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**CHILDREN AND YOUTH OUT OF PLACE:
PROGRAM STRATEGIES
IN MEXICO CITY**

by

MARSHA LEA MOSHINSKY, B.A. (Honours)

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

The Norman Paterson School of International Affairs

**Carleton University
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Graduate Studies and Research acceptance of this thesis
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of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Rudner', written over a horizontal line.

Professor Martin Rudner, Director
The Norman Paterson School
of International Affairs

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'O. Mehmet', written over a horizontal line.

Professor O. Mehmet, Supervisor

Abstract

After two decades of growing interest in the street child phenomenon, there remains scattered and often limited knowledge about their situation, environment and the best practices for interventions. This paper identifies several key guidelines for action in street children micro-scale interventions. They are later used to analyze two specific case studies in Mexico City, *Casa Alianza México* and *Casa Ecuador*. The paper argues that, although their relative impact on the target group is commendable -- particularly due to a holistic framework of interventions with alternative "life projects" and the partial usage of psycho-social indicators -- other guidelines for intervention remain limited. To improve their effectiveness, efficacy and scope, the work recommends that the organizations adopt a greater emphasis on children's rights, establish income-generating activities, promote adaptive management style and increase collaboration with other actors to ensure a comprehensive intervention.

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I dedicate this work to all those committed individuals who give so much of their energy to helping children and youth out of place. And to the children and youth. May they, in their search for a better life, find dignity and self-respect.

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Introduction

"I used to live with my mother and many brothers and with my stepfather. I quarrelled with him; we used to fight and that is [partly] why I left home. I used to work in the market in Cuernavaca and later I came to Mexico [City] when I was 12. I hitched a ride and came to live with my aunt but I didn't adapt. I lived with her three months and then I left and that is how I got to live on the streets." (Pepe; institutional street youth)

The street child phenomenon is a result of a multitude of interrelated macro and micro processes that contribute to the distress of urban children: modernization accompanied by poverty, rapid rural-urban migration and increasing urbanization, and family disintegration, among others. In the great metropolitan centers of the lesser developed countries (LDCs), populations confront a situation of pauperization with a constant flow of migrants and overpopulation contributing to the saturation of the job market. In addition, despite having achieved some economic gains, the persistent economic crisis and the politics of neo-liberalism which confront many LDCs have had negative consequences, particularly in the social sphere. Structural adjustment programs adopted by governments in response to the 1980s debt crisis have engendered a readjustment of public spending on public and social services, a reduction of employment and wages, and rising prices of basic goods, further altering the living conditions of the middle and lower classes (Zamora Chavarria, 1994: 37). Those primarily affected are the marginalized, in particular the elderly, women and children. The latter often greatly curtail, if not altogether abandon their education for income-generating activities in the informal sector. The survival of the family and of the child often depends on his or her earnings and this overriding responsibility leaves them no choice but to work.

Thus, the process of *callejerización* may begin: the street becomes the child's principal "school of life" and the central element in the child's work experiences while ties with the family and society are weakened. Lacking a solid family support, many children disconnect themselves from home because of crowded conditions, domestic violence, abandonment or expulsion. As shown below, children who work and live on the street become exposed to all its social, economic and environmental hazards, including malnutrition, respiratory and gastrointestinal health problems, addiction, prostitution, traffic accidents and rape (ILO, 1992: 17 and INEGI, 1992: 29-35).

"I lived on the streets two and a half years. I had freedom [and] could do whatever I wanted.... [I survived] doing different jobs: cleaning [car] windshields, sometimes walking the streets, begging, what was basic. We cooperated, dividing the money amongst our group, but sometimes the older ones took away our money.... Sometimes [I took drugs]. My stomach used to hurt me. I took them for the cold and the cough. The first time I thought about it because I had pressure from my friends but later I became addicted. There were many in the group, some good, some bad.... The police looked at us dirty and instead of helping us, they would take us to very ugly centers and would take away our belongings." (Pepe; institutional street youth)

Society, in particular, considers street children to be a plague of unmanageable numbers. For example, street children are referred to as *gamins* (urchins) or *chinchés* (bed bugs) in Colombia, *marginais* (criminals/marginals) in Brazil and *saligoman* (nasty kids) in Rwanda (UNICEF, "Street Children"). In some countries, Brazil, El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia, for example, marginalization has reached such extremes that the "problem" of street children consists of their physical-elimination, jobs given to death squads formed by members of the police and private security forces.

Mexico has not reached this extreme, but children are routinely mistreated in confrontations with police and criminals and in various cases have lost their lives (see Chapter 4). The marginalized children perceive adults and society as aggressors. Faced with daily adult hostility and abandonment, children suffer from acute social and psychological distress, significantly lowering their self-esteem. Some grow up maladjusted

to society and can only relate to people through crime and violence. Because they are unable to attend school with any degree of regularity, if at all, most street children will not graduate from elementary level, limiting their future income potential and constraining that of the next generation (Boyden, 1991: 59-69, Bequele and Boyden, 1988: 158, 170 and Salazar and Knaul, 1995: 389).¹

Various responses have attempted to curb the phenomenon and help those on the street to improve their living circumstances. Intervention by the state -- the organization in charge of providing care and protection for homeless children and youth and for intervening when parental care is lacking -- has traditionally consisted of institutional care. However, there are growing innovative attempts by national and local governments to replace institutionalism by sensitive services that better respond to the needs of urban children in difficult circumstances.² There are also numerous forms of micro-scale, local voluntary and non-governmental interventions. They range from assistance on the street for the purpose of responding to a group of children's most urgent needs to sophisticated institutionalized centers where children are placed in a situation resembling a family arrangement. Between these two concepts there are many types of interventions, including service delivery projects that meet only a single condition, such as health or education, to those that engage in advocacy, networking and lobbying activities in addition to the provision of supportive services. Street work, drop-in centers and open-door residential services are some of the most popular methodological approaches used.

¹ For an overview of the various problems faced by street children worldwide see Allsebrook and Swift's chapter "Artful Dodgers." In *Broken Promise: The World of Endangered Children* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1989), p. 97-159 and for a case study of the precarious situation of Brazilian street children see "Kids Out of Place." In *NACLA: Report on the Americas* (Vol. XXVII, No. 6, May/June 1994), p. 16-23.

² The most notable example comes from Brazil's system of indirect care based on non-governmental initiatives at the local level. While some of Brazil's unique methods of intervention are discussed later, please see Rizzini, Irene, Irma Rizzini, Monica Munoz-Vargas and Lidia Galeano's "Brazil: A New Concept of Childhood." In Blanc, Cristina. *Urban Children in Distress* (USA: Gordon and Breach, 1994) pp. 55-99, for an overview of actions brought about by the social movement in the country.

The plethora of micro-scale intervention and programming raises a number of issues. What alternative life-paths are offered to the child by these interventions? Do these fit with the child's reality and best interests? To what extent are the child's ideas incorporated into the program? How is the development of the child monitored? What level of interaction exists between interventions? In reviewing various theoretical approaches, these and other questions are used to identify key guidelines for action to help evaluate the effectiveness, efficacy and scope of micro-scale street children's programming.

With the aid of these theoretical guidelines, two such programs in Mexico City are examined: *Fundación Casa Alianza México, I.A.P.* (henceforth *Casa Alianza México*) and *La Casa de la Juventud J.J. Fernández de Lizardi*, or *Casa Ecuador* as it is best known for the street on which it is located. In assessing the programs' methodologies, methods for individually monitoring the child, extent of youth participation and usage of financial and human resources, among other factors, the paper attempts to analyze the programs' effectiveness at meeting their objectives and the impact they have on their target group. The key guidelines are used to highlighting some of the organizations' achievements, setbacks and suggestions for improvement

Why Mexico City

Mexico was chosen as a case study for two primary reasons: the rapid growth of its street children population and the numerous type of interventions that have attempted to curb the phenomenon in its capital city.

Despite its recent economic achievements, the country is currently experiencing growing levels of poverty and an increasing income distribution gap, contributing factors to the street child phenomenon. Mexico's rapid economic growth earned it the label of a newly industrialized country (NIC) in Latin America. In the last 50 years, the Mexican people as a whole have benefited from lower infant mortality levels and higher life

expectancy, literacy and school enrolment ratios. Economic indicators show a steady gross national product (GNP) per capita average annual growth rate of 3.7% between 1965 and 1980 (UNICEF, 1997: 91). However, the last 20 years have been marked by persistent economic crises, structural adjustment programs and neo-liberalist policies that have lead to serious negative consequences on the country's social sphere. Among other things, the depreciation of local currencies, high inflation and stagnation of the job market have diminished the purchasing power of already low salaries and shrunken the once-growing middle class. Drastic cuts in social spending, including subsidy cuts of basic commodities, have further isolated the marginalized. The worsening living and working conditions are forcing the poor to expend all their energies and resources in order to survive (see Appendix 1). Thus, Mexico is now experiencing a growth in the number of children and youth who take to the streets.

Mexico's responses to the street child phenomenon have also multiplied in the last decade; as discussed in Chapter 4, there are numerous micro-scale interventions and programming working in Mexico City. However, most operate in partial isolation from one another and only in the last few years have research, evaluations and exchange intensified. It is hoped that this paper can contribute to this knowledge building process.

Methodology

The research methods used in this work are twofold. Much of the material presented in this paper comes from primary and secondary sources. Primary source material includes UNICEF surveys and numerous documents, including statistical data, from *Casa Alianza México*, *Casa Ecuador* and other projects working with street children. Secondary material is drawn from relevant books and journals, government departments' and international agencies' documentation, and newspaper and magazine articles.

Field research in Mexico City, carried out in June through August 1996, and February through April 1997, proved to be invaluable for the analysis of the two aforementioned organizations and in gathering primary sources of information. During the first visit, personal interviews were conducted with district and municipal government officials and key members of UNICEF, local agencies and non-government organizations involved in street children programming. Five open-ended interviews with working children and former street youth also took place.³ Having identified some of the structural causes leading to the increase of the phenomenon and key projects of intervention, two NGO were selected for further in depth study.⁴

The second visit consisted primarily of a one month study of *Casa Alianza México* and *Casa Ecuador*. This research carried out a partial external evaluation of the processes of the projects (to see if the organizations meet their own objectives) and of the impact the projects are having on their target populations. Data was gathered primarily through the qualitative methods of direct participatory observation and selected semi-structured interviews with key personnel informants and the young. Different sets of interview guidelines were used for each group.⁵ While the key informants' interview guidelines covered a wide range of issues relating to the organizations' process and impact -- an organization's background, target group, methodology, accomplishments and setbacks of its various phases, personal monitoring of the child, project cycle and evaluation, and financial and human resources -- on an individual basis, only those questions relating to the interviewee's position within an organization were asked. Key informants include program directors and systematizers, social workers, psychologists, youth workers and

³ It should be noted that these interviews were conducted for the purpose of further familiarizing myself with some of the main concerns voiced by street and working children. They are by no means meant to be representative of the larger population in Mexico City, but rather to complement information obtained through census and other primary and secondary sources. Furthermore, three interviews were used as a pilot sample towards the interview guidelines later used with the children in the analyzed organizations.

⁴ The reasons for their selection are outlined in Chapter 4.

⁵ The outlines of the general interview questions, in Spanish and English, can be found in Appendix 2.

volunteers. Questions for the children and youth inquired about their personal background, their history in the institution, their understanding of its methodology and level of participation within it, their likes and dislikes of the organization and their general outlook on institutionalization. Interviews with the young were especially conducted in an open-ended manner. Aside from the directors, all participants remain anonymous and pseudonyms apply where direct quotations and sources of information are used. In all cases, translations are mine.

In *Casa Alianza México*, 22 interviews were carried out with personnel and 12 interviews with children and youth. In *Casa Ecuador*, 12 personnel and eight youth were interviewed. The latter being a smaller organization, fewer interviews with key personnel were deemed necessary. It must be stressed that despite careful selection of key informants and the young, the interview samples gathered in both organizations were not intended to be part of an exact quantitative statistical study representative of the opinions and recommendations of the staff and children as a whole. Rather, they were intended as a means of qualitative research, to provide an in-depth understanding of some of the major achievements and drawbacks relating to the organizations' processes and impact. It must also be noted that, whenever possible, interviews with children and youth were carried out only after having previously established some rapport with the subjects. This was done to avoid a defensive and elusive attitude that is commonly expressed by street children when talking to strangers.

The structure of the paper is as follows: following the introduction, Chapter 2 provides an analysis of the key concepts and terms used in the paper. The phenomenon of street children and youth and child labour are discussed and defined, as are the interrelated concepts of childhood and the urban informal sector.

Chapter 3 provides a compilation of the range of theoretical approaches to micro-scale programming for street children. This theoretical foundation is used to identify key

guidelines for action which may serve as a starting point for improving the work of the case studies and other interventions working for the benefit of street children.

The situation of the street child phenomenon in Mexico City is analyzed in Chapter 4. The first section looks at the demographic characteristics of children and youth "on" and "of" the street in Mexico City and discusses the particular social circumstances facing the latter group. Next, the chapter provides a critical overview of interventions by both the Mexican authorities and civil society. The last section introduces the case studies of *Casa Alianza México* and *Casa Ecuador*.

By examining various components of the programs, Chapter 5 analyzes the work of *Casa Alianza México* and *Casa Ecuador*. The chapter examines and, to some degree, compares the programs' methodologies, methods for individually monitoring the child, extent of youth participation and usage of financial and human resources. Major achievements and drawbacks are identified.

Drawing upon the work in the previous chapter, Chapter 6 ties together the most relevant aspects of both interventions and links them to the previously identified guidelines for action. General conclusions and recommendations also identify areas requiring further study and research.

Concepts and Definitions

"Today I am selling gum [though] I also sell handbags ... but I don't work every day. Today I am working for dinner and am going to stay until the night.... I failed fourth grade [but] ... I don't have time to study because I have to help at home and sometimes work for money. After doing housework and earning money, dinnertime comes and then I have to go to bed.... My father hits me a lot and very hard with a wire.... My mother also hits me with the broomstick. At school my teacher pulls my ears. I get hit because I don't understand; I do things that I'm not supposed to do ... like not selling all my gum. I want to go live with an aunt who defends me ... [but] I don't tell my parents I want to live with her because when my aunt asks for permission [to go live with her], my father gets mad and hits me." (Lola; street-based working child at risk of leaving her home)

Perhaps the most discussed subject among scholars, government and international and local bodies concerned with the street child phenomenon is the definition of the concept itself. The numerous interpretations and sub-definitions of the "street child" indicate the importance of understanding the phenomenon and its variations. For program/project implementation purposes, each target group requires different types and levels of intervention (Fyfe, 1993: 26-27). The following provides a better understanding of some of the key concepts and terms used in the study. In particular, the phenomenon of street children and youth and their relations to work, the streets, their families and other environments are provided. The interrelated concepts of childhood, child labour and the urban informal sector also warrant definition.

Childhood

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the most comprehensive international legal framework for children that has been signed and ratified by most states, provides the definition for this study. Article 1 states: "a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the

child, majority is attained earlier" (CRC, 1989). While the jurisdictional statement of the CRC (Article 1) provides the legal term "child," it must be remembered that all minors under this age, including children and adolescents, are included (Abramson, July 1997: 6).⁶

Under the context of child labour, the working definition of "child" is set out in the International Labour Organization's Minimum Age Convention of 1973 (No. 138): a person below 15 years or, in special circumstances, 14 years (Article 2). The former age is the general yardstick used when establishing how many children are working around the world. However, Article 3 provides for the protection of children under 18 years of age from work which "is likely to jeopardize the health, safety or morals of young persons."

While childhood can be defined in terms of age, some societies may have non-chronological thresholds for demarcating childhood and adulthood, such as the fulfillment of certain rites and traditional obligations. In others, the integration of children into the socio-economic life may begin so early in life, and the transition to adulthood may be so gradual that it may be impossible to clearly identify the different life phases. The lack of an effective age record system, such as in the urban slums and marginalized communities where most of the street children come from, further complicates the objective definition of a child, for both legal and practical purposes (Fyfe, 1993: 6 and Champagne, 1994: 10).

The globalization and homogenization of adult ideas about what a proper childhood should be, what activities children should be encouraged to undertake and discouraged or prohibited from undertaking has led to what Boyden (1990) calls the "globalization of childhood." This process, and specifically the concern of child employment, is fairly recent in history. After the first phase of industrialization in the early 20th century and with the rise of the middle class, the North began eradicating manual labour for young

⁶ While the work will use the term "child" to refer to all persons under 18 years of age, it will also attempt to make use of the terms "young people" or "children and youth" so as not to exclude adolescents. Directly acknowledging teens becomes important when considering programming for the benefit of the street child. The majority of children who work on the streets are between seven and 17 years of age, although very young children may be found on the streets as well (Myers, 1988: 125). However, children who live on the streets are mostly considered an adolescent phenomenon.

children. A clearer life span was dedicated to growing up and being educated (Zelizer 1985 in Blanc, 1994: 32). The codification of childhood in the developing world has only partially occurred and the concept is not as consciously a part of prevailing attitudes. Impoverished children are placed with adult responsibilities --pecuniary and non-pecuniary work to help sustain themselves and their families -- allotting them little or no time to just "grow up" (Blanc, 1994: 32).

Child Labour

Street children and youth engage in various types of work in order to support themselves and/or their families. As such, they form part of a larger group of "child labourers." Most children in a majority of societies perform some type of work, part time or full time, remunerated or non, within or outside of the family group and in widely divergent conditions. For effective programming, those concerned with the best interests of the working child must address multidimensional issues. The definitions and concepts behind child "work," "labour" and "exploitation" require special attention.

In general, the issue of working children has often been presented as a dichotomy. One position argues that children should not engage in any economic activity since childhood should be reserved for study and play, with only minimal work consisting of light chores in the home.⁷ Children under 15 years of age who participate in economically productive activities are deprived of meaningful relationships with family and peers and of time for play, rest and even moments of irresponsibility (WHO 1988 in Blanc 1994: 346). Even if they are not mistreated, by joining the workforce children weaken adult wages and employment, further generating the poverty that forces them to work. On the other hand, some child advocates argue that, under appropriate protection and supervision, work is a positive vehicle for socialization, training and self-esteem. It

⁷ See, for example, author S.K. Trypathy, who argues that child labour is a "social evil" (Child Labour in India. New Delhi: Discovery, 1989: ix, in Champagne, 1994: 12).

increases the children's sense of responsibility, enhances their status as family members and citizens, makes them feel less marginalized and provides a gradual integration into adult life. This argument maintains that prohibiting child labour without first raising real family income through other sources will worsen the household poverty level, creating even more destitute children. Child labour is a necessity in a poor society (Myers 1991 and Fyfe 1993: 7).

These dichotomies may help to locate the arguments more clearly, but they also tend to exaggerate them. Effective programming depends on being able to comprehend the problem from a variety of perspectives, even those that seem contradictory. Otherwise, there is a risk of carrying out simplistic actions that may not only be ineffective, but even detrimental to the best interests of the children involved (Myers, 1991).

