

STREET CHILD APPEAL 2015



MUSLIM HANDS

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**What comes to mind when you
hear the term street child?**

Beggar? Petty criminal? Tearaway?

How about victim?

STREET CHILDREN-GHOSTS IN THEIR OWN CITIES

Street life is cruel, but for over 100 million children it's a way of life



Spread across almost every major city in the developing world, and despite living and working on the streets, street children are amongst the most 'invisible' of all children. There are estimated to be up to 150 million street children in the world today. In Pakistan alone, there are approximately 1.5 million. Stigmatised as criminals and shunned by their communities they are the most difficult to reach with vital health, education and welfare services.

There are many reasons that children end up on the streets. Most have run away from problems related to extreme poverty, domestic abuse and the loss of one or both parents.

Caring for needy and orphaned children has been at the heart of over twenty years of Muslim Hands' work. Street children are amongst the poorest and most vulnerable children in the world. This is why we have been working with groups like the Azad foundation and Glad's House that are transforming the lives of children and young people on the streets.



Many children have to scavenge through rubbish to try and make a living

ABUSE & EXPLOITATION

Fear, violence and exploitation of all kinds are the hallmarks of a street child's life



With no guardian to protect them and no home to shelter them, street children are left open to all manner of dangers. The threat of violence and robbery are common threads in the narratives of many of these children and a large proportion of them have experienced abuse and sexual exploitation.

As street children must provide for themselves, they are often exploited by employers who force them to work for long hours in hazardous conditions for very little pay. Perilous jobs like scavenging through rubbish for recyclable materials expose children to diseases, moving machinery and dangerous materials.

Drugs also pose a big risk to street children across the world. Targeted by drug peddlers, many are pushed into a dangerous new world and end up in a vicious cycle of drug abuse in an attempt to escape the harsh realities of their life and to forget traumatic experiences. When asked why he abuses solvents, one young boy says that, 'I know it is bad for my health, but I cannot let go of my habit because it provides me with an escape from hideous memories and harsh realities'.

PAKISTAN'S 1.5 MILLION STREET CHILDREN

13 YEARS

AVERAGE AGE OF
A STREET CHILD



Only
8%
LEFT FOR
FREEDOM
FROM HOME

WHY ARE THEY ON
THE STREETS?



55%
LEFT HOME DUE
TO DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE AND
EXTREME POVERTY

ON EN



1151 STREET CHILDREN WERE INTERVIEWED ACROSS 10 CITIES IN PAKISTAN. THE RESULTS ARE A DIFFUCULT READ.



More than
85%
WORK FOR A LIVING

**STREET CHILDREN
ARE NOT CRIMINALS**

<1%
ARE INVOLVED
IN PETTY CRIME &
PICK-POCKETING

**THE DANGERS
- STREET CHILDREN
FACE**

55% FALL INTO DRUG
ABUSE AND SUFFER
POOR HEALTH

76% HAVE BEEN
RAPED, MOST
MORE THAN ONCE

MEERAL'S STORY

Poverty, Exploitation and Sexual abuse

Meeral Shah, a child labourer, was just 9 years old when he ran away from a village near Multan and found his way to Karachi. As with many street children, at the heart of his story lies poverty, exploitation and sexual abuse.

“I was working for Waderas (Feudal landlords) as long as I can remember. My entire family work for them and I have done every type of work they gave me. Their supervisors used to beat us all very harshly. When I was around 7 years, one of their caretakers (name removed) raped me. It was a very painful and I cried a lot. Then, he started abusing me daily – and if I

cried out, he would laugh loudly. Soon after, he brought a friend along him and they both abused me at the same time. I shouted and cried a lot but no one came.

This time I somehow managed to tell my father, but (because of his fear of the powerful landlords), he cautioned me to not speak of this. This is when I tried to escape (that household) but was caught and severely beaten. The caretaker and his friends continued to assault me regularly, making me dance naked for them before raping me – now I wanted to kill them or kill myself, and once did try to kill myself.

