

EDITORIAL

In India, roughly 60,000 children disappear each year, according to official statistics. (Some human rights groups estimate that the actual number is much higher than that.) Many of these children are kidnapped and forced to work as beggars for organized, mafia-like criminal groups. According to UNICEF, Human Rights Watch, and the U.S. State Department, these children aren't allowed to keep their earnings or go to school, and are often starved so that they will look gaunt and cry, thereby eliciting more sympathy—and donations—from people. And since disabled child beggars get more money than healthy ones, criminal groups often increase their profits by cutting out a child's eyes, scarring his face with acid, or amputating a limb. In 2006, an Indian news channel went undercover and filmed doctors agreeing to amputate limbs for the begging mafia at \$200. To prevent the children from running away, traffickers often keep kids addicted to opium or other drugs.

This month's Bulletin focuses on Child Beggary. Let us look around and see if crimes with regard to Beggary are being perpetuated. If such incidents are identified let us punish the offenders unturned to leave the criminals and protect the vulnerable children.

Editorial Board,
State Child Protection Society, Assam

- CHILD BEGGARS - Problems of Social Exclusion

*I did not determine where I was born
I did not determine how I was brought up
But would I be able to determine how I bring up!*

There is a saying that childhood is a kingdom in which no one dies. In India, such sayings cannot be taken for granted. For many kids in India today, there is no "children's hour," in the words of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, no pause in the day's occupation of begging. Child beggary, as a specific form of child exploitation mostly visible in third world cities, has received scant attention from scholars as a subject of enquiry. The veritable outcome of this scholastic abandonment is the dearth of scholarly literature on this abominable form of seeking livelihoods by numerous children in India. The statistics on child beggary is very hard to come by. Lack of data on the magnitude of child beggars is an indication of government's oversight of the most degradable source of living by innumerable hapless children in India. Public action is shockingly inadequate. The pervasiveness of child beggars, visible mainly in Indian cities, is the testimony to public inaction and collective neglect.

The child beggars are the victims of all forms of social exclusion e.g. education, health care, livelihoods, disability etc. The dimensions of social exclusion become more comprehensive from the viewpoint of disadvantaged and marginalized class when notion of 'right' is incorporated in it, because exclusion of these children not only take away their 'entitlement' but also infringe individual 'liberty'.

The persistence of child beggary on such a massive scale after more than six decades of our independence is evidently a sad story of our failure to produce our worthy future citizens. Child beggary is also unacceptable from the view point of very simple logic of development economics. Children in every society are human capital in the making. Education drives the human capital formation process. Beggary deprives children of education and thereby derails the process of human capital.

Demand-Supply Equation:

Child beggary thrives in a situation where both supply and demand side work in tandem. Supply of child beggars comes from families where children are prone to be engaged in income earning occupation for family survival. Therefore, child's time is used for begging rather than for learning in school. Families that supply child beggars look forward for child income from begging. Child beggars are thus economically vulnerable, socially neglected and politically disempowered. Thus family vulnerability increases the likelihood of children taking up beggary as means of supporting family.

Causes:

Poverty and lack of social safety nets are primary reasons of child beggary. Children's income from the degradable occupation of beggary is indispensable for underprivileged families. Families living on the margin of existence without any asset or employment take to begging as survival strategy. More hands are supposed to ensure more income. Poor parents begot more children in expectation of more 'income' hands. Thus child begging is always associated with high fertility, children's vulnerability and extreme economic hardship. Poverty is reinforced, as a dominant cause, by lack of child protection system.



Major Vulnerabilities:

Most child beggars exist in major cities and have almost become one of their distinctive features. Although they can be regularly seen on city squares, traffic roads and crossroads, in front of shops and in parks, these children are largely invisible for the system and the society. Little is known about their origin, life, family and social statuses, while the underlying causes of their being involved in begging activities are usually not subject to research, nor are they being systematically dealt with. Even though begging stands for one of the most present forms of child exploitation having fatal consequences for their development, society as a whole fails putting pressure on institutions to deal with the issue more effectively for the welfare of the children, competent authorities rarely recognize it as being a high priority for their actions, while civil society organizations addressing the issue are few.

