

B1

Topics

Introduction to Street Children

Who are 'street children'?

It is impossible to come up with a simple definition of 'street children' since every child is an individual whose situation is unique.



"A child is defined as anyone under the age of 18"

CRC - Article 1

There are numerous 'types' of children living and working on the streets who can be described as 'street children.' They include:

- **Street-working children**
 - often work long hours in jobs that may be dangerous or illegal. These children spend the majority of their day on the street, but maintain relationships with their family and often return home to sleep at night.
- **Children who live and work on the streets**
 - often have no or only occasional contact with their families. Children in this situation may view the relationship they have with their families as negative and prefer not to see them if possible. Others may simply have lost contact with or been separated from their families.
- Street children whose parents are also street children, in other words the children of **street families**.

Very often the greatest differentiating factors between street children who maintain family contact and the relative minority who actually live on the streets are violence (physical and psychological abuse and neglect, sexual abuse and exploitation) and family breakdown.

According to research conducted in Peru, family violence and child mistreatment was the precipitating factor in 73% of cases of children migrating to the streets.¹

What all these children have in common is their vulnerability and resilience. They are amongst the most vulnerable members of any society: they have extremely limited access to essential basic services such as housing, health care and education and are also very vulnerable to violence, accidents, murder and self-harm. They are also amongst the most resilient and resourceful members of society, finding ways to survive in very difficult conditions.

How many street children are there?

Nobody knows how many street children there are in the world. Estimates vary from tens of millions to hundreds of millions.

"Engaged in a day to day survival scenario, street children develop resourcefulness, self-reliance, independence and survival skills in an unfriendly and unsupportive street and general environment.

They hardly have any savings and do not usually keep money on themselves for fear of losing it to older boys. Therefore they prefer to spend most of what they earn."

SPARC, Pakistan (NGO)²

The reasons why it is difficult to count street children are:

- There is no single definition which accurately describes this group.
- They may not be registered at birth.
- They often move around a lot within and between cities.
- They are often excluded from the institutions where they would be counted such as households and schools.

Statistics:

➡ See also: 'Numbers of street children around the world' activity, p.10.

Age & gender

The age of street children ranges from newly born babies to older teenagers, depending on the country involved. Both girls and boys find themselves on the streets, but the majority are boys.

Background information

**"In the Philippines
70% of street children
are boys."**

ChildHope Asia
Philippines (NGO)

**"The average age of
street children in
Egypt is believed to
be 13 with 25% being
under 12 and 66%
between 13 and 16
years of age."³**

There are a number of reasons for this:

- In many cultures there is much greater pressure for girls to stay at home than boys.
- Girls will often put up with abuse at home for longer periods than boys. (However, once they make the decision to leave home it tends to be more permanent).
- Once on the streets, girls can be less visible than boys as they are often forced or lured into off-street prostitution.

**Are there street
children in the UK?**

Historically there have been many children in the United Kingdom who could be described as 'street children.' The Industrial Revolution and the birth of modern day cities led to an explosion in the numbers of children left to fend for themselves.

Today in the UK we do have homeless and runaway children. Each year approximately 100,000

children under the age of 16 in the UK run away and stay away from home for at least one night.

"I ran away because dad hit me and broke my cheekbone and jaw. My mother asked me to go as dad would have carried on hitting me."
Tony, 12, UK

"I had enough of my dad hitting me"

Homeless teenager, UK
(Big Issue, March 21-27, 2005)

"The Children's Society took me in. They looked after me. They cared about me. They won't let me take my tablets when I want to overdose. They stop me doing stupid things."
Tina, 15. UK

There are three main groups of children in the United Kingdom who share many characteristics of 'street children':

- **Runaways** - children who run away from home, leave home or who are thrown out. Most of them return home within a week.
- **Homeless** - someone who has no home where they can be expected to live, and who may be staying with friends, in a hostel or in a shelter.
- **Street homeless** - someone who is homeless and sleeping rough outside on the street or elsewhere.

However, their lives are often very different from 'street children' in developing countries. The main difference is that in developing countries, the majority of street children are involved in child labour on the streets in some way whereas in the UK very few actually work on the streets. Research by the Children's Society shows running away in the UK is far more closely linked to emotional and relationship problems than to economic disadvantage, and the majority (75%) do not sleep rough, but stay with friends or in hostels. Once on the streets their stay is less permanent and there is more help available than for street children in developing countries.⁴

i See further information section for details of fact sheets, websites and helplines on homelessness in the UK.



