

On the Issue of Street Children in Lebanon

2013

Capstone Project
By: Margueritta El Asmar
Lebanese American University

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	3
Abstract.....	4
I-Background.....	5
Definition.....	5
Child Exploitation and its Consequences.....	6
International Declarations Protecting the Child.....	6
Arab and International Interventions.....	7
Lebanese Street Children.....	8
Lebanese Law.....	9
Lebanese Intervention.....	10
Lebanese Education System.....	11
Parties that should be targeted.....	11
II- Project Implementation.....	13
Assisting the Children.....	14
Educating the General Population.....	17
Advertisement campaign.....	18
Donation centers.....	18
Cyber and Social Media.....	18
Targeting the Children’s Families.....	19
Training the Children.....	19
Addressing the Government, and Government-related Issues.....	20
Summary.....	21
III- Financing the project.....	22
Pilot Project (for 10 students).....	24
Expanded Project (per month).....	24
Advertising Campaign.....	24
IV- Means of Evaluation.....	24
V-Future prospects.....	25
VI-Limitations.....	25
VII-Conclusion.....	26
Bibliography.....	27
Appendix.....	28

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my appreciation to Dr. Makram Ouaiss, my advisor for this project and Chair of the Social Sciences Department at the Lebanese American University, for providing invaluable remarks and help as my advisor. I would also like to thank MEPI TL administration including the program director, Dr. Walid Touma, Ms. Rola Nader, Dr. Ramzi Haraty, Ms. Loulwa Kaloyeros, and Dr. Marwan Rowayheb for their unfailing support over the past three years.

Abstract

The anomaly of children street beggars is one that has been increasing alarmingly over the past decade in Lebanon. Whether they are of Lebanese origin or otherwise, there is only a single institution in Lebanon, the Home of Hope, that welcomes and assists those disparate individuals. The Home of Hope can only house a limited number of children, and of those housed, not all actually see the program to its end. Therefore, a new stratagem must be implemented, one that would include modified and improved methodologies of dealing with beggar children, collecting donations, recruiting street educators and volunteers, and educating the general populous about the situation, through the establishment of a non-governmental organization. This proposal discusses the modalities of developing such an organization.

I-Background

Whilst navigating the major roads in the urbanized cities of Lebanon, one cannot help but come across one or more youngsters spread out randomly throughout these cities, grouped particularly near traffic lights – where cars come to a stop. The children appear to follow a rehearsed routine: knock on car windows, look the passengers in the eyes and hold out their hands to either sell small merchandises or as a silent plea for money. It is noticeable that strangers, upon witnessing this phenomenon, would either regard it with a wary eye (suggesting that they are somewhat used to the instances of poverty) or are simply shocked at this wretched, silent cry for help.

Unfortunate as it is, this phenomenon is not restricted to the suburbs of Lebanon; as of 2002, statistical estimates indicate a number of around 100 million street children that follow a global distribution (Serrano, 2002). This ill-fated phenomenon has made it into the major film industries of Hollywood, with blockbusters such as *Slumdog Millionaire* raking in millions of US dollars worldwide on the travesties of the Indian street life. If the goal behind such movies was to increase global awareness of the dejected lives those children lead, then it was a success. However, if the goal was to, in one way or another, impact those underprivileged children's lives, then as obvious this goal was not met with success.

Definition

The celebrated philosopher Voltaire says: *If you are to debate me, then first define your terms.* Thus, before delving into the core of the situation, one ought to first seek a definition for the term “street children”. In effect, several definitions have been established. Lusk categorizes street children into 3 distinct criteria: Those who toil on the streets but return to their families to sleep; those whose families inhabit the streets, and those who seek the streets as a means of escape, or

an alternative home away from their families. This last group is divided into two categories; those who have no contact with their families, and those whose family connections are beginning to weaken (Lusk, 1992).

Child Exploitation and its Consequences

Organized mobs exploit the innocence of these children to make revenues. They distribute children at strategic points to collect money from passers-by, often watching from a distance, silently observing. Money collected is gathered at the end of the day from the children. Exploitation of female street children goes much further, whereby some are even coerced into prostitution or are sexually assaulted (UNHCHR, 2005).

Such a lifestyle has catastrophic and detrimental effects on the kids' physical and mental well-being. These children work long hours in harsh conditions, often feeding on what little they can afford or scavenge- a lifestyle which poses many risks on a physiological and psychological level. Aside from scarring them emotionally and psychologically, sexual abuse can also leave them prone to sexually transmitted diseases (UNICEF, 2006). The situation is further aggravated by the lack of proper medical care to offer the children appropriate medicaments and regular check-ups on their health (UNICEF, Declaration of the Rights of the Child, 1959).

