



---

# Consultations with children on their priorities for the post-MDG framework

# INDIA



**February 2013**

---

Family for Every Child is a diverse, global network of hands-on national organisations with over 300 years' combined experience. We work with the millions of children in extended family care, in institutions, in detention, on the streets, as well as those without adequate care within their own families. We are a catalyst for global and local change. Our network provides a platform for sharing and amplifying the expertise of our members. We work with others who share our vision to enable significantly more children to grow up in secure families and access temporary, quality alternative care when needed.

### Acknowledgements

This report has been written for Family for Every Child, a global network sharing knowledge, skills and resources to help more children grow up in safe, permanent and caring families and access temporary, quality, alternative care where needed. The report was written by research consultant Ms Meena Pai and is based on findings from research carried out by Butterflies and by EveryChild India and its partners:

- ShriGowthamaGramakalyana Kendra-SGGKK (Mudhol, Bagalkote-Karnataka, India)
- Sathi (Bangalore-Karnataka India)
- READ (Satyamangalam, Erode-Tamil Nadu, India)

In relation to the work carried out by EveryChild India and its partners, Ms Payal Saxena, Advocacy and Communications Manager, EveryChild India, coordinated the overall research process. Mr Somasekhar, Programme Coordinator, EveryChild India, managed the coordination with EveryChild partner organisations involved in the consultations.

In relation to the research carried out by Butterflies, India, Ms. Rita Panicker, Founder Director, Butterflies India, rendered guidance to the study. Mr. Jayaraj KP, Researcher, Butterflies India, anchored the research and Mr. Krishna Kumar Tripathy, Head-Alliance, Butterflies India, facilitated the consultations with children in Delhi.

Ms Gillian Mann, (Lead International Consultant on MDG consultations) developed the research methodology and guided the research process with critical inputs from the process of consulting children in Guyana. Ms Emily Delap, Head of Policy, Family for Every Child, provided overall guidance and valuable inputs into the research process.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge all of the children who agreed to take part in the consultations and generously spent time and shared their experiences.



## Contents

5	Summary
6	Introduction
7	Methods
10	Findings
19	Conclusion
21	Annexures
23	References
9	Box 1: The Research Context
18	Box 2: Feedback from the children about the findings

### Summary

This report presents the findings of a series of consultations in India with children living outside of or at the risk of losing parental care on the post - Millennium Development Goals framework. The consultations explore children's perceptions of factors that make them feel happy and safe and those that make them unhappy and unsafe in their families and communities. It also presents the kind of change children want to see in their lives.

A workshop-based approach was used, in which children participated in a series of activities designed to enable them to share their experiences and perspectives in a fun and engaging manner.

The views of children suggest that several areas included in the existing MDGs are of significance in their lives - poverty reduction, hunger, education, gender equity, child health and environmental protection.

However, children also highlighted significant gaps in the current framework as it does not cover children's leisure and recreational activities, eliminating child labour or their protection and care. Children repeatedly highlighted the importance of safe, caring family environments and of being free from violence. Clean and regular water supply, sanitation and hygiene were listed by the children as vital to their well-being.

Although there is much commonality in the perspectives of different children, views do vary by age, gender and living situation, suggesting that to truly understand children's views, a wide range of children must be consulted. This includes highly vulnerable groups who are often excluded for being too hard to reach.



### Introduction

*“If we just tell children about the MDGs, they will forget. If we just show them, they will remember. But if we involve them in the realisation of the MDGs, they will understand.”*

*By including young people in the attainment of the MDGs and involving them at all levels of decision making and implementation, we will be rendering a service not only to children, but to their communities also.”* Gilbert Chisenga - National Youth Constitutional Assembly Zambia

The MDGs were developed in 2000, assimilating numerous international agreements aimed at tackling extreme poverty on a global level. There are eight goals in total covering areas including the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, the achievement of universal primary education and reduction in child and maternal mortality.

The MDGs come to an end in 2015 and discussions are currently underway to explore the framework that will replace them.

Family for Every Child and its member organisations are dedicated to ensuring that children’s voices are heard in global development debates, particularly the voices of extremely vulnerable children who are outside of parental care or at risk of losing parental care. This includes ensuring that the voices of the most vulnerable are reflected in the development of a post-MDG framework. Towards this end, Family for Every Child and its members are currently carrying out consultations with around 600 children in seven countries on their priorities regarding the post-MDG framework.

