



Save the Children
UK

Children Living in Difficult Circumstances

CHILD-LED RESEARCH REPORT

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, 2006



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Foreword

This report is a story of children living in “difficult circumstances” as defined by children. This is a story of children who have witnessed the harsh side of life from a young age, children who have become orphans, have left or were abandoned by their parents. The majority of these children live on the streets, in residential care centres or someone else’s home. Even when they live with their families, they mostly live on the streets or at someone else’s place.

The children that participated in the “Child-Led Research” training decided to help these children by gathering detailed information about their lives and conveying that information to adults. Accordingly, they proceeded to develop research questions and questionnaires and gathered the information by themselves.

The majority of the stories are sad. The children told their peer researchers about the pressures and discrimination they experience in all spheres of their daily lives.

On the other hand, this report shows the bright colours of life as well. For most of the children, some aspects of their lives are bright and joyful. Children feel good about having lived with their mother and father, or with their mother, about having had a home before it was sold, or about having freedom now that they are on the streets. The brightest section of this report is the part that conveys children’s dreams and their desires about who they want to become when they grow up. Most children said that they want to have a healthy, illness-free normal life, with a home of their own and parents who have jobs. Some children dream of becoming President of Mongolia, a president of a bank, a cook, or an owner of a big house where poor people can live for free.

The child researchers developed a research report based on the information they collected and disseminated it. In parallel, the data gathered by the child researchers were analyzed by the adults who participated in the child-led research training. The results of this analysis are presented in this report.

Throughout this report, we have sought to present in “children’s voices” the life stories, thoughts, dreams, concerns and secrets of the children living in “difficult circumstances” as defined by the child researchers. We hope the children shall succeed in their goal to help their peers by conveying their life stories to adults.

D. OLONCHIMEG

Deputy Programme Director,
Save the Children (UK)

CHAPTER ONE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Child participation is essential in establishing a Child Protection System that provides for a unified child-friendly policy framework, integrated services and effective monitoring. That only children can adequately describe children's lives has been demonstrated by the experience of several SCUK country offices that have conducted child-led research projects. It is only by possessing knowledge and understanding of the lives of children in difficult circumstances that we can provide them with quality service.

Because the reality of the lives of children living in difficult circumstances can be best identified and vividly described by children who have lived or are living such lives, it was resolved to have this research conducted by children who had previously lived or are living in residential care centres. However, before the research started, the initial goal of studying only the lives of children living in residential care centres broadened on the initiative of the children to include children living on the streets and poor children living with their families.

As previously mentioned, this child-led research is the first of its kind in Mongolia and it has some specific features that set it apart from participatory research projects that have so far been conducted. Thus, children who have themselves experienced life in difficult circumstances carried out each stage of the research project, beginning with defining the research topics and questions and ending with identifying the children to be interviewed, gathering data, writing up the reports and disseminating the results. The uniqueness of the child-led research lay in the fact that it was conducted by the children based on their discussions and collective decision-making on what they think about the research topic and how to do the research. It is important to note that this process had a significant impact on child empowerment as it enabled the child researchers to gain new knowledge, make new friends, learn to work in a team and engage in a collective decision-making process.

Children Living in Difficult Circumstances

In the process of radical economic and political reforms that started in Mongolia in the 1990s, new risks and challenges have emerged for children's lives such as having to work, leaving home for the streets, getting involved in crime, becoming victims of crime and other new phenomena. In this connection, the traditional understanding of childhood, characterized by growing up under parental care, playing, learning and developing, has dramatically changed as many children are forced to work, live separately from their parents and lead independent lives on the streets, and thereby find themselves living in "difficult circumstances," in an environment that is dangerous for their health and very lives.

In the 1990s, with the emergence of "unsupervised children" or "street children," residential care centres were established and began to operate in order to "solve the problem" of these children and a new group of "residential care centre children" emerged. Although the numerous residential care centres established in the mid-1990s began to work towards reuniting children with their families, still more residential care centres continued to emerge and, as a result, the number of children living in residential care centres has not declined. This is due to the fact that the residential care centres constitute the only available basic services for children deprived of parental care.

Numerous recent studies conducted in many different countries have shown that child care and protection services provided by placing children in residential care centres do not have positive impact on children's lives and that, therefore, residential care centres should only be used as a means of last resort. The results of research on child

care and protection show that the social institution that is most conducive to child growth and development is not a residential care centre but a family, and that other, family-based alternative care models of services should be developed for children deprived of the possibility of growing up in the care of loving parents.

SCUK is working with an aim of increasing the opportunities for children to grow up in their families and piloting alternative models of child care and protection for children that cannot live with their families. Moreover, gaining information and experience on preparing children for reunification with their families and providing them with after-care services is another important challenge faced by child care and protection organizations and officers. SCUK shall use the results of this child-led research in order to improve the quality of services for children and develop family- and community-based service models.

Child Participation

At the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, a new theory of childhood emerged, based on the results of many years of research conducted internationally, and triggered a fundamental shift in the way we view children. This new theory demonstrated that children are active participants in their lives, have distinct views as well as a capacity to express them and have them heard by others.

At the same time, in 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified, declaring the rights of the child to non-discrimination, health, development, and participation.

Ensuring child participation is the basic principle of SCUK operations. The right to participation serves as a foundation to the enjoyment of all other child rights such as protection, development, and a healthy life. SCUK prioritizes child participation base for the following two reasons. Firstly, children are active members of society and have the same rights as adults. Secondly, it has been proven that child participation enhances the effectiveness of activities targeting children.

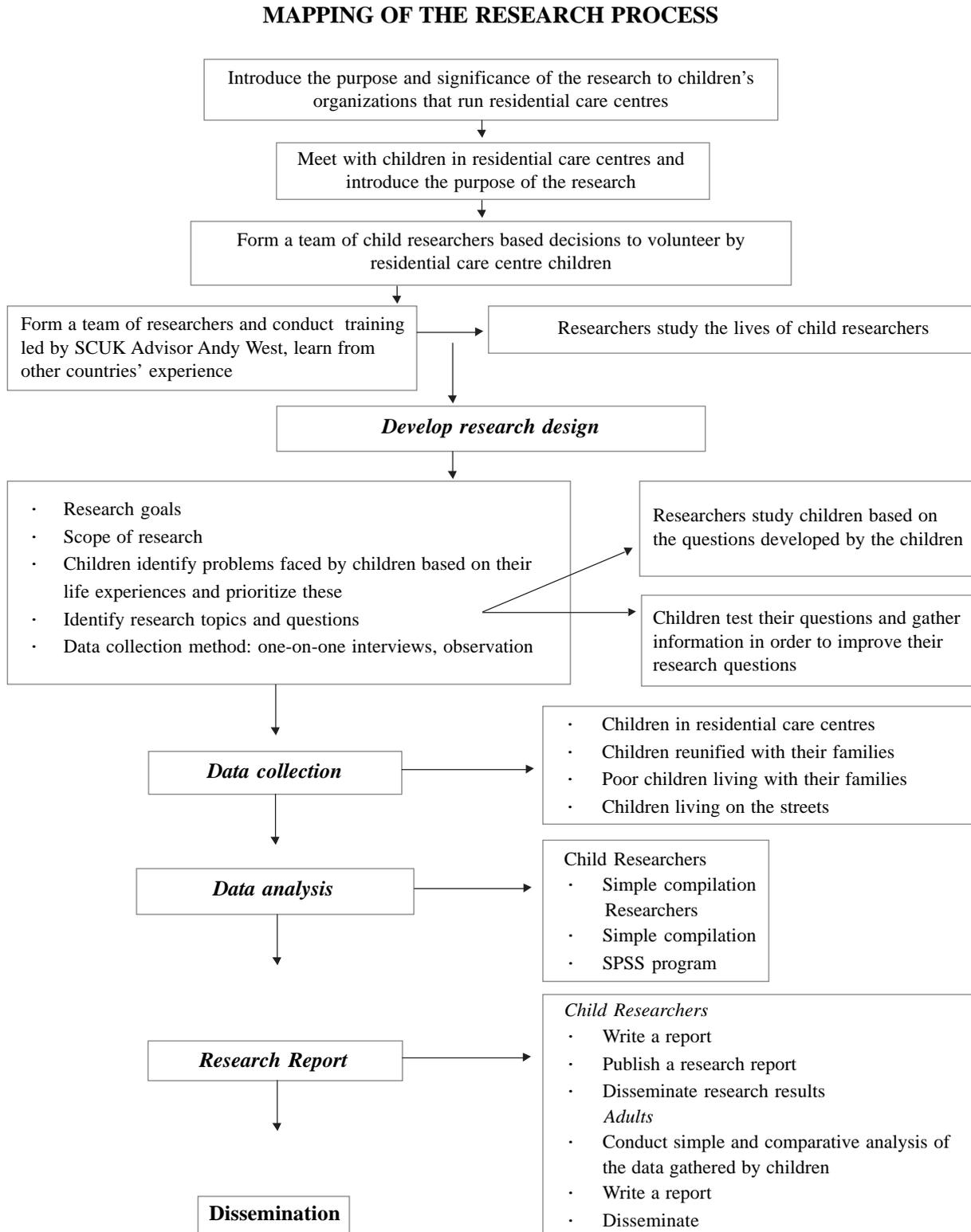
At present, the popular attitude towards children living in difficult circumstances is negative. It is common to conceive of them as isolated, vulnerable groups that require societal assistance. Furthermore, blanket accusations that such children are ‘thieves,’ ‘street children,’ and that they ‘put the blame for their being on the streets on their parents’ and ‘are fed by the state’ along with commonly expressed fears and concern about the negative effect of these children on the future of the country are still prevalent. These attitudes form the main basis and justification for violating these children’s rights and disregarding their capabilities.

This research seeks to encourage adults to see the lives of children living in difficult circumstances from the children’s own vantage point and to promote the transformation of the negative public attitudes towards these children. It is clear from this research that “street” and “residential care centre children” did not end up on the street or a care centre because they wanted to. Rather, they are living in difficult circumstances because they fell victims to the negative consequences of social development. In other words, no child wakes up in the morning and decides “today, I shall go to live on the street.”

That children from so-called vulnerable groups, who are directly experiencing a hard life, have conducted this research, analyzed the data and reported the results has demonstrated one aspect of their capacity. All the children that participated in this research, either as researchers or as interviewees, worry about critical issues such as the environment, poverty, and unemployment. They are concerned about their country and wish to participate in its development. SCUK firmly believes that they are fully capable of being active participants in the society’s development.

1.2. RESEARCH PROCESS

The research process is depicted by the chart below:



Before the research started, SCUUK introduced the purpose and significance of the child-led research to local and international organizations that provide care and protection services to children living in difficult circumstances. Verbist, Christina Noble Foundation, World Vision and SCUUK accepted the requests to allow their children to participate in this research. The research team was formed comprising 19 children of 12-18 years of age from the residential care centres run by the above organizations. In addition, a team of 2 researchers and 4 SCUUK staff members cooperated with the child researchers. Andy West, Child Protection Programme Advisor for SCUUK China, participated in the preparation for the research and conducted training for team members on child-led research design and methodology of working with children.