Well-intentioned campaigns to ban children from the labour market and force them to attend full-time education, for example, often fail to fully understand the reasons and circumstances surrounding child labour and the consequences that such actions might have on the young and their families. Many children and youth have to work not only to help support their families, but to afford their own schooling, uniforms, supplies and other school-related materials. Banning their labour can, in effect, cut them off from schooling opportunities. Even worse is the more likely possibility that children forced to leave their jobs will seek alternate sources of income instead of going to school. This tends to push children into less visible, more exploitative forms of labour, such as prostitution.⁸ Furthermore, many children and youth find formal schooling uninteresting and very far removed from their needs. Schooling may be particularly inadequate in opening new

⁸ Such was the case in Bangladesh in 1993 when, for fear of an international boycott of their products and under pressure from the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, many garment manufacturers had mass, abrupt dismissals of their child workers. Approximately 55,000 children lost their jobs. A subsequent ILO-UNICEF follow-up of several hundred of these children found that: none had gone back to school; half had found other occupations but with greatly reduced earnings and some in more exploitative circumstances; the other half were actively seeking work; and the dismissed children had worse health care and nutrition than those who were still employed in garment factories (White, 1996: 6).

opportunities in the labour market. Many are also eager to engage in the labour market given the obvious and widespread youth underemployment or because they feel pressure to adopt global lifestyles (White 1996: 1-5).⁹

It is an unrealistic goal to rigidly enforce the prohibition of all types of employment and to enforce compulsory, institutional-style full-time education. Programming concerned with the best interests of the working child should direct their efforts to combating the exploitation of children, rather than the exclusion of children from the labour market, and in establishing suitable, flexible education programs.

The reality is, for various reasons, many children work. The majority of working children do not have the power of free choice and many are often pushed into work that is damaging to their health and development. By their very nature, children require special care, protection and assistance. Their relative dependence upon adults to survive, and their lack of mobility, ability and freedom to exercise their rights of expression and association leave children vulnerable to abusive and exploitative labour (Champagne, 1994: 13). While there may be almost universal agreement contradicting the first view expressed above -- not all work is bad for children -- contending views argue over when work becomes harmful for children. If interventions are to combat the exploitation of children, how is it possible to differentiate between what constitutes the acceptable, relatively unharmed and even beneficial forms "child work" from the unacceptable, exploitative and harmful forms of work for children?

When Does Child Labour Become Exploitative?

If programming is to protect the safety and development of children who work, child advocates must have a deeper understanding of the dichotomy between "child work" and "child labour." The use of White's (1996: 10-12) differentiated approach to child labour can be used towards this purpose. Explaining the impossibility of drawing a clear

⁹ Children around the world are being made acutely aware of their "relative poverty." They increasingly share a desire to consume goods or share lifestyles that are generally attributed to the relatively better-off.

line between "child work" and "child labour," he offers, instead, a continuum of child work, from "best" to "worst." On one end, work promotes and enhances a child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and/or social development without interfering with schooling, rest and recreation; work is deemed positive to children. This is followed by neutral work, which is neither particularly harmful or beneficial to children. Next are forms of work which are hazardous and detrimental but which can potentially be made safer and less harmful and may be combined with schooling or continuing education. At the opposite end, work is hazardous, exploitative and simply intolerable for the child and the only solution is the removal of the children involved. While in theory this approach continues to be ambiguous, it can prove to be more useful in practice when deciding what makes certain kinds of work more or less problematic for children.

Identifying and establishing measures to abolish the most exploitative forms of child labour -- the sale and trafficking of children, forced or compulsory labour, the use or supply of children for prostitution or pornography and the use of children in the production and trafficking of drugs, for example (ILO 1997) -- is a first step towards protection, and one that is already under way. The 1998 International Labour Organization's (ILO) annual conference in Geneva focused on measures to abolish the most extreme forms of child labour which at best deprive children of a normal life and at worst expose them to injury, illness and death. In identifying the problem and setting clear requirements for minimum age, legislation, enforcement and action, a new ILO Convention for the elimination of extreme forms of child labour is now being drafted.

Identifying less damaging forms of child labour and "appropriate" steps toward protection is a much more difficult task; these are subjective facets particularly because exploitation lies in the eyes of the beholder. Much of child labour falls in a gray area between the two poles.

Even though there can be no line that clearly distinguishes between acceptable and exploitative, UNICEF and other children's advocates have made use of some indicators as guidelines. Child labour is exploitative if it involves: full-time work at too early an age or too many hours; undue physical, social or psychological stress; hazardous conditions; inadequate pay; hampering access to education; undermining the child's dignity and self-esteem; and taking away from the child's full social and psychological development. The impact of work on the child's health and development -- physical, cognitive, emotional, social and moral -- is key when determining when such work becomes problematic (UNICEF, 1997: 24 and Fyfe, 1993: 7-8).

Child Labour: Numbers and Type of Work

The collection of solid and reliable data on child labour is limited, partly, by difficulties of definition, lack of official acknowledgment of its existence and wide ranging differences among surveys.¹⁰ While existing statistics on the number of child labourers are inadequate and unreliable, ILO figures have become widely accepted. They estimate that approximately 250 million children, between five and 14 years of age, are working worldwide. The vast majority of all child labourers live in the LDCs, although some Northern countries have experienced a recent growth in child labour.¹¹ The ILO Secretariat estimates that 61% of child labourers are in Asia, 32% in Africa and seven percent in Latin America (French Presse-Agence, 19 June, 1998). It is not surprising that the most populated continent has more than half of all child labourers. Although their proportion had been declining in South-East Asia as per capita income increases, family size decreases, and basic education is growing, the current global economic crisis, or the "Asian flu," is seriously undermining some of these gains. Africa has the highest incidence of

¹⁰ In addition to age variance, other differences include the consideration or exclusion of child workers who also attend school, are in the informal sector and/or are deemed "invisible" due to the type of work they perform.

¹¹ Due to the abrupt transition from centrally planned to market economies, Central and Eastern Europe have experienced a substantial increase of child labour.

child labour, with approximately 41% of its children age five to 14 working, although in some countries and regions the percentages are much higher.¹² In Latin America, one in every five is working. The proportion of child workers has increased in both continents partly due to the economic crisis of the 1980s, coupled with a decrease in social spending and, in Africa in particular, because of the lack of public investment in education, of population growth and of ongoing armed conflicts. While Asia is known for children who also labour in the formal market, the vast majority of child labourers in Africa and Latin America do so in the informal sector, either with their families, in the home, in the fields and on the streets (ILO in Ngunjiri, December 6, 1998 and UNICEF, 1997: 26).

Estimates on Latin America show that it has at least 15 million working children, or between 20 and 25% of children between the ages of six and 14. The child labour-force in Latin America represents on average just under five percent of the economically active population in the region. It is important to note that this proportion is relatively close to the rate of open unemployment, which suggests that child labour is, to some extent, acting as a labour-force reserve (ILO, May 1997).

Child labour is manifested in various ways, none of which are exclusive to any one part of the world. However, cultural and socio-economic reasons may allow for some forms of labour to be more common in certain countries and regions. Forced and bonded labour has taken a quasi-institutional form in South Asia, where children are not only forced to accept the conditions of their lives, but are virtually pledged by their parents to factory owners or their agents for small loans; child slavery never succeeds in reducing the debt. The commercial sexual exploitation of children has gained international media attention through the sex-tourism industry in Thailand, Brazil and the Dominican Republic, for example. Child prostitutes, however, also serve local men of all social and

¹² For example, 60% of the coffee plantation workforce in Kenya's central province are children. In East Africa, Mali has the highest percentage of working children (54%) followed by Burkina Faso (51%), Burundi (49%) Uganda and Niger (both at 45%)(ILO in Ngunjiri, December 6, 1998).

economic backgrounds.¹³ Industrial and plantation work, domestic service, work for the family, "girl's work" and street work are other forms of child labour (see UNICEF, 1997: 32-45). This study is primarily concerned with "street children," children who work and those who also live on the streets of the developing world cities and towns.

Estimates on the number of street children worldwide vary,¹⁴ but the UNICEF calculation of 100 million is generally accepted. Like other forms of child labour, street work is manifested both in developed and lesser developed countries. Nevertheless, the majority of street workers are found in the latter, shared between Latin America (about 40 million), Asia (25-30 million) and Africa (5-10 million)(UNICEF, "Street children" and Vélis, 1995: 7). By and large, it is common to associate this concept with Latin America -- the geographical area of the LDCs with the highest urban population as a percentage of the total population, at 74% in 1997 (UNICEF, 1997: 99, Table 5) -- and where, in its large-sized cities, such as Sao Paulo and Bogota, extreme governmental and societal abuse of street children has reached international headlines. Street children work in urban, tourist and industrial areas where they have carved out niches for themselves by earning a living in the urban informal sector.

Urban Informal Sector

The informal sector differs from the formal sector in various ways. Although numerous definitions have determined the informal sector's nature of informality, activities and homo- or heterogeneity,¹⁵ for the purpose of this study, a general definition

¹³ The World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Sweden in August 1996, brought the issue on to the world's agenda for the first time.

¹⁴ The reasons for such discrepancies are similar to those encountered when attempting to gather estimates on working children in general. Chapter 4 provides an example of the variations found when attempting to gather information on street children in one urban area, Mexico City.

¹⁵ Other definitions include taking the "illegality" of the informal sector as its defining characteristic and promoting the elimination of barriers to equalize and promote it (de Soto, 1989). Another, the market rationality approach, focuses largely on the categorization of the productive capacity, whether these be units of enterprises and/or individuals, for the benefit of large modern firms (see Hann, 1989). The above definition of the urban informal sector resembles mostly the productive rationality approach, where the "rationality" of individual production (that which is different from the formal economy) serves mainly to guarantee the economic subsistence of the family. For a more detailed overview of informal sector

will suffice. Perhaps its most important characteristic is that the informal sector's process of production is extralegal, although the production is more often than not legal. It lies at the margins of the regulatory framework of the formal economy by, for example, avoiding official regulation and taxes. The urban informal sector, in particular, is characterized as small scale (usually of family-owned enterprises), labour intensive, producing and trading a wide range of goods and services usually with little or no technology, sometimes competing with larger enterprises and sometimes filling the gaps of the formal-sector firms (Gillis et al, 1992: 192-193). Despite characterized by fierce competition, its low requirements of capital and skill and low barriers to entry allow for a diversity of entrepreneurs, including recent migrants and children. The young are involved in informal income-generating activities that are denied to them, because of their age, in the off-street activities of the formal sector. Furthermore, the informal sector's fluctuating and relative ad-hoc patterns in labour absorption provide flexibility for children who may be attending school, working sporadically (or intensely) and/or engaging in other work for the family.

Urban children and youth are attracted to the informal sector in the streets and other public spaces of urban central business areas primarily because of the opportunity to earn money.¹⁶ Many urban children start off their street careers as self-employed vendors or, especially in the case of girls, family-employed vendors. While they first begin to work outside the household between the ages of seven and 10, girls usually start at an earlier age and earn less than their male counterparts. Moreover, it is usually the boys who progressively shift into working for others (non-family related employers) and actively seek and move into a broader range of occupations (such as in a mechanic shop or other forms of apprenticeship). Girls remain trapped more in family labour, paid or unpaid

interpretations in Latin America and Mexico, please see Tokman (1990) and US Dept. of Labour and STPS (1992).

¹⁶ As Connolly and Ennew (May 1996: 133-134) point out, the young are also attracted to the central business areas because they offer a number of consumer and entertainment possibilities, such as video stores, fast food outlets and cinemas, all with easy transport access. The apparent lack of structure and schedule in the area and the freedom from adult surveillance further pull the young to city centre streets.

(Blanc, 1994: 353-355). Much of the street work is exploitative, such as the illegal employment of prostitution or drug trafficking, the physically dangerous task of hauling or scavenging for garbage and the vulnerability of being underpaid, overworked and/or abused by their employers, regardless of the type of work. However, this must be contrasted with other less damaging forms of work, including working sporadically alongside parents in a market (barring abuse from the parents themselves) or in a handicrafts project or apprenticeship like employment that may offer the child better avenues for long-term employment and/or allows for part-time education.

Street Children: Urban Children Out of Place

The definition of this category of children is still problematic and continues to be clarified. "Street children" referred initially to all urban children who spent most of their time on the streets, whether working, living or merely playing on them within their own communities (Blanc, 1994: 36). However, a "street child" should not be understood as just a child on any street but a child "out of place," in thoroughfares or city center streets intended for the circulation of pedestrians and traffic. They are dislocated from the places that are commonly regarded by "typical Western mentality" as normal for children, such as family homes, schools or clubs organized by adults. Street children are in modern open spaces, without adult supervision and are exposed to various risks (Ennew, 1994: 18-19 and Connolly and Ennew, May 1996: 133).

The generic terminology of the "street child" has been further categorized by academics and NGOs to distinguish among the dynamic relationship that urban children have with the streets, their families, work and other domains. The dominant version, modified for this study, was adopted by UNICEF from the work of the late Peter Taçon (Taçon, 1985). It attempts to distinguish between "real" street children and those who are working on the street but return home to their families at night.

"Children **on** the streets," or street-based working children, are those who maintain family ties (though increasingly weakened), who may study, even if on an ad-hoc basis and who work on the streets to contribute to their own and/or family expenses. Most of them are boys in their middle years, coming from poor, stressed, but still reasonably supportive households, though with limited extended family support. They are predominantly from migrant families, but not necessarily recent migrants. The majority come from two-parent households with both parents usually working. However, the additional earnings of the child are generally quite important to the family. The main risk they face are violence resulting from their environment, the probability of abandoning their studies and their furthering process of making the street a center for play, culture and daily life (Blanc, 1994: 329-331; Ennew, 1994: 15 and Connolly and Ennew, May 1996: 131).

"Children **of** the streets," also referred to as "real" street children, or *callejeros*,¹⁷ are those who not only work but also live on the streets and struggle daily for survival without family support. This much smaller number, generally made up of boys in their early adolescence, has usually lost all family ties or, if any are existent, are weak in terms of frequency and quality. The majority have parents alive, though they come from a larger percentage of female-headed households than the street-based working children. The households are generally of recent migrants, but show greater signs of disaggregation and loss of cooperation, thus providing a less supportive and more often conflictual environment. Generally, the children are voluntary runaways, victims of abuse, neglect and acute poverty. In some countries, a majority continue to attend school, while in others only a minority do. They have developed specific survival strategies, such as organizing themselves into groups, and distrust adults and the society that discriminates against them. Compared to street-based working children, children "of" the street are

¹⁷ The term *callejero* stems from the Spanish root of *la calle* (street), meaning both homeless individuals and others who spend most of their time on the street.

subjected to more serious problems, including risks arising from the criminal and anti-social behaviour of adults (drug abuse, sexual exploitation, theft, violence, etc.)(Blanc, 1994: 324-331; Ennew, 1994: 15 and Connolly and Ennew, May 1996: 131).

A third interrelated category, that of "children at risk" of becoming children "of" the streets, deserves its own definition. Children at risk are those who, because of the poor and marginalized situations of their households and weakening family and social relations, face the problem of needing to abandon their home or the risk of being expelled from it. Their risk to turn to the streets is exacerbated by abuse, exploitation and low levels of schooling (Hernández Landa 1992: 5). Children at risk include street-based working children who are showing signs of greater stress -- do not return home every night, begin or increase drug abuse, drop out of school or turn to illegal activities, etc. (Blanc, 1994: 230-231). They have begun the gradual process of *callejerización*, where the street increasingly becomes an option for escape and the child's principal "school of life." The street may be at first a residual place, as children alternate between sleeping at home with staying out on the streets and/or in welfare organizations, but their stay on the streets may be increasingly prolonged (Sánchez, 1996: 31-32). The process of *callejerización* is one where children struggle between competing domains but face the risk of eventually becoming fully integrated into street life.

For the purpose of this study, the "institutionalized child" also needs to be defined. Institutional children include orphans, abandoned or destitute children living for extended periods of time in children's homes or residential institutions, and children living in prison or in special homes for juvenile offenders (Blanc, 1994: 332-333). Institutional children and youth are a diverse group and include those children who have spent time living on the streets prior to entering a welfare organization. In fact, one of the main groups under the UNICEF definition of street children addresses the "institutional street child": "children who are in institutional care, who have come from a situation of homelessness

and are at risk of returning to a homelessness existence" (UNICEF and UNCHR). Having temporarily or indefinitely chosen the institution as an alternate domain, an institutional street child may begin his or her transformation to a sedentary life, increasingly growing accustomed to its support and possibly becoming dependant on it for survival. A street child who has chosen to live in a welfare organization faces additional developmental difficulties beyond those of an institutionalized child or youth who has never lived on the streets. In addition to coping with the lack of daily parental care and support, institutional street children must confront and attempt to overcome the scars that led to their leaving home and those earned while living on the streets: verbal, physical and/or sexual abuse and possible drug addiction and AIDS, among other problems (Alemani, March 4, 1998).¹⁸

Conceptual Notes on the Street Child Typology

The above typology is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather representative of the children addressed in this study. While the basic "on" and "of" the streets formula has been helpful for some projects, it is important to acknowledge that when applied to local circumstances, various interpretations and distinctions apply and different cross-over alternatives may offer better versions of the children's circumstances (Ennew, 1994: 13-19).¹⁹ For example, children in India living on the pavements with their families or child prostitutes fit neither of the above categories, but are also children who have a special relationship with the street.

¹⁸ Some of the young population of the two NGOs studied have been institutionalized elsewhere for long periods of time prior to their relocation to their current residence. They may have been "abandoned" children or youth who might have spent part of their lives living on the streets. Their different background and experiences to those of the "institutionalized street children" have contributed to tensions between the two groups within the NGOs.

¹⁹ In the middle of the 1980s, UNICEF began to use the term "Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances" (CEDC) to identify those children who are exposed to circumstances which deny their most basic rights. The category has grown to include, but it is not limited to, (psychologically, physically, sexually) abused, neglected, HIV-infected, street, working, institutionalized and disabled children and children of war, nomads, minority parents and migrant workers. Despite the various backgrounds of these children at risk, CEDC has in many cases wrongfully come to be synonymous with the street child.

It must also be pointed out that it is impossible to generalize about the "typical street child." Groups of children working and living on the streets differ in their characteristics between continents, countries, cities and even within the same urban centers (Connolly and Ennew, May 1996: 137). Nevertheless, the above typology provides the basis for distinguishing from among the different groups of urban street children that are analyzed in this study of Mexico City. Further assessment becomes necessary in identifying the target group(s) to be addressed by programming.²⁰

Moreover, these categories should not be taken as enclosed, linear or stagnant classifications, but rather as dynamic representations of the children's personal choices and challenges faced when interacting with their changing environments. As such, a child framed in one category may be better described by another one in a few months' time. A street-based working child may or may not become "at risk" of leaving her home, just as a child "of" the street may temporarily join an institution once or various institutions several times, before deciding which one, if any at all, will be her new domain. Children are social actors, subjects rather than objects, who constantly weigh the advantages and disadvantages of their changing living and working spaces, their ties with family, their school, their community and different government or private agents. The street is only one of the many environments with which the children interact. It may act as a space in between the family and the institution, but not necessarily as a world itself.²¹

Similarly, while a particular child might fall under one or a few of these and other categories, the child as a whole must be considered. Normative categories effectively perceive problems in need of immediate attention. However, they tend to identify the child on the basis of a single "difficult circumstance," failing to assess the various forces

²⁰ Please see Chapter 4 for a more thorough overview of the situation of street and working children in Mexico City.