### Methods

In late September and October 2012 consultations were carried out by Family for Every Child member agencies EveryChild and Butterflies in the following areas of India: New Delhi, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu (refer to Box 1 for location details).

The consultations were held with boys and girls between the ages of 8 and 18 years who were living without parental care or with families in vulnerable situations (on the streets, in non-notified slums<sup>1</sup>).

These included children from the lowest caste groups and those vulnerable to or affected by the Devadasi system of dedicating girls to temples (see Box 1 for further explanation).

These children also included girls and boys living in hostels connected to the Morarji Desai Residential Schools (for backward classes and minorities) and in Government Children's Homes. The Morarji schools are premier co-educational schools run by state governments where children are admitted based on merit and receive free education till grade 12. Children attending these schools leave their villages and are accommodated in hostels connected to the school.

Children's Homes, constituted under the Juvenile Justice Act 2000, are meant for the reception of children in need of care and protection, awaiting reintegration with their family or communities by statutory Child Welfare Committees.

A total of 24 consultations were held and 164 children participated. An overview of the children according to age and category are as follows:

Category of children	Boys	Girls
Children in extended family care	25	21
Children in residential care – government-run institutions	19	0
Children in residential care – hostels	22	15
Children living alone on the streets	7	0
Children living with one or both parents on streets	6	6
Children living with one or both parents in non-notified slums	18	25
TOTAL	97	67

A workshop-based approach was used, in which children participated in a series of activities designed to enable them to share their experiences and perspectives in a fun and engaging manner. Each workshop was approximately two hours in duration. The workshops involved both individual and collective activities – drawings, writing, discussions and 'gallery walks' in which children looked at one

---

<sup>1</sup> A "non-notified slum" is a compact urban area with a collection of temporary tenements, usually with inadequate sanitary and drinking water facilities

## Consultations with children on their priorities for the post-MDG framework: India

---

another's productions and discussed them as a group. Broadly, the focus of these workshops was on learning from children about:

- the things that make them feel happy and safe in their families and communities;
- the things that make them feel unhappy and unsafe in their families and communities;
- the things that they would like to change about their lives and the lives of other children in their communities and elsewhere.

These discussions were placed in the context of the current MDGs and the development of the post-MDG framework. The tools used in the workshop were field tested in Guyana and India, and the research team used Family for Every Child Practice Standards on Research and Consultation with children to help ensure that ethical standards were met.

The children involved in the consultations come from a range of vulnerable contexts which are described in more detail in Box 1. Provisional Findings were fed back to the children and have been incorporated (refer to Box 2 for feedback from children). Annexure I provides further details about methods and some of the challenges we faced.



### Box 1: The Research Context

#### Karnataka – Mudhol and Bangalore

In Mudhol (Bagalkot district, North Karnataka), the social structure is strongly ensconced in the caste system. The caste groups of Madiga, Cheluvadi, Kamble, Bhovi and Lambani represent the lowest strata of the communities. Here, migration of the rural poor is rampant due to factors such as recurring drought, failure of dry-land crops and a deepening water crisis resulting in no work in the villages. Migration disrupts the education of children and leads to high drop-out rates. Children are often left behind with grandparents or other relatives leading to the neglect of their care and education.

The practice of 'Devadasi' tradition is prominent in North Karnataka. The term 'Devadasi' means 'female servant of god'. Girls are ceremoniously dedicated or married to a deity or a temple before they reach puberty. This practice has degenerated into a guise for the trafficking of young girls, predominantly from marginalised communities for commercial sexual exploitation. Some children are permanently left to the care of their kin because of desertion and Devadasi parents who have died of HIV/AIDS. In just two panchayats that EveryChild partners work, there are around 200 children of Devadasis who are staying with their kin.

In Bangalore, one sees the urban context of increasing numbers of children running away from home, travelling by trains to distant cities and surviving on railway platforms and streets. Runaway children leave home for several reasons such as extreme poverty, broken homes, alcoholic parents or being orphaned. Often, children leave home for minor reasons e.g. scoring poor grades at school, fighting with another child or losing something valuable. In this situation, they have no access to education, health services or support. Each day is a struggle to survive because their life on the streets means that they are at risk from gangs, exploitative employers, organised traffickers, brokers, syndicated begging and harassment from the police.