During a meeting between the researchers and child researchers, 7 out of 19 children left the project for various reasons and 13 remained to undertake the research. After this, the children developed rules and regulations to be followed during the research process through discussions amongst themselves and with researchers and SCUUK gave them a presentation on the research project. Afterwards, the researchers talked with the children about their lives, which assisted the children to come up with research topics and questions. In expressing their ideas, getting their thoughts across to each other and making decisions, the children used drawing, small group and large group discussions, and prioritizing. During this process, the adults witnessed how children come up with unexpected thoughts, ideas and concerns that would not naturally occur to an adult mind. This experience has left a deep impression on the researchers.

After the researchers conducted interviews with the child researchers based on the questions they had developed, the children themselves tested their skills and questions by interviewing other children. While doing so, they also took accurate notes of the information given by the child and wrote down their own observations about the child's attitude, personality and living conditions.

Based on the lessons learnt from the pilot research, the child researchers reviewed their questions and identified what they should pay attention to while conducting interviews. The researchers also discussed the information gathered by the children and gave advice on how to fill in the incomplete information.

After the pilot research, the children spent 21 days collecting data. They started off interviewing children in their own neighbourhoods, then visited the residential care centres along with the researchers and interviewed children residing in those centres. With the permission of the interviewees, the child researchers took pictures of the interview process and of the living conditions of the interviewees. The pictures were used in their report as visual evidence.

1.3. RESEARCH GOALS, TOPICS AND QUESTIONS

Research Goals

The goal of the research was for the SCUUK's Child Protection Programme to learn from the actual experiences of children living in residential care centres and use the knowledge and information obtained through this research to improve the quality of residential care centre services for children and develop alternative, family- and community-based care and protection programs for children.

The goal of the child researchers, as defined by them, was to understand the lives of children living in difficult circumstances and convey that knowledge to adults to gain their support and decrease the magnitude of the problems faced by the children.

The researchers (adults) developed the analysis of the data gathered by the child researchers in order to reach the first goal.

Research Topics and Questions

The child researchers developed 4 versions of the research topics and questions. The final version comprised 92 questions that fell under 9 topics. The children defined their research topics and questions by discussing their lives, their likes and dislikes, their concerns, and things they don't like and want to change in age groups and a large group and by prioritizing, grouping, and compiling the topics and questions generated by the discussions. Every child participated in this process.

The children included in their research topics issues that had not occurred to us such as warm discussions at home, secrets and prior lives. Also, although the children discussed abuse and pressures they feel at school and at home more vigorously than other topics such as poverty and street life, in the end they did not define it as a separate topic but included school and domestic violence under the general heading of "pressures." That the children included generally the issue of poverty in each of their topics was evident from the data they collected and their analysis of that data. Furthermore, one of the titles the children came up with for their research project was "problems and suffering caused by poverty."

During our work with the children, we observed that they did not use the term "street children" but used the term "children who wander outside." It was due to their understanding that these are children who have been forced out onto the streets.

Data Collection Method

The child researchers chose the one-on-one interview method as they saw it as a method that is most conducive to engaging the interviewee in a peer-to-peer dialogue, allowing the interviewee to express himself/herself more freely, and maintaining the confidentiality.

1.4. SCOPE OF RESEARCH

The research covered children residing in the residential care centres run by the World Vision, Christina Noble Foundation, Verbist and the SCUK; children reunited with their families and poor children from Bayanzurkh, Chingeltei, and Songino-Khairkhan districts; and children that wander outside from those who receive services from SCUK's "Child" Drop-in Centre and children that were lingering around the State Department Store, Tuul River, Sansar gas station, and Ard Cinema Theatre.

Table 1.1. Scope of Research

Gender and Age	Children's Groups				Total
	Children living in residential care centres	Children that have returned home from residential care centres	Poor children living at home	Children who wander outside	
<i>Gender</i>					
Male	17	2	8	13	39
Female	17	7	11	1	36
<i>Age</i>					
8-10	1		2	1	4
11-14	17	5	7	9	38
15-18	16	4	10	4	34
Total	34	9	19	14	76

The research comprised 76 children in total, out of which 34 resided in residential care centres, 19 are poor children living at home, 14 are children who wander outside and 9 are children that returned home from residential

care centres. In terms of age, there were four children of 8-10 years old and the rest were of 11-18 years of age. Overall, the group was balanced in terms of gender including one girl that wanders outside.

1.5. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data Collection

The data collection stage took about a month including the pilot research. During this time, the child researchers interviewed a total of 82 children. In the process of analyzing the data, the researchers (adults) invalidated 6 interview notes that did not satisfy the requirements.

The child researchers faced many problems such as gathering incomplete information from the interviewees, especially the inability of the younger children under 12 to take complete notes, posing several questions at the same time, the interviewee getting tired of the interview, and not being able to find a child from the target group. At the same time, they came up with their own tactics for gathering data such as keeping the interviewee engaged, offering soda and biscuits when the interviewees were tired, taking them outside to play briefly as well as starting with simple questions when broaching difficult topics such as prior life, family, and pressures, asking why if they received brief answers, and reformulating the question without changing its meaning. It must be noted that the child researchers collected their data with great effort, patience and perseverance.

Data analysis

The child researchers and adult researchers worked separately in processing and analyzing the data gathered by the children and reporting their findings. The child researchers had a discussion amongst themselves and decided to issue a report with photos. They focused more on family, pressures, and child labour and wrote a report that compared the situation of the children by the 4 groups.

In their report, the child researchers wrote about what made them feel most sad when talking to the interviewees, what is influencing the difficult lives of the children, what could be changed in order to reduce the hardships, and what the children wish adults would do to reduce the hardships faced by the children. They also included cases showing the lives of the children living in difficult circumstances.

The researchers (adults) used a simple compilation method and a SPSS program to process and analyze the data. Chapter Two of this report presents the results of this analysis.

Explanations of the Terms Used in the Research

The title of the research and some concepts and terms used in the research were *developed collectively by the child researchers*. These are presented below.

Children Living in Difficult Circumstances

Children living in difficult circumstances are children who, within their family, experience alcoholism, divorce, discrimination by their step-father or step-mother, children who are beaten, forced to do things they do not want to do, children whose parents don't love them but beat them when they are drunk and curse them with bad words, and whose homes are poor and dirty; at school, such children are abused by their peers, they are ashamed of their clothes; children who don't go to school but do heavy and hazardous work, wander in the streets because of an impossible family environment, beg on the streets or live in a residential care centre; children who do not have

parents, homes; children who wander outside, get hungry and thirsty, and spend their nights in different places; children who become in the future people who haven't done anything in society and are not required by society; or children who live by collecting fire wood, cans and bottles and children whose parents, friends and teachers don't understand them.

Children Living in residential Care Centres

Children who had previously lived in their home but fell under the influence of various other children and took to stealing, robbery, and wandering on the streets due to the impossible situation at home, divorce of their parents or losing their bread-winners and guardians and were referred to the residential care centres through the Address Identification Office or children's organizations and are currently living in a residential care centre, studying in school in order to correct themselves and are currently reforming.

Children That Returned Home from Residential Care Centres

Children that left residential care centres are children that left the residential care centre because they reached adulthood, or left with a gher, or whose parents took them back because their living conditions had improved or took them back to make the child to work because their conditions remain poor, or children who did something wrong and left the residential care centre, or children who left on their own volition and went home or are now wandering outside.

Children Who Wander Outside

These are children who wander outside because of an impossible family situation, pressure by step-father or step-mother or others, whose parents have died or are divorced, whose relatives neglect and discriminate against them, are subject to family neglect; or children who work on the streets collecting bottles and cans or stealing in order to feed their families and spend the nights on the streets; or children who wander on the streets of their own volition and spend the nights in computer game places, stairwells, basements, and manholes.

Poor Children Living at Home

These are children that live in poverty because the family doesn't have possibilities, children who don't go to school, whose homes are unkempt, whose parents have died or are unable to work and therefore make their children work; though some of these children have parents, they don't have a home and live in someone else's home; some children's parents are fit to work but cannot find employment due to the absence of documentation, some parents drink vodka with the money earned by their children, beat their children, isolate their children from their friends and social life, neglect and abandon their children, deprive their children of schooling and make them weak and backwards. Such children are children that live at home in poverty.

Family

Family is the child's living environment and his/her parents and relatives that live together with him/her.

Prior Life

This are the good, bad, fun and miserable days and time spent at the residential child centre or at home previously.

Pressures

These are actions committed by father, mother, sister or brother, teacher, friends, or peers that harm the children physically or emotionally such as beating a child, yelling at a child, forcing the child to do what he/she doesn't want to do, ordering the child around, kicking the child out to find money, and forcing the child to steal.

Discrimination

Discriminating against and humiliating the child based on his/her outward appearance, personality, family status, and clothes.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH RESULTS

The analysis presented in this report was conducted within the framework of the following main sections based on the integration of the research methodology, conclusions and recommendations and the 12 research topics: “Family Life and Prior Life,” “Child Labour,” “Pressures Faced by Children and Child Rights,” Future Goals and Dreams of Children,” “Things Children are Most Concerned About and Want to Change,” and “Children’s Harmful Habits, Use of Tobacco and Alcohol.”

2.1. CHILD’S CURRENT FAMILY LIFE AND PRIOR LIFE

Under the topics “Family” and “Prior Life,” we analyzed the positive and negative aspects of children’s prior lives and their current lives, the differences between their prior and current lives and the changes they experienced, current family, parents’ employment, household income, expenditure, food and diet, school materials supply, and the interest of the child to be with the family. Under the topic “Child’s Current Family Life and Prior Life,” we present the results of the analysis of the environment and family setting in which the children covered in the research are currently growing up, what life they have had thus far, and how they view their prior and current lives.

2.1.1. Child’s Current Family Situation

Who are the children living with?

Ten out of 76 children covered in the survey live with their mother and father while the majority live either with their father or mother and step-father or step-mother, or grandfather/grandmother/brother /sister/relatives. Most children live with their mother. There also were many children whose parents have died or have divorced. The majority of the children reported that their parents divorced because of alcohol, or quarrels and fights. The remaining children reported that they do not know why their parents divorced or that they were too small at the time.

My parents divorced when I was 5 years old and I left with my father. Not long afterwards my father died and I went to live with his elder sister. I haven’t seen my mother ever since and I do not wish to see her.

(15 years old, female, child who wanders outside)

Maintaining contact with the mother was more common among children of divorcees while there also a number of children who reported that they are not in contact with either mother or father.

Where are the children living?

