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EDITOR'S NOTE

In 1993, Iqbal Masih, a 10-year-old Pakistani boy, made the headlines. He was a child activist who had been a bonded laborer in the carpet industry since the age of four. He was a compelling sight on the evening news as he directed the world's attention to the plight of the 100 million working children everywhere.

He spoke for those who did not know they had a voice; he spoke for those whose first skill is to roll a cigarette or hold a hammer. His simplicity and his conviction made his death in 1995 at the hands of unknown gunmen a cause for collective shame.

Iqbal's short life and violent death exposed the conditions of child laborers to intense public scrutiny. Adults started making compelling arguments to eradicate the practice. There were global boycotts of goods known to be manufactured by little hands; there were public demonstrations outside sweatshops and factories and mines employing children.

The dilemma of child labor is played out where emotion meets economics. All too often, the deplorable conditions of child labor are overlooked by children yearning for independence; mothers desperate for additional income sources and families who are hungry, defeated and impoverished. Jo Boyden and William Myers explore the "non punitive, educative and protective strategy" toward child labor adopted by the Philippine government. It is a position somewhere between an insistence on complete eradication of the practice and official recognition in order to protect children's rights.

Rarely has the world seemed more polarized particularly to its youngest inhabitants. Ximena de la Barra in the guest editorial observes that by 2025, 6 out of 10 children in the developing world will live in cities; of these more than half will be poor. These children are at a 2 to 10 times higher risk of death from infectious and respiratory diseases than their richer counterparts, not to mention

lack of potable water and solid waste disposal systems, erratic electricity, overcrowding and few education opportunities. Her suggestions: creating a people-centered development model with a human rights approach and the restoration of governance and the promotion of child friendly cities.

Kristin Helmore uses the imagery of a journey through the tunnel of an urban childhood whose future is uncertain. Aspects of this tunnel are probed in more depth in other articles in this issue. And there are some flickers of hope amongst the sobering stories of lead poisoning, mental stress and the massacre of street kids. Look for instance at the children monitoring their environment in New Delhi during their school holidays and then learning how to take care of their own health at schools in Tanzania and Ghana.

Iqbal had an impact: Children everywhere are learning to speak out in defense of their human rights, about what their environment should look like, about their health needs. They are particularly effective in places where adults are learning to recognize and respect their contribution.

So in the fields of urban environmental and participatory planning Roger Hart describes programs in Guayquil, Ecuador; West Bengal; and New York where children are learning to negotiate with the adult world—whether it be assisting in the modeling and design of their playgrounds, or producing maps of the garbage in their communities.

And then there are other glimpses of hope: A number of talented South African youths capture the images of their city Capetown with humor, beauty, and clarity. And remind us at the same time of their ability to comment intelligently on life for us all.

A young urban life can thus be short, brutal, and fatal or long, happy, and safe. Elie Weisel reminds us sternly of our responsibilities to the children of the global community: "Once you bring life into the world, you must protect it. We must protect it by changing the world."

—Margaret Bergen

The September issue of *The Urban Age* will highlight new products and partnerships to finance urban infrastructure. The December issue will focus on feeding the city.

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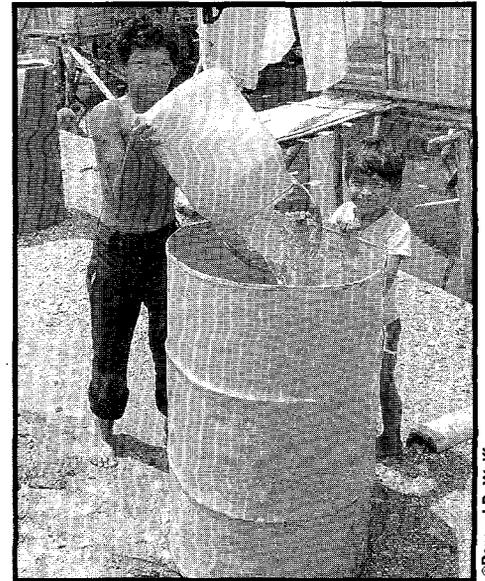
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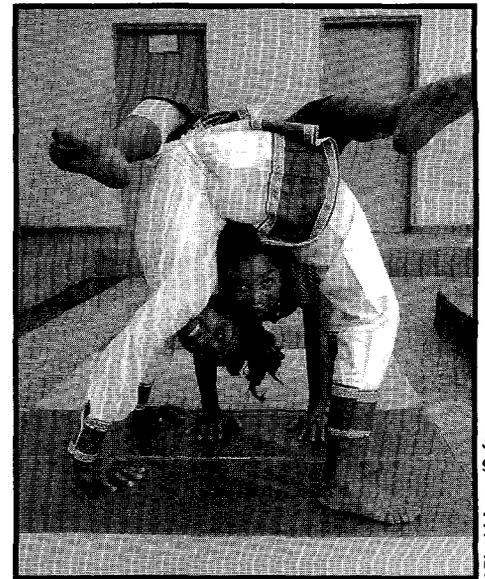
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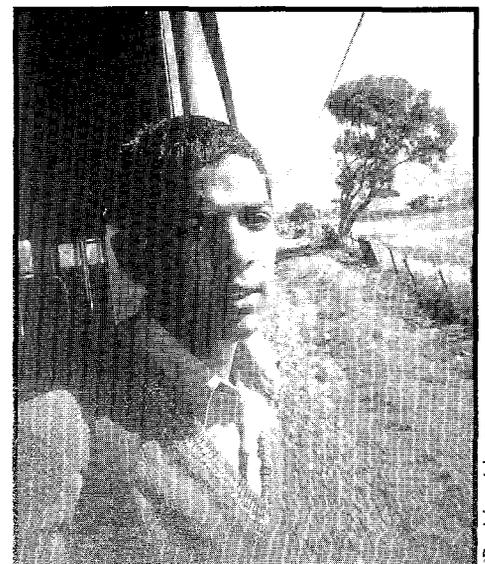
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Do Poor Urban Children Matter?

Cities Must Do More to Guarantee the Well-Being of Their Most Vulnerable Inhabitants

BY XIMENA DE LA BARRA

The largest ever global generation of children will be born in the 1990s. In the developing world, the majority of children are poor, and the majority of the poor live in urban areas. By the year 2025, 6 out of 10 children in the developing world will live in cities, and more than half of them will be poor. Urban children are at risk because cities are not conducive to their health and development. Lack of clean water and sanitary excreta disposal systems, uncollected solid waste, and natural-disaster-prone land are the most dangerous health threats in the areas where poor families live and where overcrowding encourages the rapid spread of infectious diseases.

Additionally, the worsening of local economic conditions in favor of global corporate interests increases pressure on the young to start working earlier, to work longer hours, and to work longer into old age. The consequences are unemployed or underemployed adults versus alarming increases in child labor—and neglected children and elderly. The existence of street children, the vast majority of whom are working children, is perhaps the most tragic expression of the failure of present society in its path toward development. The urban crisis has become a poor children's crisis.

Paradoxically, cities are also the centers of concentration of wealth, of production and creativity. They are best placed to tend to their populations' needs because basic services can be produced at a higher quality and at a lower per capita cost and because in cities people can best organize themselves to exercise their rights. The most important role of cities should be that of guaranteeing the well-being of its citizens—especially children who are the most vulnerable.

What has gone wrong if only a minority benefits from citizenship?

Society has been pursuing a growth-oriented development model hoping that the benefits will eventually trickle down to all. Reality has proven this wrong. The share of the poorest 20 percent of the world's people in global income now stands at 1.1 percent, down from 1.4 percent in 1991 and 2.3 percent in 1960 and continues to decrease. The ratio of the income of the top 20 percent to that of the poorest 20 percent rose from 30 to 1 in 1960, to 61 to 1 in 1991, and to a new high of 78 to 1 in 1994. Intra-urban disparities in income and access to basic services place poor children at 2 to 10 times higher risk of death from infectious and respiratory diseases than their richer counterparts. We urgently need to recognize that there is no automatic, positive link between economic growth and human development. On the contrary, growth fosters poverty as cheap labor, the absence of social

benefits and the relinquishing of environmental management are instrumental to this model.

The implementation of a market-oriented development model fails to meet the needs of the poor majority while benefiting those who are already privileged. In the context of glaring pre-existing disparities, the poor are in no position to compete in the market to generate reasonable incomes. Since there is little profit in providing services to the poor, the market tends to ignore their demands. Concurrently, we have been weakening governments by withdrawing functions and resources from them to increase debt repayment capabilities. Structural adjustment programs are transferring government functions to the market, limiting subsidies to the poor, and reducing government expenditures, including social service expenditures, and imposing unrealistic service charges. We have been attempting to enhance the productivity of the urban poor without investing in human capital. Children and the more vulnerable segments of society will always lose if profitability is the determinant of development and governance. Both governments and the markets are failing urban children.

Cities are driven to compete with each other for capital investment from the global economy. An ill-conceived decentralization process has transferred responsibilities from central governments to local governments, but not the abilities to fulfill them. The global market concentrates investment in a few selected urban sites creating encrusted pockets of wealth in the midst of poverty. Global transfers of basic resources, financial funds, and even pollution are allowed without regulations or taxation to counteract the damage. The human consequences and the price vulnerable children pay are unacceptable.

We have not prioritized human development. The world currently spends about 15 times more on war than on development assistance. Budgets at all levels have not given priority to basic needs. An additional \$40 billion a year could ensure access for all the world's people to basic social services such as health care, education, and safe water.

We are directing development assistance toward compensatory action rather than toward the eradication of poverty despite the fact that experience tells us that it is easier and more cost effective to prevent a crisis than to deal with it fully developed. We often opt for demonstration projects rather than address the institutional processes required to ensure durable and replicable programs. As long as the structural roots of poverty remain untouched, compensating for poverty is an impossible proposition.

We have embraced ill-conceived enablement strategies under the misperception that the poor can rise from their condition on their

own effort without external support and investment. This represents a cruel twist where development strategies provide incentives to corporations rather than ensuring safety nets for the poor. There is much attention to "empowering" civil society without providing the means to do so.

How should actions be redirected?

- **Aim toward a sustainable, people-centered development model with a human rights approach**, which means that the poorest, most vulnerable, and the most neglected children must have the first call on resources and efforts.

- **Restore governance at all levels to ensure that the rights of the most vulnerable are protected.** The state must assume the role of redistributing wealth to protect the most vulnerable and needy in our society. Beyond universal voting rights, democracy must also mean equally sharing the fruits of development and making human rights—including children's rights—a reality.

- **Promote child-friendly cities.** The well-being of children is a primary indicator to be used to evaluate progress at the local level. Municipal governments should (1) establish programs that are inclusive and truly empower citizens—including children—to play an active role in program design, implementation, and management; (2) train staff in how to work with local communities and respond to the needs and rights of children, especially those of poor families; and (3) provide popular organizations with access to information, employment, resources, and services.

If poor urban children really matter, we should concert and redirect our actions. Progress is possible in the presence of strong political will and when solidarity and social responsibility are valued over individualism. Advancement will come when the underlying causes of problems affecting children and society as a whole are acknowledged and confronted, when strong alliances are forged, and when action is guided by the moral frameworks of social justice and human rights. ■

Ximena de la Barra is senior urban advisor, Program Division, UNICEF. This article represents the personal views of the author and does not necessarily reflect UNICEF policy.

Data sources: Christina Szanton Blanc, Urban Children in Distress: Global Predicaments and Innovative Strategies, UNICEF, 1994; Jorge E. Hardoy, The Urban Child in the Third World: Urbanization Trends and Some Principal Issues, UNICEF, 1992; Human Development Report, UNDP, 1994; State of the World's Children, UNICEF, 1997; and Carolyn Stephens, "City Inequality," Environment and Urbanization Vol. 8(2); Human Development Report, UNDP, 1997; and Declaration, World Assembly of Cities and Local Authorities, Istanbul, 1996.

Out of the Tunnel of Urban Childhood

Helping the Children of the Urban Poor Emerge into a Brighter Future

BY KRISTIN HELMORE

ANTANANARIVO. This threadbare, faded capital of Madagascar sits precariously on 12 steep, verdant hills. Below one of these hills, in the center of town, a tunnel was dug decades ago. Today, the tunnel futilely attempts to organize the snarls of smoking traffic that wind endlessly through the city's narrow, cobbled streets.

Just inside the tunnel, on the sidewalk thick with pedestrians, three or four babies sit by themselves. The babies are old enough to sit up unassisted, but not old enough to walk or—apparently—strong enough to crawl. Their mothers, knowing they will stay put, park them in the tunnel near the curbside, with an empty tin can in front of them, to beg from drivers inching their way along or from pedestrians who often jostle the infants as they hurry by. The babies are naked and very dirty, their noses perpetually running. They sit in filth and they cry much of the time. As is typical in developing countries, there is no emission control for vehicles in Madagascar, and heavy soot-black exhaust fumes make up the air the babies breathe all day long.

These babies in their tunnel are very real, yet they are also a telling metaphor for the condition of children in cities throughout the world. For the very poor, who constitute about one-third of the population of large

cities in the developing world, an urban childhood is often a dark and frightening passageway leading to an uncertain future. At the end of it, to be sure, there is the promise of choices and opportunities that a rural environment cannot provide. But mere survival for children in the dark tunnel of urban poverty is problematic—and the promise of a better life is not always fulfilled.

Living conditions

Every day, more and more families arrive in the cities of the developing world from stagnant, impoverished rural villages, and it is mainly for the benefit of their children that they come. "As bad as life is for urban children in the slums of the city, their chances of survival and their choices in life are much more restricted if they stay in the rural areas," says Janice E. Perlman, president of Mega-Cities, a nonprofit organization based in New York that transfers innovative solutions to urban problems from one megacity to another.

