THE URBAN CHILD
in difficult circumstances

PHILIPPINES:
Children of the Runaway Cities

by Maggie Black

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INTERNATIONAL CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

The UNICEF International Child Development Centre, often referred to as the *Innocenti Centre*, was established in Florence in 1988 to undertake and promote policy analysis and applied research; to provide a forum for international professional exchanges of experience; and to advocate and disseminate ideas and policies towards achieving the goals of child survival, protection and development. On a very selective basis, in areas of programme relevance, the Centre also provides training and capacity strengthening opportunities for UNICEF staff, concerned government officials, and the staff of other institutions with which UNICEF co-operates. The centre is housed within the *Spedale degli Innocenti*, a foundling hospital that has been serving abandoned or needy children since 1445. Designed by Filippo Brunelleschi, the *Spedale* is one of the outstanding architectural works of the early European Renaissance.

This publication is one of a series designed to bring to a non-specialist audience some aspects of the data and conclusions of technical case studies on *The Urban Child and Family in Especially Difficult Circumstances* undertaken in Brazil, India, Kenya, Italy, and Philippines under the auspices of the International Child Development Centre

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Note: Throughout this publication, the peso is converted at the rate of P27 to $1.

PREFACE

THIS publication represents the first report, tailored to a non-specialist audience, resulting from an extensive case study on the Philippines, one of five country studies selected as the first project of the Urban Child Programme of the UNICEF International Child Development Centre (ICDC). Maggie Black and I travelled to the Philippines in September 1990, with Maggi Alexander, a research assistant in our Programme. The team visited "urban basic services" and "children in especially difficult circumstances" project sites in Manila, Cebu, Davao and Olongapo, the four cities included in the case study. Ms. Black met municipal authorities, interviewed representatives of government and non-governmental organizations, talked with urban children and their families, visited slum areas, and acquainted herself with the initial results of the larger case study. A subsequent publication, designed for the professional and academic community, will report more fully on the results of this project in the Philippines.

Responding to needs expressed by UNICEF Country Offices for understanding better the rising phenomenon of urban children in especially difficult circumstances, and for analyzing existing programme approaches and policies, this first ICDC urban child project launched studies in the Philippines, Brazil, India, Kenya and Italy. The first three countries were chosen for their innovative programmes on urban children and communities. Kenya exemplifies the growing problem of children living in the proliferating urban slums of Africa. Italy represents the project's "conscience" by continuously reminding us that economic growth alone provides no assured safeguard for children. Children need to become much more central in the concerns of policy-makers before real progress can be made even in high-income settings.

Each technical country case study in this urban child project has selected a particular focus, which will be partly reflected in the reports for non-specialist audiences. The Philippines and Brazil studies, for example, focus explicitly on street children and how they relate to the community. Studies in India, Kenya and Italy focus more on disadvantaged children in the community and their relationship to work, education and the street. They all discuss the problems of institutionalization, and include a concern for the problems faced by young girls, highlighting differences from those faced by boys.

The first aim of the project is to develop a fuller understanding of the current problems facing children from birth till age 18, by analyzing various levels of causes for their abuse, abandonment, mistreatment and neglect. This objective required going back to the children's families and family histories to trace the paths of deterioration that led to their present situation at home, in the streets or in institutions. It also required understanding what led people within such families to move apart, lose family connections and become socially isolated. Which factors led to loss of self-esteem by parents and children and to the downward spirals of severe distress? Which combination of factors seemed to lead certain families or certain children in those families along this path?

Low income is obviously part of the story, especially in slums in developing countries. But poverty is compounded by a sense of powerlessness, of exclusion, of lack of a rightful place that accompanies the failure of some of their expectations and their lack of access to resources they need or consider their rights. Lack of employment, for example, even if other members of the family are earning enough for survival, may be extremely damaging to the male's self-esteem and lead to heavy drinking, drug addiction and the abuse of others. The effects on children of single-headed households with heavy loads of adult work and responsibilities vary according to the social context and the number of children involved. It may lead to the serious social isolation of single children in Western countries or to the obligation of children to start working at early ages in developing countries.

Families in cities obviously live in close contact with one another. The extent, however, to which they actually interact constructively and have their own effective support systems in moments of crises, be they extended family or friends, makes a considerable difference in the quality of their life, and of the lives of their children. Community cohesiveness and community spirit provide an important safety-net for children. In many of today's cities, this safety-net is failing.

In order to establish fully the connection between urban children in especially difficult circumstances, their families and the problems they are encountering, one also needs to address the effects of social change on families and individuals. This ranges from understanding the qualitative deterioration of family ties in

different parts of the world to identifying changes in expectations, personal roles and attitudes that are common in many countries. The project, furthermore, while not strictly a comparative analysis, has sought to identify and highlight common problems such as overcrowding, pollution, the growing presence of drugs and AIDS, urban violence, national and international migration, and the lack of a sense of belonging, that transcend the "North-South" divide.

While analyzing the problems with a concern for identifying children, families and communities at greatest risk, the project has also been engaged in assessing existing, and considering possible, interventions aimed at reaching disadvantaged children more preventively in the future. One form of prevention is obviously to support and strengthen the families that most need help before their situation gets out of hand. An essential step may be to provide them, and their communities, with a stronger voice both in identifying and helping to solve their own problems, but without letting the government off the hook. Pressure needs to be put on national and municipal governments to get them to realize the advantage, politically and cost-wise, of supporting families for the sake of their children rather than having, later on, to institutionalize those same children and thus take full responsibility for their upbringing and often poor social reintegration.

The Philippines presents a good example of how an urban community participatory approach can offer a preventive solution by specifically involving children and families living in difficult circumstances.

Another preventive approach, illustrated by the Brazil case that will follow shortly in this same series, is to identify the moment and strategy that will facilitate a shift in the existing vision of the role of children in cities and in the nation as a whole. Both Brazil and the Philippines illustrate the potentially creative interaction that can be established among children, families, communities and policy-makers - but which needs to be closely supported to avoid tokenism or misutilization. The Brazil case shows how the public image of children can be significantly transformed and how that can be subsequently translated into concrete technical support.

From the beginning the project has been concerned about children as full participating actors in these processes. This means involving them in the analysis of their own and their families' difficulties and needs, in discovering how they use their time and how they view and use the city where they live. By so doing one gives them a stronger sense of personal esteem and responsibility that helps them become effective citizens.

We hope this series of popular publications will help illustrate the real everyday lives of urban children and their families, showing not only the deteriorating quality of their lives but also the clarity of their observations, the ingenuity and courage with which they face the most adverse circumstances, and the potential for action that they offer to planners and policy-makers facing the dramatic demands of the cities of the future.

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March 1991

LIVING IN THE RUNAWAY CITY

IN the Philippines, as in countries all over the world, increasing numbers of people are condemned by birthright or fortune to inhabit the miserable shacks and shanties festering in the urban landscape. From one perspective, each slum dweller is merely a millionth part of the human mass washed up by tides which planners and politicians do their best to control. From another, each is the leading player in a personal drama of luck and misfortune, good influences and bad, opportunities won and lost, in the day-to-day struggle of life in the runaway city.

This is an account of the ways in which different aspects of the culture of urban poverty - constant shortage of means, competing demands on family resources, the temptation to use violence or abuse to resolve personal conflict, the strains of ill-health and insecurity – impinge upon childhood in the urban jungle. That pressures overlap and combine to produce compounding conditions of social deprivation is at the core of family experience in the slums of Filipino cities. The interlocking nature of these pressures, as well as their disaggregated parts, needs to be understood if their analysis is to lead to the right kind of policy and programmatic reaction.

The quickest route to an appreciation of the complex forces pushing children off the edge, into "extremely difficult circumstances", is to look at the lives of one family and one child. Their story might not be typical in a statistical sense: no one true human story ever does quite exemplify the synthetic reality of the data-based profile. But it illustrates the way in which human predicaments are not easily divisible into the neat compartments of discipline, sector, or programme; it serves as a reminder that different influences operate simultaneously in the lives of human beings, complicating their view of the world and responses to it.

In many ways, the story of Noel Espinoza takes us closer to an understanding of this reality than the most careful sociological investigation. The aims in life of the Espinozas are akin to those of anyone else: to make a home, do well, raise a family, celebrate life's joyful times, strive for their children's future. But because of circumstances, some they control but most they do not, this is a family in an underlying condition of crisis. As a result, Noel is fast becoming a candidate for that new category of Filipino humanity: the "street child".

The story of Noel Espinoza

Noel Espinoza, aged 12, lives in Barangay Suba on the outskirts of Cebu City. His home is a flimsy shanty on an alleyway deep in the *barangay*. On one side is an oil factory, on another a stagnant canal full of foul-smelling muddy waste. Noel was born and brought up at his grandfather's until he was ten. He never wanted to move here after his mother died. But his father, Carlito Espinoza, refuses to let him go back.

Noel awakes at 4.30 am every day to the sound of the radio screeching through the flimsy wall from the room next door. Two months ago his father let the second room in the house to Nang Dora, a woman from the fishing port. Nang Dora rises early to prepare the rice cakes and hot chocolate she sells as her living. She pays Carlito P75 ($2.75) a month for the room where Noel and his two brothers and two sisters used to sleep. Now the whole family, including a little stepsister, cram into one room.

Noel cannot go back to sleep so he gets up, wrapping the soiled linen blanket around him. Four-year-old Antonio, who shares the blanket, is still lying sprawled on the flattened carton boxes which serve as their mattress and stop the wind coming in through the floor. His father promised to buy them a plastic mat when he earns a "jackpot" – a specially big tip from cargo owners. But that was two months ago and no sign of a new mat yet.

Noel is glad his father didn't come home last night. Carlito Espinoza, 32 years old, short and stocky with a handsome bearded face, works at the port as a cargo haulier or *cargador*. Sometimes he stays overnight, waiting for pumpboats coming from far away with a catch. Or at a friend's house on a drinking spree. Noel doesn't like his father, particularly when he comes home drunk and boxes him for no good reason.

Noel himself comes home at 7 pm. He used to stay out later, but now he has to come back to cook the rice for supper and look after Antonio. One time he was late, as he had to line up to buy water, and his father took his belt to him, leaving painful red weals on his arms and legs. His sister, 13-year-old Annalee, used to do the cooking but now their stepmother insists that Annalee help at her stall. Noel says she

The case history of Noel Espinoza was compiled by a student of social anthropology at Ateneo de Manila University.

spends her day reading comics.

Noel's mother, Linda, met Carlito when she was working in a beauty parlour. He had a job in a furniture store next door. She was 18, he 20. Linda became pregnant, so her father Noy Asyong insisted they marry. Carlito was from out of town, so the young couple lived at Noy Asyong's house. He made his living drying fish to sell at Tabo-an market. Because Linda was busy with her job, once Noel ceased to be a baby he spent all his time with his grandfather. The fish-drying area in the market became Noel's playground.

Carlito sought new friends among the cargadores. *He started drinking heavily and coming home very late. Linda continued to bear children . . .*

In June 1986 when he was eight, Noel was finally enrolled in school, not by his father but by Noy Asyong, his grandfather. The furniture shop had closed down and Carlito had lost his job. The only work he could get was as a *cargador* at Tabo-an market at P30–40 (up to $1.50) a day. Linda was off work because her heart had begun to give problems. With so little money coming in, Carlito couldn't afford to send Noel to school, so Noy Asyong paid Noel's school expenses.

This marked the start of a bitter relationship between Carlito and Linda's brothers. Why should their father put his son-in-law's child through school? Gone were the usual drinking sprees between brothers-in-law, and Carlito sought new friends among the *cargadores*. He started drinking heavily and coming home very late. Linda continued to bear children – another boy, another girl, then finally Antonio – even though her health declined and her heart weakened.

Noel enjoyed school. He learned to read and write quickly, and Noy Asyong helped him in the evenings at home. But in Grade 2, he had a teacher who was very strict and ridiculed Noel because he had a slight speech impediment. So he began cutting classes. He would roam around with his friends, along the streets and in the port. Often they played betting games, and Noel would gamble with the 50 centavos Noy Asyong gave him each morning for food allowance. Whoever won treated the rest of the boys to snacks.

Noel's great friend was Pidong. One day Pidong took him along to the house of Nang Inday, a widow who deals in all sorts of scrap. She has a fleet of pushcarts which she loans to boys who go scavenging among the garbage on the streets. Nang Inday is kind and without shame about her occupation. She started with five carts and by now she has 13, and still there are more boys coming to her than carts to loan out.

They are given out on a first-come-first-served basis, two or three boys to a cart. They go out at 2 pm and come back around nine. They bring everything from broken glasses to plastic, old newspapers to scraps of metal. Prices vary. Bronze wires rank first, at P12.50 (46 US cents) a kilo; plastic is P3.50 (13 cents) a kilo, glass P1.50 (5 cents). Nang Inday pays the kids each evening. Noel's first earnings were in August 1987: P5.50 (21 US cents). He spent the money on food, for himself and his brothers and sisters.

Noel liked scavenging and began to take it up regularly. But Noy Asyong soon found out that he was cutting school. He was furious and scolded him with a leather belt. Linda too was angry. But his father took a different line: "At least he's learning to earn a living!" This remark greatly annoyed Noy Asyong who thinks Carlito doesn't care about his son's future. In his anger, the old man vowed never to spend another cent on Noel's education. Noel was deeply affected. His grandfather behaved towards him quite differently after this.

Linda gave birth to Antonio in June 1987, but there were complications and she was ill and weak for a long time afterwards. Annalee attended to her mother and Noy Asyong paid for all the medicines; Carlito was seldom at home. He had taken up with another woman. He wasn't home the night Linda died. This was in December 1987, when Linda was 30 years old.

After the burial the house was like a tomb, not like the home Noel was used to. Carlito was never there, and Noy Asyong spent all his time at the fish market. In the morning, he would leave Annalee P10 (37 US cents) for lunch, and she made rice porridge and dills and bought ready-cooked dishes in the neighbourhood. Christmas that year was very lonely. Noel especially missed his mother. His father wasn't home. So he spent the whole night with Pidong, roaming around.

For the next months Noel went scavenging every day with Pidong. By now he could earn P30–80 ($1–$3) in a day. He gave most of it to Annalee, to spend on rice, cooked foods, firewood, mosquito killer, gas, and ice. Without Noel's money his brothers and sisters would not have eaten. Since that time his relatives stopped bothering Noel about his lifestyle.

In July 1988, Carlito informed Noy Asyong that he would leave his house, take the kids, and move to Barangay Suba. He had a new job, carrying pails of fish at the port. Noy Asyong did not agree that the children should go. But he did not disagree. Noel and Annalee wanted to stay with their grandfather. But Carlito took them anyway.

So now they live in Barangay Suba, with Istring,

Carlito's new wife, and a little daughter. To Noel, Istring can never be "Mama". He only goes near her when she summons him for something, and then he obeys without a word. He goes out scavenging every day with Pidong. Istring doesn't care. His father's only comment is that if he catches him with drugs, he'll kill him. What Carlito does not drink from his earnings at the port is used to finance Istring's stall.

After the time his father beat him for being late,

In his anger, the old man vowed never to spend another cent on Noel's education. Noel was deeply affected

Noel began to dislike his home situation intensely. That evening he went off to find Pidong and stayed away from home for two days. When his father found him, he brought him back and beat him. But now his father is again taking to spending his own nights out. Istring and he fight about it. Maybe soon he won't care whether Noel comes home or not.