²¹ Programmers must avoid using the child's relationship to the street as the sole indicator when identifying and describing the target group. In doing so, the definitions become segregational, exclusive of time and space and, ultimately, run the risk of creating unidimensional programs and projects.

affecting the child and his or her various other needs or rights. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) serves as the guiding framework for providing a holistic view of the child, an individual with civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. As such, a child "of" the street is not only being deprived of his or her right to protection by the State when deprived of her family environment (Article 20), but of a childhood deserving the highest attainable standard of health (24), education (28) and adequate standard of living (27), deserving protection from abuse and neglect (19) and economic, sexual and other forms of exploitation (32, 34 and 36).²²

While the street child typology is helpful for advocacy and programming purposes, the author recognizes that this particular terminology may not be in the best interests of the child. Even after clarifying some assumptions hidden in the term "street" -- that the street is neither the sole domain of the child nor is the child to be understood only as a passive victim of risks of the streets but also an actor who can and does exercise choices, though within limited frameworks of opportunity -- the terminology cannot dismiss the child's probable opposition to being labelled a "street kid." The term has been widely misrepresented, leaving a public perception of the children as thieves, prostitutes, drug addicts or otherwise violent and delinquent. They are labelled in this way, as threats to society, despite the fact that the majority earn a living by offering their services to the community (Dallape, May 1996: 283). For the child, it becomes a concept of dignity; how the young person perceives him or herself and how he or she would like to be identified by others. As a counsellor of *Casa Alianza Mexico* explained, although they are labelled "*chavos de la calle*" (street youth), they should not be addressed as such because they dislike it. On a personal basis, children prefer to be addressed by their names or

²² Most of the CRC's 54 articles have relevance to street children. Please see Chapter 3 for further analysis on interventions and the role of the CRC in ensuring a holistic view of the child.

nicknames. The term "urban children out of place"²³ may be better used when not referring to a particular category.

For similar reasons, it is also inadequate to define the street child as a "problem." Doing so places the negative onus directly on the child, consequently reinforcing a fear-based policy bias of control, clean-up and punishment (Lowry, 12 September 1996). A more constructive approach is to view the urban child out of place as a social phenomenon, the result of larger structural processes and problems at the global, regional, local and family levels. This emphasis redirects the fault away from the child and places it on the various circumstances that created his or her current crises leading the child to the streets.

Conclusion

How each project chooses to identify a child is representative of how it understands the young people and, thus, how it will attempt to intervene. When identifying target groups among urban CEDC, programmers must be careful to consider the children's unique characteristics (in a holistic approach), dynamic relationships with different domains and reasons that lead them to the streets. In developing an effective response to the phenomenon, it is important to first review some of the theoretical approaches with respect to programming for children out of place.

²³ This terminology is borrowed from Ennew (1994: 18-19) and Connolly and Ennew (May 1996: 133).

Street Children Programming: Theoretical Underpinnings

The following is a compilation of the range of theoretical approaches to street children programming. With the aid of this theoretical foundation, the researcher is able to construct what is felt to be an effective set of guidelines for action to address the street child phenomenon. The following mostly concentrates on micro-level interventions, thereby theoretically addressing some of the issues that will be discussed in later chapters through the concrete examples and analyses of two NGOs. It should be noted that Marc Pierre Champagne's (1994) work is especially valuable for providing much of the relevant information surrounding the methods of design, implementation and evaluation.²⁴

A Holistic Approach to Micro-Scale Interventions

As alluded to above and as demonstrated in the following chapter, children "on" and "of" the streets encounter several conditions requiring attention. In fact, Champagne's micro framework of intervention²⁵ presents a comprehensive overview of possible conditions and respective measures that may be taken to improve the lives of street children and encourage them to eventually leave the street. An overview of the children's conditions and methods of addressing them include: poverty and dehumanizing work -- tackled through income-generating and micro-business programs that promote, rather than inhibit, the physical, mental and emotional development of the child; illiteracy (and perception of marginalization and low self-esteem) -- addressed through basic education (math and literacy skills), which includes a freirian component that helps children gain a critical consciousness of their position in society, offered at flexible times and encourages

²⁴ Champagne, Marc Pierre, Street Children: Victims of Modernization (Master Thesis, Ottawa: NPSIA, October 1994).

²⁵ See Champagne (1994), pp. 98-102.

children to participate in the planning and executing of their education; disintegration of the family -- targeted through education, community work and counselling; poor physical and mental health -- addressed by offering basic health and nutrition services and counselling to both the child and the family, and sheltered homes and/or playgrounds; violence, abuse and harassment -- addressed through the provisions of a safe place to run to, education on children's rights, legal assistance and collaboration of police authorities to eliminate harassment on their part; and lack of knowledge about their situation and environment -- aided through targeted research and data gathering to learn more about the general situation and the specific problems each child faces²⁶ (Champagne, 1994: 98-102; COESNICA, 1992: 44-48 and Salazar and Knaul, 1995: 383-88).

Generally, a project or program encounters all the above conditions. How much attention each one is to receive in comparison to others partly depends on the specific situation of the target group and of each particular child, but projects and programs also have their own internal limitations. Not all have the means and capability of developing and implementing models of intervention that touch on all areas outlined above. Of course, any intervention can be beneficial for the child, but such programming must be careful to avoid providing benefits in a vacuum, without attempting to understand the child's environment and the partial role the intervention plays in the larger educative development process of the child. A more holistic approach can be attained despite partial intervention. First, the project must conceptualize the development process of the child as a whole. Targeted research can provide not only information on the specific situation and condition of the target group, but an overview of the developmental needs of

²⁶ Whatever form the intervention may take, clear identification and a thorough understanding of the target group becomes essential for project effectiveness. As mentioned in chapter 2, in the identification of target groups among urban CEDC, programmers must be careful to consider the children's unique characteristics, dynamic relationships with different domains and reasons that lead them to the streets. As such, targeted research and data-gathering become key elements in the problem analysis, design and implementation of a project cycle. Please refer to "Program Design, Analysis and Management" in this chapter for additional information on these issues.

the child. Second, with an awareness of the project's limitations, the project can seek inter-institutional cooperation and coordination thereby encouraging children to take advantage of specific activities or services provided by other projects (Barreiro and Alemani 1997: 13). Covering some or most of the conditions must be understood as part of a holistic framework that contributes to the entire development process of the child.

Conceptualization of a street child's development process can also lead micro programming to go beyond rehabilitative intervention. By viewing the child as not only an individual who presently finds himself or herself on the street but as a member of various competing social domains (including the family, the original urban marginal community and the school) interventions may realize the necessity to address problems presented in these domains. Many of the above suggested methods of intervention can be expanded to address the needs of other "categories" of urban marginalized children, particularly those "at risk," and their families and communities. Basic education and critical awareness and counselling, for example, can be extended to the children's families not only for the purpose of enhancing the child's reintegration to the family unit, but as a means of empowering families and encouraging them to become active in their communities. Sensitizing family and community members on the issue is a first step towards the mobilization of society on the issue. By slightly shifting the emphasis, some secondary and tertiary interventions can become preventive venues for addressing the street child phenomenon and some of the interrelated processes that negatively affect the urban poor.

Multilevel approaches, where both preventive and rehabilitative interventions are offered, must strive to gain an acute understanding of the dynamic relationships children have with different domains and of the reasons that lead them to the streets. Interventions on behalf of street children cannot be isolated from their environments. Where street children have only casual links with their families, efforts should focus on maintaining and strengthening these links in addition to improving the community environment. For

street-based working children, efforts need to be both protective -- improving the working conditions of children -- and preventive, by helping and sustaining families and abolishing the need for excessive child work (Blanc, 1994: 331-332). As protective measures are implemented "from above," children in the workplace and those "at risk" need to be empowered "from below." Changing negative behaviour and attitudes and building positive ones is most effectively done through many foci, considering not only the individual, but also the family, the community and the society at large (Blanc, 1994: 398). Programs that aim to curtail the flow of children taking refuge on the streets should be mainly directed towards helping the children's families and communities, by improving their living environments and increasing awareness of the street child phenomenon. For all types of street children, initiatives to improve working and living conditions and to reduce or rearrange working and schooling hours so they can attend the latter and be with their families are critical.

Children as Individuals, Holders of Human Rights

As mentioned earlier, how each project chooses to identify a child is representative of how it understands the young and, thus, how it will attempt to intervene. The decision-makers' attitudes and understanding of the developmental needs of the young shape the procedural requirements and institutional structures that can ensure rationality and fairness in any child-oriented programming. Embodying a common international framework concerning the nature of human rights and child development, the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has become one of the most important guide to standards of what constitutes a healthy childhood (physically and psychologically) and serves as a framework for action. Thus, it is strongly recommended that the CRC be utilized in any programming that deals directly with children.²⁷

²⁷ While it is the legal responsibility of state parties -- those who signed and ratified the CRC -- to implement improvements to children's rights, it does not follow that only governments or official agencies should be involved in the process. In fact, much of the input towards drawing the CRC and country reports

Perhaps the most evident teachings from the CRC is that it forces others to view and treat children as individuals with human rights, not simply as objects of benevolence. This requires child-oriented programming to move away from the traditional emphasis on welfare and protection to one that recognizes the child's autonomy, wishes and feelings, and has appreciation of the value of empowerment (Freeman, 1996: 1-3). A change in adult perceptions about children and youth can help ensure a holistic approach.

The CRC enshrines as interdependent the various civil, political and economic, social and cultural rights that are vital not only to children's survival and protection but also to their development and participation as individuals. Serving as an interpretive guide to all other articles, the four general principle articles -- non-discrimination (Article 2), best interests of the child (Article 3), the right to life, survival and development (Article 6) and taking the views of the child into account (Article 12) -- recognize and promote these ideas. Two of these, best interests and participation, are particularly important to incorporate in street children's programming and thus are deserving of further attention.

The Best Interests of the Child

Article 3(1) provides that:

"In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration."²⁸

to the Committee on the CRC has come from private organizations and groups advocating on the children's behalf (as provided in Article 45 (b)). In addition, the inclusion of "private social welfare institutions" among the list of entities specified in Article 3(1), indicates that the provision of best interests is not exclusively confined to public undertakings, but must be upheld by non-official entities as well. Links among public and private entities need to be established and strengthened for better implementation at the grass-roots levels.

²⁸ Various definitions attempt to describe what is "best interests." A CRC committee member's interpretation is helpful. According to Judith Karp, "best interests" recognizes the basic value of human dignity as an underlying concept and it to be perceived in the context of the holistic and integral framework of the CRC (Karp in Angus, 1998: 26). While this Article has its origins in the "best interests" rule applied in court when deciding adoption cases and custody disputes in divorce cases (Abramson, 1997: 2-5), it has also been used in other international instruments prior to the CRC. For example, it was included in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959), in two provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) and in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1987), and has been frequently used towards jurisprudence under the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Committee. Within the CRC itself, the

The tremendous scope of the provision, implied when referring to "all actions," should oblige and inspire all programming decisions taken and affecting the life of the child to consider his or her best interests. Children are among the most at risk and vulnerable groups in a society. They must be protected and assisted not only because they are the next generation of adults and parents (Freud in Champagne, 1994: 85), but because childhood itself is entitled to special care and protection (CRC, 1989). Inasmuch as it offers no guidelines as to how to consider "best interests," decision-makers can utilize the principle as a procedural rule where programming requires to assess the impact that a course of action may have, or is having, on children (Abramson, 1997: 22-30).

The principle is not to be understood as having a single "best interests" standard, rather its implications are to vary over time, from one society to another, from child to child and according to each individual child's situation (Santos Pais in Angus, 1998: 24). Similarly, when addressing the best interests of their target population, programs need to look at the needs of an individual child, a specific group of children and at children in general. Addressing the needs of both the singular and plural may, at times, be difficult because what is best for a group may not always be best for each individual within it (Abramson, 1997: 5).

It must be noted that the "best interests" principle does not ignore nor necessarily override the interests of others. Rather, when the principle is read in light of the holistic nature of the CRC, "best interests" demands the consideration of individuals or groups that interact with the child, in particular the family. The four principles complement one of the CRC preamble's main themes; that the family, which is the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members, should be protected and assisted so that it can fully assume its responsibilities with the community. Thus, thoroughly understanding

best interests principle has also been mentioned in several other articles. It appears in relation to: the separation of the child from the family (Article 9); parental responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child (Article 18); adoption and comparable practices (Articles 20 and 21); and the child's involvement with the police and the justice system (Articles 37 and 40)(Alston, 1994: 3-4).

the family, the community and the society of the child helps to determine what is in his or her best interests.²⁹

Partners in Their Own Development

Through participation, children and youth can themselves provide insights into defining what "best interests" means to them. By joining the "best interests" principle to the principle of participation, the young can effectively become partners in their own development. The right to participate, Article 12 of the CRC requires all children who are capable of forming their own views to express those views in all matters that affect them, and their views to be given due weight in accordance to their age and maturity.

Programs and projects for the welfare of children should build on the children's capacities and strengths and encourage their involvement (always taking into account their age and maturity)(Johnson et al. 1995: 65 in White, 1996: 8). Their participation is important both as a goal -- it contributes to the social and psychological development of the child -- and as a means towards effective programming -- leads to better decisions and actions with lasting results. Child participation becomes particularly important when dealing with street and working children or other children from disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods. Many suffer from psychological traumas and low self-esteem, which are often generated by repeated negative experiences and by their own perception of marginalization. Involving them in situations where they can demonstrate competence contributes to their heightened self-esteem. Second, it allows children to participate in their search of options to overcome their situation. Children are their own best spokespersons. Not only can they make valuable contributions to situational analyses by

²⁹ A family reunification project, for example, has to work with both the street child and the family (while having established support links with their local community) in the process of determining what might be best for the child's present and future. Notwithstanding the above, as decision-makers balance the multitude of interests involved, the "best interests" principle should prevail in the case where there is a conflict between the interests of the child and of others, including those who are responsible for him or her (Santos Pais in Verhellen, 1996: 137). In the above example, the "best interests" principle becomes relevant in determining the right of a child to be cared for by parents versus the right to be protected from abuse or neglect from parents; the desire to promote the family cannot take precedence over the safety of the child.

indicating what troubles them most, but they can be good researchers, designers and decision-makers, especially when it is their best interests that are being assessed (Blanc, 1994: 390-394 and Sánchez, 1996: 40-42, 58). Street children, in particular, have already been required to make numerous important decisions in order to survive. Providing them with the opportunity to become active and responsible participants in the decision-making process of their programs allows them to take advantage of and apply their unique experiences and skills towards the formation of their own development. Participation in programming for CEDC not only gives children an opportunity for personal growth, but is an effective means of guaranteeing success.

The idea of research subjects playing an active part in programming is still in its infancy, and this particularly holds true when the research subjects involved are children (Kefyalew, 1996: 203). Participatory research and action with children requires a change of mentality and attitude by researchers and adult decision-makers. Child participation does not mean supplanting adults. Nevertheless, adults have to be willing to take the thoughts and feelings of a young person seriously, and to learn to listen, support and guide the young decision-maker (Eekelaar, 1994: 53 and Hart, 1992: 37). While the role of children and youth as potential partners in their own development has been widely underestimated, in some street children programs their involvement has reached the highest levels of participation. Exemplary cases of participation can be found through street work -- where adults act as project facilitators in the decision-making process of the young -- and through the child-to-child approach, which uses trained children to teach and reach out to others.³⁰ These and other participatory street children programs and projects are the ones which are generally found to function best (Henry Dunant Institute, 1997).

³⁰ See the Chapter's next subsection for further information on street work and its origins. The child-to-child method originated in England's Institute for Child Health in the 1970s. Although used originally to train and empower young people as peer health educators (Goulet, 1995: 14-16), the method can and has been used in the context of other non-health related programming, including for children in difficult circumstances. For examples, see Child-to-Child Trust. Directory of Child-to-Child Activities (Child-to-Child Trust: London, 1996).

Children's programs require mechanisms that enable children to have direct input into the decision-making process; the opportunity for children to participate, to have spaces where they can express themselves, should be a procedural requirement in programming (Abramson, 1997: 25-29). Child-centred programming can internalize participatory approaches at all levels of the project cycle. Street and working children can take part in identifying and defining their needs and in designing, implementing and evaluating programs and projects that respond to those needs (van Beers, 1996: 195-201 and Dallape, 1996: 288-293).³¹ If programs are not initiated by the young themselves, adults need to encourage them to become involved, either through decision-sharing, informed consultation or even informed assignments.³² Because of their age and maturity, different children at different times might prefer to participate with varying degrees or responsibility. Programs should be designed to maximize the opportunity for any child to choose to participate at the highest level of his or her ability. The more choices and opportunities offered to children, the better the chances that they will want to exercise their right to participate (Hart, 1992: 12-18 and Bond in Goulet, 1995: 11).

Methodological Approaches: Educative Proposals With Alternative Life Projects

Despite the fact that international attention and research pertaining to the street child phenomenon has only recently begun, interventions intending to benefit street children have been in existence since the last century. Their wide variety of approaches and experiences can provide some guidelines and admonitory "dos" and "don'ts."

Deciding on a methodological approach of intervention is often strongly dependant on the decision-makers' attitudes and understanding of the rights and developmental needs

³¹ Some exceptional NGOs are incorporating Article 12 of the CRC throughout the project cycle of those activities that target children. For example, ACTIONAID's study Listening to Smaller Voices is built on the concept that "development initiatives should build on the capacities and strengths of boys and girls, rather than focusing on their weaknesses," and that "children should be involved in planning, implementing and evaluating actions taken for their welfare (Johnson et al. 1995: 65 in White, 1996: 8).

³² For various examples of participatory research methods and processes with street children, see Childhood's edition on "Children out of place" (Vol. 3, No. 2, London: SAGE Publications, May 1996).

of the child . For instance, a similar debate to that of child labour -- should children engage or refrain from participating in economic activities -- presents itself in programming targeted to children "of" the streets. While there is a general consensus that a child ideally does not belong on the streets, thus the coined phrase "street children out of place," opinions differ on the best alternatives for helping street children better their condition. One view calls for the removal of children from the streets as the immediate and primary concern. The other supports the provision of elementary basic services and services directed to improving the children's survival skills and advocacy tools while they are on the streets. Through the promotion of self-respect and empowerment, the latter efforts might eventually lead children to choose a lifestyle away from street life. Both views attempt to act in the best interests of the child. Ultimately, however, it is the decision-makers' attitudes, understanding and implementation of children's development and educative processes, and of children's participation and empowerment, that determine how precisely a methodological approach can be used in the child's best interests.

