

Street and Unsupervised Children of Mongolia

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1. Introduction

Globally, the diversity of experiences and definitions of street children are wide ranging, as are their growing numbers due to changes brought about by globalization, economic policies and development trends. In many regions of the world, the phenomenon of street children has a long history, whilst it has just emerged in others where it was unknown, especially in the ‘transitional’ countries. Whilst, acknowledging these differences together with the socio-economic and cultural specificity in each country, at the root cause of this phenomenon are poverty, inequality and violence, at a structural as well as household level. Street children are marginalized, discriminated against and excluded in mainstream society. Their rights to protection and access to basic rights to education, health, care and development are limited. Once on the street, children, youth and girls are vulnerable and ‘at risk’ to all forms of abuse, exploitation and discrimination. This further endangers their life, physical health and psychological well-being, as well as putting them at risk of being criminalized for petty theft, involvement in commercial sex, and detainment by law enforcement agencies.

Public and official attitudes to street children are often shrouded in negativity due to their perceived or actual involvement in petty crime, addictive habits, promiscuous behavior and prostitution of girls and begging. Whilst generally, street children are perceived as victims, threats or problems for society, this ignores the resourcefulness and reliance of street children and focusing on them as a resource. The possibilities for street and other vulnerable children as resources are enshrined in the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child; the key lies in the empowerment and true participation of children.

The impact of poverty as multi-dimensional factors in the lives of children and families world over is unabated. It is widely acknowledged that children who grow up in poverty, “are more likely to have learning difficulties, to drop out of school, to resort to drugs, to commit crimes, to be out of work, to become pregnant at an early age and to live lives that perpetuate poverty and disadvantage into succeeding generations”. (UNICEF 2001). The economic transition has brought about all kinds of deprivation from outright hunger to the disruption of previous norms and expectations from social welfare structures. As the recent study by UNICEF indicates, poverty persists for many children and it touches many more children over the years than the standard point-in-time snapshots. (Bradbury et al, 2000). This is a particularly important point, as any lost development during formative years of children cannot be easily recouped, or reversed in later life. Street and working children, whose access to basic services is severely limited, are particularly prone to the negative impacts of poverty that deny them opportunities to develop and live healthy and fulfilling lives.

Mongolia ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990. In addition, Mongolia and other state parties renewed their commitment to improving the status and rights in particular for children in especially difficult circumstances at the UN Special Session for Children in 2002. It is universally recognized that poverty is passed within families from generation to generation; that poor children are likely to grow into poor adults. Breaking this cycle of intergenerational poverty in the developing world is the priority of the Millennium Development goals agreed by the nations of the world at the special session of the UN General Assembly in 2000.

This report has two main parts:

- To provide an overview of the current situation on street and vulnerable children and those children in especially difficult circumstances.
“Street and unsupervised” children encompasses a wide range of vulnerable groups of children; as such they straddle both the child protection and children in conflict with the law of provisions and measures.
- To provide a framework of intervention on the rehabilitation of street and unsupervised older youth who have a long history of living on the streets and related recommendations on the proposal for a specialised institution for the Ministry of Social Welfare and Labour.

This assessment is based on a review of available legislation, official statistics and secondary literature. The assessment focus is on Ulaanbaatar as the majority of street and unsupervised children are predominately based here. In addition, interviews were conducted with individuals from the relevant ministries, the police department, city government officials, the National Board for Children, children’s care shelters and state institutions, international and national NGOs. A number of interviews were conducted with front-line social workers and juvenile inspectors.

Due to time constraints a few focus groups with street male youth attending NGO drop in shelters and young girls linked to the project on ‘youth girls at risk of prostitution’ were held. This was to elicit their views on the kind of support and provisions that would be helpful to them to reintegrate into mainstream society. The focus groups with the street male youth had to be re-organised and re-arranged a number of times due to their work schedules. In one instance completely abandoned as some of the male youths were extremely distressed as a result of living on the streets and a lack of trusted adults they could turn to for help. An independent needs assessment was undertaken by young people living in the state dormitory as to what they considered to be their needs for independent living and what support they required.

This assessment report includes recommendations and strategies for short and long term measures on legislation and policy. Also included are practical measures for children and family support services to prevent children from being disconnected from mainstream society and secondary levels of support.

2. Socio-Economic Context

Mongolia is a huge, landlocked country situated between Russia and China. It has a landmass of 1,566,000 sq km comprised of steppe, forested mountains and vast desert; it is roughly the size of Western Europe. It is home to less than 2.4 million people and has one of the lowest population densities in the world. Its climate is extremely harsh with temperatures plummeting in winter to –40C and rising in the summer to +40C.

Mongolia is divided into 21 *aimags* (provinces) and the capital city (Ulaanbaatar). The capital city and aimags are in turn divided into districts or soums (rural districts), and Khoroo (sub-districts) or baghs (rural sub-districts). In total there are 324 soums and 1,590 bags. The Mongolian Government Census 2000 revealed that 58.6% of the population lives in urban areas, with 32.5% of population concentrated in the capital city and there are significant population concentrations in the next largest aimag centres of Darkhan and Erdenet, and 41.4% in rural. It is now estimated that 51% of the total population lives in the 9 districts of Ulaanbaatar.

Since the 1990s Mongolia has been largely defined by the transition. The past decade has been characterised by rapid political and economic changes. Although liberalising the economy has brought many benefits, the transition period has not been smooth, resulting in lower living standards, unemployment and inflation. Whilst progress has been made in many areas, the gap between the rich and the poor has also widened and by 1998, 36% of the population was living below the poverty line¹. These periods of adjustment and their social effects are not transitory, but rather the adjustment processes are in a constant flux, greatly changing the economic and social situation in Mongolia. The economic challenges for Mongolia are tremendous; the early years were particularly difficult as inflation rose to more than 300% and have been problematic as Mongolia continues struggling to build its institutional capacity and reform its economic structures. GDP growth has been falling from 4.0% in 1997 to 1.1% in 2000.

The breakdown of the former Soviet Union infrastructures saw an abrupt halt of aid and heavy subsidies from Russia and the central government, education, health and other social support services have come under severe pressure – in remote areas in particular these systems are seen to have simply collapsed. In the initial stages of the transition the Government rapidly started to shut some industries, privatised others and made severe cuts in social services. For Mongolians this was a heavy blow, leaving many unemployed and, with no other sources of livelihood, many of the unemployed returned to herding. The opportunities to own livestock privately have also resulted in many more Mongolians returning to herding, with overgrazing and deforestation creating an ecological disaster. Poverty in rural and urban areas, exacerbated in recent years by consecutive droughts and ‘dzuds’ (a winter disaster) has devastated livestock. The effects of these harsh winters coupled with negative economic growth in rural areas have led to increase in migration to the urban centres and peri-urban areas. The push factors are unemployment, low living standards and lack of welfare support, and many believe that some or all of their problems can be resolved or improved in the urban centres and the capital city.

According to the 2000 census an estimated 35% of Mongolia’s population lives under the officially defined poverty line and 23% of the total population live in extreme poverty. The urban poor and homeless in Ulaanbaatar ger areas are especially vulnerable due to high costs of housing, fuel and staple food; their hardship is aggravated by severe climatic conditions. Children are acutely affected by poverty at present in Mongolia. Economic retrenchment places a severe burden on those most vulnerable in communities, including women, children and the elderly. Children suffer doubly from both the reductions in services for minors as well as the flow-on effect of economic recession on their parents and adult care givers. With the shrinking role of state, many of the structures that directly or indirectly protected and promoted the development of children have been weakened or dismantled. Access to, and quality of, health care, education and social services have declined. The UNDP Human Development Report highlights that between 1992 and 1998, as a proportion of GDP, government spending on health, education, and social security continued to drop – from 16.2% to 14.8%.

Mongolia has a young population. Despite the falling birth rates since Independence, almost half of the total population is under 18, and one quarter are adolescents. Child welfare support is seen to have been seriously compromised since the collapse of the socialist systems; child neglect, unsupervised children, school drop-outs and working children are examples. Given

¹ Living Standards Measurement Survey 1998, National Statistics Office/UNDP

the large percentage of the population under 18 who will eventually make up the bulk of the country's productive sector, the present decline in child welfare will impact seriously on the future economic and social well-being of the country unless urgent measures are taken to redress current shortcomings.

Cuts in social sector expenditure in the early period of the transition were dramatically rolled back reducing children's access to social welfare. The middle period of the economic transition shows a gradual increase in the overall social sector expenditure from 13.3% of GDP in 1995 to 21.5% in 2000. Similarly, the budgets for education and health also show gradual increases. However, the earlier transition reforms had severe impact on the erosion of the social welfare services, which in the past protected minors from extreme deprivation. This continues to strongly impact on children's welfare as the universal systems of social benefits are no longer possible, and the gradual increase in expenditure has minimal coverage for growing numbers of poor.

In 2000 primary school enrolment dropped to only 75.6% and completion rates for basic education were down from 87% in 1990 to only 64% in 1999. Many children dropped out of school or are denied access because schools are overcrowded, because they lack the necessary registration documents, adequate clothing in winter or cannot afford basic school supplies. The severely shrinking formal job market has meant that many children must work to help support their families, either in the home, or in the informal sectors. In particular, there is a high increase in the number of boys who drop out of school in rural areas to help their families with herding. This further restricts their access to education and healthy development. In Mongolia, as opposed to trends in other countries, the academic attendance of girls is significantly higher than that of boys. In high school 61.5% are girls and 38.5% are boys, whilst at tertiary level 70% of students are girls.² This gender disparity has to be placed in the broader social context of Mongolia. Women's equality to senior employment positions and politics is low and in the domestic sphere the demands made on girls and women are heavier, whilst boys traditionally inherit family property and livestock.

With the economic downturn have come other social problems for children. The negative impact on their parents has compounded their situation as parents find it increasingly difficult to support their offspring because of poverty and the decline in state support. Increasing incidence of alcoholism, domestic violence in the home, homelessness and family breakdown are all too well documented. Parents struggling to make a living are often required to spend long periods away from home and are finding it difficult to provide appropriate guidance and supervision to their children. Some children leave home because of the level of abuse in the family and in institutions, whilst others are abandoned and survive either in children's shelters or on the street.

Rates of crimes committed by children and young people are rising and there is an increasing engagement of young people in marginal and organised criminal activities linked to sexual exploitation, petty and violent crime and extortion. The increased risk factors for young people from lack of a secure protective family and community environment and a weakening in the protective factors, namely school, leisure and adequate vocation training opportunities, are contributing factors of crimes committed by children. There were 733 recorded juvenile crimes in 1991 rising to 1,676 in 2001, and of these many were committed by boys.

² Mongolian Adolescents Needs Assessment Survey Report 2000

The repercussion of these rapid changes is acutely felt by the Mongolian's 'transition generation' of children and adolescents. Whilst many opportunities are opening to this generation of children of a more open society, and they do have more choices than were accessible to their parents, in reality many children are much more vulnerable. Guaranteed employment and education is not something they can take as given. In 2000 the Mongolian Adolescents needs assessment survey organised by the Scouts Association of Mongolia and supported by UNICEF, revealed some disturbing facts. This report highlighted that:

- More than a third of adolescents felt that their parents do not understand them, and a fifth felt that their parents do not care for them.
- Many suffered from shyness, timidity and a lack of confidence, and a high proportion from loneliness and sense of isolation.
- More than 200 adolescents attempted suicide each year according to reports from the Public Military Hospital in Ulaanbaatar.
- Schools were seen as unhealthy, uncomfortable and uninviting environments.
- For a third of these adolescents, major problems were bullying and discrimination by teachers, a factor leading to school drop out.
- Adolescents reported there was no appropriate place for young people to meet, and cited lack of extra-curricular activities. Half of the adolescents spent their 'free time' doing housework.³

It is generally recognised that programs for the development of children must address the varying needs of children as they progress to adulthood. Successful programs provide an integrated set of interventions from conception through to 18 years. The Mongolian government remains committed to improving the rights and provisions of children within the constraints of the current economic climate. Whilst, a number of national programs are related to poverty alleviation and infrastructure capacity building, the interests of children have received particular attention through the enactment of a National Program of Action for Children. The second ten year NPA was approved in 2002 by the Parliament, and sets out broad objectives towards an integrated framework of child development and protection of children. Co-ordination, collaboration and partnerships with key stakeholders are key ingredients to the full implementation of the NPA.

3. Street Children in Mongolia: Definitions and numbers

The emergence of the first numbers of street children in Mongolia's capital city in the early 1990s was a national jolt. This was a new phenomenon not experienced during the socialist period. The child welfare system was predominately characterized by the soviet-era preference of institutional care for orphans, half orphans, neglected and abandoned children. In response to the crisis of the street children phenomenon, the Mongolian government requested support from international and national NGOs to provide emergency shelters and services for street and unsupervised children.

In Mongolia, estimates given by various agencies and studies put the numbers of street children from 3,700 to 4,000 (cf. Juvenile Justice Report:2002, Mongolian Adolescents Needs Assessment Survey Report:2000 and World Bank Report:2000). A national survey conducted by National Center for Children in 1997, put the numbers at 3,700 and applied a broader category of street and unsupervised children as those who spend their time on the streets,

³ Mongolian Adolescents Needs Assessment Survey Report

those living and working on the streets and those in care shelters.⁴ The quotation of this figure has remained remarkably consistent over time in various reports, but the validity of these numbers is hard to substantiate. The public and media perception in Mongolia is that large numbers of children are on the streets, and the majority of street children are clustered in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar, although there are reports of street children in other urban centres such as Darkhan, Dornod and Selenge. To date the street children remain predominately male adolescents, although the numbers of girls has gradually increased. Street children can be as young as five years old.

Definitions and categories of street children, hence statistics vary according to the functions of the agencies and the source of information, and whether the issue is a development priority. In general, many research studies highlight the problems on agreement on the definitions of street children and the validity in numbers quoted. Categorization has proved problematic such as the UNICEF definition of children ‘in the streets’ (working or socializing, but going home at night) and ‘child of the streets’ (having little or no contact with their family and permanently living on the streets). Some agencies argue that the term ‘street’ children’ is inappropriate because it creates an artificial category and diverts attention from the interconnected dimensions of child vulnerability and the wider social and economic context.

Policy makers advocate for local knowledge in assessing and monitoring the ‘flows’ of children on the streets. That patterns and ‘flows’ of street and unsupervised children are likely to vary and influenced by a number of factors. In Mongolia, definitions of street children refer to temporary and permanent children who live in manholes, apartment entrances and tunnels. The term “street children” is also used interchangeably with unsupervised children. Children in care shelters and in some state institution are referred to as street and unsupervised children despite the fact that the reason for their admission may be different. Although there are various attempts to define the numbers precisely, these have been contested. There are no definite and reliable statistics. In terms of flows of children on the streets, there are usually more children ‘rounded up’ in the winter period due to sub-zero temperatures for their own protection, whilst in the summer period their presence in Ulaanbaatar is lower. There are reports from various agencies that street children are ‘rounded up’ in the summer period and sent to military and summer camps during the tourist season.

The presence of children living and working on the streets, and the increasing numbers of migrating families with children, are indicators of children in especially difficult circumstances (CEDC). A related serious concern expressed by many agencies is that many more children are ‘at risk’ of becoming street children due to growing poverty of their families; of single parent household structures; natural disaster of dzuds; drop-outs from school; internal migration; child labor and intra-familial abuse. The current infrastructures of social welfare, and the technical skills of personnel are seen as inadequate for preventive work or for the secondary preventive mechanisms that can provide effective protection and provisions for these vulnerable groups of children.

3.1 Street children in Ulaanbaatar

International and national organizations working with street and unsupervised children state that a rough estimate of street children is approximately 250-450, but this cannot be said with

⁴ Study on Street and Neglected Children, NCC – UNICEF, 1997.

any certainty. Many have commented that numbers of adults living in manholes and apartment entrances is greater than that of children. Indeed this is something that street children themselves allude to as well, seeing these adults as a threat and risk to their own personal safety, but also a pressure to engage children in criminal activities. INGOs operating night shelters and medical mobile services reported that during the period of January 2003, the numbers of street children visible was lower than previous years and, they were unable to track certain street children for follow up medical services which was easier during previous years.⁵

The National Board for Children estimated about 88 street children in April 2003 were living in manholes, apartment entrances and tunnels in Ulaanbaatar. The Municipality of Ulaanbaatar (MUB), Social Development and Policy Department estimated that 850-860 children are placed in care shelters. According to this department, there are no permanent street children in Ulaanbaatar. "As a result of active measures taken as regards the children who were left without any care takers or left their homes because of different pressures of other members of the family, and the homeless children the numbers of permanent street children in Ulaanbaatar was brought to null". (Donor's Thematic Group Meeting 2003:36) The broader goal of the MUB is the complete eradication of the street children problem by the year 2004. This statement reveals contradictory attitudes towards street children, basically stating that they are a temporary phenomenon that can be contained, whilst ignoring that effective preventive measures are simply not in place to support poor and vulnerable children from taking to the streets. Nor are there constructive measures in place once they are living on the streets. There are reports from many districts that measures have been taken to permanently seal manholes as a deterrent.

INGO/NGOs and the police working specifically with street children in localities of Ulaanbaatar, highlight that patterns of street children living on the streets vary considerably. Poverty in ger districts was cited as factors contributing to children leaving their family home, among others. There are those who regularly come on a temporary basis for a few days, a few weeks and the longest period being two months, generate income through work and begging, then return home. In addition, there are increasing numbers of children who 'wander' the street for a few days; these children have families who are concerned about their children's welfare, seeking them out in care shelters and seek police support to locate them. In some instances the parents have difficulty in encouraging these youngsters to return home. A worrying trend is that these children also encourage their siblings to abscond from home having discovered the support systems for street children that they can tap into. Here the parental supervision is seen as rather loose, with parents working long hours or problematic social issues such as domestic violence and alcoholism in the family.

The second groups of street children are those who have left home from all accounts permanently, and have been living on the streets for longer periods of time. A 'hard core' of roughly 400 street children/adults has been identified as those who resist 'institutional care' and other support services by city authorities. A 'boss' system, hierarchies and sub-cultures exist within these groups that are considered well organized. As well as gang rivalries and fighting have developed. Although, they know how to use the systems of support from care shelters for food and material provisions. Two-thirds of these street children are aged 12 years old and over, including a third of girls. The other third of street youth are now aged

⁵ Christina Noble Foundation observations from their medical team. Follow up of children has been important for their focused target approach on treating children such as with TB, STDs, ear, nose and throat, and neurological diseases.

between 18 – 24 years old, again predominately male, but there are small numbers of young women. These young adults have been living on the streets since the early to mid 1990s, and are suspected for their involvement in petty crimes individually and in groups such as pick pocketing, slashing handbags and theft.