The majority of the children that are not currently living in residential care centres live at home. The rest live either in someone else’s home such as at their brother’s, sister’s, grandfather’s or a relative’s, or live outside and spend their nights in staircases, at train stations, in Shar Khad, near the State Department Store and other places. The most number of children who wander outside were among the 11-14 year-olds. Compared to girls, fewer boys lived in someone else’s home and there were many more boys than girls among the children who wander outside. Children with a single father or a single mother mostly lived at home whereas among children with a mother and a step-father or a father and a step-mother, there were more children that wander outside. This shows that the role of a step-father or a step-mother is significant in forcing the child out onto the streets.

What family environment are children living in?

The majority of the children reported that they do not engage in warm discussions at home and the rest replied that they engage in such conversations at the residential care centre. When children engage in an warm discussion with

their family, they talk about their family life, something funny that happened to one of them, difficulties faced, future plans, ways to find food for tomorrow, getting a job, and ways to improve their livelihood.

My family engages in an warm discussion. We talk about how we used to be a better off family and how we became poor now, about how to find money and where from.

(14 years old, female, poor child that lives at home)

They also talk about the housework they did, how parents tell their children to study well and not to associate with questionable children and give them other advice. Children in residential care centres tell each other fairy tales, talk about something one of them knows well, open their secrets and share their feelings. When asked why they don't engage in an warm discussion with their families, children said there are no conditions that allow the family to be together, they don't have a home of their own, the family doesn't live together, and that family members are not interested in talking to each other. It was clear from the discussions with children that they have a big desire to be close to their parents and other family members and have warm discussions with them.

The majority of the children stated that quarrels happen from time to time or constantly in a family environment, that the main cause of these quarrels is alcohol and that there are one or more people in his/her family who abuse alcohol. This shows that children are growing up in an environment characterized by alcohol-induced conflicts. The most frequent answers were that it is only the father or the step-father who drinks alcohol in the family. The remaining answers were that aside from the father or the step-father, it is the mother, elder brother, elder sister, or grandfather that abuse alcohol as well. When asked about the reasons why the adults alcohol, the children said it is because they are frustrated about their poor life and problems with work, or because of conflicts and quarrels, or when they have money or get paid their salaries.

In my family, we used to have many quarrels because of our poor and difficult life and relations between my father and my mother. When dad quarrels with mom, he comes home drunk. And if he comes home drunk, then that's a disaster. He gets violent and breaks plates and cups. When dad comes home drunk, my younger sibling gets so scared that he (she) spends the night outside. Dad just likes alcohol.

(15 years old, female, child that lives in a care centre)

In addition, quarrels take place because of poor life, clothes, food, fighting over school supplies, failing to do housework, wandering outside, coming home late, doing something wrong, misunderstanding with family members (especially step-father and step-mother), and not doing well at school. In care centres, quarrels and conflicts arise when children disagree amongst each other, tell on each other, get divided into opposing groups, fight over toys, and when the older children bully the younger. The children who live in residential care centres reported that the instructors sort out their quarrels and reconcile the children with each other. It is mainly the children as well as their younger siblings and their mothers that become victims of quarrels in the family.

What did the children say about their family income and expenditure?

The children's parents (elder brother or elder sister) mainly gain their income by selling things at the open market, working on vegetables, fortune-telling, gambling, carpentry, cooking food and selling, and collecting soda and alcohol bottles and cans. Among the children covered in the research, the prevailing situation was that both father and mother were unemployed. The majority of the income is spent on food, clothes and other general household needs. A few children answered that the money is spent on paying off debt and buying alcohol. The child researchers emphasized that the overall incomes of the children covered in the research were not sufficient to meet the family's needs and barely sufficient for food and sometimes the children had to go hungry.

Are children able to collect their benefits?

The majority of the children covered in the research are not receiving any benefits. The children that are receiving benefits mentioned the 3000 tugrugs for children, welfare payments for the loss of the breadwinner, disability payments, and sponsor's money. Regarding the reasons why children are not able to receive benefits they are entitled to, they reported that they do not have documents, are not registered with the local authorities, do not have transfer documents, are not officially residents of the area, live in a residential care centre, have reached adulthood, do not know how to collect their benefits, and have never tried to apply for the benefits.

Children's benefits are mostly collected by their parents and spent on the needs of the family. A few children that live in residential care centres reported that their managers collect their child welfare benefits and put these in bank accounts in the children's names while a couple of children said they collect the money by themselves and spend it on what they like.

Are children able to eat sufficient food?

Children think that they are better provided with food at residential care centres than at home. The children who live or had lived in residential care centres reported that 3 out of 4-5 meals they ate at residential care centres were meat-based meals. By comparison, children that live at home said they only eat hot, meat-based meal in the evenings. Moreover, a fair number of children reported that due to income poverty, their evening meals often consist of *jijiglen*,¹ they are not able to eat meat-based meals every day, they sometimes go without a meal a day, and eat a meat-based meal only once in two weeks.

Because we gain 40,000-50,000 tugrugs per month, we are not able to eat sufficient food at home. We go on empty stomach since morning and eat a meal only in the evening. But at a residential care centre we have 4 meals a day and we can eat anything we want.

(15 years old, male, child that returned home from a care centre)

Are children provided with school supplies?

Children currently living in residential care centres are better provided with school supplies compared to the children from the other three groups. But the poor children living at home and the children that have returned home from residential care centres replied that they are not fully provided with school supplies, some children work and buy school materials from their own earnings, and some children are provided with school materials by the schools through assistance programmes.

Do children enjoy access to development opportunities?

The children covered in the research defined opportunities to develop themselves by the possibility of attending extracurricular activities of their choice. While the majority of the children living in residential care centres responded that they are able to attend workshops and courses of their choice, the majority of the children living at home and children that have returned home from residential care centres reported that, when living at home, they are not able to attend any extracurricular workshops and courses they like.

The main reasons why children are not able to attend extracurricular activities when living at home are: lack of financial capacity of the family, failure of the father/mother to send money, lack of interest, lack of free time, dropping out of or never having attended school, and having left the residential care centre. The research showed that the main reason why children are unable to attend the workshops and courses they like is the lack of financial capacity of the family.

¹ Internal organs of small animals (goats, sheep) packaged in 100-200 grams.

The money is a difficult issue when I want to attend a workshop. Also, because my health is weak, I must not get tired. That's why I don't attend any workshops and courses.

(17 years old, female, poor child living at home)

By comparison, a small number of children living in residential care centres stated they don't attend extracurricular programmes because they are not interested or because the teacher discriminates against them and does not allow them to attend.

Thus, the poverty of the children's families is limiting the children's possibilities to receive sufficient food and necessary school supplies, and to study successfully and develop themselves.

What do children think about their current lives?

The following table shows the responses of the children, by the 4 groups, about what think is good in their current lives.

Table 2.1. Children's definitions of what is good in their current lives

<i>Good things in the children's current lives</i>	<i>Children's Groups</i>			
	Children living in residential care centres	Children that have returned home from residential care centres	Poor children living at home	Children who wander outside
Lacking in nothing	+++++	+	+	
Having many friends	++++		+	++
Caring for each other/being in agreement with each other	++		++	+
Being with the family		++	+++++	
Being able to attend school/improved performance at school	++++		+	+++++
Being free/wandering outside at will				
Attend summer camps/watch good shows	++			
Receiving parental love from teachers	++			
Everything is good	+++++	+	++	
Nothing is good	+	++	++	+++

Compared to other children, the children living in residential care centres display the highest level of satisfaction with their current lives. In particular, they regard their ability to attend school, have many friends and live lacking in nothing as the best things in their current lives.

Everything in my life has improved after I came to the centre, especially my performance at school. I became the leading student at School No....

(15 years old, male, child living in a care centre)

Although being with the family is the best thing for children living at home and children who have returned home from a residential care centre, they are not very satisfied with their current lives. Children that wander outside mainly responded that there is nothing good about their current lives and that the best thing in their current lives is the freedom and free wandering outside.

The children covered in the research were also asked about the hardships in their current lives in addition to the question about the best things in their current lives. The majority of the children who responded that there are no hardships in their current lives are children living in residential care centres.

Table 2.2. Definitions of hardships in the children's lives

<i>Difficulties in the children's current lives</i>	<i>Children's Groups</i>			
	Children living in residential care centres	Children that have returned home from residential care centres	Poor children living at home	Children who wander outside
Being homeless/wandering outside/living in an uncomfortable environment			+++	++
Being hungry/clothes/not having sufficient school supplies		++	+++	+
Father/mother/relative drinks alcohol			++	
Fights and quarrels happen/getting oppressed/abused	+	+	+	++
People discriminate		++		++++
Not having friends/no children to play with	+++++	++		
Much workload/Doing much housework			+	
Father/mother/relative is sick	+	+++	++	

That a father, mother or a relative drinks alcohol is a things most children consider to be a hardship. Lack of food, clothes and school supplies are considered to be a hardship by children who have returned home from a residential care centre and poor children while family conflicts and fights, oppression/abuse and poor life are considered as a hardship by children who wander outside, children who have returned home from a residential care centre and poor children. Conflicts, fights and oppression/abuse are particularly hard for children who wander outside and are considered by them as their main hardship.

Children living in residential care centres identified discriminatory treatment by others as the main hardship in their current lives. Children who have returned home from residential care centres reported that heavy workload at home and poverty are the main hardships they face in their current lives.

Do children like living with their families?

The majority of the children, especially the younger children, covered in the research responded that they like living with their families. Such positive replies are least frequent among children who wander outside while they are most frequent among children who have returned to their families from a residential care centre and poor children living at home. Almost all children who currently live at home with their natural father and/or mother responded that they like living with their families.

Children reported that they like living with their families because it makes them happy/joyful, it is fun, they are cared for by their closest people, father and mother. Children reported the reasons that make them dislike living with families are: abuse of alcohol by a member of the family, which leads to quarrels and fights; oppression/abuse by a member of the family, especially step-father or step-mother; lack of understanding and cold relations between family members; and not living together with father and/or mother.

Children living in residential care centres often reported that they do not like living with their families because they are used to the teachers and children of the centre and enjoy their life at the centre.

Children believe that no one besides their natural father and mother can love and care for them more because their natural father, mother and siblings are their closest people. They believe that if they got another family, they would be mistreated and would suffer. Therefore, they do not wish to have another family.

I very much wish to have another family. Because from a very young age, I have not felt a warm family atmosphere and love, I very much wish to have another family and I dream about it.

(18 years old, female, child living in a care centre)

At the same time, a fair number of children who currently live in someone else's home and children who wander outside reported that they wish to have another family because in their current family, they lack parental love and care because their families are full of conflicts and fights, oppression and abuse due to homelessness, poverty and lack of clothes and food.