There is a wide variety of organizations seeking the quick removal of children from the street and their placement in an institutional or group-home-like setting. On the one hand is the conventional, macro-level secondary and tertiary state intervention that provides custodial care to children and youth whom they label "abandoned," "destitute" or "vagrant." The homeless young who pass through the judicial system, often after having been "picked up" by security forces, have traditionally either been placed in a custodial institution or returned to their homes. In practice, the former are often of very poor quality, treating children as delinquents in a highly circumscribed environment. Many are autocratic and/or paternalistic, where children are subordinated to orders and deprived of opportunities to make decisions about their future. In the latter instance, family reunification often occurs without careful counselling and other support, leading to

the possible re-victimization of the child through the recurrence of previous difficulties at home (Boyden and Holden, 1991: 70-73 and Hernández Landa, 1992: 13-16).

These types of interventions are often the results of fear-based policies, where concerns lie more with the "protection" of society from the young "delinquents" than with the children. As such, the blame of their circumstances are erroneously placed on the young by isolating or incarcerating them, expelling them from society -- the place that generated the phenomenon. Forcibly removing children off the streets and/or placing them in closed-door regimented institutions is against the principles of "best interests" and participation. It hinders the child's development and contributes to his or her already low self-esteem.

Other institutional interventions stand in sharp contrast to the custodial methods described above. They may be open-door, family-like environments (such as drop-in centers, hostels and group-homes) that, with the active participation of children, discourage their making the street their home. As described in the next chapters, the methodologies of *Casa Alianza México* and *Casa Ecuador* stem from this premise. The relative success of some of these open-door institutional interventions lie partially in their establishing a coherent methodology based on the developmental and educative process of the child. The educative proposal of any program should have a congruent approach that offers concrete alternatives that spur the child to pursue an alternate life-path while being under close supervision. It is critical that the child have alternatives presented to him or her and that the choices made by the child be continuously tracked against his or her chosen "life-project." Since each individual is unique and carries different experiences, the "life-project" must be constructed according to each particular situation (Barreiro in Esquivias Aguilar, July, 1996). Furthermore, with the intention that the child make an autonomous decision to choose and maintain an alternate life-path, the methodology should enhance and strengthen the child's sense of empowerment and self-respect and

capabilities for autonomous decision-making (Alemany, July 23, 1996). Thus, respect for the child and his or her points of view needs to be incorporated throughout the entire process, from the moment of initial contact on the streets until the last follow-up visit.

Some argue that the methodology of institutional interventions must be clearly established prior to having initiated personal ties with the child (Barreiro in Esquivias Aguilar, July, 1996). If concrete alternatives are available beforehand, the child can see in advance some of the possible directions that he or she can take. However, as the next section explains, it is often impossible and not altogether desirable to fully plan ahead an entire street child program. Programming can be developed along the implementation phase so long as the process is based on a holistic educative approach and forms together with the child his or her "life-project." In fact, some of the non-institutional interventions that develop their programming with children have proven to be very successful.

The alternative, non-conventional approach of street workers has dramatically transformed street children programming from the traditional institutional setting. Rather than establishing a concrete life-plan before having initiated contact with the child, street workers design possible alternatives during the process of interaction with the children on the streets. Street workers begin by establishing a rapport with the children in their domain and understanding their current situation as a basis for improving their own lives. Whenever possible, they help them return to their families. Where this is not in the child's best interests, street workers support them by forming alternative "families" or "communities." Through participatory techniques, street children and workers identify the main risk factors affecting the children's lives and the possible means and actors to tackle and/or control these. The street work approach means recognizing and building upon the resiliency and creativity of the children themselves. Children develop their activities and construct their rules for their own functioning, based on their own reality,

while the street worker's role is mainly as facilitator (Hart, 1992: 29-35 and Hernández Landa, 1992: 16-32).

Secondary and tertiary street work action usually involves non-formal education, vocational training and the creation of a healthy means of economic survival. However, in addition to the high level of children's participation, street work is also unique in that it generally involves an underlying attempt to change the socio-economic conditions that create and maintain the children's misery. In the cases of Brazil, the Philippines and India, for example, street and working children have established associations related to their professions. These have been essential in gaining better working conditions and pay from their employers and in pressuring governments to change laws and regulations for protection from workplace abuse. In order to extend their cause to and educate parents, employers and the larger community, they have also organized numerous events, such as art performances, demonstrations and conferences in support for children's rights (Hart, 1992: 29-35 and Hernández Landa, 1992: 16-32). The most notable example of success in street work comes from Brazil. Street workers collaborated with street children at the local levels throughout the country and helped coordinate many groups of children into a powerful national movement; street children in Brazil entered the political agenda (Hart, 1992: 17, 28-35). Paulo Freire and other influential proponents within the country are best known for applying the principles of empowerment through the development of self-awareness with street children.³³

Both the open-door institutional and street-work approaches are viable forms of intervention, offering manifold qualities to their methods. As Hernández Landa (1992: 15) explains, an organization need not be considered opened or closed simply because it has walls. Institutional aperture depends on the ideological posture taken towards the child's

³³ Some of Freire's most influential work and its approaches are found in his Pedagogy of the Oppressed (47th ed. Translated to Spanish by Jorge Mellado. Mexico: siglo veintiuno editores, 1996) and Education for Critical Consciousness (Translated by M. B. Ramos. New York: Continuum, 1973).

liberty and self-determination. Furthermore, a sound and sustainable project, regardless of its methodology, considers and incorporates the idea that the child is a being in constant development. Offering occasional ad-hoc assistance in a vacuum, such as meal or clothing hand-outs, may at best provide some immediate relief and at worst reinforce the children's position as an outcast and a dependent.³⁴ Programs must be planned and implemented in the long term to follow through the developmental needs of the child, whether this be to enable the individual to resume his or her place in society, to challenge the socio-economic conditions that lead to their circumstances or, at least, to live in better conditions (Henry Dunant Institute, 1997).

Treating children as possessors of rights asserts them as citizens and social actors who have the capacity for improving their own lives and the communities in which they live (Blanc, 1994: 439). Street children programming must approach and treat children as full human beings, with integrity, personality and the ability to participate fully in the formation of their own development.

Program Design, Analysis and Management

The plethora of methodologies of street children's interventions are representative of the complexity surrounding effective action. Added complications are the difficult circumstances, little initial data and limited resources under which street children's programs and projects operate. Project design, evaluation and management inevitably face additional challenges at the methodological and operational levels. To address and overcome these, projects require flexible, adaptive and non-conventional methods of design, management and evaluation.

³⁴ Hand-outs that lack long-term objectives can reduce the motivation of children and youth to participate in other projects that promote the development of an alternate "life-project." If children and youth can easily obtain hand-outs for the sole reason that they are street children, they will not want to change to another condition that might deprive them from these services (Sánchez, 1996: 61).

Compact Project Cycle and Adaptive Management

Street children's projects and programs must have the capability to adapt to new situations. Traditional control-oriented management and pre-planning, long-term "check-list" project cycle approaches are not conducive to effective street children project designing and management. Rather, an unconstrained, adaptive management style is recommended. A flexible management can increase the ability to seize opportunities to achieve a project's goal or to modify goals to reflect changing or unanticipated conditions. The ideas expoused in David Korten's "Learning Process Approach" (LPA) are particularly useful for street children projects (Korten in Champagne 1994: 103-104). Korten outlines three characteristics of managerial flexibility: (1) embracing error as a vital source of adjustment; (2) planning with the people to build on existing capabilities; and (3) linking knowledge building with action so that research, planning and operations are interrelated, rather than separate elements (Korten in Champagne 1994: 103-104).

Some of the most valuable managerial skills, and those normally used by street workers, are the ability to innovate, modify, experiment and improvise. Adaptive management can be maximized when accompanied by flexible planning where research, design, implementation and evaluation can feed into a compact project cycle and can do so at different stages (Champagne, 1994: 103-105).³⁵ In fact, street children programs can begin implementation despite having little initial data on the situation of the target group. While lack of initial information greatly inhibits the ability for detailed and systematic planning, there are alternate methods of design and implementation that can effectively be carried out. Planning a comprehensive course of action ex-ante can even prove to be a

³⁵ Instead of utilizing the classic World Bank six-stage project cycle (Baum, 1978) -- a rigid top-down approach that might lead to years of preparation and appraisal -- a compact development cycle that allows for quicker and flexible intervention is more feasible. The four stages in this project development include: (1) problem analysis, which identifies and responds to the problem; (2) project design, which plans a rational course of action; (3) implementation and monitoring, which carry out and check the progress of the project; and (4) evaluation, which involves assessing whether the project met its aims and provides lessons for existing and future projects (Fyfe, 1993: 16-17).

time-consuming, costly activity that not always ensures effective results (Rondinelli, 1983: 74-76). Street children's projects can use the available data to implement preliminary activities as a means of creating a relationship of trust while avoiding excessive costs and delays in implementation. For example, many street workers provide first aid and children's rights workshops with street children while applying participatory techniques as a means of gaining their trust. Their interaction serves as the basis for problem identification and for design of concrete paths of action.³⁶

A flexible approach can help projects become more easily familiar with the necessary activities and inputs (knowledge, fund, equipment, expertise, etc.) required to address objectives while acting on immediate needs. As data gathering and experience introduce new dynamics, implementation and evaluations may also recommend changes to initial project objectives and design. Dependant on new inputs received throughout the development of a project, initial objectives and design must remain open to alterations (Fyfe, 1993: 43-44). Interrelating stages of the project-cycle can best be carried out through flexible planning and management, particularly using Korten's third characteristic of linking knowledge building with action. Street children projects and programs are often an activity of learning through experimentation.

The Undugu Society of Kenya is an excellent example of the use of experimentation, flexibility and a willingness to adapt to new inputs and activities. Having begun as an organization that offered shelter, individual assistance and other types of secondary and tertiary intervention to street children, Undugu has grown into a complex, mature NGO that now emphasizes improving the living conditions of low-income groups through employment, low-cost housing and community organization.³⁷ By adopting a

³⁶ Champagne's proposed "two-stage" approach is similar in theory to that used in street work. During the first stage, a project can focus on the provision of immediate basic needs. This stage serves as a base to collect data and plan for a more comprehensive approach to the problems, which are implemented in the second phase (Champagne, 1994: 106).

³⁷ Its approaches can be divided into phase one, portrayed by a more immediate responsive, curative and welfarist attitude; phase two, having a more preventive and community-based developmental orientation;

developmental lessons-learned approach, Undugu has experienced numerous shifts in both its operational framework and strategies and has pioneered a number of innovative programming. Undugu's transition was made possible through the use of multi-pronged/multi-sectoral approaches of experimentation and innovative methods that suit local needs. Its adaptive approach enabled the organization to successfully re-orient its level, focus and scale of intervention.

It should be noted that a flexible management and project cycle can work best if the project and its data are well organized. All stages of the project should be based on as complete and accurate information as is possible to obtain at each stage and should involve proper record keeping and organized documentation (Champagne, 1994: 109). Various concepts of the methodology should be written clearly and made available to project members. These include, where possible, the history of the organization, daily activities and operative concepts, indicators used for qualifying operative concepts and for providing overall results, and a process of internal evaluation (Alemany, July 23, 1996). Organization not only allows programs to run effectively, but it increases their opportunities (and those of other programs) of duplication and learning cycle.

Monitoring and Evaluations

Evaluations -- ex-ante, ex-post, interim and continuous monitoring -- are an invaluable tool in measuring program effectiveness. Evaluations and cost-effective analyses force programs to evaluate all the elements of their intervention, promote accountability and provide effective advocacy tools for convincing decision-makers that policy shifts can be justified by financial considerations. They can also raise issues of replicability, if the results can be generalized and are thought to be transferable (Blanc,

and phase three, where a greater emphasis is placed on social mobilization, community empowerment and social transformation. Having established constructive interactions with different branches of the government in education, housing, community health and street girls, it is most recently working at social mobilization at the national level, in cooperation with UNICEF and other partners (Mutuku and Mutiso, 1994: 247 and Vélis, 1995: 105).

1994: 399). However, street children programs do not have a set standard for evaluation; formal assessments and systematic appraisals and evaluations are few.

Measuring the effectiveness of such programming is challenging given that most endeavours are relatively new. Many are pilot projects and/or are too recent to have had a formal assessment. Feasibility studies are especially difficult to perform given the lack of research on urban marginalized communities and the difficulties in gaining the trust of the children and the community for accurate data collection (see UNICEF, 1989). In addition, comparable projects are few. Wide-varying methodologies and unique adaptability methods to meet local needs result in a plethora of programming styles. Most often, projects have to learn from their own mistakes.

A suggested method of including feasibility studies into programming, one that is commonly done in many programs and adapts well to a compact and flexible project cycle, is the incorporation of assessments into the implementation stage. As experience, research and further data are gathered, project members can clarify objectives, learn of possible needed resources and acquire a better idea of the necessary funds to sustain the project. As such, the project adapts and changes accordingly, feeding into an ongoing process of monitoring and evaluation. Interim evaluations should be a learning experience that involves all those who have a stake in the project, including personnel (adult management and educators), the young and others (donors, community, etc.).

It must be noted that a flexible management project style does not entail ad-hoc monitoring and evaluations. In fact, adapting to new needs and conditions becomes easier when changes, and the reasons for them, are systematically reported and discovered through regular progress reports. To be effective, such evaluation reports must be timed into the project and focused to address a range of issues dealing with effects and impact. In determining current project execution and future project design, interim evaluations

should be able to provide specific lessons about what works and where, what does not work and why (Fyfe, 1993: 44-48).³⁸

The difficulty in defining and assessing complex parameters towards cost-effective evaluations in street children programming make continual tracking and monitoring essential. Lack of information at the planning and implementation stages greatly hinders efforts to create a blueprint of the resources and funds needed to sustain a project. The unavailability of complex measurements and the high levels of subjectivity in measuring effectiveness further complicate evaluations. Nevertheless, cost-effectiveness -- making the best use of available resources and seeking options that yield the highest degree of effectiveness for the lowest cost (Blanc, 1994: 398) -- can improve through experience.

The use of judgment by those implementing and evaluating the project is vital, particularly because precise quantification and shadow pricing methods are difficult to apply in street children programming. A lack of detailed data and funding limitations inhibit the use of specific calculations (Champagne, 1994: 108-109). Excessive quantification, on the other hand, can mislead programming away from the original objectives. It is also undesirable given the difficult, if not impossible, process of attempting to attach precise numerical measures to all project components, outputs and impacts. Quantification in street children programming is useful so long as it is focused, based on complete and accurate information and is balanced by subjective judgment.³⁹

The lack of strictly scientific evaluation data should not keep governments, agencies, communities and individuals from developing programs for children in difficult circumstances. Nevertheless, project credibility requires concrete evidence that expenditures of human and material resources can be linked to positive changes for the

³⁸ Some of the most recent and common used methods for evaluations consist of systematic interviewing of program participants (including participatory assessments), external observers, and relative assessments of coverage, retention rates, etc. (Blanc, 1994: 400).

³⁹ It must be noted that evaluations must also acknowledge and consider the impact of externalities, whether these be negative/counter-productive or beneficial for the project.

children, their families and/or their communities. Evaluating achievements of street children projects and programs necessarily involves evaluating the development process of their target group. An impact (results oriented) evaluation attempts to measure the influence or effect that program actions are having on street children: how and to what extent has the project made a difference in the lives of the children it serves? (Barreiro and Alemani, 1997: 37-39 and UNICEF, 1988: 20-21).⁴⁰

Many evaluations measure impact through children's actions, such as their return to school and family, attendance/participation in both domains, enrolment in vocational training or finding and maintaining a job. As concrete actions, these outputs are more easily quantifiable than other changes in the development of a child. Programs targeting disadvantaged children are progressively attempting to measure changes in the children's knowledge or attitudes. However, insufficient documentation often questions if such changes are necessarily or solely attributed to the program itself. As Blanc (1994: 400) explains: "Ideally, the evaluation should demonstrate that, in aggregate, more of the participants changed to the desired behaviour than matched controls. It is, in fact, very difficult to prove that a program 'causes' a change in behaviour, that the change is, in other words, exclusively attributable to the program."

Be that as it may, systematic focused evaluations that use tailored and carefully constructed indicators can go a long way in determining the efficacy of a program on a child's development. Personal statistical indicators can be created to measure for example, in the case of secondary and tertiary intervention for street children, the "psycho-social" development of the child and his or her ability to re-integrate into society. When the educative process of a program is guided by clear criteria established along each stage of

⁴⁰ This central question can be further broken down into three areas of examination: (1) the change in the target group since their inclusion to the program, including physical, intellectual emotional and social development, living and working conditions and the relations among these; (2) the extent of attribution of such changes to the program or to other factors and influences, and identification of program aspects that appear to be the most influential; and (c) the main successes and problems and the reasons for these (UNICEF, 1988: 48-49).

the process, indicators can more easily be created to break down and measure the more specific desirable elements. As personal indicators are systematically entered into a data registry system, the personal development of the child and, subsequently, the program's contribution to it, can be monitored and evaluated (Barreiro and Alemani, 1997: 13-14). Indicators may either be created internally, by individuals or collective members of a program, or with the help of outside experts familiar with child development, the street children's culture and their environment. Once established, indicators may be used by external evaluators or by those working within a program.

An innovative approach developed by a UNICEF team in Brazil in 1986, has become a leading example of how to measure the psycho-social impact of programs for street children. Through the observation of children's behaviour, the first phase of the project identified attitudes that could indicate possible changes induced by the program. The results were a preliminary list of impact indicators that allowed for observation and measurement of the psycho-social development of children. In the second phase, the indicators were tested in 11 selected programs to verify their validity. This was carried out through participant observation and discussion with the children, including drawing and painting, puppet dramatization, life stories and unobtrusive observation of critical events. After various empirical tests, comparison of results and changes in the indicator bank, 46 indicators subdivided into the four categories of social skills, career skills, personal growth and moral values were identified. Three levels demarcated the impact of each of the 11 programs on the children (UNICEF, 1988: 51, 65-68 and Firme, Stone and Tijiboy, 1991 in Champagne, 1994: 111-114).

The method of establishing indicators and the flexibility of those identified by Brazil's team have lead other projects to create additional indicators or adapt and modify these to suit their individual projects. Those projects that have not yet utilized indicators should also make use of the guidelines for planning and constructing psycho-social

indicators for street children programming provided by Barreiro and Alemany (1997: 43-54, 101-108).⁴¹.

Sustainability, Collaboration and Going to Scale

The sustainability of a project cannot be overlooked. Sustainability entails the ability to maintain achievements either through the continuation of a project or effective transference of its knowledge on to others who will continue to carry out its achievements. The need for interventions and services that follow the development process of the child means that medium- or long-term programs need to overcome the various obstacles which may arise and hinder their continuation.