The under 18 year old street children have their own circle of support. The pattern that is emerging is that many are sibling groups of 3-4, and/or they are peer groups from the same *aimags* or districts. The police stated that once one sibling goes on the street, they bring their other siblings onto the streets as well. There are also reports of groups of mixed gender groups of street children, who tend to live together as protection. These adolescents are sexually active within their own groups. A number of national NGOs reported that age of street children becoming sexually active is getting younger i.e. 10 years old, with reported cases of STIs being quite common. Concerns have been expressed by some agencies of pregnancies among teenage girls, although low in numbers at the moment.

The now street adults are a group of young people that particularly concern the police and local authorities. They form one of the most marginalized groups of adults in society, with no documents or identity papers. They are excluded from any kind of social service provisions and support and their future prospect of reintegration into mainstream society is bleak. These young people have started to have their own families and the prospects of raising families in manholes and homeless conditions present many risks for this new generation of babies and their mothers. Their lifestyle is a social issue and not a child's right issue any longer. This lifestyle may not conform to the social norms and expectations of society, but this is also part of the growing urbanisation and migration phenomena. It is a tragic consequence of the economic transition that could not provide appropriate provisions and protection for these now adults during the adolescent stages. These are alerts to ensure that adequate preventive and early protection measures are in place in future.

3.2 The Police Statistics

The City Police Department, Crime Prevention Division and the Address and Identification Center, both have mandates to identify unsupervised/street children and provide appropriate further action. Both gave two different set of statistics on the numbers of street children, and both applied narrow definition of street children as those identified as living on the streets, i.e. manholes, apartment building entrances, train stations and homeless.

The Crime Prevention Division put the numbers of street children at 1,200. The breakdown of where the street children are currently is as follows⁶:

- 880 out of the 1200 are living in some kind of care shelters.
- 60-70 children/youth wandering the streets and live on the streets in Ulaanbaatar.
- 40 are placed at the Address and Identification Center
- 160-170 children are estimated as placed in the Labor, Education and Training Center (LET Center).

In addition to the above, a further 411 youths are currently held in detention centres. These 1200 are considered 'real' street children, regardless of whether they work to survive, are in shelters or attend drop in centres. Working children are not included in these numbers, as

⁶ Statistics provided by the Crime Prevention Division to the author in May 2003.

they continue to live within their own family household and work to support their families due to poverty related reasons.

The juvenile police are particularly worried about the 'hard' core of 200 street males, aged from 16 – 24 years; this group of youth is perceived as particularly 'difficult'. Whilst the police acknowledge that these children have had problematic family background and life circumstances, they are also concerned about their potential and current involvement in delinquent and criminal related activities. These groups of adolescent are also seen as exploiting the shelters for food/cloths, but resist attempts to reintegrate into mainstream society.

Address and Identification Center

In comparison, the Address and Identification Center (a sub section of the Crime Prevention Department, under the Juvenile Section) has different numbers of statistics. Their survey conducted in 1999 indicated there were 400 street children. Out of which, 240 or so were provided with social assistance and the rest of the street children resist any form of intervention. Currently, they identify 285 children living on the streets under 18 years old who resist adult intervention, but are a group who use the care shelters and support systems to suit their needs. The police acknowledged that double counting can also occur in trying to estimate the numbers of street children. A separate group of 115 street children now adults comprising of young men and women aged over 18 years old have been living on the streets since 1992. Both of these groups are considered the 'hard core' of the street adolescents, mainly males with a third being females.

The Address and Identification Center stated that, in their estimation the numbers of street children are decreasing due to police efficiency. It appears this police department counts the numbers of newly admitted children as the current cohort of street children. The numbers of new comers tend to remain under 350, and these children tend to be either absorbed into the state LET Center and care shelters or are returned home (see table 1). The World Vision social workers placed at this Center estimate that 20-30 street children per month are returned home from these numbers, although the waiting period before these children can be returned home is about 2-3 months.

Children who are lost and abandoned from home are accounted for separately, and these usually concern children aged 5-6 years old. These children are eventually returned home, and for those whose identity and home address cannot be traced are transferred to the LET Center or care shelters. However, children admitted repeatedly are higher in numbers, although again the statistics show a significant downward decrease from 1997 to an absolute low at 850 in 2002. The police inspectors report that these street children admitted repeatedly are the same numbers of 285 or so of the 'hard-core' street children identified. In fact, most of them have been admitted 20-30 times each in the last three years. It appears that the practice of round up accounts for many children admitted repeatedly, as there is no targeting and it is just random 'raids' of children in public places. This practice is a vicious circle, of round up, sending these children predominately to the LET center and then other care shelters, from where the street children only abscond again to the streets.

The children themselves state that the police tend to target the same group of children for 'round ups' even when their circumstances are known to them i.e. street/working children, those in care shelters, etc. The children/youth resent these round ups as intrusive to their routines established around work, especially those who have paid a deposit for the market

carriages (detention for 14 days means loss of deposit and future loans of carriages). The children reported they often go to locations where they know the police won't find them. The long term street children are quite aware of the routines as to when the police undertake their street 'raids'. They recognize the inspectors and their vehicles, and the children said it was like playing a 'cat and mouse' game.

Children admitted	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Newly admitted	575	274	327	238	346	331	231
Admitted repeatedly	1591	3305	2211	1605	1293	1285	850
Lost from home	66	172	164	86	154	201	194
Abandoned from home	4	9	3	1	2	4	4
Total numbers of children	2236	3760	2706	1930	1795	1821	1279

Table 1: Information taken from 'Children and Women in Mongolia: Situation Analysis Report ' UNICEF 2000. Statistics from the year 2000 onwards were provided by the Address and Identification Center.

3.3 Child Prostitution

A study conducted by ILO/IPEC and MYDC in 2001 in Ulaanbaatar, indicated that girls involved or at risk of prostitution was 66 in numbers, out of which 15 were engaged in prostitution. Considering the underground and hidden nature of prostitution the estimated numbers of girl child prostitution was considered higher.

A project started by ILO/IPEC and MYDC in April 2003, on working with child prostitution and those at risk of prostitution, stated that the age of prostitution for girls is getting younger, now involving 13-14 years old. They stated that although 130 girl child prostitutes are registered by the police but estimate the actual numbers are higher. Also, the numbers of girl child prostitutes registered by the police has been increasing since 1998. The project staff gave the following statistics of officially registered cases with the police:

Registered cases of Child Prostitution	
1998	48
2000	82
2001	118
2002	130

Table 2: Statistics provided by social workers from the ILO/IPEC project .

The Juvenile Justice Police Department stated that currently 130 girl child prostitutes are registered with them, although they estimate the total to be currently around 200. The Address and Identification Centre state that they currently have 13 girl child prostitutes on their list.

NGOs working with adult sex workers estimated that numbers of girl prostitutes are likely to be in the regions of 400-450. They highlight issues of poverty, migration to urban areas, intra-familial sexual abuse and unemployment in the family as factors contributing to younger girls as 'risks' factors leading to prostitution. Street life for girls presents particular risks from the older street boys, from soliciting clients to the more sinister aspect of organised prostitution. In particular, the 'boss' system operating among older males youths on the streets, and who have known links with organised prostitution and other organised criminal activities, recruits girls into prostitution. Sex workers operating near border towns to China

and Russia give anecdotal evidence of girl children being used in human trafficking and sex industries.

There is no evidence of male child prostitution in Mongolia. This does not mean that this phenomenon does not exist, but reflects a strong social taboo in society to acknowledge this existence.

3.4 Migrant Families

The Mongolians with nomadic lifestyles and tradition are highly mobile household structures. Poor living conditions in rural areas exacerbated by high unemployment, poor access to education and health and the three consecutive dzuds have all contributed to a rapid process of migration, in the first place directed to Ulaanbaatar and, to a lesser extent to the larger *aimag* centres. The MUB statistics reveal that the patterns of migration to Ulaanbaatar oscillated around 10,000 each year from 1992 to 1997, but from 1998 the increases were substantial, reaching 25,000 in the year 2002.

Currently, 51% of the Ulaanbaatar population lives in apartment buildings and 49% live in ger accommodation. Migrating families gravitate towards the poorer areas of UB; ger districts that are already overcrowded with poor water and sanitation conditions. Migration presents particular barriers for family and children to access education, health and basic social services as they have to re-register. However, many families cannot afford the registration costs.⁷ Migrant adults work in the informal economy, and lack the life skills, qualifications and professional skills required in the formal urban markets.

The Supreme Court on 1st July 2003, upheld the Mongolian National Human Rights Commission appeals that Ulaanbaatar registration fees for migrant families and children violated the constitutional rights of citizens freedom of movement in the country and the right to choose their place of residence. The registration fees were imposed as part of the government strategy to deter migration to UB; the already over-burdened services to health and education, and overcrowding in ger districts cannot absorb this over spill. Increasing poverty in rural areas is unlikely to slow internal migration in the future.

NBC statistics recorded that there are currently 491 family members with their children living in manholes in UB. Reports of alcohol abuse, prostitution and lack of supervision for children have been cited as concerns. Despair and a sense of powerlessness leads many families to abandoning or negotiating for their children to be taken into care shelters to have their basic needs met and education provided as they find their life circumstances deteriorate. The practice of care shelters also taking in younger children from migrant families to provide for their care is another pattern emerging, effectively separating children and families due to poverty and the Government's policy on registration requirement.

There is a silent crisis for migrant children taking place in the poorer ger areas of Ulaanbaatar is acknowledged but largely swept aside. Children of migrant families are a particularly vulnerable group as they often work long hours both inside and outside the family; many work alongside their parents in the informal sector to contribute to the family income. Currently, only INGO/NGOs provide social welfare assistance in the form of NFE and material provisions in the longer-term prospects for these families and children are poor, increasing the intergenerational cycle of poverty. It has also been stated by district social

⁷ Registration cost are 50,000 tgs per adult and 25,000 tgs per child.

workers that essential material provided by INGO/donors can only be given to poorer families who are registered with the appropriate documentation.

Young adolescent girls' view on the impact migration and lack of registration documents on their lives.

- Most families have problems due to no money. When we first moved here, I went to school, the school kept on demanding more and more money for things, materials, books, payments of half fees, my family could not pay this kind of money, so I just dropped out of school.
- I come from a rural area, we sold everything to come here two years ago and I have never attended school since moving here. We have no money there is not much we can do. My mother's elder sister helped us, but we have no registration documents.
- Because we have no documentation, we are not entitled to anything. During the SARS period the media and television said we can be given free masks from the hospital and family clinics, but we were not given any because we had no documents. And, the family doctors will not see us either.
- We also have no registration. I don't go to school. 3 months ago when we lived in Darkhan I went to school there, since then no school.
- I sell plastic bags in the market with my mother from 10-10 p.m.
- I also sell plastic bags alone in the market for about 9 hours a day
- I work in the market, its hard work being on your feet for so many hours, you walk up and down the market all day, my legs always hurt.
- I also do housework everyday, and work all day as well.
- I work in the market, then come home and cook dinner.
- I return from the market, fetch water and then cut wood for fire.
- Tuesday is the day the market is closed so we don't work, I spent my day off just watching television.

3.5 Working Children

Working children are viewed more favorably by the state agencies as they continue to live with their families and their labor is seen as a necessity for the family survival due to poverty, as opposed to street children who also work for their own survival. Reliable statistics are not available on working children. Mongolia has ratified the ILO 138 on the Minimum Age of Employment and ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor. Current legislation provides employment protection for children in the formal sector of the economy but not the informal sector of the economy where the majority of children work. The government, in view of the economic circumstances of poor families, pursues a policy that it is more effective to allow children to work openly in the informal sector where it is easier to monitor and provide support and take action on work that is hazardous for children. Enforcement regulations on eradicating child labor are seen as leading to a more hidden, underground nature of child labor which would make it difficult to monitor.

In 1998, 0.6% (5,271) of adolescents aged between 14-16 were officially registered as employed and living in urban areas.⁸ The national school drop-out statistics are usually a barometer used by many agencies for estimating the numbers of children working in the

⁸ Mongolian Adolescents Needs Assessment Survey Report, UNICEF 2000:69

informal sectors. It is estimated that presently 13.5% (68,155) of all children aged between 8-15 do not attend school.⁹

The prevalent forms of child labor in the informal sectors are those relating to the different kinds of work in main markets, shoe shining, scavenging, cleaning cars, herding, to the more hazardous work of illegal work in coal and gold mines. The ILO study on gold mining draws attention to the dangerous practices of whole families with children engaged in gold mines and mercury recovery in the Selenge and Darhan-Uul aimags. These included spending 2-3 days underground in narrow trenches of mines, use of mercury to separate the gold particles by hand, freezing conditions in winter and rock breaking. Children's current and long-term health is compromised, as reports of high levels of serious injuries are reported. The younger the children and the longer they are engaged in child labor the more likely their physical growth and development is compromised.

The International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labor by ILO, SCF UK, UNICEF and other NGOs sectors have conducted various surveys on child labor and are implementing programs to support these children through advocacy, NFE and vocational training. As stated above IPEC/ILO with the Mongolian Youth Development Center is currently on the 2nd phase of working with girl prostitution and those 'at risk' of prostitution.

4. Institutional Framework

4.1 Legislation and Policy Provisions for Street and Unsupervised Children

There has been an active process of amendments to the Mongolian legislation since January 1996, when Mongolia presented its Inception Report on the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC). The Child Rights Protection Law (CRPL) was passed in May 1996, and further amendments to this law were approved by Parliament in May 2003. In addition, over 50 sectoral laws have been amended to include provision on the rights of children. Mongolia has ratified 29 international human rights treaties, including the ILO Convention on the Minimum Age of Employment and ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Children Labour. Currently, the need for a separate Juvenile Justice Law is under review.

Legislation and policy related to street and unsupervised children reflects the soviet-era concerns with anti-social behaviour, delinquency and children 'at risk' of offending that may or may not lead to criminal behaviour, rather than children in need of special protection measures. Currently, Mongolia does not have a separate juvenile justice code, and provisions for dealing with children 'at risk' of offending and juvenile offenders are covered by the Criminal Code 2002 and Criminal Procedure Code, these include special provisions and protection that apply to all children under the age of 18. However, the Criminal Code legislation is designed primarily for adults, not children. Provisions are also included in the Criminal Code to protect minors' involvement by force or coercion into drinking, drug abuse, prostitution, vagrancy and beggary, including forced child labour, by any persons including parents, guardians or state officials in charge of children.

Specific laws and rules also relate to the reduction of juvenile crime and to permit police to exert control and supervision over street and unsupervised children and those children identified as being at risk of criminal behaviour. The Law of the Temporary Detention of

⁹ Statistic quoted in Profile of Children working at markets in Ulaanbaatar – National University of Mongolia/ILO 2000:3

Unsupervised Children (1994) gives the police powers to apprehend and detain unsupervised children for up to 14 days, if their address, parents and carers are unknown, and there is actual or potential risk to their life or health due to lack of parental supervision.

The CRPL stated objective of the law is to organise the protection of the rights of the child and to co-ordinate the mechanism on policy, implementation and practical measures by the state, individuals, business, children organisations, NGOs and local authorities. Local authorities are required to develop programs and annual plans for the protection of children in their own territories and to publicise their results. The main areas of their work include responsibility for all state children's establishments and institutions; monitor child labour activities; surveys of CEDC and actions; custody of children; create a favourable environment for children to develop; placement on children into state care; crime prevention activities; oversight and guidance to social workers on delivery of services to children and families; and measures to stop violence against children. Local authorities on their work with CEDC can contract out social care and assistance to children's organisation through tender processes.

The law provides broad provisions for Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances (CEDC). There are two broad groups of children defined:

- those affected by natural disaster, epidemic diseases and armed conflict who will be rendered emergency assistance.
- the other concerns orphans, very poor, neglected children and child victims, children working in hazardous work and those sexually exploited and abused.

It does not specifically mention street and unsupervised children, although they are indirectly referred. The social assistance comprises of education and vocational training, a range of free medical services, a state allowance for families who adopt children in CEDC, and regular supervision of children addicted to alcohol, drugs and child prostitution, by various state agencies such as the police, health, education and social care institutions, including NGOs.

Both the CRPL and the Family Law 1999 provides provision for placement of orphans and children without parental supervision (i.e. imprisoned, abandoned, parents rights deprivation), firstly within a family environment, i.e. extended family, adoption, appointment of a custodian and as a last option, institutional care.

Legislation provisions relating to street and unsupervised children reflect their ambiguous status in society; on one hand their reintegration and support in the CRPL. And, on the other hand the need for their control and containment as specified in the Law of the Temporary Detention of Unsupervised Children and provisions in the Criminal Code, including the CRPL. There is a clear need on one hand to provide services for families experiencing difficulties due to poverty, family dysfunction and abusive relationships to prevent children from being leaving home and to enhance the quality of family care. On the other hand there is an equally clear need to provide support for rehabilitation and reintegration of street and unsupervised children to their families and communities.

The provisions of the CRPL in co-ordinating the institutional framework at national, aimag, soum and the city government are significant. Nevertheless, the overall legislation and policy directives lack a clear and coherent child protection and care philosophy. The provisions of the CRPL are broad statements of objectives on practical measures, but lack clear regulatory framework and welfare principles to guide the work of those agencies responsible for children

welfare and protection at different stages of working with children and families. Nor, when the administrative and judicial process will be initiated to protect children from violence in the family and in the wider context of child exploitation and abuse.

4.2 National Programmes for Children

The Mongolian Government adopted its second follow-up National Plan of Action for the Development and Protection of Children in December 2002 for the next 10 years. This programme stated objectives and priorities is to provide a legal environment to protect the rights of children, development of children, access to good quality education and professions, and improve their livelihood. The management and co-ordination is devolved to a local council for children headed by the governor at aimag, capital city, soum and district level. The Ministry of Social Welfare and Labour is mandated to ensure nation-wide implementation of the NPA and can assign Members of the Cabinet, and Governors of aimags and the capital city to implement the NPA, whilst nationally, the implementation of the programme is under the National Board for Children. The Ministry of Social Welfare and Labour is specifically responsible for providing social welfare measures for CEDC.