According to the United Nations, there will be 23 megacities with populations greater than 10 million by the beginning of the next century—18 of them in the developing world.

These cities, and smaller ones like Antananarivo, are increasingly overcrowded. Adequate housing, infrastructure, and services cannot keep pace either with birth rates or with escalating levels of urban migration.

In industrialized countries, many cities are friendly, safe, nurturing places for children to grow up in—at least, for middle- and upper class children. Dr. Perlman cites Paris and Tokyo as having the best daycare

systems in the world—even though, in Tokyo, social services are not available to the growing community of low-income foreign workers. But even in rich countries, children of the poor often live in developing country conditions: Inadequate housing, malnutrition, poor health care, substandard schooling, lack of daycare, vulnerability to violence and drug abuse are just some of the perils they face. And among middle-class urban families with two working parents, children are often neglected, as the responsibilities of child-rearing are increasingly passed on to institutions such as schools, and to the cities themselves.

Meanwhile, in the fast-growing cities of the developing world, more and more millions of children are growing up in slums, squatter settlements, or shantytowns. In 1990, a report from the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that more than 50 percent of the populations of Bombay and Lagos lived in slums or shantytowns; in Cairo, where thousands of families actually live in a huge cemetery, the figure was 84 percent. The populations of these cities are also young.

The families of the babies in the Antananarivo tunnel live in black plastic tents on the sloping ground next to the tunnel's mouth. They have no sanitation, no electricity—indeed, no flooring and no windows. Their homes are cramped, hot, dark, and airless. The mothers use charcoal for cooking, and the children often contract respiratory ailments from the smoke. In winter, the families have no heat.

Under slum conditions like these, psycho-

An urban childhood is often a dark and frightening passageway leading to an uncertain future.

Children's talent to endure stems from their ignorance of alternatives.

—MAYA ANGELOU



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logical pressures can be devastating. Having left behind the traditional structures and support networks of the village, recent arrivals experience a sense of alienation and depression in crowded, impersonal, fast-paced cities. Unskilled jobs are hard to come by, and men who cannot find work to support their families often turn to alcohol for solace, taking out their frustrations in violence toward their wives and children. Many are absent for long periods, searching for work. Others simply leave—to find a new woman and beget more children.

An increasingly large proportion of urban families is headed by a woman, with little or no education, who bears sole responsibility for her children's well-being. Food is more expensive in cities than in rural areas, and mothers must be highly creative, energetic, and courageous just to make ends meet. Those who are desperate enough may come to see their children—even six-month-old babies—as potential earners of income to help feed the family. As early as they can, many women send their children out into the streets to beg or work. And, in fact, many children seek the streets of their own accord. Home life in the slums is often so tense and turbulent many children find it less stressful to fend for themselves.

Health risks

In such an environment, many children are at risk from birth. "All the children of poor families are at great risk," says Janice Perlman. "First there's the physical risk of malnutrition or of getting caught in violent struggles within the squatter settlements." Perlman also cites the risk of high infant mortality and contagious diseases, as well as diarrhea (the world's

number one killer of small children) due to water pollution and inadequate sanitation.

Despite valiant efforts by international organizations such as UNICEF to improve the health of mothers and children around the world, little headway has been made in the cities. "Cities have their own special epidemiology," says Martin Bockerhoff, a researcher at the Population Council in New York. "In slum conditions, childhood diseases like measles tend to proliferate, as do certain strains of malaria, which are often fatal to small children." Some recent studies indicate that infant mortality rates among the poorest communities in megacities are the highest in the world.

One innovative effort to improve the health of urban children is the UNICEF-supported Child to Child program in Bombay. In this program, children from squatter communities are taught principles of basic health care, hygiene, and nutrition. These children fan out through the shantytowns to spread the word about such practices as immunization, the importance of hand washing, and oral rehydration therapy to prevent diarrhea. Between 1989 and 1995, some 20,000 children in Bombay were trained under this program; it is estimated that their message has reached 120,000 families, or 600,000 people. Through the work of Mega-Cities, this program is now being replicated in Rio de Janeiro.

Education opportunities

While education is generally acknowledged to be the surest way out of the tunnel of urban poverty, providing education for all the children of the world's cities has so far proved to be impossible.

"I never went to school," says Kenneth, a bright-eyed 10-year-old in Nairobi, Kenya. "It

was too expensive." Technically, primary schooling in Kenya (and in most countries) is free, but the cost of shoes, uniforms, books, pencils, and various school "fees" keeps education out of reach for many children, particularly in cities.

Kenneth comes from a large family in Mathare Valley, Nairobi's huge, sprawling shantytown. He began working at age seven as a "parking boy," watching parked cars in the center of town for a small fee. But Kenneth is fortunate. He recently joined a training program run by the Undugu Society, a local organization that helps the street children of Nairobi, and he is learning a marketable skill: how to weld cooking stoves together out of scrap metal. He is also being taught reading and arithmetic for the first time.

But in many cities, there are simply not enough schools to meet the demand. In a newly settled shantytown high above Bogota, Colombia, eight-year-old Rosalia sits locked in her one-room house all day long, taking care of her three younger brothers and sisters. Her mother, who works as a domestic, dreams of sending Rosalia to school, but there is no school within walking distance and she cannot afford bus fare. With three younger siblings to care for, school for Rosalia has so far been out of the question.

Even when children do make it to school, "The schooling available for most low-income children is not very good," says Perlman, "so even if their families manage to keep them in school, they aren't necessarily going to be literate." She cites the large cities of Brazil as an example. Because of overcrowding, the primary school day in Rio de Janeiro lasts less than three hours, and most poor children do not go past the third grade.

The education problem extends beyond developing countries. Even in the cities of industrialized countries, schools often fail to give children an adequate education. Janet is a single mother of three in New York City, and all of her children attend a public school a few blocks from her Harlem apartment. Jeanette, Morquette, and Timmy's daily walk to school takes them past several abandoned buildings that have been turned into "crack houses" and through vacant lots knee-deep in garbage. The children dread going to school. None of them reads at grade level, and none of them seems to comprehend much of what is being taught. Their classes are too big, and their teachers are

Life and Death on the Streets

Increasingly in cities throughout the world, there are children who must find ways to survive on the streets. They beg, they scavenge, they steal, they work at endless odd jobs. They are entrepreneurs selling everything from candy bars to basketballs, waiters sweeping the floors of grimy tea shops, and prostitutes risking HIV infection in the back alleys of red light districts. They are garbage recyclers, shoeshine boys, drug pushers. They sleep on the streets or in any sheltered spot that will admit them. They sniff glue or shoot up heroin to forget their very real fear of a violent death. If they are lucky, they can be helped by programs such as *Roda Viva* ("Living Circle") in Rio de Janeiro, which sets up communities for street children and provides education and job training. If they are unlucky, they will die of exposure, malnutrition, drug overdose, or disease, or be shot by vigilantes who find their presence in the neighborhood an annoyance.

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too preoccupied with discipline problems to give them the attention they need. Already they worry that they will not be prepared to face the world of work.

The workplace

For many children in the cities of developing countries, the world of work starts almost as soon as they can walk, hold a hammer, or roll a cigarette. Like the aborning children in the industrial cities of 19th century Europe and America, hundreds of millions of children are working today in cities throughout the developing world.

Take Shadab, for example. He lives in the fast-growing city of Aligarh southeast of New Delhi in northern India. The city is famous for its Muslim university—and for its lock industry, in which many children are employed. The government of India has laws against child labor, but the inspectors who come to the lock factories of Aligarh are easily fooled, or easily bribed, turn a blind eye to the practice.

In the sweltering heat and ear-splitting noise of a small factory, nine-year-old Shadab grinds pieces of metal on a high-speed grinding wheel. Since he was six, he has worked 12 hours a day, six days a week. He earns the equivalent of US\$0.17 per day, which he proudly gives to his mother to help feed the family. His father is dead, and as the oldest child, he is the principal breadwinner.

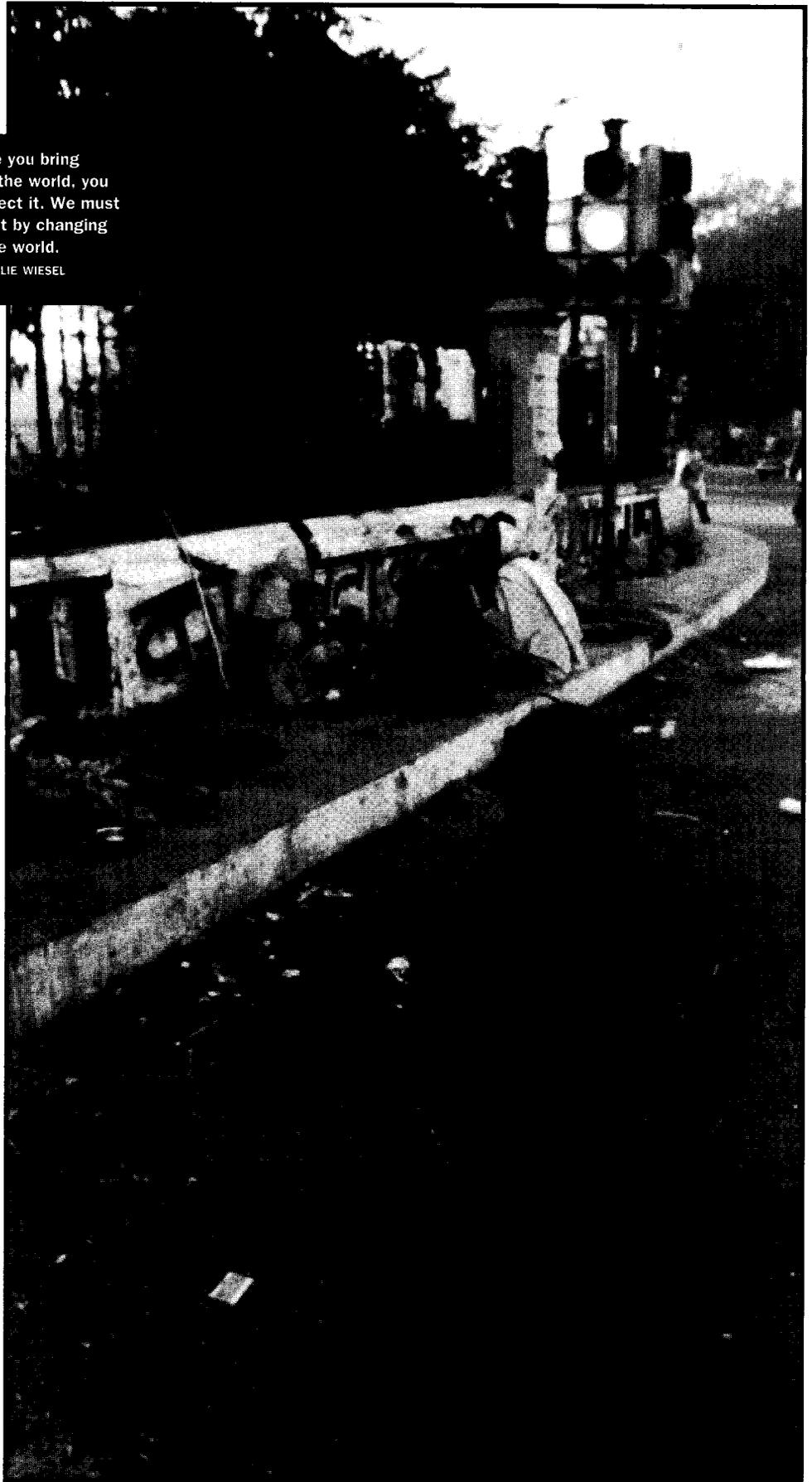
Once you bring
life into the world, you
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protect it by changing
the world.

—ELIE WIESEL

For many children in the cities of developing countries, the world of work starts almost as soon as they can walk, hold a hammer, or roll a cigarette.

Shadab says he likes his job. He seems to enjoy the cheerful banter of the men he works with, and to take pride in the exacting work required of him. He seems quite comfortable amidst the dangers of his workplace: the particles flying from the grinding wheel inches

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URBAN CHILDHOOD

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from his face, the air thick with metal dust which he breathes all day, the puddles of acid near his bare feet on the dirt floor.

Shadab and children like him represent a conundrum for those seeking solutions to the problem of child labor. Some advocates call for the immediate elimination of child labor through total enforcement of child labor laws, mandatory school attendance, and boycotts of goods made by child workers. They point out that child labor takes jobs away from adults who need them, and who remain unemployed as a result. They argue that when working children reach adulthood their health is often damaged, and that with no education they are condemned to a life of poverty—in which they will likely send their own children out to work. Others insist that under present circumstances, child labor is a necessary evil that will die out naturally as economic conditions improve. They advocate improvements in wages, hours, and working conditions for children until this change occurs.

The ILO launched a program to eliminate child labor in 1992, and children themselves have taken up the cause as well. In 1993, Iqbal Masih, a 10-year-old Pakistani boy who had worked as a bonded laborer in the carpet industry since the age of four, showed great courage in contacting a local group, the Bonded Labour Liberation Front. As a result, he and hundreds of children were rescued from a life of veritable slavery. Iqbal became internationally known as he spoke out against child labor—until he was gunned down in Lahore in 1995. After his death, however, a 13-year-old Canadian, Craig Kielburger, decided to take over Iqbal's campaign. Craig toured South Asia with his father, amassing evidence of child labor and attracting the attention of the Canadian prime minister who was in the region at the time, and who acknowledged in his official agenda the need to eliminate child labor. Back home in Canada, Craig founded an international network of child activists called Free the Children, which lobbies for a solution to the problem around the globe, including boycotts of products made by children.