The sun has risen now above the roofs, and the cold of the early morning is lifting. Istring is sitting on the bed combing her hair and Annalee has gone out to buy rice. Today, Noel will not be able to go scavenging. He has a bad cut in his leg, and the wound has made him stiff and swollen. He sits at the top of the wooden stairs, hoping Annalee will be home soon. He is looking forward to his breakfast.

Who are the urban poor?

The Espinoza family exemplifies in almost every dimension – living conditions, family composition, occupations, lifestyle – the Filipino urban poor. More than five million people, or 830,000 families, belong in this category. They live in slums and squatter colonies in major towns and cities.

Ninety per cent are "illegals", renting or squatting on government or privately owned land. They pay between P60 and P195 ($2.20–$7.08) a month to inhabit a ramshackle, often unsafe, plank and tin sheet structure, like Istring's house in Barangay Suba. Insecurity of tenure, fear of eviction and relocation, and fear of fire are constant pre-occupations.

The urban poor comprise around 10 per cent of the national population of 60.5 million, and around one quarter of the entire urban population. Metro Manila, with by far the highest proportion, contains 591 slum colonies housing three million people. Cebu and Davao cities are the second and third largest urban centres. Almost all residents of the slum and squatter settlements – including three-quarters of Manila's population – live below the official poverty line, reckoned at P3,500–P5,000 per month ($130–$185) for a family of six. Nearly half are under 18 years of age.

The average low-income urban family has six members and is nuclear in structure. Like Carlito Espinoza, the typical head of household is aged less than 40 years and has only the barest elementary education, normally no higher than grade four. Unemployment among men is 16 per cent, and underemployment much more pervasive. With few skills or training and little entrepreneurial self-confidence, most slum dwellers land in service jobs, under-paid and without security. Their brightest prospect is an occasional "jackpot", if not from their boss, then from a cockfight or a betting game.

The exigencies of life within this socio-economic group mean that all family members above a certain age, male and female, must help support the family. In the Espinoza household, Noel's mother's salary and tips at the beauty parlour were vital to their income. Women's childrearing responsibilities do not fit easily with a regular job so many operate within the informal sector. They trade in the market, sell snacks like Nang Dora, or run a makeshift stall like Istring, Noel Espinoza's stepmother. Others work as launderers, dressmakers, beauticians, maids, and cooks. Many children learn the ways of the working world at their mother's (or another close relative's) knee and start to earn at an early age.

Although the immediate surroundings of the Espinoza's house in Barangay Suba are particularly squalid, this is not uncommon. Only around one-third of such households enjoy a garbage collection service from a government dumptruck. Even fewer benefit from a piped water system: only between 16 per cent and 28 per cent of households. Up to two-thirds, depending on the city and the area, have no sanitation facility and are reduced to a system of "wrap and throw" for human waste.

In case of sickness, many slum residents use traditional remedies as they cannot afford the expense of modern drugs. They may, for the same reason, more readily call on local midwives and traditional healers than resort to a doctor in a clinic whose prescriptive treatment or hospital bill is beyond their financial reach; this was another cause of family rupture in the Espinoza household. There is little routine protection for child health. In 1986, only 19 to 25 per cent of preschoolers were fully immunized. Nearly half were found to be mildly malnourished, and nearly one-quarter moderately so. The snacks which Noel and his mate Pidong buy to keep themselves going hardly constitute a nutritious diet.

If holding onto a clean, healthy, and respectable way of life is difficult amidst city filth, the crowdedness in the home and on the block is even harder to bear. The Espinoza family is actually doing well in this regard, even if the wall between the two rooms

of their house is thin and the second temporarily let. The average slum dwelling has one room, and often shelters two households of six members each.

With no privacy even for intimate physical relations; no quiet for a child to study; no possible separation of a sick person with an infection; no means of avoiding the family member who is drunk or irritable, the fabric of daily life is frequently strained to breaking point. It is easy to see how violence and cruelty become integral to poverty-bound living. Brutality in the home is not uncommon, children are frequently disciplined by verbal or physical abuse, and consensual union often of short duration. Domestic stress and broken marriage are often the cause which precipitate children into leaving home. Here too the Espinoza story exemplifies a gradual process of family disintegration and child "drift".

With no possibility of privacy, the fabric of daily life is frequently strained to breaking point

Eviction from an illegal squatter area, even where it is accompanied by relocation to another site and some assistance with rehousing, is a further cause of family disruption. Travel to and from the old place of work may be long and costly, encouraging a father to come home more and more irregularly; or joblessness may ensue. Neighbours are unfamiliar and extended family or other support networks for childminding and mutual care non-existent. For children in school, the bus fare may pose a problem and mates no longer live nearby. Such dislocation may well subconsciously confirm to an impressionable child that parents and friends cannot be depended upon; that the world is an alien and antipathetic place against whose forces life is a constant struggle.

An historical process

The creation of this extensive society of poverty-bound humanity in Philippine cities is a side-product of a long process of industrial and urban growth. Its first rapid phase was in the 1950s and early 60s, in response to the need for reconstruction after the devastation of the Second World War.

Subsequently, Metro Manila and one or two other regional centres continued to grow at runaway speed, and after 1975 the tempo of urbanization accelerated countrywide. But at the same time, the pace of economic expansion began to falter and eventually stalled. The urbanization process may have begun as the twin of economic growth, with new factories and businesses attracting job-seekers from the countryside. But by the late 1970s, it was becoming clear that economic stagnation could be as influential.

Apart from depressed agricultural prices, reform of the rural landholding structure was needed – reform which has been slow and painful to achieve. Emphasis on cash crops farmed under the old, virtually feudal, estate system, and an industrial development pattern favouring import substitution, exacerbated the structural inequalities which kept those at the bottom of the economic ladder deep in poverty. Around 30 per cent of the population already stagnated in this category during the booming 1960s, but the large wealth differentials have since persisted and even grown. In the worsening economic climate, urbanization caused by "pull" gave way to urbanization caused by "push", and the sense of being denied the fruits of development fed popular tension and unrest.

In the Philippines, as in much of the contemporary Third World, the forces of rapid urbanization have a dynamic power which no economic policy seems able to check. The migratory "push" comes from the pressures described above; meanwhile "pull" is exerted by the promise of jobs and opportunities, freer personal and social mores, the lure of money and the great modern consumer world. This combination of forces brings the Carlito Espinozas and his female equivalents into town and entices them to stay. With all the difficulties and letdowns, more than 80 per cent of Filipino slum residents see town life as an improvement on the drudgery and monotony of the rural scene.

The 1960s and 1970s were an era of official pride in the growing magnificence of municipal skylines, gracious boulevards, shopping malls and civic institutions. But the unfortunate corollary of the new high-tech urban economy was that a high proportion of its dependents could not be fully admitted, and were forced to camp – literally and metaphorically – in its crevices and margins.

In the early stages of the urban explosion, municipal policy-makers persisted in viewing the proliferation of slum settlements as an awkward but temporary setback. Their inhabitants and dwellings were illegal and would therefore be swept away. Through the late 70s and early 80s, eviction and demolition were remorselessly used as instruments of urban renewal. Families like the Espinozas of Cebu were seen as superfluous to the grand design for the city of the 21st century; the terrible truth is that, although it is no longer politically acceptable to say so, this ingrained attitude is very difficult to eradicate and can only be so where municipal development is radically restructured. The price of failing to do more than tinker with a few blueprints, adjust a slum clearance scheme here or there, was shown by the political upheavals which characterized the mid-1980s. The lesson is an important

one for Filipino development overall.

The civic authorities of the early 1980s, pursuing their noble architectural adventures, underestimated the considerable weight and combination of forces represented by the presence in the landscape of millions of urban poor. They also underestimated their tenacity. As fast as bulldozers flattened their dwellings and buses trucked them to distant sites, new residents – often the same residents – appeared and new shanties sprang up. With help from protagonists of humanistic persuasion, they began to organize and find a voice. They managed to halt and redirect an urban improvement policy which had failed to encompass their needs. They forced the authorities to recognize that, whatever the squalor of their existence, they had paid their urban ticket and belonged.

Chill economic winds

During the early 1980s worldwide recession caused the Philippines' economy to stumble to a halt, sending the growth rate into reverse. The balance of payments crisis led to political instability, which in turn drove further investment away. National debt and inflation mounted. In 1985, world sugar prices collapsed and there was famine in the main sugar-producing island of Negros. Runaway urbanization continued apace, both from migration and because of a high birth rate among existing town dwellers. Between 1980 and 1989, the proportion of urban Filippinos rose from 37 to 41 per cent of the country's population.

When the new government came to power in 1986, there was great hopefulness and some economic recovery. For a while manufacturing improved, and investment rose by 20 per cent. The new administration pledged itself to support the poor in return for the mass demonstrations of "people power" on which its legitimacy was based. New policies emerged, policies which accepted not only the existence of families like the Espinozas, but their need for basic services and their right to some security. Programmes for tenure and mortgages, drainage and water supply, livelihood and health care, emerged. A Presidential Commission on the Urban Poor (PCUP) was set up to co-ordinate these programmes and ensure they were targeted to those families most in need.

As fast as bulldozers flattened their dwellings and buses trucked them to distant sites, new shanties sprang up

But the new government has been plagued by internal contention and political fragility, as well as continuing economic malaise. The national debt now stands at $28 billion, absorbing a huge proportion of the national budget – 39 per cent in 1990. During the 1980s an increasing number of both rural and urban Filipinos, driven by the dearth of prospects at home, sought employment overseas where a year or two's hard graft and family separation could bring in enough for a proper house or the

children's education. By 1990 the three million workers overseas were repatriating – officially and unofficially – $2.5 billion a year, or the equivalent of one-third of exports. With the crisis in the Gulf pushing up the price of oil and forcing many of the migrants to return, economic distress became acute. With unemployment mounting and prices steeply rising, the urban poor have become ever more locked into the struggle for basic survival.

Meanwhile, the contraction of national income means that the speed at which social services can be introduced has slowed; their costs have also risen to a point where the neediest families are often excluded from their benefits. City halls find it difficult not to retreat into the economic and political bunkers from which the new era so recently released them. Slum dwellers, defensive and distrustful, look askance at some of their programme initiatives, regarding them as efforts by the bureaucracy to extend its tentacles over "illegals" or feather its own nest. Carlito Espinoza calls them *instis* (from "institution") and wants nothing to do with them or the officialdom they represent.

Families like the Espinozas feel the chill of today's economic winds without knowing where it comes from. They only know that things are getting worse. They try harder to find work which brings in less, and they pay more for the commodities they need to survive. Two-thirds of their income is absorbed by food alone, and since the early 1980s, malnutrition among children has risen.

Although families such as the Espinozas experience the events of their lives as daily ups and downs, fortunes and misfortunes, personal affections and animosities, their margins are so thin that their sense of control over their lives is constantly at risk of disruption. A job may disappear from one day to the next. A mother may develop pains in her chest, and lose her earning power. A father may inexplicably lash out, starting a family row over a small boy's school fees.

Thus, movements which begin high in the economic firmament have their reverberations way down in those tin-shack shanties along muddy alleyways in countless poor communities: one too many pregnancies; truancy, neglect; drunkenness, lies, and unnecessary death. The links between the servicing of the national debt and the loneliness of Noel Espinoza's Christmas may not be directly causal and certainly their connection is unknown to him. But interventions to improve his life and that of hundreds of thousands of Filipino children need to take account of the entire range of political, social, and economic influences, and the interconnections between them, bearing upon slum families' lives.

Movements which begin high in the economic firmament have their reverberations way down in the tin-shack shanties

It is for this reason that the UNICEF-initiated study of the "urban child and family in difficult circumstances", undertaken in four Filipino cities during 1990, has tried to bring together a variety of qualitative and quantitative data to reach a richer understanding of urban families' and children's many and various predicaments. It is only with the benefit of such an understanding, and a belief in the child's essential humanity and need for a niche in a kindly world, that programmes – or *instis* – can relevantly respond.

The street child epidemic

As the economic recession of the early 1980s began to bite deeper into urban pockets, a new phenomenon became conspicuous. An increasing number of children had begun to adopt streets, markets, and public spaces as regular haunts and, in some cases, as their permanent abode. By the late 1980s, "street children" were estimated at between one and three per cent of cities' child and youth population. Most are in Metro Manila: between 50,000 and 75,000; regional urban centres such as Davao and Iloilo contain 2,000 to 3,000.

In Filipino society, the family is universally regarded as the key context of material and emotional succour for every human being. Christian beliefs and their celebration of family life reinforce the values attached to loving bonds between parents and children, filial duty and respect, parental responsibilities, and obligations of mutual support within a close-knit kin network. Family solidarity is upheld as the ideal, even where it is heartbreakingly difficult to achieve. The sight of growing numbers of children on the streets showed that for more and more families, migration, poverty, low pay, early marriage, rapid childbearing, and crowded slum living were putting pressure on key value systems.

The sight of children working, begging, or simply playing on the streets was not new to Filipino society. As in any population undergoing upheaval, whether political or economic, there are bound to be casualties among the weakest members of society – the children. As the process of industrialization and urbanization moved ahead during the post-war era, the street urchin, the runaway, the waif and stray, became familiar figures of the urban landscape as they had in the West during an earlier industrialization process. Similarly, opinion regarded them primarily as a menace.

Until the 1960s, the policy was to round up "pick-up boys" (as street boys were then known), and confine them along with abandoned children,

delinquents, handicapped, and the mentally retarded, to a huge government orphanage. The boys were treated as "vagrants" or "truants", and both law and practice towards such children and their parents – if they were apprehended – was punitive. Anti-social behaviour stemming from poverty – begging, for example – was regarded as criminal.

From the mid-1960s, a number of changes began to occur in national policy towards disadvantaged children, with advice and help from UNICEF. The government orphanage was closed, and different rehabilitative programmes for special groups of children introduced. In 1974, a legal code on "child and youth welfare" was passed. But old attitudes die hard. The main legal instrument against children loose on the streets, the law against truancy, remained on the statute book. And while more progressive attitudes had taken hold in professional and official quarters, they had not penetrated far into public or political consciousness.

Thus in the early 1980s, when confronted with an increasing number of children on the streets, most civic authorities greeted the epidemic with the old punitive reactions. They largely perceived street children as social reprobates in need of correction, attitudes influenced by their looks and behaviour. Many were dirty and ill-kempt, and some went in for such anti-social behaviour as picking pockets, begging, soliciting, and sniffing solvent. The law on vagrancy remained intact and it was used. Many street children were subject to harassment, arrested and flung into jail, and kept for months alongside adult offenders in the brutalizing surroundings of the cells without any criminal charge being laid.

In the mid-1980s, officials began to realize that, as in the case of urban poverty itself, the forces which propel children onto the streets and into damaging occupations are of a weight and combination which cannot be dispelled by coercive removal of the victims. The professionals in the Department of Social Welfare began to question seriously the policy of institutionalization except for the seriously damaged, physically or mentally. A visit to Brazil, at UNICEF's invitation, showed senior officials of the Filipino Council for Child Welfare new approaches to the street child problem.

The forces which propel children onto the streets cannot be dispelled by coercive removal of the victims

The Brazilian programmes were against the existing forms of institution, attempting instead to listen to the street children's own perceptions and relate to their world view, and on this basis design programmes of a re-integrative character.

In 1986, in the midst of sweeping political change, the Council for the Welfare of Children was revitalized. It set out to alter policies and attitudes towards street and working children so as to make responses on the ground more workable, cost-effective, and humane. But the degree to which these ideas have yet become current in city hall circles varies considerably. In some cities, children continue to be rounded up on grounds of curfew violations and the need to clear undesirable and criminal elements off the streets. The security situation in some parts of the country, or campaigns against drug abuse, can provide cover for police

harassment of this kind. Until vagrancy is decriminalized – there is now a Bill before Parliament – this is likely to continue.