While the framework of the current NPA is comprehensive in its intention to cover provisions for children from conception to adulthood such as health, education, juvenile justice, child labour and family provision. The framework lacks a child's right approach on programme planning; the strategy for implementation is fragmented with each line ministry and local authorities responsible for addressing children's issues from their particular perspective. Their own divergent priorities conflict with the NPA objectives. There are also a large number of obstacles and constraints mentioned in the NPA for the next two years' first phase of policy development. Some of these include lack of adequate budgets, inter-ministerial co-ordination and agreement, lack of skilled technical personnel and shortages of human resources, different standards of services and provisions, lack of resources, and poor participation and representation of children and civil society in policy and programmes implemented. Whilst, the constraints are considerable, the real challenge for the government is to develop strategic plans that are achievable within the existing budget realities and human resources, that target the most disadvantaged and poor. In particular, there is an urgent need for a strategy to address the concerns of abject poverty and the situation of migrant families in Ulaanbaatar.

In addition, the five-year National Programme on the Prevention of Juvenile Crime and Crimes Against Children was introduced in 1999. This national programme is also responsible for measures on protection and support for street and unsupervised children. Its main objectives are the prevention of juvenile crime and to take appropriate actions to identify those who draw children into crime. The police are specifically responsible to conduct research on unsupervised children and, to improve measures to identify street children and distribute them to appropriate places.

4.3 Current Practices of working with street and unsupervised children in Ulaanbaatar

Life on the streets is related to everyday problems of basic survival: malnutrition, lack of shelter, violence and health risks. Street and unsupervised children first encounters with 'officials' are likely to be the police or street educators from INGO/NGOs.

Responsibility for children's issues is divided over four main ministries: Health, Education, Social Welfare and Labor and Ministry of Justice and Interior. Other ministries and

government agencies also have interest in children's development such as the National Council for Children. The main ministry responsible for CEDC is the Ministry of Social Welfare and Labor, with the National Board of Children responsible for implementation of policy and program development nationally and within the capital city.

At the capital city level, the MUB Social Policy Development Department at the Capital's Governor Office is the State Administrative agency for implementing policy for health, education, social protection and welfare, labor and employment, children and youth issues and sports and culture. Each department has 12-18 members of staff responsible for overall implementation of policy in Ulaanbaatar. In addition, each district and soum Governor's office has a children's center and a person in charge of children and youth issues, and there are social workers in each khoroo and bagh. There are also social workers attached to each school to provide support for families and to prevent school children from dropping out.

There are 25 police personnel in the whole of the Crime Prevention Department, which also includes the Crime, Alcoholic & Narcotics Unit; Juvenile Unit; Advocacy & Press; and the Address and Identification Center. In addition, there are a total of 36 juvenile inspectors appointed in the 9 districts of Ulaanbaatar who are responsible for children's issues.

The juvenile inspectors have three main objectives: crime prevention activities, implementation of the law and to investigate and resolve criminal cases. They broadly work with five main groups of children: unemployed and school drop-outs; secondary schools; unsupervised children and 'at risk' children; youth released from detention centres; and children 'at risk' of offending. According to the police officials, nearly 80% of juvenile crimes are committed by these groups of children. As the Juvenile Justice of Mongolia report noted, the majority of crimes are property-related, rather than violent. Theft is the most common crime, such as pick-pocketing and stealing in market areas and train stations; in rural areas it is mostly livestock theft. In addition, older children reportedly intimidate, steal and extort money from younger children. In many cases, juvenile crimes are poverty and survival ones to meet basic needs for food and clothing. (2002:10)

The juvenile inspectors work with street and unsupervised children is through regular police patrol of public places such as markets and bars. The police also conduct regular nightly sweeps to locate and identify street children living in manholes, train stations and apartment entrances. The usual practice with street and unsupervised children is to identify the child's parents and family and return the child home. Children who are orphaned, abandoned or whose parents cannot be located are referred to the LET Center or an NGO care shelter.

Children identified as being unsupervised and at risk of offending are interviewed by juvenile inspectors and background information is obtained from them; this usually includes an assessment of their family situation, reasons for being on the streets, how they support themselves and addictive habits. A file is opened on the child, and it is quite a common practice that children are photographed and fingerprinted to facilitate criminal investigation should they commit crimes in the future, as well as to track and monitor children movements. Children who have committed crimes have their cases passed to the criminal inspectors for investigation.

Children who are registered as being at risk or unsupervised are placed under the supervision of a juvenile inspector for a one-year period. The purpose of registration is to monitor and provide support to the child and family, as well as to ensure the risk of further offending and

absconding is reduced. Notification of a child's registration is sent to the local Governor and to the child's school (if they are still attending). The juvenile inspectors are usually required to meet with the child and parents once a month. However, with street children the police inspectors reported difficulties on supervision and follow-up due to the fact that street children are highly mobile. Largely, the response of the juvenile inspectors is on control; that is street and unsupervised children must be contained either within their families or institutionalized.

The juvenile inspectors also undertake activities to prevent under-age prostitution by visiting hotels, bars and parks in the evening. Child prostitution is dealt with as an administrative infraction, rather than as a criminal offence. Child prostitutes are generally fined and placed under police supervision. Perpetrators are rarely prosecuted. This is largely because the child's identity is not kept protected from the perpetrator, and the children giving statements are often interviewed in the same room. It is known that perpetrators harass and threaten the child to withdraw their allegations. If the child is still in school, the child's prostitution is made public; this practice serves to further alienate and stigmatize the child.

Each district's juvenile inspectors, depending on the numbers of street and unsupervised children in their area, provide legal awareness training for care shelters as well as advice on bullying and dealing with petty theft. Prevention activities, on the whole, consist of legal awareness training in schools, usually in the form of lecturers. In some cases, the juvenile inspectors also saw their role as monitoring the work of the care shelters to ensure that children's rights are not violated.

In Ulaanbaatar, the Address and Identification Center (AIC) was established in 1996 to hold and identify children under the Law of the Temporary Detention of Unsupervised children. The Center is a subdivision of the Crime Division Department of the Capital City, it is run and maintained by police in uniforms on a 24 hours basis, and their regime puts them closer to a remand facility. The Center has the capacity to hold 50 children, but in winter it frequently holds 70-80 children. Like the juvenile inspectors, they conduct sweeps on unsupervised children in public places, manholes and apartment entrances two or three times a week. This includes street children, lost children, children in groups, girl prostitutes, as well as those suspected of being involved in delinquent behavior and 'at risk' of offending. If the child's home can be identified then they are returned home. Those who cannot be returned home are placed at the LET Center or other INGO/NGO care shelters. The police routinely take pictures and fingerprints of all children admitted which are then sent to the district juvenile police, MUB Social Policy Development Department, the Ministry of Social Welfare and Labor, and to the school and social workers where the child's original home is located. The police reported that there is no follow-up from their side or from authorities as to where the records of children are sent.

Children are sent back within their families without an assessment that it is safe for them; in particular when abuse/violence and neglect is disclosed. There are no follow-up mechanisms or co-ordination to ensure that the issues of concerns are appropriately managed with social work support for the child and family. As stated above, the Address and Identification Center has relatively small numbers of new-comers on the streets, and the larger numbers of those admitted repeatedly concerns the same group of 200-300 street children, as many as 20-30 times each in the last three years.

The Children and Youth Development Department of Capital Governor Office implements policy on child and youth, women and family work, including national programs and projects. It receives no budget and generates its main revenue from the activities organized at the Youth and Children's Palace. Its functions still reflect the pioneer association work for providing social, leisure and cultural activities, sports and youth clubs. Unfortunately, the majority of activities organized by the Children's Palace are not accessible to poor and disadvantaged children. The department's specific functions relating to vulnerable groups of children include surveys, policy directives, help lines, public awareness on alcoholism and crime, and in providing training and methodological support to district and khoroo social workers.

The district and khoroo social workers defined their main tasks as health, welfare benefits and education, although they are increasingly taking responsibility for enrolling drop-out children back to school, documents for residents, family support and distributing material aid amongst their other wide range of administrative duties. They are regularly called to perform many other tasks unrelated to social welfare issues such as social and cultural activities to organizing garbage collection . Social workers involvement with street and unsupervised and working children is often in collaboration with the juvenile inspectors, school social workers, Children's Officer for Social Development and health officials. These involve legal awareness training, surveys of street and working children and accompanying the juvenile inspectors on patrol of public places such as train stations, bars, empty buildings and manholes. In some districts, twice a year all street and unsupervised children are collected to one place for health checks and are given access to showers, haircuts, clothes and food.

Districts and peri-ger areas have different priorities and approaches to unsupervised and working children. The policy staff and social workers at local levels have detailed knowledge through their survey conducted on vulnerable groups and 'at risk' children. Whilst, local development plans are made there was an absence of a strategy to target and provide support for street and unsupervised or preventive support services for children and families. In general, the perception was that both groups of children work really hard to support themselves and their families due to poverty and poor living conditions, and that the age of children working was getting as young as 7 years old. There are concerns expressed about the huge increases of children who collect trash in ger districts as well their work in the informal sectors of carting wood, alcohol production and selling goods in poor working conditions and often very long hours. Enforcement of legal regulation is rarely used to protect children in such circumstances. The perception held was that children in manholes are decreasing, but people living on the streets are increasing. One district area official handed over an empty building to house the homeless adults and children, but found that children stayed one night and never returned again.

The attitude and perception held by many social workers and other workers is that street and unsupervised children are the responsibility of the police. And, generally, it is mainly INGO/NGOs that work with them. Hence, beside the one-off interventions and consultations, there is no sustained, continuous and rehabilitative work undertaken with street and unsupervised children. In terms of preventive work with families and children this consisted mainly of welfare assistance of material aid and limited to preventing school drop-out. Whilst domestic violence and alcoholism was highlighted and support and advice is offered, social workers reported on the limitation of their involvement. Child abuse and neglect in the family was considered low, with some social workers saying this was not really a problem. This is at

odds with the work of the National Center Against Violence that reported intra-familial abuse, especially reporting of sexual abuse was increasing.

There were a number of initiatives established to support families and children in crisis, and to reduce the numbers of children taking to the streets. In the mid 1990s the establishment of Social Services Centres in 6 districts and 9 Family Development Centres were set up specifically to provide preventive family support services such as counseling, tutoring and leisure activities with facilities for emergency shelter for street and unsupervised children. These were managed by local district authorities in Ulaanbaatar, and in the first year, considerable financial support was provided by UNICEF; in the second year some of the local district authorities continued the funding, and now they are practically defunct. It raises a number of issues on sustainability, policy and management of the development of these types of services. It was reported that parents wanted their children admitted to these shelters in the belief they provided better material care and afforded their children access to education, to the extent that some parents deliberately made their children homeless. And, when these shelters were closed due to lack of funding, children left for the street again even though alternative institutional care was offered. The one or two Family Development Centres to remain functioning are currently used by elderly people as day centres facilities and by social workers to give advice or distribute material aid, but no children activities.

The far greater social problem that the district and khoroo social workers highlight is that of poverty of families leading to high numbers of children dropping out of school and poor quality of life standards¹⁰, in addition to the large numbers of migrant families moving into ger areas without the financial means for re-registration. The government policy unfortunately remains fixed on the issue of re-registration the 1st July, when the Supreme Court revoked registration fees. In the Bayanzurkh district, the local authority was beginning to relax their policy to enable migrant children to enroll in schools as this also reduces the numbers of children 'wandering' the streets. The district social workers negotiations with schools have achieved some success for migrant children. The problem remains that many schools are overcrowded and do not have the physical capacity to take in extra children, as they already work a daily three-shift system. Barriers also include refusal by schools to take children that are not from their district as well as discrimination against migrant children. Access to health for children and their families and to other social welfare assistance remains extremely difficult.

4.4 Special Project for Street Children and 'at risk' children

Reintegration of Street Children into Civil Society

The International Development Association (IDA) World Bank and the Government of Mongolia signed an agreement for a grant of US\$443,000 from the Japanese Social Development Fund in June 2001. The main objective is to assist the Government of Mongolia to improve the living conditions of street children in UB and their reintegration into civil society. The project will be implemented by the Department of Social Affairs, MUB, with participation of NGOs.

The implement of the project has been delayed for 2 years due to lack of agreement between the MUB and NGO sectors on ways forward. The main problems reflected the polarized

¹⁰ See also reports by UNICEF and SCF UK on their Series of Peri Urban Area of Ulaanbaatar: The Living Conditions of the Child (2003). This provides a comprehensive detailed analysis of living conditions of children and families and future strategies.

positions between approaches of the MUB and the international/national NGOs; the former favored development of institutional-models for street and unsupervised children and the latter small community-based homes. In the end, the time frame for the grant period led to the implementation of the project, with the major disagreements somewhat comprised.

The project has three main components:

Part A: Development of combined bathing-cum-community centres.

Three bath-houses are now under construction in three of poorest district of Ulaanbaatar. Whilst, problems of the longer term financial sustainability of these bath houses remain, in the short term the Governors of the local districts have agreed to meet the short fall in expenditure. The bath-houses are to be a community resource for all those living in the locality, despite concerns that access for street children and the poor will become problematic. Different schemes are still being considered to ensure that street children will have access such as through a vouchers scheme and open days.

Part B: Rehabilitation and conversion of the Labor Education and Training Center.

The original plan was to convert the LET center into a vocational skills training facility for street and other disadvantaged children/youth with spaces for residential facility for a small number of children. And, over a two-year period, to develop community based small group homes for a wide range of children such as street children, children with disabilities, orphaned and abandoned, and as well, to rehabilitate the current resident children into these community based homes. Originally MUB stated it would locate suitable premises and find funding for these small community based homes, but currently stated they do not have the financial resources. However, a proposal for a Life Skills Training Center is still in the pipeline by the MUB and the Ministry of Social Welfare and Labor. This suggests that an institutional model remains the preferred alternative.

Currently, only the essential refurbishment of LET center will be undertaken to improve the shower, toilet, kitchen and lights, etc. facilities. It is envisaged the repairs will take place during the summer holidays, whilst the children are in summer camps.

Part C: Technical Assistance

This part has two components:

- To increase the awareness and raise the capacity of local staff at all levels in responding to the needs of street children, including training for trainers.
- To provide a sustainable system of vocational training for street children/youth.

The training of social workers and other personnel is for a period of 2-3 months and commenced in June 2003. Training and increasing the knowledge and skills base of social workers and police is important, but in the absence of clear regulatory framework on child protection and, unless this is accompanied by provisions to implement actions for street children, then the value of this training is highly questionable. The reality is that many intensive training courses on social work have already been conducted by UNICEF, SCF UK, and the University of Humanities Social Work Facility. Their impact has been minimal.

The vocational training program has also commenced, and is managed by the Children and Youth Development Department. For the first phase, 300 young people (100 street children and 200 poor and 'at risk' youth) will receive a one-month period of vocational training

linked to employment. Tenders were invited from business, private, NGOs and others. 10 such organizations will be selected for implementing this project. An allocation of US\$100 per young person has been allocated to cover essential expenses during the training. Ongoing and after-care support for children/youth has not been incorporated. In consideration of the fact that this group of children lack basic literacy skills and possess poor interpersonal skills, this is a major shortfall in the plan. The WB team highlighted the problems of longer-term accommodation, food, clothing and general living support but this has not been addressed. Nor is there provision for ongoing support for these youth to help them adjust to the work environment and manage independent life.

ILO/IPEC AND MYDC project “Child Prostitution and Girls ‘at risk’ of Prostitution

The first phase of the project identified a broad range of girls at risk of prostitution and the areas in the city where recruitment of child prostitution was high. Areas identified with high concentration of child prostitution were Baynazurkh and Songio Khaikhan districts, areas on either side of Ulaanbaatar where high numbers of migrant families settle. On the whole, it is migrant girls that have become involved and recruited into prostitution. The second phase of this project commenced in April 2003, with activities centered around NFE, reintegrate younger girls into mainstream school, life skills and vocational training, individual counseling, health, income generation projects for families, public awareness and training for professionals working with child prostitution. The project target group is 120 girls aged 12-18, and it is estimated that 30-40 young girls are already involved in prostitution. The project staff also asked for referrals from the police department. The ‘at risk’ category of girls also includes small numbers of street and unsupervised girls living in manholes.

The project staff works separately with girls involved in prostitution and does not integrate them with the other girls for fear of negative influences. Whilst, these concerns are understandable, isolation of girl prostitutes only serves to further alienate them from a socializing with their peer groups. On the other hand, the ‘at risk’ girls are not informed that the reasons for their involvement in the project is due to risks of prostitution, along with other contributing risk factors.

Before the project commenced, one of the objectives was also to place 40 young girls in institutional care at the LET Center. While there is a need to plan for girls who might require alternative care, it also rather predetermines that the third of the identified as girl prostitutes are likely to be placed institutional care. This rather defeats the purpose of family support work to support these young girls to remain with their families and/or their rehabilitation into mainstream society.

4.5 State Institutions for Children in Ulaanbaatar

Amgalan: Labor and Education and Training Center

The LET Center was established in 1999, replacing the old detention facility. It functions as a residential facility for children aged 7-17 years old, although children as young as 4 years old are also admitted. The management of Center is under the City Government although in January 2003 only the financial management was transferred to the MSWL¹¹. In May 2003, the Center accommodated 145 children, 88 boys and 57 girls and this included 20 full orphans including a number of sibling groups. The age population of 16 years old and over is only 3.

¹¹ The Law on Public Finance and Management passed in January 2003 make a number of amendments of financial and management responsibilities for state institutions, as well as broader re-structuring with MUB and different Ministries.

A wide range of children with different needs are admitted including street children, abandoned, mentally ill, abused and at risk of offending. During the winter periods the numbers of children admitted increase to over 200.

The majority of children are referred by the Address and Identification Center and from other city district offices. The Center has gained a reputation that children who cannot be placed elsewhere are placed here, hence it has a large number of children that are not only hard to place but present challenging behavior. The Center staff members perceive the children as being abandoned or coming from unfavorable family backgrounds, hence very little work is undertaken on promoting contact with their families. There is a part-time social worker from World Vision who undertakes reunification work where this is possible for children, and provides limited social work guidance to the teachers.

The Center integrates children into mainstream education where possible. Children with mental retardation go to a special needs school for their education and vocational training. A large number of children are illiterate and have very basic literacy skills, they attend the non-formal education classes at the Center. In addition, children of all ages are trained in the standard vocational skills within limited materials and equipment. There are some interest groups that children can attend such as music and singing classes. However, it was observable that there was lack of planned activities for younger children, who tended to stay in their rooms or wandered around aimlessly.

There has been on-going concern from international and national organizations about the regime, management and practices of this center, as well as from the children themselves. These concerns revolve around the poor quality of care, the poor environment and the repressive practices of dealing with children. The different needs of children and age groups, combined with problems of working with children who present challenging behavior, and those who abscond frequently, highlight the difficulties faced by this Center. Introduction of new methodologies and a focus on the individual needs of the children have somewhat addressed some of these problems. However, the concerns persist over the management and poor quality of care afforded for children. Since, January 2003 the Center maintained it has received no or inadequate funding for children's food. In response to this crisis the ALPHA NGO provides one hot meal a day for the children and will continue to do in the foreseeable future until the situation is resolved.