International Declarations Protecting the Child

These children, just like any other child, have civil rights they are innately entitled to. Unfortunately, not only are those underprivileged children not receiving the minimal rights that are entitled to them by the "Declaration of the Rights of the Child", but they are also completely and miserably unaware of the existence of such a declaration. It is apparent that they do not experience the childhood others so luckily do. These children suffer through tough living conditions, growing-up often in fear, without the slightest hint of security in their lives. Of

course, the luxuries of a proper education and perhaps some recreational activities remain topics that are completely alien to them. These topics are targeted in Principle 7¹ of the “Declaration of the Rights of the Child”, which tackles the issues of elementary education and recreational activities, considering them to be a must to every child though many street children do not even have the slightest access to these.

In most cases, children that are a part of Lusk’s first category (those who return home every night) most commonly have a justifiable fear of the “head of the home”. It is a common thing that the man (or woman) in charge would make them suffer dire consequences for returning home without a minimum amount of collected money each day, often either beating them to make them “learn their lessons” or simply refusing them access to their home. This is not only a demonstration of child exploitation in denial of the rights addressed in Principle 9², but also a breaching of Principle 6³ which entitles each child to grow up in a caring and loving environment. Recently, a report by the US embassy in Beirut stated that a shocking less than 20% of street children kept the money they collected, while the rest gave part if not all of it to the adult in charge (U.S.Embassy, 2005).

Arab and International Interventions

Several projects have been undertaken and directed to helping solve this matter; in 1999, for example, no less than 16 Arab countries participated in a workshop conducted in Cairo titled "Confronting the Arab Phenomenon of Street Children", an event that alone indicates public awareness and interest in the matter. This workshop was an initiative by the Arab Council for Childhood and Development (ACCD), headed by His Royal Highness Prince Talal Bin Abdul

¹ Refer to principle 7 of the appendix

² Refer to principle 9 of the appendix

³ Refer to principle 6 of the appendix

Aziz. The end result was a production of a book and a supplementing documentary, which they hope would help in raising awareness of this issue. Two years later, a fundraising party was held by the ACCD in an effort to financially support projects in several Arab countries including Lebanon. Collections amassed to a total of 3 million Egyptian pounds (ACCD, 2001). With aid from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), the ACCD has released training manuals and workshops for individuals in contact with street children. Furthermore, an ongoing project was initiated in 2005, to empower street children through improving their image, participation, and legal protection in five Arab counts including Lebanon (ACCD, ACCD's Efforts in Confronting the Issue of the Street Children)

In the year 2000, the World Health Organization began an initiative of 'street educators', using social workers to give minimal education to street children. These workers are also involved in answering to the children's immediate needs and advocating on their behalf in the community. In that manner, a street educator becomes viewed by the street children as an elder, and a supportive friend (WHO, 2000).

Lebanese Street Children

On a local level, a demographic analysis indicates that the majority of street children in Lebanon are of a non-Lebanese origin, the majority being Syrian or Palestinian refugees (U.S.Embassy, 2005).Street children of Lebanese origin are more likely to be from the poorer North, South and Bekaa areas (CAS, 2000). Usually, boys constitute a higher proportion of street children, as they are more prone to evading abusive homes, according to the UNICEF (UNICEF, The State of the World's Children, 2006).These children are also exploited by mobs to gather money, and therefore experience the same atrocities explained above. Elie Mikhael, the

Secretary General of the Higher Council for Childhood, attributes its causes to the need of the child to escape domestic pressure and violence, or to aid the family financially, wherein children are abused physically and sexually if they fail to hand over the money collected (Aridi, 2007).

Lebanese Law

Since 1991, Lebanon has signed and agreed to different international agreements on child rights. It has agreed to the Convention on the rights of the Child (CRC) (Assembly, 1989) and more recently the optional protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (OHCHR, 2007). ACCD has conducted a study on Child Law in Lebanon, and its concurrence with the CRC, with the aim of drafting proposals of additional principles that can further protect underprivileged children's rights (ACCD, ACCD's Efforts in Confronting the Issue of the Street Children).