As recently as last year, Cebu City carried out a well-intentioned sweep-up of children on the streets called "Operation *Gugma* (Love)". Operation *Gugma* brought public attention to the problem and identified the administration as trying to solve it; it also enabled individual children to be "processed" into an appropriate help network. But its inherent contradiction was revealed when the street children and their parents were hauled into court and sued. The idea that the poor and ignorant classes need to be disciplined into what is right by those that know better still holds sway in a society steeped in hierarchical tradition.

In a hierarchical society, the idea that the ignorant classes need to be disciplined into what is right, still holds sway

There are also situations in which police and authorities, far from intervening overzestfully in the street lives of children and their families, decide to "look the other way" when children are being abused or exploited. The tragic combination of contemporary mores and urban poverty on personal and social codes has been most conspicuous in tourist areas. In the mid-1980s, Filippinos were forced to admit to the reality of something quite new in their society: sexual exploitation of children, on the informal and hidden fringe of tourism and the entertainment industry. Public outcry centred on Olongapo City, Pagsanjan, and Manila's red light district. In scenic Pagsanjan, foreign paedophiles had set up businesses to trade in child sex and pornography. A public hearing revealed that influential individuals and officials supported the paedophiles for economic reasons. Parents claimed to be ignorant of why foreign men lavished money upon their boys, even though some accompanied their children to hotel appointments.

After the exposure of the trade, this formalized system of child abuse has been reduced. Specific laws and regulations now do something to control the activities of foreign paedophiles. Local civic groups, in co-operation with the police, try to provide children at risk with some measure of protection. Almost all the victims come from poverty-stricken and/or broken homes and are school drop-outs: a typical profile of the urban child at risk.

In the early 1990s, the underlying economic forces promoting the Filipino street child epidemic are still operational. The numbers of children spending a part of their day working, begging, or playing on the streets are not showing a decline. But what has changed, in some cities quite significantly, is the official and social service reaction. This has been brought about by the efforts made by government and non-governmental organizations to understand the forces at work at all levels of society which are causing damage to Filipino urban families.

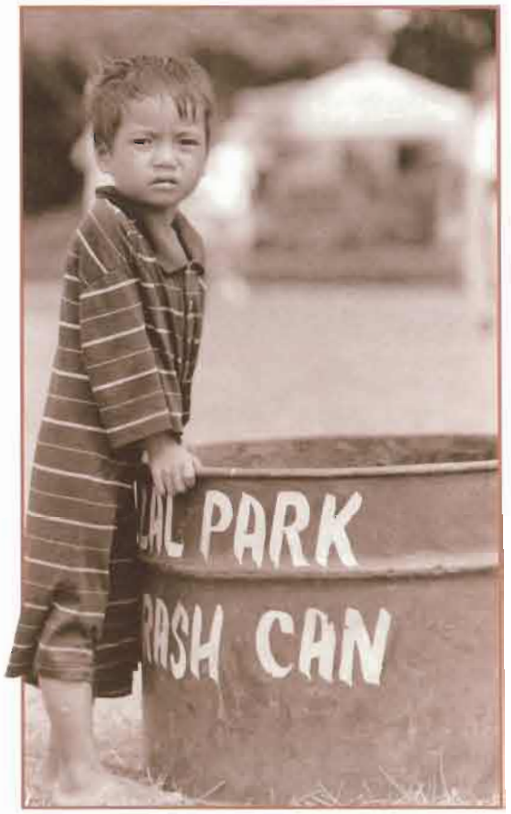
A series of studies carried out in ten cities in 1988 have done much to fill in the contours of the national "street child" picture. The studies were jointly sponsored by government and non-governmental bodies, and by UNICEF. Some of their findings were highly significant: for example, that three-quarters of such children still lived at home and many tried to continue schooling. For many, therefore, family disintegration is a threat but not yet a reality. These studies have been supplemented by ongoing research, by conferences and meetings, and by the information generated as a part of the monitoring of projects for children under stress.

The latest stage of enquiry, conducted during 1990, consists of a wide-ranging analysis by a number of research institutes and policy advisors, commissioned by UNICEF. By examining the plight of street children in four cities – Metro Manila, Cebu, Davao, and Olongapo – the study firmly establishes the connection between the children and their home communities and illuminates the spectrum of risks to children posed by a slum birthright. It also examines the ways in which different kinds of response help reduce or exacerbate these risks. The aim is to unlock the process whereby risks compound and precipitate such negative influences in the child's environment that the normal course of development is arrested and the victim moves towards an exposed lifestyle outside the normal confines of childhood and society.

CHILDHOOD IN THE URBAN JUNGLE

ANY child born or brought up in a community in a back street slum in urban Philippines faces special risks to life, health, growth, and development which prejudice both childhood and future adult attainment.

These risks are most evidenced by the small child abandoned and living rough, but are by no means confined to the street lifestyle. Many are integral to the environment of upbringing, at home and in the community, as is graphically illustrated by Noel Espinoza's story and the many factors which led him into working on the streets. Studies of such children offer signposts to the underlying disadvantages confronting all children of the slums. Street children are both victims and barometers of extreme social and economic stress, manifesting these disadvantages at their most acute.



The risks at birth and infancy

The disadvantages begin at birth. Because of the cost of a hospital delivery, a high proportion of slum children are delivered at home, by the *mangihilot*, the street midwife.The family into which the child is born is likely to be large: typically six or seven strong, maybe larger with up to 12 siblings. Maternal time and attention is correspondingly sub-divided, and depending on the position in the family, the newborn may be handled as often by an older sibling, and develop closer bonds with him or her than with the parents.

Parents are young, often in their twenties. Between half and two-thirds are newcomers to the city, having migrated at the age of restlessness in teens and early 20s and embarked early upon marriage and childbearing. Most have little education; the deprivations of their own childhood and adolescence have left them short of skills and qualifications, not only for income-earning purposes but in management of their domestic economy and parenting. Although they often live in a neighbourhood and household where they have kin, clock-round childrearing support from female family members of the older generation, guaranteed to the young mother in the countryside, is less likely to be dependable in town.

Street children are both victims and barometers of extreme social and economic stress, manifesting these disadvantages at their most acute

Life in town has important effects on infant care and rearing. Most Filipino urban mothers – nearly three-quarters – breastfeed their infants, but this compares with 90 per cent of mothers in rural areas, who also breastfeed for longer. Nearly half the infants in urban areas are anaemic. The infant mortality rate in the cities ranges from just under 25 per 1,000 to over 110, compared to a national average of 56. Birth injuries are one cause of infant death, and another is the squalid slum conditions in which childhood infections flourish. Common diseases include pneumonia, diarrhoea, tuberculosis,

Case I:
Unemployed at eight years old

Ryan Cabajar is the second of four children born to Mario and Felicidad Cabajar of Cebu City. When he was small, they lived in the house Mario built in 1980. Like most of their neighbours, the family's source of income was the nearby Club Filipino Golf Course. Mario was a caddy, an industrious one. The marriage was happy.

At the age of six, Ryan began to go along to the Club Filipino with his cousin Archie, to work as a ballboy. He had an ID number, and the Master Caddy would call out "85" when he had an assignment. Usually his number was called once a day, and pay was P10 (37 US cents) an hour. He liked being a ballboy, he enjoyed himself. And when waiting for a job, he and Archie had a great time playing on the grass.

His father earned around P2,000 ($74) a week, so the family did well. But in 1986, Mario fell sick with leukaemia. From then on, things went downhill. Mario's medical care was a heavy financial burden, and his precious house had to be sold. In 1988, he died.

Ryan's widowed mother, Felicidad, needed money, so she became an umbrella girl at the Golf Course. She left her children in the care of Alfredo, Mario's brother. She was pretty, still very young, only 27, and soon she had many admirers and began to lead a frivolous life. In early 1989, she ran off with another caddy. She never even said good-bye to Ryan or the others.

Soon afterwards, the Club Filipino was closed: the golf course was sold to business interests. All the caddies, umbrella girls, and ballboys lost their jobs. Alfredo's entire family – five of his own children, three of his brother's – now depend on the P50 ($1.88) his wife brings in each day from selling fish. Archie has dropped out of school.

Ryan, at eight, has just been enrolled with the help of another uncle. He is not looking for a new job at present. He is happy dividing his time between school and home, where he helps look after his little brother. But if Alfredo's fortunes do not improve, that situation may not last.

This case history was compiled by a social anthropology researcher from Ateneo de Manila University.

and measles. Mothers in the slums often do not have the resources to seek out preventive care for their infants, although there are signs that bringing maternal and child health services, including immunization, closer to the urban poor is having an effect.

In psychological and social terms, the day-to-day contact with the world experienced by the infant and toddler carries a special kind of conditioning. The nurturing environment in no way corresponds to the calm, protective seclusion of "home" envisaged in the modern consumer image of childhood; the slum mother is rarely able to devote herself to house-bound domesticity. The marketplace, the snack bar, or the public laundry facility is more likely than the porch or nursery to provide the surroundings with which the toddler earliest identifies.

Thus begins the contact with street life which characterizes the upbringing of the slum child.

The risks at pre-school age

As the toddler becomes increasingly aware of personal needs, a complaining nag in the stomach is likely to be a frequent companion. Studies indicate that close to one half of Manila's pre-schoolers suffer from first-degree malnutrition, nearly a quarter from moderate malnutrition, and nearly four per cent are seriously malnourished.

Less than one-quarter of the children of the slums attend a preschool where they would receive a meal at midday. Most grow out of infancy into preschool age wherever their mothers are to be found. As they begin to run around, straying further from their mother's knee at market place or pavement stall, it is natural for them to hunt for spare food or ask for leftovers. Desire for snacks or candy is a major reason why young children scavenge, beg, or try to earn money. Those helping out on stalls, fetching and carrying under a parent's direction, may be given a few cents out of the earnings to go and buy something to keep their stomachs quiet. These snacks hardly constitute the nutritious diet a small child needs and are a costly way to eat.

The typical preschool activity of a slum child – and in the Philippines school enrolment does not occur before age seven and often not until age eight - defies classification into "learning", "play", "stimulation", and "work". The years between learning to walk, speak, and think independently, and arriving at the age of eight, are among the longest and most formative in any person's life. In fact these children are learning, playing, being stimulated, and working all at once. Because part of what they commonly do

The years between learning to walk, speak, and think and arriving at age eight, are among the longest in any person's life

involves exchanging activity for cash, society tends to highlight the element called "work". What they are doing is, more accurately, a natural extension of the daily accompaniment of mother or some other relative to the place they go to earn their income.

Since formal workplaces do not accommodate children, the child usually accompanies an adult working in the informal sector. It is normal for this responsibility to fall to the mother, especially if she has no house-bound mother of her own or mother-in-law to carry out the traditional childminding role. In fact, the need for a woman in her prime to pursue her economic obligations to the household alongside her nurturing role in circumstances which do not permit convenient overlapping of roles – as in the countryside – bind the urban mother and child further into joint deprivation. Young mothers work as petty traders and entrepreneurs, often with their children at their side; in fact, women dominate the Philippines' informal sector. Childrearing duties often limit chances of upward mobility into structured and better-paid employment.

In the case of boys, the relative they accompany to the place of earning may be a male. Noel Espinoza, for example, went with his grandfather to the fish market every day until he entered school. Ryan Cabajar (**see Case 1**) became a bailboy at the age of six at the golf club where his father and uncle worked. This does not mean that boys are exonerated from domestic and child-minding chores: Noel Espinoza has to make supper and look after his little brother, Antonio.

The unavoidable, even deliberate, inculcation of children into earning activities in the wider society is more common with boys than girls. Girls often accompany their mothers to the market and get into the way of running errands and helping out on the stall. But they may also be left at home in the care of a relative or older sibling.

On the whole, girl children are more protected from street exposure. They tend, like Noel Espinoza's sister Annalee, to be conditioned into domestic and childrearing chores. But there is no hard and fast rule, as there is in societies which systematically seclude girls beyond puberty. When family circumstances change, so may the roles of the children. Since the Espinozas moved house and Carlito remarried, Annalee helps her stepmother run her stall while Noel does the cooking.

The risks at school age

By the time many slum children go to school, many have established an earning routine or occupation. Once they start school, many continue to make money in out-of-school hours. Others are introduced by schoolmates to the world of buying a few of something and re-selling them, or hanging around in the evenings and on fiesta days, when clients need their cars watched while they are eating out, going to clubs or the cinema, or simply in the mood for spending.

Certain street-based activities are almost occupationally reserved for children. These include scavenging cans, bottles, and other non-degradable trash; watching and washing cars; selling recycled plastic bags; humping goods as barrow or pushcart boys; calling out the stops – "barking" – on jeepney (public) transport. Typical earnings in these occupations average P20 ($0.75) a day, but the skilled and experienced – like Noel Espinoza – can run up P60 or P80. These amounts are often on a par with the income brought in from laundering, stevedoring, cleaning, or low-paid factory jobs in which their parents make a living.

Young boys perceive many of their street pursuits not as work but as things they do while hanging out with friends

Existing surveys suggest that there are considerably more boys engaged in these activities than girls. Most are aged between 11 and 14 years, though the full age range is from six to 17 years old. These young adolescent boys perceive many of their street pursuits not as work but as things they do while hanging out with friends. This is called *estambay*, meaning simply being out and about and tuning in to the world going by. With no recreational facilities in their neighbourhoods, parents are hard-pressed to stop their children running wild and finding their own ways of amusing themselves.

The experience children pick up from plying their various trades fashion their world view. Street life, peopled by tough and worldly characters, all of them on the make, is a completely different world from the structured enclave of home or schoolroom. The streets belongs to another order, full of adventure, illicit temptation, things kept secret in case of punishment or worse. They learn the tricks of their various trades from each other – where to go for supplies or sales, who to trust or distrust, how to keep out of trouble – and band together for companionship and mutual protection. Some become hardened survivalists, giving false names to police or authority figures, responding to questions with as little information as possible and keeping most adults effectively at arm's length.

Education is held in very high regard in the Philippines. Everybody knows that without completing school, there is no passport to a better place in life. Street children's own aspirations reflect these values: almost all say they hope to complete their studies one day. Primary school enrolment is very high at over 97 per cent, and charges for

schooling were recently abolished.

But "free of charge" is a relative term. To have a child attend school means many outlays of expense. These expenses easily run up to P2,000 ($74) per year. Pupils need uniforms, strong shoes, money for busfare, pens and pencils, text books and a bag to carry them in, a lunchtime snack or the money to buy one. Then there are levies for "extra-curricular activities", frequently resorted to by teaching staff because the school budget will not stretch. If pupils do not pay they may be ostracized. Children who are made to feel inferior by teachers or classmates may start to skip school: Noel Espinoza did so because his speech impediment was ridiculed.