In May 2003, a steering committee comprising of international and national NGOs and city government officials was established to address these concerns. Whilst, short-term measures on financial support from the international community will address the immediate problems on the food problem, urgent measures must be taken to address the management and the financial situation of the Center by the City Government.

State Institutions for orphans, half orphans and abandoned children in UB

Three institutions in Ulaanbaatar cater for orphans, abandoned and half orphans including children who are mentally disabled. Referrals are only accepted from the state administrative departments with the required documentation, these institutions do not admit street children and receive no children from the Address and Identification Center. The children admitted are considered true orphans, and those who do have families are considered 'unfavorable'. Hence, maintaining contact with the children's families is not encouraged, nor is reunification. In general, the children move from one institution to the next on reaching that age range group and new referrals are placed within the appropriate age group.

Type of Institution	Responsible Authority	Age Group	No.s
Infant Home for orphans	Ministry of Health	0-3 years old	60
Kindergarten for orphans	Ministry of Social Welfare & Labor	4 – 7 years old	70
Dormitory for orphans	As above	8 – 18 years old	140
		Total	270

Table 13: Statistics provided by the director of the Dormitory as of May 2003.

Children in the Dormitory attend mainstream schools. In addition, the dormitory provides a number of activities and programs that children participate in such as music, dance, chess, public performances of theatre/music, competitions, international exchange visits, and outings. The dormitory’s stated objective is to provide life skills and preparation for independent life for all their children. There is a bakery on the premises, along with provision for standard vocational training skills, and children plant vegetables on the land owned by the dormitory for their own use.

Currently, the Dormitory is providing support for 30 children in universities, 20 are studying in Russia, and 5 are working in the United States, through scholarships and donor aid. 30 children will complete their 8th and 10th grade education this year, whilst a majority of 8th grade children plan to continue their education at universities. Planning for the needs of the children leaving care is a challenge as very little support is available especially for accommodation. The dormitory has been successful in ensuring that children do not end up homeless after leaving care through the support they provide by ensuring many do have a university education, vocational training and mediating for unemployment.

Although the administrative units at aimag/district level are legally obligated to provide accommodation, this does not happen. In the past, the dormitory staff members with young people have supported construction of straw accommodation for young people who had no possibilities for accommodation. Young people who cannot pass their entrance examination for university end up seeking distant relatives for support.

The Dormitory provides as much after-care support as they are can to children, but reported employment and accommodation continue as the main problems experienced by these children. There is no planned after-care support for these children, and much of it is very much on an ad-hoc basis. The young people themselves reported the daunting prospects for their future on their own and especially about their accommodation.

Adolescent boys and girls concerns and issues on independent living

- First thing is have is a house.
- To address the relevant organizations and/or individuals who has financial abilities.
- I need everything but it all depends on my fate.
- I want to change my country.
- I don’t know, will address the relatives.
- The problematic issue is I don’t have enough confidence that I can live on my own. And, frankly I am scared.
- There are many things I need like university admission, notes books, stationery, etc. In order to study I need to make an effort, have a job earn money and have housing.

- Because I don't have anyone to address, I would satisfy my needs by myself.
- Problematic thing is we don't know much about life, I have less trust that I can live independently.
- In order to have a right life is to make the right choice. Therefore, we need to think as early as possible whether to study or work and what is better for us. When the time comes there are many choices and children get nervous and often make wrong decisions.

The director of the dormitory is a very resourceful person, engaged in various fundraising activities, using their own resources to generate income i.e. the bakery to improve the quality of life for the children. Nevertheless, lack of finances for urgent repairs and renovation, replacement of old equipment and furniture, and problems of inadequate expenditure means lack of finances to pay salaries for staff for months are particular hurdles they face. In addition, the live- stock the dormitory possessed had to be destroyed for food during the dzuds. This had provided dairy produce for use by the children.

4.6 Conclusion:

- The numbers of street children identified by the police and other organizations are relatively small at 400-450. While reliable statistics will always be difficult to obtain, the numbers of children taking to the streets according to official statistics have been decreasing over the years. At the same time, the numbers of girl prostitutes shows a slight increase. The picture changes dramatically, if a wide range of children are included in these numbers who are 'on the street' on a temporary, permanent and daily basis and are also exposed to the 'risks' of the streets. Such as working children, child prostitutes, homeless families with children, migrant children, school drop outs and unsupervised children whose parents work away from home or work long hours, and so on.
- Street and unsupervised children as a social group alert the necessity for the protection of children and the need to develop new forms of appropriate services and care for them. Currently, the methods of intervention by the Address and Identification Center and juvenile inspectors have proved rather ineffective as it concentrates on individual control and containment through institutionalization for the same groups of street children that are rounded up repeatedly. These agencies are institutions specializing in the prevention of crime and antisocial behavior of minors. They have an inherent contradiction in their intervention as performing both preventive and repressive tasks simultaneously; they function as a law enforcement mechanism and their main task is to solve crimes rather than provide social work support. Effectively this method of work isolates and stigmatizes street and unsupervised children. Whilst, the underlying problems leading to children taking to the street are understood, these are rarely dealt with. Primary preventive and rehabilitation work is still insufficient, as is the unmet need for adequate education, vocational training and employment for street and unsupervised children.
- There are no streamlined services to deal with children with antisocial behavior, delinquency, 'at risk' of offending and child prostitution, nor any kind of early preventive services to cope with instances of these kinds of problems.
- The legislation in Mongolia does not include status or vagrancy offences. Nevertheless, its practical application uses status offences without any legal basis. The Address and Identification Centre routinely takes photographs and fingerprints of all children regardless of whether they have committed a crime or not. And, this information is passed on to the Juvenile Police, or the Crime Prevention Department, who hold these records as a basis for further action. This is inappropriate stigmatising and labelling of

children, as well as violation of children's rights. Child prostitutes over 16 are effectively criminalized without adequate support for rehabilitation and support.

- The lack of a clearly established framework for identifying and responding to child abuse and neglect in the family means that Family Law measures are rarely initiated to protect children. To date there have been no cases of parental rights limitation or deprivation. Nor is there any effective measure taken to protect children from violence and sexual exploitation outside the family environment. The specific nature of child abuse, neglect and exploitation is not taken into account, therefore no particular policy or practical measures regarding evidence, proof, statements of children, protection, and procedures are in place. Child welfare support remains one of institutional care as the only option in such cases.
- The silent crisis in the peri-urban areas of Ulaanbaatar, with its tremendous challenges, are known by the Government and the MUB in the areas of education, health and welfare sectors, whilst measures are being developed for infra-structure and capacity building. The current crisis for migrant families and children remains leading to a growing underclass of children deprived of basic rights and at greater risk of subversion by criminal and coercive elements.
- Poverty remains the main social problem for families and children. Dropping out of school is a major risk facing children from disadvantage families as well as the increasing reliance on the labor of children to augment family income. The urgent problems of migrant families in the ger districts are growing; migrant children are particularly vulnerable to homelessness, and lack opportunities for access to education, health and other welfare support. Whilst ad-hoc projects provide for non-formal education and vocational training to girls at risk of prostitution, for working and migrant children, its coverage is limited to small groups of vulnerable children.
- Enforcement mechanisms on child labor exist in the formal economy, but the main problems exist within the informal sector. Whilst it is widely accepted that child labor is an important source of support for poor families, both in the household work and income generation, nevertheless there are no measures in place to provide social assistance and protection for them. In particular, absence of any defined baseline criteria of intervention for children who are denied an education or who work long hours for low wages under condition that damage their physical health and emotional well being and mental development is not in place.
- The provisions and service delivery at local levels for children and families reflect the lack of clarity of micro policy directive specially targeting street children, 'at risk' and vulnerable groups. At MUB, the Youth and Children Development Department and other main policy departments have different priorities to those defined at local levels. There is a need to define the mechanism of governance at ministry, MUB, district and khoroo levels on the nature of intervention, responsibilities and co-ordination. In addition, the Youth and Children Development Department and the National Board of Children also are responsible for the implement of policy for children and families at local levels, whilst some overlapping functions and responsibilities are held in common such as methodological support, many are not.
- A child rights approach to providing preventive child and family support services and the kind of social workers envisaged in the CPRL to undertake these functions simply do not exist. The social workers at district and khoroo levels are basically administrators with a wide range of duties unrelated to social work. Their interventions on preventive and social support are limited to a series of tasks, usually one-off interventions of material aid, advice and support and training on children rights. Whilst, local surveys conducted

provide detailed information of priorities and needs of CEDC, there is lack of targeting, strategies and case management to respond effectively to these needs.

- Outdated management systems together with increasing demands on social workers to provide services to the growing social problems of children and families within limited resources. Additional tasks continue to be added to their workload without any management reviews of their jobs and changes made to reflect these increased responsibilities.
- Children placed in the institutional care at the LET Center include children who have experienced abuse and neglect and those children with deviant and at risk of offending behavior. The individual needs of the children for support and counseling to deal with the underlying causes of their admission are rarely undertaken, as children are expected to adjust to the routines, regimes and expectations of life in an institution. The Center is also unable to provide adequate protection from peer group bullying and intimidation by older children, nor reasonable quality of care leading to high rates of absconding by children.
- All the state institutions lack adequate finances to provide 'good enough' care for the children, in addition to urgent repairs and replacement of old furniture and equipment. In particular, the LET Center does not currently have the means to feed the children in their care.
- There is lack of proactive individual planning for the children, in terms of reunification, contact with families and independent living. Children exiting the institutions are not specifically prepared for an independent life and lack confidence and significant life skills to manage the transition to adulthood. Both staff and children highlight problems of access to accommodation, employment, vocational training and further education.
- The state institutions and other state agencies dealing with children lacked any kind of child friendly complaint procedures that was accessible, let alone enforceable.

5. Overview of INGO/NGOs working with street and unsupervised children

It is predominantly international and national NGOs that provide a range of services for street and unsupervised children. There are approximately 30 care shelters in Mongolia based in Ulaanbaatar, Darkhan, Erdenet, Selenge and Dornod. 20 of these care shelters are based in various districts of Ulaanbaatar. The majority was established in the mid 1990s at the request of the Mongolian Government to provide emergency services for the large numbers of street and unsupervised children that emerged during the economic transition.

Each care shelter operates in a different manner and function as structures within the organizations that have established them. Most are small-based homes catering for 15-20, with a few that are large institutions. Many are affiliated with religious organizations, but operate on secular principles. The CPRL places basic responsibilities on individuals, entities and organizations for running and maintaining child care services such as health/hygiene standards, prevent delinquency and provide basic needs of child. However, there is no legal licensing requirement or regulatory guidelines on national standards. The legal status of many children is unclear, as they do not possess the required documentation that is required for state institutions; the assumption is the act of staying at the shelter is voluntary. (See appendix on INGO/NGOs).

World Vision, SCF UK and Peace Winds¹² have large programs specifically targeting street and unsupervised children. Currently, these and many other care shelters are effectively operating as small institutions, as the majority of children admitted, remain until they reach the majority age. The admission criteria of many care shelters has gradually widened to respond to the needs of a wider group of poor homeless and migrant families who cannot access social welfare assistance, namely registration documents and referrals from local authorities. In addition, orphans and other groups of vulnerable children are also admitted because state institutions are full or unable to accommodate children. The increasing numbers of girls admitted to these shelters is also reflective of the widening admission criteria, as well as the fact that many children now maintain contact with their parents. The care shelters highlighted the problems of admitting children who have lived on the streets longer term, as they present a disruptive influence on the 'settled' living in the shelters; bullying of younger children and absconding are main problems cited.

Education (formal and non-formal)

All care shelters provide a form of education as an essential component of their programs. Children who can be enrolled into the mainstream school are provided with appropriate documents with support from the Address and Identification Center.

Some shelters have experienced problems of discrimination against children in their care at mainstream schools such as segregation of these children. Non-formal education is provided on site, or access arranged for this, for those who have little or no basic literacy skills. The staff devises their own curriculum, which differs from the curriculum of other similar institutions, with the objective being to motivate children to integrate into mainstream education. The curriculum for NFE is not accredited by the Ministry of Education, and stands as providing basic literacy skills for children.

Family Reunification and contact

Each shelter has different policies and practices on how actively family reunification is planned and promoted. Family participation and involvement in these programs is limited to contacts and visits to their children and reunification work, and some care shelters operate open days for parents to access showers, washing and hot meals.

Where reunification is an objective of the care shelter, this option is fully explored including with the extended family and reunification has met with some success.

Tracking and after-care support to the child and family is weak, although some shelters provide material aid to the families for a time limited period when the child returns home. As stated above, many care shelters intend to keep the children until they turn 18, as no other alternatives are possible. World Vision has initiated a small program on fostering; this includes screening of potential foster carers, monthly payments and follow-up social work support once child is placed. This project has met with some success in recruitment of carers and placement of children.

Vocational Training and independent living

Most care shelters provide basic standard vocational training consisting of sewing and handicrafts. Although it can be argued that these standard vocational training courses are

¹² Peace Wind (Japanese Funded) had a fairly substantial programme of shelters for street and unsupervised children. It now has two care shelters in Chingeltei district. The care shelter in Erdenet has now been taken over by the City Governor. In April 2003, they reopened a Children and Family Development Centre, operating like a drop in facility in the Chingeltei District. This was initially a Family Support Centre established with funds from UNICEF.

preparation for independent living, the simple transmission of technical skills has proved unsuccessful in the labor market. It has been noted that youth have been unable to adjust to the work environment and unemployment in the country makes the market competitive with adults in similar situations.

The care shelters manage the children's preparation for independent living linking this to the young person's interest and abilities. However, the range of life skills to enable the youth to develop social skills that will equip them to deal with future life in a mature and healthy manner is rather limited. Partly, this can be attributed to life in institutions and the diverse needs of children for individual attention and planning.

The problems of securing professional vocation training courses, employment, appropriate accommodation and higher education present numerous problems of on-going support and additional costs for care shelters. Loans for gers are offered as the only option, but these schemes are not seen as sustainable in the longer term due to costs, management and tracking of loans. Many shelters have cited limited success in securing employment; often these are unskilled jobs. The vocational training offered by the Ministry of Education is secured through individual negotiation and additional costs. It is evident that many shelters do try to manage all the processes related to preparing young people for independent living.

An excellent vocational training combined with educational, counseling and life skills is offered by the Don Basco Technical Skills Center. This is a two-year program that promotes the children's professional and personal development to manage independent life.

After-care support for children once they leave the care shelters is problematic due to time constraints of staff, lack of resources and, facilities to track children once they leave. One national NGO reported that, although they provide gers on a contract basis, a support structure has to be in place to enable these young people to reintegrate into society. Without this, slippage to the street life is a risk, in particular for young girls. Establishing gers near the young person's own family network presents other problems. Cases of these gers being sold by their families has been reported as well as the problem that the children initially left home from remains, such as alcoholism and family conflict.

Detached and outreach work

Many care shelters undertake outreach work to identify newcomers of street, unsupervised and at-risk children as preventive work, here the children are taken directly to the care shelters. World Vision, SCF UK and Peace Winds undertake both detached and outreach work through their drop-in centres. They provide a wide range of other activities for street and vulnerable children who do not want or are unsuitable for residential care such as NFE, working children, vocational training, legal advice and recreation. These predominantly function as service operations through provision

of hot meals, access to showers and washing facilities and other material aid. The purpose of some of these activities, or criteria for selection, on behalf of children was unclear, and how these were linked to other programs within the organization such as referral to other appropriate agencies and supporting children to gradually integrate into mainstream society is not well organized. This model of providing service provision has gained a certain amount of credibility as a child oriented approach and may set up false incentives and expectations for the child and their families. It has also raised expectations among street children that material aid is available and these places were perceived as places to 'waste time and hang around'.

Methods of Work

Well-developed methods of work with street children are not in place. Each shelter operates in a different manner. The staff often consists of educators who have limited training and experience in social work. Some children cause bigger problems since there is no tradition in this country for dealing with issues such as anti-social behavior, school dropouts, violence against children (in the institution and outside) and prostitution. State social workers are rarely competent to respond properly to these problems, and the lack of specialized institutions with the expertise to deal with the new issues further limits appropriate reaction from these workers.

Community Integration

The majority of care shelters are based in local communities. Links for children within the wider community are limited to education, training and the occasional social/cultural events. Without exception, the majority of care shelters reported that that communities tended to distance themselves from the care shelters. The process of supporting children to integrate into the community and provide them with proper exposure to a range of different adults and children hinders the opportunities for children to develop social skills and build relationships outside the care shelters' networks.

Children's participation

Children's participation and involvement in the running of projects and programs was limited to daily tasks of the shelters such as cleaning and cooking. Their participation in the decision making as well as consultation on their own needs assessment is weak. In general, lack of advocacy and monitoring on violation of children rights is also poor. Street children reported that even when they complain about abuse and violence from the police, it is not followed up. There is also a lack of child-friendly complaint procedures in many of the care shelters. Whilst some projects are supporting street and working children to develop and articulate their own needs for advocacy and peer support, these are still very much in the infancy stages.

Financial costs and sustainability

The financial expenditure of maintaining a shelter for 15-20 children costs international NGOs US\$1,700 – 2,000 a month. This does not include additional costs for clothes, education costs and activities for children. Drop-in Centres are even more costly, as they focus on the service provisions of providing daily hot meals, washing facilities and material aid. INGOs have indicated that they have a long-term investment in the programs developed in Mongolia, but would ideally like local governments and/or NGOs to take over aspects of the programs gradually, this has proved problematic. In particular, SCF UK reported that the management and financial responsibilities for one of shelters was taken over by the district Government but was closed within a year's period.

In comparison, national care shelters are newly established and caught in a cycle of fundraising to remain viable. The national NGOs working with children and families indicate that they would ideally like to be service delivery and provisions agencies. However, many have small budgets and are cash strapped, relying on donations and small grants to provide essential services and salaries; in some instances the local authorities provides salaries for staff and utilities cost. Some national NGOs that had established shelters with properties given by the local authorities rent free, were now receiving demands for rent, which has meant they had to relocate to cheaper premises or close their projects.

Co-ordination and collaboration

There is some collaboration and co-ordination between the international NGOs generally but not necessarily between the care shelters and drop-in centres, and to some extent with some of the government agencies. For example, some INGO's have social workers in the LET and Address and Identification Center, on reunification projects. There is very limited co-operation with International NGOs and national NGOs, and between the national NGOs themselves.