Currently, the law gives the Lebanese court judicial right to interfere in cases where children are exploited, or when their interests are in peril (Law Number 422,art.26, 2002). Additionally, the court has the right to take action against street children, since they are considered "vagrants", and therefore their presence is illegal (Law Number 422,art.25/26,2002)

Although trafficking of children is not specifically illegal in Lebanon, inducing children into prostitution is considered a crime punishable by law (Decree no. 340, art 523)

As for the kids that do not own legal identification papers. Lebanese law dictates that every child must be registered within a month from the date of birth (Law, 1951).This act of not registering these kids is hence rendered illegitimate. Furthermore, the law specifies that any child that is not entitled to receiving a foreign nationality, or a child born to parents without a nationality may acquire the Lebanese nationality (Decree no. 15, art.1 , 1925)

Lebanese Intervention

Lebanese institutions that deal with children may be divided into 3 categories. Those that deal with orphans, those that deal with children with special needs, and those that deal with street children. Home of Hope is the only organization in Lebanon that falls into the last group. It offers a refuge to both Lebanese and non-Lebanese street children (Khourchid, 2009). More than 50% of the kids there are non-Lebanese, with many others half Lebanese. The organization, established by the Lebanese Evangelical Society (LES), is headed by Mr. John Eter, whom the kids refer to as dad. The organization is funded mainly by the government, by LES and partly through donations. It is regrettable that following funding cuts by the government, the organization can now shelter merely 70 children. Private donations are also a source of funding and are considered a valuable resource for the organization. The center offers kids a basic education, medical insurance and most importantly a loving environment. A part-time psychologist is responsible for counseling and helping overcome psychological scars imparted on the kids.

In 2007, the Ministry of Social Affairs in collaboration with the Higher Council for Childhood, and as part of their concern for the phenomenon, organized a workshop at the *An-Nahar* newspaper's premises. During the workshop, Elie Mikhael described this occurrence as 'the most important mounting social problems in Lebanon'. He acknowledged the psychological need for family ties, besides the physical need for food and shelter, suggesting the implementation of foster care in Lebanon. Although the idea of foster families is not widespread in the Lebanese culture, in his opinion, such a project would positively impact the situation. Foster families are only a temporary replacement for real family, or until another family adopts

the child. However, in the case of non-Lebanese street children, who form the majority, the Lebanese law does not allow for adoption, another aspect that must be tackled (Aridi, 2007)

Lebanese Education System

Although in Lebanon education is compulsory until the age of 12, it is not completely free (State, 2004). In state –funded schools, students pay the registration fee, but not the tuition (ILO). Nevertheless, not sending their kids to school constitutes a financially lucrative opportunity for poor families, since these children will utilize their free time to help raise funds to support the household. Some children would resort to working in various non-professional domains, while others would divert and delve into the “street art” of begging. Both forms are in adamant violation of international laws for child protection. The former, while beneficial to the family, nevertheless involves child labor, since most of the children are below the minimum legal employment age of 14, as dictated by the Lebanese Labor Code (Government, 1996).

Syrian refugee children, whose enrollment fees are paid by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and underprivileged Lebanese children alike are entitled to register in Lebanese state schools (Constantine). Yet again, not all street children are Lebanese in origin or refugees, and so not everyone is entitled to a free education. Some, do not even own identification cards, a feat that diminishes their likelihood of getting access to any form of education (Aridi, 2007).

Parties that should be targeted

As obvious, the children are the primary stakeholders that must be targeted, as it is their lives that is on the line. Living on the streets alone causes psychological and physical stress, let alone having to deal with abusive gang leaders. The consequences children suffer are dire, as

explained in the “child exploitation and its consequences” section above. However, the children are not the only party involved.

The general public plays an important role in the development and sustaining of such a phenomenon, for it is through the act of generous donors that such beggar gangs continue to strive profitably on the innocence of children. Public opinion has a soft-spot for children, with many feeling obliged to donate to a poor kid on the streets. After interviewing a group of Lebanese students at the Lebanese American University (LAU), it became apparent that many are aware that these kids work for gangs. When asked why these people donate money to the kids despite knowing that this money goes to illegal activity such as drug-dealing rather than to the child (U.S.Embassy, 2005), many answered that through this money, they hope to save the child from getting tormented once (s)he returns home. Yes, these children do get tortured if they fail to collect a minimum amount each day.

Currently, the Lebanese National Security Force is the only body legally allowed to remove the kids from the streets before transferring them to the Home of Hope. Since kids are at such a vulnerable age, it is important to treat them accordingly in order to win their trust and cooperation. As outlined by a report by the Consortium for Street Children (CSC), the use of uniforms and formalities in Lebanon may discourage cooperation by the kids (CSC, 2004). Furthermore, improper treatment may not only harm kids, but also make them less welcoming of a sudden change in environment and lifestyle, increasing drop-out rates. The report also mentioned that females would be more approachable by the kids (CSC, 2004).