#### Tamil Nadu – Satyamangalam

Satyamangalam, in western Tamil Nadu, and is home to the Arundhatiyar community. They are Dalits who are considered to be at the bottom of the caste hierarchy. Often referred to as the 'Dalits amongst Dalits', they are a socially, economically and politically disadvantaged group and are treated as untouchables. There are about 8 million Arundhatiyars in Tamil Nadu, the majority of whom live in Western Tamil Nadu. They do very menial and undignified jobs.

Most Arundhatiar children in the rural areas work as bonded labourers for the upper castes as their parents themselves have been bonded and are not able to break out of it. Due to their inability to pay back their debts, children are sent to work with the same employers. Many young girls are being exploited and work as bonded labourers under a textile mill employers' scheme known as the Sumangali scheme wherein after three years of hard and exploitative work, they receive a lumpsum of INR 30,000 which parents are told to use for their daughter's marriage. The status of the children after completion of high-school education is worse - there is no economic stability to continue their education.

#### New Delhi

UNICEF's estimate of 11 million street children in India is considered to be a conservative figure (Consortium for Street Children, 2011). The majority of these street children are workers who live with their families in Delhi slums and resettlement colonies as well as on pavements. Though there is no concrete data to establish the exact number of street children in Delhi, it is estimated that nearly 25% of all street children are runaway, migrant or missing children whose families and parents are not in Delhi. They work between 4-10 hours a day and earn on an average Rs.20 a day 60-70% of which is spent on food. They are denied education, basic health care, adequate nutrition, leisure time and the safety and security of their homes, families and communities. The suffering of the children and the extreme poverty makes them vulnerable to exploitation and violation of their rights.

### Findings

The process of facilitating group discussions with the children was an enriching and revelatory exercise. While some aspects were known to the organisations holding the discussions, the depth of children’s experiences and levels of importance that they attribute to different issues was new.

Factors such as age, gender and the living arrangements of the children did influence their perception of issues and also, the priority they had in their lives.

Through the consultations, children identified and ranked the changes they would like to see in their lives and in their living environments. The following table is a representation of their priorities –

#### A summary table of the changes children want:

High priority	Medium priority	Low priority
Good education – good teachers, books, computers	Sports and playgrounds	Vacations with family
Living with parents, siblings	Good friends	Shops closer to home
Amenities – toilets, water supply, electricity, shelter, drainage system	Transport – especially school vans	No sleeping on the streets
Clean environment	Good clothes	Kind relatives
Adequate Food	No scolding or beating at home	Singing and dancing
No quarrels at home	Money – to reach goals	Cycling
No alcohol consumption and violence at home	Siblings	
Adequate playtime – at home and hostel	No household work	
No child labour		
Health for all		
Employment for parents and reduction in poverty		
Better hostel conditions		
No evictions		
Gender equality		
Skill-based training		
No misconduct from police		

### Factors that made children feel safe and happy:

#### Education and loving teachers

A good education was perceived as a route to a bright future, a pathway to security and better social status. The role of teachers was highlighted as children saw them as motivators and guides. They expressed love and respect for those teachers who took a personal interest in them and were conscientious in teaching the students well.

*"If I study well, I can become policeman or a car driver"* (boy, 13 years)

Older girls, 12–17 years, felt that girl children should be given equal educational opportunities as boys and one group quoted the Karnataka government's slogan - "Educating a girl child is akin to opening a school".

*"I want to study as much as possible, I should know about the world"* (girl, 17 years old)

The older group of children also mentioned the need for skill-based and vocational training to supplement formal education as this might widen their horizons as far as securing a job was concerned. They felt a school degree may not be enough and they need to have some skill to fend for themselves and family later. They did not want to join their parents in work such as rag-picking, street vending, construction work, etc..as these forms of work are unsafe, fetch very meager returns and have no scope for improvement.

In this context, children from all ages mentioned computer education as a necessity in today's world where technology is becoming an important source of employment. They felt all schools should provide training on using computers which would empower them with a higher level skill.

Knowledge of spoken English was also considered an important asset.

The children in hostels were happy that they were receiving regular schooling which was not the case in their village schools where teachers would not teach properly. The schedules in hostels helped them to focus on studies along with play. They also appreciated that hostels provided them with regular food and water supply to bathe.