NGOs providing services for children and families

There is a large network of international and national NGOs providing a range of services for children and families such as advocacy, children's rights, non-formal education, research centres, vocational training, mediation for employment and public education. A substantial number of national NGOs have good networks of volunteers and staff throughout the Ulaanbaatar districts that work with different groups of street and unsupervised children, orphans, single female headed households, drops outs and abused children. There is also the National Center for Violence that has a special child protection unit, offering counseling and advice to children who experience abuse and family conflict. Nevertheless, the focus of intervention is strongly characterized by provision of material support and service provisions of food.

5.1 Trends and patterns of children in care shelters

The raw data was collated by NBC for the period April 2003 but not analyzed. This data provides a snapshot; as well as broad trends and patterns of current profiles of children in all care shelters nationally. The only state institution included in these statistics is Amgalan – LET Center. Data is not dis-aggregated by age or gender, nor is there clear information on reasons for admission/how the child was referred, duration of stay in institution or exit points. Children themselves in some instances provide the categories used and in all probability they might not want to disclose personal information for reasons they might be returned to their families or to those institutions from which they have moved.

5.2 Children in care shelters

The total population of these 30 care shelters, including the LET Center is 1086. The total population of children in care shelters in Ulaanbaatar is approximately 830 –900. Although all these care shelters do cater for unsupervised and street shelters, others have different target groups of vulnerable and 'at risk' children, such as abandoned babies, orphans and poor children.

5.3 Gender of children

In general, the relatively high numbers of girls largely reflects the different kinds of care shelter target groups. The two main providers of care shelters for street children, SCF UK and World Vision reported that initially, male children dominated. SCF UK reported that currently 60% of their care shelters' populations are girls. However, this high percentage of girls reflects the widening of the admission criteria of children perceived to be 'at risk' of becoming street children, such as migrant children, abused children and orphans, rather than street children.

SCF UK and other care shelters also stated that the initial groups of children admitted in the early stages of their operation remain to date.

The higher percentage of the male population in most care shelters reflects the wider trends in Mongolia of school dropout rates, child labor, abuse and family dysfunction. Also, boys are more likely to engage in risk-taking behavior for stated reasons of escaping their unfavorable family environments, but as many boys reported, ‘out of interest’ to experience the city life.

Gender	Total	%
Males	604	55.6
Females	482	44.4
Total	1086	100

Table 3: Gender distribution of care shelters

5.4 Age distribution of children

The wide disparity in age distribution of children is not surprising considering the different admission criteria and specific age groups that care shelters target. The age distribution of children under 10 years old at 32.9% does suggest this group is particularly vulnerable to long term ‘institutional’ care, and that care shelters may not be appropriate in the long term solution. The larger numbers of 4 – 7 years old may also reflect the practice of identifying younger children at risk and those without access to pre-school education, as is the case with the Verbist shelter and CNF Ger village. Lack of alternatives to institutional care such as fostering and adoption programs and counseling to support young mothers from abandoning their babies is also limited. Lotus Center provides a service whereby usually a lone mother (mainly prostitutes) can abandon their babies anonymously in Ulaanbaatar’s red light district. This center also stated that many families leave their children for an unspecified time, some return to claim their children but many do not.

67.1% of these children are over 11 years old, and these groups of children figure highly in all statistics given the high school drop-out rate, working/herding children, and children ‘at risk’ within family situations. These are also children who vote with their ‘feet’ on leaving home. 39.5% of children are aged 14 – 18 years old, and these children would require support to manage a transition towards independent living in terms of their vocational training, employment and accommodation. Whilst the 5.4% of over 19 years old is suggestive of continuation of support for further education and training as has been indicated by care shelters themselves.

Age distribution of children in care shelters		
	No.s	%
0-3 years old	100	9.2%
4-7 years old	123	11.3
8-10 years	135	12.4
11-13 years old	242	22.3
14-16 years old	310	28.5
17-18 years old	120	11.0
Over 19 years old	12	5.4
Total	1086	100

Table 4: Age distribution of children in care shelters

5.6 Original geographical location of children prior to admission to care

Children in Ulaanbaatar districts remain the highest group of children admitted to care. This is not surprising all the majority of street and children are located in Ulaanbaatar. The fact, that many International and national NGOs are also based in Ulaanbaatar and can identify newcomers on the streets fairly early for preventive and reunification work. Migration and urbanization are also contributing factors of children being admitted to the care shelters. The trend that has emerged is that many children are placed in care shelters due to family poverty. In particular, poor parents and those migrating to the city are now also self referring their children to care shelters as means of obtaining access to education for their children and hope that care shelters can provide better care than they can.

There are 10 care shelters based outside of Ulaanbaatar such as Dornod, Darkhan and Selenge, where the capacity of most is about 20 children. This would suggest approximately 200 of the total care shelter population is based outside of Ulaanbaatar. In total it can be assumed that approximately 36.2% of children migrate alone or with their families to the Ulaanbaatar. As others have identified, the link by the railway line makes access to Ulaanbaatar easier for children from Dornod and Darkhan, which are the highest numbers for this cohort of children. However, migration to Ulaanbaatar from more remote *aimags* is very low in numbers.

The next highest groups of children are those that are unidentified. As stated above, many younger children are abandoned or left by parents in shelters. There are a small group of children with mental illness who may not be able to provide information on their family circumstances, but this could also reflect older children who do not want to disclose their family circumstances.

Child's original home geographical location		
	No.s	%
Ulaanbaatar	467	43
Dornod	121	11.1
Darhan-Uul	66	6.1
Selenge	58	5.3
Darkhan	35	3.2
Other Aimags	112	10.4
Unidentified	227	20.9
Total	1086	100

Table 5: Child's original home geographical location

5.7 Family composition and circumstances

The public perception that the majority of street children and those in care shelters are fleeing home due to reconstituted families with step parents at 7.3% and alcoholic parents at 7% is not borne out by these statistics. These are likely to be one of the contributing factors amongst others such as poverty for these children leaving home. Although, it is significant that there is no mention of intra-familial abuse as one of the reasons for leaving home, considering this has been cited as a contributing factor by many agencies.

Overall, the statistics highlight that poverty affects 69.7% of these children. Only 8.7% children reported that they lived in an average income family and were not poor and only 6 children stated they came from reasonably well-off families.

The half orphans and divorced parents group forms 44.7% of those children who lived in a single parent household structure, a group that is especially vulnerable to the effects of family and child poverty. However, it appears that children with both parents at 19.5% are also unable to provide sufficient protection for their children as a result of the adverse impact of poverty. The care shelters reported that many migrant/homeless families are increasingly turning to them to provide basic shelter and food for their children, but also for access to education and health services.

Full orphans and children with no guardian/carer form a group of 15.4% in total. It can be speculated these children might have run away from institutional care, alternative family-care arrangements due to abuse and/or lack of appropriate care and love. Coupled with the fact that state orphanages do not take in street children or those from the Address and Identification Center, effectively leaves care shelters as the only option in this current climate. As much as preference for placements within the child’s extended family are desirable to offer the child continuity and security, poverty, among other factors means that support within the extended family is also weakened. There is another small group of children whose parents are imprisoned, mentally ill or otherwise incapacitated.

20.9% children are of undetermined status overall, but their family composition is known. Again it can be speculated these are younger group of children who have been abandoned and/or those unwilling to disclose their family circumstances. Stigma on lack of family name and family lineage are strong in Mongolia culture; a perceived identity of not belonging will heavily impact on their future lives.

Child’s Family Composition		
	No.s	%
Half orphans	291	26.8
Both Parents	212	19.5
Divorced Parents	194	17.9
Full orphans	91	8.3
Step Parent	79	7.3
No guardian/carer	76	7.0
Alcoholic Parent	51	4.7
Unemployed	43	4.0
Parent in Prison	22	2.0
Parents’ illness	14	1.3
Parents’ mental illness	13	1.2
Total	1086	100

Table 6: Child’s family composition

5.8 Where the children lived prior to admission in care:

The numbers of children already having experienced care shelters suggest that there is considerable movement of children between care shelters as this represents the highest percentage at 40.3%. In general, this movement may reflect a choice exercised by the children, who often want to be placed with their peers, friends or siblings, but also that

services and provisions on offer are perceived as better than others. It could also reflect the children absconding from the LET Center and being re-admitted several times. This is also a concern as children may play one shelter off against other, but also avoids them dealing with issues that were present in the previous shelter.

The next highest category is the ‘other’ at 36.6%; whether this means their own family support systems or children were simply homeless or abandoned is unclear. However, it is concerning that none of the children stated that they lived with their own families prior to their current admission to the care shelter. This trend may reflect that older children opt for a number of options, including living on the street for some time before admission to a care shelter.

Children who have some form of support represent a group of 11.2%, whether this included extended family members or just family friends, suggests that this relationship has broken down or was particularly strained forcing them to move on.

Children living in manholes, apartment entrances and using the night shelters represent a smaller group of children who were living on the streets at 14.9%. What is less clear, due to a lack of revolving door policies, and because care shelters increasingly provide longer-term care how many street children are new admissions.

Child’s residence prior to care shelter admission		
	No.s	%
Other care shelter	438	40.3
Other	365	33.6
Other people’s houses	122	11.2
Apartment entrances	75	7
Manholes	59	5.4
Night service shelters	27	2.5
	1086	100

Table 7: child’s living circumstances prior to admission

5.9 Education Status of Children

33.2% of these children currently go to school from the care shelters. One of the main objectives of many of the care shelters is to ensure that, where possible, children attend mainstream school and necessary documents are secured for this. 29.9% of those children of school age (excluding those under 7 years of age and those over 17 years) are not in mainstream school. Although many care shelters are providing informal education, this is a high percentage of children whose opportunities to full education are not possible and, depending on the planning for their futures, whether they will be able to catch up on missed education to complete their 8th and 10th grade. Children who are completely illiterate are 16.3% and with basic literacy is 8%; combined, they make a total of 24.3%.

The reasons behind the 15.7% who dropped out of school are unclear although there is ample evidence to suggest that many poor families struggle to cope with the additional costs required for schools, lack of registration for migrant families, along with the need of families need for the child’s labor. In particular, it is the adolescent male child that is vulnerable to school dropout.

Current and previous education status of children		
	No.s	%
Currently attend school	361	33.2
Pre-school education	181	16.7
Illiterate	177	16.3
Drop out	171	15.7
Basic literacy	87	8.0
Primary education	86	7.9
Secondary education	23	2.1
Total	1086	100

Table 8: current and previous education status of child

5.10 Child's reasons for leaving home

As discussed previously, the strong factors contributing to children's admission to care is poverty related i.e. poor life, migration, homelessness and abandonment. As a combined total, these form 69.5% of reasons for leaving their family home. Family conflict actually is a lower contributing factor at 6.8%. However, as a combined total of family conflict and ignored/outcasted, this accounts for 13.1% of reasons that related to problematic family circumstances. There is certainly a group of adolescents who are bored and interested in exploring life in the capital city, but these are very low in numbers at 5.8%, as are those who are influenced by their peer groups at 3%.

Child's reasons for leaving home		
	No.s	%
Poverty	437	40.2
Homeless	177	16.3
Abandoned/left	141	13.0
Other	93	8.5
Family conflict	74	6.8
Ignored/outcasted	68	6.3
Prefer wandering	63	5.8
Influenced by others	33	3.0
Total	1086	100

Table 9: Child's reasons for leaving home.

5.11 Length children have been away from home before admission to care shelter

Information is available for 948 cohorts of children. The information suggests that early identification and entry to care shelters of street and unsupervised children before 3 months is low at 1.7%. This number is likely to reflect abandonment of babies and toddlers age group. The vast majority of children at 94.5% have lived away from their family home or elsewhere for more than a 1 year before entering the care shelters system. This is a fairly lengthy time frame for children regardless of their age to lose their connection to family life and education, and to become imbued into life and culture on the streets either alone or within their family. This does suggest that the large majority of children wanted a secure environment as indicated by the stability of care shelter population.

3.8% of children lived away from their family home for a period of 1-3 years before admission to a care shelter. As stated before, migrating families often try to manage some sort of livelihood situation, and a year period is when the reality of their situation hits the hardest leading to relinquishing their children to care shelters. However, many street children also resist the return to normalcy preferring the freedom and 'risks' on the streets. As some children stated, living on the streets 'was fun and the best experience of their lives'. The accounts of street children [mainly adolescents attending drop in centers] stated that they had experienced enough of street life. Some desired to return home and others to a stable care environment. It is much harder to reintegrate these children into a care shelter routine, and as the lowers numbers of children admitted to care shelters after 3 years suggest, these children are too disruptive and compromise the sense of 'safety' of the other children. There are many reports of the 'hard core' of street children continuing with the 'boss' system of the streets, bullying of younger children and also abuse of younger children on admission to care. Hence a much more cautious approach is exercised towards the older children and those who have lived too long on the streets.

5.12 Children involvement in income generation activities prior to admission

36.5% of this cohort of children did not undertake any kind of work prior to admission in care. 18% of children representing the older age range were engaged in activities to earn money; these include unskilled work in the informal sector of markets, scavenging and begging. However, the kind of income generated by these activities was very low for long hours, earning anything from 100 to over 1,000 tgs per day; a hand to mouth existence for basic survival.

5.13 Contact and visits to family

Research studies (cf. Rowe) highlight the importance of contact with the child's family, not only for a sense of the child's identity and maintaining links, but also for successful reintegration of children with their family, especially for those children in institutional care. The care shelters either encourage the children to visit their families or operate open days when parents can visit. Only 9% of children in these care shelters have regular contact with their families. 32.2% children have some form of contact that is infrequent/sporadic. Unless this is regular and meaningful to the child (depending on their age and the quality of this contact), research highlights that, over time this decreases significantly unless this is actively promoted by care institutions. Regularity and quality of contact is also strongly linked to the successful reunification to home for the child.

Children who never have any contact with their parents are significantly high at 39.2%. The 'other' category refers to those groups of undermined children, who are unlikely to have any future contact with their families. As a combined group, this is 58.7% of the total population of children in care shelters who do not have contact with their families. There are 15.4% full orphans and those with no guardians. Nevertheless over 23.8% children have lost contact with their families due to distances, family conflicts and poverty related reasons, and for this group of children their sense of identity, belonging and family roots are likely to have become distorted. Issues of loss, separation and abandonment are likely to be strong for these children.

Contact/visits with child's family		
	No.s	%
Never	426	39.9
Infrequent/sporadic	350	32.2
Other	212	19.5
Regular contact	98	9.0
Total	1086	100

Table 10: contact/visits with child's family

5.14 Objectives of the placement

There are broad objectives set for children in terms of their future planning. Research highlights that unless active planning and arrangements are in place, 'drift' sets in and children end up lingering in care indefinitely. Return home to the child's family is possible for 29.6%. The percentage of reunification to relatives is very low at 1%, as is alternative family based care such as adoption. However, for 69.4% of children, alternative care arrangements, education, employment and independent living are required, although 18.2% will remain in care for the remainder of their minority years. Nevertheless, there are a significant numbers of children who will require support to complete their education and manage their transition to independent life.

Placement objectives for child in care		
	No.s	%
Return home	321	29.6
Continue to study	227	20.9
Remain in care shelters	198	18.2
Other	141	13.0
Work placement	92	8.5
Independent living	87	8.0
Return to relatives	11	1.0
Live in another country	5	0.5
Adopted	4	0.4
Total	1086	100

Table 11: Placement objectives for child in care

5.15 Addictive Habits

The perception that children on the streets and unsupervised are more likely to develop or turn to addictive substances is not borne out by this cohort of children. In terms of any kind of addictive or unhealthy lifestyles of these children, 18.6% smoke, but the numbers abusing alcohol and drugs is very small at 1.2%.

5.16 Conflict with the law:

The public perception and attitudes that these children are from unfavorable families and the negativity surrounding street children, hence more likely to be involved in delinquent and criminal activities is not borne out by these statistics. 53.3% have had no contact or conflict with the law, and the 'other' category is likely to represent the children identified by the police as 'unsupervised' at 36%, hence involvement with the police. Stealing related to

poverty and survival is low at 8.9% and hooliganism is minimal at 1.4%. Prostitution is very low at only 4 children.

Conflict with the law		
	No.s	%
None	579	53.3
Other	391	36.0
Stealing	97	8.9
Hooliganism	15	1.4
Prostitution	4	0.4
Total	1086	100

Table 12: Conflict with the law

5.17 Conclusions

In Mongolia, the analysis of care shelters and state institutions presents an unusual situation for a post transition country, in which the state has fewer institutions and smaller numbers of children accommodated, than the numbers of care shelters managed by international and national NGOs and the children currently accommodated by them. Originally, the care shelters were established at the request of the Mongolian Government as an emergency response to the large numbers of street and unsupervised children emerging due to the economic transition and weakened social service provisions. As a short-medium term strategy they have made significant contributions, however they have now evolved into operating as orphanages. A lack of integrated and coordinated national child protection systems has led to care shelters acting as welfare care systems for a variety of children that might not necessarily end up in care.

- International and NGOs have good reputations with the state agencies and the community as providing valuable services for street and vulnerable children. In effect they are perceived as having the main responsibility for street and unsupervised children. Nevertheless, concerns were expressed about the openness and transparency of the care shelters operations; children were being unnecessarily kept long term when they could be returned home and children are being indoctrinated through religious teaching by some care shelters. There is an important element of teaching children about world religions and cultures, different value systems and tolerance for differences, so long as this is part of a wider secular teaching and learning process.
- In general, international and national NGOs are characterized both by a development oriented approach and charity welfare assistance approach. Both have made a positive impact on supporting street and vulnerable children and their families. However, as lessons learned from international experiences highlight, charity programs help perpetuate the street children problem by making street life easier and strengthening children's dependence on service provisions. In the long term, they are counter-productive to enabling street children to gradually move away from street life. There are also concerns that children who are not street children are tapping into the care shelters' provisions of material aid and free meals, and encouraging their siblings to take to the streets. Currently, street children view the drop in facilities as 'places to waste time and be fed'.
- As with the state institutions, there is an absence of coherent gate keeping policies and practices that have clear objectives on admission of children to the care shelters (and drop in centres), planning for children while in care, and exit strategies. As the statistics above indicated, the number of street and unsupervised children admitted are low at 14.9% of the

total care population. The analysis of trends and patterns on the population of children in care shelters highlights that family poverty is the main reason leading to admission to care, including the children from migrant families using the care shelters as the only means of providing education and meeting the basic needs of their children.