A way out?

Such efforts—and countless others like them on the part of international agencies such as UNICEF and grassroots groups such as Roda Viva in Rio de Janeiro or the Undugu Society in Nairobi—represent the light of unlimited possibilities for the impoverished children of the world's cities, for whom the tunnel of an urban childhood is dark and long.

Yet despite the perils they encounter along the way, urban children do face a brighter future than those in rural areas, especially in developing countries. Experts agree that political will is needed to improve health care, education, and urban infrastructure. But more and more, it is being recognized that solutions can also come from the people—and even from the children—themselves. If the unlimited resources of energy and creativity that exist in the teeming cities of the world can be nurtured and harnessed, more and more children will emerge into the light. ■

Kristin Helmore, formerly Third World Correspondent with The Christian Science Monitor, was the editor of African Farmer magazine and writes widely on development issues.

FACTS AND FIGURES

- Globally, one out of every three people is a child under the age of 15. In some countries, the proportion is even higher: In many parts of Africa and the Middle East, children account for half the population. Even in industrialized countries, between one-fifth and one-quarter of the population are children.
- In seven of the developing world's largest cities, approximately 30 percent of the population is under 15—that's some 30 million children in these cities alone.
- Almost half of the developing world's population of children under the age of five live in absolute poverty. In Latin America and the Caribbean, children under the age of 18 make up 41 percent of the total population; 42 percent of these children live below the poverty line.
- Since 1990, around 60 million children died before their fifth birthday; 42 million of these were killed by diarrhea, pneumonia, measles, malaria, or malnutrition.
- In Africa's "mega-villages"—agglomerations of up to 500,000 people—infant mortality has shot up from 70 per 1,000 in the late 1970s to 90 per 1,000 in the early 1990s.
- In 1993, diarrhea and acute respiratory infections caused more than 7 million deaths among children under age five in developing countries; this represents 58 percent of all deaths in this age group.
- Working children in Brazil contribute between 20 and 40 percent of the family income. In Bangalore, India, children contributed 19 percent of the family income. In Egypt, boys employed in factories and workshops contributed one-quarter of family income. In Haiti, 130,000 children between the ages of 5 and 18 are employed as "domestic servants"—a condition not far removed from slavery.
- An estimated 250,000 children under 18—some as young as 7—are presently serving around the world in government armed forces or armed opposition groups. Children took part actively in 33 armed conflicts in 1995-96.
- In the United States, a gun takes the life of a child every 92 minutes—the equivalent of a classroom of children every two days. Since 1979, more U.S. children (60,008) have died from gunfire than American soldiers died during the Vietnam and Gulf wars and U.S. engagements in Haiti, Somalia, and Bosnia combined.
- Every school day in America, 1,644 Hispanic public school students are suspended, and 773 Hispanic babies are born into poverty; 4,404 black public school students are suspended, and 805 black babies are born into poverty; and 6,674 white public school students are suspended, and 1,611 white babies are born into poverty.

Sources: CDF Facts, Save The Children Fund, International Labour Organization, Macro International, Population Council.

Learning to Get Better

African Schools Provide Perfect Setting for Lessons and Actions to Improve Children's Health

BY DON BUNDY, MITESH THAKKAR, AND CAROLYN WINTER

TANGA. There's good news: Thanks to major international efforts, today almost 90 percent of the world's infants and preschool children will live beyond their fifth birthday. And there's more good news: By the year 2000, about 80 percent of the world's school-age children will in fact be attending school. But there's bad news, too: Quality of life for school-age children in developing countries is seriously threatened by the malnutrition, respiratory infection, diarrheal diseases, and range of parasites that are leading causes of sickness and underdevelopment.

The problems

There are some 1 billion school-age children in the world, and a recent analysis suggests that 97 percent of their disease burden is carried by the children of developing countries, with Sub-Saharan Africa and India suffering the most. Most of the children in developing countries are urban residents. As such, they are not just schoolchildren but often also working children—and even street children. Many try to get an education even while they struggle to feed themselves—and often their family.

Children often begin school late, repeat grades many times, and spend several years just trying to get a primary education. In fact, many primary schoolchildren in developing countries are adolescents. These city schoolchildren thus are not only at risk of communicable diseases—such as malaria, measles, diarrheal disease, tuberculosis, and intestinal worms—but are also exposed to adolescent diseases and the major health risks related to reproductive health, substance abuse, and violence.

In urban areas, both boys and girls face these health hazards. Though it has been estimated that girls are much less likely than boys to be street children (1:10) or abusers of narcotic substances, they face a greater risk of

sexual exploitation. They also carry a disproportionate burden of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

School-based solutions

New comprehensive efforts to improve the quality of schoolchildren's lives are under way around the world. These programs are delivering education and prevention services from one of the few constant and consistent structures within the lives of these children—their schools. "The education system is one of the most pervasive sectors in any country—there are more teachers than nurses, more schools than clinics. This is a capacity that can be put to good use," notes Dr. Sam Adjei, coordinator of the Ghana Partnership for Child Development Program.

Mwanje, a child in metropolitan Tanga, is a health program success story. Now that her school has participated in a deworming and health education program, her belly does not hurt, and her urine is no longer tinged with blood—for the first time in her short life.

Through the program, she was treated for the bilharzia worm infection; through its participatory education methods, she has come to take a more responsible view of her own health. Both the treatment and the education were provided by her teacher, in her school. "Children really appreciate the extra care that teachers show, and the teachers appreciate this wider role in the community," says Elizabeth Yona, deputy director of Tanzania's Department of Primary Education.

These school-based health programs go beyond immediate physical well-being to improving a child's cognitive development. This combination of improving health and educational achievement simultaneously makes these programs particularly attractive—and particularly helpful.

Low overhead

"A small investment in the health of the next generation may be one of the most effective we can make," notes Charles Kihamia, professor of parasitology at Tanzania's Muhimili Medical Center. The new school health programs certainly represent a "small investment." The Tanzanian program provided deworming medication and health education on preventing parasitological disease for 345 schools and 110,000 students—all at a cost of less than US\$1 per student per year. Almost all (97 percent) of this expense was for the medication provided; the delivery cost was negligible since it used the existing school system.

The largest scale school health program of all, run by the state government of Gujarat, India, and currently reaching 3.5 million schoolchildren twice a year with medicine and nutrient supplements such as vitamin A and iron, costs just US \$0.33 per student per year.

Future success

Decrepit urban sanitation, adolescent violence, substance abuse, and the spread of STDs including HIV/AIDS have become the new, growing health concerns of the developing urban world. Many countries are attempting preventive measures to arrest these health problems early—through the schools.

The new school health programs are innovative, and emphasize participation and prevention over "cures."

This approach is sound: Children learning to make responsible decisions about their lifestyles is now seen as the most effective tool against the urban maladies arising in the developing world. What better place for this learning to occur than in their own schools? ■

Don Bundy is professor of epidemiology at the University of Oxford and is currently a visiting fellow in the World Bank Human Development Department. Mitesh Thakkar is a consultant to the department, working on girls' education and school health issues. Carolyn Winter, a human resource specialist with the department, is involved in education issues.

Children learning to make responsible decisions about their lifestyles is now seen as the most effective tool against the urban maladies arising in the developing world.

Unraveling the Dilemma of Child Labor

Where Childhood Is Insecure, Work Often Promises Answers

BY JO BOYDEN AND WILLIAM MYERS

MANILA. In the wake of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child—the most widely subscribed international convention in history—global concern about child labor has grown, especially regarding developing countries, where the practice is today overwhelmingly concentrated. Developing countries are making serious efforts to deal effectively with their child labor problems. Some have demonstrated remarkable energy and creativity in this effort. Although it may still be too early to determine whether and how these innovations will be successful—many are less than 10 years old—it is highly informative to observe some of the ideas and activities now being advanced and tested. In this regard, the Philippines provides some excellent material, particularly because the country's attitude toward child labor is so conflicted.

The Filipino child labor situation

According to official estimates, there are about 2.2 million working children between 10 and 17 years of age in the Philippines. The real number is certainly much higher, though, because many tens of thousands of children are engaged in informal activities, which are not officially recorded. Also, a large proportion of children under 10 years of age work as well; the Bureau of Women and Young Workers estimates that there could be 5 million children ages 5 to 14 in the workforce.

Recent assessments reveal that Philippine children are engaged in an alarming array of hazardous activities and occupations. Between 400,000 and 1,600,000 children—or at least 20 percent of all working children—may be involved in dangerous or servile work.

NGOs champion the cause

The first attempts to combat child labor in the Philippines were largely confined to the development of legislation. The law now

This article was excerpted from a paper, "Exploring Alternative Approaches to Child Labour: Case Studies from Developing Countries," published by UNICEF, International Child Development Center, Florence.

proscribes employment outside the family for children under 15, prohibits hazardous work for children under 18, and protects children working legally. This law, however, is not enforced adequately, due to a shortage of enforcement inspectors. In any case, as a senior official with the Department of Labor and Employment notes, "You can't inspect your way to the end of child labor."

In the absence of governmental commitment, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) took up the crusade against child labor. NGOs—together with church and community groups—identify at-risk groups of children in need of assistance and determine the most appropriate responses to their situation. For its part, government, until about the late 1980s, chose to disregard child labor problems—overlooking, for example, child prostitution and hazardous deep-sea fishing practices for fear that efforts to combat the exploitation of children might affect the income obtained from the tourist and fishing industries.

The resort town of Pagsanjan became a hotbed of community activism in the 1980s when the townspeople rallied against the large influx of foreign pedophiles who had caused the child prostitution industry to burgeon in the area. The NGO Rural Organization and Assistance for Development mobilized the national and foreign media. The subsequent media reports caused a public stir not only in the Philippines but also in the foreign countries that were home to many of the tourist pedophiles.

A local inter-agency committee, the Council for the Protection of the Children in Pagsanjan, was

established to provide a focal point for the campaign. The council sought to change the attitudes of parents who, because of the large payments they or their children often received, tended to see pedophiles as economic benefactors and knew little of what actually took place between the foreigners and their children. Posters were displayed throughout

the town, and seminars were held informing local people about the foreigners' activities. Health workers taught children about the dangers of sexually transmitted diseases and drug abuse. These efforts substantially reduced the problem, although they could not completely eliminate it.

NGOs and government team to develop balanced solution

Cooperation between civil society and government has gradually developed to address child labor issues. This can be seen in the example of action against child labor in the deep-sea fishing industry of Cebu, an occupation for which boys were hired in large numbers. *Muro-ami* fishing is a very dangerous and environmentally destructive technique using divers—the boys—to help set nets and drive fish into them. This practice was elevated to a public issue when conservationists, scuba divers, and the tourist department joined forces with NGOs concerned about the hazards to children.

Interestingly, however, unlike the situation in Pagsanjan, action at the community level was conspicuously absent in Cebu: Despite being aware of the dangers to their children, parents saw no other alternatives to sustain their families. Therefore, the impetus for change came from national, Manila-based civic groups which applied pressure on government and mobilized the community. These groups sparked the formation of a special interagency

task force including representatives from both government and civil society organizations. This task

force held a consultative workshop, which recommended an eventual ban on the industry and proposed a set of interim measures to reduce local dependence on fishing and to improve the terms and conditions of adult employment locally.

"You can't inspect your way to the end of child labor."

— PHILIPPINE LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT OFFICIAL

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Children in Development

Participation Benefits Youth, Community, Environment, and the World

BY ROGER HART

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child presents a challenging new vision of children as individuals, capable and deserving of a greater degree of participation in society. It recognizes that children are developing citizens and, as such, need to be gradually allowed to participate—according to their developing interests and abilities—in their cities and communities.

It will take a long time for all cultures to fully realize this conception of childhood. Even communities that believe in community participation underestimate the competence of children. Further, when children's energies are recognized, they are almost always channeled in social mobilization efforts rather than in meaningful participation.

People—including children—should learn to act based on critical analysis. The communities in which people—including children—live should be developed in a similarly thoughtful fashion and with an awareness that there are different values surrounding human use of the environment. The area of environmental planning is thus a fertile one for citizen—including children's— involvement.

There is great value in beginning an environmental research or action project by enabling children to evaluate their own everyday environment. Their research can be the basis for environmental action for children in any community. Furthermore, by building upon an analysis of their own daily lives, street and working children may be able to develop joint plans for the improvement of their living conditions.

From research on their own issues, children may wish to go on to a larger, communitywide analysis of environmental issues. The problem identification phase then includes interviewing community residents, environmental professionals, and—ideally—elected officials and representatives of government agencies. By making maps, children come to see ways in which issues in their neighborhood coalesce—such as the identification of a lack of play space in an area where there is unlawful dumping of waste.

Having completed their research, children may simply need to convince others of the importance of what they have discovered.

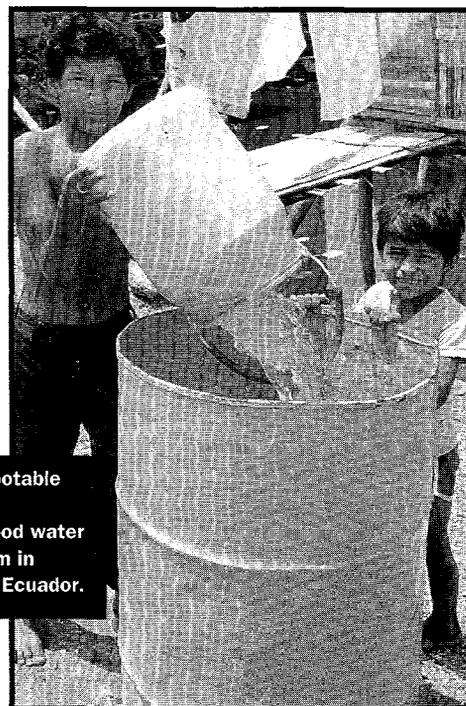
Making a presentation to local civic leaders or environmental planners, for example, can be an extremely satisfying experience—if the adults actually listen and ask serious questions. This is the approach of the Children's Panchayat, recently developed in West Bengal to mirror and inform the local adult Panchayat, or decisionmaking body. If they receive honest feedback and criticism from adult decisionmakers, they have gone a long way toward entering into the democratic process as citizens. And, if the children's research efforts become part of a larger planning effort, they should be allowed to follow up with the planning body to see what does—or does not—happen.