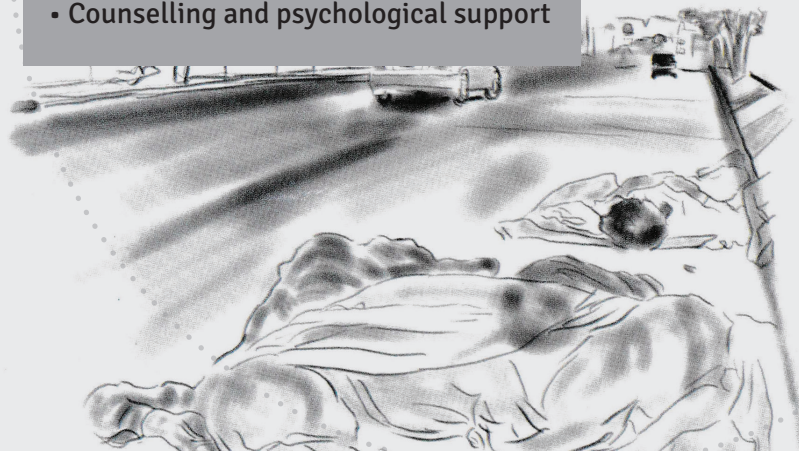
That's when I ran away again, and God helped and I kept hidden and travelled continuously and I escaped.

Now I have been here in Karachi for about four years, and my life is much better. In fact I am now the group leader here and take care of my juniors”.

The fact that Meeral Shah refers to his life on the street as ‘better’, speaks volumes. But it doesn't have to be this way. Muslim Hands is working hard with our partners on the ground to re-shape the futures of children like Meeral.

We provide vulnerable street children like Meeral with:

- Medical check-ups and basic healthcare
- Food and shelter
- Educational and vocational training
- Counselling and psychological support



RE-SHAPING FUTURES

It's a complex problem and its requires a coordinated response - one child at a time



Helping a single street child to get off the streets brings numerous challenges. For example, since street children move from city to city, registering and tracking each child is important but extremely challenging.

Often, the children we work with will have experienced so much betrayal that they have lost faith in the adults around them and will not easily allow us to take their names, fingerprints and photographs. Our outreach workers use their expertise and experience to engage with children and build their trust up and our programmes are designed to address the varying needs of each child. Here are some of the main ways we work to re-shape the future of street children:

Drop-in centres



Drop-in centres are at the heart of the work we are doing. In Pakistan and Kenya, our drop-in centres provide children of all ages with food, shelter and healthcare. As well as this, children at the centres receive access to education and vocational training, preparing them for a more secure future.

Success stories from our drop-in centres include children who have been rehabilitated back into their home environments and young adults who have entered work, enabling them to earn a dignified living and support themselves.

Building nationwide support networks

Our partners on the ground are working hard to build a common understanding and approach towards street children amongst the police force, hospitals, schools, community organisations and local government. As well as promoting dialogue between different sectors, we provide training and expertise for different institutions and our social workers visit children on the streets, in schools and detention centres.

Reaching Out Through Sport

We have found that sports is one very effective way by which engagement begins.

Our outreach workers organise sports events to engage with children and build up their trust, paving the way for working more closely with them. As well as organising sporting events, we also provide specialised sports programmes that include educational and vocational training. In Kenya, for example, street children have been enrolled in football and boxing courses, where they are supported in moving into education and work and living independently in their community. Many have, in turn, become mentors for other street children involved in our programmes.



Street Child Ambassadors

The people best able to understand street children and the problems they face are other street children. This is why we promote 'street champions'. These are former street children that become ambassadors for our advocacy work and take an active part in our training programmes for the police, schools and other state institutions working with young people. These ambassadors are also able to engage with children on the streets and show them that there is a better way of life available to them.

We want to do more but we need your Help

Thanks to the support of our donors and the efforts of our partners on the ground, we have already been making a huge impact on the lives of street children in Pakistan and Kenya. But, with over 100 million street children across the world, we have a lot more to do. As well as continuing to support our current programmes we hope to expand our work into other corners of the developing world and reach more children in desperate need, but we cannot do this without your help. This is why we are asking you to give to our Street Child appeal and help to reshape the futures of some of the most vulnerable people in the world.





First aid on the roadside



We believe all children should have access to food, shelter and an education.



Earning a dignified living
repairing bikes



Engaging children
through sport



Vocational training
equips children for the future



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