- There is a danger of a 'dependency' culture being promoted unintentionally, setting up false incentives and unrealistic expectations that care shelters are solutions for a wide range of children for whom residential care is inappropriate. The provision of material aid and the perceived better care provided may prove to undermine the family structures and kinship obligations. Families see that care shelters are able to provide better material care for their children due to poverty. This approach inevitably does not empower families, but reinforces the powerlessness of parents and further creates problems of reintegrating children back into their families whose ability to provide material support for children is perceived as lacking.
- The care shelters are not in a favorable position to respond properly to the reported abuse and neglect of the children in their families, nor violence on the street or by the police officials, or effectively mediate on their behalf with the relevant authorities. There was an absence of child-friendly child protection procedures and complaint procedures in most care shelters.
- Some care shelters work with the families and manage the processes of family reunification. This has had success with some programs, although follow-up support is inadequate, as is after care support to young people leaving the shelters.
- The education attainment of the children in care shelters does not usually correspond to their age hence the majority of children are refused enrollment in mainstream education. Further problems are encountered for admission to vocational training schools, as they require a completed general education first, or after completion of the fifth grade. The kind of life these children lead imposes constraints on them because the lack of education and lack of professional skills disadvantages them in the labor market. The prospects of accommodation are practically non-existent unless the care shelters provide it.
- The provision of care shelters needs to be considered in the broader context of the de-institutionalization, and CRC principles, of supporting children within family structures through family oriented social policy and provisions. New care shelters or orphanages continue to open on ad-hoc basis. Provision of care shelters and material services has gained credibility as the predominant model for meeting the needs of a wide group of children at risk. This is very much conceptualized currently as a child oriented approach.
- There is an urgent need to evaluate the future role of care shelters because the numbers of street and unsupervised children are decreasing. The need for new care shelters within the wider context of the overall national strategy on dealing with street and unsupervised children and children in especially difficult circumstances requires careful review prior to implementation. Currently, care shelters are being used as a child welfare support service in the absence of other alternative provisions and adequate preventive and family support services.
- There is an urgent need for a National Policy on street and at risk children to establish common strategies, policies and objectives, and to strengthen and enhance inter-agency and INGO/NGOs co-ordination and partnerships, both at national, city, district and khoroo levels.
- Information and management systems of children in care shelters are inadequate for the purpose of tracking and monitoring. However, the patterns and trends of children in care shelters as well as in state institutions are an important for forming a basis upon which to plan social policy on future care provision.

6. Main Conclusions: Recommendations and Strategies

6.1 The change agenda

The challenges facing the MUB are tremendous in the areas of education, health and welfare sectors. The problem that Mongolia confronts is how to maintain levels of welfare support within an increasingly unstable economic climate in context of declining expenditure and to respond effectively to growing emerging needs of street and other vulnerable groups of children together with increasing migration to the capital city, Ulaanbaatar. Economic reforms, poverty alleviation and strengthening the social welfare services are the main priorities of the MUB and the National Government. There are a numbers of projects with major donors in partnership with the MUB, that who are working on long term development on infra-structure reform and capacity building in the areas of education, health and employment.

The Ministry of Social Welfare and Labor, with the support of ADB is developing Social Security Sector Master Plan (SSSMP). This is a long-term reform strategy through the establishment of soum-level social services centres and development of social work. The main objective is poverty alleviation through promoting equal opportunity and social inclusion for the poor and vulnerable groups. The SSSMP does not include a separate strategy to improve the well-being of children, as its general objectives are designed to prioritize reduction of poverty of the large numbers of families and children currently identified as living in poverty.

While there is considerable debate on the kind of professional social workers that would be suitable to the Mongolian context as part of the modernizing reform agenda, and the types of social workers in the richer western countries are perceived as inappropriate. There is a need to ensure that policies and practices on child protection and care are integrated within child and family welfare reforms, that also deals with the protection of wider groups of children suffering violence, exploitation and abuse, both within the family and outside. However, these policies and practices themselves also contribute and reinforce 'social problems'. This is especially true if the wider context on issues of patriarchy, disparity between the rich and poor, gender and the impact on children and families on increasing social divisions, structural inequality and deprivation are not addressed.

Whilst, there are major changes envisaged in the re-structuring and reforms in the social welfare sectors, there is no interim/transitional strategy in place. In addition, Legislation passed in January 2003 on Public Finance and Management envisages further re-structuring and cutbacks within the MUB structures, and at national and aimag levels. Children's issues need to be centrally placed in the economic and social welfare reforms, to ensure that children rights can be fully implemented. As a prerequisite to reforms and restructuring there is a need to have a coherent common and integrated philosophy on child welfare reform and effective inter-sectoral co-operation and collaboration.

6.2 The institutional framework on preventive family based services

The impact on the CRC on developing mechanisms on preventive and family support services have been minimal. While there has been an active process on reforms on national legislation and policy to comply with the CRC, with various updated regulations and orders adopted by different ministries and local governments these further fragment provisions and development

of services to children and families. The introduction on the Child Rights Protection Law was an initial step on the transformation of the CRC into national legislation; its impact remains limited without accompanying regulatory framework for implementation. Whilst, this legislation mandates the transfer of responsibilities for children's issues to local social workers at district and khoroo levels this areas of work remains underdeveloped for streamlining provisions and service delivery. In practice this area of work is still predominately undertaken by juvenile inspectors for a range of children 'at risk' and vulnerable groups of children. Since, there is no tradition of dealing with a broad range of issues relating to children 'at risk' such as street children, juvenile offenders, school drop out, violence against children and prostitution the institutional responses are characterized by systems of sanctions, individual control, educational and corrective measures on children. Frequently, institutional care is the first response, rather than the last option for these groups of children. This area of work is predominately undertaken by INGO/NGOs sectors to fill in gaps on state provisions.

There is a commitment from the government in legislation and the NPA to develop family-based children protection to fulfil the "right of every child to grow up in a family". Longer-term welfare reforms policies are aimed at social development and poverty reduction through community based provisions to improve the situation of families and children to prevent family breakdown. There is a lack of understanding on concepts of de-institutionalisation and shifts towards family/community based model of care as outlined in the CRC. Institutional-based models of care continues to be favoured by the state authorities for a range of children 'at risk'. The alternatives small community based models that have been developed by INGO/NGOs are not necessarily perceived as viable or sustainable in the Mongolian context in the longer term. Hence, policy and developmental strategies on de-institutionalisation and alternative family based care for children are not properly addressed. These include fostering and adoption. In Mongolia, the numbers of children in residential care are relatively small. Therefore providing effective provisions in the area of preventive and family support will ensure that the numbers of children admitted to institutional care in the future are kept to minimum.

6.3 Potential interventions

Given the Government's present budget realities it is crucial that emphasis be put on utilizing, strengthening and developing existing resources fully and more effectively through streamlining services and provisions. There is a need to focus on both early preventive measures on problems, once they arise as it more cost effective both socially and economically. There is a concurrent need to focus on those groups of children already facing hardships through social protection programs. To create an enabling environment it is important in the short to medium term to provide a coherent framework of possible interventions with effective inter-sectoral and NGOs co-ordination. It is recommended as a pre-requisite that certain measures need to be in place to provide overall direction for state agencies and local authorities. These include:

- Placement of a near time frame as to when the full transfer of responsibilities and functions for providing support and supervision for a wide range of children at risk and unsupervised are to be passed to social workers. The juvenile inspectors are not specifically mandated in the legislation or in the NPA to undertake this area of work.
- Review and evaluation the current role and responsibilities of social workers and promotion of their professional development in social work. In the longer term

professional social workers will be a more a cost-effective way of providing preventive family based community services.

- Develop a regulatory framework on policy and procedures to guide the work of those agencies responsible for providing preventive family support services, child protection and care. This should take the form of multi-disciplinary guidelines and handbooks such as early identification and reporting, defining the role and responsibilities of each agency, objectives of intervention and measures to protect and provide provisions for children.
- Develop national standard requirement on social work practices for working with children and families. Introduce a range of social work assessment tools that can enhance decision making and provide consistency in service delivery such as case management, social enquiry reports, individual protection and rehabilitation plans in partnership with child, family and community, including care reviews.
- Defense of the rights of children in cases of intra-familial situations where parental care is endangering the child's personality, safety and development. As well as prevention of abuse, violence and exploitation outside the family needs to be enforced. There is a need to develop procedures and mechanism to facilitate this process such as requirement for evidence, proof, statements and social work inquiry report.
- Reform systems in court proceedings to provide a safe and enabling environment for children to give evidence such as in closed courts. Provisions should be made for independent representation for children in any court proceeding.
- Effective gate-keeping policies and practices on preventing children from being institutionalized and separated from their families.
- CRC decentralization – strengthen deeper understanding of CRC core principles at all levels to inform policy, provisions and practices for children and families.
- Access to education and schools are prioritized for all children, regardless of their circumstances and status. Schools are recognized as providing one of the most important protective environments for children's emotional well being and development as well as providing a wide spectrum of rewarding and learning activities.

6.4 Street and Unsupervised Children

The numbers of street and unsupervised children identified as permanently living on the streets and the new comers on the streets are manageable groups of children for integration and rehabilitation through special programs and with sustained and appropriate support services. There are two levels where intervention needs to be focused:

- Effective targeting of new street and unsupervised children for early preventive and support provisions.
- Outreach and detached work for the groups of street and unsupervised children who have lived long term on the streets to support their reintegration.

The work with new street and unsupervised have an immediate secondary preventive nature to include specialized family support, protection, abuse prevention and other support services to minimize the risks of longer term street life and culture. Children who have a longer history of living on the streets require rehabilitative programs directed at a numbers of levels to facilitate their gradual reintegration through education, family reunification, vocational training, and the labor market. Work with both these groups of children require individual tailor made plans and case management systems to ensure that they are offered appropriate support and services and to address the underlying causes that led them to leave home in the first place.

It is recommended that a National Policy is developed on street and unsupervised children to establish common strategies, policies and mechanisms of intervention and to enhance inter-agency and NGOs co-ordination at national, city, district and khoroo levels .

In the immediate and short term small working groups at district and khoroo levels must develop a local strategy and actions plans on management of street and unsupervised children in partnership with key stakeholders and NGOs, including community and family involvement. The more localised and community based the responses are the higher the commitment to working and supporting children who are likely to become dislocated will be. International experience has shown some remarkable initiatives from the community in being able to provide support in all kinds of ways from informal education by university students as well as from the street children themselves to clearing streets of rubbish.

Targeting new street and unsupervised children

At present the Address and Identification Center, juvenile inspectors and INGO/NGOs are able to effectively target new and recent street and unsupervised children. However, there is a need to systematically manage information and plan for intervention for these groups of children once they are identified. It is suggested that the Address and Identification Center is the focal point to co-ordinate the initial responses and ensuring that subsequent follow-up work is managed through referrals to social workers and appropriate systems of support to the child and family.

- INGO/NGOs must inform the Address and Identification of any new street and unsupervised children they identify through their detached and outreach work. They must also indicate whether or not they are able to continue to work with the child. If they are not, these children are referred must be to the Address and Identification Center.
- The Address and Identification Center and juvenile inspectors must shift their emphasis away from their frequent ‘sweeps and rounds up’ of all street and unsupervised children in public places, manholes and apartments entrances. They must work towards community policing that targets only lost, new and recent street and unsupervised children. This would include any children who are in need of immediate protection for health or other risks.
- For routine cases of lost and unsupervised children the Address and Identification Center must develop makes plans for their return home. At present, children from far off aimags or remote rural areas continue to supported by World Vision social workers to facilitate their return home and World Vision offer interim short- term residential care. Information on all children returned home is passed to the local worker to monitor for a time-limited period. The social worker on receiving this information should within a one-week period visit the family and ensure that the child is appropriately cared for and assess the need for additional support to prevent the child from leaving home in the future.

For the individual cases where the underlying reasons for leaving home highlight concerns and problems an individual case management approach is required to ensure that the responses include co-ordination with social workers and other agencies for further actions and support. The 14 days period that the Address and Identification Center can detain unsupervised children is a sufficient time period to undertake a range of activities to assess the situation such as child abuse, neglect, family conflict, poor quality of care and violence. This includes making a home visit to the child’s family to assess the family circumstances before the child is returned home and to co-ordinate appropriate sustained support for the child and family.

Where the risks to the child returning home are considered manageable with social work and do not compromise the safety of the child. Social work support should work on enhancing child and family relations through problem solving skills. As well as networking within the community to manage these issues through appropriate linkage of support services such as reintegration into formal and non-education, leisure and interest activities and other suitable programmes.

In child protection where abuse, exploitation and violence is disclosed decisions will need to be made on whether it safe for the child to return home with social work support or not. In such cases children should be enabled to give evidence and statement to be used in administrative and judicial proceedings that avoids the need for repeated interviews and are conducted in a child sensitive manner. Even in complex child protection cases the child's return home is possible. Working with the non-abusing parent in cases of sexual abuse, the family is sufficiently motivated to address issues of abuse and there are other supportive members in the extended family and community who can provide support for the child and family. The police and social worker will need to assess the need to initiate legal proceedings to protect the child, as well as take actions against perpetrators of child violence and exploitation.

- Children's opinion and views should be taken into account in all cases in accordance with the child's age, understanding and maturity.
- Children who have been abused and exploited should be offered appropriate counselling and support.
- It is recommended that the practice on finger printing of all children admitted to the Address and Identification Center is discontinued. This practice unnecessarily stigmatising children who have not committed any offences and it is a violation of the rights of the child.

For children who cannot return home due to child protection reasons and those who are orphaned and abandoned who will require alternative care arrangements. In such cases the families must be notified of this decision. Placement to the LET Center and other care shelters should not be just a routine decision, but a planned process that considers other alternatives and possibilities within the child's extended family and the community in the first instances and in consultation with the local Governor. This requires collaboration with other agencies to explore these alternatives and to assess the suitability of such arrangements as well as the risks of such placements breaking down. Children placed in institutional care should have a plan outlining the objectives of the placement in terms of education, health, independent living preparation, reunification, contact and visits to their families. Children and families should be encourage to maintain contact and home visit should be regularly schedules, even if reunification home is not a possibility within the foreseeable future.

Outreach and detached work with street and unsupervised children who have lived long term on the streets to support their reintegration

The MUB and National Government's growing impatience with the large group of street children who resist any form of intervention has lead to a number of deterrent practices such as sealing manholes and consistent attempts to clear them off the streets through police sweeps and raids. Whilst these measures are effective in the short term, they rarely work as long term deterrent, as the street children just move to other places and return again after a period. There is some value in allowing the street children to remain in places that they

inhabit for monitoring and supervision purposes, as well as to initiate and engage them in rehabilitative work.

The Address and Identification Center's and juvenile inspector's frequently 'round ups' of these children, as many as 20-30 times each in the last 2-3 years have proven to be ineffective in engaging the street children to move away from street life. It is recommended that this form of intervention be discontinued and that sustained programmes of detached and outreach work are undertaken to support the reintegration of these groups of street children.

A detailed framework of intervention has been included in part two of this report. It is recommended that this framework be applied for implementing reintegration and rehabilitative work with these groups of street children and youth. In addition, it is recommended that the small team of police inspectors from the Address and Identification Center, local social workers and INGO/NGOs are given the main responsibility for undertaking this work. As outlined in part two of the report, the personnel undertaking this work will require regular supervision but also effective inter-sectoral co-operation from other state agencies and local authorities to link children to a range of support services and provisions. It would also be equally useful to have a small group of experts to provide overall case management and guidance.

Children 'at risk' of offending

There is currently a national working group to develop separate legislation on juvenile justice and social protection of children 'at risk' of offending. While longer term reform are being developed, it is recommended that in the short to medium term practical measures outlined in the Juvenile Justice in Mongolia Report be implemented in respect of street and unsupervised children 'at risk' of offending. As well moving towards a child oriented services is essential. Some of these measures included the following:

- Discontinue the practice of subjecting children under the age of criminal responsibility to police supervision.
- Instead, refer children who exhibit risk factors (e.g. unsupervised, abused, or history of violence) to a social worker for assessment and referral to appropriate government and NGO support services. Develop clear referral guidelines and procedures to ensure that the child and his family receive sustained support such as parenting skills courses, mentoring, life skills programs, school reintegration, and non-formal education.
- Develop safe, alternative family-based care options for children without adequate parental supervision. Ensure that measures are taken to protect younger children in care shelters from abuse and exploitation by older residents.
- Reassess the current crime prevention activities of juvenile inspectors and adolescent police and discontinue the practices that are not an effective use of resources and that contribute to the marginalization and stigmatization of children at risk.

6.5 Working Children

There is a liberal stance on child labour due to poverty related factors and the recognition for the need of the family for child labour inside and outside the family domain. There has been some improvement in reducing the numbers of children who dropping out of school. The numbers do however remain alarming high. Research studies highlight that youth unemployment and access to opportunities for employment are related to education

attainment, whilst those with little or no basic literacy skills struggle to access decent employment opportunities.

- It is recommended that education social workers, children's center staff, district and khoroo social workers devise a strategy to enable working children to continue basic education and to make up gaps in their schooling through non-formal education programmes. This will require a flexible and creative approaches for access to education such as those provided by INGO/NGOs, as well as for support access to social, cultural, summer camps and leisure activities. Where it is possible children must be integrated into the mainstream school system.

Child labour in the informal sector continues to grow. Social protection of children involved in child labour requires a distinction between child workers involved in family activities such as housework or herding and child labour working long hours of under hazardous conditions in the informal sector. There is a need to provide for enforceable mechanisms where the need for a child labour denies children a right to education and decent quality of life. Long working hours for low wages under working conditions that damage the physical and emotional development of children must come under great scrutiny and control. Support for children to find alternative forms of employment that is safe and appropriate for these working children should be provided.

There is also a need for welfare provisions and employment opportunities for families. This is especially true in single female headed households to reduce the need for child labour. Support for children where parents are engaged in long hours of work and unable to provide adequate supervision should be provided for children such as accessible and affordable day care, pre-school education and after school activities.

6.6 Children Prostitution

Current legislation and practices effectively criminalizes underage prostitutes. Child prostitution and sexual exploitation is not a severe problem in Mongolia in comparison with other former transition or Asian countries. International best practice developed in other countries that has proved to be highly successful treats child prostitutes as victims, rather than criminals, and they are afforded the opportunity to be rehabilitated into society. Intervention is aimed at different levels that focus on police investigation, legislative framework and actions to rehabilitate underage prostitutes. There are currently special programs to provide support to 'at risk' young girls and children however it is recommended that amendments to the existing legal and provisions for practical measures are introduced to reduce the numbers of child prostitutes and to prevent human trafficking from growing.