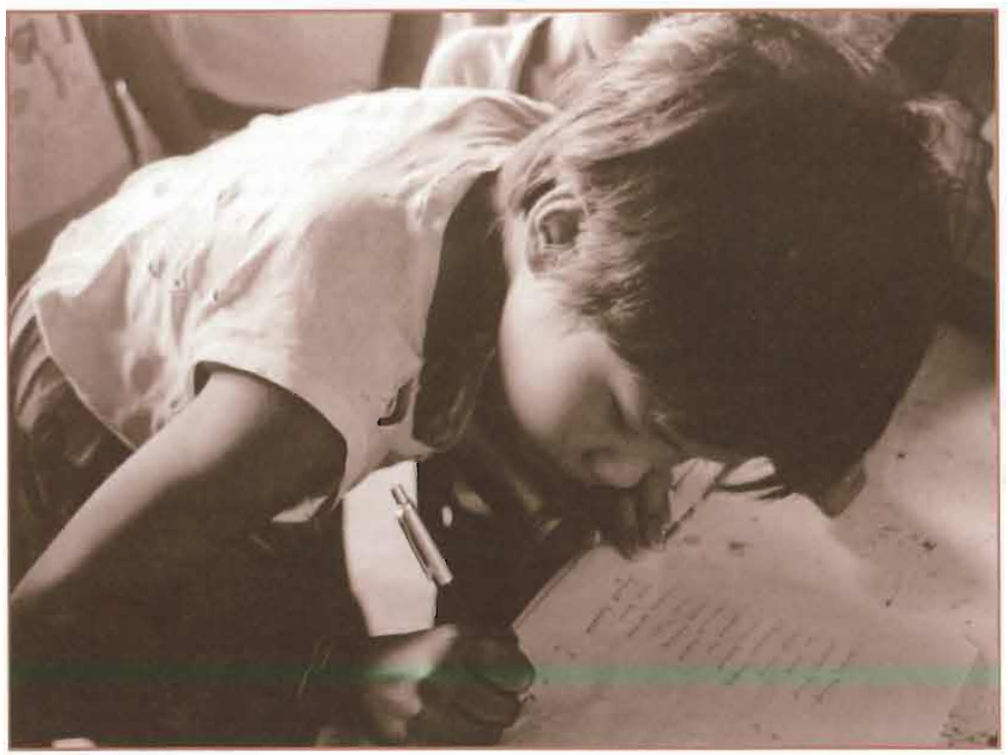
Three-quarters of street children go to school for some period of their school-age years

It is not surprising, therefore, that there is a significant drop-out rate among slum and street children. Three-quarters of street children go to school for some period of their school-age years, but around one-half are out of school at any one time. Many of those in school are in classes inappropriate to their age-group: their performance suffers because they spend little time on school assignments and few of the adults around them help with their studies – as did Noy Asyong when Noel was in his good books.

Relatively few of the children regularly found on the streets complete their elementary education: the average reaches no further than grade three. Parents' determination to find the money for the necessary expenses may diminish over time; or they may send out the fledgling student to help earn his way and, as he grows older and more independent, find their control over his daily life slipping.

The experience of school life in the most crowded parts of town, where teachers are overextended and classrooms full to bursting, may not be inspiring. If class is unrewarding and marks poor, some of the children may begin to find life outside, in the shopping centre or at the garbage dump, more appealing than books, discipline, and teacher's complaints. Richard Arpon (**see Case II**) is a child who lost his way because he was susceptible to bad influences at school and fled an irate parent's violent admonishment.

Many street occupations, not least prostitution, expose their child practitioners to particular health hazards. Scavenging on garbage tips carries a risk of tetanus. All street occupations carry risks of accidents with vehicles. One study, in Olongapo, observed that street children are often thin, pale, too short for their age, malnourished, and suffer from scabies, permanent coughs and runny noses. More hardened streeters often have fresh wounds or scars, tinea flavia, hair lice, dental cavities, reddish



Case II:
The runaway child

Richard Arpon, now 13 years old, ran away from home and took up street life in a shopping centre in Metro Manila.

The lovechild of a girl who didn't want him, Richard was brought up by his uncle and aunt. They were kind and loving and formally adopted him. In 1987, they moved from their tiny rented slum house in the city out to a re-settlement area in a farming valley. Since that time, things have not gone easily for Richard's stepfather, Francisco Arpon. Joblessness and strain have made him bad-tempered.

Richard's problems began in 1989. With friends from school, he started to miss class and loiter around town. To keep him from temptation, the Arpons sent him to stay with his real mother. But the man to whom she is now married resented his presence and was angry and abusive. Richard returned home. But the pattern – truancy, banishment to his mother's, return home – kept repeating itself.

One day when Richard was caught skipping school, Mr. Arpon became infuriated, whipped him with a belt, and told him not to go back to class. He was again sent to his mother's, and this time he ran away for good. He joined a group of boys in the shopping centre, living on money earned by collecting plastic cups.

Since pickings were lean, he supplemented them from time to time by homosexual pick-ups. One man took him home to be a servant. He didn't use him sexually but Richard feared that he was going to. So after a while he ran away.

Richard has now joined a drop-in centre. He still collects plastic cups part-time, as well as following the centre's programme. He is happy to be there, grateful for "good friends", and has reflected on his situation.

He now regrets his truancy and hopes that he can in time be reunited with his home. But he fears Mr. Arpon's bad temper, and above all the prospect of another banishment to his mother's. Richard is waiting for the right moment to make his reconciliation, and trying to catch up, too, on all the school work he has missed.

This case history was compiled by a researcher from the Philippine Social Services Council.

conjunctiva, and speech difficulties. Sickness and minor ailments are a common reason why slum children frequently miss school.

The risks for school-age girls

The state of their schooling shows that girls on the street are a specially disadvantaged group, although female education in the Philippines is high. Only three per cent, compared to 15 per cent of boys, go beyond grade four; 40 per cent of street girls never go to school at all. The seclusion from typical street occupations girls seem more likely to experience than boys is echoed by their more likely exclusion from school. Gender expectations and occupational roles are reflected in the positions school-age children occupy in the formal and informal workforce.

The fact that boys on the street outnumber girls by two to one in Manila, by nine to one in Cebu, and are in the majority everywhere, does not necessarily mean that boys suffer worse than girls the deprivations of slum childhood. The fact that more boys are out on the streets does not mean that their home lives are worse; their home lives must be the same as their sisters'. Boys move more freely in the urban jungle, whether they are in school or out. That freedom may enable them to escaping servitude to back-room drudgery. Many girls take on a heavy domestic burden from an early age – work for which there is no pay – because their mothers cannot cope with the responsibilities that constant childbearing and the simultaneous need to earn inevitably draw down upon them.

School-age girls pushed to vend or beg on street corners to supplement their family's income suffer greater personal vulnerability than boys and greater risk of exploitation. Street girls in Metro Manila describe with dread and distress the molestation they endure from men on the streets, and the sadistic handling they receive from policemen who seem to enjoy arresting and punishing them. Some, like Jocelyn (**see Case III**), are innocently induced into a business of which they had no previous inkling: gratifying the sexual appetite of adult men.

Street girls in Metro Manila describe with dread and distress the molestation they endure from men

Once inducted, confusion, financial need, and secrecy may make it very difficult for the street-walker child to give up her (or his) trade. The proceeds from prostitution, particularly with foreigners who pay much more than Filipinos, are in a different league from any other street pursuit. It is not uncommon for a child to earn P500 ($18) in a night. By definition, this trade is plied as far

outside the public gaze as possible. Appearances and data notwithstanding, girls may well suffer worse than boys the impact of acute urban poverty because their exploitation is more often hidden and, except in the case of prostitution, is less often financially rewarded.

Case III:
A streetwalker at ten

Jocelyn's mother is a laundrywoman bringing in P150 ($5.60) a month. Her father died of cancer three years ago. Her sister took her to a shopping centre in Manila and taught her to beg. One day a smartly dressed woman asked her if she wanted "big, easy money". She was soon in the hands of a man who did horrid things to her body in a dingy room. But her family needed the money so she managed to get used to it.

Now, at age 13, Jocelyn has a regular routine. In the morning, she rests and then does housework chores. In the afternoon she hangs out with her mates. They chat, buy snacks from small eateries, and take in an occasional movie. On days when she works, she also sniffs solvent to make herself feel daring and uninhibited for the next few hours.

Three or four times a week, she goes on the look out for customers willing to pay her price. Jocelyn knows how to spot them. At her usual night-time haunt she has simply to give the right body signals and the deal is closed. On a good night she earns P400-500 ($15–18) from two or three customers. Foreigners, specially Japanese, pay best.

Sometimes Rolly, her pimp, sends her a customer and then she must give him part of her proceeds. This she does not mind because Rolly also supplies her regularly with solvent.Jocelyn has plenty of money to take home for the family's food, with some left over for clothes, fun, and even savings.

Her mother does not know what Jocelyn does to earn. But if she did, could she object, since her earnings keep the family going? At present Jocelyn sees no way of leaving her occupation. Things are just too difficult at home. Now her younger sister has started selling chewing gum and candies in the street . . .

This case history is adapted from *The Street Girls of Metro Manila: Vulnerable Victims of Today's Silent Wars*, published by Childhope in co-operation with the NCSD, Manila.

CHILDREN *ON* AND *OF* THE STREETS

SINCE the descriptor "street children" was first coined in the early 1980s, it has tended to be used pejoratively. An evocative term was needed to draw attention to a growing phenomenon around the world. But unfortunately every child spending time earning or running errands is now a "street child", and in the Philippines at least, parents and children may both be made to feel shame with questionable justification. The phrase, appropriately in some cases but by no means in all, conjures the Dickensian image of a scruffy urchin, sleeping rough, surviving among pimps and pushers on the crumbs of a savage adult world.

"Street child" is an over-simple classification whose widespread use has highlighted one feature of the slum childhood environment at the expense of others.It has even prejudiced the data and the way it has been collected. For example, we know much more about "street children" than we do about "slum children"; and we know much more about the Filipino version of Oliver Twist than about the Filipina version of Cinderella. In time, these distortions will be corrected. But for the moment, information about the "street child" or the "working child" is the only research framework we have for interpreting the impact of the urban environment on childhood.

Now that the contemporary street child picture is filling in and becoming less trammelled by emotive images and preconceived ideas, some refinements in terminology are needed. The children encompassed by it are clearly suffering degrees of deprivation – familial, educational, occupational – which are far from uniform and cannot be viewed holistically. In the Philippines, as elsewhere, street children have been loosely categorized into "children *of* the streets" and "children *on* the streets". This provides some means of differentiation between cases, and a pointer towards suitable responses; but it does not go far enough.

It also suggests that the two categories are contiguous, that "street" is the definitive predicator of stress, and *on* the street or *of* the street a matter of degree. The assumption of close, virtually causal connection, between earning money on the street and family abandonment needs careful re-examination if today's street child epidemic in the Philippines is to be properly understood. "Street" may not, after all, be the most suitable framework in which to understand the forces at play; nor, particularly in the case of girls, may it be more than one of many suitable places for intervention.

Children *of* the streets

This group consists of those children who have been pushed, or have themselves chosen, to lose almost all contact with their families, and have adopted the urban jungle as their home. These are often called the "hard core" street children, who normally constitute between five and ten per cent of the total. (The proportion appears to be conspicuously higher in Cebu City.)

The child *of* the streets is making a statement that some Filipinos with their sacrosanct view of the family might find difficult to accept. That statement is about the child's existing experience of "family", about the failure of the household in which he or she belongs to offer adequate love, nurture, protection, or economic security, or elicit in response a voluntary filial respect. Implicitly, the child's abandonment of home is also an abandonment of the home-based community, which apparently offers no alternative nurture or security to the abused or neglected child.

Children *of* the streets have lost the sense of structure that a normal upbringing, with its adult-imposed timetable for eating, sleeping, grooming, playing, and learning, provides. Many, particularly those whose contact with their family has been severed for a long period of time, are without a sense of morality acceptable in the wider society. They may slide into criminality, and are prone to self-destructive behaviour such as drug-taking and sexual promiscuity, often with each other. Many are highly adapted to their own sub-culture and are efficient and resourceful survivors; but they are poor at self-care and their sense of identity reinforces their alienation from the regular world.

Children of the streets have lost the sense of structure that a normal upbringing, with its adult-imposed timetable, provides

The direction their conditioning has taken at an early age makes it very difficult for such children to

re-conform to any regime, whether of rules or organized activity. Their resistance to structured living leads to frequent escape from institutional confines, particularly when these are reinforced by lock and key and do not offer attractions which compensate for the things such children sorely miss. Their keenest sense of deprivation is their lack of familial love. Almost all still maintain a vision, whatever the sadness of their experience, of being loved and belonging to a mother, or father, if either is alive. Rare is the child to voice criticism of parental, as opposed to step-parental, behaviour.

Almost all still maintain a vision, whatever the sadness of their experience, of being loved and belonging to a parent

Many recognize the "badness" of their own behaviour: society confirms this value to them at every opportunity. They may want to reform, but the survival mechanisms they have developed to cope with the difficulties of street life further embed them in its anarchic, anti-social ways. They sniff solvent, or "rugby", to take away hunger pains, and become addicted. Some sleep all day so that they can stay awake at night to fend off the police, and other sinister operators with whose illicit activities they then become connected. They become caught up with gangs, sucked into crime because they crave companionship or protection.

Some youngsters have the gravest difficulties in overcoming the physical, emotional, and intellectual scars of their long, embattled street years. Yet others – with the right kind of help – do manage to do so, a tribute to the self-repairing and self-redeeming characteristics of human nature, and to the importance of a rehabilitative rather than repressive response. Such is the story of Jesse in Olongapo City (**see Case IV**).

Children *on* the streets

The category of street children described as "children *on* the streets" consists of those who spend a significant amount of time out on the streets beyond the supervision of a parent or other responsible adult, and spend some or all of it making money. The degree to which a given child is functioning independently of the family or is still very much a member of it varies widely.

In many cases, like that of Noel Espinoza, the child may work most of the day and spend some nights out with mates whose company he finds more congenial than that of his family. But he still essentially lives at home and gives most of his earn-

Case IV:
Becoming a new person

Jesse is tall by Filipino standards. At 13 maybe 14, he has long been parentless. He hardened into adulthood in the cheap hotel rooms, bars and strobe-lit discos of Olongapo City before he reached his teens. Jesse's height and looks give away what he does not say: that his mother was a "hospitality worker", his father a US serviceman based at Subic Bay.

Jesse was about four when he started selling cigarettes. He can't remember at what age he lost touch with home. His mother had "another" husband by then, a man "full of vices", who beat him up. So Jesse decided he would do better making his own way on the streets.

He has had many professions. Some, like plastic bag vending, are respectable enough. Others, such as selling the use of his body to homosexual clients, are not explicitly discussed. He describes being present, asleep, in a bedroom in which a foreigner inserted a vibrator in a small girl's vagina. She later died and the case became notorious. Maybe Jesse really was a witness; or maybe it is important to him to feel part of the drama and ensuing court case. The personal codes that govern a spirit fashioned in such fire are difficult to crack.

Jesse spent some of his most formative years as a member of a gang. He received part of the proceeds from their robberies and scams, but says he never himself took part in any crime. Whatever the truth about his unfortunate past, the important feature of Jesse's present is that all of this seems to be thoroughly over.

In 1987, Jesse was invited to join Lingap, a centre for runaways and streeters run by the Department of Social Welfare and Development. The house is a modest suburban dwelling on a residential street. There is a gate, a porch, a flowering shrub, an office for the principal, a cafeteria, a play-room, and 60 children of all ages and both sexes. The atmosphere holds promise. No door is locked.

To begin with, Jesse had great difficulty adjusting to his new "home". He disliked structured activity and yearned for freedom. But unlike some he did not take off and return to his gang. Jesse is smart. He has passed his grade six test and is doing well in school. He is a monitor for the younger children and a leading member of the dramatic guild. The way he sees things: "There might be a bright future for me if I can stick it out."