#### Relationship with Parents, siblings and extended family

A central theme through all groups and discussions was of fulfilling relationships. The need for parental love and care was the most prominent issue all children discussed. The family unit was the safest space for them and one that they craved for to remain intact. Along with family, the social network of friends and supportive teachers were of paramount importance in children's' lives. Without any of these, they felt lost and broken.

In all the groups, across age, gender and living arrangements, parents and family were identified as the most important factor that makes children feel safe, loved and protected. They felt that no person or institution can replace the acceptance, love and care that parents can provide as they understand

## Consultations with children on their priorities for the post-MDG framework: India

---

the children's needs well, prioritise their wants and earn only to be able to take care of the children.

*"Parents, especially mothers, are our first teachers and are god-like for us"* (girl, 17 years old)

Children, who are not living with their parents, said that they loved to visit parents in their village or feel excited when parents come to see them. They felt great sadness at leaving home for hostel and not being able to see parents for months. They felt parents held their best interests at heart and made sure they went to school.

*"I missed school for a year and still, my father sent me back"* (boy, 12 years old)

Many children mentioned that the division of their families made them anxious and scared. Children, who live by themselves on street, indicated their strong desire to stay with family members. Children who stay with single parent (in majority cases with mother) wanted both parents to be together.

Older sisters held a special importance as they would take care of younger siblings like a mother would.

*"My grandparents are very good to me. I love my siblings, especially sisters"* (girl, 10 years old)

### Amenities and Basic Needs

Adequate food was an important need for all the groups. They wanted nutritious, regular meals to be healthy. Many children did not get adequate food at home and sometimes, in hostel too. The food would also have no taste, salt or spices.

*"We are poor, so we get to eat very little at home"* (boy, 15 years old)

*"At hostel, we are provided very limited food."* (boy, 11 years old)

Infrastructural needs such as a regular water supply, electricity and good roads leading to the village were identified by the children to make their lives smoother. Many walked long distances to reach school, to fetch water, buy groceries and essential goods for the home. Generally children fetch water from sources such as hand pumps at nearby public pipes.

Lack of an electricity supply made things very uncomfortable for children living in locations where weather conditions such as extreme heat in summer and cold winters make it difficult to survive under tin/asbestos sheet roofs in temporary homes.

Toilets, near the home and at school, was a necessity that most children wanted access to. Open defecation and use of paid toilets were common.

They also wanted new and better quality clothes as many of them wore torn ones for years. They also wanted a good hospital or clinic closer to where they live so that they and their families would be taken care of in emergencies.

They felt that a transport system which covered all the villages would help them immensely. A school

van was mentioned by most children as a must.

Children also wanted better quality homes as most of them lived in poorly constructed or temporary ones which had leakage problems and flooded in monsoons. Demolishment of temporary homes in non-notified slums by civic authorities is a frequent occurrence.

### Clean Environment

Children felt that a sustainable environment was necessary for life itself and greenery is a must. Clean surroundings has been raised by children as a point to be taken into consideration to live safe. Children have pointed out that dumping waste in the surroundings might spread diseases and makes life difficult.

Apart from clean surroundings, children shared the importance of trees in their life. They pointed out that trees give us oxygen and pure air to breath. In this regard they felt more trees should be planted.

*"If trees are cut, rains will be hampered and ecology will be destroyed"* (girl, 16 years old)

### Peace in family, neighbourhood and community

Children, particularly girls, emphasized need for peace in family and community to lead a safe life. According to them, issues such as alcoholism, violence, communal tension between Hindus and Muslims in non-notified slums and conflicts in neighborhoods destroys the peace and make their life unsafe. They feel secure and at peace when adults interact with each other and with children in a polite and respectful manner.

*"I hate it when people fight and have hatred in their hearts for others"* (girl, 11 years old)

### Relationship with friends

After family, friends were identified as the most important relationship for children. They would share all their problems with friends and spend long hours playing with them. This made them happy and well supported. Children in the age group of 12-14 and 15-17 years emphasized the role of friends in their everyday life. They feel happy and safe while staying with their friends. Female children in the age group of 15-17 years also underscored this point.

### Sports and Recreational needs

All children, irrespective of age, expressed great joy and excitement when they play games. For many, it was a main source of entertainment and an outlet. They felt there was freedom in movement. Play gave them space from family and problems. It could be games that they have invented or sports with set of rules. They felt playing sports was good for health, made them active and happy. They wanted more playgrounds and longer playtime.