- Police investigation should be pro-active in all instances of trafficking and organization of prostitution. This must extend to investigating possible advertising that are asking for waitresses and other position for young women abroad to ascertainment of whether or not these are legitimate. Many countries undertake undercover activities involving policewomen and volunteers from NGOs to act as prostitutes. They provide excellent opportunities for prosecution as they can provide a court with useful witness statements. In some countries, where prostitution is legal, adult female prostitutes provide information to the police on child prostitution.
- Review legislation to ensure that it protects children from sexual exploitation and penalizes all direct beneficiaries of prostitution such as organizers, trafficker and clients.

Stiff levels of imprisonment depending on the seriousness of the crime can act as a deterrent.

- A strategy must be developed that can successfully promote the rehabilitation of child prostitutes rather than punishes them. This work needs to be done in collaboration with the police, relevant social welfare agencies and NGOs. There is a need to develop policies and procedures to be followed when a child prostitute is identified or arrested, enabling them to give evidence/statement in an enabling environment. Shelters, counseling, provision of opportunities for education and training, and work to reunite them with their families and communities must be a priority.
- There is a need to protect the identity of child prostitutes in terms of confidentiality within the police departments and state agencies to prevent sharing this information inappropriately within public places such as announcements in schools and media publicity. This further stigmatises and isolates underage prostitutes rather than encourages their reintegration.

6.7 Migrant Children

The recent Supreme Court decision to cancel the registration fees for migrant adults and children to the capital city, Ulaanbaatar was passed on 1st July 2003. While access is theoretically guaranteed, the problems of overcrowding in schools and provisions of the health services are already over stretched and these barriers remains for migrant families and children. In addition, there are problems with homelessness and poor living conditions in peri-urban ger districts.

In the short term creative and innovative strategies are needed to support migrant families and children. This requires collaboration and co-ordination efforts of MUB, the National Government, donor community, INGO/NGOs and the communities themselves to address the most pressing needs. INGO/NGOs already run education and other programmes by establishing gers and medical services for poor families. These services can be extended as short-medium term practical measures. In addition, empty government buildings can be converted, to be used as education and family centres for migrant families that offers other welfare support and activities. Volunteers from within the communities, university students and those linked to NGOs could be recruited to support these initiatives. The reliance of migrant families in stimulating the informal economy in Ulaanbaatar highlights that communities are able to organise against stiff competition and find solutions in the face of adverse poverty.

There are as many opportunities and possibilities to address the poverty of families that will directly benefit their children but also the wider communities. This can include extending existing programs on poverty alleviation as well as creating new income generation project, training on small medium enterprises, co-operatives, youth training project and farming (crop and other non-herding). The participation of migrant families, children and communities in policy making and strategies in addressing and finding solutions is a key and important aspect of future planning.

6.8 State Institutions Care and Care Shelters

The care shelters programmes were initially established as an emergency response, the 'economic' transition in Mongolia is still on going. The numbers of street and unsupervised children show a decreasing trend currently, while the social problems of children living in

poverty is increasing. As the analysis of children in care shelters highlighted the majority of care shelters have been effectively operating as orphanages since their establishment, including those that were specifically established as an emergency measure for street and unsupervised children. The lack of clear gate keeping policies and practices with no revolving door exit strategies and in the absence of effective preventive and family welfare services has led to care shelters increasing acting as child welfare services for a variety of children that might not necessary end up in care.

The high financial costs of the care shelters are unlikely to be sustainable in the long term for the numbers of the children that are accommodated by them. This again highlights the need for shifts away from residential care towards approaches that does more than just provide a shelter for children and more sustainable strategies for helping disadvantage children and families. In Mongolia, education sponsorship programs developed by Christina Noble Foundation and the fostering programmes by World Vision are examples of more cost-effective strategies.

The LET Center is the only state institution that caters for street and unsupervised children, children ‘at high risk’ of offending and generally for children who are orphaned, neglected and abandoned. There have been ongoing concerns expressed about the poor quality of care for children in this institution relating to the poor environment, lack of adequate support for children and the inadequate finances to provide for the children’s daily food. There is an urgent need to review the policy and management practices of the LET Center in the short term and its future.

The State has three main institutions catering for orphans, half orphans and abandoned children in Ulaanbaatar. These institutions do not admit street children and receive no children from the Address and Identification Center. The quality of care, education and preparation for independent living are quite good. However, the institutions highlighted problems of inadequate state expenditure for urgent renovation work, replacement of furniture and equipment, food budgets and salaries for the members of staff.

All the care shelters and state institutions highlighted the problems encountered on children exiting out of care for independent living and lack of access and opportunities for further education, vocation training and accommodation. Children left without parental care and support have low self-confidence and they are not sufficiently prepared for independent living, which restricts their opportunities for coping with the life challenges outside the residential care environment. While legal measure are provided for orphans and those without parental care leaving care for assistance with accommodation, further education and vocational training, in reality access to these are practically non-existent.

There is an urgent need to review the overall systems for providing care for children in state institutions and care shelters. While it is acknowledged that institutional care is not cost effective in the long term unless this is accompanied by an active and sustained process of reforms that invests in alternative community and family-based models of care, reliance on institutional care will continue.

As an initial strategy the following recommendations should be considered:

- The Government and INGO/NGOs review, assess and evaluate all care shelters functions in providing residential care for street and unsupervised children and children in

especially difficult circumstances in the short and longer term. A large majority of children admitted to the care shelters is because of poverty related reasons. The future role of care shelters needs to be placed within the wider context of preventive and family support provisions for children and families and those children who would require permanent alternative care.

- New care shelters continue to be established on ad-hoc bases as a ‘rescue’ response for a wide range of children. The Government should not give approval for registration of new care shelters until a national strategy has been developed to consider the need for more residential care institutions based on reliable statistics. In the longer term, the sustainability of care shelters is an issue, but it also endorse the continuation of residential care as appropriate.
- National legislation, policies and provisions should reflect the Government’s commitment to community integration over institutional care in all its provisions. And, a commitment to develop and provide alternative family based care for children left without parental care such as fostering and adoption.
- There is a need for effective mechanisms on restricting new admissions to state institutions and care shelters through effective gate keeping policies and practices, at both national and local levels, but one that also responds to the difficulties experienced by families and child protection concerns.
- There is a need to review the financial expenditure provided to state institutions and improve the living conditions for children. In particular, urgent repairs and renovation to maintain the conditions of the buildings.
- Develop national standards of care for children in public, private and NGOs to assure a guaranteed standard of services to children in care. This would include complaint procedures for children, promoting partnership with parents, contact arrangement, case reviews, individual planning for children, case reviews, active family reunification policies and dismissal of staff for gross misconduct.
- There is an urgent need to review the short term and future of the LET Center. It is recommended that the original strategy to close the institution in two years is put into force with active planning to rehabilitate the current population of children to suitable alternative family and community based care and where it is safe and appropriate with their families. Emergency financial assistance and short term measures to improve the quality of care is not sustainable in the longer run.
- The Government makes provisions to support orphans and children without parental care exiting state institutions and care shelters for free access to further education and professional vocational training. While provisions for accommodation are difficult, that measures are taken to support children to access some form of housing assistance such as a one off grant payment or provisions of Gers.

6.9 Street projects and programs

There is already a good network of services and provision provided by NGOs and other organizations for street and other vulnerable groups of children on legal awareness and rights of children. Street and working children identified many risks that they encountered while working on the streets and in public places relating to peer group bullying, lack of awareness of personal safety, lack of information on welfare organizations, health issues and access to leisure and sports activities. There is a need to provide information and activities for these groups of child to reduce the ‘risks’ they encounter on a daily basis, as well as extend the range of programs that promote their personal development. It is recommended that state agencies and NGOs provide programs to address these issues.

- Provision of health certificates for street and unsupervised children.
- Support street children to locate their birth certificates and provide identity papers for them that will enable them to enter the formal education system and access welfare provisions.
- Develop street programs in public places where large numbers of street and working children are located on a wide range of issues so these are more accessible to them. Such as how to deal with bullying, strategies for dealing with abusive and violent adults, personal safety issues, healthy life styles, information on organizations to support children, access to education and informal education.
- Open days for street, working and poor children to have free access to activities organized at the Children's places and other youth facilities.
- Information and advice on employment and vocation training programs.
- Involve parents and the communities in markets to support and protect children that are working in the informal sectors.
- Organise short training sessions of a regular basis for children, parents and communities in the informal market sector such as conflict resolution and mediation.

6.10 Advocacy, public education and awareness

Public awareness and advocacy can make the voices of street children and children in especially difficult circumstances heard, by producing changes in policies, laws and provisions that make a positive impact on their life. Public education and awareness with government, civil society, international communities and children participation on the a wide range of issues that impact negatively on child as well as encouraging solutions to these problems are required to prevent more children and young people from becoming marginalised and disconnected from their families. There are many successful and innovative programs run by Mongolian adolescent and youth on alcohol abuse, domestic violence and school based community program. Nevertheless, participation of street children and other vulnerable groups of children are weak. Child care organizations and NGOs need to find ways of empowering children through support and training to enable them to represent and articulate their own needs and views in programs, policies and service provisions.

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Part Two

Reintegration and socialization of street children and young people

This part of the report is to provide a framework of intervention on the rehabilitation of street and unsupervised older youths who have a long history of living on the streets as requested by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Labor. The report includes the following:

- Recommendation on the proposal for a specialized school and alternative forms of community based transitional half way homes for the rehabilitation of street and unsupervised older youth.
- A framework of intervention on practical measures to support reintegration and rehabilitation of street and unsupervised youth.
- Recommendations for independent living for young people exiting care shelters

1. Background Information on the proposal for a specialized school

Reintegration of children and young people who have a long history of living on streets of Ulaanbaatar, and have resisted various forms of interventions, give rise to concerns. These revolve around a high risk of offending due to lack of parental care, general delinquency and their vulnerability due to their street lifestyle. It is also acknowledged that older children/youths bully or threaten younger children into committing crimes against those living in manholes and care shelters and exert an exceptionally negative influence. Adults who bully and threaten them into engaging in criminal and anti-social activities, also place the older youths themselves, in similar positions. In this sense, these youths are victims of street life as well as the wider social and economic dislocation of Mongolia's transition.

To deal with the problem, plans were initially developed by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Labour and the General Police Department to build a military school in Ulaanbaatar. This was planned to hold unsupervised children under police security until they turn 18. The proposal received much international and national opposition, as detaining children who have not been convicted of a crime in a secure environment is a violation of children's rights under the CRC and the Mongolian Constitution.

The alternative favoured by the Ministry of Social Welfare, the Juvenile Police and the Municipality of Ulaanbaatar (MUB) for these groups of children remains with an institutional-based model. The Decree passed by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on April 6th is now considering placement of these youth in a Life Skills Training Center. The planned proposal considers a combination of institutional care and a component of vocational training with life skills.

For street children and youth the process of re-socialization is a long one and cannot be achieved by force or without their consent. The CRC obliges state parties to develop alternative family and community-based care for children without parental care and supervision. The Riyadh guidelines also stress the need for special programs to address the problems of "at risk" children in a manner than emphasizes care, counseling and, promotes their social development. Children should not be considered as mere objects of socialization and control.

Whilst there is considerable concern and frustration over male street youth who have resisted efforts to reintegrate and socialize into mainstream society, strategies based on any kind of institutionalization are the most expensive and least effective means of addressing the needs of this particular group. A large body of international research points out that, although institutional care is usually perceived as an ideal solution by the placers, they rarely meet the needs of children who are drawn into this system. Destructive and powerful peer group influences are well documented, and highlight that, far from altering offending behaviour, residential care tends to immerse young people in a criminal sub-culture; to reinforce their delinquent tendencies and; to serve to further alienate them from the norms of their wider society.

These street youth have a history of distrusting adults, a lack of stable, consistent adult relationships and, have strongly resisted any attempts to be drawn into long term institutional care. Despite the adult perception that street life is fraught with risks and dangers, and the undesirability of their presence on the streets, street life is often highly attractive to some children, such as these male youth, as it offers them good opportunities to earn a living and provides them with a level of freedom from their previous experiences of care in institutions and families, which they see as restrictive, abusive and lacking opportunities.

1.1 The broader context of institutional care

The proposed establishment of a new specialized school needs to be placed within a wider context as to the appropriateness of residential care for street youth, both as a short-term containment mechanism and the longer-term objectives of such an institution. In view of the MUB position that there are no street children in UB, as well as the broader context of appropriate social and economic policies that are clearly essential to prevent the numbers of street children from growing in the future, the experiences of the LET Center and other care shelters are indicators that institutional care has been unable to contain these groups of street children for a variety of reasons. This does raise a question as to the necessity and validity for a specialized school, especially for these groups of youth.

International good practice and CRC principles oblige State Parties to develop alternative community and family-based models of care. This is in line with shifts away from large institutional care in response to the poor quality of care and poor outcomes for children leaving institutional care that are highlighted in research studies worldwide. Alternatives of transitional halfway homes and small group homes based in the community are likely to be more suitable alternatives that can provide a 'good-enough' residential experience to adequately prepare young people for independent life. However, it is recommended that residential care is the last option as discussed further below. Where residential care is considered, there should be clear gate-keeping policies and practices; on assessment and planning to determine the future course of events for the child at each stage: prior to admission, following admission and prior to leaving residential care.

1.2 Disadvantages of Institutional responses

Planning for the future and reintegration processes should not be approached as a simple and practical task to be undertaken for these groups of street youth. It necessitates an honest acknowledgement of the disadvantages of institutional living relative to adequate resources as well as the level of support available to properly equip young people for independent living. It is worth reiterating some main arguments against institutional responses:

- The hierarchical ‘boss’ systems, peer group rivalries, and conflict that exist on the streets are likely to be replicated and transferred to the institution.
- Institutional care might be counter-productive to the objectives of rehabilitation into community life, as young people get immersed in adjusting to residential regimes, routines and expectations.
- They fail to adequately protect some young people from bullying and abuse whilst in institutional care.
- It does not provide them with good adult role models or individual attention and attachment to caring adults.
- The problem with most models of institutional care is that they fail to equip young people with the knowledge, skills and experiences that will contribute to their healthy personality development or to cope with normal life in the community and the working environment.
- Young people fail to learn the range of social and life skills, or to develop the social skills of making decisions to cope with daily life or forming healthy relationships with a range of adults and other significant people.
- Young people fail to develop their own potential, based on their interests, aspirations and desires.
- Institutions stigmatize children as ‘different’ from the rest of the community, reinforcing their status as ‘delinquent’ and/or ‘anti-social’.
- They may ultimately ‘criminalize’ young people who fail to conform to the norms and expectations of the institutional regime. Those who ‘escape’ the institutions to the freedom of the streets only add to their stigma and labeling.

1.3 The street youth participation

The proposal for a Life Skill Training Center is based on an institutional response from a perspective of the authorities’ assumption as to “what is best” for these children. The children have to ‘fit in’ with systems existing, and proposed. Many cultures operate from the basis that adults usually make decisions for children and assume that children are unable or cannot make decisions. This lacks a child rights based approach to provisions and services that the children can, and should, be involved and participate in, given the right environment. A process that is worth considering as well as investing time and effort prior to establishing any type of residential facility is to consult with these groups of children and youth people themselves. Their own assessments and requirements for preparing for independent living are an essential part of a successful and sustainable strategy on their behalf. Focus group discussions with long-term street youth indicated they would like support and opportunities for education in a boarding school or vocational training with accommodation, but were uninterested in any kind of residential establishment or care shelters as an appropriate option for them.

Article 12 of the CRC states that children who can form their own views should have the right to express those views and have them taken into account. Participation and involvement of children on this crucial issue is important as it directly impacts on their future. If this is sensitively and constructively managed, the youth are likely to be more engaged and receptive to the reintegration process. An approach that focuses on street youth as a resource rather than a problem, would enable for a ‘win win’ solution, and break the deadlock on the ‘them and us’ situation that currently exists with the authorities. There is a need for a steering group or street youth working group, who could present their plans and ideas to trusted adults [or a

nominated NGO]. These adults would then mediate and advocate their interests to the relevant authorities. Such a move would represent a major, positive initiative on the part of Government in its attempts to properly address this growing issue.

International experiences highlight that responsive approaches designed to divert young people away from street life successfully are those that can respond to street children's own articulation of their needs and the resources required to meet them.

2. Alternative to Institutional Care: Framework of intervention

Target groups

There is a lack of consensus by different government officials on the numbers of this 'hard' core of street youth, with numbers contested. Nevertheless two broad groups are identified as requiring immediate intervention:

- Street youth aged 18 and over, by definition, are no longer children as defined by the CRC and the Mongolian constitution. Their lifestyle is a social issue and not a child's right issue any longer. This lifestyle may not conform to the social norms and expectations of society, but it is their choice and right. It is a tragic consequence of the economic transition that could not provide appropriate provisions and protection for these now adults, as children. However, any intervention planned for these young adults must be with their consent and agreement.
- The second groups of street youth concern the older age range and the numbers estimated vary considerably i.e. 100 or more.

The objective of intervention must have a clear purpose: the socialization and reintegration of these children into mainstream society under the child's rights framework, and not under the guise of dealing with other issues. The juvenile police and authorities concur this is the main objective, but at the same time also state that some of these children and youth are also juvenile offenders already involved in criminal activities. Breach of law and order must be dealt with separately. The CRC and Riyadh guidelines state that young people should be held accountable for their actions, but in a manner that safeguards their well being, development, rights and interests.

There are no easy solutions for this group of street youths. Their process of re-socialization is a lengthy one that requires a range of options and real choices that will promote a high level of personal investment from these young males. As the Riyadh guidelines stress, adolescence is a time when young people engage in behaviour and conduct that does not conform to societal norms, expectations and the law. This is more so for street children who do not have a protective family, community and education environment and therefore have become excluded and marginalized vulnerable groups. This behaviour is part of the maturation and growth process and tends to disappear spontaneously in most individuals with the transition to adulthood. Interventions that focus on facilitating integration and socialization of these children should be on a voluntary basis that promotes their development and potential.

2.1 The enabling environment

A child-centered approach that combines individualized planning and tailor-made services that focus on integration into the family, education and labour market and that create an enabling environment are the best way forward for these groups of children and youth. This

requires trained professionals, effective case management and especially integration and linking of services within a multi-disciplinary framework. In effect, this relies on making the existing structures and welfare support systems to be sensitized and responsive to the varying needs of these children. This is also likely to be more cost effective in the longer run considers the constraints of government budgets and resources. The intervention is based on two components:

- Detached work with street children to gradually move away from street life
- Reintegration into mainstream society that combines both institutional and non-institutional responses meeting the needs of individual children based on their consent and agreement.