Case V:
The apple of his mother's eye

Allan Elcadre is the seventh of ten children born to Aling Perpetua and her husband Mang Tomas. At 15, Allan is the apple of his mother's eye. He is the best looking of her four sons, and the most responsible since an early age. She is counting on him to give her and their family a better life: "Among my children, Allan is the one with dreams."

Allan's day begins at 4 am. He makes his bed, feeds the pet rooster, and cleans up if there are any plates or glasses left unwashed from the previous night. At 4.45 he sets off to collect his newspapers from the supplier's. He sells them to car-bound commuters on the highway, returning at around 10.30, bringing a kilo or two of rice and some canned foods.

At 11, Allan leaves for school. He is in his first year at Mandaluyong High School, and he is doing well. He is a reserved boy, quiet and industrious, and abstemious in his habits. At 6.30 he comes home, helps his mother in her "sari-sari" store or to prepare the evening meal. The family sits down to eat at 7.30. Then Allan studies for an hour or two before bed.

Newspaper selling was not Allan's first job. He began work at eight years old, washing dishes in a banana snack stand in the market-place. At 13, he felt this job was now too young for him. He took up newspapers instead, and now has many friends and companions among the other newspaper boys. Not all lead the kind of dedicated school life that Allan does, but this does not affect him. They take the same bus route, riding down and back until their papers are all gone. Then, if there is time, he works as a *cargador* at the central market. From his daily earnings of around P55 ($2) Allan gives his mother P50 and keeps the rest for his own needs.

Allan's main motivation for working is to help his mother. Aling Perpetua has worked hard all her life, still bringing in P1,200 ($44.50) a month for laundering and acting as the main economic stay of the family. Mang Tomas, who was brought up as an agricultural labourer, is rarely in work.

Allan's greatest fear is that he might become lame, perhaps in a traffic accident, which would put him out of the nimble-footed newspaper business. This would put paid to his most precious dream: that of becoming a soldier. Allan believes, from the stories he reads in the newspapers he sells, that society is full of chaos and hatred, and that Filipinos are proud, treacherous and violent. The life he sees with his street companions and the life he sees at school are different worlds.

He wants a life where there is order. To own a gun and a uniform is a common street child dream. His mother says she cannot imagine Allan in the army, but he is putting some of the money he earns aside, to spend on a uniform for the Cadet Corps next year.

This case history was compiled by a researcher from the Philippine Social Services Council.

ings to his mother or whoever is in charge of the household food budget. Some go home less often; yet others are close to sundering ties with parents who do not make them welcome or whose brutality they shun. These are on the verge of becoming "children *of* the streets."

Because many of the street children whose lives have been analyzed have tended to have been introduced to researchers via projects dealing with "children *of* the streets", there has been an in-built bias depicting most children earning on the streets as already relatively cut off from their families. If, instead, the children interviewed by researchers are chosen at random from the streets, a different picture can emerge. As already noted, the school "day" in the major cities is often either morning or afternoon, leaving plenty of free time. What more natural in a home where money is short for a boy of 12 – the average street child age and sex – to go out and bring in some extra?

In a not untypical case, the child may rise early to spend a few hours selling newspapers before smartening up and going off to school. Such is the way of life of Allan Elcadre (**see Case V**), a boy not only completely integrated in his home, but regarded by his mother and older sister as its pillar and best future prospect. Allan's street activity is an important ingredient in his life and formation as a human being, but as a key to a disadvantaged condition, it is not particularly appropriate.

Like many others, Allan works primarily because, with so many mouths to feed, there would not otherwise be enough money coming into the family to support its needs. But he also holds on to a small proportion of what he earns for his own expenses, entertainment, and savings. This pattern, of a child worker holding onto a few pesetas as pocket money, is standard practice. Allan Elcadre has a very definite purpose connected with his future aspirations towards which he is currently saving.

Understanding the role of "work" in childhood

The street-based nature of some children's existence has been the starting point of most recent enquiries into the lives of urban children at risk. The dangers an unprotected child may encounter on the streets and the influences to which he or she may be prey encourage a pre-judgement about the absolute undesirability of street-based pursuits. This may ultimately prove unhelpful to the quest for the right interventions. Such judgements stem from the middle-class values of Filipino researchers and professionals, some of whom express concern about the way these values tend to distort their interpretation of the street child phenomenon.

Childhood itself, according to the sociologists, is a modern and middle-class invention. Children of the working poor, whether in traditional or modern societies, have never known a childhood free of contribution to their family's economy. Parental expectations in such homes extend far beyond the standard chores of "helping mother"; they include child labour and material support as the rule, not the exception. This applies both to boys and girls, usually in different and complementary roles.

Children of the working poor have never known a childhood free of contribution to their family's economy

While parents in this socio-economic group accept their children's dependency on them for food and clothing as well as for social, moral, and emotional conditioning, they are not in a position, personally or materially, to allocate a high proportion of familial resources for meeting these needs. Nor is the process of giving and receiving mono-directional. The notion that childhood is a time with no responsibilities in which the child learns and plays in a specially fashioned world, and that this period of dependency on adults should be deliberately protracted, is unfamiliar and impracticable. The balance of commitments and expectations is quite different from that accepted as normal in the better-off, educated, modern family.

The modern type of family is usually "planned". This is by no means defined by the use of contraceptives or other child spacing systems, although these symbolize such planning and make it technically easier. Controlling the timing and number of pregnancies implies a much more fundamental change in parental outlook: the careful deployment of familial resources of energy, time, and money, to maximize the physical, intellectual, and personality growth of each individual child. In a large poverty-restricted family, there are no spare resources for this kind of child-centred investment; in contrast, the growing children are resources to be deployed on behalf of the family, not the other way around.

This pre-industrial pattern of childhood role expectations still holds true today of upbringing in the Philippines countryside. The daily activities of every family member in the typical rural home concern the well-being of the household; but they are not defined as economically important or technically as "work" because no money changes hands. Only while children are in school are they

not primarily engaged in some task - hoeing crops, fetching water, minding younger brothers and sisters - which helps support the family. Even schooling is regarded as an investment in the future well-being of the family as much as in that of the child.

The rural life-style also has a seamless continuity; it is not compartmentalized into passages of work, play, and domestic activity in which different family members engage separately according to market place criteria, and in which children's occupations in time, place, and content are distinct from adults'. Mothers and small children lead their lives in tandem; play is not a structured activity with toys designed by someone living somewhere else and bought in shops; learning is an informal process similarly contextualized by the maternal and physical environment. Once they are able to run around on their own, children are expected to contribute to the household economy.

Those families most likely to seek better fortune by migration to the city come from this older world of parental expectations. The typical head of a Filipino slum household only arrived in town ten years ago. The principles governing his, or her, domestic economy are similar to those of families back in the countryside.

In the town, changes must be made, but expectations remain the same. In the town, meeting needs for family production and service - food, utilities, water, transport - always involves financial expenditure. So instead of weeding, herding, carting, carrying, or frightening the birds away from the crops, children have to pull their weight by earning money. Not only is the street their natural place of recreation, but it is also the environment from which they must help to forage, scavenge, pluck, and pick, some of the wherewithal to make ends meet. As in the countryside, play and work overlap. Playmates are workmates and partners.

The world of making money, particularly in town in the most marginal of occupations, is a hard world. Functioning in that world may teach a child useful life skills, including resilience. But at the same time it is a world full of physical risk, as well as risk from exploitation. It is an unhealthy world, both from the point of view of germs and dirt, and morally and spiritually. This is one key to the specific risks of slum life to the urban child. The other is that, as they arrive at a certain age, children going out into this world, whether for earning or recreational purposes, are bereft of protection from an adult family member with a well-established authority relationship with the child.

If a child's place at home is not secure, streets and street companions begin to provide a substitute structure

This characteristic – the absence during a large part of day-to-day life of a guiding, protecting, and nurturing adult – is the critical deprivation in the life of the street child. Although many parents feel shame that their children are out earning money on the streets, the experience of "work" is not by definition negative although many street occupations carry special health or other hazards. The key

problem is that this "work" rarely takes place within a child-supportive and protective structure. If a child's place at home is not secure, streets and street companions begin to provide a substitute structure, and other influences than a parent's or teacher's are bound to prevail.

The key to understanding the child's predicament is to recognize the price paid, in physical well-being, in skills and intellectual development, in socially empathetic behaviour, in moral values, by being cut off at too early an age from a structured lifestyle, loving nurture, and support. It is the degree of that critical deprivation, and the distance the child has drifted from integration in the family setting, which above all determines whether street life – even when it teaches useful survival skills – becomes for that child the social and personal disaster the phrase tends to conjure.

Understanding the role of "home" in childhood

The antithesis of "street" is "home". Filipinos' confidence in the supreme value of family life makes them want the street-based child to return to a non-earning, home-based lifestyle. But as well as being unrealistic, this view fails to recognize that, for children in the urban slum, that part of life spent at home may contain little that is appealing.

Mothers may be often out, and when they are in, too busy or tired to spend much time cosseting their children. While home remains a shelter and retreat from the unkind world outside, there is no room for play and no quiet for study. Community facilities for children – whether playground, library, basketball court, or drama group – have a far greater social importance in poor communities than they do among the relatively better-off in their more spacious homes. A woman in Quezon City asked to say which was the most important of the urban services introduced in the past few years named the basketball court because it kept the youth away from drugs and in clean-living habits.

Partnership disintegration because of death or conjugal breakdown is an important risk factor for the slum child

Although the idea persists that street children have weak links with their families, in fact more than three-quarters of children classified as "street" are living with one or both of their natural parents. Their presence on the street can be interpreted in another way, as an indication of the diffidence they feel towards their homes: they prefer to be rarely in them. If there is no money to be made in the neighbourhood, no recreation place, nothing going on to excite or entertain, a shopping mall or downtown location will seem more desirable.

Absence from home has to do not only with need to fulfill their "work" quota. At home, they will also be expected to "work", but it will be less exciting and non-remunerative work, in crowded and disciplined circumstances: scrub, clean, run errands, tend a squawling and dirty baby. If they give cause for complaint, punishment may well be a beating or at least a hearty slap.

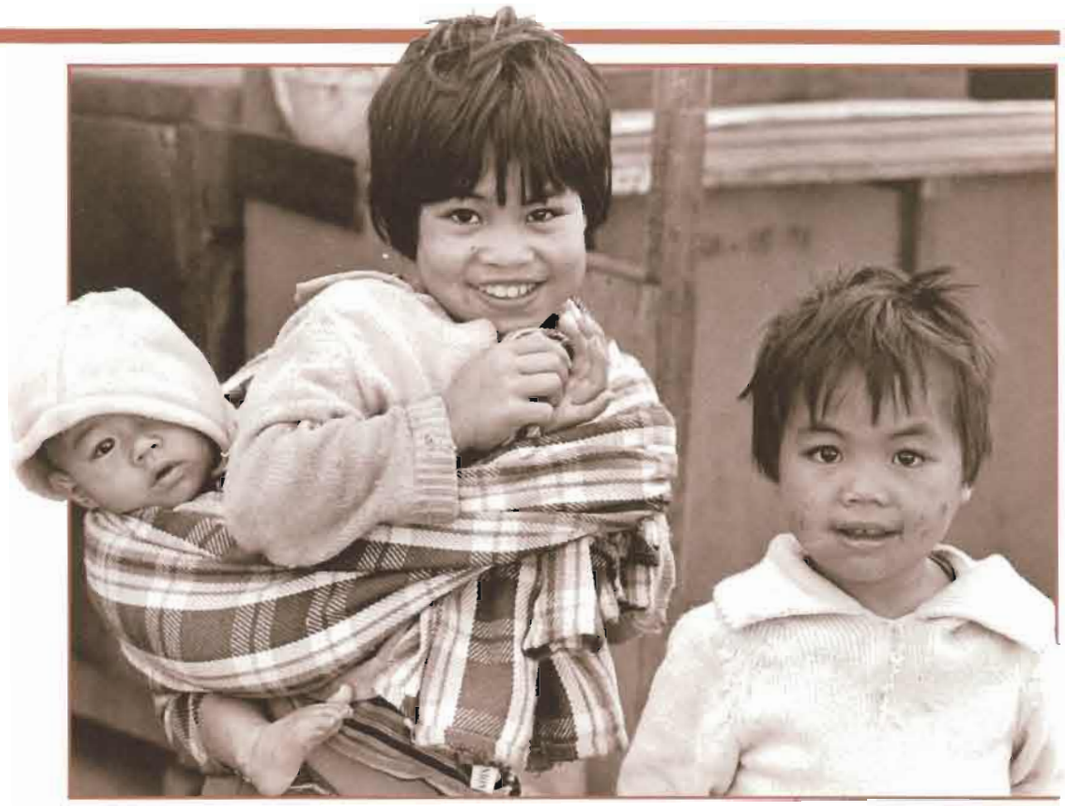
In a high proportion of street child homes, up to 65 per cent in some cities, the child's natural parents are separated. Partnership disintegration because of death, illness, or conjugal breakdown is an important risk factor for the slum child. It is not uncommon to find that the child spending an unusual amount of time away from home is escaping from violent or sexually abusive behaviour from a step-parent. The brutality in some children's daily lives is compounded by the prevalence of drinking and gambling, and to a lesser extent drug-taking, in low-income urban households. Over one-third of street children in Metro Manila report that parents go on drinking bouts every day.

Towards a new framework of interpretation

While understanding the street child phenomenon in the Philippines requires a reappraisal of value assumptions about "work", "home", and "street" in childhood experience, it would be wrong to suggest that their opposites are true: that "work" is a mainly beneficial influence upon preparation for adulthood, and escape from the stressful slum "home" a positive achievement. What is important is to distinguish between the various risks and benefits contingent upon the specifics of "home" and "work" as they are actually experienced.

In an ideal world, every child has the right to a childhood, a passage of protracted dependency and protection to permit him and her to develop into a fully-fledged human being untrammelled by "adult" responsibilities. In the slum neighbourhoods of the Philippines, as elsewhere, that world is still in the making. The industrializing process that invented childhood and created a protective cocoon for some has damaged the growing up process for others. In the slum alleyways of the runaway city, the childhood period of dependency may actually shrink, the responsibilities begin earlier, and their burden prove heavier than they used to do – still do – in the traditional countryside. The challenge is to accept the reality, and soften its roughest edges.

The part played by different influences at work in the slum household and community is now becoming much better understood. Outright shock



and punitive retaliation against the street child and irresponsible parents is gradually being replaced by a range of more sympathetic and practical responses. Included in these is the need to strengthen both the family's and community's capacity to provide a suitable environment for growing up, and to allow children a voice on their own behalf. Some strategies tackle at source the poverty which depletes the home environment; others try to enhance children's healthy physical, psycho-social, educational, and emotional development.

The context of such efforts can be provided by programmes to support urban basic services, tackling many symptoms and predicaments of poverty from various directions, including some of the specific causes of child poverty. Alternatively – which has mainly been the case up to now – programmes can be child-focused, aimed at rehabilitating child suffering consequent upon slum life and apparent in the streets and existing institutions. The overriding purpose of all programmes for children in "especially difficult circumstances" is to arrest childhood damage, at whatever age and stage, and in whatever context: nurture, health, education, livelihood. The key often lies in blending basic services which are primarily preventive with child-focused programmes for the already seriously disadvantaged.

A safety net is needed, in the family and community, with a mesh fine enough to prevent children at risk from slipping through. In any residential home for children hardened by street life are some faces and bodies damaged beyond repair. Physical abuse, psychological trauma, lack of love, mental debility, stunted growth, untreated sickness and accidents, have inflicted their scars in ways no nurturing rehabilitation can ever finally erase. Such children, pushed, lost, fallen, or enticed, entered on a track which no child should ever have to take. The challenge is to close that track, so that other children of the slums can be spared from joining them.