*"Sports and play are good for health, keeps one active always"* (boy, 15 years old)

Excursions with parents and from school were a fun activity which children looked forward to. Along with spending time with family and friends, they liked to explore new places. Cycling, singing, drawing and religious activities were sources of entertainment and joy.

## Consultations with children on their priorities for the post-MDG framework: India

---

### Respect for girl children and child rights

Many of the groups with girls felt strongly about being treated on a par with boys. They felt families should feel as happy when a girl is born as they display with boys. They shared that girls were not sent to school, had to take on household responsibilities and care of younger siblings and were not allowed to play games. They get scolded for mistakes made by male siblings. They wished for a world where girl children are given equal status and love.

*“We should engage in sports and make our parents proud. It is sad that girls are not encouraged enough to play” (girl, 17 years old)*

All children felt that their rights and fundamental needs should be given respect and actions must be taken by families and governments to actualise these rights.



### Factors that made children feel unsafe and unhappy:

#### Child labor

In some families, fathers or elder brothers do not indulge in any kind of employment on a regular basis and this affects the monetary situation at home. Families often sent children to work to earn extra income. Other than this, insufficient earning of parent(s) to run and manage family needs forces parents to put children into work.

Children often have to drop out of school to work. They don't have time to play or meet friends. In addition to working, they have to complete household work too.

## Consultations with children on their priorities for the post-MDG framework: India

---

*"We don't own any land, so the poverty forces us to work and I am also forced to work"* (boy, 14 years)

A few female children felt that working gave them some independence as they would have some money for themselves. If they didn't work, it would make their life difficult and unsafe as they would be compelled to depend on their parents or guardian for money even for meeting their small requirements.

### Violence and conflicts in the household

Violence between their father and mother or mother and elder siblings made children feel scared. They also felt sad when extended family members fought or treated them badly. It was common to be scolded and hit by grandparents, aunts and uncles.

*"My mother gets beaten by my father regularly and sometimes even I get beaten by my father, which I don't like"* (boy, 16 years old)

### Scolding and beating in the family and at school

Punitive measures such as hitting and yelling are commonly used to discipline children, but all of them said they disliked it and it upset them deeply. Hitting was a regular feature in most families, schools and hostels.

Children related incidents where adults threw shoes at them, made them stand on one leg, asked girls to hit them, tying up, kicking, being hit with a bat or belt or stones. The reasons for being hit varied from not carrying out household tasks, breaking things, not following instructions and answering back.

*"If I don't bring fire wood, my grandmother beats me and I cry a lot"* (boy, 13 years)

*"My father hit me with a shoe when I was eating once. I felt very bad"* (boy, 10 years)

### Alcohol consumption and substance abuse

In most children's families, male members such as fathers, uncles, grandfathers and older brothers drank alcohol excessively. Children were expected to buy the alcohol and would get hit if they refused or didn't buy the alcohol as instructed. The men in the family would hit the women and children after drinking. Some would fall by the roadside, unable to walk home. Children were disturbed by their behavior after drinking and were worried that they would suffer from ill health. They wanted all alcohol shops near their homes to be closed.

*"I threw chilli powder on my uncle's face when I found him drunk and ran away from there. He hits me after drinking"* (boy, 12 years old)

*"My grandfather sends me to buy alcohol. I don't like him drinking. If he drinks, he hits me. If I don't buy alcohol, even then he hits me"* (boy, 14 years old)

Male children, especially those living on the streets, indicated that in spite of their understandings about the consequences of usages, often they consume substances such as glue. Peer group

## Consultations with children on their priorities for the post-MDG framework: India

---

pressure pushes many children into substance abuse. Many were introduced to smoking and drinking and were forced to eat tobacco by friends.

*"I have a friend who forced me into chewing tobacco. I don't like such people"* (boy, 11 years old)

### Living in hostel

A few children in hostels were unhappy with the living conditions. They had to follow rigid schedules, were frequently hit by teachers and older children, not given adequate food and were exposed to violence and abusive language from older students.

### Police harassment

For children living on the streets and in non-notified slums, harassment by the police is one of the major threats in their everyday life.

They are apprehended and face beatings frequently. The meager amount earned by children is taken away by the police personnel. Two children mentioned that they were taken to police station and forced to clean the floor.