It becomes obvious that the government also plays an important role, be it through funding the Home of Hope, or enforcing laws that deal with this phenomenon. The government should ensure that people in immediate contact with these kids are qualified enough to interact with

them in a manner that would not harm them. As mentioned by Mr. Mikhael, more stringent border security should be enforced by the government, to reduce trafficking rates (Aridi, 2007).

Families of the kids are another important factor to be considered. Many kids may evade their homes due to family abuse. Others have large families with either one or both parents deceased, with certain special needs, or in need of medical care. They seek the streets as a means of fundraising, and gradually become part of the network of beggars controlling the streets.

Finally, the gangs themselves play a major role in the existence of such a phenomenon. This business in their eyes is a lucrative opportunity to raise money for alcohol or drugs. They may conceive more children that end up gathering money on the streets. If one walks early in the morning in Beirut, (s)he may be one of the few to see an older person give instructions to children and order them to disperse into different streets to collect money. These kids do not remain on the same street all day and night, but rather move from one to the next, according to the given instructions.

II- Project Implementation

As mentioned above, numerous activities worldwide have been aimed at solving this issue, yet it still remains in various areas around the world. This only indicates the complexity of the issue, yet its complexity should not deter people from continuing to find new approaches to solve this problem. The following proposal will not eradicate this phenomenon; however, if implemented, it should help improve the situation and lay grounds for more extensive futuristic work in the field.

It is important to note that this phenomenon, if not properly treated would drastically aggravate, particularly since it leads to vicious cycles, whereby the kids grow up without a profession and aspire to become the gang leaders one day, this lifestyle being the only mode of

life they ever knew. That is why it is important to target this issue from different perspectives. The children themselves should be targeted, as well as their families, police, the government, the gangs, and the general public.

Assisting the Children

The means of approaching street children is a delicate matter, since children at this age are considered to be at a very vulnerable state. Therefore, this issue must be approached with careful consideration. Regrettably, the currently applied methodologies of forcing children off the streets is through the use of violence or coercion, which leaves them prone to psychological and physical damage, not to mention greatly reducing the probability that they remain in those institutions that they were coerced or forced to join. During the interview, the secretary of the Home of Hope mentioned that some of the children who join the institution run away, as a consequence of being incapable of adapting to the new environment. This is not only the case in Lebanon. Egypt, in order to deal with this situation, has developed a system of several institutions, whereby the children are moved from one to the next gradually, ensuring that the change in rules of conduct is not sudden, and hence allowing the children ample time to adapt (CSC, 2004).

Also, if long –term progress and a noticeable decrease in dropout rates are sought then the change that is imposed on those children’s lifestyles should be gradual and not in a sudden manner. And as mentioned earlier, considering that these children live a “free” lifestyle, living on the streets and without rules, then a sudden change that comes with different housing, healthcare etc. would not be so readily embraced.

Attempting to gain these young children’s trust is a delicate and difficult matter. It is important to approach them on an individual basis to reach each and every one of them. With the

help of volunteer street educators this can be accomplished, albeit in a gradual manner. As explained above, the term street educator was coined initially by the UN. However, in this proposal, the role of street educators is slightly different from that defined by the UN. From previous experience, street children are drawn to free public entertainment.

This proposal suggests a new method for attracting the kids into those centers. It has been established that the means of communication with these children is critical to ensure the efficiency of a project (CSC, 2004). To draw the attention of the kids, for several days a small street parade with some street educators wearing cartoon costumes will take place. Naturally, the attention of street children will be drawn to this act, and they will gather around to watch. During this time, uncovered volunteers and ones wearing costumes will approach different kids, including street children and entertain them. It is important that some volunteers are not fully covered in cartoon clothes, in order to allow the kids to establish acquaintance with them, and recall their faces. Later, perhaps on a different day, these volunteers would approach one kid at a time and open a short conversation that would place him/her at ease. This is repeated several times even on several different days to progressively gain the trust of the child even more.

Street educators will not give money to these children since such donations would not benefit the child directly. Instead they may give them some food or a free ticket to an entertainment park; however it is preferable that such inducements are not used because that would contradict the main aim of the intervention. That is, we desire to get the children to choose freely to attend specialized centers present in the country and quit their street life, without luring or misinforming them. When children take part in the decision process they are less likely to quit, and more likely to endure some of the emotional and psychological problems faced by a change in their lifestyle. It has been suggested, that money should be given as an incentive to encourage

children to attend the specialized institution. However, this money would naturally go to the gang leaders, further encouraging illegal activities such as drug-dealing. Instead, support for their families can be given, by offering them shelter, food, and/or helping parents find a more productive means of obtaining a source of living.