REACHING THE CHILDREN OF THE SLUMS

DURING the past two decades, legal and institutional changes at national level have progressively reflected a heightened appreciation of the vulnerability of Filipino children in the modern world. The dramatic political transformation of the mid-1980s speeded up and consolidated this process. The last regime sentimentalized the predicament of children but reinforced punitive responses; the current regime has focused on "children's rights" in the same breath as "people's rights".

In legal terms, the first important landmark came in 1974, with the passage of the Child and Youth Welfare Code. This elaborates the rights and responsibilities of children under the law, and provides special protection for specially disadvantaged categories – tribal children, the abandoned, orphaned, abused, handicapped, and child victims of conflict. A Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) was created, with the task of becoming the Filipino child's national watchdog, advising the President on policies, programmes, and changes in the law designed to promote their well-being.

At this time, the institutionalization of "problem cases" was still the emphasis of welfare policy towards children, although the institutions were run on more humane, rehabilitative lines than they had been in the past. As we have seen, it was not until the mid-1980s, with the street child epidemic and the sense that the "problem caseload" had become overwhelming, that pause for thought and the trip to Brazil caused a re-orientation. The Council for Child Welfare was then revitalized; its new preoccupation with street children, working children, and sexually-exploited children was in keeping with the dawning of the new political era.

A number of legal instruments, including the Family Code of 1987, have since been developed or revised on behalf of the "child in difficult circumstances". These articulate the rights of children, and provide, on the one hand, tools for bringing those who exploit or maltreat children to book; and on the other, protection for child victims and provision for young offenders. In June 1986, a Presidential Proclamation was issued declaring 1986–87 as the "Year for the Protection of Filipino Exploited Children". In 1989, the President set up a fund of P20 million ($741,000) for the use of NGOs involved with street children, and in 1990, raised the amount to P30 million. During the past year, the Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified, and in December 1990, a National Plan for Children for 1991–93 was announced.

This wide-ranging activity at national level provides a policy, financial, and legal framework in which the problems of children can be tackled. The task is not complete; vagrancy is not yet off the statute book, for example. Nor, at a time of deep economic recession, can there be unlimited expansion in the social sphere. What is important to note, however, is the sincerity of the national political will to improve children's lives. Not only, for children, are more resources available to municipal authorities under a range of different programmes in spite of economically troubled times; but activity for children, particularly for street and working children, is in favour at the highest pinnacle of government.

Children's voices, too, are being heard in ways that were unthinkable ten years ago. At regional congresses on their plight held during 1990, street children made their own presentations about their life-style, needs, and values. With help from street educators and community volunteers, they discussed their rights in the light of the Convention and prepared their own Action Plans. This process will be taken further in a National Congress of Street Children during 1991, at which children are expected to make proposals on their own behalf to all branches of government, the legislature, judiciary, and fellow citizens. The old spirit of antagonism, the sense of the state as a harsh and cruel step-parent crushing the last trace of joy from the streeter's difficult life, is gradually dying away.

Activity for children, particularly for street and working children, is in favour at the highest pinnacle of government

The urban poor and "people power"

If the situation of children has moved up the national agenda since the mid-1980s, so has the plight of the Filipino urban poor.

During the early 1980s the trauma of evictions, demolitions, and removal to inadequately planned

resettlement sites continued to dominate policy towards runaway urban growth. Eventually, slum upgrading instead of clearance became an option. This change of heart came about because of the rapid growth of community networks among the urban poor, based on a long Philippine tradition of grassroots organization.

Starting out as local groups determined to fight eviction with the help of sympathetic NGOs, urban poor associations later began to federate with each other and forge alliances with sympathetic church and labour organizations. This development is a new element in the political life of the Philippines. Without the emergence of these networks, the movement of "people power" which played a vital role in the changes of 1986, might not have exhibited the extraordinary and determined force needed to sweep the existing establishment aside.

In recognition both of their support, and of the distress which had originally led to their emergence, the new government pledged better times for the urban poor. Land reform was introduced and a Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor (PCUP) set up to protect their interests. A range of special assistance programmes for housing, tenure, community mortgages, environmental improvement, and service delivery was set in motion; some were taken over from the previous administration, but refocussed on the poorest 30 to 50 per cent.

It is impossible for programmes for the urban poor to operate in a world divorced from today's turbulent political reality

The UNICEF-assisted Urban Basic Services Programme (UBSP) had taken shape in experimental form since 1983. The new wave of concern for the urban poor, as with the heightened concern for children, provided the programme with a promising political environment. As a strategy for the transformation of slum environments, it began to attract attention. At national level, UBSP has increasingly been seen as an effective way of expanding health, family planning, nutrition, sanitation, and other services at relatively low cost. Subsequent recognition of the strategy by the Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor gave it enhanced visibility. Some city halls also began to appreciate its virtues; city health departments have been particularly positive.

Meanwhile, the growing concern with deprived childhood paved the way for a UNICEF-assisted Joint Project for Street Children, whose key partners are the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and the National Social Council for Development (NCSD). This was an initiative directed at the same socio-economic group, with the "child in difficult circumstances" as its target.

These two parallel programmes share many common features. Both are concerned not with the urban infrastructure, but with people, with the human dimensions of multiplying slum and squatter colonies. Both also uphold the belief that a sense of common purpose can be fostered between governmental and non-governmental bodies to maximize the programmes' impact. At all levels – national, city, and community (*barangay*) – programme guidance

is provided by an Inter-Agency Committee or Task Force in which official representatives sit with representatives from church bodies, community networks and other NGOs, and dovetail their activities.

In the heady days when the new administration rode into office on "people power", the Philippines experienced what was historically a miraculous sense of fusion: communality of interest between the governing and governed. But euphoria was short-lived. Continuing economic stress, exacerbated by the crippling size of the national debt and the collapse in the sugar market, as well as the volume of thorny issues on the internal and external political affairs agenda, soon opened splits in the fabric of joint purpose.

"People power" is still an important factor in government legitimacy and the dynamics of political change. To some in authority it remains an ally; but others have re-assigned the community networks who might make it a powerful force again back into their more usual adversarial slot. For a President, a City Hall, an opposition candidate, community organization can be seen as a potential weapon, or a prop, or a threat, in the struggle for power. Meanwhile, the number of urban poor organizations has continued to grow. The issues they raise now extend beyond housing and land tenure to exerting pressure for democratic participation in policies and programmes affecting them.

It is impossible for programmes for the urban poor, even when their explicit purpose is social and humanitarian, to operate in a world divorced from today's turbulent political reality. At the national level, the insecurity of the administration has been illustrated by a series of attempted coups, of which the most threatening was in December 1989. At city level, urban basic services and street child assistance programmes were affected by the municipal elections of 1988, and continue to be affected by what mayors and their allies in and outside city hall perceive as key political and business interests. In the face of diverse pressures and discontent, the climate of co-operation is difficult to sustain.

In Davao, the capital of Mindanao where separatist forces are at their most active, "law and order" and "security" among the population have a highly politicized connotation. A proportion of recent city migration is the result less of flight from declining rural fortunes than from the crossfire of armed conflict. Any programme, even for children at risk, feels reverberations. Who stands where in relation to support for a specific leadership cannot be left out of calculations about the future prospects of urban basic services programmes.

In Cebu, important enclaves of the urban poor are organizing against their old enemy: dispossession and removal to make room for business expansion. Those enlisted on the side of slumdwellers whose housing, tenure, and livelihood is under threat do not sit easily at any inter-agency table of co-operation controlled by those involved in executing such plans. In Olongapo, where the vast majority of residents live off the "hospitality" provided for US servicemen at Subic Bay, local political dynamics revolve around the future of the Naval Base. Community organization, even of the most socially purposeful variety, can easily be misinterpreted as an attempt to foment support for the Base's expulsion.

In today's uneasy political climate in the Philippines, the glow of post-1986 co-operation across classes and interest groups has dimmed. There is still commitment to a common framework for delivering basic services to poor communities. But in practice, the meeting of minds between officialdom and NGOs, particularly the more activist among them, is becoming increasingly precarious. Until municipal commitment to participatory strategies is more whole-hearted, genuine partnership with the voluntary sector will be difficult to maintain. That this can be achieved has been demonstrated in certain city environments; in others, where real commitment and resources are unforthcoming, the partnership is crumbling.

Until official commitment to participatory strategies is more whole-hearted, partnership with the voluntary sector will be difficult to maintain

Meanwhile, out in the city streets, Noel Espinoza and thousands of children like him step out with their pushcarts and their plastic bags, their comics and their chewing gum, and pursue their own version of security. It takes enormous dedication among those whose only desire is to improve the lives of children like Noel and their families adrift in the culture of poverty to sidestep political tripwires and singlemindedly pursue their work.

Up from the muck: urban basic services

Programmes for urban basic services (UBS) have as their target the improvement of the lives of women and children in slum communities. At their heart is a process whereby slumdwellers themselves participate in bringing in all or some of the following: primary health care, day-care facilities, medicinal herb gardens, paths and drainage, meals for malnourished pre-schoolers, loans schemes, self-help projects, training courses for women, toilet and laundry installations, house improvement, scholarship and recreation programmes for youngsters in and out of school; and to improve their own community management capacities.

Although modest, UBSP experience is growing.

Between 1988 and 1992, the UNICEF-assisted programme is targeted to reach 1.1 million children under six, over 200 mothers, and 35,000 street children in the poorest *barangays* in 10 cities: Metro Manila, Angeles, Olongapo, Bacolod, Cadiz, Cebu, Iloilo, Cotabato, Davao, Zamboanga; other cities are taking part on a more modest scale. As well as each City Development Council, the PCUP, and hundreds of NGOs and urban poor organizations are involved. The Government contribution amounts to $9.5 million; UNICEF's, $1.7 million.

City hall, the hirer of bulldozers, the ally of landowners, does not normally enjoy a high reputation in slum communities

The participatory process central to UBSP, fostered by the agents of change whether NGO or official, reverses the usual way of planning and implementing services. Instead of officialdom making an assessment about what the community needs, and then delivering it, the community itself assesses its needs, and draws up a plan for addressing them with technical and material assistance. In the Philippines, the hallmark of this process in a neighbourhood or sub-neighbourhood (*barangay* or *purok*) involved in a UBS programme is the presence of a large board on which is displayed the community's demographic indicators, services, and how many mothers and children are being reached. Community assessment, service delivery, and monitoring are visible for all the world to see.

Building the capacity in the community to manage affairs on this scale is an arduous business. A *Barangay* Development Committee and sub-committees need to be elected. They have to budget, prioritize, know who – from their own and from the authorities' side – will implement different aspects of their plan. They have to resolve neighbourhood disputes; agree scales of levy among members of different means; assign the community cashbox; decide on sites for community facilities and whether volunteers are to be compensated. They have to establish criteria for eligibility for benefits; terms of loan repayments; routes for pipes or improved paths; cleaning rotas for community toilets; penalties for failure to meet obligations, and a host of other matters. For people with little education or previous experience of joint action, this elaborate and time-consuming process does not come easily.

When they have completed their plan, it is forwarded to the responsible city authorities, and after the necessary consultations across the health, education, and other departments concerned, it becomes a part of the Social Development Council's overall plan for urban basic services. In their turn, the municipal authorities can call upon resources and technical advice from various national bodies and programmes: National Task Force Funds, the Presidential Commission on the Urban Poor, and others. When the necessary resources have been made available, the plan then goes into implementation, and with guidance and material inputs from the various city departments, the *Barangay* Committee and its sub-committees for health, livelihood, sanitation, and so on, carry it out.

This, at least, is the ideal. Whatever the determination at the national level, it can only be put into practice if the city authorities are sincerely committed to making urban basic services work in spirit as well as in name. To enable communities to take on these responsibilities requires an extensive process of training and confidence-building, most of which must be carried out step by step, by personnel prepared to devote their time to the people, visiting insalubrious neighbourhoods where they may not initially be trusted.

City hall, the hirer of bulldozers, the ally of landowners and businessmen, and the employer of the agents of law and order, does not normally enjoy a high reputation in slum communities. It is much more common for a voluntary organization to spark off and nurse through the community's effort to grapple with its self-improvement. This is why the voluntary and governmental organizations need each other's help and a common framework for effective service delivery. Although a social services department may run a course on social credit, it is usually an NGO agent who enables that training to be applied within a loan scheme. Although the Health Department runs immunization sessions, a volunteer ensures that all children who need immunizations attend.

Since the strategy for urban basic services was first articulated and the first packages of small-scale projects introduced, it has proved its potential for success. In certain *barangays* in major cities, selected because of their acute poverty and service shortage, evidence of improvement is palpable. Local committee members show with pride their community herb garden, their paved pathways, the bridge they built across the filthy stream, the containment banks which stop the flooding, the basketball court which keeps youngsters away from the lure of drugs and vice.

In a suburb of Davao, a woman with five children is making a success of her mushroom farm, set up with a community-administered loan. In a room in Pasay, 20 women learn from the city social services team how to make fried-fish snacks before going into business. In Cebu City, pre-schoolers recite their alphabet and sit down to a midday meal cooked by a team of mother-helpers. In Quezon City, the *barangay* nutrition scout enters the latest child statistics on the large green board set up in the

Case VI:
Reach-Up, and up again

Little Baguio II: The landscape of Olongapo City is a Filipino San Francisco, green hillsides, roller-coaster dips, and breathtaking views of the sparkling Pacific Ocean. Little Baguio II is a community which clambers up a hillside, reached by a concrete pathway winding through the fruit trees and descending sharply down the ravine.

Not far from the beginning of the climb is a small health clinic with a monitoring board outside detailing vital child statistics. Spelled out is information concerning how many families live here, how many children have been immunized, how many women are in receipt of livelihood loans, how many children are enrolled in the scholarship programme which keeps drop-outs in the classroom.

This monitoring board is a testament to the importance of community self-assessment. In 1987, a programme to "Reach the children of the urban poor in Olongapo" was started by the city's Columban College, and ran a demographic survey of the locality. Soon afterwards, six neighbourhood clusters of 15 to 25 families were formed. By February 1988, a Council of Leaders was elected covering all the groups, and various committees set up, for health and nutrition, livelihood, education, water and sanitation, and – significantly and unusually – a committee for street children. The Columban College programme was intended for children; but it took no short-cuts. Community organization came first.

The community identifies its own high-risk families according to its own criteria: female-headed households, households with malnourished youngsters, families with street children. It gives them first call on social credit, scholarships, and special services. Other projects benefit everyone: paved pathways, the water pump and retaining tank, washing area, and community toilets.

According to their own data, 16 out of 139 member families have children working on the streets. Out of 42 street children in Little Baguio II, 39 are enrolled as Reach-Up scholars whose school expenses are part paid by UNICEF funds and part by money raised in the community.

The *gabays* – community volunteers – supervise enrolment of the scholars, interviewing families and assessing the attitude of the children towards being in school. If recommended, a child's parent must sign an agreement with Reach-Up, with the *gabay* as witness. If the child skips school and behaves badly, a reprimand will be given and in time, scholarship funds withdrawn, as recently happened with five of the scholars.

Since March 1988, the Livelihood Committee has drawn up loan agreements with ten beneficiaries. Loans for P300-500 ($11–18) have been given for smoking fish and vegetable vending; P1,000 ($37) for *sari-sari* stores (little general purpose shops) and poultry-raising. Members of the Committee collect the repayments, and when someone defaults, there is strong pressure to make good.