2.1.2. Children's Prior Life

Children defined their prior life as good, bad, fun, and sad days and time spent previously at the residential centre or at home. Their definitions and opinions differed widely. Some children talked about their life from a young age until now and some talked about their lives until 1-2 years ago. Some of the children currently living in a residential care centre defined their prior life as their life at home before coming to the residential care centre while some talked about their life until the research and talked about things that had happened at the residential centre before the research took place. Similarly, children that have returned home from residential care centres defined their prior life as life at the centre while some talked about things that happened after leaving the residential care centre. We have compiled the information provided by children about their prior lives and are presenting the results here. It should be noted that 21 out of 76 children covered in the survey refused to give information about their prior lives or said they don't remember much or don't know much about it.

What was the prior life like for children living in residential care centres?

Parents' divorce is a common experience in the prior lives of most children in care centres. After the divorce, the children's parents tended to get remarried and following that, most children lived in an environment characterized by conflicts and lack of understanding with step-parents, quarrels, fights, and oppression/abuse.

My parents got divorced and then my mother married another person. Not long afterwards, my step-father brought his children and there were always quarrels and fights because of them. When I got into a conflict with his children, I was always beaten up. Sometimes he said "I treat you as if you were my child" and beat me up for no reason at all. So in 2003, I left home and ended up at the centre after the address identification centre.

(14 years old, male, child living in a care centre)

Aside from such cases, there are also cases when the family lives of children deteriorated and parents gave their child for adoption, left their children in the care of relatives, or just left them unattended, or became alcoholics. It was clear from the information given by the children that it is for these reasons that children did not receive adequate parental care and attention and ended up wandering outside. According to the children's stories, they ended up in residential care centres through referrals by address identification centres or khoroo social workers who found out that the children were being abused by their relatives and other people with whom they were living.

My father and mother had sold Mongolian made products and my family was doing OK. But then my parents got divorced and as soon as my mother left, my father began to drink and stopped paying us any attention. So I began to wander outside and ended up in an address identification centre, and then... I came to the centre.

(15 years old, male, child living in a care centre)

Apart from the experience of parents' divorce, separating from one or both parents due to death or other reasons was the second most common experience for children living in residential care centres. There were many cases when either father or mother or both parents died and the child was adopted by another family or the mother abandoned her children. While living in someone else's family after the death of their parents, children experienced significant physical and emotional suffering such as hunger, heavy and hazardous work, oppression/abuse, and

battery. This caused children to wander outside. One child told how he had lived with someone else's family and did all the housework for that family since the age of 5. He said it is still hard for him now, when he thinks about that suffering.

When I was very little, I was adopted by my father's sister. Then when my father's sister died, I returned to my father. But my father died because of a misfortune and I began to wander around Zamyn Uud and ended up at an address centre and, from there, I came to the ... centre.

(16 years old, male, child living in a residential care centre)

The research showed that even when both parents are there, there are cases when they do not provide their children with care and attention. For example, one child that is currently living in a care centre had lived with his parents but left home and spent 7 years wandering outside, collecting bottles and cans and sometimes even stealing, before coming to a residential care centre. Children living in residential care centres also said other things about their prior lives, for example how good it felt when they were with their father and that they had participated in competitions and games when they attended kindergartens.

What did the children who have returned home from residential care centres say about their prior lives?

Children who returned home from residential care centres also said that they came to the centre because their parents had divorced or died. They said that at the centre, they made many friends, lacked nothing, discovered themselves, attended summer camps, experienced the good life they hadn't experienced before and were satisfied. They leave the centre with a ger or return home after graduating from school.

I lived at home until I was 6 years old and then when I was 6, I came to the ... centre with my brother. Not long after, I ran away and came home, which is in the staircase of the micro-district (III-IV micro-districts of Ulaanbaatar). Then I wandered outside for almost 2-3 months and spend the nights around micro-district's Minii Delguur.

(14 years old, male, child who wanders outside)

What was the prior life like for poor children living at home?

For many of the poor children living at home, life has become harder after one of their parents died and a step-mother or step-father entered their lives. There were also many cases when the children's parents got divorced. In some cases, the family's life deteriorated, they had to sell their ger, khashaa (fenced land) or house and children were forced to work for a living.

Children commonly linked the reason for the deterioration of their livelihoods with the divorce of their parents or the death of one or both of the parents. Children mentioned that they do not get enough food, clothes and other consumer goods because their parents became unemployed and are not able to find work and that they are therefore homeless, living in harsh conditions.

I live with my father and mother and I am the only child. My father had worked on construction and my mother had worked at a canteen. Now they are unemployed. Even though they want to work, my mother cannot because she is ill and my father is not able to find work. We don't have a place of our own and live in another family's khashaa. Sometimes my father finds some money but it is only enough for food. Going to bed hungry is very often. I sometimes collect iron and cans with my mother to find money to buy medicine for my mom. This year I am in second grade. I will go in the clothes I wore last year, carrying my old bag. I am very concerned about this life.

(8 years old, female, poor child living at home)

The children also reported that their family's life was better off when they lived in the countryside but they lost their livestock in the *dzud* and came to the city but became further impoverished because their parents couldn't find work. Some children said their family was wealthy but became poor after moving to the city and have now

become totally poor. They also reported that they had a very difficult childhood and/or that they were beaten up frequently by their father. These responses indicate that there are families whose lives have deteriorated after having moved to the city, due to the inability of the adults to find gainful employment.

In their prior lives, children had experienced many hardships such as shortage of food, clothes and other things, quarrels, fights, alcohol abuse by one of the family members, illness, getting driven away by another family, and heavy and hazardous work.

What was the prior life like for children who wander outside?

The children began to wander outside because of their parents' divorce, abuse by father, mother, step-father or step-mother, their lack of attention and care, dropping out of school, and poor and difficult family life. The pressure they experienced from their step-father or step-mother was a particularly important reason for which the children left their homes for the streets.

My family is in Erdenet. When I was 4 years old, my parents got divorced and I stayed with my father. Not long after their divorce, my father died and I went to live with my mother. There were 4 of us living together: my mother, my grandmother, my elder brother and I. My mother bought alcohol with my grandmother's pension money, she got drunk and beat me and yelled that I and my brother should follow our father. So for some time, I sold tea at the Erdenet market, then left home and came to the city and on the 13th I met a girl by name U. Now I am in the city and have been wandering outside for a year. In April, I was at the address centre and then left there.

(17 years old, female, child who wanders outside)

Children who currently wander outside, frequently experience such difficulties as being hungry and cold, discrimination, missing their family, and getting harassed and robbed by street children.

Are children satisfied with their prior lives?

Children who reported that they are satisfied with their prior lives, mentioned the following reasons: they lived together with the family when parents were not divorced, they lived at home, had food and clothes and did not experience any shortages, went to school, had a home of their own, had many friends at the centre, and had nothing to worry about.

I am satisfied with my prior life because I had many friends, paid attention to my studies, travelled to many places, attended summer camps, and took the first steps towards becoming an educated person. I didn't have to worry about food, everything was ready and our teachers replaced parental love.

(15 years old, female, child who returned home from a residential care centre)

Children who reported that they are not satisfied with their prior lives, mentioned the following reasons: parents got divorced or died, they didn't have enough food and clothes, they wandered homeless, there were quarrels and pressure, they didn't feel happiness, and they suffered.

What nice and hard things were there in children's prior lives?

The nice things in the children's prior lives were very similar to the reasons why they are satisfied with their prior lives. The majority of the children covered in the research said that the nice thing about their prior lives was living with their parents and family and being cared for by their parents. Children also reported pleasant memories about having many friends at the care centre, not experiencing any shortages and pressure, being free and celebrating nicely birthdays and other festive occasions.

The hardest things in their prior lives were poverty, shortages of food and clothes, and having to do heavy work. Children also mentioned family conflicts and fights, pressures, alcohol abuse by one of the family members, not having a place of their own and moving from a family to a family, or wandering alone outside, not being able to go home, absence of parental care, not being able to attend school, illness of one of the family members as hardships they faced in their prior lives.

I can't remember anything nice. In terms of what was hard, my father constantly drank and instigated quarrels and fights. There was no TV to watch, no money, no food or drinks, and no electricity.

(12 years old, male, child living in a care centre)

Children said that the things that make them most sad about their prior lives are, aside from the divorce of their parents that brought them step-parents: father and/or mother becoming an alcoholic, not having been able to go to school, to study well and to attend the extracurricular activities they liked, living in constant poverty and shortages, doing bad things, going into prison, falling sick and becoming disabled, etc.

My parents got divorced and I followed my mother. My mother didn't take any care of me so when I was small I froze in the snow and became epileptic. I regret having followed my mother, I think I would have lived better had I lived with my grandmother. When I see girls of my age, they wear pretty dresses, play and they look beautiful. I want to become healthy quickly, be healthy again.

(17 years old, female, poor child living at home)

Table 2.3. Children's definitions of the differences between their current and prior lives

<i>Positive changes that have occurred in their current lives as compared to their prior lives</i>	<i>Negative changes that have occurred in their current lives as compared to their prior lives</i>
<p>Before I was worried about everything, now I don't have anything to worry about or be afraid of</p> <p>In my prior life, I was always sad, under pressure, now I am not</p> <p>At home, I didn't have any friends, now I have many friends and it's fun</p> <p>I am provided with everything at the centre</p> <p>At home, I was often hungry, now I am provided with enough food</p> <p>The centre's food is good quality, at home I almost never ate meat-based meals</p> <p>Teacher used to discriminate against me saying I was a bad student, now she treats me well</p> <p>Teacher has begun to care for me always</p> <p>I am now able to go to workshops and courses of my choice</p> <p>At home, I couldn't do my homework because I constantly did housework. Now, I have free time and pay attention to my studies</p> <p>Now I am older and I understand everything, I have become wiser</p> <p>Now I am free, there is no one who yells at me</p> <p>Now there is no one who can bully me and beat me</p> <p>It is nice now because I don't have to suffer to work, to collect coal</p>	<p>Before I lived with my parents and family, now I hardly ever see them</p> <p>Before, I was with my mother but now she has passed away</p> <p>My parents got divorced</p> <p>I cuddled with my parents, now such things don't exist</p> <p>Compared to before, now I don't have a stable place to live</p> <p>Before, my parents both worked and we lacked nothing but now it is difficult</p> <p>We sold our livestock and came to the city and life became so-so</p> <p>I didn't use to go to the market, now I go to the market</p> <p>At home, I ate whenever I wanted, at the centre we eat by schedule</p> <p>When I lived at the centre, I lived in a house, now I live in a ger and it is not that nice</p> <p>My father didn't use to drink, now he drinks almost every day</p> <p>Lately children have begun to bully me</p> <p>The people I used to know are no longer there and I am not able to sleep in the shop any more</p> <p>Before, my character and personality were very nice.</p> <p>Now I have become angry and rude</p> <p>My birthday and every holiday were celebrated wonderfully. Now it is not like that</p> <p>My prior life was somehow very nice, now my life is bad at its roots</p> <p>Our Mongolia's deer are very few now. Also meat has become very expensive</p>

Positive changes from their prior lives include being free from quarrels and pressure, not being subjected to discrimination any more, not having shortages, not having to work and being able to study. Negative changes from their prior lives include not being able to live with their parents, being separated from their parents, being deprived of parental love and care, not having a place of their own, having shortages, and being bullied and pressured.