After gaining initial trust, street educators can gradually begin influencing these children by learning about their interests and teaching them some of the basics of language, mathematics and further increasing their knowledge about the fields that excite them most. After the educators feel that they have established some sort of baseline, they would then inform the kids about “The International Declaration of Human Rights” and the Lebanese law in general, particularly about the clauses that pertain directly to their situation.

The passing on of such information is to raise awareness that their presence on the streets is in violation of local laws, and that they are entitled to various benefits they currently are deprived of. However, this information should be conveyed in a manner that does not raise feelings of extreme disparity in the kids yet triggers emotions that are strong enough to allow these children to decide to make a change in their lives. Information gathered by these volunteers can be documented and used to publish reports that would help institutions tailor their programs to fit the needs of these children in order to best target this issue. These reports may also be shared with other countries across the globe, with the hope that through such collaboration, this sad, abusive phenomenon may be erased off the planet. Eventually, the volunteers would mention the institutions present in the country and the benefits they offer. These volunteers would try to convince the child that their benefit lies in joining such institutions that would take care of them. Furthermore, it is important to target the fears that these children constantly confront; the fear of facing and evading the gangs that previously employed them, and all that without getting caught

and being severely punished for their actions and for trusting strangers. This can only occur under the supervision of and close cooperation with the Lebanese security forces to ensure the safety of both the volunteers and the kids alike, particularly since the organized gangs may have access to arms.

At first, this will be part of a pilot project, targeting 10 street children. This will serve to assess the efficiency of the proposed project, and the weakness points that should be amended in order to better achieve the targeted goal.

Educating the General Population

Besides targeting the kids themselves, it is important to educate the general population and inform them about this issue to help overcome it. Most of the children are being exploited by gangs to collect money. The use of children triggers feelings of sympathy in strangers who in turn become compelled to help through offering them money. What some citizens fail to recognize is that this money does not go to help the kids but rather most of it is taken away from them as revealed by statistics mentioned in the background section. The sad reality is that this money goes into drug dealing and other illegal activities which those empathetic citizens would certainly not approve of. Others are aware that their money goes to gangs, yet they still donate to save the kids from getting physically and mentally abused when they return home without a minimum amount.

So how can one pass by a poor begging child and turn his/her face away? Well, we do not need to completely ignore the situation, but rather approach it from a different manner. Instead of donating money that will be confiscated from the kids at the end of the day to satisfy the greed of the organizers of these gangs, we can donate basic necessities such as food. In Lebanon, the idea of taking home left-overs from restaurants is not widespread but rather looked down upon.

However, in recent years this idea has slowly begun settling into the Lebanese culture. If food left-overs or extra un-needed clothes were given to these children, they would certainly benefit more than if they were given money that will sooner or later be taken away from them. Firstly, the children would keep what they are given, which would improve their lives in the short run. In the long run, the gangs would start losing revenues and divert to another means of raising money.

Advertisement campaign

Educating the general population has begun through various articles and media reports. However, methods of dealing with this issue still need to be addressed. Therefore, a nation-wide advertisement campaign ought to be adopted. This campaign should take care not to marginalize these kids further yet raise awareness and sway public opinion against donating money directly to these kids. Advertisements should target people of all ages, and should be placed in cinemas, on national television, and on billboards.

Donation centers

Furthermore, donation collecting centers must be set to collect money and other non-perishable goods. These donations will go to the Home of Hope to support their finances and to help it expand in order to accept more children, considering that they can currently accept only 70 children. Besides setting donation centers, another way to help would be to place plastic containers in supermarkets to collect donated goods.

Cyber and Social Media

Similarly, a website will be launched containing information about the current ongoing campaigns. The government and particularly the Ministry of Communications may help

promote this website or even the campaign, by advertising it on every Lebanese governmental or social site. It would include a donations section targeting individuals across the world, to support this issue as well as general information section about the undertaken campaigns and future fund raising events. Such a website would also potentially allow for forming liaisons with similar organizations worldwide, which permits productive exchange of information and know-hows. Similarly, a page can be created on Facebook, with the main aim of reaching more people, since this social network is one of the most daily visited websites in Lebanon.

Targeting the Children's Families

As mentioned previously, the family plays a major role in the progression of such a phenomenon. As such, it is vital to target the families of street children. As part of the pilot project, the families of the 10 targeted street children will be contacted by trained volunteers. These volunteers would try to map the underlying problems faced by these families that seed this phenomenon. Parents may be suffering from drug abuse, prostitution or other atrocities that can be addressed appropriately and solved if identified. Hence these volunteers would help ascertain their problems, and serve as a bridge between these individuals and NGOs working in the respective field. In the long run, and if the pilot project proves to be successful, a larger number of parents of street children will be targeted in a similar fashion.