The Toybox Charity

Girls playing in the street, Guatemala City



Footnotes: see page 76

Who are street children?



Key learning points:

- There are many different types of street children: different ages, gender, race and situation
- They include those who work on the streets and those who also live on the streets.
- They may or may not have ties with their family.



Instructions

1. Worksheet activity

- a. Give students the 2-sided handout of 8 photographs and ask them to tick the boxes below according to whether they feel the image shown represents a street child.

Photo 1: Romania



Street boys sniffing glue in Bucharest.

Can be useful to bring out the fact that we do have street children in Europe and even in the UK.

- yes
 no
 maybe

Photo 2: Mongolia



Street boys in a gang in Ulan Bataar. They live underground to be near the heating pipes that keep the cities of Mongolia warm in the winter.

- yes
 no
 maybe

Photo 3: Sri Lanka



A picture of a family living in a slum dwelling in Sri Lanka. Note to teacher: If the children work on the streets during the day, they would be 'street-working children', even if they have a family.

- yes
 no
 maybe

Photo 4: Mexico



A girl begging on the streets in Puebla. Children who beg may or may not have family contact. Some may be forced to beg, possibly as part of a criminal gang.

- yes
 no
 maybe

Photo 5: Mexico

Street girl
washing a car
windscreen at
traffic lights.

Photo 6: Afghanistan

Street girls in
a shelter getting
an education.

- yes
 no
 maybe

- yes
 no
 maybe

Photo 7: Guatemala

A street girl and baby in
Guatemala City. Street
children can be as young
as a newborn baby.

Photo 8: Mongolia

Tsengunjav,
aged 12,
imprisoned for
a crime he did
not commit.

- yes
 no
 maybe

- yes
 no
 maybe

b. Discuss their answers. Bring out the following points:

- Street children can be found in all areas of the world – even in the UK.
- There are many different types of street children:
- Some work on the streets; some live and work on the streets
- Some work, some beg, some steal for a living
- There are many different ages of street children
- Both boys and girls can be street children

2 Video and discussion activity

- a. Watch the introduction to the video – ask students if there are more female or male street children.
- b. Ask the class to suggest why there might be more boys than girls on the streets.

Answer

Girls are often brought up to think that they must stay at home. If girls do leave home and end up on the streets they can become more invisible than boys – they can end up in brothels, for example, where they are not seen. However, if girls do leave home they are less likely to go back as it has usually taken more to leave in the first place. Many families are not willing to accept girls back into families if they think they have been involved in sexual activities whilst on the streets.

B1a

General

Who are street children?

Photo 1: Boys sniffing glue in Romania



The Railway Children

- yes
- no
- maybe

Photo 2: Children living in a sewer in Mongolia



Alistair Ruff

- yes
- no
- maybe

Photo 3: Children living in a slum in Sri Lanka



The International Childcare Trust

- yes
- no
- maybe

Photo 4: A girl beggin in Mexico



marcuslyon.com for the ICT

- yes
- no
- maybe

Photo 5: A girl washing a car windscreen in Mexico



- yes
- no
- maybe

Photo 6: Children taking lessons in Afghanistan



- yes
- no
- maybe

Photo 7: A girl looking after a baby in Guatemala



- yes
- no
- maybe

Photo 8: A 12-year-old boy in prison in Mongolia



- yes
- no
- maybe

B1b

Geography

Numbers of street children around the world



Key learning points:

- Street children are a global issue.
- No-one really knows how many street children there are.