Children who stay in non-notified slums spoke of the role of police in evictions and demolishing slums. Children have been beaten along with their family members by the police. Their utensils, clothes and other belongings were thrown away by the police during the time of eviction.

Apart from the dimension of physical abuse of police, a female child in the age group of 15-17 years (New Delhi) mentioned that a few policemen do 'wrong things' with female children in her neighborhood

### Lack of security whilst sleeping on the streets

Male children, who live on streets alone, expressed fear of staying and sleeping alone as their money is often stolen and they are always in fear of adults and police. They often face police harassment. Female children who stay with parent(s) on street, harbored fear of other adults particularly drug addicts while sleeping on the street.

*"They might do something 'wrong' with me...I don't like them"* (girl, 14 years old)

Children living in non-notified slums shared the fear of being left alone at home by parent(s).

*"When my mother goes to our native place and leaves me here, I feel scared and unsafe"* (girl, 15 years)

They also feared falling sick because of the adverse environments that they live in and not having access to healthcare.

### Child marriage

Groups with girls brought up the issue of child marriage. Child marriages are a culturally accepted practice in many parts of India and families feel marriage will keep the girl safe, reduce the financial

burden of caring for one family member and also, carry on the gender assigned role for girls of wife and mother. The girls in the consultations disliked the attitude of parents on the issue and expressed their feelings of helplessness as far as their future is concerned.

### **Devadasi system** (refer to Box 1)

Children, across genders, in groups from Karnataka expressed disgust and fear of the Devadasi tradition. They had lost their mothers, sisters and many other female relatives to the practice. Girls were vulnerable to being sent to live in temples and were fearful of how their life would turn out after that.

### **Unhygienic environments**

A vast majority of children highlighted unhygienic environments and surroundings as a health hazard for them and their families. There are no designated places for dumping garbage in their neighbourhoods. Poor drainage system in cities, shrinking green cover and lackadaisical attitude of people towards waste management has also been brought up by the children in relation to the issue.

## **Differences in the groups:**

There were differences in the perceptions of boys and girls on what the other would have to say on key issues. The girls felt that boys would not have focused much on gender inequality. They felt boys would have been more concerned with poverty as parents send boys to work more when they cannot afford education. The boys felt girls would focus more on household work, recreational activities such as singing and drawing and may not have been hit as much as boys.

In terms of key issues, both groups brought up similar issues and even gave them the same amount of importance in the last activity on *change*.

Children in government homes cited more incidents of violence, abuse and ill treatment at the hands of parents or relatives than those in regular hostels. They also shared higher incidence of alcohol-related family disturbances, which was a significant cause of them leaving home.

Older children were more articulate in expressing their thoughts, but the themes were the same. The younger children pointed out issues they face in a more literal manner and were not able to deliberate on reasons behind the issue very clearly.

### Box 2 – Feedback from children on the findings of the report

In the month of January 2013, discussions were held with children in the same locations where consultations were held - to share the findings of a child-friendly version of the draft report and record their feedback.

Children were in agreement with the main findings of the report and felt that it reflected their concerns adequately. They added information to the existing findings, stressing on the importance of these factors in their lives:

**Education** – Punitive punishment must be banned in schools. Emphasis should be on learning and not merely on marks obtained in examinations. Scholarship amounts provided by the government must increase and books must be provided.

**Relationships with family** – Parents must not fight in front of their children and cause stress and anxiety in the home. All efforts of the parents should be on making family life secure and peaceful.

**Amenities** – The lack of resources such as water and electricity causes unrest in communities due to fights between neighbours about sharing them. Children are not able to concentrate on studies as they do not have electricity at night.

**Peace in the community** – Children felt that peaceful and progressive communities where caste and gender disparities are removed will serve as good role models for them when they grow up.

**Sports and recreation** – Parents and schools realise how important rest and play is to children and not create barriers to play such as giving a lot of household work, holding special classes during sports hour at school or sending children to work. Playgrounds must be made available to all children, in every village.

**Living in hostels** – Girls' hostels must have only female wardens and good clothes should be provided to all children.

**Child labour** – No child should be a slave to anyone. Education is more important than work and parents must make sure all children attend school. Government must provide financial support for poor families so that children don't drop-out of school to earn extra money.