Still, based on some earlier researches, it is observed that it is mostly male children, aged 7 to 15 years in most cases, who are involved in begging. Alarming is the piece of data revealing that, in average, more than one-third of children found begging is below 10 years of age. The issue of begging is pressing year-round; however, this problem intensifies during the state and religious holidays, and tourist season. Children spend their days begging at busy crossroads, streets and shops, at times earning around Rs 50 a day. In many cases, children are forced to beg and contribute a certain amount of money to their parents and/or third parties. It is found that, in many cases, these children are not included in education system and do not have health insurance. Many of these children do not have their births registered in the register of births. The children who beg and live on the street are exposed to risk of becoming economically and sexually exploited, enslaved or trafficked. These children spend their childhoods on the street, living under terrible conditions. This constitutes one of the gravest and most gross violation of children rights given that such living conditions prevent them from exercising their rights guaranteed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – such as the social and health care rights, right to education, right to development, etc., as well as the right to be protected from all elements and persons infringing and jeopardizing those rights.

Child Begging: An Organized Crime

Hundreds of thousands of children in India are being forced to beg, often by unscrupulous mafia-style gangs. Many of the children are trafficked into gangs, some are kidnapped, others may have been handed over by their family out of desperation or because they have been duped. Every year some 44,000 children fall into the clutches of the gangs (Dalit Freedom Network, UK). Child begging is very clearly part of the organised crime and mafia which benefits from this lucrative business of exploitation and mutilation.

Sri Kailash Satyarthi, Nobel Peace Prize Winner and Chairperson of Global March Against Child Labour quoting the international framework explains "This is the ugly, dehumanising and criminal aspect of exploitation.....". Child begging violates the basic human rights and protection framework of UN Convention on Right of Child (1989). Beggary fits into ILO Convention No.182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999), as an outcome of illicit human trafficking and is one work that is hazardous physically, emotionally, morally and intellectually to the child's well-being.

Legal Context:

There is no central law applicable in the whole country for prevention and control of beggary. The anti-beggary law itself does not draw any

distinction between organised begging where one or more persons are compelled to beg by force and people who beg to sustain themselves.

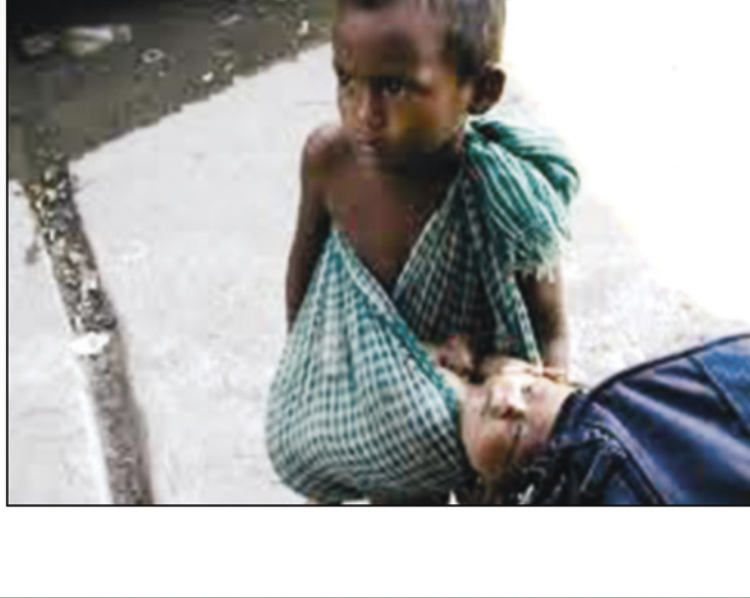
Most of the laws make a distinction between a child and an adult beggar; child beggars are not treated under the anti-beggary Acts. The practice of child begging and using children for begging has been declared illegal and punishable under the Juvenile Justice (Care & Protection of Children) Act, 2000 and children engaged in begging have been declared as Children in Need of Care and Protection (CNCPP) u/s 2(d) of the amendment Act on 2006. The Act also makes provision for accommodation, maintenance and facilities for education, training and rehabilitation of children to ensure development of their character and their abilities. The Indian Penal Code (Section 363A) deals with the kidnapping and maiming of a minor for purposes of exploiting them for begging.