For children younger than 10, who have difficulty understanding complex, long-term planning processes, it is ideal if they can take some direct action themselves emerging from their research as a way of rounding out and making their experience concrete. The National Programme of Working Children in Ecuador has found it best to first design micro-actions—small projects close to children's homes that can be completed in a matter of days or weeks—before joining with other children to conduct macro-actions of considerable importance to their community. The children evaluate the success of the actions undertaken. This may lead them to conclude that a different kind of action is required—or it may lead them to a new problem.

For children in all cultures and income groups, the planning and design of play spaces in their neighborhood is an important issue. Schoolgrounds are another excellent domain for children's involvement in all planning and development phases, including the building of projects. We have found three-dimensional modeling to be a highly effective strategy for involving children of all ages in the design of schoolgrounds and playgrounds. The key to the success of the participatory planning and design process lies in the negotiation effort—both among the children and with adults; we have found that models are excellent for communicating across all ages.

At all levels, from household to global, we need to know how the environment is chang-

ing—particularly with regard to human intervention—so as to better balance development with ecological sustainability. In several countries, community-based monitoring is being used to track the health of the community and the environment by measuring certain relevant physical indicators. Thus, in Guayaquil, Ecuador, children produce maps of the garbage in their communities; this provides a



Boys add potable water to neighborhood water supply drum in Guayaquil, Ecuador.

©Bernard P. Wolff

strong basis for environmental awareness and action within the community.

Only though direct participation can children develop a genuine appreciation of democracy and a sense of their own competence and responsibility to participate. The planning, design, monitoring, and management of the physical environment seems to offer an ideal domain for the practice of children's participation. ■

Roger Hart is director of the Children's Environments Research Group at the City University of New York and editor of the journal Children's Environments. This article is drawn from Hart's book, Children's Participation: The Theory and Practice of Involving Young Citizens in Community Development and Environmental Care (New York: UNICEF, 1996).



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PICTURE **Cape Town:** IMAGES OF **South Africa**

An exhibition of photographs by
young people, aged 10 to 18, of landmarks in
Cape Town, South Africa.



©Jason Cope

*People in a changing world have to
"say something" with their photographs. So what
was there to say? And then how to put it into
pictures? I often wished that I could turn
the camera around and point it at ourselves.*

—JASON COPE, 18



©Vette Kruger



©Jolene Martin

At first, I found the question of capturing [South Africa's] elusive cultural aspect problematic. But increasingly, I began to focus on the fact that people inherit their culture and they are the expression of it.

—JOLENE MARTIN, 16



©Bikram Mitra



©Andrea Eden

I was touched on many occasions by just one person who, for me, signified everything that is Cape Town. Sometimes, you can only capture an image in your memory—the camera just cannot do justice to the experience.

—ANDREA EDEN, 16



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Picture Cape Town: Landmarks of a New Generation is reproduced with permission from The Getty Conservation Institute.

Delhi's Children Take Arms against Air Pollution

Can Delhi's Youth Make an Impact Where Experts Have Failed?

BY PATRALEKHA CHATTERJEE

NEW DELHI. The inhabitants of this city—the fourth most polluted in the world—inhalate the most polluted air in all India. Delhi is a deathtrap: Its poisonous air has turned more than 12 percent of its schoolchildren into asthmatics. Nearly one-third of the city's population suffers from chronic respiratory diseases.

seminars and symposia—but to little effect. Now, Delhi's schoolchildren have decided that they will not be silent spectators any more. It is their lungs, their brains, and their future at stake. If adults will not listen to other adults, maybe it is time for the children to intervene.

Opportunity to make a difference

But the real work is just beginning. As the summer vacation starts, the whole school is undertaking a gigantic monitoring exercise. Each child involved in the project has volunteered to take charge of at least five vehicles in his or her neighborhood and to jot down their pollution control status. This entails checking whether the vehicles have valid PUC certificates. The month when the vehicle was last tested is punched on the certificate; a certificate is valid for only three months. Part of the child's work is to remind the owner of a vehicle with an expired PUC certificate to get it renewed.

For the children, the campaign is more than just a refreshing change from the usual holiday homework. It is a rare opportunity to make a difference, and to light a fire under the passive elder generation.

"We experience pollution in our everyday lives. My mother comes home with a headache every evening, and pops pills. Once I was cycling down the road with my little sister in the pillion when a truck belched smoke at us. My sister started coughing. I felt helpless. Now, I can actually go and do something," says Dipali Prakash of Apeejay School.

Admen with a cause

The idea of involving children in the advocacy campaign for a cleaner Delhi comes from Tulika Public Service Division, subsidiary of a Delhi-based advertising agency. Normally in the business of selling upscale goods and lifestyles, the advertising agency is today trying to promote "pollution control as a fashion

statement," quips Sathya Sheel, one of the brains behind Tulika's latest Students Against Pollution campaign. Predictably, getting every school principal interested in the idea was not easy.

Saurabh Khosla, a graduate of one of India's top management schools and a director at Tulika, recalls early morning trips

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Pollution vigilantes in action: Pollution under Control certificate inspection in South Delhi

Pollution vigilantes

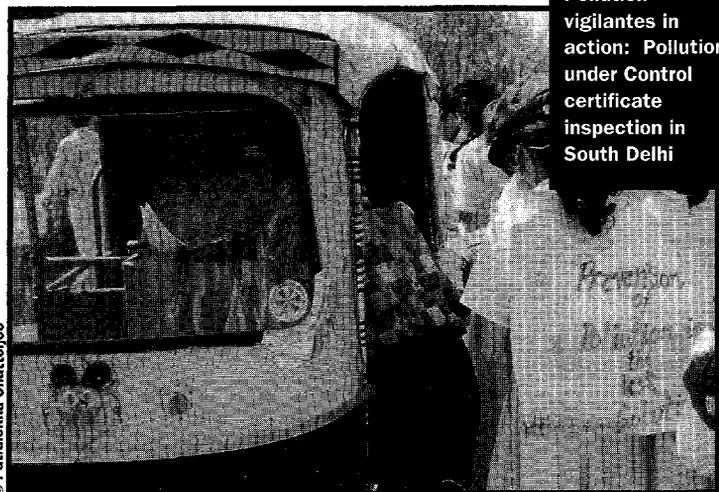
On a May morning this year, passersby at one of South Delhi's busiest intersections caught a glimpse of the new pollution vigilantes. A group of high school students stood on the curb, sheaves of paper in hand, doggedly flagging down vehicles. The children were checking

to see if each vehicle on the road had a Pollution under Control (PUC) certificate. Those who produced the piece of paper got a handwritten thank you note. Drivers who could not do so were directed to get a test done instantly. The students let the errant vehicle owners off with a stiff warning that next time around there would be a hefty fine to pay.

Many buses and cars refused to stop as they trudged through the hot morning rush hour. Some commuters snapped at the children for delaying them. Others were angry that they had to produce their certificates rather than being taken at their word. But a few welcomed the youths' initiative. And the kids remained as buoyant as when they had started, each trying to outpace the others in catching defaulters. By noon, the students—all ninth graders from Apeejay School, a private senior secondary school in South Delhi established by one of India's leading corporations—had checked 3,072 vehicles.

If adults will not listen to other adults, maybe it is time for the children to intervene.

© Patralekha Chatterjee



Vehicular pollution accounts for most—64 percent—of the total air pollution load in the city, according to a recent study, "Slow Murder: The Deadly Story of Vehicular Pollution in India," by the Delhi-based Center for Science and Environment. Vehicles—which tend to be badly maintained and to use poor quality fuel—account for 97 percent of hydrocarbon emissions in the Delhi air, 48 percent of nitrogen oxides, and 76 percent of carbon dioxide.

According to a 1995 World Bank study by Carter Brandon and Kirsten Homman, *The Cost of Inaction: Valuing the Economy-wide Cost of Environment Degradation in India*, the health costs of ambient air pollution in Delhi alone range between US\$100 and 400 million. Clean up the air in Indian cities, and over 40,000 premature deaths and 17 million respiratory hospital admissions can be avoided, the study asserts. And, according to Brandon and Homman, the impact of current ambient lead levels in 10 Indian cities accounts for 0.5 million lost IQ points in children.

Environmentalists and other concerned individuals have told the grim tale in countless

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Urban Youth and Crime

Teens Need Something in Their Lives to Replace Drugs and Crime.

BY ROGER GRAEF

AIR POLLUTION

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

to the other end of the city—and the disheartening responses he received. Even the pollution control division of Delhi’s transport department, now a partner in the anti-pollution drive, was skeptical at first about the eventual success of the project.

One of the first schools to respond to Tulika was the Central Reserve Police Force senior secondary school on Delhi’s outskirts. Explains principal Suraj Prakash, “It was a natural step for us. Our children have to pass through some of the most polluted stretches in the capital to come to school. [And] two years ago, they took part in a project sponsored by a Japanese newspaper to test pollution levels in Asian cities.”

Message now being received

Now, as the campaign’s simple but powerful message is beginning to capture the imagination of the public—and the attention of the media—Tulika is flooded with calls from schools wanting to be part of the Let’s Save Our City campaign. School principals say they are bombarded with calls from students wanting to do more. And private sector firms are chipping in with assistance in kind. Ballarpur Industries Ltd., a leading pulp manufacturer, donated 100 reams of paper to print the students’ action reports. A prominent hotel chain and a tire manufacturer have helped with promotional material.

Meanwhile, the admen with a cause have more cards up their sleeves. A few months from now, there will be a special concert staged at which the country’s best-known musicians will perform alongside their children in the grand tradition of Indian classical music. The event’s special guests will be those schoolchildren judged as the city’s best pollution monitors and their parents.

It is not yet clear whether this children’s crusade for clean air will be successful. What is clear is that society’s youngest members are trying to make a difference—before it’s too late. ■

Patralekha Chatterjee is a former student of the Refugee Studies Programme, University of Oxford, and a development journalist. She is currently based in New Delhi.

LONDON. Traditional societies sent adolescent youths away on rites of passage that tested their manhood and kept them out of the community while they expended their testosterone on animals—or each other. Middle-class Americans use summer camp; the British keep school going longer and use the gap year abroad; the Boy Scouts perform a similar function, as do the armed services. Colleges and universities often have walls within which adolescents can safely act their age.

But youngsters trapped in poor inner city housing projects get no such dispensation. They are often called gangs, but that exaggerates their degree of organization and usually their criminal intent. For the most part, beyond the huge disciplined U.S. groups such as the Crips, Bloods, and Latin Kings, youngsters described as gangs by police are actually just restless youth desperately bored and dangerously excitable.

Unsupervised children are most at risk of offending. Persistent young offenders have parents who are often apart and unemployed. Many have learning problems, and are soon excluded from school. That means children too restless to be taught are left free all week to roam the streets; some are as young as five.

Many have poor physical and mental health, and a family history of alcohol and drug abuse. Yet inner city stores sell cheap malt liquor and beer in huge bottles that become the staple diet for young teenagers rather than badly needed nutrients.

Without a network of family businesses to give them starter jobs, selling drugs is the primary source of income for many teens. This is not inborn criminality; rather, they want the same signs of success as everyone else: Rolex watches, the right car, clothes. It’s not the violence on television that drives crime, but the commercials. These youngsters are truly fashion victims.

When crime pays

For them, crime pays. And, as prosperity has brought more to steal, youth crime has in-

creased—especially in cities where the difference between rich and poor is constantly on view. Youth find in crime and in each other’s company the approval, excitement, and reward that we and our children get from playing by the system. The threat of arrest and

Children too restless to be taught are left free all week to roam the streets.

imprisonment is too remote, and too familiar, to hold the kind of terror it would for someone with a career at risk. In America, the prevalence of handguns means many youngsters cannot think past the weekend. They have no expectations, so why should they forego immediate pleasure?

Programs that work

Fortunately, there are examples all over the Western world of programs that address the needs of urban youth. It isn’t rocket science: Teens need something in their lives to replace drugs and crime. They need skills to get work—by far the best form of crime prevention. (In Les Ulis, an industrial suburb of Paris, the most popular restaurant is staffed almost entirely by young offenders starting a new career.)

With work, youths can form a steady relationship—the next best reason to stop crime. They can discover other forms of excitement, like music, art, sport, and travel. The most thoughtful rehab programs, like South West Key in Dallas, answer to this.

Crime is often a reasoned response: Car theft is common where public transport is poor, and the young seek excitement and escape. In Belfast, the Turas program recruits young joyriders at night when car crime is at its worst and lets them drive old stock cars on a racetrack—legally. In South London, the Ilderton Motor project allows “graduates” to stay on when their sentence ends to build cars,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

race them, and supervise younger people—a way to give back while staying out of crime.

The isolation of urban ghettos is emphasized by the lack of public transport. It's even worse after dark, when there's nothing for youth to do. The last buses from city centers leave long before cinemas and clubs let out. So fringe estates are littered with abandoned cars stolen by teens going home.

It is not the violence on television that drives crime, but the commercials.