2.2. CHILD LABOUR

Under the topic of “Child Labour,” the child researchers collected extensive information about the work the children do, the reasons for which they have had to work, pressures they experienced when working, their views about their work.

2.2.1. The Status of Child Labour

What work are children doing?

The majority of the children covered in the research had worked and some of them are still working. The types of work include cleaning another family’s home, house-sitting, taking care of children and other housework as well as selling things, carrying and loading heavy things, collecting bottles and cans and even begging. The following table shows the work they had done, disaggregated by gender.

Table 2.4. Types of work performed by the children

<i>Type of work in the order of frequency</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>
Petty sales in the streets (TV programmes, bags, ribbons, gauze, eggs, black tea, soft drinks, water, cigarettes, candies, etc.)	++	++++
Collecting metal, containers, bottles, cans	++	+
Transporting “freight” by hands or on their backs (coal, bricks, cement, flour)	++++	
Preparing and selling firewood	++	+
Pushing carts	+	
Caring for another family’s children/doing housework		++
Sorting and picking vegetables	+	+
Working in a soft drink, mineral water, or pastry workshop	+	+
Dish-washing at a canteen		+
Guarding and washing cars	+	
Singing in public places	+	
Working as a ticket-collector on public transportation	+	
Begging	+	

The most common type of work performed by the children is petty sales, especially selling TV programmes, soft drinks and bags, followed by collecting metal, bottles, containers and cans, transporting heavy weights, preparing and bagging firewood, etc. Boys tended to perform more physical work such as transporting heavy weights and pushing carts while girls tended to do more housework type of work such as dish-washing in a canteen, cleaning someone’s home, and taking care of children. Younger children mainly engaged in petty sales and collection of metal, bottles and cans while older children mainly engaged in the transportation of heavy weights and worked for soft drink, bottled water and pastry workshops.

During my summer vacation, I go to collect pine cones. Nowadays, I wash cars after school. I also collect bottles and cans that I see on my way while washing cars, deliver them and get some money.

(15 years old, male, poor child living at home)

The majority of the children that had worked, had performed more than one type of work. In other words children had frequently shifted from one type of work to another. There are also children that do 2 types of work at the same time.

Children of what group are working?

Working children are the fewest among the children currently living in residential care centres. There is only one child from that group that sells newspapers now. Working is more common among boys compared to girls. That working was most common among children living in someone else's home deserves specific attention. Compared to children attending school, working was 3 times higher among children who don't attend school. The majority of the children that work in addition to attending school, work after school or work on Saturdays and Sundays while there were also children that sometimes cut school to work.

Why are children working?

The most frequent answers were that children work to buy their daily food, to prevent their family members from going to bed with an empty stomach, and to help out the family somewhat.

I worked to bring food home and to be able to eat till I was full myself. I worked because I thought that if I bought small things for home such as soap, I would help my parents even if a little bit.

(14 years, male, child wandering outside)

I worked to bring food home and to be able to eat till I was full myself. I worked because I thought that if I bought small things for home such as soap, I would help my parents even if a little bit.

(14 years, male, child wandering outside)

The majority of the children gave the money they earned to their mother or elder sister or spent it on buying food and consumer goods for their family. They also worked to earn money to buy clothes and school supplies and gain pocket money. In other words, children were forced to work because of the poverty of their families and because they had to make up for the shortage of food, clothes, school supplies and other basic necessities. Children began to work either voluntarily or because there was no other way or because they were forced to work by their parent(s)/step-parent(s)/street child(ren).

The first time, my step-mother bought me a case of soft drinks and told me to go to the market and sell them. So I had to work. There was no other way. Of course, if I didn't sell the soft drinks, she would have beaten me and pressured me when I came home.

(15 years old, female, poor child living at home)

How long have the children been working and how many hours do they work?

The earliest age at which children covered in the research began to work was 5 years old while the average commencement age was 10-11 years old. Boys tended to start earlier than girls. Children worked for a minimum of 1 month and a maximum of 12 years. The majority of the children who are currently working have on average worked now for 2-3 years and there is a child that has worked for 12 years.

The majority of the children that had worked said they worked 7 days a week without a day off while fewer children said they had worked 1-3 days a week. Most children had worked for 8 and more hours a day. In particular, children that work at the market come early when the market gathers and leave late when the market closes.

Did children experience pressure and abuse while working?

When reporting that they did experience pressure while working, the children mentioned bullying by street and marketplace "chieftain" children as well as pressure and bullying by children that do one kind of work, adults, marketplace inspectors, and the police. "Chieftain" children mainly extort money from working children while children that do one kind of work bully and pressure the working children seeking to protect their territory, customers and income.

2.2.2. Children's Views on and Satisfaction with Their Work

Are children satisfied with their work?

Children said they were satisfied that they were doing work and making money and helping their families. They also said they like working because they feel proud about doing it by themselves, their bodies develop, the boss likes them, they are not beaten up at home when they work, and because it is fun to work. Children that are not satisfied with their work reported the following reasons: they get very tired, their workload is too much, the work is hard, they work all day and gain very little money, they don't benefit from the money they earn, the money is spent only on food, they get pressured and bullied, they feel ashamed to be seen by other children, and the work is uninteresting. The most frequent answers were "getting tired," "heavy workload," and "hard work." Boys tended to be more satisfied about their working. Children that perform hard physical work such as piggybacking bricks, coal and flour frequently described their working conditions as "hard" and such responses were mostly given by children of 8-10 years old.

When I was small, I looked after children and did the family's housework. At the time, I got very tired and was pressured much. Now, when I think of how much I had suffered then, I feel like a knife is cutting through my heart.

(18 years old, female, poor child living at home)

What do children think about child labour?

The majority of the children covered in the research stated that child labour is wrong because the working children have not reached adulthood and their child rights, especially their right to go to school and study well, are violated. The children that approved of child labour mainly said that children should do light work that is suitable for their physical capacity, that children can help out at home, that they gain experience through work or that children should work on their own volition and not because somebody else forced them to.

Judging by these responses, while children are often satisfied with their working because they make a contribution to their families' livelihoods, in general, they do not support child labour.

2.3. PRESSURES FACED BY CHILDREN AND CHILD RIGHTS

Under the topics of "Pressures" and "Child Rights," we sought to clarify what children defined as pressures, where the pressures take place, who pressures children, at what age children are subjected to pressures most, why they are pressured, whether pressures are different from discrimination, and what child rights are violated by whom and why.

2.3.1. Pressures Faced by Children

How do children define pressures?

According to the children, pressures include yelling at them, beating them, verbal abuse, scaring and threatening, making them feel down, robbing them, and extortion, while discrimination is when children are treated differently based on their being rich or poor, school performance, looks, clothes, and their living in a residential care centre, and when at home the step-father gives more food and better clothes to his natural children.

Pressure means poverty, hatred and jealousy. Parents drink and come home and beat their child, then the child becomes weak and is bullied by his classmates and doesn't study well and then his parents don't give him food and he gets very skinny and then his classmates call him a skeleton and so on and in general theft is caused by hunger. My classmates sometimes discriminate against me for being poor. My step-mother's brother and my classmates beat me, pressure me to get my money. My step-brothers order me around as if I were a horse or some animal. Maybe my brothers think I am rich because I collect bottles. In my class, children that use tobacco and alcohol demand money from me. My eldest step-brother stole a water boiler from another family and then gave it to me and I got caught when I was guarding it and the policemen beat me "to death" by their sticks, then I couldn't tell them it wasn't me because I was afraid my brother would beat me and because of this my step-mother beat me "to death."

(15 years old, male, child living in a care centre)

Children mentioned many different types of pressure. Out of these, the most common types were beating a child, yelling at a child and verbally abusing/humiliating a child. Children who wander outside most frequently mentioned getting pressured to give up their money. Boys most frequently reported they are forced to do things they don't like, to go and find money, and bullied to surrender their money while girls mostly mentioned getting yelled at, verbally abused and beaten up. It is evident from the responses of the majority of the children covered in the research, that they are frequently subjected to multiple pressures such as getting beaten up, yelled at, verbally abused and driven away from home or other places, all at the same time.

When beating a child, the abusers hit the child with a piece of metal, cut the child's arm, or hit him in the back with a fist, hit the child anywhere on his/her body with anything that comes handy including metal hooks, dough rolling sticks, fire-stove scissors, and boots, and scratch the child's face, thus inflicting or barely falling short of inflicting serious damage to the child's body. In general, it is clear from children's discussions that adults vent their anger and frustration with the poor life and unemployed status by beating their children, yelling at them and verbally insulting them, cursing and driving them away from home.

When controlling a child and forcing him/her to do things, the abusers make children wash their clothes, send them out to find money to pay for alcohol, tobacco and PC games, make them do all the housework, sell things, lift things, scare them, make them lift their arms, make them stand with their arm raised with a heavy boot in the hand, they withhold food from children, force them to do things by beating them, abuse them when children are not doing anything, ill-treat and discriminate against the children, and drive them away, thus causing much distress to children.

I don't like being with my family, my natural father left me when I was small, my step-father comes home drunk and beats me and my mother doesn't say anything when he beats me. Now, I live together with my grandmother in someone else's khashaa. This family's husband comes home drunk and yells that we get out of their khashaa. It is very difficult. My grandmother and I constantly think about where we could go.

(15 years old, female, poor child living at home)

When verbally abusing a child, the abusers, in particular street "chieftain" children and adults threaten to kill the children if they don't bring them money, yell at them insult them with terrible curse words, bully them; at school, children call them ugly, bad-looking, badly clothed, stupid, give them nicknames, snatch their belongings, etc.; at home, father, mother or step-father, step-mother, elder brother or elder sister drive them out demanding the children bring money to buy alcohol, to pay for transportation, and buy food, they get violent and yell, order the children to go collect bottles and cans and do other things, yell 'you are not my child,' 'get out and never come back,' 'tramp,' etc., which cause children much emotional pain.

2.3.2. Environment Where Pressures Takes Place

Where are children most subjected to pressure?

Children are most subjected to pressure outside, in the streets (public places), in the family and at school. Pressures are particularly frequent in and around the State Department Store, train stations, transportation terminals, staircases and basements, centres, shops, bus stops, near schools and in the children's own neighbourhoods (well, khashaa corner, etc.).