Resources: Atlases / internet



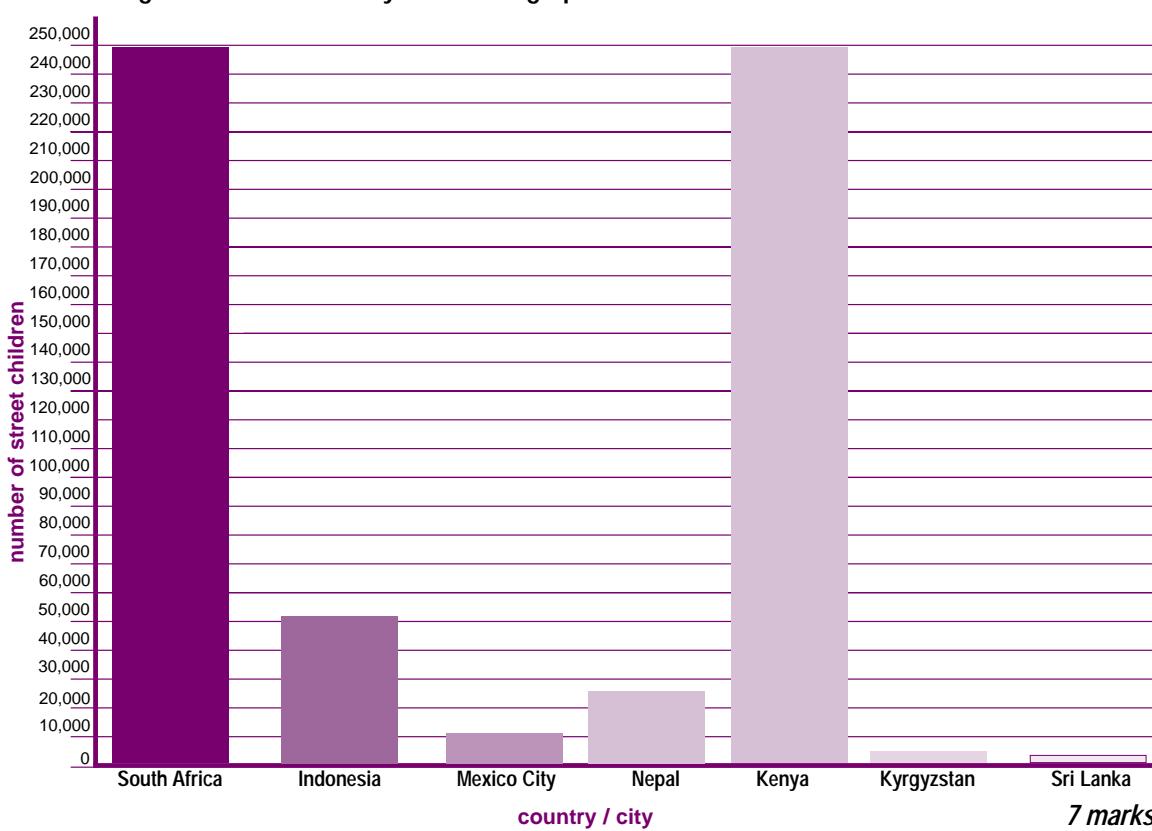
Instructions: Ask students to fill in the handout using an atlas / the internet. (The statistics are given for many of the countries featured in the Voices from the Street video / DVD.) Explain to students that one of the figures is for a city, not a country.



1. The name of the country and continent for each street children shown: (7 marks)

- 1) _____ South Africa _____ in _____ Africa _____
- 2) _____ Indonesia _____ in _____ Asia _____
- 3) _____ Mexico City _____ in _____ Latin America _____
- 4) _____ Nepal _____ in _____ Asia _____
- 5) _____ Kenya _____ in _____ Africa _____
- 6) _____ Kyrgyzstan _____ in _____ Asia _____
- 7) _____ Sri Lanka _____ in _____ Asia _____

2. Plot the figures for each country on the bar graph.



7 marks

3. Why is it difficult to know how many street children there are?

✓ ✗ Answers

- There is no single definition which accurately describes this group – different countries may categorise street children in different ways.
- Street children may not be registered at birth.
- Street children move around a lot within and between cities.
- Street children are often excluded from the kinds of institutions which would provide statistics, such as households and schools.

6 marks

Total 20 marks

Extension activities

- Ask students if they think the numbers of street children are likely to be the same today as they were in (e.g.) 1991 or even 2003. Ask them to give reasons for their answers. Explain that it is very difficult to get numbers of street children: in some countries there are only numbers available for capital cities and in many countries there are either no numbers available at all, or else the numbers may be out of date. Stress the importance of always citing the source and date of statistics like this so that information given is not misleading.
- Ask students to find out the total populations for each of these countries. These can be plotted on a bar graph and students can be asked to write about what they have noticed when they look at the two sets of figures. Students can be asked to explain why different countries have different numbers of street children.

➡ See also: Activity B2a, 'How did they end up on the Streets?' p.17.