Way Forward:

- Establish special register and database on children who beg, meaning those who are abused and exploited in this way;
- Sensitize and educate the public about the harmful effects of child begging.
- Provide compulsory primary education, which must include all children, and, in particular, take the necessary measures to include as many children from the poor households in preschool education;
- Provide timely response of the competent authorities e.g. CWC, DCPU in cases of inadequate parental care and early detection of children at risk of becoming beggars;
- Deal very strictly and stringently to punish those who operate beggary rackets and are promoting organized beggary.
- The Municipal Corporation/ Panchayats have to take up inclusive programmes under NRLM/NULM for these excluded groups focusing on income support, housing, health, provision of ration cards, and enrolment of children in the schools, training on alternative livelihoods for both men and women, to arrest migration and facilitate social integration.

- Schemes such as Old-age, Widow and Disabled pension under the Ministry of Rural Development can be given to those who are eligible and have no means of subsistence.

- Anganwadi centres under ICDS project can be started where these groups made their settlements. Pre-school education, supplementary



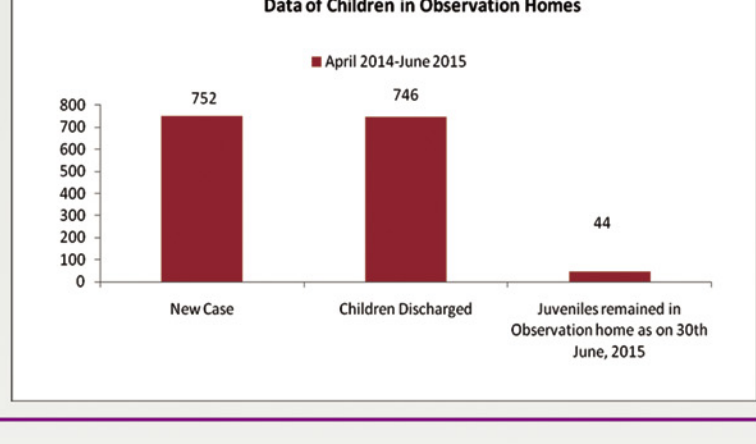
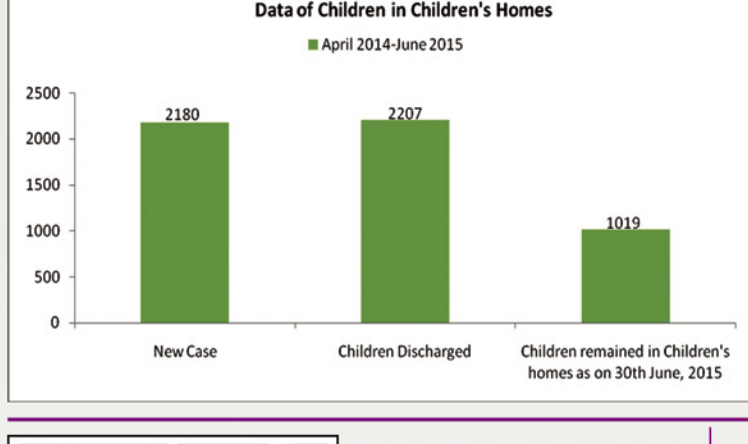
nutrition and health care services may be delivered to the children of 0-6 years;

- A comprehensive state wide survey may be carried out for enumeration and categorization of this social group and to understand the causes, consequences, magnitude and nature of the problem, status regarding institutional services, rehabilitation status etc for framing beggary prevention policies;

- Organise Training for the Police Officials, CWC members, DCPU staff members on various provisions of anti-begging legislations;

- Create mobile professional teams for continuous field work, in charge of identifying problems and working with parents to remove children from the street, as well as ensuring integration of children and their families into the system.