Table 2.5. Environments where pressures take place

<i>Environment where pressures take place</i>	<i>By Groups of Children</i>			
	Children living in residential care centres	Children that have returned home from residential care centres	Poor children living at home	Children who wander outside
In the family	+++	++++	+++	++++
Outside/in the streets	++++	+++	++++	+++
At school	++	++	+++	+
At the centre	+			
Everywhere	+			
Don't know	+			

Mainly children living in residential care centres and poor children living at home reported that they experience pressure in the streets and at school while mainly children living in residential care centres and children who wander outside reported that pressures take place at home. In the streets, children are pressured and bullied by other children, while at school and near schools, children are beaten up by other children, extorted for money, insulted as children from residential care centres. Children who wander outside often fall under the control of an adult who pressure them while older children bully and control younger children.

At school, the class "chieftain" pressures me demanding that I bring a few tugrugs. In the streets, when I am just walking, children hit my shoulder with theirs and instigate a fight. At the centre, children want to grab things, quarrel over the ownership of things and try to dominate, saying "it's mine." When I was at the centre, older boy B sent me home to fetch him money. So I stole my sister's wallet with money and gave it to B and was beaten up by my sister and got injured. When she beat me, she scratched me, heated metal till it was red-hot and burnt me anywhere on my body, also humiliated me by cutting my left hand, and yelled "Get out, thief! Don't ever come back to our place!" It was very difficult for me.

(14 years old, male, child who returned home from a residential care centre)

In the family as well, children are subjected to pressures as their parents or step-parents drink because of their frustration with their poor lives and vent their anger at their family and beat and throw out their children, or children are beaten up by the children of their step-parents, forced to work, bullied, etc.

The majority of the children that attend school stated that they experience pressure in the streets and in public places whereas children that don't attend school reported that they experience pressure at home. This suggests that children that wander outside leave their homes because of pressures at home. Being bullied by "chieftain" children and other bullies was a more wide-spread experience among children living in residential care centres and children who wander outside.

2.3.3. Who is Pressuring Children?

The research shows that children are pressured/abused by their family members, especially by their elder sisters, other relatives, parents, step-parents, step-parents' children and by bully children/"chieftain" children, schoolmates and classmates. Children living in residential care centres, children who have returned home from a residential care centre and poor children living at home mainly reported that they are pressured by their elder siblings and

other relatives while children who wander outside mainly reported that they are bullied by “chieftain” children and other street children.

It took place in the family and in the streets. It is very difficult, I get very scared, I am not able to resist in any way. I don’t like being at home, at home my step-father, his child, his elder brother and his mother all beat me and yell at me. They beat me for breaking the TV antenna though I had not broken it. That’s why I ran away from home in the first place.

(14 years old, male, child living at home)

Children are commonly yelled at by their relatives, elder siblings of their parents, children of their aunts and uncles or elder siblings, and children and other relatives of their step-parents, forced to wash their clothes, forced to bring water from the well and do other chores, beaten and thrown out to fetch alcohol, and cursed with bad words.

The most difficult experiences for children also include the following: “chieftain” children/elder children threaten to do this or that if the children do not bring them money, people that collect containers drive children away yelling “don’t collect my containers, go away!,” at marketplaces, in the streets and in parks, children wandering in groups and street children bully and demand money, and especially ill-treatment by children at school who discriminate them for being poor, by their looks and clothes and call them ugly, etc.

No, there is only that kind of a father. No other person. When I am wandering outside, no one bullies me. I am a “chieftain” myself. At the State Department Store, I make those under me tremble.

(12 years old, male, child who wanders outside)

Why are the family members pressuring children?

According to the children, the main reason why their parents/step-parents and older siblings drink, get violent and instigate quarrels and fights at home, is the poor and difficult life. The majority of the children in the families that the children used to live in and the families they are living in are unemployed, don’t have regular income, don’t have an apartment, khashaa or a ger of their own, constantly experience shortage of food and often go hungry. Mostly, they collect bottles and cans, sell eggs, push carts and do other chores for others and earn barely enough for food. In such living conditions, elder siblings often beat their younger siblings for failing to bring money, mothers throw their children out into the street to force them to earn money including money for buying alcohol, food, etc., and force the children to collect bottles and cans.

Eighteen of the children covered in the research, had never attended school or dropped out of school and the majority of these children are wandering outside due to the pressures imposed on them by their parents or step-parents and discrimination by their step-parents. The majority of the 57 children attending school reported that they experience pressure due to alcohol, quarrels and fights, poor life, and bully children. Also, children that do not like living at home reported that they experience pressure because of alcohol, quarrels and fights, bullying one another and step-father.

2.3.4. Children of What Age are Subjected to Pressure?

Children said that people of all ages including children under 10, 10-14 year old children, 15-18 year old children as well as adults (mothers) and elderly become subject to pressure but that children under 10 and 10-14 year old children are subjected most to pressure due to their inability to defend themselves and resist those who pressure them.

I think younger children are pressured most often because adults abuse them most because they are small and don’t understand things. Small children are unable to speak up to adults.

(12 years old, male, poor child living at home)

2.3.5. Causes of Pressures Faced by Children

What is causing pressures on children?

Children said that the main causes of the pressures they face are alcoholism, quarrels and fights, poor life, domineering character of bullies and “chieftain” children. Children think that alcohol is not only the root cause of pressures but a factor that destroys their family lives and leads to the divorce of their parents. Among the children covered by the research, there are frequent cases when the children’s parents divorced or both or one of the parents passed away. Judging by this, there are very few children who are growing up in an intact family while most children are growing up in the context of parental divorce, parents’ death, separation, conflicts and quarrels, fights and pressure.

I think it is all because of alcoholism. I think so because it is exactly what happened in my family. Dad drank and beat my mom up and used to throw us out.

(18 years old, male, child living in a residential care centre)

Children said that pressures are created when one of the family members, especially the father or step-father, drinks and gets violent, or when father/mother or step-father/step-mother quarrel and fight, when the family is poor and conflict-ridden (quarrels arise when there is no money for food, public transportation, and work is unsuccessful), also when at school, in public places and in the streets, classmates, schoolmates, “chieftain” children and bullies demand money, bully, threaten and scare, insult and humiliate the weaker ones and force them to do things.

Only male children that wander outside mentioned suffering pressure from their step-fathers: getting beaten up, humiliated, insulted and discriminated against. Being pressured by “chieftain” children or older children was a common experience for the children covered in the research.

My step-father drinks and then he yells “you are not my child. I will find your natural father and give you to him.” Step-fathers are the main problem.

(16 years old, male, child who wanders outside)

2.3.6. Discrimination Faced by Children

Who is Discriminating against Children?

Children responded that they are discriminated against by their parents, step-parents, older siblings, children of their step-parents, relatives of their parents, teachers, school children, street children, and rich people. Of these, children are most frequently discriminated against by schoolmates/classmates/neighbour’s children and step-parents.

In general, children living in residential care centres and poor children living at home are mostly discriminated against by children at their schools and in their neighbourhoods while children who have returned home from a residential care centre are mainly discriminated against by their step-parents and elder siblings, and children who wander outside are mainly discriminated against by their natural parents, step-parents and street children.

Because I am not his child, my step-father says “this trashy kid must not be spoiled” and beats me. He beats his own children only from time to time. Even though I do much more than his children, he says I don’t do much and beats me. My step-father gives more to his children and gives less to me. I know very well that he gives food and nice clothes to his own children.

(16 years old, male, child living in a care centre)

Why are children discriminated against?

Children gave many answers to explain the reasons for discrimination. They identified the main reasons to be poverty (teachers give poor grades because of having poor clothes, being handicapped, being late to school, and being poor), not being the natural child (step-father prefers his own children), living in a residential care centre (don't let me pass but insult me and say I am from a care centre, they don't play with me because I am from a residential care centre), and "no reason" (demand money, fight over bottles and cans, mistreat me for nothing, don't let me sit in peace but force me out to fetch food and money, call me bad names).

Children living in residential care centres are discriminated against as care centre kids, children that have returned home from a residential care centre are discriminated against as step-children, poor children living at home are discriminated against because of being poor and children who wander outside are discriminated against for no reason at all or for being poor.

There are no children who discriminate against me but the teachers do. I think they treat me so because I am poor. They are so nice with other families' children but they almost don't talk to children from poor and so-so families.

(8 years old, female, poor child living at home)

How are children discriminated?

Children are most often discriminated against or "treated differently" based on their being a natural child or a step-child, being rich or poor, living in a residential care centre, their clothes and external looks. In addition, they are often pressured to go and fetch money, bullied to do things, given nicknames and called names, cursed with bad words, driven away, isolated, marginalized, and neglected.

In a school environment, teachers and peers make fun of poor children, embarrass them, ignore and isolate them. This kind of discrimination makes children feel ashamed of their family situation, become even lonelier, and belittle one-self. Children who wander outside are discriminated against by rich people (as referred to them by the children) who call them "dirty, nasty," "beggar," "get away, you are touching me with your dirty clothes" while rich children do not condescend to interact with poor children, make fun of them for having poor and ugly clothes and don't make friends with them.

Children living in residential care centres responded that they are nicknamed, attacked and discriminated against as "care centre kids." At school and in the streets, children call them "care centre kids" and don't let them pass.

Children living with their natural mother and step-father reported cases of discrimination twice as frequently, which shows that children living with a step-father are at higher risk of being subjected to pressure. The research shows that while beating is the main form of pressure, differential treatment based on social status (rich or poor), school performance, clothes, and living in a residential care centre is the main form of discrimination against children.

2.3.7. Child Rights

Children mentioned that they have a right to be protected, to study and develop, to grow up healthy, to live/be alive, to protect their health, to participate in social life, to freely express their opinions, and to be free from violence. The research showed that children put greater value on their right to be protected, to cuddle with their parents, to be loved by their parents, to study and develop, to grow up in health and to participate in social life.

Which child rights are violated?

Children responded that they are not able to enjoy their right to be provided for by their parents, to have them buy things they want, be loved and cared by their parents, be loved, caressed and protected by their parents, grow up as good people, enjoy equal rights with all other children, live in a clean environment, freely express oneself, be free from violence and to play.

The majority of the children who wander outside said that they don't know what rights they have. Boys and younger children tended to reply that they don't know what rights they have.

Who is violating child rights and how?

Children stated that they are not loved, cared for, or caressed but are beaten up, and that they are growing up in an environment filled with conflicts and quarrels which is a violation of their rights. They said that, in general, their being victims of quarrels, conflicts, alcoholism and poverty forms the basis of the violation of many of their rights. The children reported that their rights are violated as they are not able to study, cannot freely express their thoughts and opinions to their parents and other adults (when they do, they are seen as being disrespectful, adults use their privileges to bully and insult children and to demand money), and when they fall sick or something else happens, they are ignored and neglected.

My rights are violated as I am not able to study and I don't have a guardian. My step-mother and father beat me and yell at me to do this or that and verbally insult me like "motherless vagabond." I think my life has become very difficult since my mother's death.