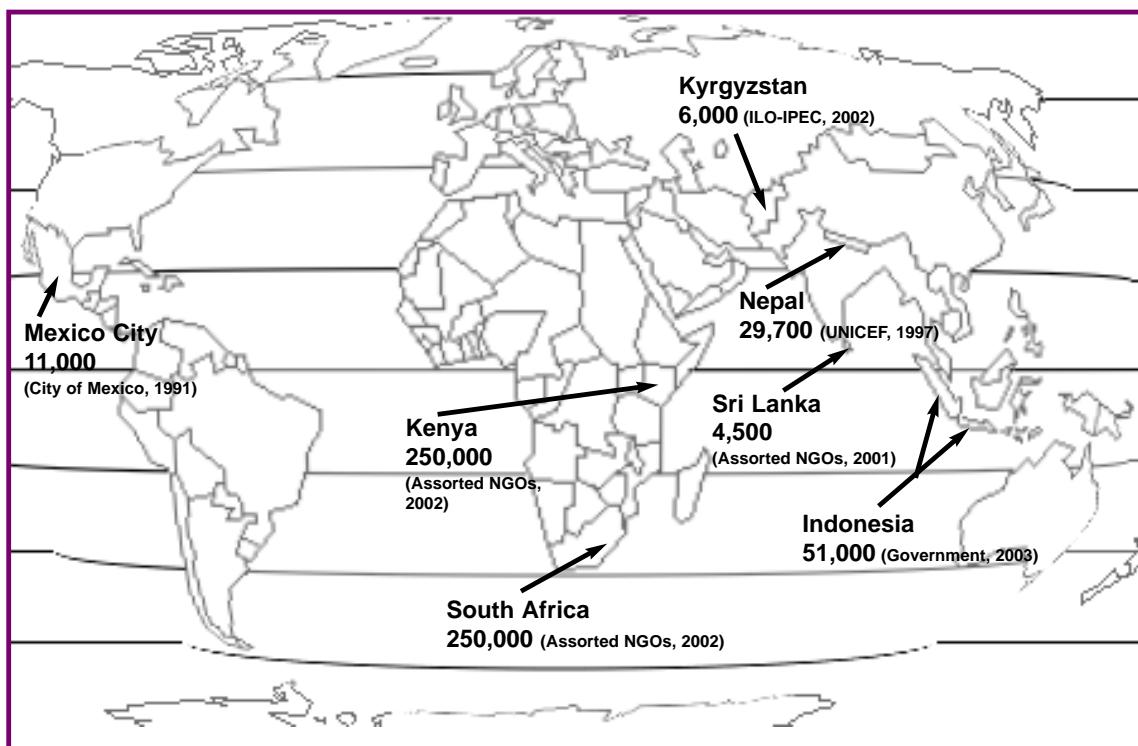
National Curriculum

- 1c) collect, record and present evidence (e.g. statistical information about countries etc); 2c) to use atlases and globes and maps...e)...and to select and use appropriate graphical techniques to present evidence on maps and diagrams e.g. pie charts, choropleth maps 2a) to use an extended geographical vocab c) to use atlases and globes and maps and plans at a range of scales.

B1b

Geography

Numbers of street children around the world



Student handout

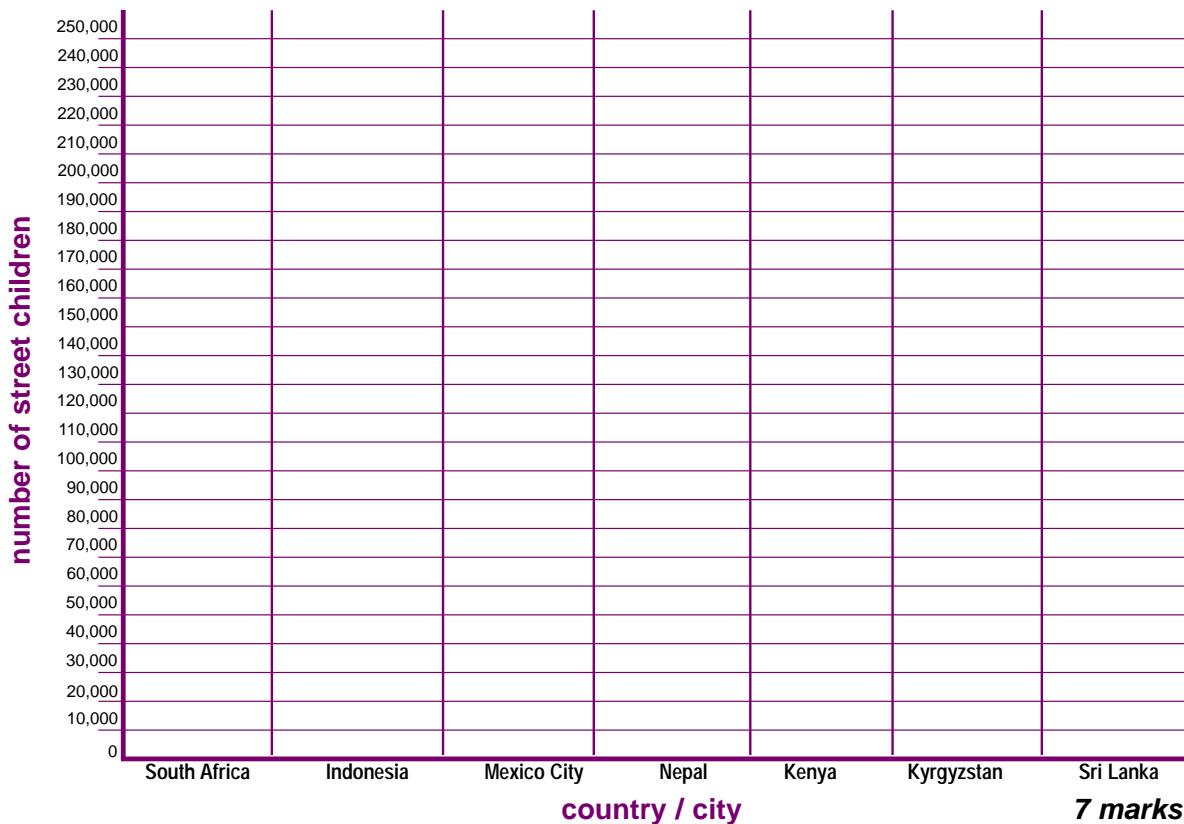
This map shows the approximate number of street children in 6 countries and 1 capital city around the world.

