioned by the Consortium for Street Children, aimed to improve the understanding of street children by identifying recent advances in academic scholarship which began in the 1970s, and identify priority areas for academic research on street children, in order to build a stronger strategic base for the development of advocacy, policy and programme design initiatives for street children.

In particular the review found that:

- Research on policies relevant to street children is thin and fragmented. Street children are rarely a specific focus of policy, and implementation of policies of relevance rarely includes street children. There is a need for more robust knowledge development and systematic engagement with policy-makers to improve policy-making with and for children connected to the street.
- There is little economic or financial research about street children, even though budgets and financial resources are very significant constraints in ensuring and restoring street children's access to their rights. Development assistance is found to prioritise economic growth, even though reduction of income inequality is now

** Action for Brazil's Children (ABC) Trust, Action for Children in Conflict, Action International Ministries, Association of Network for Community Empowerment (ANCE), Calcutta Hope, Child Welfare Scheme, Children in Hunger, Congo Children Trust, Cutting Edge Theatre Productions, Edith Wilkins Street Children Foundation, International Children's Trust, International HIV/AIDS Alliance, IUT de Mulhouse, Latin American Foundation for the Future (LAFF), Sathi Bangalore, SKCV Children's Trust, The Mandala Trust, Widows & Orphans International, SOS Children's Villages (UK), Africa Foundation Stone, Amnesty International (Children's Human Rights Network), Cheka Sana Children's Trust, Children in Crisis, Childs i Foundation, Depaul Foundation, Frishta Children's Village, Mi Arca, Mkombozi Centre for Street Children, Retrak, SOWED Kenya, Street Child Africa, Street Kids International, Students Supporting Street Kids, Task Brasil Trust, The Esther Benjamins Trust, Walou, Amazing Children Uganda, Amos Trust, Caretakers of the Environment Tanzania (COET), Doctors to Children, Glads House, Hope for Children, Hope Foundation, ICT- UK, Jubilee Action, Keeping Children Safe Coalition, Moroccan Children's Trust, Msizi Africa, Plan International UK, Railway Children, Save the Children UK, Sharpe's Children Foundation, Stepping Stones Nigeria, Street Action, Street Child of Sierra Leone, Street Kids Direct, StreetInvest, Toybox, ViaNiños UK, War Child UK, NGOs without consultative status, also sharing the views expressed in this statement.

¹ Street Children: A Mapping and Gapping Review of the Literature 2000-2010 (working title – to be published in March 2011 by the Consortium for Street Children. Authored by Dr Sarah Thomas de Benitez, and commissioned with support from Aviva).

understood to be important for reducing childhood poverty. Public social resources often do not have the reach to support street children.

- Research about interventions and models of care street children has been largely descriptive rather than analytical. Encouragingly, increasing attention is being paid to: impacts of interventions on street children; analysis of approaches behind models of care; exploration of child welfare and protection systems; the roles of families, youth and mobility in interventions.

The following policy recommendations were highlighted in the review:

- Street children must be distinguished, but not isolated, from other children in policy frameworks and intervention design, to respond to the nature of their multiple deprivations and to their street-connectedness.
- Transparency of information about budget allocations, child protection systems and evaluation of their impacts on children is needed to identify missing links between laws, policies, interventions and children's realities, and for preventative purposes for effective protection of their rights.
- Local level policies and interventions involving NGOs and local authorities must be supported by effective national laws and budgets to prevent and protect street children successfully.
- Investment in research is needed to develop and consolidate a strategic knowledge base capable of informing design of laws, policies and interventions to respond to the issue of street children.

Where next?

- We encourage States and UN institutions to compile and disseminate international data collection guidelines and best practice research with regards to street children, with the support and guidance from development practitioners, academics and street children themselves.
- We recommended that States and UN institutions take into account the role of private sector involvement and corporate social responsibility strategies in supporting the further development of street children specific research to enhance programme design and policy interventions.
- We urge States to create a political space for the active ongoing participation of street children as an integral part in the development and implementation of national action plans and child protection systems.
- We invite the relevant Special Procedures Mandate holders to encourage and support the development of street children related research and data collection in their investigations, reports and strategies which inform national policies.
- We recommend that States invest in, and create the political space for, the following analysis to take place to inform policy and programme design:
 - Analysis of government and international agency budgets: proportions and sums allocated for street children and the use to which they are put at national and local levels.
 - Comparative research on cost-effectiveness of NGO and government interventions in terms of impacts on street children.
 - Evaluation of impacts of income-generating activities, livelihoods training and microfinance for street children.

- Exploration of relationships between macroeconomic structures and street children's experiences of governmental protection and support to restore their rights.
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