(16 years old, male, child who wanders outside)

At school, children's rights are violated by teachers who yell at them, beat them and discriminate against them. Children said that their rights to be protected and to study are most seriously violated by their parents who yell at them without love and beat them, making it impossible for children to express their thoughts and opinions and to study. The right to education is violated also due to the poverty of the family and inability to buy school supplies, clothes and pay for public transportation. Children experience multiple violations of their rights as they wander onto the street to avoid constant quarrels and fights in their family environment, get robbed of their bottles and cans by adults and older children, as their belongings get stolen while they are sleeping, and as adults and older children bully them to extort money from them.

Children said that their rights are violated by their family, parents, step-parents, elder siblings, adults on the streets, teachers, children/classmates, "chieftain" children, and address identification centres. Most frequent answers were parents and step-parents. Thus, in the opinion of the child researchers and the children interviewed by them, it is the adults that are to blame for the violation of children's rights.

2.4. CHILD'S FUTURE GOALS, DREAMS AND SECRETS

Child researchers established what children's short-term and long-term goals are, what obstacles they face in reaching their goals, what their dreams, likes and dislikes are, and what their secrets are and who they share them with.

2.4.1. Children's Goals

Children defined their short-term and long-term goals as successfully graduating from their schools, improving their school performance, entering a university, acquiring a profession, getting rich, living well, and living together

with their family. Children living in residential care centres and poor children living at home mostly mentioned graduating successfully from their schools, improving their school performance and entering a university as their short-term goals whereas the majority of the children who wander outside defined their short-term goals as getting rich and living well. Also, children living in residential care centres and children who wander outside frequently reported that their goal is to live with their family, to get a family, to find their elder brother or sister and live together with them.

The majority of the children defined their future goal as that of becoming a famous singer, actor, big boss who is always on TV, and a well known person. Children also mentioned as their future professions (which they can do or like) hairdresser, shoe-maker/repairman, singer like Airunaa, doctor, policeman, and driver. Poor children wish to live well with no shortages in their family, in a several-storied private house, and with a car.

I want to have a home and live peacefully with my younger sibling. The obstacle is that we need a ger.

(18 years old, female, child living in a residential care centre)

A fair number of children said their long-term goals are not to be making their own children orphans, not subjecting their own children to pressure, and not making their children suffer. Although the majority said that currently there are no obstacles to fulfilling their short-term or long-term goals, those that said that they would face obstacles, mentioned money, family conflicts and fights, and family pressure.

Children imagine their future based on their desire to see it free from loveless treatment and pressure from their parents and step-parents, to change their poor lives, and not to live a hard life again. The research showed that people close to the children do not help them plan their future and choose a profession. However, residential care centre teachers do provide moral support, provide advice, teach what is necessary, give information about different professions and provide children with opportunities to attend extracurricular programmes free of charge.

The majority of the children that participated in the research said that paying attention to their future is the most important and useful thing in living their lives the right way and reaching their future goals. While some emphasized the need to mobilize themselves, make an effort, not to give up and study well in order to reach their future goals, some said they can reach their goals by working, making money, getting a home, getting adopted by a good person and obtaining documentation.

2.4.2. Dreams

What do children dream of?

Children dream of many things including a rich and good life, education and profession, a big house, a jeep, becoming a famous singer, actor, meeting their mother, younger siblings and other family members, living together as a family, living peacefully at home free from alcoholism, quarrels and fights, stopping their parents' rows, flying in an airplane, travelling to foreign countries, a zoo, and having a resort. They also dream about developing good human qualities such as honesty, good heart, fulfilling one's promises, contributing to society and aiding poor people.

The majority of the children covered in the research dream about becoming a rich person, a director of a big company, and having a big many-storied house and a nice jeep. Also, children dream of becoming a person with education and a profession and becoming a famous singer or actor.

I dream of taking my parents to the country, near livestock, take them to a sanatorium and improve their health. Also, I dream of living in a many, many-storied big house. When I grow up, I will become a businessman and build a house.

(14 years old, male, poor child living at home)

A fair number of children covered in the research dream about living with their family, living well free of illnesses and quarrels, and preventing their children from experiencing the hardships they have. They even dream about developing the country and resolving critical issues faced by society such as protecting the environment, making the city clean, and becoming good people and helping others.

Child's Dreams, Likes and Dislikes

What do children like?

Children mentioned many things they like including their favourite lessons and sports (basketball, football, light athletics, wrestling), types of PC games, Barbie doll, soft toys, sweets (candies, chocolate, watermelon, grapes, gummy candies, ice cream, bubble gums, and the meals mother cooks), and human qualities. Most frequently, they mentioned listening to the music, watching movies on TV, singing, and dancing. Quite a few children said they like to play sports, to eat candies, fruits, and sweet food and drinks, and to dream.

What do children dislike?

The majority of the children reported they don't like alcohol and tobacco, saying that they don't like it when their father is drunk and when they see a drunk person. They do not like being discriminated against, bullied, and pressured. They dislike people who make others quarrel, who have a bad personality, who are envious, and who are thieves. Poor children living at home said they do not like being poor and that they hate poverty while children who wander outside reported that they do not like wandering outside and collecting trash. These responses are very disturbing.

2.4.3. Child's Secrets

What do children keep secret?

The majority of the children said they do not have secrets while the children that said they do have secrets did not like sharing them with others. Their secrets are the hard lives they lead at home, getting beaten by their parents, being in love with a boy at the care centre, and worrying about their health.

While boys tended to hold secret their smoking and having committed a robbery, girls' secrets are their hard lives at home, poverty and parental abuse.

I think of telling my mom "why did you take me, why did you give birth to me if you couldn't feed me?" but I am not able to tell her that, I just think it inside and maybe one day I can tell her this.

(15 years old, female, child who wanders outside)

Some children also said that it is no use telling one's secrets to anybody because children are not able to keep each other's secrets, some said that it is hard not to share one's secrets with anybody and yet some said that it feels good to share their secrets with someone, someone close, and that it makes them feel calmer when they do.

2.5. CHILDREN'S BIGGEST CONCERNS

We analyzed what things children are most concerned about, why they are concerned about them, what causes those things, why children are embarrassed in relation to their peers and about what, and what they wish to change and why.

2.5.1. Things that Worry Children Most

Children are most worried about their parents, family, family life, siblings, their own future, and especially about their mother, brothers and sisters. Family, family life and siblings are the biggest concerns of children living in residential care centres and poor children living at home. Children living in residential care centres are very concerned about their future as well.

I am most worried about my younger siblings. Life and future professions of the 3 of them. Because my natural sibling doesn't go to school. I am worried that he is becoming uneducated because we are not able to provide school supplies. My other two siblings are orphans. I worry a lot about how they will live when they grow up.

(17 years old, female, poor child living at home)

I am most worried about my younger siblings. Life and future professions of the 3 of them. Because my natural sibling doesn't go to school. I am worried that he is becoming uneducated because we are not able to provide school supplies. My other two siblings are orphans. I worry a lot about how they will live when they grow up.

(17 years old, female, poor child living at home)

Girls are more concerned about their parents and family while boys are more worried about their siblings. The older the children, the more concerned they are about their future.

Why are children concerned?

In explaining their concerns about their family, parents, siblings, their own future, and other things, the children said "they are far away from me, I haven't seen them for a long time," "I wonder where my parents are and what they are doing," "I wonder if my mom/younger sibling is being beaten up and pressured," "because I miss my younger siblings and because I wish them to grow up as good people," "because my father/mother (or another close person) is sick," "because life is hard," "because we are living in another family's place," "I worry that my family members will become street people because of shortage of money, food, clothes, and poor life," "my parents/step-parents drink," "there are quarrels," "I don't go to school," "I don't study well," and "I don't know where to go when I leave the centre, I will be in a difficult situation."

Children are especially worried about their poor lives, and wonder where their mother and siblings are and if they are being abused by somebody. The majority of the children who gave such responses are children living in residential care centres and children who wander outside. Poor children living at home mainly reported being worried about their poor lives.

I am most worried about my mother. I worry about not making her suffer, she never buys clothes for herself when she gets her salary, she only buys clothes for us. If I don't love my mother, if my mother dies, I will get infested with lice because I won't know how to wash my clothes. Without my mother, I will become an orphan.

(14 years old, male, child who wanders outside)

Children living in residential care centres reported that, aside from worrying where they will go once they leave the centre, they also worry about the country's life and the life of children who wander outside. They are concerned that as the country develops, the price for meat is increasing and the number of street people is increasing and that the street people's children will also face the same fate. Girls are most concerned about not attending school while boys are most worried they will face difficulties if they leave the residential care centre.

Children are embarrassed by their peers about their poor life/homeless state/unpleasant home, clothes they wear, their looks, their height, about being out of school/studying poorly, living in a residential care centre/having no parents and living in a residential care centre.

Children of my age go to school and have homes whereas I wander outside and I feel ashamed of that. My clothes are dirty and theirs are clean. I wander outside like this because of my home. If my mother did not drive me away and beat me, I would not be living like this.

(13 years old, female, child who wanders outside)

The majority of the children said that their concerns stem from their parents.

Table 2.6. Causes of children's concerns

<i>Causes of children's concerns</i>	<i>By Groups of Children</i>			
	Children living in care centres	Children that have returned home from care centres	Poor children living at home	Children who wander outside
I am the cause	++++	+++	+	+
Family situation/parents	++		++++	++
Depends on me and on family	++		+	
No cause				
Don't know	+	+	+	+

2.5.2. Things Children Want to Change

As children are most worried about their family and parents, they most of all wish to improve their family's livelihood and change their parents and themselves for the better.

What do children wish to change?

The research has shown that most of all children wish to improve their livelihoods, make their homes nice, live with their parents, stop their parents' drinking habits, leave the centre with a ger and live together with their parents. In addition, children wish to make many changes including making their father/mother quit drinking, stop their quarrelling and fighting and live with their parents in peace, stop their parents from beating and throwing them out, find jobs for their parents, return to the past time when they lived well with their parents, find their younger brother/sister, make their family members healthy, get treatment for oneself, improve school performance, grow up and get a job, get a home, grow up quickly and provide for the family and stop the shortage of food, stop wandering outside, etc.

Table 2.7. Things children want to change

<i>Things children want to change</i>	<i>By Groups of Children</i>			
	Children living in residential care centres	Children that have returned home from residential care centres	Poor children living at home	Children who wander outside
Change their living environment/family	++++	++++	++++	+++
Make their parents stop drinking alcohol	++		++	+
Make their parents stop quarrelling and fighting	+++	++		+
Make their family members healthy	++	+	++	
Change the politics	+++	+	+	++
Grow up and get a job	+++	+	+	++
Stop wandering outside				+

I want to live with my mother. It is so great to be altogether and even better to play with my younger sibling. Then I will be happy.

(8 years old, female, child who wanders outside)

Children wish to have money and use that money to improve their homes, live in an apartment, make their family live well, be with their mother, make their mother separate from their step-father and live with him/her, not be short of clothes and food, make their father stop drinking alcohol and make him a different person, make their homes nice (buy a ger cover, flooring, make the fence nice, etc.), stop alcoholism, stop their father from drinking, establish justice and to change people.