1. Fill in the name of the country (or capital city) and continent for each street children total shown on the map:

- 1) _____ in _____
- 2) _____ in _____
- 3) _____ in _____
- 4) _____ in _____
- 5) _____ in _____
- 6) _____ in _____
- 7) _____ in _____

7 marks

2. Plot the figures for each country / capital city on the bar graph.



3. Why is it difficult to know how many street children there are? Give 2 reasons.

1) _____

2) _____

6 marks

Total 20 marks

Where would you go?


Key learning point:

- What it might be like to be homeless in the UK and in a developing country and to compare these situations.
- Mapping skills (sketch and overlay mapping).



Resources: Paper, tracing paper, (atlases / internet for extension activity)



Instructions: Ask the students to read and fill in the worksheet.

4. How would life on the streets in the UK be different to life on the streets in a developing country? What similarities and differences would there be?

Answers (examples)

Similarities	Differences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ At risk of sexual abuse and violence ■ Loneliness ■ Discrimination ■ Vulnerable to illness ■ More temptations to abuse substances ■ Insecurity – where is next meal coming from? ■ Sense of hopelessness ■ Have run away from violence and neglect at home ■ Rely on other friends in similar situations for help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In the UK there is less poverty than in a developing country so in some respects life on the street can be easier e.g. people throw away more things that can be eaten / used ■ There are fewer street children in the UK competing for help and resources ■ Governments and NGOs in the UK have greater resources to help people on the streets e.g. social services to help support children and families at risk, hotlines etc. <p> See further information section.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Climatic differences ■ Street children in developing countries can be very young and are particularly vulnerable ■ Different types of illness are prevalent e.g. unlikely to get malaria in the UK

Extension activity

Ask students to use an atlas / internet to find out the temperature ranges for three of the countries in student handout B1b and for the UK. Ask them to write a paragraph on which country they think would be the worst to be homeless in or ask them to describe how the different temperatures might impact on homeless people in these different countries.


National Curriculum

2c) to use atlases and globes and maps... e)...and to select and use appropriate graphical techniques to present evidence on maps and diagrams eg. pie charts, choropleth maps; 3 c) to describe and explain the physical and human features that give rise to the distinctive character of places.

Geography

Where would you go?

1. Draw a sketch map of your local area. Show the main places that you normally visit in a week.

**2. Now imagine you had to leave your home. What would your life be like?
Fill in the answers to the following questions:**

a. Where would you go in the day? _____

b. Where would you sleep? _____

c. How would you stay clean? _____

d. How would you feed yourself? _____

e. Where would you get new clothes from as you grew bigger? _____

f. If someone threatened you where would you go? _____

3. Copy your sketch map onto a piece of tracing paper and then label the places that might become important to you now you are on the streets. (Your answers to the questions above will help you).

4. How would life on the streets in the UK be different to life on the streets in a developing country? What similarities and differences would there be? Fill in the table below:

Similarities	Differences