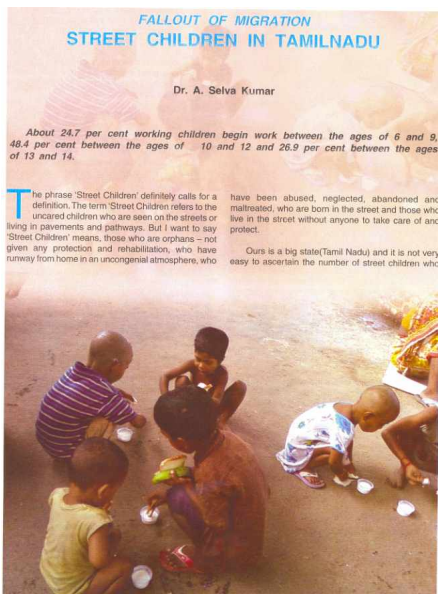


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live in it. Because there is no proper census report prepared either by the Government, or by any Non-Governmental organizations. They are mostly concentrated in urban areas and thickly populated areas. They live and work under poor conditions. These children are more vulnerable and so they are easily exploited and swindled.

According to various reports available so far, about 24.7 per cent working children begin work between the ages of 6 and 9, 48.4 per cent between the ages of 10 and 12 and 26.9 per cent between the ages of 13 and 14.

They are working in the streets as beggars, rag pickers, hawkers, shop-assistants, cooks, waiters, head loaders, shoe-shiners and vendors. They are often harassed by the police.

They begin their work from early morning seven o'clock. Most of them are awakened by the traffic noise. They are living in between noise and air pollution. They do not bother about their own health any hygiene. They are forced to begin their work from the early morning in search of their daily bread.

Mostly street children are of four cadres. They are,

- The male street child,
- The female street child,
- The street child who lives with his or her family,
- The street child who lives without his or her family.

The male street children are generally between 7-14 years of age living with their families in pavements and path ways. They are involved in rag picking, metal and scrap collection, hotel cleaning, as hawkers and construction labourers.

The female street child is generally between 7-14 years of age living with her family under the same conditions as her counterparts. They are involved in household work,

baby sitting, look house duties, washing of clothes and utensils, procuring water and firewood for their homes. They also work as rag pickers, metal and scrap collectors and construction labourers.

Due to quarrels and mis-understanding, separation or death of parents, many children leave their families.

have been abused, neglected, abandoned and maltreated, who are born in the street and those who live in the street without anyone to take care of and protect.

Ours is a big state (Tamil Nadu) and it is not very easy to ascertain the number of street children who

So, they have to live on the road sides and path ways under unhappy situations. Majority of them are involved in rag picking, helping at marriage parties and working as coolies. They feel that they are living a lonely life and there life is unprotected. They have no relatives, possession and belongings. Sometimes they are irritated and punished by the police. In few cases, there are charged with illegal activities. So they are beaten and asked to pay fine. Their mind and body suffer due to the effect of their working in dangerous garbage heaps, rummaging in filthy, scrap and metal. And also, they are living in fear of their employer. But they consume very poor nourishing food.

Some street children live with their family on the road sides. Generally they migrate from various places with their family members. Mostly they come from backward areas. The main reasons are poverty, unemployment, natural calamities and personal problems. These children are willing to study in schools, but that can not do so, because of, lack of study materials, place to study, police and government authorities harassment. Even though children are supported and settled by their family members economically, occupationally, physically and emotionally, this affects the development of these children and they are deprived of a better future and peaceful life.

Most of these children do not get adequate food. Sometimes they are without food for days together. Thus the main problem for them is finding food only. If they don't have work, they have no food. If they don't have work, they immediately get into the habit of stealing.

Once he gets employment, the next problem is to get food and stay. They buy their food at a road side hotel and path way stalls, because it is cheap and they stay in unhygienic places. Further they change their resting places everyday. They come into contact with bad elements and pick-up habits like smoking, drinking alcohol, taking drugs etc. This brings them many diseases and their health is affected.

Street children are the vital problem for all of us. This can't be solved in a day, but in due course by giving education, vocational training and good environment to them. Our country will be led to prosperity, only when they are properly educated, guided and get into a good job in right time.

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