Why do children want to change things?

Children gave many reasons for why they want to change things. Their answers were grouped and are presented below:

· *Life will improve and we will live well*

By keeping themselves clean and living in a clean environment, children will grow up healthy, the residential care centre will be made nicer, I will have a nice house just like the foreigners, life will improve, we will be happy playing on a nice playground, hands and face will become lighter, I won't have to bring water and chop firewood, my family will change and people will not call us poor again, we will get rich, I will not live in the previous environment but will sleep in a very nice environment.

· *Will live together with the family*

Will go home, will know what parental love is like, will not wander outside, will not go to a residential care centre, will be happy as I was before with my mother; if my parents work, I will study well and attend extracurricular activities I like; I will be more self-confident if we live as a family and I will be joyful for them; father will not drink and beat my mother and if he doesn't spend his money on alcohol, I will go home; I will not be pressured, I will walk with my mom, wearing nice clothes.

· *Will study well*

I will study well and become a knowledgeable person, I will study well and live well without any shortages, will become a good person, a better provided life will change my life and I will go to school, choose a profession and study, will stay at home and study hard.

· *Will have peace with nothing to worry about*

I will have a peace of mind and become optimistic, I will walk outside without feeling embarrassed or ashamed and make many friends, will not be pressured by other people, my wishes will come true, and the country will develop.

If I live with my family, I will be more self-confident. I will provide for them when I study and grow up and work.
(16 years old, female, child who returned home from a residential care centre)

If I live with my family, I will be more self-confident. I will provide for them when I study and grow up and work.
(16 years old, female, child who returned home from a residential care centre)

Children said that if they change the things they want to change, they will have a good life, a rich life, have a home of their own, be optimistic without anything to worry about, live without feeling ashamed from others, be with their family, be loved and cared for by their parents, be with their parents and younger siblings, find their younger siblings, live in a clean and comfortable environment, will not be beaten up and pressured by anyone, will become a good person, attend school, study well, their character will improve and the country will develop.

Table 2.8. Changes that will happen if children change the things they want to change

<i>Changes that will happen</i>	<i>By Groups of Children</i>			
	Children living in residential care centres	Children that have returned home from residential care centres	Poor children living at home	Children who wander outside
Will have a decent life	+++	+++	++++	++
Will feel optimistic/have nothing to worry about	+++	++	+++	+
Will be with the family, loved and cared for	+++	+	+	+
Will live in a clean and comfortable environment	+++	+	+++	+
Will not be beaten up, yelled at, pressured			+	+++
Will become a good person/ attend school	+			+

While poor children wish to have a decent life and experience no shortages, children who wander outside mainly wish not to be beaten up, yelled at and pressured by somebody as well as to live well together with the family (as before, with their mother and siblings).

Things needed to make the desired changes

Children mostly stated they need money in order to send their father to receive treatment for alcoholism, to study, and to buy furniture to make their homes nice. They also wish to receive emotional support, gain education, reunite their parents and find their mother and younger siblings.

Children commonly held that they can make things happen if they have money and that they need to work in order to find the money. Some children covered in the research said they need someone to help find jobs for their parents, they need to get necessary documentation so their parents could find employment, they want to go to another school, and that they need school supplies.

2.6. CHILD'S HARMFUL HABITS, USE OF TOBACCO AND ALCOHOL

We have analyzed the use of tobacco and alcohol by children, the age of children who use tobacco and alcohol, children's thoughts on substance abuse, and whether children had engaged in fights, theft and robbery.

2.6.1. Use of Tobacco and Alcohol

Smoking is common among children covered in the research and their friends. It is particularly common among children of 15-18 years of age. The rate of smoking is higher among children who wander outside and male children living in residential care centres than among children from other groups. Children who wander outside have begun smoking since very young, at 8-9 years of age. A small number of children reported that they drink alcohol under peer pressure and each other's influence. Most of these children were children who wander outside and children living in residential care centres.

I smoke when I am angry. I drink under pressure from kids when I am outside home. They say "smoke, smoke" or "drink, drink if you are real friend."

(14 years old, male, child who wanders outside)

That smoking and drinking is more common among children who wander outside and children living in residential care centres suggests that their conditions are conducive to falling under peer pressure, being influenced by other children, doing anything they like, pressuring each other, forcing each other to drink or to smoke because these children live away from their parents, unlike children from other groups.

Parents mostly do not know that their children smoke and drink but the teachers at care centres do know. Children do not advise each other on not using tobacco and alcohol, even if they do, they are not listened to and their words are ignored by their friends. In fact, children often draw each other into harmful habits. Children had given each other advice on not drinking and smoking, saying that tobacco and alcohol are harmful for health, it is bad to smoke and to drink, tobacco and alcohol will lead to the wrong path, alcohol takes away 10 years of life and tobacco 5 years of life, you shouldn't use even if your parents do, don't use alcohol because you might get in trouble, and tobacco is an enemy of money.

Fights, theft and robbery

Some of the children covered in the research had committed theft and robbery. Most of the children that gave these answers were children who wander outside and children living in care centres. Alcohol and tobacco use is also higher among children from these two groups. Poor children who wander outside often commit theft under someone else's pressure or to find money to buy food and clothes for themselves.

CONCLUSION

Researchers (adults) are presenting the conclusions drawn from their analysis of the data collected and analyzed by the child researchers. In doing so, firstly, we are presenting the observations about the methodology and, secondly, we are presenting the conclusions pertinent to the initial goal of the research to improve quality of the services through the residential care centre for the children.

Methodology

- This was the first genuinely child-led research conducted in Mongolia as children themselves identified their issues, developed research topics, collected research data and analyzed them.
- The reliability of the research data was ensured by the fact that children with similar experiences interviewed their peers.
- The definitions and terms used by children in their research differed from those widely used by the society and by adults.
- Children identified topics and questions that never would have occurred to the minds of the adults such as children's prior life, difficulties of child poverty, secrets, warm discussions, and things children are concerned about and want to change. We would like to stress that if we, adults, had developed the research design, we would have collected very different information.
- Children who conducted and were covered in the research do not like the discriminatory notions and attitudes established in society and social institutions (especially schools) toward a (lower) class of children called "care centre children" and they do not like to relate to such children in the same way the broader society does.
- The research project proved that children of so-called vulnerable groups have full capacity to think, identify issues, process information, draw conclusions, express themselves and relate to other people, thus defying social stereotypes about these children.
- Children of the so-called vulnerable groups do not wish to be mere recipients of social welfare and services but desire to contribute not only to their families but to society at large as active participants and are concerned about such issues as the environment, politics, and poverty.

Residential Care Centre services

- During the transition, with the emergence of the new phenomenon of "street children," it became necessary to develop welfare services for these children. At the time, many residential care centres became established as there were no alternative service models. With the emergence of many residential care centres, a new class of "care centre" children emerged.
- As there were no alternatives to residential care centres at the time, the residential care centres protected many children from the cold and hunger by providing them with a place to live, clothes, possibility to attend school and attend extracurricular activities. The centres also allowed children to make many friends. The residential care centres are continuing to provide care and protection services such as locating children's family, contacting them, assisting family reunification, and providing after-care services. Some organizations such as Christina Nobel Children's Foundation, World Vision and the SCUK have begun to pilot family-based alternative care models for children who cannot return home.
- Although residential care centres did help solve some of the issues that arose at the time, there are many things that need to be revisited, assessed and changed. The fact that there were no clear policies on the residential care centres, service standards, admission criteria and regulations and that it was unclear how long children were to be placed in those centres led to the admission of children that should not have been served by the residential care centres, resulting in the unnecessary separation of poor children from their parents, families, siblings and weakening family ties. In addition, there were no specifically trained service staff.

These factors combined to limit possibilities of providing services that were consistent with the best interests of the children.

- Children who live in residential care centres do not experience close, loving and caring relationships with their parents or people who substitute for their parents. The child development theories and recent research conducted internationally show that children who grow up in residential care centres face difficulties in fully developing as human beings, becoming a family member and living as a member of society throughout their lives.
- The downside of the residential care centres is that children living there must adjust themselves to the institutional order, regulations and schedules designed for everyone and to the whims of adults rather than developing their individuality and responding to a family environment and atmosphere.
- By bringing together children with many different experiences, residential care centres create conditions for serious violations of children's rights such as violence and abuse of children by children, sexual and economic exploitation of children by children and ganging up against a child.
- Moreover, teachers and adults who work at residential care centres abuse and mistreat children and inflict emotional and corporal punishment on children, thus merely replacing one violent environment with another.
- Living in a residential care centre becomes the basis for discrimination at school and in other environments.
- Although there are model regulations for residential care centres, these are not enough for ensuring the quality of residential care centre services. In combination with the absence of well trained staff as well as the high turn-over of staff, the absence of proper regulations prevent residential care centres from providing services that are in the best interests of the children. Moreover, due to the failure to properly prepare for family reunification and provide quality after-care services, children often migrate from one residential care centre to another, go back to the streets or resume a family life that is full of abuse and violence.
- Child rights are violated as children's opinions and wishes are not listened to and taken into consideration when decisions are made about their admission to the residential care centre, family reunification, and services provided to them during their stay at the centre.
- According to the children, they face difficulties in adjusting back to their poor lives with their families after having had everything ready and being well provided for at the residential care centre. Also, children currently living in residential care centres are full of concerns and doubts about their future and view their future in dark colours.

In conclusion, children's rights to live and develop in a family environment and in the care of loving parents, to be protected, to freely express themselves, and to participate in making decisions that affect their lives are frequently violated in residential care centres. That residential care centres do not have a positive impact on children's lives in the short or long term has been demonstrated by the results of research conducted in other countries. We conclude that a residential care centre is not the optimal model of child care and protection.

Recommendations

- The state should develop a comprehensive policy to support families in order to provide children with the possibility of growing up in a caring family environment (in particular, changing parents' and family members' child-care/child rearing knowledge and attitudes).
- To pilot and develop alternative family-based temporary and permanent care and protection services for children in special cases when it is not possible for them to grow up in their birth families.
- To develop a practice whereby in cases when serious damage has been done or there is a risk of such damage to a child's life and health, decisions are made in the best interests of the child based on a professional assessment by a team of relevant players with the participation of the child based on consideration of his/her age, psychology, and other specific developmental characteristics.
- Although residential care centres are not the optimal method, in order to protect the interests of the children currently residing in residential care centres, the state should make a concerted effort to improve the quality of residential care centre services by clarifying relevant state policy and conceptual framework, residential care centres' mission and purpose, define who they should serve, what services they should provide and for what period of time, developing and monitoring the implementation of regulations and quality standards for admission, family reunification, after care and other services.
- To develop an effective child protection system consisting of a comprehensive policy, legal environment, services and mechanisms for protecting children from violence and abuse, neglect and exploitation and implement the above recommendations in connection with developing such a system.

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