Training the Children

According to a phone interview conducted with a senior staff member at the Home of Hope center, once the kids leave the Home (at age 18), they search for jobs in diverse sectors such as in car repair shops or lumberjacks or even in leather factories. After removing the kids from the streets, comes the more difficult (and more vital) task of helping them learn professions that can be of use to them in the future, and thus hopefully keep them permanently off the streets.

To accomplish that, workshops on small business development can be given at the Home of Hope by specialized volunteer groups. Such workshops would be instrumental in teaching teenage kids how to assess the market, develop a good/service that fulfills the needs of a particular niche and market it. This would help develop their business minds. A similar program is currently employed by *Injaz-Lebanon*, in an attempt to expose youngsters to the global economy, teaching them ways to start their own small businesses in the future through what they call ‘student companies’ (INJAZ).

Additionally, basic vocational training should be made accessible to them, through the government. There are numerous vocational schools across the country, in which the kids can become enrolled. This will help integrate them into society, and grant them a much needed and invaluable education.

Addressing the Government, and Government-related Issues

To complement this work, the NGO that will be set up will lobby the government and high-ranking officials in strong political positions of power to take strong action against the gang leaders. These leaders should not only be taken to court for disobeying the Lebanese law, but they should also be interrogated by any means necessary in order to discover the whole network of beggar gang leaders.

Only after a strict, non-discriminatory law is enforced will gang members be truly afraid of getting caught, and only then would they be less inclined to committing such despicable crimes.

However, several barriers remain that need to be addressed, including the fact that most of these kids do not have official paperwork to help identify them, and therefore cannot become enrolled within certain institutions. Home of Hope helps issue paperwork for kids of Lebanese

origin living under their roof. Non-Lebanese kids are required to return to their home of origin, or contact their consulate in Lebanon, both tasks which are facilitated by Home of Hope.

Summary

At first, a pilot project targeting 10 street children will be placed into effect. With the use of street educators, children will be approached and gradually led to the Home of Hope, as described previously in details. These volunteers will also be in charge of keeping track of learned lessons and information gained, that might be of use in the future to this organization or to similar ones on a global level. Another group of trained volunteers will target the parents of these 10 children, mapping their situation, and trying to help them accordingly.

In the long run, a non-governmental organization (NGO) will be set up with the following functions. It will first include a group of volunteer street educators with the same function described above. Another group of volunteers would be in charge of amassing information collected about the kids through street educators into papers that may become published research. This department will also be responsible for designing appropriate questionnaires, and consent forms to ensure that the privacy and security of the child are not made liable, as required by international research laws.

Secondly, it will launch a large advertising campaign raising awareness in the general population, discouraging giving money donations to beggars on the street. Complementarily, donation centers will be set to collect non-perishable goods and money that goes to the host institutions, to help them expand, and increase their capability of hosting more children. A website would be launched to collect more donations, and raise more awareness on the NGO's latest activities.

Another sub-division of the NGO will be concerned with targeting the families of these children, identifying their underlying problems and helping them, possibly through linking them to an appropriate NGO.

Finally, the NGO will lobby people in power to take action against criminal gang leaders by enforcing the power of the Lebanese law; they would also lobby the government to allow the children to attend vocational schools across the country.

III- Financing the project

This project, though constituting mostly of volunteers, still needs considerable financial support. These volunteers will be recruited informally, through friends, and/or through an invitation through social networking. Funds are needed for the paperwork fees that are required to set up the NGO and for the recruitment of specialists to train street educators on the proper means of conduct to ensure that the kids are treated in a way that leaves no permanent emotional or psychological scars. Logistics (such as setting up donation centers and advertisements) should also be taken into consideration. Although the workshops will be conducted mainly by volunteers, the commute back and forth to the institution where these workshops will be held would also call for some financial compensation. Furthermore, if certain forms of non-financial support to the families is to be given, then money is needed to provide shelter, and food temporarily, while helping parents find suitable jobs- lest they become merely dependent on aid.

During the phone interview with Home of Hope, it became apparent that the institution fails to accept all kids sent to it because they are limited by a maximum capacity of 70 children, a number that they may not exceed on account of lack of adequate support. As such, the major bulk of donations will go to helping expand this institution in terms of building a new Home, and

recruiting more personnel to take care of it. Additionally, some of the donated money would go into enrolling the kids at vocational schools.