**Violence and conflict at home** – Children residing in government homes stated that a major reason for running away from home was violence between parents and between parents and children. If parents had stopped the violence and taken care of them better, they would have stayed at home and been happier.

**Living on the streets** - There should be many night shelters for street children with health facilities as they are prone to illnesses. Social welfare organisations must reach out and support street children in every way they can.

**Police harassment** – The police should recognise that a child that has run away from home is in distress and needs help. They should speak to such children with respect and try to help them rather than beating them and making their lives more difficult.

### Conclusion

Children in the consultations had much to say about the post-MDG framework, with strong ideas and options about the priority areas for inclusion. Many of the issues that children mentioned in the course of the group discussions are interlinked and cross-cutting in nature.

The views of children suggest that several areas included in the existing MDGs are of significance in their lives. These include poverty reduction, hunger, education, gender equity, child health and environmental protection.

However, the views expressed by the children also highlight significant gaps in the current MDG framework which has not articulated specific goals related to the rights enshrined in the UN Convention of Rights of the Child (CRC). In particular, the current framework does not cover children's leisure and recreational activities, eliminating child labor or their protection and care.

Play was identified as a healthy and satisfying outlet for children. This, along with other rights, is also guaranteed in Article 31 in the UN CRC which states that, 'every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts'. All member governments (including India, being a signatory) are expected to respect and promote this right and integrate it with international commitments such as the MDGs.

In relation to protection and care, children repeatedly highlighted the importance of growing up in safe, caring, family environments and of being free from violence. Most children wanted to live with parents but adverse conditions led to their separation from families. In this regard, India's acceptance of the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, which were welcomed by the UN in 2010, corroborates this finding.

Equitable access to amenities was discussed in detail by the children. Clean and regular water supply, sanitation and hygiene were listed by the children as vital to their well-being. Along with regular supply, children stressed increasing the reach of these services to even the remotest villages. This suggests that the development of amenities may warrant a separate goal in itself.

In terms of education, children wanted more meaningful education that would equip them with skills for the future. The goal on education needs to focus on better training of teachers and development of curriculums aimed at skills.

It is also important that efforts are made to measure the equitable achievement of other MDG goals and indications to ensure that progress in areas such as health and education reaches the most vulnerable groups.

Although there is much commonality in the perspectives of different children, views do vary by age, gender and living situation, suggesting that to truly understand children's views, a wide range of children must be consulted. This includes highly-vulnerable groups who are often excluded for being too hard to reach.

These conclusions suggest that in addition to many of the issues covered in the current MDG goals, it

## Consultations with children on their priorities for the post-MDG framework: India

---

is important for the post-MDG framework to include goals and indicators in the following areas:

- Child protection and care. For example, a goal of ensuring that all children live a life free from all forms of violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect, and thrive in a safe, family environment, accompanied by targets in areas such as the eradication of harmful child labour and the end of harmful institutional care (see Annex 2 for further details of what such a goal and indicators could look like)
- Water and sanitation. For example, a goal ensuring that all children have access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities.
- Quality and relevant education. Current goals should be expanded to ensure that all children will have access to a relevant and quality education that equips them with the knowledge and skills they need to contribute to societies as productive adults in the future.
- Play. With a goal or target aimed at ensuring that children's rights to rest and recreation are upheld



### Annex I

#### Challenges faced during consultations:

(Refer to 'Methods' section for details on process of consultations)

- **Location of FGD** Ideally, the location must be such that the children are not distracted. But in the case of the children in kinship care, their carers accompanied them especially if they were of a younger age group. The carers had to be engaged in some parallel activity so that there was no interference from them during the children's discussion. In a residential care setting again, the place of discussion should not be such which inspires fear of being heard or being under surveillance, with the institution staff hovering or insisting on being part of the discussion.
- **Understanding concepts such as 'like/dislike' and 'safe/unsafe'** Sometimes, children would interpret the questions as pertaining only to material things such as 'ice cream, toys, good beds'. Facilitators would have to break the questions down into sub-parts to elicit answers to principal questions. It was difficult to draw out information from the children through one exercise.
- **Timing** In some groups, the FGD took longer than anticipated since the explanation of concepts proved more time consuming. In this case, the team further refined the concepts in local language, keeping in mind the cultural context. Visual depictions may have helped in making this process easier. Also, the children took a long time to put their thoughts on paper for the gallery walk.
- **Literacy level of children** A significant percentage of children could not express themselves in writing as schools do not encourage a culture of writing on such topics. Some children could not read or write in accordance with their age. This factor got in the way of understanding the consultation questions and workshop activities. The gallery walk, in particular, posed a challenge to the children and many chose to express their thoughts through drawings or took the help of children in the group who were proficient in writing.
- **Space for games** Facilitators felt that they had to be as creative as possible to break ice with the children and engage the group effectively. Children would lose interest over the course of the workshop. So, they had to be equipped with many short energisers and maintain time as well.