One of the main obstacles in street children programming is finding and maintaining sound and long-lasting economic support. Major challenges arise particularly after short-lived initial funding expires. This is especially so for programs that rely on temporary external support; they often tend to require inputs, both financial and human resources, that are not easily attainable or affordable at the local level. Projects can attempt to greatly reduce external dependency through the use of local inputs, including community staff and volunteers (Henry Dunant Institute, 1997 and Champagne, 1994: 115). A greater emphasis on community outreach, including working closely with community representatives and auxiliaries can also contribute to a project's greater understanding of the problems faced by individual households or individual children (Boyden and Holden, 1991: 72). However, local inputs can offer best results when project achievements reflect the needs voiced by the target group and the community. As Blanc (1994: 399) explains: "[T]he urban poor may be so busy earning a living that they are unable to assume responsibility for the project unless it responds to their own high priorities." The organizational constraints of sustainability, such as household time availability and

⁴¹ Their process is divided into four stages: defining the objective of the monitoring area, breaking down the concept into its dimensions, elaborating indicators for each dimension and determining the level of measurement of each indicator.

opportunity costs of local participants should also be incorporated into the project's management (Blanc, 1994: 399).

Perhaps the most viable alternative to external funding is for projects to design interventions with approaches that have some type of revenue capability. Income-generating activities for street and working children's programming can often be linked with the children's education and vocational training and can be a particularly helpful process for stimulating children's participation in the project and their own development. Some innovative income-generating projects include employing street children to clean soft-drink bottles in the Philippines (Myers, 1989), to drive rickshaws in India (Nanban, 1996) and to cook, wait, manage and keep books for a pizzeria in Tanzania (SKI, 1995: 12-14). Community-development projects for "children at risk" can also incorporate income-generating activities. The Undugu Society of Kenya, for example, created a business advisory service that offers training to individuals through a qualified business educator and shop and export unit that provides marketing outlets for local women's handicrafts (Ndegwa, 1996: 61-78). Some of the most effective income-generating programs have successfully targeted the unmet needs of their local economy, often through the informal sector, by providing a service that either was not there before or was not being provided efficiently (Barker and Knaul, 1991: 13-15).

Cooperation and exchange with local projects, such as transfer of personnel,⁴² can also be helpful. The creative development of networks, partnerships and exchanges can contribute not only towards the exchange of inputs for project sustainability, but can help coordinate the activities of numerous interventions. Given the varying methods and

⁴² Changes in the personnel involved can also become a major obstacle in sustainability, particularly if a key person or a large group of individuals leaves the project *en masse*. This problem is not only a result of the end of temporary external support, but of tensions and burnout resulting from a highly demanding but poor financial and career development rewards offered by street children's programming; the motivation for most street workers is mostly personal satisfaction (see examples in Chapter 5). Staff training and development, access to educative material and advancement within the program can help to maintain a lower turnover of personnel.

philosophies available, communication and collaboration among various actors become vital for the sharing of experiences and the promotion of a collective line of action (Sánchez, 1996: 61-62). Collaboration and links with other actors can ensure complementarity in work, thus providing a more comprehensive, multi-pronged and holistic approach to the development of the child. Coordination can also avoid duplication especially in regions where there are a large number of organizations and interventions involved (Henry Dunant Institute, 1997), as is the case in Mexico City (see Chapter 4).

Collaboration and network links may include private sector exchange and cooperation, the creation of NGO umbrellas, intra-governmental partnerships and links with international organization.⁴³ Collaboration should also stimulate the mobilization of partnership with those who traditionally are considered to be child "oppressors," such as employers, business owners and the police and judiciary. Converting potential enemies into allies, such as training of police departments in children's rights and community development issues, can result in stronger alliances against abuse of children "of" the street and exploitative child work (UNICEF, 1993: 24-29).

Collaboration can also prove to be a successful strategy for expansion of service delivery interventions and replicability. Due to the numerical dimension of the problems, priority must be given to programs and projects likely to reach the largest number of children in difficult circumstances. But going to scale -- substantially increasing coverage -- has been problematic for NGOs. Most of their street children projects are known as "jewel boxes," where small, self contained interventions focus on quality rather than coverage and reach only a very small number of children requiring assistance. Going to scale usually requires the involvement of governments, the largest welfare provider in a given country, and of international organizations, such as the ILO and UNICEF.

⁴³ For example, the Universidad Iberoamericana of Mexico City in conjunction with local government departments and NGOs, was enlisted to hold a low cost street educator training workshop. Over 200 educators who successfully completed the course were either hired by local NGOs, government programs or set out to create their own projects.

However, collaboration among different levels of intervention must ensure that expanding coverage will not discourage or take away from the quality of work and participation achievable through locally managed projects. As the ability to reach a larger number of children and their families increases so must the ability to change positively the lives of the target group. If it is not accompanied by effectiveness, coverage *per se* serves little purpose. Innovative cooperative relationships between government funders and local management in poor urban neighbourhoods have been possible. For example, in an attempt to reach a broad range of children at risk through preventive intervention in the Philippines, an integrated program was developed at the municipal level. It elicits the cooperation of urban poor communities and works in partnership with citywide street educators and other networks (Blanc 1994: 400-401, 414-416 and UNICEF, 1993: 26-28).⁴⁴

With the help of larger donors, jewel-boxes can expand. Where jewel-box approaches may not be entirely replicable, they may contain elements which are extractable and applicable in the context of other projects, policy development or larger scale government interventions. The use of street workers in Latin America and the child-to-child approach, for example, are now being copied in various contexts. Through publicity, jewel-box projects can also indirectly inspire other actors to intervene. Consequently, multiplication may come about not as a result of expanded coverage of government intervention or individual projects going to scale, but as "an expanding patchwork quilt" of various jewel-box interventions among different communities and target groups (UNICEF, 1993: 27). Multiplicity through direct transfer, adaptability and inspiration can better reach considerable coverage with a supportive external environment.

⁴⁴ Government-NGO partnership also entails a shift of state policy away from institutional care and towards a consistent and innovative approach; it requires a radical change in government perspective and operative methods. It implies shifting the focus away from established institutions, including centralized professional services and direct institutional care, towards a greater emphasis on community development and outreach and work on the streets. Such a shift, of course, cannot occur without the collaboration and participation of local level interventions (Boyden and Holden, 1991: 72).

Collaboration and a cooperative relationship among various actors remains an important element of success.

Conclusion

The following seven concepts have been isolated as key action guidelines for projects addressing street and working children and children at risk. It is recommended that projects should: (1) conceptualize the development process of the child in order to intervene within a holistic framework; (2) build, in partnership with the child, an educative proposal offering an alternative "life project" which is designed to meet the needs of each individual child; (3) operate under a children's rights perspective; (4) adopt an adaptive management, compact project cycle and flexible methods of design, implementation and evaluation; (5) evaluate using concrete actions and psycho-social indicators that measure the development of the child; (6) ensure sustainability through income-generating capabilities; and (7) work towards a comprehensive intervention that broadly addresses the street child phenomenon by directly providing multi-pronged approaches and/or working in collaboration, partnership and coordination with other actors.

Urban Children Out of Place in Mexico City

"I used to work for economic reasons. I worked daily fishing or at the market to sustain my family. I used to administer everything. My father drank and used to hit me and my brother. Once, he broke my brother's arm.... My mother died when I was one year old and we lived afterwards with a step-mother and my new sister. I had other step-mothers and after I left, I learned that my new family had new sisters. I left home due to family reasons...." (Ramón; former street child)

The first section of the chapter provides an overview of the phenomenon of street children and youth in Mexico City. It begins by providing demographic highlights of the street child phenomenon, particularly addressing the characteristics of children and youth "of" the street, and continues by looking at the particular social circumstances facing the latter group. The second section provides an overview of interventions working for the benefit of street children in Mexico City. Special emphasis is placed on local government and non-government programs and projects created in the past decade. Within this larger context, the two case studies analyzed in the following chapter are introduced, *Casa Alianza México* and *Casa Ecuador*. A comparative approach provides a historical description of the projects, and outlines and compares their objectives, goals and operative framework. The rationale for choosing these two particular organizations is included.

Children "on" and "of" the Street

While street and urban working children and youth are present in the three largest cities of Mexico (Mexico City, Guadalajara and Monterrey) and in smaller urban, tourist and industrial areas, by far their largest concentration can be found in the metropolitan center of Mexico City (ZMCM). Much of the data, including an estimate of their numbers, activities, sources of origin and breakdown of age, gender and other statistics is

taken from two comprehensive studies/censuses conducted in 1992 and 1995.⁴⁵ These and other government studies, the NGO community and the media have borrowed from the classical UNICEF definitions of children "on" and "of" the street to differentiate between those who work and those who also live most of their lives on the streets of Mexico City. Acknowledging the dangers of such generic terminology (see Chapter 2), the following overview works with these definitions to distinguish between the characteristics of two related but different phenomenon.

A general understanding of street children and youth, the generic distinctions and differentiating characteristics, are necessary for efficient policy-making and planning. Furthermore, it is important to learn about the child's membership in various social domains, including the street and other environments such as family, school and society. While some information regarding the child "of" the street's contact and relationship with the school, government enforcement authorities and NGOs is provided, most information focuses on the young people's relationship with their primary domain, the streets.

Demographics

The 1992 Street Children Study found 515 meeting points where approximately 11,172 street children work, live and interact. 10,152 are children who work "on" the streets while the remaining 1,020, or nine percent, also live on the streets (COESNICA, 1992: 18, 20-21). The II Street Children Study in 1995, found that the total number of street children grew to 13,373, a 20% increase in only three years. Of that number, 86% are children who work on the street and 14% are children "of" the street. The 1995 result of the latter group reflects an 81% from 1992, to 1,850. The number of meeting points

⁴⁵ In the early 1990s, seven private, government and international institutions in the field of child care -- including the Government of the City of Mexico (*el Departamento del Distrito Federal* or DDF) and UNICEF -- joined efforts to create a Commission for the Study of Street Children (COESNICA). Its goal was to conduct a census of street children in Mexico City, which was carried out in 1992. This quantitative and qualitative survey was followed by a second similar study in 1995, under the direction of UNICEF, the participation of the DDF and the collaboration of various NGOs (COESNICA, 1992: 7-12 and UNICEF, 1996: 37 and inside cover).

also grew drastically, by 136% in 1995, to 1,214, indicating that the phenomenon has spread over a larger area of the city (see Figure 1)(UNICEF, 1996: 1, 6-7).

Despite these comprehensive surveys (possible margin of error of 10%), their numbers continue to be contended. Most programs, studies and organizations agree in an overall increase of the phenomenon due to the continuing economic hardships exacerbated by the 1994 economic crisis (see Appendix 1). The rate of increase, however, is disputed. In August 1995, the director of Socicultur estimated a total of 28,000 street children of whom 2,000 are "of" the street. This would indicate an increment of 80% with respect to the figure given by the 1992 Study (Albarrán de Albul, June 17, 1996: 3). The director of *Casa Alianza México*, an NGO that collaborated in both studies, believes these statistics underestimate the amount of street and working children in the city. In 1996, *Casa Alianza México* had contact with 1,273 children "of" the street; yet the director

Figure 1: Street Children's Meeting Points by Municipalities, 1995

Source: UNICEF, *II Street Children Study (Executive Summary)* (Mexico: Departamento del Distrito Federal, 1996), 2-4.

calculates the number of total children living on the streets of Mexico City to be at least double that, reaching as high as 3,000. He approximates the number of working street children to be at 27,000 for a total of 30,000 children "on" and "of" the street (Capellín and Banda, March 7, 1997). The organization estimates that 10 new children arrive on the streets of Mexico City every day; an increase of approximately 3,560 street and working children per year (Ramos in LaFranchi, May 1997). Such a discrepancy between numbers only exemplifies the problems encountered in gathering relevant information needed for implementing programs and projects that target this vulnerable group.

A similar predicament is faced when attempting to explore the origin of the children. Statistics from the 1995 Survey indicate that just over half of the children "on" and "of" the street were born in the Federal District, about a quarter were born in the neighbouring State of Mexico, which includes outlying areas of Mexico City, while the remainder originate from other states such as Puebla, Guerrero and Hidalgo (UNICEF, 1995: 21-22, 27-29). The director of *Casa Alianza México* estimates that only 55% of the population attended by his organization (1,273 children "of" the street in 1996) were born in the Federal District and surrounding areas, the remainder coming from other states, especially those with large poverty rates such as Veracruz, Guerrero and Michoacán (Capellín, March 7, 1997). The program coordinator of the same NGO indicated that about three of every five children arriving on the streets of Mexico City come from rural areas (Ramos in LaFranchi, May 1997). With different sources providing diverging information, it becomes difficult to focus on the target populations for possible preventive programming; anywhere from a quarter to three-quarters of children "of" the street either arrived in the metropolis with their families before leaving for the streets or travelled to the capital area on their own. From the above one may at least conclude that the street children phenomenon is all encompassing; the expulsion households are located both in the metropolitan center of Mexico City and in the poor states of the republic, including rural

areas. If greater credibility is to be given to the UNICEF census, it becomes clear that the phenomenon is mostly related to the urban rather than the rural medium, and the urban poor should be a primary target for preventive programming.⁴⁶

Statistics from both censuses, however, could be representative of the street children's population once they are broken down (Alemany, July 23, 1996).⁴⁷ The majority of the children are between 11 and 15 years of age (34%). However, children "of" the street are primarily a teenage phenomenon with 85% being between the ages of 12 to 17 years. It is important to note that four out of every 10 children "of" the street is said to have begun their life there between the ages of five and nine, while six out of every 10 had done so between 10 and 14 years of age (p. 2-7 and 27-28). It appears that younger children are increasingly choosing to opt for a life on the streets (Saldaña in LaFranchi, May 1997).

Thirty-one percent of all children surveyed in 1995 are girls, up from 28% in 1992. The gender breakdown of children "of" the street sees an even lower percentage of street girls with 15% according to the 1995 Survey and 20% according to the director of *Casa Alianza México* (Capellín, March 7, 1997; COESNICA, 1992: 20-22 and UNICEF, 1995: 2-7 and 27-28). Two main reasons can explain the evident minority of girls. First, cultural norms maintain that girls should be more protected and attached to the family than boys. In the lower classes, especially in the provinces where the boys may be encouraged to go out and work, the girls' universe is limited to the home and they may only be allowed to work in familiar, preferably enclosed areas. The same cultural reasons prevent girls from

⁴⁶ A separate study focusing exclusively on street girls found that, in accordance with the 1995 UNICEF Study, the girls "on" the street originate mainly from urban spaces. The vast majority of the sample were born in either the State of Mexico (47%) or in Mexico City (38%), where the expulsion zones of the former are immediately adjacent to the City and/or form part of the ZMCM (such as Naulcalpan, Netzauhalcáyotl, Ixtapalaca, Chalco and Huixquilucan). Three hypotheses were given for the low presence of state-born girls: (1) their strong family ties and reduced access to the public sphere deters girls from running away and migrating to unknown large urban centres, unless they have a previous contact there; (2) girls migrate, but more often opt for non-street life, such as working as domestic servants, or find working and living arrangements with step-parents, and; (3) the sample is not representative of reality (Sánchez, 1996: 29-30).

⁴⁷ The following data is extracted from the 1995 Study, unless otherwise indicated.

becoming as unruly as boys, which leads them to be more passive and withstand family conflicts. While the boys may run away, the girls may try to hang on to what remains of the family. Second, for those who do leave their homes, other life alternatives -- such as domestic helpers, prostitutes, bar and tavern waitresses, etc. -- which are "less visible" than work on the street are available to and chosen by girls. This does not equate to less risk or more protection, but the contrary; the girls are easy prey and, thus, more exposed to suffering from all types of aggressions, including sexual abuse (Sánchez, 1996: 28-29).⁴⁸

While 15% of the total children surveyed are of indigenous origin, only 1% of children "of" the street (21 out of 1,850) are indigenous (UNICEF, 1995: 5, 27). Other studies and NGOs confirm that only in exceptional cases do children "of" the street (those without family support) belong to indigenous ethnic groups (Capellín, March 7, 1997 and Sánchez, 1996: 31). The primary reason for this is once again cultural. Indigenous groups continue to be organized by strong family models and solid ties within their communities, where intra-family and social nets are of primary importance. In the case of parental absence, the children have the security of being looked after by a family member or godparent. Therefore, while the children may suffer from parental separation, they are not abandoned (Sánchez, 1996: 31). The indigenous working street children in Mexico City live with their families, though some may do so in a situation of homelessness (Sánchez, 1996: 31 and Rodríguez, June 27, 1996). Therefore, while they may live on the streets, their family ties remain and, thus, their *problematique* is different than those who have been categorized in this study as children "of" the streets.

⁴⁸ The "invisible girls" of Mexico City and other areas of the country would have to be the object of separate and comprehensive studies. For example, the Human Rights Commission of the Federal District (CDHDF), in collaboration with UNICEF and Spaces for Total Development, A.C. (EDIAC), a Mexican civil association, prepared a study of juvenile prostitution in the area of La Merced, Mexico City, where a significant number of prostituted minors have been detected: On the other side of the street: Juvenile prostitution in La Merced Neighborhood (Mexico City: CDHDF and UNICEF, 1996).

Work and Location

The street children of Mexico City can be found at many urban roads and crossroads, enclosed and open street markets, passenger and cargo bus and subway terminals, parks and gardens, tourist zones and various other public locations throughout the city. Here, the children are engaged in numerous economic activities for survival. Most commonly, street and working children earn a living through selling, begging and washing car windshields, with the second activity being the most commonly reported by children living on the street (26%). Although unemployment among the latter group is often present, most street-based children are working (59%)(UNICEF, 1996: 3, 5, 28-29). Often, however, even the most poorly rewarded work is seized upon by adults and, together with their exposure to the criminal and "anti-social" behaviour of adults, the temptation for children to turn to criminal activities, including robbery and prostitution, is high. Such acts are generally committed by older children because, as they grow up, their physical appearance changes, inspiring less compassion and resulting in less income, particularly for beggars (Sánchez, 1996: 35). Street and working children earn an average daily income of between 20 and 50 pesos, with working children having a higher income average than children "of" the street (UNICEF, 1996: 23, 29).

Despite the spread of the phenomenon to other parts of the city, the municipality or *Delegación* of Cuauhtémoc continues to have the highest concentration of street and working children, with 31% in 1992 and 22% in 1995 (see Figure 1)(COESNICA, 1992: 19-20 and UNICEF, 1995: 1-4). Other sources, including the directors of *Casa Ecuador* and of FANIC (a support NGO), confirm that the geographic zone containing the largest number of street children and consequently, one of the areas in most need of tertiary intervention is *Delegación Cuauhtémoc* (Vallejo, July 2, 1996 and Galindo Orozco, July 23, 1996). The director of a "*Niños de la Calle*" program set up by the government of the *Delegación* explained that although the municipality only has 600,000 residents, about

seven million transients transact business in the municipality each day. Forming part of Cuauhtémoc are the downtown core, the trendy Zona Roza and most of Paseo de la Reforma (a central avenue). Street children are attracted to the business opportunities and the large crowds of people and tourists (Molinski, September 30, 1995).