Dr. J. Mazumdar



A baby in Jalulukbari Children's Home now 3 months old suffered from multiple boils on head and other parts of the body when it was 15 days old. The doctors said that the percentage of survival is minimum. But due to the efforts of the superintendent of the Home, the child came out of the illness and is healthy now.



A Poster is being released By the Chief, UNICEF, Assam, Commissioner & Secretary, Social Welfare, I/c Commissioner, ASCPCR, Adtl. Labour Commissioner and Regional Director, NIPCCD on Child Labour on the occasion of World Day Against Child Labour, on 12 June, 2015

NIC's Missing Child Portal aids family reunion

IT created history by reuniting the 13 year old Sunny with his family in district Vidisha (Madhya Pradesh) after 6 long years. The credit of this exceptional accomplishment goes to the Missing Child Portal designed, developed and implemented by NIC pan India.

Sunny had left his parental house alongwith his friends when he was 7 years old and had unknowingly boarded a train to Bhopal, 60 kms from Vidisha. The Railway Police personnel (GRP) found him crying on the platform and produced him before the child helpline authorities.

Sunny had faint memories of his mother and sister and remembered that he belonged to Vidisha. The shelter home ("उम्मीद") where he took refuge, uploaded Sunny's photo on the Missing Child Portal. After several days of scrutiny, the determined efforts of CSP Vidisha, who visited the portal, reaped fruit. Sunny recognized his mother (who had lodged an FIR) and was handed over to his family after proper verification and intervention by Child Welfare Committee.

Thanks to the technology which miraculously bridged the small physical separation (60 km) between family members separated for years.



The inmates of the Jalulukbari Home Celebrating Independence Day, on 15th August, 2015 with much fervour and gaiety.



Status Report on the functioning of the Juvenile Justice Boards and Child Welfare Committees in Assam for the month of July 2015

Sl. No.	Districts	Juvenile Justice Boards			Child Welfare Committees		
		No. of cases instituted	No. of cases disposed	Total cases pending	No. of cases instituted	No. of cases disposed	Total cases pending
1	BAKSA	Cases are jointly dealt with Nalbari JJB			0	0	0
2	BONGAIGAOON	0	6	17	4	2	9
3	BARPETA	6	0	119	6	4	6
4	CACHAR	3	4	64	7		2
5	CHIRANG	16	8	58	0	0	6
6	DARRANG	2	39	104	4	6	20
7	DHEMAJI	0	1	28	7	3	7
8	DHUBRI	10	43	157	7	5	17
9	DIBRUGARH	6	2	80	16	15	7
10	DIMA HASAO	5	0	15	0	1	0
11	GOALPARA	1	2	106	5	4	3
12	GOLAGHAT	3	3	18	5	3	7
13	HAILAKANDI	0	0	28	8	8	2
14	JORHAT	2	2	63	1	3	5
15	KAMRUP (M)	11	24	114	69	75	69
16	KAMRUP (R)	3	3	59	4	4	20
17	KARBI ANGLONG	2	13	31	0	0	1
18	KARIMGANJ	2	1	63	3		31
19	KOKRAJHAR	2	4	133	0	0	10
20	LAKHIMPUR	11	10	24	12	18	18
21	MORIGAOON	1	2	5	3	6	19
22	NAGAON	2	4	256	17	15	10
23	NALBARI	6	4	43	5	4	36
24	SONITPUR	7	16	141	31	27	45
25	SIBSAGAR	3	4	67	3	5	43
26	TINSUKIA	1	3	70	10	6	12
27	UDALGURI	1	0	22	7	3	21
Total		106	198	1885	234	226	426

Source: MIS Cell, SCPS, Assam

For any feedback, write to :
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DSW, Government of Assam



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