Many youngsters vent their frustration by attacking the few trams and buses willing to venture into their area, so services are cut further. Rotterdam and Strasbourg hire unemployed young men to ride along and win the youngsters' loyalty and good behavior.

When Lille built a new Metro, its warm, brightly lit stations became a haven for urban

youth. Instead of calling the police, the transit authority hired a theater director, who made a video about young people in a Metro station. Many who worked on it went on to careers in television.

But it's absurd that such services should only be triggered by crime. Across France, the Summer of Youth program is organized in nearly a thousand communities; any youth who buys a 10 franc "passport" can visit them. To recruit youth for whom such activities would not be "cool," they hire potential gang leaders, train them for five weeks, and send them back to the street. Their certificate of training is the first official paper many will have received besides a summons. Their task is to recruit their friends.

The message is clear. It is spelled out in the branches of Youth as Resources in America, where youngsters at risk join the community instead of intimidating it. In the Robert Taylor Homes in Chicago, one of the most violent places in America, young people from eight years old and up deliver food to the elderly and infirm. In Fort Worth, Texas, the Youth Advocate Program hires local people to give youth on probation the extensive supervision

that is impossible for overworked probation officers. Such attention is a lifeline for restless youngsters, many of whose fathers are in prison while their mothers struggle with serious urban deprivation.

Need to reverse priorities

Once upon a time, looking after other people's children was normal: It *does* take a village to raise a child. But urban villages disappeared as low-rise, traditional streets were swept away by impersonal comprehensive redevelopment in the sixties. It's time we reversed our priorities before another generation of deprived urban youth loses its chance to discover what other possibilities the city has to offer besides crime. ■

Roger Graef is a London-based writer and criminologist. His current book and TV series explore ways to solve juvenile crime in North America and Europe. As a filmmaker and consultant, he has long been engaged in urban issues. He codesigned the London bus map, and lectures often on media, cities, and crime.

Two-Way Street: Children and Oxfam in Partnership

Innovative, Locally Based Programs Capitalize on Street Children's Survival Skills

BY JULIET LE BRETON

Street children are among the most defenseless and vulnerable people in any society. They can be robbed, abused, injured, ill-treated, subjected to police brutality—or even murdered in the night. In spite of the challenges they face, children who live on the streets are resourceful and resilient, with many survival strategies, including selling items, washing or guarding cars, begging, stealing, scavenging, drug dealing, prostitution, domestic work, and all manner of other informal sector activities.

Oxfam UK and Ireland aims to provide street children with alternatives to their current situation—or enable them to deal better with it—by working with partner nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in developing countries. It does this by also supporting

initiatives that involve children directly in researching, designing, and managing their own projects. In Egypt, Brazil, and other countries, projects have used participatory learning and appraisal techniques, collected oral testimonies, and encouraged children to share their own experiences about life in the streets. And in Indonesia, street children are writing, illustrating, editing, and producing their own magazine as a way of discussing their situation, needs, problems, and dreams in creative and critical ways.

Overcoming negative stereotypes

Street children have a poor reputation in local society. At a children's project in Brazil, a local businessman was heard to exclaim

loudly: "How can this shit Brazilian bring these gringos here to see the dogs on the street? Why doesn't he show them the commercial and shopping centers here?—That's Brazil!" State employees working with children often have similar perceptions: An Indonesian NGO reported that a local government officer asked whether setting up a drop-in center in his area would increase neighborhood crime.

Negative public image makes for poor self-confidence among street children. One of the more innovative programs for combating this has been Circus Ethiopia, which trains street children in music, drama, and acrobatics as a supplement to their schoolwork. "The sight of these children working in a focused, energetic way is an amazing one," says Marc La Chance,

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CHILDREN AND OXFAM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

the program's director. "It's hard to imagine that these well-disciplined, bright-eyed children were the same ones roaming the streets of Addis Ababa in rags." Participants are also learning: their grades are improving, and the performances they stage carry messages about crime, health, child abuse, AIDS, and gender issues.

Teaching life skills

Many street children work to support themselves, and sometimes also their families. A blanket ban on child labor could worsen the plight of children around the world: Some 40,000 children were thrown out on the streets of Dhaka in 1993 when factory owners feared an American boycott of their goods.

Oxfam campaigns for children's rights, condemns exploitative child labor, and calls for the protection of worker rights. Many projects also teach vocational skills such as carpentry and sewing. Such training is designed to meet the local needs of the children and fit in with their lifestyle. Thus, the Mobile Trade Schools in Dhaka, Bangladesh, run classes in rickshaw repair, carpentry, and tailoring, skills that are in demand locally. The schools go where the children are, and classes are scheduled so as not to interfere with children's regular activities. About 60 to 70 street children are trained in Dhaka each year; some of the teachers are last year's graduates.

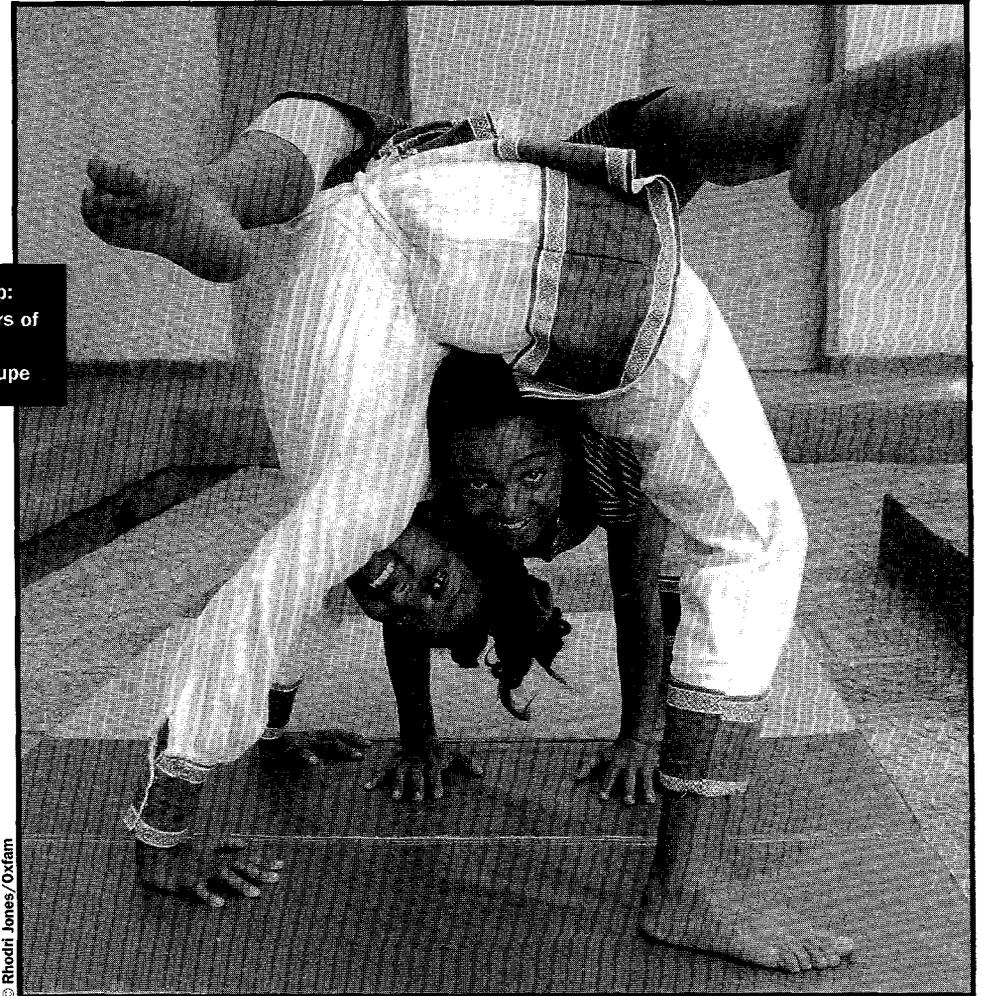
Putting girls first

Street girls are often in a worse position than street boys. To address this, the Oxfam-supported Kenya Alliance for the Advocacy of Children's Rights (KAACR)—an umbrella organization of NGOs that lobbies for the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child—recently launched a campaign against sexual violence toward girls in schools. Such violence is common in parts of Kenya. KAACR trains teachers and school principals on gender and violence, harmful cultural practices, and how to deal with this within their schools. Unfortunately, a recent evaluation report noted that, although the project was an

ongoing success, there was some resistance among a few teachers to the "Western-imposed" idea of gender equality. KAACR has, however, won the support of the Ministry of Education, and continues to promote public education, campaigning for equality for girls.

ing, and barriers to education—must be addressed. Children's involvement in this effort has proved crucial; their contribution to decisionmaking and project evaluation is included whenever possible. Through this effort and with this involvement, good development

Limbering up:
two members of
the Circus
Ethiopia troupe



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Networking, lobbying, promoting, publicizing

It is crucial to enhance the effectiveness of local organizations in lobbying for children's rights and to help children speak for themselves. Oxfam supplements national networks through international lobbying calling for the support of children's rights and pressing for appropriate public policies. In addition, Oxfam supports learning through experience to improve its programs—above all, learning from the children themselves. Publications and workshops also help improve the quality of work as well as share valuable information.

The issues that make children take to the streets—such as poverty, poor health, hous-

ing, and barriers to education—must be addressed. Children's involvement in this effort has proved crucial; their contribution to decisionmaking and project evaluation is included whenever possible. Through this effort and with this involvement, good development

programs can be crafted to prevent children from becoming destitute and living on the streets in the first place. As Roberto, a former street kid, who is now an outreach worker with Brazil's National Movement of Street Children, puts it, "We believe that through our strength, the growth of the movement, and the training of kids, one day this will get better." ■

Juliet Le Breton is a sustainable development policy advisor and writer. She has lived in Latin America, Africa and Asia, working for local and international NGOs as well as for the United Nations Development Programme. She wrote this article while working for Oxfam.

Urban Stress without Leads to Youths' Stress within

Impact of the Built Environment on Children's Mental Health

BY HUGH FREEMAN

LONDON. People often say, "This place is driving me mad"—but that's not really true. There is no evidence that serious mental illness—psychosis—is directly caused by environmental conditions, however unpleasant.

But there is a kernel of truth in the hyperbole. Any feature of the environment can affect the various people who are exposed to it in very different ways, depending on their innate constitution and previous life experiences. Also, any external stimulus that acts on the body is transmitted through enormously complex processes—mainly in the central nervous system and the endocrine system. There, it merges with many other influences, so that there is unlikely to be any single illness as a direct effect.

The urban environment has many features—

children are more sensitive than adults to these effects because they have less control over resources and fewer coping abilities.

Two models

Two main models have been used in the study of environmental effects on mental health. The first of these is a *social support model*, which is related to the study of social networks. Social support is believed to be a necessary element for healthy living; its absence is related to depression and several less serious forms of mental disorder. A study of

outside and from within the immediate family, is strongly influenced by the surrounding built environment.

For instance, those who live in a street

where people frequently walk by have a much better chance of supportive interaction than those who live in blocks of flats. If there are local shops or cafes, particularly in traffic-free areas, or sites conducive

Perhaps children are more sensitive than adults to the effects of the urban environment because they have less control over resources and fewer coping abilities.

to informal meetings—like the outdoor *paseo* of Mediterranean countries—social support will be much easier to obtain. On the other hand, the inhuman environment of high-rise blocks in cities or that of sprawling suburbs where movement is only possible by car have the opposite effect. Out-of-town shopping centers are so large and draw on such huge catchment areas that the likelihood of seeing anyone one knows is infinitely less than in a local street. Yet the possibility of chance meetings and face-to-face encounters is a fundamental part of human life.

The second model is a *stress model*. Chronic stresses, such as noise, that derive from environmental conditions and may be inescapable can adversely affect mental health. Noise is not only external, particularly from traffic or aircraft, but can be very severe within blocks of flats and other buildings through the absence of effective sound insulation. A minority of people are more sensitive than others to the effects of noise, and so are more likely to be affected by it.

Mental health in the city

In certain types of environments where the quality of housing is low, it is likely that adverse social factors will be found—as well as more psychiatric disorders. This is *social*

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The human cost of high-rise living

noise, overcrowding, a lack of privacy ironically combined with isolation, pollution, disease—that can affect inhabitants. Perhaps chil-

suicide in London showed that it was strongly associated with social isolation. How much support a person will receive, both from

MENTAL HEALTH

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stress. Poverty, prolonged unemployment, single-parent families, drug taking, delinquency, attempted suicide, and child abuse all tend to be present.

Also, more cases of schizophrenia—the most serious of mental illnesses—have been found in the central, run-down areas of cities than in suburbs. The meaning of this has been disputed, but most experts believe it is because people who have become ill migrate into city centers, where they find casual work, cheap lodgings, and an absence of intolerable social pressures. In contrast, healthy people—especially in complete families—migrate outward to newer housing areas. The result is a central city population with high rates of both medical and social problems.

In the 1970s, Sir Michael Rutter and colleagues at the Maudsley Hospital, London, compared a group of 10-year-old children in inner London with a similar group in a rural area. Both psychiatric disorders and delayed reading were twice as common among the London children as those in the rural areas. It seems that environmental effects were transmitted through families and schools to the children, but the exact nature of this inner city effect has not yet been identified.

An aspect of the built environment that is particularly important to children is the effect of living in high-rise blocks. There is some evidence that this can have unfavorable psychological effects on both young children and their mothers. A number of strong objective

reasons can be found why this situation is stressful: structural risks (from poor construction), the danger of children falling from balconies or windows, the difficulty of safely supervising the play of young children, inadequate fire precautions, isolation, vandalism, poor maintenance, a dehumanized and demoralizing appearance. Environments of this kind are also associated with higher rates of crime—though the extent to which the actual structures are responsible for this difference is uncertain.