2.2 1st Phase of intervention: detached work

Several established programs internationally that have produced positive impact begin with a phased-in transition of working with children on the streets to allow children to gradually change their life style. A detached programme starts from the premise that children cannot be forced to leave the streets and requires sustained, consistent and continuous efforts on the part of professional workers. Time and multi-disciplinary expertise needs to be invested in assessing the situation of each child and making individual life plans with them and their subsequent linkage to appropriate services.

- **Social history and assessment:** basic information already exists on these young people with the various juvenile inspectors and local authorities. A full social history and assessment of the children is required that also includes their strengths and limitations. Individual plans will need to be agreed, reviewed and monitored with the youth person.
- **Building trust and rapport:** This stage is crucially important to re-establish contact and maintain relationships with street children in a non-threatening and non-authoritarian manner. This stage involves intensive contact by consistent professionals and focuses on working with children in a supportive role that helps them to address their current problems, while introducing them to viable alternatives.
- **Individual and group work methods:** In the initial stages it would be appropriate to hold discussion with the street youths in small groups, as a 1-1 contact can be perceived as threatening. It would be strategic to identify and work with the leaders. The more they can be involved in the activities and give their support to the plans for rehabilitation, the more their peer groups will feel permission to do the same. Encouraging 'leaders' to be part of the planning processes; consulting and asking their opinions will help break barriers towards creating an enabling environment to engage with the street youth.

Continued group work approach can be further utilized by dividing the youth into small groups; plans and activities can be designed according to their similar needs and interests.

- **Networking, institutional co-operation and linkage to activities and programmes:** To enable street children to gradually move away from street life, a range of activities and programmes that can positively help them consider alternatives and different possibilities should be introduced. This should also address their immediate problems such as free provision of registration documents to enable them to access health and other welfare provisions. This would also give them a sense of trust and encouragement to seek support.

Building on their interests and aspirations, they should be enabled to join existing provisions that help promote confidence building through recreation and leisure, access to non-formal education and vocational training.

There are many existing programs and services that could be used more effectively to improve education, recreational and cultural activities, work and community support services for these groups of street youth. In particular, team sports and recreational activities help children learn cooperation, teamwork and social skills. Professional workers need to network and link street children to suitable activities and programmes that exist for children and young people, both in the government and NGOs sector. Street children will need to be encouraged through joint visits to attend programmes with follow up support for both the youth and where the youth are referred to ensure they are not further alienated. Feelings of rejection and frustration need to be worked through.

- **Child in need of immediate protection:** During the course of intervention some street youth may require immediate protection such as suicidal tendencies, severe health problems, and potential risks to life and health during the winter's sub-zero temperatures. This may require the professional workers to take compulsory action for the child's own safety. Again, this should be undertaken in a consultative, informative and sensitive manner that respects the young person's concerns and opinions.

Each child will have different needs depending on their age and other factors. Whilst some children will be ready to leave the streets very early on, others may require a longer period. Some youth, given the choice, may prefer the opportunity of an appropriate care shelter or boarding school very early on.

2.3 2nd Phase: Reintegration and Socialization Process

Non-Institutionalized Response

Family Reunification

Family reunification is a real alternative for some of these street youth. This requires a skilled approach to exploring the reasons why the child left home in the first instance and what problems they envisage if they return home. The objectives of reunification must take into account the families' capabilities and willingness to receive and protect their child.

Reintegration is a gradual and delicate process that requires counseling for the child and parents, confidence building, enhancing the family's conflict resolution skills and sometimes financial support. The stages of intervention are: tracing and tracking the family; making assessment of family situation; reintroducing and placing the child; and monitoring and supporting the family.

International experience highlights that, sustaining change within the family requires follow up. Continuous visits to the children and family for counseling along with linking the children and youth to education, employment and community provisions will ensure that slippage to streets is minimized.

Young people will present many challenges of poor concentration, lack of discipline and social relations. Additional support is essential through other programs that emphasize learning, critical abilities and general life skills rather than the traditional pedagogy standard

criteria, will help the child to access education opportunities that will give them marketable skills for their future lives.

What the street youth males (aged 15-18 years old) said about reunification home

- I have had enough of the street life for the last three years. I want to return to my family in Darkhan, but I don't know how.
- I am an orphan. Yes, it's possible with my uncle. But, contact and visits only create problems; even feeding me is a problem.
- No, I don't want to return.
- I am an orphan and there is no one for me. We do not have any adults we can talk to or trust. I am very worried about my future and I fear being stuck on the streets with no life prospects and no skills, and sometimes I feel very alone.
- I left my family when I was very young, if I have a choice, I want to live with my younger sibling and mum only, not others in my family.
- Its best not to see them. Lots of trouble, not enough food, everything I do is just trouble.
- We are just not close as a family.
- Its boring to visit the family, they live in Darkhan, I would not be lonely because of friends.
- There is less chance to survive nowadays. In the early days, mid 90's was a good period, a dream in my time of being on the streets, even in the tunnels. Now there are criminals, living in these tunnels. In the early days there was plenty of food, restaurants would give leftovers, good ones, no one gives food anywhere nowadays. My advice to children on the streets, go through the centres and go back to the family, be a good person and live in the family.
- It is better to stay home, tomorrow, it's hard. It's difficult to survive.

Education, Vocational Training and Employment

For young people, whether family reunification is possible or not, support will be needed to integrate them into the labor market. The young people themselves acknowledged that lack of education and basic literacy skills will be barriers into the labour market and for their future lives. Many young people still desire opportunities to catch up on their missed education, and/or opportunities of non-formal education and vocational training. Vocational training and non-formal education with dormitory accommodation is a less threatening option for these young people and likely to promote a higher investment from them. This would also be the case for those currently engaged in the employment.

The standard vocational training offered, based on the simple transmission of technical skills has proved unsuccessful in the labor market Children are unable to adjust to the work environment and unemployment in the country makes the market competitive with adults in similar situations. Whilst the short term needs of these young people are immediate, there must be a focus on the longer-term employment needs and interests of the children to develop a work ethic and life skills that will equip them to deal with future problems in a mature and healthy manner.

Individualized plans drawn with the child on their capacities and aspirations that works step by step through the various professional and emotional challenges involved in entering education vocational training and employment should be worked through with the child. This entails a realistic approach on their aspirations and the reality of holding down a job and vocational training. This would include:

- Providing information on vocational training, non-formal education and employment opportunities, which are most suited to the child. Judgments on combining NFE with employment must be made.
- Information on short and long term job opportunities, disadvantages of certain types of employment, i.e. seasonal work that pays better than a stable job with less money and jobs in the informal sectors.
- Counseling on skills and demand in the labour market, support and advice during the job search process.
- Continuous follow up with employers once a youth is employed.
- Training in additional/alternative occupations to enable the youth to obtain extra finances such as for education or independent accommodation.
- Encourage youth to be involved in social and community activities to promote their full social integration.
- Enhance their practical and psychological skills that are needed to live independently such as reliability, time management and money.

There are a number of alternatives with which young people can be effectively linked. These include:

- Ministry of Education, Vocational Training centres and their technical education programmes such as the certificate and technical education courses that do not require a completed 8th grade education. These are also combined with dormitory accommodation.
- The voucher schemes for temporary and professional vocational training.
- The many INGOs vocational training courses such as Don Basco Technical Skills Center; places could be negotiated on an individual basis.
- Private business to offer combined training and employment. World Vision successfully negotiated for numbers of such placements with Gobi Initiative.
- The World Bank programme managed by the MUB on vocational training for street children.

Accommodation

The challenge will be enabling the youth to find affordable suitable accommodation during their course of training and employment and afterwards. The renting sector is expensive, and there is no public housing available. Material aid of Gers or loans, building of wooden cabins as well as the land to house the Ger will need to be assessed by the professionals. In turn the children themselves, with appropriate assistance from trusted adults, should advocate for such provision from the relevant authorities. The 'risks' that the youth will sell their Gers and slippage to the streets are real. This should be based on how well the youth has attempted to engage with the training and employment and their commitment to reintegration into mainstream society. The practice of one national NGO is that the Ger or housing is established within a supportive community that can offer the youth on-going support.

What kind of support, opportunities and access to services street youth have requested?

- House if I could have loan/mortgage, any kind of shelter, and a job. Vocational training in car repair/mechanic, or plumber.
- Depends on the situation and reality, if I could graduate from 8th grade. In the summer I can make money by washing cars, if I could be independent and have a shelter. If this shelter could enrol me in the college.
- Any kind of job will do.
- Shared accommodation in ger area, you can chop your own wood, bring water and do things. In shelters/units you just become lazy.
- I want to live in a community, there should be more place than in a haasha, some sort of space for garden to grow vegetables and keep livestock.
- Any alternatives that allow you to be independent with housing are good.
- We want a place like this area, a ger district, where we can integrate with people, here we have built relationships with the community, and we know most of the people. We help the community with collecting water, chopping wood in return they give us yoghurt, food.
- I want to complete my 8th grade, learn the Mongolian language, some of us children cannot write.
- We want some kind of vocational training and for this to be combined with non-formal education, it's useful for children.

2.3 Institutionalized Response

These youths have already experienced residential institutions and these have not endeared them to further institutional options. As stated above, education and vocational training with dormitory are a more acceptable alternative. Failing these options, the youth involved in the focus groups discussion stated they would ideally like their own accommodation or shared accommodation. Some might consider a short- term placement in the existing care shelters, if these are negotiated with clear objectives with a contract on the purpose and are time limited.

Any kind of residential care on independent living should aim to provide a more 'adult' ethos and environment that will equip them in future life. International experience has shown that transitional half way homes or small group homes with minimum but professional adult supervision have proved successful. This enables the youth to be responsible on a daily basis for managing the household tasks combined with their education, training or employment. As with any residential programme, there are 'risks' of failure and difficult peer group dynamics, but more so with this group. To ensure that the residential environment is secure and supportive, clear stated boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour for both youth and staff should be discussed and agreed with the youth. A copy of these rules should be accessible and visible in the home; agreement to these rules, transgression and mediation should be part of the individual contract with the youth. Some homes have a policy on behaviours and acts that will lead to exclusion from the home.

Individual contracts with the youth should realistically outline the purpose of residential care, objectives that the youth is expected to meet and the time frame of the placement. These should be reviewed periodically. Ideally, a residential placement should be no longer than a year period. Any extension should be agreed with future objectives.

In addition, there are possibilities of contracting out to existing NGOs working in this area, who have the skilled staff, provisions for small group homes, provide vocational training and

mediate for employment. The Life skills Children's Center is one such example; the advantage is that they already have a community base that the youths could integrate with.

What street boys said about any kind of specialized schools?

- I would like a boarding school that has a dormitory for us to sleep and separate study areas.
- Its doesn't matter to us who it's run by, so long as they teach us, but teach us well.
- It would be good if we are divided into groups by our abilities and levels, it should have good directions for us to follow, and also should be interesting for us.
- We need to learn to be independent, and how to manage to live by ourselves, finding accommodation, what we need, etc. We need knowledge of welfare organizations and how they can help us. We only know this care shelter, talk to teachers and shelters for advice. It would be useful, if we can have this information and advice. We only come here to eat and wash. Its o.k. for some children but not others.
- Yes, if they teach you skills, to be helped to have an independent adult life, it has to be disciplined.
- Not interested in any military school, you just waste time being there, just another centre, I would prefer a job and income.
- I left the Labour Education and Training centre, I spent just one night there and left. I just did not like it, there is nothing to do, I felt it was like a jail, you sleep, eat, and sleep, that's all.
- We were young when we went there (LET), the big boys just beat the younger ones.
- Older boys are problems. Some children jump through the windows because they did not like the place (LET).
- I have tried three shelters. I want to develop myself. That is the big mistake with workers they lack understanding on child development and care.
- Shelters just provide food/bed; you need non-formal education, just small things.

2.4 Staffing and case management

Trained skilled professionals and integrating the use of multidisciplinary teams of experts to assess needs and build life plans are essential ingredients for successful intervention. This is a real 'barrier' as social workers are not qualified and lack the necessary expertise to work with these youth. Nevertheless, it is recommended that a small team of key case workers is responsible for the case management and co-ordination on individual life plans and tailor make services for each youth and they remain the case manager through the course of intervention. The key caseworkers play an important role in linking the youth to services and activities through networking and collaborative efforts. The involvement of local authorities, education, health services, employment offices and others organizations are necessary to create a favourable environment for these youth to move away from street life. Besides networking and linking the youth to a range of service provisions, they would also have to advocate on behalf of individual youth.

- It is recommended that key caseworkers are social workers who have had training in social work methods, or the current attending the City Government training on 'reintegration of street children'.
- The police should not be key caseworkers as their mandate is law enforcement and not social welfare development. However, they can play a key role in facilitating access to the youth; provide background information, registration documents, tracing the child's family and activities that promote positive police and youth relationships.

- It is recommended that main state agencies support the work of key caseworker by providing relevant information, resources, provisions and services. This would include human resources to give specialist advice on employment, vocational training and accommodation.
- Other multi-disciplinary professionals are key to link youth with appropriate service providers and provisions to meet the specific needs of street youth.

2.5 Supervision and Support of Key Workers

Social work as a professional activity is underdeveloped with the state sectors, with qualified and experienced workers working mainly in the international and national NGOs. It is important to provide direction, management and supervision to the key caseworkers on managing difficulties and to enhance their problem-solving capacities. This is a role that the National Board of Children could facilitate. In addition, INGO/NGOs could also act as consultants in this area, considering the wealth of experience at their disposal such as World Vision and SCF UK.

Failure and slippage to street life is a risk that will exist regardless of 'good enough' intervention. The skills of the key caseworker to remain consistent, empathetic and concerned regardless of dis-engagement and rejecting behaviour as a part of casework are critically important so that the youths recognize that they are not being rejected. This is the turning point for change.

International experience has shown that many countries have developed effective reintegration programmes to support these children to become productive members in society, through coordinated efforts with state, community, business and INGO/NGOs.

3. Advise on best international practices on placement and assistance to street children who live in shelters and turn 17 years old, recommend on most suitable for Mongolia way.

Young people exiting out of care shelters, like many other children leaving institutional care have low self-confidence and they are not prepared enough for an independent life. This restricts their opportunities for coping with life challenges outside the shelter. They face problems of unemployment, accommodation and opportunities for career prospects. It is highly questionable whether any form of further placement in institutional care is an appropriate intervention, as they need to be supported to move away from institutional care towards reintegration into independent community and adult life.

Young people exiting out of care shelters are a group of 120 in the age range of 17-18 of males and females; this includes children from the Amgalan Center. The majority of children will leave when they turn 18. In addition there are substantial numbers of street children attending the drop in centres who also require support to manage independent living. These children have different experiences and family histories. As much as the assumption is that care shelters predominately accommodate street children, some of these children are not. Many children are placed due to the poverty of migrant families who maintain contact with their children, whilst others are abandoned, orphans or are placed for child protection reasons. The need of these youth for independent life and the problems they experience is similar to the street youth living on the streets.

The care shelters do manage the transition process of youth exiting their care for independent living through individual planning. In some cases they extend the period of care for a number of young people well beyond their majority age to enable them to complete their university education. Family reunification, formal and non-formal education, accommodation and mediation to employment are all part of ensuring that slippage to the streets is minimized.

Nevertheless, the care shelters do confront challenges of securing professional vocational training, employment and accommodation for young people, not only due to the low education attainment of young people and lack of opportunities but also the discrimination and the stigma attached to young people from care shelters. All care shelters highlighted problems of suitable sustainable accommodation for young people and entrance to vocational training.

3.1 International experiences

As in Mongolia the majority of programmes for street children are provided by INGO/NGOs in other countries, and vary to the extent that UN agencies and local government are partners. Many programmes recognize the limitations of curative intervention of services and provisions for street children. As much as individual program provide preparation for independent living, life chances and access to opportunities for children leaving institutions go beyond the programs' activities and are directly affected by national laws and policies on education, social protection, health, vocational training, juvenile crime, employment and other factors.

There is now a body of literature concerning the lives of young people leaving care, in terms of education and employment opportunities indicating that young people leaving residential care achieve lower standards and qualifications in schools than their counterparts. Associated strong links relate to homelessness, instability in secure accommodation, youth crime and unemployment, early pregnancy for young women, frequently as lone mothers and increasing poverty. Rich industrialized countries have well developed infrastructures and provision of services for young people leaving care situations such as an independent living grant for basic essentials, social work support, public housing and welfare benefits. In addition, there are youth training schemes to help young people (aged 18-24) attain technical training, higher education and apprenticeship. These structures are rarely available in developing and poor countries, leaving many young people disadvantaged and unprepared to cope with adult life.

International best practices highlight the right kind of programmes are those that will help young people strengthen their connections and integration to their families, community, education, vocational training, employment and accommodation. Personalized and tailor-made plans developed with the child can promote a high level investment from them, with continuous and sustained after care support.

3.2 Mongolian Way of life and identity

Children are at the heart of Mongolian society and hold a particular importance for families in continuation of family links, values and cultural practices. Mongolia is proud of its traditional nomadic culture that has survived various social and economical changes. There is a keen sense of moral and mutual obligation between children and the family kinship patterns; children as adults are obligated to provide support and care for their parents in old age.

The meaning and identity of a child independent of a family structure are problematic, as familial and kinship relationships define the role and status of a child in Mongolian society. Street children and other children without a family base lose their sense of identity, belonging and cultural heritage and these are likely to be weakened and confused.

The traditional ways of life are perceived as under threat with modernity that has entered Mongolia cultural sensibilities with the economic transition. These debates need to be viewed in the wider concept of positive identity formation. As well, the complexities of identity and Mongolian culture that is being articulated within a pluralistic, dynamic society dependent on geo-political, social, cultural, religious and national contexts. The Mongolian way of life and instilling these cultural values for young people living in care shelters is a two way process; the need for communities, families and society to care and protect its young and support their reintegration and for young people to learn to value their cultural heritage.

3.3 Short term measures

Care shelters vary in their collaboration and co-operation with state agencies, other NGOs and private entities. Some care shelters lack information of the range of service provisions available.

It is recommended in the immediate and short term that relevant Ministries, MUB and local authorities actively provide information and link young people to relevant provisions to facilitate their process of independent living with care shelters' staff. This should include:

- Identification and documents for children, if these have not already been provided.
- Information and facilitation access for young people to the State run vocational training with and without dormitory accommodation.
- Information and mediation into suitable employment with opportunities for training and non-formal education.
- Information on the range of welfare provisions and how to contact relevant agencies for future support such as employment services, benefits, health insurance, etc.
- Negotiate and provide suitable accommodation, especially for orphans and young people.
- Link young people with adults and mentors who can support young people in the community and promote the Mongolian culture and way of life.