A watch is kept on pre-school health, and the association's leaders hope soon to put up a playground and basketball court for the older children. They believe that this will discourage the young from setting off for Olongapo's bars, streets, and hot night spots in search of recreation.

The changes wrought in Little Baguio II demonstrate that the community, once mobilized, can manage its self-improvement, given some incentives and guidance. Reach-Up's role has been critical, both in the degree of its involvement, and the degree of its uninvolvement in influencing the important decisions in the community.

Reach-Up is a very special organization. It operates the same "hands-off" policy for all its activity among the 2000–3000 street children of Olongapo. Bill Abaigar, street educator and stand-in father for many Olongapo kids, concentrates attention on the 400 odd children whose links with their families still exist but are irregular.

Bill has encouraged the children to form their own associations. There are now plastic bags and condiments vendors', bus washers', newsboys', pushcart boys', and scavengers' associations. They elect their officers and have their own sports teams and projects. Each levies money from the members and banks it in a savings account for which Bill is co-signatory.

If Reach-Up's style is "hands-off" the beneficiaries, some of the colleagues on the Inter-Agency Committee (IAC) find it very "hands-on" in regard to Olongapo's range of programmes for the urban poor. Reach-Up is actively involved in implementing UBS and serves as a secretariat both for the IAC and for the Working Committee on Street Children. It can therefore ensure that the UBS programme and the street children activities converge in an orderly fashion, without duplicating each other or introducing different criteria for self-assessment and loan or scholarship eligibility.

This, then, is the model for the convergence of services, made possible by Reach-Up's involvement at every level. At city level, there is mayoral support and commitment, and social service backing. In the community, the *gabays* know what is going on, which scholar is skipping school, which family is facing problems with their loan, which preschooler is not getting enough to eat.

The Olongapo model shows that, using relatively few resources but with appropriate approaches, good co-ordination and community help, municipalities can put into place some kind of safety-net for the needy child. For this reason, it is a model of linkage with street child services that other UBS programmes are now being encouraged to copy.

street outside her home. Throughout all the UBS cities, a push on immunization has raised coverage and in many, child mortality has declined.

In almost all the corners of the urban landscape marked by some degree of transformation, certain key ingredients are to be found. The first is dedication, from staff of the city health department and social services, from non-governmental personnel, from community members who give their time and energies free in service to their neighbourhood. The second

Without community involvement in management there is no longlasting dynamic for change, and no real community spirit

is the political will from the city establishment which oils the wheels of service delivery and community response. The third is the vital process of community organization. Beside these three ingredients, the availability of financial resources is the most modest hurdle to overcome.

If city hall is not genuinely convinced by the need to equip communities to plan and run their services, within the framework of support on offer but occupying the driver's seat, urban basic services programmes cannot fulfill their promise. At best, they consist of a better spread of maternal and child health care clinics, some welfare, and some minor infrastructural improvements. There may be some enhancement of services. But without community involvement in management there is no longlasting dynamic for change. It also means there is no real community spirit. Without that spirit, it is very difficult to foster within the community a sense of joint responsibility for the community's casualty members, notably the children.

When the urban basic services strategy is applied in an essentially mechanistic way, there may be some improvement in – for example – immunization and preventive care during infancy and early childhood. But without a more fundamental transformation of the community's developmental prospects, there can ultimately be no long-term change in children's overall chances. Given the prevailing economic climate, the underemployment, the low wages and rising prices reinforcing the plight of the poor, only an effort to marshall energies within the community, define priorities, and deploy to their best advantage the scarce resources available to it, can place a safety-net under its most vulnerable members. Without that effort, the culture of the slum environment remains intact, and the forces placing families under stress continue to operate. Community organization is not a panacea; but it is a precondition of genuine and lasting change.

The urban child under duress needs to be reached in the family and community before he or she drifts away. Via community networks sensitized by the UBS process, children spending time money-making on the streets can be identified, and they and their families given the kind of counselling and support which can prevent any further slide into ill-fortune. In at least two UBS cities – Olongapo and Davao –

"children in difficult circumstances" are a specific focus of the programme. Extra support can be to the whole family, by means of loans or environmental health improvements; or it can go directly to the child. In the parlance of programming, the community can become the point at which services "converge".

The recent experience of this "convergence" – in which street children become an additional focus of UBSP – has encouraged UNICEF and its governmental partners to project urban basic services as the overall framework for reaching the slum and street child. The best example of a programme which incorporates street child services into UBS and vice versa, is a project called "Reaching the Children of the Urban Poor in Olongapo", or "**Reach-Up**" for short. **(See Case VI)**.

Off and on the streets: child-based services

During the past few years, the trickle of programmes directed at street-based children in the major cities of the Philippines has taken on the dimensions of a flood. From 38 agencies responding in one way or another to the plight of disadvantaged children in eight cities in 1986, the number of government and non-governmental agencies supporting programmes rose to 305 in 17 cities by 1989.

This activity has been fuelled by the Joint Project on Street Children, established with UNICEF assistance in 1986, and implemented with a number of partners. On the government side, these are led by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD); within the NGO arena, the National Council for Social Development (NCSD) acts as an umbrella and a conduit for UNICEF assistance. By 1989, the Project had reached 25,653 children in 17 cities: Metro Manila (where around 60,000 street children are to be found), Angeles, Bacolod, Baguio, Cagayan de Oro, Caloocan, Cebu, Cotabato, Davao, Iloilo, Legaspi, Naga, Olongapo, Pagsanjan, Pasay, Quezon City, and Zamboanga. Costs are modest: around $310,000 over two years.

Advocacy for the street child's cause is seen as an important activity of the Joint Project. The Philippines media has given much attention to the problem, encouraged by national conferences, workshops and seminars in which children themselves have played a prominent part. Filipinos' assumption that their culture is one of family unity has been assailed, but many in public and private life have risen to the challenge. The lead has been taken by the President herself, and the special Presidential Fund for Street Children has released extra resources for their care. Church and activist agencies have branched into extra projects for the street child. This outburst of activity demonstrates the deep-rooted natural compassion of the Filipino people towards the predicament of children in distress.

In the 17 cities which have launched programmes for "children in especially difficult circumstances" under the Joint Project, the co-ordination of the programme is carried out by the City Task Force on Street Children. With membership from DSWD, the health department, other governmental services, and NGOs, these task forces have a similar character to those formulated for the urban basic services programme, of which they are often a sub-group. They share information, compare notes about individual children, and take joint initiatives regarding police behaviour or city regulations.

This outburst of activity demonstrates the deep-rooted natural compassion of the Filipino people towards the child in distress

Although the well-being of children is less touchy an issue than the predicament of the urban poor as a whole, major differences of perspective may still colour deliberation. In Cebu City, for example, the introduction of legal controls against vending and pedicab transport will make it harder for both parents and working children to make ends meet, and reflect an anti-poor bias which is ideologically opposed to the perspective of many NGOs, both the church-based and the secular. However, the influence of NGOs within a joint task force may help moderate an official view. In Olongapo, a fiercely traditional administration has been won round to a new way of seeing things and has lent its support, largely due to the careful diplomacy of Reach-Up and its allies.

It has become usual to classify programmes directed specifically at street children under three different headings: "centre-based", "community-based", and "street-based". These classifications describe the main locus of programme effort, but it is not uncommon for one programme to encompass more than one type of activity. The majority of programmes and projects are carried out by NGOs. The breakdown in programme type is that government agencies tend to shoulder more centre-based activities and the less formal organizations, many of them offshoots of Catholic and Protestant congregations, pioneer community-based and street-based schemes.

Centre-based services

"Centre-based" services provide shelter or a substitute home for children who are parentless or homeless. They include institutions providing a total living and learning environment for their charges. These include the Salesian Don Bosco Boys Town in

Cebu, which offers truant or delinquent boys residential rehabilitation in an atmosphere similar to boarding school. Others provide care and a base from which children go to regular primary and secondary schools, such as the Lingap Centres.

The category also includes the more casual "drop-in centres" where children acculturized to the freedom of the streets can come for a bath, food, some sleep, and a sense of fellowship with a kinder world. Some such centres, such as *Kalungan*, meaning "Sanctuary", for child prostitutes in the red-light district of Manila, also offer health care, drugs counselling, sports and recreation, and try to inculcate a code of spiritual and moral values celebrating a different notion of human worth.

But many children do not want to go home unless they are sure that the circumstances of family life will be different

Most programmes for street children are nowadays starting to make an effort to reunite children with their families, or to rebuild the filial and parental bonds where these are in danger of breaking. Institutions for residential care, such as the Lingap centres run by the DSWD, regard themselves as a temporary refuge for most of the children in their charge. (**See Case VII.**) Contact is re-established with parents or relatives, and efforts made to return the child home. Family solidarity is the ideal for most Filipinos, no matter how insuperable the obstacles sometimes appear.

But many children *of* the streets have been physically or sexually abused at home, and for valid reasons do not want to go back unless they are sure that the circumstances of family life will be different. Only with thorough family counselling is reintegration possible, and in some cases it cannot be achieved. The alternative is to place children in foster care or adoption. However, finding families into which previously "hard core" street children can be integrated successfully is no easy task.

Community-based services

If centre-based service are primarily designed for hard-core street children, community-based programmes mainly deal with children who are living at home. Their focus is on the family and neighbourhood where the street child comes from, and what can be done within the community to help find other ways than child-earned income to solve their economic needs. Where it may be impracticable for families to stop their children earning altogether, the community-based service tries to ensure that the work is not exploitative, and is carried out within hours and under conditions which do not damage school or recreational prospects. Above all, it tries to ensure that the street child's relationship with home and neighbourhood remains secure.

The community-based programmes, often integrated within urban basic services programmes, offer the best prospects for preventive action, as already illustrated in the case of Olongapo's "Reach-Up" programme (**see Case VI**). Another example of a similar approach is in Barrio Cemento, a poor and crowded neighbourhood of Davao City. Here, a range of activities to assist women and children is run at local level by community groups, and fostered by social workers paid by voluntary organizations and backed by city hall.

Every month, preschoolers are weighed and dietary supplements given out. A 13-day Parents Effectiveness Seminar was recently conducted with help from the Department of Social Welfare. A women's co-operative has been started, and 32 members are now engaged in sewing dusters and making Christmas decorations. A scholarship fund, with money from UNICEF and from voluntary agencies and citizens, has enabled 20 street children to enrol in school. Although some boys may still go out and wash cars to earn a few pesos, their lives

Case VII:
Cebu's Lingap Centre

On a one-hectare lot stands the Lingap Centre. With its concrete walls and metal gates, its dusty drive and large front door, it looks like a rather run-down school. The ground is bare, but recently some beds have been dug and vegetables are flourishing. There is a court for the game all Filipino youth adore: basketball.

At present, Lingap caters for around 30 boys between eight and 16 years old. It opened in 1987 to house street children from Cebu, and is funded and run by the DSWD. Early in 1990, it was used as the processing centre for children picked up in Operation *Gugma*, a street clearance drive. For a while it housed upwards of 60 boys; numbers fluctuate as boys move back to family life or on into the community.

Boys rush forward to greet visitors, grinning with affection-hungry pleasure. Some have cuts on their faces; shaved heads signal the recently de-loused. They caper around, their gaiety at odds with the look some wear of serious deprivation.

Lingap serves as a temporary shelter for its charges, providing food, clothing, health care, and enrolment in local schools. Those with families are returned to them, if possible. Others are candidates for adoption or for employment.

Many have been hardened over time to a lifestyle they do not easily forego. One former ward caught stealing at a hospital was shot dead by a security guard. Another lost a job because of delinquency. Some escape, preferring the freewheeling life on the street with all its insecurities. It takes hours of counselling and much cajoling to kindle desire for any kind of future of which society would approve.

The Lingap social worker, Mrs. Anecita Suico, blames poverty for the existence of the centre. Next she rates traumatic family experience or abuse by a stepfather or -mother. Handling the children is not easy. Some boys show great reluctance to talk about their lives. They live impulsively from moment to moment. They fight one another and do not follow assigned duties. Sodomy used to be practised in the older boys' dormitories. But the most intractable problem, according to Mrs. Suico, is the little interest they show in schoolwork.

The current administrator of the centre is known as "Uncle Tom". Before he came there were six different administrators in two and a half years. He has started visiting the local school which has made a difference to attendance. His visits made the boys feel on a par with other pupils.

Reintegrating such children in their families presents many problems. These are less to do with the child's reluctance than because many are from long broken homes, were always unwanted, and are more so now.

Jerome Carbojosa, a 12-year-old, is the son of a domestic helper in Manila. According to Mrs. Suico, she came home to Cebu only long enough to give birth, leaving Jerome in the care of his grandfather. After trouble with his step-grandmother he went to live with his great-grandmother. But he stole her savings from her piggy bank and, fearful of punishment, drifted into street life. She was too old to cope.

Jerome says he only has one relative, an aunt. This is untrue but perhaps he feels ashamed of his rejection by the others. His aunt won't have him either, though she could well afford to. An uncle agreed to take him, but he is only a car washer and has many children of his own. He doubts he could keep Jerome off the streets.

Jerome has been eight times in Lingap since 1988. In the past, he has stayed around two months at a time, and then gone back to street life. He lived by begging, ate one meal of bread a day, and sniffed rugby to assuage his hunger. His physique – broken teeth, stoop, pocked skin – show all the signs of malnutrition and street illness.

Jerome says he likes the centre, and that now he intends to stay. With the more empathetic regime introduced by Uncle Tom, Lingap has become more inviting. Unlike any previous administrator, Tom and his wife live there to make it feel like a home. He has introduced a reward scheme to give the boys a new code of behaviour and values. This may be the first time in their lives some have experienced continuity and a dependable sense of self-worth.

Jerome does not seize the visitors' hands nor clown about. He watches from the side, brooding and taciturn. But maybe, one day, he too will rush forward and point to his good marks and accomplishments. Institutionalization is the street child programme of last resort. But for some, a relatively humane and caring "home" steering them towards social reintegration is their best chance of making good.

The case history of Jerome Carbojosa was compiled by a researcher from Ateneo de Manila University.

Case VIII:
Children of the dump

A concrete road leads up into the heights of Smokey Mountain, built to allow the heavy garbage trucks of Manila passage to the peak. As bulldozers smooth the stinking grey mass, small children follow like birds behind a tractor, watching the clod turn and hoping it will toss some treasure to the surface.

Smokey Mountain is a dump of immense proportions whose piles of rubbish give off a smouldering pall. Manila has emptied itself onto this site for 45 years, and the mountain is now over 200 metres high and 20 hectares in extent.

Recently, it became unstable. Torrential rains set off a landslide which engulfed homes in a foothill community and killed two children. The dump was closed temporarily while the bulldozers try to make it "safe". Around 1500 families hope the closure will be brief. Smokey Mountain is their home and its harvest plays an important part in their income.

Conditions may be foul but the work is rewarding. Most of the scavengers are children. In six hours, a child can make more money than adults earn for a 10 hour shift in a nearby factory. Around 900 spend time working at the dump.

They carry plastic bags and long iron hooks for poking through the trash. The best equipped wear gum-boots. They hunt for plastic, glass bottles, aluminium cans, metal wire, anything they know will fetch a price.

These children are "pit-face" workers for layers of traders, middlemen, and those franchised by breweries to recoup their empties. All play their part in the elaborate economy of the dump. It has its terminology and culture, even its myths. Tales are told of finding jewellery and dollar bills, even a superfluous gold bar discarded by the Central Bank. One day, by luck or prayer, the trash may yield an item of real value, making its scavenger an instant millionaire.