The incivilities of these settings offer another source of stress; these include environmental degradation such as litter and graffiti, as well as frightening behavior, particularly by groups of young men. These symbols of danger and decline make people more anxious and discourage them from using public areas in cities. Consequently, the cities become even worse.

Toward solutions

Architects and planners have long been preoccupied with reducing the density of populations in cities. This emphasis is, in Western societies, misplaced. Provided that crowding within each home is avoided, a fairly high density per hectare is not only

harmless but is in fact necessary to support the special services and amenities of these areas.

Better progress could be made regarding these issues if research into them was better coordinated. The methodological problems involved are very great, but the biggest problem is that of coordination: The various scientific disciplines involved don't tend to communicate much with each other, yet each can do relatively little on its own. There is also a need for longitudinal studies over time rather than "snapshot" cross-sectional research. Such studies are both difficult and expensive. These logistic and funding issues

must be resolved, however, if our understanding of the stresses of the urban environment on the children—on the future—is to be advanced. ■

An aspect of the built environment that is particularly important to children is the effect of living in high-rise blocks. There is evidence that this can have unfavorable psychological effects on both young children and their mothers.

Professor Hugh Freeman was editor of the British Journal of Psychiatry and is now Honorary Visiting Fellow at Greens College, Oxford. He has been consultant to the World Health Organization and produced the book Mental Health and the Environment in 1985. His latest edited book is Quality of Life in Mental Disorders.

Foundation Morning Star: Shining Hope for the Children of Ecuador

Foundation Morning Star is an organization that advocates for the children of Quito and the poorest provinces of Ecuador—areas characterized by extreme poverty—by providing them with the resources they need to find creative solutions to their own problems. Its services are provided through a center and a bus-based outreach program. Almost no technical assistance programs exist to work with the 6- to 12-year-old children of these areas. By creating new programs and coordinating with already existing initiatives and experts in health, education, and environmental management, Morning Star fills a critical gap.

Open to all children, the Morning Star Center provides opportunities to develop creative and cognitive skills, learn more about other cultures and languages, and share experiences with each other. The center features:

- training courses, seminars, and workshops;

- language classes and laboratories;
- health education;
- a library with audiovisual facilities;
- an intercultural communication center, featuring Internet access to learn about and reach children of other cultures;
- exchange programs with students from other parts of Ecuador and the world;
- a hotline children can call for assistance with any issue;
- a games center for developing cognitive and reasoning skills, featuring toys such as Legos.

For more information about the Morning Star Foundation, contact Sharon Gonzales, Casilla 17171449, Quito, Ecuador, tel: 593-9-722410, fax: 593-2-250292.

Lead Poisoning

Who's Responsible for Children's Health in the Big Apple?

BY EMILY BACKUS

NEW YORK CITY. Were you to meet Marilyn David, you wouldn't know what—beyond poverty—holds her back. She's girlish and giggly. Perhaps her conversation is a little pedestrian. And her mother says her temper frequently kindles into tantrums. On the day I met her, Marilyn dashed from room to room pointing to all the spots on the walls where a health inspector had stamped "lead hazard"

in red block letters. Marilyn was lead poisoned as a toddler by paint in her family's Bronx apartment. Eleven years later, her six-year-old brother Hector was also lead poisoned. Lead caused Marilyn to become learning disabled and emotionally unstable. It's too early to tell how much damage has been done to Hector, although he already shows behavior problems.

In most cities of the world, these children would have sunk silently to the bottom of society. In New York, they live in the eye of a storm of litigation over just who must take responsibility for the damage done them and thousands of other New York children.

Gradual, silent, and omnipresent

Part of what confounds New York policymakers and courts is that lead poisoning is mostly gradual; silent; and often hard to ascribe to a place, source, or time. Lead is inhaled as particles in the air, licked in paint dust on a child's hands, chewed as peeling paint chips, and eaten in the soil of playgrounds or yards. Acute lead poisoning leads to kidney malfunction, seizures, profound brain damage, and even death. Even in small amounts, lead incrementally stunts a child's developing brain, causing learning disabilities, hyperactivity, emotional disturbances. It can even, according to a Fordham University study, lead to male criminality. And no "safe" level has been found below which brain damage does not occur. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control found that children ages six

and under lose approximately 2.5 IQ points for every 10 micrograms of lead per deciliter (mg/dl) in their blood. That's a total of only 10 parts per *billion*. Over time, a daily lead dose the size of a sugar granule will easily poison a small child.

Lead poisoning is mostly gradual; silent; and often hard to ascribe to a place, source, or time.

In most urban environments, lead is everywhere, in industrialized and developing countries alike. In some cities, like Bangkok and Cairo, sampled populations were found to have blood lead levels higher than 30mg/dl. In Damascus, downtown Budapest, and Mexico City, blood levels were found between 20mg/dl and 25mg/dl. The average blood lead level for the entire U.S. population was 17 mg/dl before the country banned lead from gasoline, paint, and most household goods. Now, 20 years later, the average U.S. blood lead level has dropped to only 4 mg/dl. Even so, 7 million tons of lead remain in America's environment—in the soil where old gas emissions settled, and in old paint on the walls of three-quarters of the country's housing stock.

Lead protection in New York

New York City has tried to protect small children from lead paint in their homes. In 1982, the City Council passed Local Law 1, which forbids exposed or chipping lead paint in any apartment building where there are children aged six or under. The building's landlord is responsible for lead paint abatement; the City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) is responsible for enforcement by inspecting and issuing violations. When a child is lead poisoned, defined as a blood lead level of 20 mg/dl, the child's doctor must report the case to the City Department of Health, which in turn must contact HPD. HPD is obliged to abate the dwelling (following safety guidelines) at the landlord's expense, if the landlord hasn't already remedied the problem. And, if neither the landlord nor the city fulfill their obligations, a tenant can sue one or other or both.

This system seems reasonable; unfortunately, it has done little more than generate a vicious tangle of litigation. Lawsuits against the city concerning lead paint have snowballed to 1,058 pending civil actions. About a thousand cases more have been launched against private landlords. Meanwhile, childhood lead poisoning marches on. This fiscal year, New York City's Department of Health expects to identify 2,370 new lead-poisoned children. The New York Public Interest Group estimates that 70,000 to 80,000 New York City children have blood lead levels above 10mg/dl.

Numerous weaknesses in the system

Lead activists charge that the city has never seriously enforced Local Law 1. HPD inspectors often don't show up, or do only partial inspections. None are equipped to field test for lead, but instead rely on a provision of the law that says that any building built prior to 1960 with peeling paint is presumed to be a lead paint hazard. When landlords contest HPD findings, HPD seldom, if ever, has hard evidence of its own. According to a landlord association, violations are dismissed about 90 percent of the time.

Further compromising the city government's stand on lead is the fact that it is New York City's biggest landlord, owning 21,000 units. When private landlords fall far behind in their property taxes, the city seizes their buildings and puts them under HPD management. Generally, landlords have abandoned their buildings long before they fall into the city's hands. Thus, the city has become by default its own worst slumlord, responsible for New York's poorest, most dilapidated housing stock.

Lisa Yee, an attorney specializing in lead paint matters, claims that if New York abated all its lead paint, it would cost \$30 billion—an expense equal to the city's annual budget. If the government forced private landlords to do the same, the city would be deluged with more abandoned buildings. At least, that's the threat made by landlord associations, which say that their liability is so vast and vague under current law, they can't get property insurance to cover lead paint liability.

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LEAD POISONING

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Reform under way

New York City has had so much difficulty over lead paint that the author of Local Law 1 is trying to change it. Councilman Stanley Michels has admitted that the law he wrote 15 years ago has been too stringently interpreted by the court. Consequently, he has introduced a new bill that limits landlord and city respon-

If New York abated all its lead paint, it would cost \$30 billion—an expense equal to the city's annual budget.

sibilities to immediate lead hazards—like peeling lead paint and its underlying causes, and areas that create paint dust, like window sashes. However, the new bill applies not only to dwellings but to daycare centers, public schools, and playgrounds as well. The bill also mandates new safety standards for work sites—the city has been harshly criticized for carelessly blasting lead paint from local bridges, letting it blow into nearby neighborhoods.

To the city, this reform might just open a bigger, badder Pandora's box. On the other hand, given the public costs of medicating, educating, housing, and feeding lead poisoned children over a lifetime—not to mention the collective cost of the loss of precious human potential—mandated prevention comes at bargain prices. ■

Emily Backus is a television journalist living in New York City.

CHILD LABOR

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The task force opted to prioritize enforcement of a minimum age of 18 for employment in the industry, improvements in the conditions of adult employment, and the introduction of alternative income opportunities.

There was serious local resistance to removing children from the industry. Mothers of children employed as divers insisted on the need to find alternative income in order to end their dependence on child labor. Consequently, priority was given to establishing alternative income sources locally, extending "soft" loans, and providing training in production.

Each of the interventions adopted had varied success; however, follow-up inspections and press reports indicated that the participation of children in the industry had declined to a relative handful. The case of Cebu therefore serves as a reminder that, in some situations, effective child labor interventions must go beyond strong local advocacy campaigns to include structural activities involving high levels of government.

Questions remain

The two cases outlined above illustrate how mixed are the reactions to the issue of child labor. Members of the Salinhani Foundation hold the fairly radical view that unless child work is officially recognized and tolerated, it is impossible to protect working children and guarantee their rights. The Ministry of Labor, on the other hand, is concerned that legitimization of child work could be interpreted as tacit acceptance of a morally reprehensible situation. The apparent contradiction between laws proscribing child labor and a

pragmatic program strategy protecting working children has never been fully resolved and is perhaps unresolvable, but both seem to have found a useful place and justification within a Philippine approach prioritizing children at risk.

The fact that child labor in developing countries is so widespread and affects so many people suggests that the locally based, nonpunitive, educative, and protective strategy adopted in the Philippines is perhaps an especially realistic one, for it can penetrate to the level where most decisions about the work of children are made. ■

Jo Boyden is an anthropologist specializing in child labor and other problems of children in developing countries. William Myers is a former official in the Working Conditions and Environment Department of the International Labor Organization.

NEWSFLASH

Construction Begins on Malaysia Cybercity

Ground was broken on May 17 for Cyberjaya, a multibillion-dollar "intelligent city" to form the administrative capital and heart of what Malaysia hopes will be its version of California's Silicon Valley. The Cyberjaya plan is for a 750-square-kilometer multimedia super-corridor, 25 kilometers south of Kuala Lumpur, for media and information technology companies. The effort has attracted nine joint venture partners, including Japanese telecommunications giant Nippon Telegraph and Telephone. Cyberjaya will be built in four stages—the first to be completed in 1999—at a total cost of US\$3.99 billion, and will eventually have 250,000 inhabitants.



New Studies Available on Poverty Reduction in Urban Areas

Sida and the Dutch government have supported the preparation of case studies on innovative initiatives to reduce poverty in urban areas. To date, papers on the following efforts have been developed:

- SPARC-National Slum Dwellers Federation and SPARC-Mahila Milan, India;
- Integrated Improvement Programme, Banco San Jorge, Argentina;
- Orangi Pilot Project, Pakistan;
- Urban Community Development Office, Thailand;
- Mutirao and Casa Melhor, Fortaleza, Brazil;
- PRODEL Programme, Nicaragua;
- FONHAPO, Mexico;

- Women's Credit Union, Sri Lanka; and
- People's Dialogue and South African Homeless People's Federation.

Papers have also been developed that provide an overview of the scale and nature of urban poverty, a discussion of how to reach low-income groups with housing finance, and why aid agencies should channel funding through city-based funds for community initiatives. Each of these papers is available for US\$2 (half-price for orders from developing countries) from Human Settlements, IIED, 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H 0DD, UK; e-mail: humansied@gn.apc.org

Brazil's Street Kids Won't Just Go Away

BY NANCY SCHEPER-HUGHES AND DANIEL HOFFMAN

Before dawn on Friday, July 23, 1993, a carload of off-duty plainclothes policemen pulled up to a sidewalk in elegant Candelaria Church Square in downtown Rio de Janeiro and opened fire on about 70 street children who were sleeping on the sidewalks. In his own defense during the trial, one officer said that the children were dangerous, and had been known in the past to attack and kill innocent people, including policemen.

RIO DE JANEIRO. Suddenly, or so it appeared to a great many Brazilians, the urban shantytowns known here as *favelas* ruptured in the late 1980s, and the nation's poor, needy, and mostly black children descended from hillside slums. They seemed to be everywhere, occupying the public spaces, boulevards, plazas, and parks that had been viewed as the private domain of the more affluent. The specter of homeless and abandoned street children—or *meninos da rua*—rose as a blemish on the urban landscape—and a reminder that all is not well.

By invading the city centers, frequenting the upper class beaches, and engaging in petty crimes against the middle class, street kids defy the segregated order of the post-modern city. By refusing to accept peaceably their status as *favelados*—nobodies—and by refusing to stay on the city's periphery and in the slums, Brazil's street kids frustrate those who seek to maintain distance and difference from the urban poor.

Street children are, in a sense, poor kids in revolt, violating social space, disrespecting property, publicly intoxicating themselves, and refusing to disappear. The risks and hazards of this inchoate rebellion are great: illiteracy, toxicity from inhalant drugs, chronic hunger and undernutrition, sexual exploitation, and more recently—AIDS.