This money can be collected from several sources; personal savings of the group of activists setting it up can be used to start up the NGO, but are not an option for this NGO's continuity. Sponsors on a national level (both individuals and businesses) must also be approached. It is fortunate that in order to distinguish themselves from other similar companies, businesses today are trying to incorporate social responsibility to their corporate worlds which creates the grounds for a mutually beneficial situation. The business would benefit by advertising its goodwill to humanity, and the society would benefit from the money and projects formed as a result of these funds and the advertisement, both of which will have a great, positive impact on its issues. It is fortunate that the phenomenon of humanitarianism is rippling throughout our Arab societies, and so more businesses are becoming interested in such opportunities. The government can also be approached to set aside an additional part of its budget for this cause, perhaps by facilitating and helping finance the entry of institutionalized kids into public vocational schools. It would be beneficial to our cause to host bi-annual dinner soirees that would target influential leaders in our society and well known philanthropists alike. Revenues from such an event will constitute the major part of donations. The cyber media may be used through in which online donations made through the website or through social network sites will go directly into a designated bank account, specialized for this purpose. Finally, financial and non-financial donations made at donation centers will raise a substantial amount of money that would contribute towards funding the working expenses.

Pilot Project (for 10 students)

Item	Item cost	Number	Total
Travel Expenses	\$40	10	\$400
Costumes	50	3	150
Books	10	10	100
Phone calls+ Internet			300
Miscellaneous			100
Total			<u>\$1,050</u>

Expanded Project (per month)

Item	Item cost	Quantity	Total
Travel Expenses	\$40	10	\$400
Costumes/2 months	50	3	150
Books	10	50	500
Phone calls + Internet			500
Administrator Salary	1000	2	2000
Website fee /year	10	1	10
Miscellaneous			300
Training Volunteers	4000	1	4000
Donation Booths	200	10	2000
Total			

Advertising Campaign

\$150,000 are needed for billboard, TV, and cinema advertisements.

Extra funds raised through fundraising parties will go to expanding the Home of Hope, allowing it to accept more children.

IV- Means of Evaluation

To evaluate the efficiency of the pilot project and its weaknesses, the number of children out of the targeted 10 that end up joining the Home of Hope must be tracked. At first, biweekly meetings will be held between volunteers and the children who joined the Home of Hope, asking for their feedback. Gradually these meetings will become spaced farther apart in time. A report will be written at the end of each month for a year, and submitted to the administration of the project.

In order to evaluate the impact this intervention has in the long run, pre-execution statistics on the number of street children should be taken, as well as annual statistics. These will be conducted by volunteers. The number of children attracted to the Home of Hope through the NGO, and the total amount of donations collected will be recorded. To assess public opinion change on the subject, pre-execution and annual questionnaires will be taken.

V-Future prospects

Nobody can tell the story of a kid on the street better than the kid himself/herself; similarly, nobody can understand the needs of the kid better than himself/herself. Once the kids grow up and leave the institution, they may choose to volunteer for this cause, thereby spreading the joy and fighting cruelty and abuse of children. These reformed adults would not only return the favor to the society that made them who they are, but they would do it in a better manner, since they know the drawbacks of such a program, and can greatly improve on it. What is more, we hope that in the future, this local endeavor spreads to neighboring Arab countries, and then to the rest of the world, lest there remain no child living on the street unaware of the beauties of childhood and the prospective future ahead of him/her.

VI-Limitations

It is not enough to target the current situation, but rather it is important to prevent its continuation. Country borders should have stricter security, preventing illegal immigration into the country. All children must be filed for registry upon birth, to ensure they have legal documents of identification. Reports mention that many foreigners leave their illegitimate children behind upon leaving the country, under the belief that these children have better prospects for having a more prosperous future in Lebanon, as opposed to their home country

(CSC, 2004). These kids wind up on the streets begging. Unfortunately, these fundamental issues have not been tackled in this proposal, and may need international interventions to resolve them.

VII-Conclusion

In a country with one of the relatively densest populations in the Middle East, a single institution to deal with homeless children is, indeed, vastly inadequate. Though the work of the Home of Hope is admirable, indeed, this solitary institution with its limited staff and capacity can only help a very restricted number of children. Evidently, seventy housed children out of the probable hundreds that roam the districts of Lebanon is a very meager number, but it is a certainly good place to start. However, as previously stated, out of all the children taken in, very few are capable of coping with the drastic change of lifestyle, which results in their premature evasion of the home entirely. Therefore, after ceaseless researching and interviewing, it is apparent that a strategy that encompasses all the combined aspects of gathering street children, recruiting trained street educators and volunteers, philanthropist donors, and the general populous ought to be adopted. In the event where this strategy is executed in the meticulous manner in which it was planned, then it would certainly become the urgently sought-after solution for the ever worsening calamity of child beggars in Lebanon.