Nutrition, Health and Education

Working and living on the streets has adverse consequences on the nutrition, health and education of the children. Child workers and children "of" the street claim to eat mainly tacos, rolls and tamales, followed by junk food, fruits and vegetables and meat. As for the number of meals the children have during the day, most claimed to eat two to three meals, but there is a sharp difference between the responses of the children "on" and "of" the street. Forty-five percent of the working children have two meals a day, with an equal percentage having three meals while 6% eat only once per day. In contrast, 55% of children "on" the street eat twice daily, with only 25% eating three times per day and 17% having only one meal. As an institutional street youth corroborated: "[Living on the streets] was tough. Sometimes you didn't eat for three or four days, only managing to eat pop and sweet rolls." (Pepe). The children's health equally showed certain deficiencies. The vast majority, 86% and 90% of the children "on" and "of" the street respectively, claimed to have been ill at least once during the six months prior to the census; their main ailments were respiratory and gastrointestinal infections (UNICEF, 1996: 21-22, 28-29).

The education of both groups of children is also at a great risk, and this lack of schooling diminishes their present and future income-earnings. Their relationship with their school is severely undermined. Sixty percent of the children working on the streets or in closed public areas have dropped out of school, while the remainder are still enrolled in some form of school system, mainly attending primary and secondary education. The reasons for dropping out were primarily financial, work-related and family problems and disliking school (UNICEF, 1996: 22-23). It must be noted that these same reasons cause

those children who are still enrolled in school to attend infrequently and/or obtain poor results. A total rupture with the school system occurs when children leave their homes to live on the streets. Children who live on the streets do not attend any schooling given that their new lifestyle is incompatible with school obligations (Sánchez, 1996: 30-31). Children gave family and financial problems as the main reasons for dropping out. However, the education obtained prior to leaving home provided the majority (88%) with the ability to read and write (UNICEF, 1996: 28).

The Children and Youth "of" the Street

"[I was on the streets] for two years, between the ages of 13 and 14.... I slept in the sewer, all of us aligned against the wall with a blanket. I did different jobs. My specialty was carrying groceries at the market. I also got to wash [car] windshields and sweep the streets. While I never did it, my friends [were] also fire-eaters.... I belonged to a group of between 10 and 13 youth... The leader administrated the money; ... sometimes he would trick us and not everybody received the same and [he] held on to more.... [My health conditions were] bad; as is I've always been skinny. Sometimes I didn't have money to eat and sometimes some friends would lend me but sometimes not.... I was afraid, coming from a provincial town the traffic and the buildings scared me. I lacked confidence...." (Ramón; former street child)

Both children "on" and "of" the street suffer from poor living and working conditions. However, as the example above indicates, the latter group is more vulnerable to the detrimental effects of extended exposure to the street environment.

For children living on the street or who are in the process of making that transition, shelter is often found by sleeping outside, and in sewers, abandoned buildings or other empty spaces close to their employment source. Most commonly, they organize themselves into groups or gangs of 10 to 30 members or more, a number that constantly varies due to their displacement, migrations, entry to NGOs, etc. Their composition is variable; they may be formed only by teenagers or children and young adults of different ages, by boys or a mixture of both boys and girls. Group membership provides some of the characteristics of a family -- with traditional feminine and masculine cultural roles --

and of a business enterprise. Members care for one another and usually the weakest one is protected by the strongest, provided he or she accepts the authority; leadership may be assumed by the strongest members, who usually tend to be the eldest males. Some groups rotate leadership while others exercise joint decision-making. Band formation and leadership control is rarely used for criminal objectives or for defending a territory or physical space. Rather, leadership mostly represents the father figure of the family. Similarly, the girls submit to their male partners while providing a maternal role to the younger members.

These power and gender roles can be explained by the desire for group solidarity. The group is an effective strategy to compensate for emotional emptiness, where the sharing of similar situations and life stories provide for a feeling of respect and understanding. Nevertheless, relationships between group members tend to be ambivalent, changing quickly from love to hate. While group solidarity is an essential component for survival, daily interaction is marked by aggression and authoritarian attitudes.

The *callejeros* also unify to optimize subsistence possibilities. Each member specializes in his or her talents in order to make money, which may be shared and distributed according to the authority each member has. While most groups are quite formal in structure in that they pool resources to share food and other living essentials, others share only their living space.⁴⁹ It is important to note that previous to the mid-1990s, this type of group was the exclusive form of organized collectivities living on the streets. Mexico City is now experiencing the emergence of street families, those made up of single mothers in extreme poverty and street girl-mothers (Allsebrook and Swift, 1989:

⁴⁹ For example, *Los Ponis* is a group of approximately 40 members (33 boys and seven girls, recorded in January, 1997) who live together in three sewers by the North Central Bus Station. The sewers are used mainly as sleeping quarters, one exclusively assigned to couples and unattached girls and a second that doubles as a shower area. Earnings gained through their jobs -- porters, car minders, windshield cleaners, beggars etc. -- are administered individually, but they often share clothing, food and personal cleaning utensils. *Los Ponis* has a leader, the oldest male in the group, and rites of entry are exercised for newcomers. They watch and care for one another, sometimes teaching others basic math skills or protecting each other from other gangs and private and public security forces (Avilés, January 6, 1997).

100; Monge, 1990: 15-17; Sánchez, 1996: 33-36; Vélis, 1995: 54-55 and 106; Visión Mundial, 1994: 6-7).

Group space, size and membership is dynamic. The young are constantly seeking alternative care on the streets, making choices between different lifestyle options and taking charge of their own lives, even though this may be within restricted frameworks of opportunity. Groups that may be forced out of their living spaces due to, for example, the demolition of "their" abandoned building or the closure of "their" sewer, seek alternate spaces. Children and youth constantly migrate. They may do so alone or in small groups. Those who are in the process of *callejerización* may temporarily return to their homes or stay with relatives. Some migrate to other parts of the city for job opportunities while others travel outside of the city for entertainment, such as regional carnivals. Some are forced to leave the streets against their will due to arrest and incarceration.

The young population's interactions with NGOs are also deliberate. Within their networks of survival, the children and youth learn about the different organizations, what they may receive from each (its goods and services) and the organization's particular methods of approach.⁵⁰ They exercise their choices and opportunities when entering one organization, deciding to remain -- based on the level of discipline, relationship with counsellors, cleanliness, material benefits, etc. -- or to leave it for the streets or for another NGO.⁵¹ Many street children and youth have experienced several NGOs and their varying methods of operation before deciding to permanently settle in one, or to reject institutionalization altogether (Galindo, July 23, 1996 and personal interviews with various children and youth).

⁵⁰ Of those institutional organizations who are open to taking children and youth directly off the streets -- as long as the young population abides by the rules of entry and remains in the organization without tarnishing their reputation -- many often allow children and youth to enter and exit several times. In fact, it is easier for the child or youth to enter an organization independently, than for organizations to channel an individual from one organization to another.

⁵¹ For example, one organization offers the young summer vacations abroad. This was given as one of the reasons why fewer beneficiaries join other organizations in the summer months.

Children and youth "of" the street are a particularly sexually active population. Nearly half (49%) of those surveyed in the 1995 Study admitted to leading an active sex life and 43% of this group claimed to have had intercourse for the first time at a very young age, between seven and 14 (UNICEF, 1996: 28). Their experiences do not always involve mutual consent. Many street children are sexually abused by a family member, and/or by their partners and adult members of society. As one 16-year-old described:

"I was locked up ... in the attorney general's office and the secretary told me that if I had relations with her she would let me go. That is how I left. That was my first time. The secretary was 27 years old. I was 12. The second time I did it to get even. The third time was because I wanted to, because I liked the person." (Felipe; institutional street youth)

Compounded with a lack of sexual education and use of protection and with multiple partners, the *callejeros* are particularly exposed to contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) including gonorrhea, syphilis and, most recently, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). AIDS has been detected with some frequency and has been the cause of death of some infected children and youth.⁵² It is feared that with the continuous lack of precautionary measures to prevent contraction, AIDS could be the cause of numerous deaths in the coming years (Sánchez, 1996: 37).

Their sexual behaviour has brought about another set of problems. The majority of the *callejeras* have reached their child-bearing age and have sexual relations without the use of contraceptives. Therefore, a growing number of girls are becoming pregnant on the street⁵³ and have added a new and disturbing aspect to the street child phenomenon: a second generation of children being born and raised on the street (LaFranchi, May 1997). Due to health reasons, teenage pregnancy is extremely dangerous,⁵⁴ but the potential risks

⁵² In February, 1997, *Casa Alianza México* was aware of 13 cases of infected youth. One passed away of a heart attack as a result of full blown AIDS in September of the same (Harris, September 12, 1997).

⁵³ A study of 180 street girls in *Casa Alianza México* found that 12% had a detected pregnancy. This number probably underestimates the pregnancy rates on the streets because many of the pregnancies go undetected (Sánchez, 1996: 45).

⁵⁴ There is a two-fold risk to teenage pregnancy: on the one hand is the health of the mother and on the other is the survival of the newborn based on the multiple problems faced by the mother. For a

faced by street life further endangers the mother and child. The girls have a limited knowledge of reproductive health, are traumatized by the pregnancy and show a lack of concern in preparing for the coming of the baby. Those who do not abort, choose to either abandon or keep the baby after birth. In the latter case they can opt to either return home, send the baby to relatives, integrate into a single mother's home or remain on the streets as a family (Sánchez, 1996: 45-50). According to the Mexican Collective of Child Assistance (Comexani), one out of every 10 girls living on the streets are mothers with one to three children (Albarrán, June 17, 1996: 6).

For those newborns whom the mothers opt to keep on the street, their lives are compromised from the outset. Those who survive share the same living spaces and conditions of their parents, are victims of the same discrimination, abuse and other dangers of the street, and like the girl-mother's experience, are an additional burden to the enormous limitations of the family. They will not be able to aspire to a better form of life. But their vulnerability is greater than that of their parents. As the assistant director to Mexico City's Preventive programming explains: "We're confronting the first generation of children who know nothing but the streets, and because of that they are even more disadvantaged than their parents." (Saldaña in LaFranchi, May 1997). Marginalized from birth, growing up in subhuman conditions, and learning from violent attitudes and behaviours, they have the potential of becoming a great threat unto themselves and to society (Sánchez, 1996: 45-47).⁵⁵

comprehensive overview of health risks related to teenage pregnancy worldwide, see UNICEF. "Too Old for Toys, too Young for Motherhood" (New York).

⁵⁵ As the analysis of both organizations will show, reintegrating to society the current generation of street children -- a child born within a family nucleus who attended some schooling and has a minimal level of socialization -- is a very difficult task. It will become particularly challenging, if not impossible, to reintegrate, or rather "integrate" the second generation of street children. In Brazil and Colombia, this "second generation" is an older phenomenon, where a totally marginalized population can only survive and relate to society through violence and aggression. Unless current interventions are taken immediately to impede the growth of this phenomenon -- in quantitative and generational terms -- Mexico City may face a similar risk in the coming years (Sánchez, 1996: 47).

Another risk faced by the *callejeros* is drug addiction. Drugs are used by most children and youth "of" the street as a coping mechanism and social function, mainly to stave off hunger, forget their present circumstances and share with one another while doing so. In the 1995 Study, seven out of 10 children and youth admitted to using drugs (p. 28), however other studies indicate a higher proportion of drug users where eight and nine out of 10 admit to consumption (street educators of *Casa Alianza México*, 1995, and Sánchez, 1996: 38). Thirty-two percent of the UNICEF Study's subjects claimed to have been using drugs for one to two years, 25% reported to have been addicted for over three years while only 9% said to have used drugs for less than a year (UNICEF, 1996: 28). Addiction seems to increase with the length of time they stay on the streets. Inhalants -- "*el activo*" (a mix of inhalants), toluene, thinner, cement and glue -- are the most commonly used type of drugs, but marihuana, alcohol, pills and drops are also used (Sánchez, 1996: 38 and UNICEF, 1996: 28).

Drugs have a disastrous impact on their health: it irreversibly affects their brain and nervous systems by killing neurons; reduces appetite thus contributing to malnutrition; and weakens their immune systems, leaving them vulnerable to common colds and stronger diseases. While they are under the influence of drugs, they become irrational and may become violent:

"There were different ways in which [we] reacted to the situation: smoking, taking drugs or alcohol. I smoked but didn't do drugs. They would motivate each other and that's why I smoked but I didn't touch drugs because my father taught me not to. Once I saw how two friends, under the influence, started to fight and took out jacknives and all the rest of us left. Returning moments later we found them dead. It felt really bad having two friends and then seeing them dead." (Ramón; former street child)

Due to their addiction, the children and youth cannot work in any type of activity that requires organization, discipline, rigour or any degree of responsibility and adherence to schedules (Dallape in Vélis, 1995: 60 and Sánchez, 1996: 35, 38-39).⁵⁶

Violence is another danger. Almost everything on the street is obtained or defended through verbal or physical confrontations. Violence prevails not only among the children and youth, but also between adults and the young *callejeros*. Street children and youth are regularly subjected to adverse treatment by government officials and the public. Persistent violations of the human rights of street children and youth have been documented by government surveys, the media and various local and international NGOs. The 1992 COESNICA Study found that 38% of the street and working children and youth interviewed have been mistreated on at least one occasion. The main group of individuals who they identified as having mistreated them is the police (39%)(p. 30). The Second Study sought the responses of street and working children separately. When children and youth "of" the street were questioned about perceived threats on the street, 29% reported maltreatment by other people, 24% reported extortion by the police, 18% indicated chased from their dwellings with the remainder indicating being run over, sexually abused or else no particular action specified. Over half of those interviewed (62%) reported having been arrested by the police on at least one occasion. The reasons given for their arrest include carrying drugs, vagrancy, "for no apparent reason" and for trespassing, in that order. It is deplorable that almost half of the detained children and youth indicated having suffered from human rights violations by the police, the same group that is supposed to provide for their protection: 35% said they were verbally or physically abused while detained, 10% reported being offered freedom for money while 1% said they were sexually abused or harassed. By contrast, 13% said they were treated with respect

⁵⁶ Their addiction vastly complicates efforts by local organizations to assist them. Drop in centres and homes for street children provide food and shelter, but since drugs are strictly prohibited, children often leave the premises to consume them. Furthermore, it becomes difficult if not impossible for social workers to assist children if they are under the influence.

and 2% indicated that the police had expressed concern about their being on the streets (UNICEF 1996: 29).

Private security guards, agents of the local police force and the judicial police have been responsible for persistent acts of physical and verbal harassment and violence, including sexual abuse and presumed forced disappearances. Repeated incidences have been reported in the North Central Bus Station and the *Observatorio* subway station and surrounding areas, locations where large numbers of street children and youth live and work.⁵⁷ The private security guard force of the bus station have on numerous occasions physically assaulted children, chased after them with security dogs, released tear gas into their living areas and taken children who are later reported missing. Public security patrols have beaten, threatened and arbitrarily detained street children and youth, and sexually assaulted detained girls (Amnesty International, December 20, 1997; Avilés, April 14 and July 2, 1997; Ednica, February 6 and April 16, 1998 and OMCT, June 10, 1997 and April 20, 1998).⁵⁸

Little information is available on the prospects of the *callejeros*, however a few hypotheses may be offered. Some die young. The director of *El Caracol*, an NGO program working with street children in Mexico City since 1994, has registered the deaths of 34 street children and youth. Among the primary known causes of death are violence, drugs and AIDS (Martín Perez García in Albarrán, June 17, 1996: 6 and *El Caracol*: 3).

⁵⁷ The group of *Los Ponis*, for example, has come to public light due to the numerous human rights abuses committed by public and private security forces.

⁵⁸ One such example of police brutality occurred on April 14, 1998. The *callejeros* were with members of a local NGO (*los Misioneros de la Caridad*, or Charity Missionaries) at the *Alameda Central* of Mexico City. A police patrol and a riot police bus approached the group and began threatening and beating them, sending several for medical treatment. Witnesses saw police kicking some 10 children in the bus as they rode to the Public Prosecutor's Office. They were charged with damage to private property and resisting arrest. The authorities claim the youth were caught stealing and attacked the police armed with stones and bottles when resisting arrest. According to press reports of *La Jornada*, the Mayor of the Cuauhtémoc District of Mexico City, Jorge Legorreta, considered the actions a "normal confrontation." The street children, adult witnesses, *Casa Alianza México* and the *Misioneros de la Caridad* claimed the minors did nothing wrong. *Casa Alianza México's* Legal Aid Office is representing those who were charged (Baltazar, April 16, 1998; Ednica, April 16, 1998; Harris, April 16, 1998 and OMCT, April 20, 1998).

Others grow up with severe physical, social and/or psychological problems because they lack family care or provision and face societal abuse. Some may slowly enter the crime scene. They turn to crime because of hunger, the need to feed their drug addiction or peer pressure. Another reason is their physical appearance, which as time weans on begins resembling an adult, rather than a child. They are less pitied by society in this case and thus receive diminishing earnings from begging and washing car windshields (their principal sources of income). Their search for alternate forms of subsistence may lead them to criminal activities, which may include stealing or selling drugs. Once they penetrate the criminal circle, or if they are forced to increase their contact and influence with young delinquents through incarceration, rehabilitation becomes very difficult.

Finally, in best cases, some children and youth reintegrate in society. They leave the street in search for a better lifestyle, doing so through returning to their family, coupling with a partner or finding a job. Despite their developments, it becomes difficult for the youth to break the cycle of poverty and it is not uncommon to see the same phenomenon reoccurring to themselves or their offspring (Sánchez, 1996: 42-45).

Interventions in Mexico City

"I like the [organizations'] programs because they help children and youth with low [economic] resources and facilitate various things that [otherwise] one could not have, such as [vocational] training, schooling, sports...." (Eduardo; institutional street youth)

The Mexican authorities and the society at large have offered a mixed response to the growing street child phenomenon. On the one hand, various projects and activities directly relating to the betterment of the street child at different levels are being undertaken. International influence has no doubt played a role. The growing advocacy, research and mobilization of financial resources have increased awareness of street

children on a global scale.⁵⁹ Moreover, action at the local level has been further prompted by a relative increase of people's collective action and the civil society call for democratization.⁶⁰ A political culture that reawakened with the 1985 Mexico City earthquake and the socio-economic consequences of the lost decade have resulted in greater electoral participation, and social and political awareness and mobilization. This, in turn, has been accompanied by government decentralization which, albeit slow and problematic, has given the Federal District⁶¹ its *delegaciones* and other local level governments further freedom to carry out development projects.

On the other hand, actions performed by police forces, some government officials and members of society seem to directly contradict the positive programming of governments and NGOs. This is in part due to a lack of public and inter-governmental knowledge about children's rights and the fragmented and limited advocacy and programming among different government levels. While some positive action has been

⁵⁹For example: the 1989 *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, of which Mexico is a signatory, includes two articles (19 and 32) that are especially applicable to the circumstances of street and working children; one of the 10 goals of the 1990 *World Summit for Children* and its *Plan of Action* is "improved protection of children in especially difficult circumstances"; other child related conferences, such as the *World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children* (Stockholm, August 1996), the *International Conference on Child Labour* (Oslo, October 1997) and the annual *ILO Conference* (Geneva, June 1998), which adopted a new Convention to eliminate extreme forms of child labour, include prevention and protection strategies that are interrelated to those of street children and; conferences that directly target this group, such as the *Innocenti Global Seminar on Street and Working Children* (New York, 1993) are becoming more common.