Child advocates in Brazil who recognize the risks these street children face began to defend the right of the child to be in the street, while recognizing that a life of the streets can only be self-destructive in the long term. In the past decade, a movement of thousands of individuals and many smaller

grassroots organizations has risen on behalf of children's rights. They have organized street youth in the cities, exposed the routine assassination of children, and advanced constitutional amendments and model legislation defending the rights of children.

Defending the rights of street kids to occupy public space without harassment is laudable. But until the children's movement can address the chaotic economic and social conditions that cause desperately poor parents to lose their children to the streets, the majority of Brazil's *meninos da rua* will suffer.

Street children are typically barefoot, shirtless, and seemingly untied to a home. They represent the extreme of social marginality and anonymity, and they occupy a particularly degraded position within the Brazilian hierarchy of place and power. As denizens of the street, they are separated from all that can confer relationship and propriety.

Youth who live in the street are feared and avoided by the other class of children who merely work there. And so, the outward signs that a child is working—the shoeshine box, the tray of candy, the pail of roasted nuts—are also symbols that the child is good and should not be perceived as a threat. The earnings are negligible, but there is often a strong resolve among many poor youth not to be criminal. Padre Sechi, a

Salesian missionary who has been working with the poor and street children for close to 30 years in the Amazonian city of Belem, told us that he feels that what is striking is not how many poor children are criminal, but how few resort to crime, given their conditions.

Street children live in fear of the police, state children's asylums, and of anonymous kidnapers and death squads. In all, their lives are

characterized by a profound sense of ontological insecurity. They are subject to a final solution of sorts through kidnaping and assassination by anonymous death squads that operate with relative impunity, particularly in Brazil's larger cities. Death ends the street child's annoying tactics once and for all.

Between 1988 and 1990, an estimated 5,000 street children were murdered in Brazil, according to a statement in a 1991 edition of *Jornal do Comercio*. Few of these homicides were investigated. "There appears to be a deliberate intention of these groups [death squads] to summarily eliminate children and adolescents seen as suspected future delinquents," said the Office of Legal Advice to Popular Organizations in the same year.

The concept of positive laws and equal rights both challenges and undermines the privileges of the *casa* and personal connections, including the privilege to ignore the fate of those that fall outside its realm. The new discourse on children's rights strives for, and assumes, an "egalitarian individualism"—the liberal democracy of the streets, to be exact—that is antithetical to the social hierarchies typical of Brazilian social life. Conferring equal rights to all children requires significant redistribution of resources, power, and symbolic capital, and herein lies the democratic project's deepest obstacle and threat. ■

Nancy Scheper-Hughes, professor and chair of the anthropology department at the University of California at Berkeley, is a former Peace Corps volunteer and the author of Death without Warning: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil. Daniel Hoffman is studying toward a doctoral degree in the department.

They do become thieves. But I myself am going to be different. I am going to return to school until I am graduated and then I will find a good job. I am going to have a wife and children and I will never put any of them out in the streets to beg.

—ADEVALDO, 10 YEARS OLD

So what do you think of the world now?, we asked the 11-year-old street kid.
I think it stinks.
Is there anything good about it?
Nothing. It's only fit for thieves.
The world is nothing.

A longer version of this article appeared in the Winter 1996 issue of WorldView, the magazine of the U.S. Peace Corps.

Children in the City: An Interview with the Mayor of Rio de Janeiro

BY MARGARET BERGEN

Brazil, and Rio de Janeiro in particular, has come under attack for its handling of the problem of street children. The mayor of Rio, Luis Pablo Conde, discusses street kids and the city's municipal solutions.

UA: *In July 1993, off-duty policemen opened fire on children sleeping in front of Candelaria church, killing eight. Why do you think this happened, and could it happen again?*

CONDE: Society looks on street children as potentially dangerous, lawbreakers. Sometimes they are, because of the harsh struggle for survival on the streets. The truth, however, is that these children are vulnerable. They suffer violence, are exploited, and are often forced into crime. The Candelaria incident happened because of the general view of street children and teenagers, and the policemen's feeling that they could act with impunity.

I don't think anything like that will ever happen again. The municipality's education specialists are out on the streets trying to persuade the children to give up that life. The policemen involved in the Candelaria affair are in prison—some with sentences lasting over 100 years—and that should certainly deter others.*

UA: *Would you defend a child's right to live on the streets?*

CONDE: That "right" is an illusion. The notion that it is a right comes from a cruel view of their situation, regarding them as deviants constantly on the verge of committing crimes and not as people who have been deprived of their rights. Because of this view, until recently, the relevant agencies and the police put street kids in jail, or kept them isolated in other institutions. A lot of organizations in civil society came to oppose this official policy of imprisonment and isolation. The idea that they had a "right" to live on the streets arose as a counterpoint to the repressive measures adopted, but it is no longer accepted.

I would say that street kids, like any other human beings, are entitled to come and go as

they please, but they are not entitled to live on the streets just because they are poor and helpless. They should be in a family—their own, or a substitute family—in school, and in the community. That is the guiding principle for the work of the municipality.

UA: *What is your philosophy for tackling the street kid problem?*

CONDE: Certain rights must be guaranteed; because of this, the problem can't be solved merely through charity or repression. Sometimes street people do need immediate support in the form of material things or even money, but the really important task is to work on their will power and help them believe that life can be different, so that they will help themselves. My office has introduced social measures that have had a considerable impact, such as the Shantytown Development project, the City of Rio project, and programs specifically targeted toward street people, such as the Come Home and Light on Rio projects.

The office also has programs for banning child labor and preventing children from taking to the streets, in addition to measures intended to help the people already living on the streets. Their basic purpose is to prevent or check the process of exclusion.

UA: *Are you working with child and youth advocacy groups to solve the economic and social problems that cause children of poor parents to take to the streets?*

CONDE: Street kids are not just an abstract concept; they are people who have—or had—families and neighbors in their communities, and who may have attended school. The municipality is trying to get street kids and teenagers back to their rightful places: that is, their families, communities, and schools.

Children of poverty, the unemployed, the homeless, the hungry, and those with no

particular aim in life head for the streets; that creates very tough problems for the municipality—both the local government and society. To deal with these problems, my office has been implementing a successful policy in cooperation with nongovernmental organizations, community associations, employers, churches, and universities.

UA: *How could the view of these kids as dangerous criminals be changed so that they would be seen as children in great need?*

CONDE: Such views won't be changed quickly, because they have become entrenched over a number of years. In large cities, people live in fear and see everything as a threat. Violence is an everyday occurrence. Buildings

The municipality is trying to get street kids and teenagers back to their rightful places: that is, their families, communities, and schools.

are constructed to be inward-looking, so as to offer safety and some defense, and houses are becoming refuges. However, in poorer areas there is no chance of isolating and protecting one-

self. A shanty offers no tranquility—and even less protection. When kids take to the streets, it's because they don't think they're any worse off on the streets than in the place where they lived before, with its tiny shanties, open sewers, and violence.

My office is attempting to integrate these poorer communities into the city, turning them into urban development areas, providing sanitation facilities and equal, democratic access to services.

I believe that the first step in changing the view that the poor—whether in the slums or on the streets—are potential criminals is to deinstitutionalize inequality. It is also important to ensure that organizations within society participate more fully and effectively in the formulation and implementation of social policy, as is happening in Rio de Janeiro. ■

* As reported in the 20 June 1997 Washington Post, one of the policemen originally sentenced to 261 years was acquitted of the murders in a new trial, and his sentence was reduced to 18 years for a single count of attempted murder.

The Global Grid of Strategic Cities

World Loci of Wealth and Technology Eclipse Traditional Sites of National Power

BY LUCY CONGER

BARCELONA. As the forces of globalization march inexorably around the planet, a few cities in the North and South are being singled out as the strategic sites in the worldwide grid that will map the economy of the future, according to Saskia Sassen. Sassen, a professor of urban planning at Columbia University was speaking at a conference in March hosted by the Inter-American Development Bank on “The Latin American and Caribbean City of the Next Century.” In the industrialized and developing worlds alike, she noted, national capitals, industrial centers, and major ports are being eclipsed by these strategic cities which concentrate financial wealth and cutting-edge technology in response to the new world economy.

The strategic cities of the world include the obvious choices—Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Hong Kong, London, Los Angeles, New York, Paris, Sydney, Tokyo, and Zurich—and some surprises, such as Bombay and Bangalore in India. Other strategic cities in emerging countries include Bangkok, Beijing, Mexico City, Moscow, Sao Paulo, Seoul, and Taipei. Regional trading blocs will further inflate the importance of some strategic cities such as Sao Paulo and Mexico City.

The new vital hubs, which include the major international business and financial centers, are “places that can coordinate cross-border flows of information, services, and finance,” noted Sassen, creating the opportunity for local governments to increase their power. In fact, the new importance of cities in the evolving world economy is evident in the recent creation of a mayors’ club at the Davos conference: Corporate elites are coming to realize that the private sector can now negotiate business directly with mayors.

What it takes to be a strategic city

What causes one city to take on the special role of a nodal point on the worldwide grid of strategic cities? The cities that have become strategic are places “that function as centers for the coordination, control, and servicing of global capital,” Sassen said. Other types of

centers that are currently strategic are export-processing zones and high-tech districts, including Silicon Valley and Bangalore.

What it means to be a strategic city

While today’s broad economic changes offer opportunities, they also unleash a fierce competition to be among the chosen few that rank as strategic cities. Municipal governments are strained to modernize urban services—and to finance these costly infrastruc-

So that cities *can* capture some of the wealth they are helping create, they must focus on using their newfound importance to negotiate for partial funding for their infrastructure and amenities from their “clients”—the industries dependent on the cities and municipal services. For example, New York has persuaded multinational corporations to finance renovation of a subway station as part of their location package, and Boston has negotiated with industries to create a linkage between their locating in the metropolitan region and

The Mexico City Strategy

Mexico City is an example of a metropolitan center that turned tragedy into opportunity to enter the era of cutting-edge technology. After the 1995 earthquake that destroyed its long-distance telephone installations and leveled important government and banking offices, the city “began rebuilding as a state-of-the-art service center,” in Sassen’s words. A new, decentralized long-distance telephone system was installed, and empty space in the damaged downtown district allowed for building up new, specialized legal and financial services. The process of gearing up for international competition as Mexico negotiated the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) gave added impetus to Mexico City’s evolution from a hydra-headed administrative center to a modern service center for post-industrial production.

ture projects. In the South, cities face a daunting double burden: providing the high-tech installations to service international finance while creating the basic urban services required by their burgeoning populations of poor people. Jaime Ravinet, mayor of Santiago, Chile, reeled off a list of demands pressing in on Latin American cities: “Growth in population; physical expansion which raises infrastructure costs; congestion owing to increasing use of automobiles; air, water, and noise pollution; and inequalities across *barrios*.”

In response, mayors, increasingly, are looking for expanded revenue sharing. Often, large cities that are major production sites contribute more revenues to their federal government than they receive in return. “The political challenge here is how to transform decentralization [of government functions and administration] into a political project,” said Sassen. “Cities are often growth machines for the private sector, but the city doesn’t get money because it goes to the elite and doesn’t recirculate.”

assuming social responsibility—companies that build an office building also support construction of low-income housing units.

There is a downside to the dynamism that is launching strategic cities into prominence for the 21st century. The globalization responsible for bringing Buenos Aires in closer proximity to London, for example, is also creating vast distances between the strategic cities and their surrounding suburbs and rural areas. And the social distances that exist within cities between rich and poor, empowered and un-, are even greater. Noted Ravinet, “We have inequalities—*barrios* that are First World and *barrios* that are Third and Fourth World.” Resolving the problems created thereby, equalizing the unequal, will be just one of the imminent challenges for the world’s strategic cities. ■

Lucy Conger reports on Latin American economic and financial topics for Institutional Investor magazine and Emerging Markets newspaper.

A Roof over Their Heads

Nonprofits Get Housing through Innovative Portland Receivership Program

BY DAVID SWEET

PORTLAND. Picture a dilapidated, abandoned house, deserted years ago in a crumbling older neighborhood. Its grass is too high. Its windows are broken.

In the not-too-distant past, this house was nothing but a nuisance, an eyesore, a potential crime site, a city expense. Today, however, this house will be a home once more, a symbol of security and utility—for a nonprofit community development corporation.

Portland, Oregon, has a number of older residential neighborhoods filled with wood-frame one- and two-family houses. Since World War II, these neighborhoods have provided much of the area's affordable housing. They were hit particularly hard by the real estate boom-and-bust cycle of the 1980s, when many people defaulted on their mortgages as the value of their homes fell. Portland was left with an unprecedented number of boarded-up, vacant, derelict buildings—most of them in older, low-income neighborhoods.

In response to this problem, Portland's mayor and city commissioner convened the Vacant and Abandoned Buildings Task Force, composed of 34 citizens, housing professionals, and public officials. The task force met for 10 months in 1988; among the recommendations it made for reducing the number of derelict buildings was that the city should develop state enabling legislation that would allow for housing receivership. In 1989, the city did just that. It improved on the suggestion by involving nonprofit community development corporations.

Through its Housing Receivership Program, Portland enables a nonprofit housing developer to take possession of a deteriorating building and make the needed repairs. Only cases that offer little hope of resolution otherwise are involved in the program. Typical candidates are houses with a long-standing record of housing code violations that have been vacant for two or more years. The visual impact of these structures discourages investment and diminishes neighbors' sense of safety. Moreover, communities are denied the vitality they would enjoy if these buildings were well-maintained and occupied.

The program was created by statute in 1989. This statute grants the city standing to file a lawsuit seeking appointment of a receiver for any housing in violation of local codes. Generally, the owner of such property responds to the initial notice sent by the city announcing its intent to seek receivership by asking for time to complete repairs—or by selling the property.