## Annex II

### An example goal and targets on child protection for the post-MDG framework

#### Goal:

All children live in a life free from all forms of violence, are protected in conflicts and thrive in a safe family environment

#### Targets:

- End child deaths from armed conflict and halve the number of non-conflict violent deaths of children (e.g., intentional homicide)
- Halve the number of children who are subject to sexual violence and abuse of any form
- Halve the number of children subjected to violent discipline at home
- Halve the number of children unnecessarily living outside family care (including children affected by emergencies)
- End the placement of all children in harmful institutional care
- End the worst forms of child labour

## References

Consortium for Street Children (2011) *Street Children Statistics*, at <http://cfsc.trunky.net>, accessed on 11 February 2013

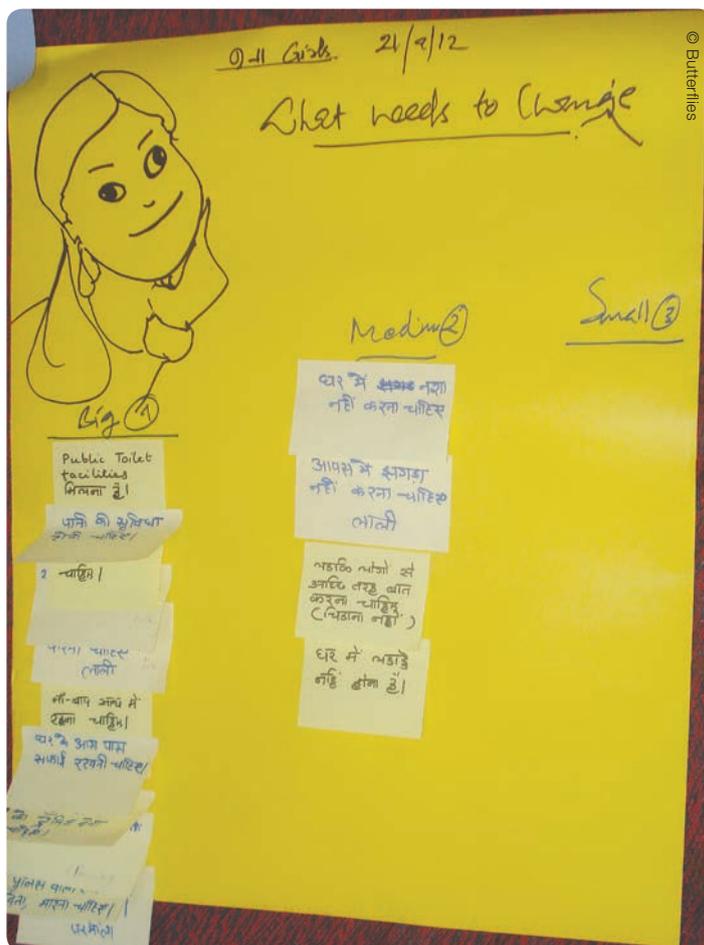
EveryChild India (2010), *Bidugade (Liberation) 2007-2011: Protection and development of Children at Risk of trafficking in Northern Karnataka*, Bangalore, India

EveryChild India (2010), *Engalkural: Protection and development of children living in kinship and alternative care, and those at risk of losing parental care in Western Tamil Nadu*, Bangalore, India

EveryChild India (2010), *Reintegration of children separated from their families and living on the railways (2011-15)*, Bangalore, India

Government of India, *Note on Urban Slums*, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementations,

UNICEF (2007), *Convention on the Rights of the Child with Optional Protocols*, New Delhi, India



Family for Every Child  
Email: [info@familyforeverychild.org](mailto:info@familyforeverychild.org)  
[www.familyforeverychild.org](http://www.familyforeverychild.org)  
Registered charity no. 1149212  
Registered company no. 08177641