⁶⁰ The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the unified party that emerged from regional paternalistic leader rivalries following the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917), has since won every presidential election. The country's political system and its government can simultaneously be defined as authoritarian, corporatist, clientelist and presidentialist. Although post-revolutionary Mexico has faced recurrent episodes of popular protest, electoral opposition, union insurgency and other events calling for political change, it is not until the last decade that the PRI government has begun, or has had the need to respond more seriously to these cries. For further information on Mexico's political system see the author's paper "Economic Apertura and NAFTA: The Democratization of Mexico" (Unpublished paper, Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University, December 1995) p. 1-6.

⁶¹ The Federal District (DF), traditionally an entity ruled by a regent appointed directly by the President of the Republic, became democratically elected in 1997. The first elected mayor of the DF, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, represents one of the national opposition parties, the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD). Through this transition, the district's government changed its name from the Department of the Federal District (DDF) to the Government of Mexico City.

undertaken, the sustainability, multiplication and coordination of these and new programming need improvement.

Government Response

Awareness and interventions for the benefit of street and working children and youth in Mexico have increased and expanded, particularly in the last decade. The traditional promoters of street children programming, international and local organizations -- particularly NGOs and institutions such as UNICEF and UNESCO⁶² -- are no longer acting alone. Government bodies, including the National System for the Integral Development of the Family (DIF)⁶³ and other national entities, the former Department of the Federal District (DDF) and certain *delegaciones* within the City, for example, have taken some positive, intervening steps. Their work is in part being promoted and monitored by the 1991 and 1995-2000 National Action Programs for the Benefit of Children and their respective yearly evaluations. Created in the aftermath of the 1990 *World Summit for Children* and its *Plan of Action*, the programs' objectives, goals and evaluations directly target children in difficult circumstances, including children "on" and "of" the streets and those at risk.⁶⁴

⁶² Due to their unique international makeup and the centralized nature of Mexico's government, UNICEF and UNESCO work primarily through the government, providing indirect intervention to CEDC. UNICEF primarily supports preventive projects in expulsion areas, assists those governmental and non-governmental entities that offer programming for street children and has a number of projects that directly target CEDC. Both entities have been involved in inter-institutional projects and workshops, such as the "Strategic Prospective and Coordination for the Attention of Street Minors and Children at Risk" and in various cultural, sports and recreation activities (mini-Olympics, soccer tournaments, and day of the dead events, for example)(E. Rodríguez, June 27, 1996 and April 3, 1997, and Cruz, April 16, 1998).

⁶³ Given the unique status of the Federal District, not all of the federal government departments' had jurisdiction over Mexico City. Thus, the federal government's broad ranging social assistance program, DIF, and its program for Minors in Difficult Circumstances (MESE, later changed to MECED), created in 1985, did not operate in the Federal District prior to the recent change of government. In 1997, a new DIF office in the DF was created. Aside from a new library for CEDC, the author is unaware of any interventions that DIF may be having in Mexico City's street children's programming. Refer to de Anda Lorea, Juan Manuel. La Gran Carrera: Una Experiencia de Atención a los Niños en Situación de Calle (Mexico: DIF and UNICEF, 1992) for an introduction to MESE and a case study of its work.

⁶⁴ Please see Comisión Nacional de Acción en Favor de la Infancia. "Menores en Circunstancias Especialmente Dificiles." In Programa Nacional de Acción en Favor de la Infancia 1995-2000 (Mexico City: Secretaría de Salud, October 1995), 159-171 and Comisión Nacional de Acción en Favor de la Infancia. Programa Nacional de Acción en Favor de la Infancia 1995-2000: Evaluación 1996 (Mexico City: Secretaría de Salud, November 1996), 207-211.

Under the regency of Manuel Camacho (1988-1994), the DDF created its own Plan of Action for children in 1991,⁶⁵ placing children "on" and "of" the street on the agenda. Though various projects were established -- a program initiative for the investigation of inhalants, substance abuse and vocational training centers, a trust fund to support street children programming (*Fideicomiso*), and the 1992 street children census,⁶⁶ for example (Galindo, July 23, 1996, and Secretaría General de Desarrollo Social, DDF, 1991: 45-50) -- with the 1994 government change, many lacked continuity. The incoming government's policies and actions under Oscar Espinosa (1994-1997) were also based on a child oriented program, a unique intra-institutional Alliance⁶⁷ between national and local government bodies, UNICEF and local NGOs. Various goals and action plans were initiated and have been jointly carried out under its specific project objectives for children "on" and "of" the street (G. Rodríguez, April 2, 1997 and E. Rodríguez, June 27, 1996).

The bulk of governmental interventions in Mexico City have originated with the department of Social Protection, a branch of the DDF. Its street children involvement has progressively shifted away from punitive actions -- where children "of" the street were routinely rounded up in vans and incarcerated or placed in massive state institutions (the type of action previously criticized) -- to the creation of a specific street child program that began contacting children through street workers in 1992. The program itself gained permanent budget approval in 1996, and through the Alliance, it solidified and shifted some of its focus to avoid duplication with the private sector. As of November 1997, the Social Protection Program worked with street children who still have family ties, primarily indigenous and street based working children, and was increasing preventive

⁶⁵ See Secretaría General de Desarrollo Social, DDF. Cumbre Mundial de la Infancia: Compromisos de la Ciudad de México en Favor de los Niños: Programa de Acción (Mexico: Ciudad de México Librería y Editora, SC, December 1991).

⁶⁶ The two latter projects were done in collaboration with international and local organizations and institutions and other government bodies.

⁶⁷ Alianza en favor de la infancia del Distrito Federal (Mexico: Corporación Mexicana de Impresión, SA de CV, July 1996).

programming in communities with children at risk, leaving the bulk of rehabilitative street work with children "of" the street to the experienced NGOs. Non institutional government intervention with the latter group continued through the provision of increased health and judicial services, for example, but the government closed public funded shelters and transferred its population to private institutions.⁶⁸ The Social Protection Program, geographically focused in four of the 16 *delegaciones* identified in the 1995 street children census as requiring the greatest assistance (Cuauhtémoc, G. A. Madero, Iztapalapa and V. Carranza), is coordinating and increasingly delegating its activities with those *delegaciones* that have their own micro projects (Saldaña, August 8, 1996 and G. Rodríguez, June 22, 1996 and April 2, 1997).

While government street children programming increased under Espinosa's regency, these actions have again been fragmented and insufficient and have raised criticisms over transferring much governmental responsibility on to civil society. It is hoped that interventions under the new government will have a greater qualitative and quantitative impact on street children. During his campaign and after having assumed power, the new Mayor, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, has specifically raised the street children phenomenon as a government responsibility. The new Government of Mexico City has begun establishing an Institute for Development and Training for Street Children and, as of November 1998, was creating a new street children program under the Secretariat of Education, Health and Social Development (SESDS). Expected to address short-, medium- and long-term interventions with a focus on prevention, the new programming will continue to seek

⁶⁸ The Education Secretariat closed down its two public institutions which housed abused, abandoned and institutionalized street children in the City. They were transferred and dispersed to not-for profit organizations, including *Casa Alianza*. An agreement was established with many NGOs where "scholarships" were provided by the government to help sustain their stay. Some child advocates have criticized this transference, explaining that the scholarship sums are minuscule amounts compared to what other governments have done in similar cases, such as Brazil, and that the Mexican authorities simply delegated their social responsibilities and passed them on to civil society. Educators have also complained of the institutional children's difficulty in adjusting to their new homes, street children's programs that were not geared to address their needs (Miguel).

collaboration with international and local organizations and institutions and with its 16 *delegaciones* (Gobierno de la Ciudad de México, November 4, 1998; Galán, April 16, 1998; Kline, March 16, 1998; Reuters in CNN, March 15, 1998).⁶⁹

NGO Response

Within Mexico's long history of NGO development and transformation, intervention focusing on urban children in especially difficult circumstances (CEDC) is relatively recent. While some older NGOs have intervened with street children as part of their larger welfare programs, the majority of projects and organizations specifically targeting urban CEDC were created in the 1980s, their birth and expansion proportionally related to the growing social disintegration produced by the poverty and marginalization of the lost decade (Foro de Apoyo Mutuo, 1995: 31-34, 40). Despite the fact that NGO interventions have only come about quite recently, civil society has shown greater initiative than the government in addressing the street child phenomenon. Most offer secondary and tertiary intervention, providing rehabilitative services to children who already are "on" the streets; fewer are those that work to reduce the risks of children in urban slums, or *barrios populares*.⁷⁰ The society's identification with the street child as the urban child in most distress (the one requiring immediate "assistance") gears the majority of interventions to address the phenomenon at the tertiary level. Most street children NGOs work directly with the target group, while fewer are those that provide support or services to front-line organizations.⁷¹

⁶⁹ The author is unaware if the interventions under Social Protection are continuing under Cárdenas' government while the new programming is being created.

⁷⁰ While community development initiatives exist, some are either shunned by the government, given little support or are swallowed up by local authorities, thus often changing the quality and nature of the interventions. The government's fear of mass mobilization and its centralization tactics have partly contributed to the limited preventive response by civil society (Alfonso and Fideicomiso, 1992: 90-94).

⁷¹ One example of such organizations is the Support Foundation for Programs Favoring Mexico City Street Children (FANIC), whose goal is to generate public and private funds for the support of institutions and groups which provide services to street children. FANIC favours educational, health, job training, family ties and addiction prevention programs (Galindo, July 23, 1996, and "FANIC" pamphlet, 1997).

In addition, despite an increase in the number of street girls, assistance for this gender remains limited. As is the case in most countries, programming tends to concentrate exclusively on boys, the most visible and largest gender group. Interventions also tend to neglect street girls because of the additional challenges they face, including issues surrounding female sexuality and the societal values that favour the male gender. Few NGOs target street girls at their inception or are willing and/or capable of re-adapting their interventions to address their needs. Given the particular risks faced by girls and the growth of a new generation of street children in the city, intervention towards street girls must be increased.

The Mexican civil society, like its government, has come to identify the street child with institutional intervention, placing priority on rehabilitation through shelters and group homes. Unfortunately, this programming often emphasizes a protectionist approach that views children as objects of benevolence rather than as subjects for change (E. Rodríguez, June 27, 1996, and April 3 and 4, 1997). Regardless of the type of interventions, the welfarist approach is generally true of NGOs operating in Mexico and is partly due to the lack of public knowledge and understanding of the rights of the child and the specific makeup of many organizations. The majority of projects originate with non-member organizations -- those that are either run and/or staffed by people who are from a different social, professional and ethnic background, and from a different age cohort than their clients⁷² -- composed of either middle- or upper-class groups⁷³ or religious organizations. The attitude of viewing the young as "passive victims of cruelty" in need of immediate charitable assistance remains, and has resulted in limited and, at times, inadequate programming.

⁷² This NGO classification is borrowed from the work of Farrington, John and Anthony Bebbington. Reluctant Partners? Non-Governmental Organizations. The State and Sustainable Agricultural Development. Chapter 1, (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 1-28.

⁷³ UNICEF Mexico held a workshop to respond to the demand of *señoras* (upper-class women) and companies that, with limited knowledge about children's rights or the situation of the street child, are interested in opening their own street children's group home (E. Rodríguez, April 4, 1997).

The lack of coordination among and regulation of programming has been another major obstacle for the provision of a comprehensive, uniform and shared approach to address the phenomenon. The exact number of interventions is contended. Over 100 civil associations are registered by public notaries as providing assistance to street children in Mexico City (García Lizama in Sepúlveda Ibarra, July 8, 1996). However, only 40 street children institutions are identified in a Human Rights Commission of Mexico City listing (CDHDF)(UNICEF-CDHDF, 1994 in Sánchez, 1996: 71-72) and, according to an inventory of the Social Protection Department, only 15 of the 80 institutions providing attention to vulnerable children in the city focus on street children (UNICEF, 1996: 35).

While Mexico City may be dotted with an array of organizations and institutions that directly and indirectly concern themselves with street children, the disparity in numbers has much to do with the quality and reputation of the organizations. Only a dozen or so are consistently recognized by street children activists and researchers (government and non) as serious and reputable organizations whose approaches and methodologies display a genuine concern for the welfare of street children (see Esquivias Aguilar, July 1996). These are: older, more established and in many cases larger in scope; involved in umbrella networking (however limited this may be) and other inter-institutional programs; and/or generally known and respected by the street children themselves. For example, while praising *Casa Alianza México*, one institutional street youth criticized other organizations where he had lived:

"Some that don't have rules or rights -- they don't give a shit and hit the youth -- don't have respect [even] among themselves. [One institution] kept us locked up; in [another] the food was thrown around; [Yet another one] would throw water over us in the morning [to wake us up] and would hit us with a stick...." (Alex; institutional street youth)⁷⁴

Unfortunately, even the reputable organizations work in relative isolation from one another, concentrating on the same meeting points where street children converge, and

⁷⁴ The names of the organizations have been withheld.

even with the same population, thereby duplicating efforts (UNICEF, 1996: 35). While some umbrella organizations, such as a trust fund in support of street children programming (*Fideicomiso*) and the Mexican Umbrella in Favour of Street Children,⁷⁵ have been created, coordination must be increased.

Furthermore, the lack of government supervision has, in part, contributed to the distrust between the plethora of organizations that have recently surfaced and are (or claim to be) involved in this type of work (Barreiro in Esquivias Aguilar, July 1996).⁷⁶ One private umbrella institution, the *Junta de Asistencia Privada para el Distrito Federal* (J.A.P.), is the only body monitoring not-for-profit organizations in Mexico City; only seven street children NGOs are under their supervision (Tapia, July 22, 1996 and JAP, 1996: 1, 9-16). Such concerns are partly justified. While there are "unknown" NGOs that operate with limited experience or guidance, some may be truly innovative in their methodology and embrace of the rights of the child. With the possibility that such cases may exist, there is a need to identify and support these initiatives for the total betterment of street children programming. The lack of monitoring, on the one hand, can also lead to the creation of organizations that do not adhere to, or even work against, the best interests of the child, as in the above examples provided by the youth. It is most unfortunate that cases of fraud have surfaced in Mexico City where, the same organizations claiming to help street children are involved in crimes from money laundering to schemes that verbally, physically and sexually abuse the rights of the child (see, for example, Sepúlveda Ibarra, July 8, 1996).⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Thirteen NGOs formed the *Red Mexicana en Favor de la Infancia Callejera*, whose main objective is to promote respect for the human rights of street children, denounce violations against their rights and generate spaces for exchange with the government, private sector and other social actors (Esquivias Aguilar, July 1996).

⁷⁶ A children's programming consultant expressed her frustration concerning such organizations: "It is said that there are institutions, or groups, or people, who have the [ability] to work with street children, but they do not.... I can only speak with authority on those [eight] institutions that are working as part of [my] program. Beyond these [who knows]...?" (Astor).

⁷⁷ Mexico City is not free of organized crime rings where, those involved in pornography and international organ transplants, for example, take advantage of the already vulnerable CEDC. Other fraudulent NGOs,

Two NGOs Working in Mexico City

Casa Alianza México and *Casa Ecuador*, both monitored by the JAP, are two of the few "experienced" and popular organizations providing direct secondary and tertiary intervention for street children in Mexico City. It is in part due to their reputation that they were chosen as case studies: in analyzing their methodologies, processes and impact, these and other street children interventions may learn from their experiences. Other reasons for their being chosen include their general objectives and goals, target groups, size, origin, and type of intervention and methodology used.

Location, Historical Background and Population

Casa Alianza México and *Casa Ecuador* are located within reach of Mexico City's street children, are in close proximity to each other (within 20 blocks), and serve a similar, and sometimes overlapping target group. Both organizations have their offices and crisis centers in the downtown core of the City, in the heart of *Delegación Cuauhtémoc*. Having been identified as an area where a large number of the city's street children congregate, the organizations' location allow for immediate access to many of those who enter the organization voluntarily. The creation and development of each program, however, are markedly different from the other.

Fundación Casa Alianza México, I.A.P. (*Casa Alianza México*) is a filial of Covenant House, an international NGO based in New York. Founded in 1968 to "protect and attend abandoned youth," Covenant House expanded its activities throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico and Central America. Operating now in 17 cities, Covenant House claims to be the largest non-profit children's welfare organization in the Americas (*Casa Alianza*, January 28, 1997, and 1994: 2-4), certainly the largest serving

such as the now suspended *Proyecto Nueva Vida para el Menor Marginado*, extorted and abused street children. The young of *Nueva Vida* were routinely beaten and chained if they failed to bring in their daily quota and rape, lashing and cigarette burns, in addition to disappearances, are accredited to the couple running the organization (Sepúlveda Ibarra, July 8, 1996 and Veledíax, June 1, 1996).

street children in the region. In 1981, in Guatemala, it founded the child organization Covenant House Latin America, or *Casa Alianza*. *Casa Alianza* has expanded to Honduras (1986), Mexico City (1988) and Nicaragua (1998), and is headquartered in San José, Costa Rica. Dedicated to the "rehabilitation and defense" of street children in Mexico and Central America, *Casa Alianza* monitors and cares for approximately 4,400 street children per year.⁷⁸ Through its experience, size and effective advocacy and rehabilitative intervention with street children, *Casa Alianza* has earned a favourable international reputation (Casa Alianza, January 16, 1999).⁷⁹

Covenant House was introduced to Mexico through the initiative of Luis Creel, a lawyer and current President of the Local Board. *Casa Alianza México* became an incorporated Mexican agency in 1988 and began its work through a needs assessment study. By 1989 it began to operate with the help and financing of Covenant House and patronage from the Local Board (Casa Alianza, 1994: 2-4, and January 16, 1999). *Casa Alianza México* has since expanded considerably and currently consists of eight homes located throughout the city: one crisis center, two transition homes and five group homes. The new crisis center, opened in June 1996, also offers non-residential services, including various horizontal programs, and serves as the administrative base of the project.

Casa Alianza México is one of the largest street child organizations in Mexico City. It has contact with approximately 1,800 street children (Casa Alianza, January 16, 1999), the majority of which are in the first two phases of the project (Street and Crisis).

⁷⁸ Due to variations in the characteristics of street children in different countries, *Casa Alianza* attempts to adapt its programming to better target the local population. For example, many of the Guatemalan street children have been traumatized by a lengthy civil war and their reasons for being on the street are related to the war factor (not the case in Mexico). The lingering war mentality in society and the large number of ex-soldiers now-policemen also contribute to a high degree of physical abuse by the authorities. *Casa Alianza Guatemala* has therefore created a legal aid service that is primarily involved in efforts to stop the abuse and murder of street children, including, for example, assisting in the proper training of new recruits to the Guatemalan National Police (Casa Alianza, January 28, 1997).

⁷⁹ For example, *Casa Alianza* and its executive director, Bruce Harris, received the 1996 Olof Palme Award, one of Sweden's highest honours for those who work in "international understanding and common security." Please refer to *Casa Alianza's* Internet site, which has an overview of its activities and various issues concerning street children in Latin America.