In the few cases where the owner does not respond, the city asks the court to appoint a nonprofit community development corporation as receiver. Using funds loaned by the city's urban renewal agency, the receiver rehabilitates the property. The court awards the receiver a lien for all rehabilitation costs plus a 15 percent management fee. The receiver can then seek to acquire title to the property through a foreclosure. Meanwhile, it can rent the property, applying the rent received to the cost of repairs.

The typical property addressed in the program is the lone deteriorated structure in an area where other properties are reasonably well-maintained. It has usually been vacant for a number of years, and the owner has ignored city fees and penalties assessed as liens on the property.

It is difficult to say how many properties there are in Portland that might qualify for receivership, but 150 were listed as derelict buildings in January 1994 and continue in that status today. To date, six of the city's more than 40 nonprofit community development corporations have been prequalified for participation in the program; three have been appointed as receivers for one or more properties.

Receivership cases take a long time to resolve—sometimes more than a year. Since the city only uses the receivership program for cases that offer little hope for resolution, neither the staff time used nor the length of time to resolution seem unreasonable. This shortcoming is a natural consequence of the use of the court system and of nonprofit

receivers to resolve cases—the very things that make the program successful.

Before Portland had a receivership program, there was no authority to require the repair of derelict buildings. Instead, through a series of nuisance code actions, the city would keep these buildings secured, cut the grass, and remove trash. When the structure had deteriorated past the point of reclamation, the city would seek a demolition order. The resulting vacant lot was usually worth less than the accumulated municipal liens—which would be eliminated in the likely event of a property tax foreclosure.

The program's most important achievement is that it has created a straightforward, well-defined strategy for ensuring that long-time derelict buildings will be returned to productive use. Housing brought under the receiver-

The program's most important achievement is that it has created a straightforward, well-defined strategy for ensuring that long-time derelict buildings will be returned to productive use.

ship program will be rehabilitated, either by the owner under a negotiated agreement or by the court-appointed receiver. Prior to the inception of this program, there was no way to guarantee that substandard housing would be repaired. If the property owner was not motivated by fines, a boarded-up building might have sat indefinitely. At best, it was an eyesore; at worst, it was a haven for drug dealers and prostitutes.

In addition, the program helps nonprofit developers acquire affordable rental housing. This has fostered a most productive partnership between the city's code enforcement program and the nonprofit community, to the benefit of neighborhood revitalization efforts citywide. ■

David Sweet is the inspections supervisor in the Portland, Oregon, Bureau of Buildings.

Charting New Territory: Child Health Problems and the Environment

BY JANE MONAHAN

The exploration of child health problems and the environment is a new area of analysis. Two recent publications focus on this topic: Ekblad concentrates on child health-urban connections in industrialized countries, while Satterthwaite et al. look at child and environmental issues in developing countries.

The problems

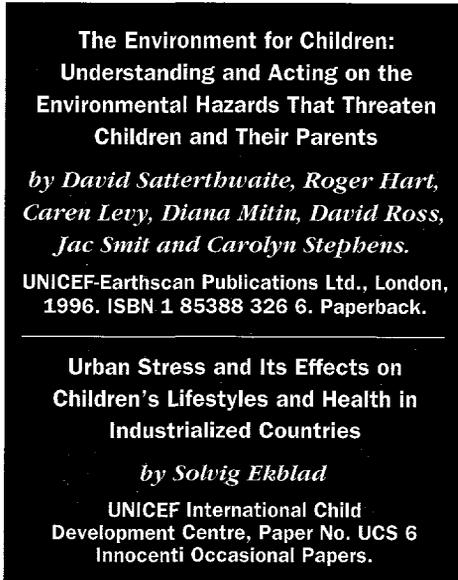
Noise, pollution and overcrowding are all environmental factors that cause stress in cities and towns. Children, explains Ekblad, are even more exposed to such stress factors than are adults. For example, children inhale greater quantities of airborne pollutants relative to their weight because of their high activity levels during outdoor play.

Furthermore, pollution is now so pervasive—indoors as well as out—that it even affects children in the womb. The Baltic cities and Mexico are cited as places where the number of children born with disabilities due to pollution is rising.

Overcrowding is a chronic urban stress factor. Studies show that children living in crowded conditions, without certain basic amenities and often in low-income housing areas, score lower on scholastic attainment tests than children from similar social backgrounds without housing difficulties.

Despite these many threats and dangers, Ekblad notes, little attention has ever been paid to the effects of urban stress on a child's mental and physical health and social development. And, as Satterthwaite et al. point out, the environmentally related problems for children in developing countries are much, much bigger—although similarly under-addressed:

"The child crisis—the 40,000 child deaths that occur each day from malnutrition and disease and the 150 million children a year who survive with ill health and with their physical and mental development held back—has somehow become separated from discussion of the world's most serious environmental problems . . . Yet, it is pollutants or disease-causing agents (pathogens) in the child's environment—in air, water, soils or food—and poor household's inadequate access to natural



resources (fresh water, food, fuel) which are the immediate causes of this child crisis."

Meanwhile, the authors note, millions of infants and children die each year in developing countries from diarrheal diseases and malaria largely as a result of contaminated water, and hundreds of thousands die from respiratory infections caused by urban air pollution and tuberculosis.

Focus and approach

If the study of the connections between the urban environment and child health is still in its infancy, so too is research into possible solutions. Some general conclusions can, however, be drawn. For instance, Satterthwaite et al. note that it is not appropriate to focus on issues of poverty and inequality—even though most of the environmental problems that threaten the lives and health of children occur within low-income households and are heavily concentrated in nations with relatively low per capita incomes—because this often misses or underestimates the environmental aspects of illness, injury, and premature death among children and their parents.

Also, finding solutions is not a matter of cost related to a country's prosperity. In many cases, the cost is not so great to substantially reduce some of the most serious environmen-

tal hazards for infants and children by ensuring safer and more adequate water supplies; improved sanitation and drainage; and safer and healthier houses, schools, and neighborhoods. "This," write Satterthwaite et al., "has been demonstrated by many projects or programmes in Africa, Asia and Latin America . . . [and by] community-driven approaches [which] often achieve remarkable cost savings in comparison with conventional government or contractor implemented approaches."

The solutions

According to Satterthwaite et al., the solutions that work best in addressing the problems of child health and the environment are those that make use of a grassroots participatory approach that recognizes and strengthens the capacity of local groups acting collectively to find solutions to their own problems. An example of a successful community/collective environmental management approach—primary environmental care—is a locally organized project in Orangi, an 800,000-person settlement in Karachi, Pakistan. Over eight years, this project resulted in households building 69,000 bathroom facilities for their own use—all with their own funds and under their own management.

And, taking the participatory approach a step farther, children are increasingly organizing and helping shape the environmental debate that affects their lives. A recent example is Programa Muchacho Trabajador (Working Child Program) of Ecuador, which has established centers throughout the country for working and street children. Each center has a trained coordinator dedicated to empowering children to become active agents in defense of their rights and improvement of their lives.

The links between the environment, children, their health, their future—our future—are becoming more apparent. Future efforts will need to build on the baseline established by Ekblad and Satterthwaite et al. ■

Jane Monahan is a British journalist based in Washington, D.C., who writes about development, economic, and environmental issues.

THE URBAN CALENDAR

These urban events were culled from The Urban Age's current files. We are not always able to list events more than once, given space limitations. Please refer to past issues of The Urban Age for additional events scheduled in 1997. Send your announcements to: The Editor, The Urban Age, Room F6P-174, The World Bank Group, 1818 H Street, NW, Washington, DC 20433, USA. Fax: 202-522-3227; e-mail: mbergen@worldbank.org

Conferences

Colombia, South America—June 26–28, 1997. **International Seminar on Rural-Urban Environmental Integration.** Contact: Dr. Leonardo Acevedo Duarte, Academic Coordination. Universidad Industrial de Santander, Escuela De Ingeniera, Quimica Apartado Aereo 678, Bogota, Colombia. Tel: 57-76-344746; fax: 57-76-344684; email: lacevedo@uis.edu.co

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia—July 3–4, 1997. **Quality of Urban Life & World Exhibition and Congress on Technologies and Solutions for City Environment, Housing, Utilities and Transport.** Contact: Yap Siew Fuen, Special Events Division, Asian Strategy & Leadership Institute, Level 1, Menari Sungei Way, Jalan Lagun Timur, Bandar Sunway, 46150 Petaling Jaya, Malaysia. Tel: 603-731-7775; fax: 603-731-4759.

Asia-Pacific Cities Forum Roundtable July 31–August 1, 1997, New York The Asia Society

The Asia-Pacific Cities Forum (APCF) is an action-oriented partnership linking business, government, civic organizations, academia, and media leaders in the Asia and Pacific region. Its mission is to act as a catalyst whereby the partners are able to leverage their respective resources to a degree not achievable individually. APCF's initial role is to assist cities and communities by facilitating the establishment of an activist network among all stakeholders in urban development. In doing so, the optimal assembly of resources will be enhanced to the end of supporting cities in the achievement of their respective sustainable development goals.

A roundtable will be held at the Asia Society in New York City on July 31 and August 1, 1997, to serve as the launching for this regional network partnership. The venue is New York City so as to tie in to the United Nations International Conference on Governance for Sustainable Growth and Equity, which is being held immediately prior to this roundtable.

The APCF Roundtable is organized in partnership with the Asia Society, the Institute of Public Administration, and the International Center for Advanced Studies—New York University. Attendance at this first meeting will be limited to approximately 40 leaders from the Asia-Pacific region representing a variety of backgrounds including mayors, senior business executives, community leaders, scholars, media representatives, and executives of international and bilateral donor agencies and foundations.

Contact: Akhtar Badshah, 21 Helen Street, Warren, NJ 07059, USA. Tel: 908-561-3072; fax: 908-755-5717; e-mail: abadshah@msn.com; internet: <http://www.apcf.org>

Durban, South Africa—September 1–5, 1997. **Water and Sanitation for All: Partnerships and Innovations.** Contact: Rowena Steele, WEDC, Loughborough University, LE11 3TU, UK. Tel: 44-150-922-2390/2391; fax: 44-150-921-1079; e-mail: r.m.steele@lboro.ac.uk

Bandung, Indonesia—September 2–4, 1997. **Fourth International Congress on Urban Restructuring in the Fast Growing Asia: Its Implications for the Planning Profession and Education.** Contact: The Secretariat, Department of Regional and City Planning, Faculty of Civil Engineering and Planning, Institute of Technology Bandung, Gedung Labtek, IXA JI, Ganesha 10, Bandung 40132, Indonesia. Tel: 62-22-250-4735; fax: 62-22-250-1263; e-mail: itbpwk@bandung.wasantara.net.id

Miami, Florida—September 21–24 1997. **Where the Jobs Are: Hot Industries, Communities and Strategies for Economic Development.** Contact: National Council for Urban Economic Development (CEUD), Annual Conference Registrar, 1730 K Street, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20006, USA. Fax: 202-223-4745.

Lisbon, Portugal—September 21–25, 1997. **Flagship Projects: Their Place in Urban Development and Regeneration.** Contact: International Urban Development Association, Secretariat General, Nassau Dillenburgstraat 44, NL 2596 AE, The Hague, The Netherlands. Tel: 31-70-324-4526; fax: 31-70-328-0727.

Gothenburg, Sweden—September 27–October 2, 1997. **Urban Challenges: Investments, Sustainable Quality, Identity.** Contact: IFHP Secretariat, Wassenaarseweg 43, NL-2696 CG, The Hague, The Netherlands. Tel: 31-70-328-1504/324-4557; fax: 31-70-328-2085.

Havana, Cuba—March 30–April 3, 1998. **Shelter and Revitalization of Historic Urban Centres.** Contact: TRIALOG, c/o Lehrstuhl für Städtebau und Entwerfen, Universität, Taun 11.40, G-009, D-76128 Karlsruhe, Germany. Tel and fax: 49-0-30-216-7281; e-mail: havana.congress@usa.net

United Nations, New York July 28–30, 1997

International Colloquium of Mayors on Governance for Sustainable Growth and Equity

Contact: Jonas Rabinovitch, Manager, Urban Development Unit, MDGD, UNDP, One U.N. Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA; tel: 212-906-6791; fax: 212-906-6973.

URBAN STUDIES



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Urban Studies is a world class journal providing an international forum for the discussion of issues in the fields of urban and regional analysis and planning. A hallmark of the journal is that it publishes leading articles from urban scholars working from within a variety of disciplines, including geography, economics, sociology, political science as well as planning and public administration.

The journal aims to provide theoretically and empirically informed analysis of the myriad changes affecting the urban and regional condition in the economically advanced nations as well as less developed economies. While contribution to academic scholarship is the mainstay of the journal, its intent is also to inform practitioners of the changing urban scene.

For 1997 the Editors are pleased to announce three major changes:

- an increase in the number of issues. In 1997, *Urban Studies* is published monthly (except September) allowing for the more rapid publication of key manuscripts.
- Professors **Richard Child Hill** and **Janice F. Madden** acting as United States editors
- a revived United States Editorial Advisory Committee, which better reflects the range of social science disciplines in which urban scholars are working.

URBAN STUDIES REVIEW

Urban Studies Review is published annually in May and forms a double-issue of the journal. The main aim of the *Review* is to provide a critical overview of contemporary theoretical and policy debates within the urban field. Core research areas, such as housing and local economic development, are monitored and reviewed each year by international experts. More specific issues are reviewed as one-off articles.

SPECIAL ISSUES

The devotion of whole issues of the journal to key topics of current concerns continues in 1997 with two Special Issues on *New Urban Agendas from Habitat II (1996): Evaluations of Histories, Policies and Research and Developer Contributions: The Bargaining Process*.

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