According to SABANA, an organization supported by the Philippines Department of Labour and Employment and ILO, around 100 families with 165 children rely entirely on trash from Smokey Mountain for survival. This hard core group is their target. A second group of children scavenge for personal needs such as their bus-fare to school. A third group go scavenging with their peers because they live around the mountain and have no other place to play.

At the top of Smokey Mountain is a deserted building called *Bahai Silungan*, or "House of Shelter", now used by SABANA as a drop-in centre. At midday, a nutritious meal is served for P3 (a meal at a snack-bar down the hill would cost P12). P1 of each child's payment is put into a savings account. At the end of the month, the children can take out all the money and spend it whatever way they choose.

There is health care, including drives against tetanus and hepatitis B, and first aid for those who get hurt in garbage truck accidents. Clean water is provided free for drinking and washing; a glass of water must normally be bought. For recreation there is volley ball and table tennis, singing, dancing, and beauty contests. The programme has a morning shift and an afternoon shift which children join according to which part of the day they spend in school.

When children join they are also "processed", and a family profile built up. SABANA staff visit parents of the hard core kids. Around 30 of these are enrolled at the SABANA workshop. Here, they earn a living screen printing and hand-painting T-shirts. This is better and cleaner work, with time and guidance for study. But it is not as lucrative as scavenging as no money comes in during training. So both parents and children have to be committed to stick it out.

This is where SABANA's greatest strength lies. The outreach workers employed to work in the community are all local community members, ex-scavengers and parents of scavengers. As neighbourhood people, they involve the parents in bringing about the transition from child scavenger to student. Parents cook, teach, help manage the programme, and through discussion in their own group, find ways of becoming better bread-winners and role models.

From a distance, the uniformly grey huts and pathways of Smokey Mountain have a grim, choked appearance. Once within their narrow lanes, there is colour and vitality, a handful of items here for sale, there a washing line of plastic bags waiting for re-cycling, in a ramshackle building a chorus of squeaky voices singing a preschool song. Some people, even here, have made something of their lives. With their growing community spirit, more of the current generation of child scavengers will maybe manage to do so too.

have become more structured. Mothers have a new sense of self-purpose, and the community is looking after its own.

The most important characteristic of the community-based service is that it focuses on the child at risk within the context of family and neighbourhood (**see Case VIII**). Activities for health, education, recreation, and spiritual guidance are planned by and with the street child's own parents and community leaders, keeping their guidance and example at the centre of the child's world view.

Street-based services

In the Philippines, "street-based" services are at present very much in the minority of programmes directed at street children. They comprise those activities focused on children themselves, but go out to them where they are living and working on the streets rather than attempting to recuperate them into residential care or into their families or communities. Those that exist are mainly outreach programmes run by existing drop-in or semi-residential centres. They involve a degree of recognition for the children's way of life since they do not attempt to remove them from their chosen environment, but endeavour to soften its negative impact on their experience of childhood and preparation for adult life.

The most advanced programmes are those of the kind run by Reach-Up in Olongapo, where children in different occupational groups have been organized into their own associations. Some other imaginative initiatives have been taken by a church-based organization in Cebu, *Dangpanan*, whose premises are close to the city's main market. Apart from running a home for 20 girls rescued from the market area, *Dangpanan* works on a daily basis with women vendors, providing a sidewalk school and helping them run their own day-care group. Without these efforts, children would otherwise wander loose all day among the market stalls while their mothers are working.

Organizations such as *Dangpanan*, since their genesis is to help children in need rather than to deliver services planned according to models and blueprints, are difficult to classify under any of the three programme types. They function on a pragmatic basis designing responses which fit the predicament of their young clients. As time progresses and experience grows, they start incorporating many types of activity based within and outside their own walls.

Another programme in this category is the Community Scouts, also in Cebu, whose operations are based at a shelter run by a woman Police Sergeant. Her links with the police ensure that when boys are apprehended for vagrancy, the centre is informed and the child may be spared the cells. The Community Scouts have been allowed to "camp" in premises on the city's old carnival ground. The accommodation is much simpler than in most traditional residential care facilities. The boys make the furniture and cook the meals themselves.

The atmosphere is one of nurture and discipline combined. One graduate has entered the police force. The centre's main emphasis is on training and skills for employment or small-scale entrepreneurship. It has a bottle-washing plant and a small jewellery workshop, both of which pay the boys as workers on piece rates; and a number of small livestock projects. When a UNICEF-donated sow bore piglets, some of its offspring were distributed to the families of boys who came from nearby poor communities. This allowed the staff to monitor both the piglets and the boys' home environment. There was an agreement that when these piglets in their

turn produced, some of the new offspring would go to other needy families in the barrio. Thus, links with local communities are an important emphasis of the programme.

Street-based activities in the red-light districts of major cities, especially in Manila, allow programmes to reach those who – like Jocelyn, the child prostitute (CaseIII) – would not be contactable through family or community because of the taboos surrounding their lifestyle. Counselling may enable them to reflect on their situation and, in time, the alternative of schooling or training to an existing way of life may attract children who otherwise perceive for themselves no alternative to their present degradation.

Ultimately, all programmes aim to counteract the negative aspects of street life - the exploitation, occupational risk, ill-health, and parental neglect - both through the child and through the family and community. From which direction they start, and which range of activities they embrace, is not particularly significant. Of over-riding importance is the clear identification of the particular child's predicament, both as it is perceived by the child and as diagnosed by those who stand for the norms of the wider society and aim to recuperate the child into a suitable niche within that world.

At this point this process is underway for less than half the children in need. The Joint Project for Street Children aims to reach 35,000 children out of a total estimated street child population of 85,000 in 14 Filipino cities by 1992. Preventive activity, carried out within the context of urban basic services programmes, could improve the lives of many thousands more children if greater emphasis were given by municipal authorities to the kind of community-based organizational effort, and the convergence of urban with children's services, pioneered by Olongapo.

Without that effort, the chances are that more projects to mend lives already broken and bind together family ties already sundered will be needed. The cost-effectiveness of investing in urban basic services programmes and the UBS strategy as a means of harnessing community resources towards self-improvement would ultimately pay rich dividends in terms of fewer damaged lives, and fewer expenses to repair them.

PROSPECTS FOR MENDING CHILDHOOD

FOR the Filipino child born into the poorest 30 per cent of the urban population, childhood is not a time of careful protection from the brutishness of adult life and adult responsibilities, but its opposite: an early – premature – induction into them. The slum environment, its crowdedness, its lack of facilities, its moral codes, contains particular risks to healthy physical and personal growth which precipitate many children into "especially difficult circumstances".

Childhood is short, the conditioning process heavily influenced by the world outside the home and household, and parental expectations from offspring quickly catch up and outdistance commitments to them. Once this reverse flow of dependency has begun, and the family and the child are locked into the daily expectation of a contribution to the family purse, it is difficult for the child to keep up his or her studies and school attendance. Without a passport to other prospects, children are equipped only for the low-paid casual and menial jobs, the vending and hawking in the informal sector, to which their parents were condemned, which condemned their own childhood, and will in turn condemn that of their offspring.

To be an infant or a child in the grey garbage land of Smokey Mountain, the tight-packed lanes of Barrio Cemento in Davao, the street market of downtown Cebu, or the steep hillsides of Little Baguio II, means a childhood unrecognizable to those born in more favourable circumstances. Childhood in the slums has to be analyzed from within the culture of poverty. It is unrealistic to wish for the child with a slum birthright the same protracted period of dependency on adults, the same mono-directional flow of resources invested in his or her physical, intellectual, and personal development as in a middle-class, educated family.

A society which constantly applauds the quintessential value of family life has to back measures which make it possible for the family in poverty at least to extend the childhood dependency period through the years of school; and to limit their own expectations of their children's household contribution to a size and scope which puts child health and development as little in jeopardy as possible. If society wants slum children to mature in an image of respectable, worthy, well-behaved adulthood, it also has to be willing to substitute in service delivery for some of the nurture, care, and informal instruction that mothers in slum life cannot provide from their own resources.

Before designing any suitable programme for children and families at risk, it is essential to recognize that people in the runaway city are the leading experts in how to deal with its many vicissitudes. They already have their own coping mechanisms, even if some of them are unsystematic, anti-social and ill-informed. They have no particular reason to believe that *instis* designed by those who have in the past rarely, if ever, identified themselves as allies of the slum and shanty dwellers are likely to be of value. Winning their confidence, and positioning the various helping agencies and services so that they can be tested and found useful, is a pre-condition of any successful intervention.

The various possibilities need to be explained and discussed at local level, preferably through

Noel Espinoza

"I don't want to go on scavenging for ever. I would like to become a policeman some day. A policeman earns money the easy way, and he doesn't pay for food. He just asks for it and people give it because he has a gun. Ah, I wish I had a gun!

"I would like to go back to school. My classmate from Grade I is now in the Don Bosco Centre. But I told my father about it and he would not consent. He said it would be better for me to stay and work so that the family can eat."

Ryan Cabajar

"I miss my mother. She went away after my father died. We used to be a very happy family before that happened. Now I am with my cousins.

"My uncle is helping me go to school, and my teachers and classmates are good to me. My sister walks with me, and every day I have one peso allowance. I like to study, and I want to be a doctor when I grow up."

Richard Arpon

"My present situation at the centre is far better than all I went through after I ran away. But I miss my family, my stepmother especially. I would like to go back, but I am afraid my stepfather will be angry and send me back to my real mother and then things will go bad. I don't want to be homeless and alone again with no-one to rely on.

"When I am older I want to be a soldier because soldiers are respectable and help ordinary people. But to finish my studies and enter the Military Academy, I need help. Maybe the centre can sponsor me."

Jocelyn the prostitute

"I would love to resume my studies and take up a dressmaking course. Maybe then I could earn some money and change my life. But would the income be as much? For the moment, I can't see how to change.

"The greatest improvement in my life would be if the policemen would give us better treatment."

Jesse of Olongapo

"I used to be a member of a gang. I started working on the streets so young I can't even remember how old I was or when I left home. When I came to Lingap, I didn't like being here very much. Now, the way I see things, I could have a bright future if I can only stick it out."

Allan Elcadre

"Yes, I've got into fist fights from time to time. The very first was when I was 12, with another street boy who was bothering me. I lost that one. He and his grandmother beat me up together, and I felt very ashamed.

"My greatest dream is to become a soldier. I am sure I can shoot like Fernando Po Jr. I shall arrest all the Zest-O-Gang and put them in jail for harassing people to buy their juices.

"If I don't make it, I'll go into business and run a drugstore or a movie house. The most important thing is to help my mother because she has worked hard all her life, and she has become very tired."

locally-elected committees. At different stages of childhood, different support systems are needed. At birth and infancy, the most useful will be in the field of maternal and child health care, including family planning to prevent too early another pregnancy. At preschool age, day-care facilities and income-generating opportunities for women are critical. At school-age, support for children to go to and stay in school is vital, including provision of community places for study and incentives or disapprobation for parents who do not encourage school attendance. As children grow into adolescence, recreation and sports facilities are needed, and guidance in the adoption of self-protective and socially acceptable behavioural codes.

These are some of the preventive measures needed to soften the rough edges of an upbringing in the slum environment. The facilities, training, and amenities required constitute a minor charge on the urban service budget if communities are mobilized and guided in how to deploy their own resources, personal and financial. The context in which this can be done is the urban basic services strategy, itself "converging" with activities specifically focused on children at risk. It is here that the opportunity lies of preventing increasing numbers of slum children from adopting habits and mores which represent – both to themselves and to society – a source of jeopardy.

Also needed are the rehabilitative services, those which attempt to repair child lives already damaged. In the Philippines, serious concern with "urban children in difficult circumstances" is a relatively recent development. Many interventions on behalf of children under duress began as a reaction by charitable organizations, religious orders, or caring individuals to protect child victims of neglect. Providing a home, shelter, essentially some form of "centre-based" care, was the instinctive response. But it has not taken long for old-fashioned versions of institutional care – the orphanage, the reformatory – to be modified, and a new generation of programmes based on supporting mothers and children in their homes and in the community to come into existence.

In the process, the costs of service delivery per child have gone down. The Lingap approach, which institutionalizes a child only as a preamble to reuniting him or her with the family or finding some other permanent solution, is still far more costly per head than community-based or street-based approaches. The cost of a scholarship to keep a street child in school under the watchful eye of the community is around P2,000 ($74) a year; the cost per child of residential care is several times that amount. If a child such as Noel Espinoza stays in school and does not drop out, the chances that he will keep roughly on the straight and narrow path to adulthood are dramatically improved.

Great progress on behalf of the Filipino child in distress has been made in a short space of time. No-one doubts that much still remains to be done. The statistics of children in need far outnumber those

Josie the vendor

"I started helping my friends sell candy and Juicy Fruit gum on the streets six years ago, when I was four. I never knew any peace at home because my parents quarreled and my father was always drunk and violent. He often just picked me up and threw me out of the house. When he died we had no money at all.

"I got used to the streets by the time I was six. We have a *kuya*, an adult who looks after us well. I'm not frightened of anyone any more, except the police. I try to study, though I have already dropped out of Grade One three times. Nowadays, the drop-in centre pays for my bus fare to school so that makes it easier. Every day I pray not to end up in evil hands, like my older sister."

Entoy Royo

"Four years ago, when I was nine, my father was murdered. One of my cousins stabbed him at the dance hall during our town fiesta. I have sworn to revenge his death when I am old enough. But my mother brought me here to Cebu, far away from our home. She lost everything when my father was killed.

"At first I didn't go to school here. I took up scavenging with boys in the neighbourhood. When my mother found out, she was angry. Now I am a scholar, but I also drive one of the three pedicabs my mother lets out for hire. The boys envy me because I make good money, better than for garbage. And my mother is important now, president of the streetchildren's parents organization. I am proud of her, and one day I shall become a civil engineer."

known to be touched by one form of service or another. Filipino commitment to the family, the immense social value attached to children, and the legislative changes emphasising children's rights, have created a favourable environment for further efforts to slow the negative impact on childhood of contemporary social and economic forces.

In some cities, there is still need for the strongest advocacy in leadership circles against attitudes which persist in viewing victims of misfortune as mainly requiring admonition. There are still cases of children languishing in jail alongside adult offenders, subject to influences which can only reinforce the outcast character of their lives. There are still drives to clear the "menace" of youngsters off the streets in ways that increase the likelihood that they will end up as hardened members of the criminal fraternity. And there is still a reluctance to commit even modest amounts of municipal resources to the underpinning of slum community's own impulses for self-improvement.

Some city authorities are content to do something for the street child's cause, but are not yet willing to move beyond the establishment of institutions and centres, as if buildings can somehow contain, and thereby remove, a problem. The problem starts in the family and the community, and in the family and community must be addressed. Only there can the child presently drifting away be recuperated into a nurturing and supportive social setting. Further advocacy is needed on behalf of services for the urban poor, presenting self-help and local organization as a professionally sound, cost-effective, and politically positive basis for service delivery, so that this process of rebonding can begin.

In the case of every slum child, it is possible today to lessen at least one of the many risks to which he or she is exposed, to give each Noel Espinoza a better set of prospects for the future. Many children of the streets, ill-kempt and unruly though they appear, have demonstrated tremendous capacities of learning, adaptation to adverse circumstances, resilience, resourcefulness, loyalty to their mates, and other positive characteristics. Most want do well in school, succeed in their chosen path in life, belong to a loving and caring human environment. If Filipino society can find the means to make that possible, it will be building a better and a safer world for the coming generation, and the generations beyond.

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