Bibliography

Law 422, L. (2002). *protection of at-risk children or children violating the law.* (2004).

Consortium for Street children.(2004). *A civil society forum for north africa and the middle east on promoting and protecting the rights of street children .*

ACCD. *ACCD's Efforts in Confronting the Issue of the Street Children.* Retrieved from: <http://english.arabccd.org/page/1071>

ACCD. (2001). *Fundraising Party in favor of the Street Children.* Retrieved from: <http://english.arabccd.org/page/935>

Aridi, F. (2007). Issue of the street children 'one of the most important mounting social problems'. *The daily star* . Retrieved from: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/Jul/31/Issue-of-street-children-one-of-most-important-mounting-social-problems.ashx#ixzz2RDEPuv1i>

Assembly, U. G. (1989). *The convention on the rights of the child.*

CAS. (2000). *State of the children in Lebanon* . Beirut.

Constantine, Z. (n.d.). UN bid to educate thousands of Syrian refugee children in Lebanon. *The national* . Retrieved from <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/un-bid-to-educate-thousands-of-syrian-refugee-children-in-lebanon>

U.S. Embassy. (2005). Beirut.

Government, L. (1996). *Code du Travail des enfants.* Loi no. 536 article 22. available from:<http://www.lebaneselaws.com/>

ILO. *Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations.* INJAZ. *Company program.* Lebanon: INJAZ. Retrieved from: <http://www.injaz-lebanon.org/>

Khourchid, M. (2009). The lost children of Lebanon's Streets. *NOW* . Retrieved from:https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/reportsfeatures/the_lost_children_of_lebanons_streets

Law number 422 of 2002. *Personal status records Registration.* art. 26 and art 25. (Lebanese Constitution, 2002)

Lebanese Nationality law issued by Decree Number 15 (1925), art. 1

Lebanese penal code issued by Legislative Decree No. 340 (1943), art.523

Lusk, M. (1992). Street children of Rio deJeneiro. *Internatonal Social work* , 293-305.

OHCHR. (2007). *The child soldiers protocol entered into force.*

Personal Status Records Registration Law (1951), art. 11

Serrano, A. (2002). Education crucial for street children. *On the record for children* , 3 (14), 7.

State, U. D. (2004). *Country reports.*

UNHCHR. (2005). *Expert on Trafficking in Persons Ends Visit to Lebanon.* Retrieved from:
<http://www.unhchr.ch/hurricane/hurricane.nsf/0/5F43BE66EDB9D815C125707E00240837?opendocument>

UNICEF. (1959). *Declaration of the Rights of the Child.* Retrieved from:
http://www.unicef.org/lac/spbarbados/Legal/global/General/declaration_child1959.pdf

UNICEF. (2006). *The State of the World's Children.* Retrieved from:
http://www.unicef.org/sowc06/pdfs/sowc06_fullreport.pdf

WHO. (2000). *Working with street children.* Retrieved from:
http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/66756/3/WHO_MSD_MDP_00.14_Module2_eng.pdf

Appendix

Declaration of the Rights of the Child

As declared by the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1924

Principle 6:

The child, for the full and harmonious development of his personality, needs love and understanding. He shall, wherever possible, grow up in the care and under the responsibility of his parents, and, in any case, in an atmosphere of affection and of moral and material security; a child of tender years shall not, save in exceptional circumstances, be separated from his mother. Society and the public authorities shall have the duty to extend particular care to children without a family and to those without adequate means of support. Payment of State and other assistance towards the maintenance of children of large families is desirable.

Principle 7:

The child is entitled to receive education, which shall be free and compulsory, at least in the elementary stages. He shall be given an education which will promote his general culture and enable him, on a basis of equal opportunity, to develop his abilities, his individual judgement, and his sense of moral and social responsibility, and to become a useful member of society. The best interests of the child shall be the guiding principle of those responsible for his education and guidance; that responsibility lies in the first place with his parents. The child shall have full opportunity for play and recreation, which should be directed to the

same purposes as education; society and the public authorities, shall endeavor to promote the enjoyment of this right.

Principle 9:

The child shall be protected against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation. He shall not be the subject of traffic, in any form. The child shall not be admitted to employment before an appropriate minimum age; he shall in no case be caused or permitted to engage in any occupation or employment which would prejudice his health or education, or interfere with his physical, mental or moral development.

Retrieved from: <http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/humanrights/resources/child.asp>