Between 180 and 240 children and youth are housed in the three institutional phases at any one time (Casa Alianza, February 1997). About 70% of the population are between 12 and 16 years old, although children as young as eight and youth as old as 18 can be part of the project. While the majority are boys, the 20% of girls are given separate dormitories and housing throughout the phases (Capellín, March 7, 1997).

In contrast stands *Casa Ecuador*, a local operation much smaller in size and scope, which has experienced drastic changes in ownership, management, methodology and financing. It began as a government-run institution, a pilot project set up in 1989 by the social development branch of the DDF. At first, *Casa Ecuador* provided basic services and an alternative development process to help local street children reintegrate into society, in addition to providing older, institutionalized youth a home environment that encouraged greater responsibility and extensive social interaction with the "outside world." Thus, younger street children were housed with older institutional youth transferred to *Casa Ecuador* from other government homes, including the Justice Attorney Office of Mexico City. Within the year, the project was transferred to the Social Protection Department and the project's central objective focused on the street child. By 1991, its objective was: "to provide an alternate lifestyle of 'open doors' that the children themselves can administer...[through]... a methodology that seeks to provide an integrated response to those children and youth who live on the streets" (Casa de la Juventud, 1991: 1). The focus on education and the necessity for gaining employable skills was reinforced and residents were strongly encouraged to either work or study to remain in the project (Casa de la Juventud, 1997a: 2-13).

However, the government's pilot project encountered various managerial and methodological problems. Advising services ceased to be effective, personal development monitoring diminished, and, as a former resident explained, rather than learning independence and self-management, the majority of the population "ran wild" (Ramón).

The volatility of change in management -- five directors within a period of three years -- also likely contributed to the weak authority and methodological instability. By the time *Casa Ecuador* was handed over to a private association in 1993,⁸⁰ the project was idle. From March until November of that year, the facilities of *Casa Ecuador* were unmonitored. When the new and current director took over, street children were found living in the facilities without adult supervision or services. The new civil association inherited approximately 70 children, 40 of which were considered to be addicted to drugs (Vallejo, July 2, 1996).

While remaining a civil organization, *Casa Ecuador* established a pact with the government in which Social Protection continues to provide technical personnel, food and some materials (Casa de la Juventud, 1997a: 13-14). The *Delegación Cuauhtémoc*, on behalf of Mexico City, is also contributing some personnel to the program. Financial difficulties have since forced the closure of various internal vocational training workshops and a large reduction in personnel. In response, the project has been collaborating and establishing links with other public and private actors that complement *Casa Ecuador's* work. It has also reduced the population by transferring older youth who showed little social development to more specialized institutional facilities (Casa de la Juventud, 1997a: 16-18). In time, *Casa Ecuador's* methodology and services have continued to evolve, gaining a more reputable name along the way.

Casa Ecuador works out of a large colonial house in the heart of *Barrio Tepito*, in downtown Mexico City, serving both as a crisis center and group home and as the base for other non-residential services. From the time it became a private organization in 1993, the average number of children served per year has varied between 120 and 280. These figures include all those who had some contact with the organization, from street outreach

⁸⁰ The main reasons given for transference to the private sector was to ensure the program's continuity following the upcoming governmental change (Vallejo, July 2, 1996 and Casa de la Juventud, 1997a: 12-13).

to those that are in the last phase of the project. An average of 60 to 80 children and youth are living within the facilities at any one time. All are male and the majority are in their mid- to late-teens, although nine-year-old children and a 24-year-old youth are part of the program (Casa de la Juventud, 1997a: 26, 32).

It should be noted that, despite the years of experience behind both organizations, at the time of the field research neither had complete documentation of their experiences and impact. Under the financial assistance of a program proposed by QUIERA, A.C. (the Voluntariado de la Asociación de Banqueros Mexicanos), *Casa Alianza México* and *Casa Ecuador* were undergoing a systematization process of their experiences and methodology (Casa Alianza, 2, Introduction pamphlet and Vallejo, July 2, 1996).⁸¹ The preliminary results were already being incorporated into the organizations' strategies of action.

Objectives

While diverging in various elements, the organizations' objectives have certain common characteristics. They stem from the basic intention that the child should choose, autonomously, an alternate life option off the street. They attempt to provide the street child with the necessary tools to enable him or her to choose a non-street life and to assist him or her in the process of *descallejerización* and in the creation of a new life-path (Alemany, July 23, 1996).

Casa Alianza's mission is based on the Christian values of living out God's covenant with its people by developing of a special relationship, or covenant (*alianza*), with the child based on "unconditional love, absolute respect and honesty." The mission is fulfilled

⁸¹ Through the instrumentation of a social development consulting agency, Thais, S.C., in 1993, QUIERA initiated a "Programa de Apoyo Integral a Niños Callejeros." The objective of strengthening existing street children organizations is being carried out by providing assistance in: (1) the methodological systematization of the organization's working model; (2) the personalized statistical monitoring of each child (evaluation indicators); (3) the creation of stronger inter-institutional relations; and (4) training. The purpose of the program is not to homogenize a particular model or methodology across all organizations, but rather to work and develop the strategies of action based on the experience and characteristics of each particular organization. Eleven organizations in Mexico City and Guadalajara are involved in the program (Alemany, July 23, 1996).

through its vision: providing shelter and services to children and youth who are homeless or at great risk; reuniting children with their families; collaborating with community organizations to improve the conditions of families and children; and advocating with and on behalf of youth (Casa Alianza, January 16, 1999, and 1994: 5-6). Specifically, *Casa Alianza México's* objective is:

"To remove children from the street and provide them elements for personal development so that when adulthood is reached, they may have the necessary tools and abilities to affront an independent life" (Casa Alianza, 1994: 2).

Casa Alianza's plan of service stems from the premise that "the street is not an adequate place for adolescent children" (Casa Alianza, January 16, 1999); children should neither live in nor work on the streets (Capellín, February 20, 1997). In exchange it offers a house (*casa*) that is not only a physical space away from the street, but is to serve as a home where the child can develop spiritually and emotionally (Casa Alianza, January 16, 1999). *Casa Alianza's* program has five core principles or rules that serve as its methodological and pedagogical foundation: (1) urgency; (2) sanctuary; (3) communication of values; (4) structure and (5) option. The principles are an underlying structure joining all the different phases and projects of the organization (Casa Alianza, January 16, 1999).

Casa Ecuador's mission is to act as a facilitator that enables the children and youth to undergo a radical behavioural change, breaking away from their adversarial attitudes so that they may create for themselves better living conditions. The organization's primary initiative is an open door program that provides shelter, basic services, formal and non-formal education and labour training. Priority is placed on the youth's social, educational and emotional development, including the re-establishment of family ties and occupational development (Casa de la Juventud, 1997b: 6-9). *Casa Ecuador's* general objectives are:

"To contribute to the psycho-social development and educative formation of male children and youth between the ages 10 to 18 who have lived on the street or find themselves at risk. [And] to modify, in a positive manner, their living conditions,

allowing for their social rehabilitation, prioritizing their re-entry to the family nucleus through the family attention program” (Casa de la Juventud, 1997b: 11).

Casa Ecuador also has four basic institutional principles that provide a cohesive structure to the program and guide daily decision-making: (1) non-determinism; (2) respect of decision; (3) sense of life and (4) internal change (Casa de la Juventud, 1997b: 9-10). Through its residential services, *Casa Ecuador* encourages social rehabilitation and behavioural change towards a non-street life, but, unlike its counterpart, does not necessarily encourage a total break with the street. Following its second and third principles, the program respects and supports those youth (over 14 years of age) who choose to train or work on street-related occupations, such as shoe shining or vending.

Methodology

The basic methodological approach of intervention of both *Casas* are one of the most popular secondary and tertiary methodologies used in the NGO community.⁸² In the process of discouraging children from making the streets their home, this methodology seeks the active participation of children in their decision-making process of leaving the streets and joining alternate living arrangements. The latter are open-door, family-like environments, where the children develop attitudes and skills to ease their reintegration to society. It is a gradual strategy that, through various phases, distances children away from street life.⁸³ Both *Casa Alianza México* and *Casa Ecuador* began with two phases,

⁸² This methodology has been adapted by various organizations, including Bangalore Street People's Service in India, El Caracol in Mexico and World Vision in various developing countries (Allsebrook and Swift, 1989: 205-208, El Caracol "Presentación" and Visión Mundial, 1995).

⁸³ Most interventions typically start off with two phases: street work, where educators make contact and establish ties with the child, offering various degrees of assistance on the street and encouraging his or her entrance to the second phase, either a home or drop-in centre, which offers a variety of services that meet additional basic needs and serve as a refuge or temporary shelter. If the methodological process continues, some children are prepared to become integrated into a group home, the third stage, where they share and interact with other children like themselves while being incorporated into other social activities, such as schooling and vocational training. Some organizations have a last phase that specifically promotes their reintegration into society, helping the child establish an independent life, either through work and/or family reintegration (Barreiro in Esquivias Aguilar, July, 1996 and Fideicomiso, 1992: 25-29).

adding additional phases and other horizontal projects as demanded by the population's growth and development.

Casa Alianza México's work derives from the evolving methodology developed by the three decades of Covenant House's experience. Having begun in 1989 with street educators and a boys' crisis center, *Casa Alianza México* currently has a fairly complete program. It consists of four phases -- Street Phase; Crisis Center; Transition Homes and Group Homes -- and various horizontal programs, including Family Reintegration, Legal Aid Office, Psychology and Social Work, Drug Rehabilitation (Ollín) and HIV/AIDS (Luna). A new program for street girls and their children is in the process of being initiated (Casa Alianza, January 16, 1999).

Casa Ecuador's phases are generally similar to *Casa Alianza Mexico's*, but they stem from a shorter development period of self-evaluation and renewal. At the time of the field research, *Casa Ecuador's* methodological development continued with the expansion and implementation of its new program. Working originally on a two phase methodology -- street work (*trabajo de calle*) and home (*albergue*) -- *Casa Ecuador* now has five phases: Transition/Induction; Formative/Re-socialization; Social Stability; Detachment Initiation and Pre-independent Process. In addition, *Casa Ecuador* has six projects or areas working along all phases of the methodology: Social Work; Medical Care; Psychology; Pedagogy; Educational Auxiliary and Administration. An overview of *Casa Alianza México's* and *Casa Ecuador's* key phases (their objectives, main activities and operational methods) are found in Appendix 3.

Despite their various similarities, *Casa Alianza México* and *Casa Ecuador* have unique characteristics that result in variations in project impact, efficiency and effectiveness, including philosophical approach, financial support, management style and use of external actors. Their evaluations in the following chapter highlights some of their common and unique positive and restrictive characteristics.

Evaluation of Two Case Studies:

Casa Alianza México and Casa Ecuador

"[What I like most about *Casa Alianza*] is the way I am treated. They give clothes, shoes [I enjoy] living with others, having friends, playing sports, aerobics ... many things [but] mostly the support of *chavos* and counsellors. [The institution has helped me the most] in my attitude, the way I express things. [I am] more tolerant, stable, happy." (Julio; Crisis Center resident)

"I left home when I was seven years old. I went travelling everywhere for about 10 years. At 17 I started to get worried about [not attending] school ... growing up without an identity card or [other] documents.... Once, I abandoned [*Casa Ecuador*] but I left school [too] so I came back because I want to continue [school]." (Eduardo explaining his reasons for joining and remaining in *Casa Ecuador*)

By assessing the structures, components and methodologies, methods for individually monitoring the child, extent of youth participation and usage of financial and human resources, among other factors of *Casa Alianza México* and *Casa Ecuador*, this chapter attempts to analyze the programs' effectiveness at meeting their objectives and impact they have on their target populations. The study does not intend to nor, given its limited resources, is it capable of providing complete and comprehensive assessments of the programs. Rather, by highlighting some of *Casa Alianza Mexico's* and *Casa Ecuador's* achievements, drawbacks and suggestions for improvements, it is hoped that the study may serve as a base for future internal and external evaluations.

Each intervention is analyzed separately, beginning with *Casa Alianza México*. However, given their great similarity in methodology and programming, and to avoid duplication, the analysis of the second intervention focuses on those areas which vary significantly from the first. Possible reasons for such differences and the ultimate impact they have on the population are examined. Chapter 6 ties together the most relevant

aspects of both interventions making general conclusions, suggestions and recommendations for these and other micro-scale programming for street children.

Casa Alianza México

Its clear methodological structure, cleanliness and size, among other factors, have made *Casa Alianza México* one of the most reputable organizations working on behalf of street children in Mexico City. In order to assess its success and shortcomings, it is important to examine the methodological objectives of the program, the four phases and relevant horizontal projects. In examining these components, this section attempts to measure the desired and undesired changes/transformations in the target population and determine the effectiveness of the projects at meeting their objectives. Although the qualitative component is more prominent, some quantitative analysis is also used.

Individual Monitoring of the Child

Casa Alianza México must be praised for monitoring the development of the child by systematically measuring changes in the children's knowledge and attitudes. Currently, the organization uses two main methods of assessing a child's individual development: a computerized system, NINOCA, established in 1994, and a personal dossier, where the child's medical, psychological and counselling files are stored (Banda, March 7, 1997).

The outcome of an external evaluation, NINOCA was especially designed for *Casa Alianza México*. Although its standard development indicators were expected to monitor the child's progress at every phase, the system can provide only a reduced record of the child (Carlos and Capellín, March 7, 1997). It is efficient, albeit in formulating group statistics of children having a common characteristic, a need for some projects including

Street Work, Family Reintegration and Psychology and Social Work. Staff from other phases and projects rarely use NINOCA.⁸⁴

The dossier is the primary tool for monitoring the individual development of the child (Banda, March 7, 1997). Upon entry to the Crisis Center, a file is created for the newcomer. Basic information is recorded by the assigned psychologist, social worker and counsellor, and by a medical team. Thereafter, the child's counsellor and social worker, and if relevant, his or her psychologist and family reintegration staff regularly work with and update the dossier throughout the child's stay at *Casa Alianza México*.⁸⁵

The dossier is a complete document, made up of numerous components/sections that monitor different aspects of the child's development: medical, psychological, educational, vocational training/labour, *plan de vida* (life plan) and chronological history among others. The documents of the *plan de vida*, in particular, use personal statistical indicators to measure specific elements of the child's development. As seen in Table 1, for example, the use of soap is an indicator for measuring the level of personal hygiene. These indicators are a vital component of the program as they can provide a more accurate measurement of the impact of a program on the child's development than the other more general actions, such as school or work attendance.

It should be noted that while the dossier system itself is comprehensive, its documents are not always filed thoroughly or in a timely manner.⁸⁶ The excess amount

⁸⁴ The limited use of the system is apparent. NINOCA is not included in the training orientation process of new counsellors (except street workers), some are not aware of its existence and others have only had access to it by chance.

⁸⁵ The dossier is physically located at the phase and home where the child lives, thereby facilitating the counsellor's access to it for both reference purposes and making relevant entries. After the child's departure from *Casa Alianza México*, the dossier is archived in case of his or her return to the organization.

⁸⁶ In one instance, a counsellor still had in his possession the dossier of a youth who had been transferred to another home some weeks before. He explained that while not having had the time yet to complete his notes on the dossier, he made sure to speak to the "new" counsellors about the main characteristics of the youth. In another incident, Family Reunification took over a month's time to include in a child's dossier information noting his communication with a family member. This delay prevented the child's counsellor from providing him with immediate support in this important development (Alfonso).

Table 1: Life Plan Indicator for Hygiene

<i>Plan de Vida</i>	
1. Date:	February 26, 1997
2. Activity:	soap for hygiene
3. Goal:	learn to maintain himself clean
4. Responsible:	the nurse is in charge of monitoring the counsellor
5. Evaluation:	to take place every 30 days
6. Observations:	evaluation did not take place due to nurse's absence

Source: Document provided by Social Work, March 26, 1997, Casa Alianza Mexico, Mexico City.

of work faced by each counsellor, psychologist and social worker was the primary cause cited for such negligence. There are also concerns that information on the dossier does not always accurately reflect the characteristics of the child nor the type of counselling which has been carried out.⁸⁷ This can have serious repercussions, especially when the dossier is taken at face value and the child is placed in a higher phase and/or with greater level of responsibilities that he or she might be ready to handle. Inconsistency, lack of continuity and negligence in the handling of the dossiers hinder the development process of the child.

Lack of integration between the various projects also hinder the effectiveness of the monitoring process. With the exception of the social workers' weekly meetings with counsellors and inter-project courses offered by the organization, members from different projects rarely interact with one another. There are limited opportunities to learn about the details or simultaneous activities being carried out by other projects and how they are having an impact on the child. The dossier becomes the main source through which a counsellor is informed of what has been worked on with the child by others, but the

⁸⁷ While human errors may occur, some of these inaccuracies are in part caused by pressure from Coordination to perform. The staff, in particular the counsellors, feel that they carry on their shoulders the child's developmental process; it is their task to ensure that the child overcomes her street attitudes and lifestyle. However, a great amount of pressure also comes from the Directorate which reinforces the counsellors position of responsibility and has additional administrative reasons for wanting to see the youth advance along the phases. In the unfortunate instances where the counsellor gives in to such pressures claiming to have helped the child along more than she really has, the child suffers.

written word can often not suffice in explaining why exactly a certain activity or type of treatment was given to a child and what the results were.⁸⁸ Despite the dossier's comprehensiveness, the child might not be getting the maximum amount of support that could be provided.

At the time of the research, the organization was in the process of restructuring and expanding NINOCA's functions to include an extensive record of the child's various development components (Capellín, March 7, 1997). If it proves to be comprehensive, the new NINOCA may internalize the dossier, thereby providing to all its staff (through a data network) instant access to the monitoring system.⁸⁹ This can potentially diminish some of the dossier's communication and delay problems. In the meantime (and given the dossier's relative strengths and NINOCA's impracticality for extensive monitoring), the dossier will continue to be the primary tool for monitoring the development of the child.

Greater cohesion including increased daily/weekly communication among the various projects is also necessary. Project members should be encouraged to use the telephone on a regular basis and set up one-on-one meetings with other team members to follow-up, answer questions and discuss particular issues or doubts concerning the counselling of a child. Scheduled inter-group meetings could also aid in bridging communication gaps. Above all, greater emphasis should be stressed on filling out the dossier comprehensively, accurately and on schedule. When complete, the staff indicated that the dossier is very effective in documenting and maintaining control of the development and setbacks of a child. As one counsellor noted, the characteristics of the child and the particular areas that need to be worked with the child are all included.

⁸⁸ For example, if doubts remain concerning the interaction in Family Reunification between a child and family member -- how long did the two parties speak; what was the child's attitude; did it change during the conversation; what was her reaction afterwards -- the child's counsellor may use the dossier to pursue these questions with Family Reunification. However, it may be months until a Family Reunification member meets again with the child and reviews her dossier. In the meantime, the child may approach the counsellor to talk about her family or the counsellor may wish to encourage such a discussion. The knowledge and time gap encountered by the counsellor may prevent his acting in the child's best interests.

⁸⁹ At the time of the field research, most of the homes and projects were already equipped with computers.

Furthermore, the organization should consider sharing the dossier more with its population. As other projects have found, reviewing their own life history and analyzing their own progress and setbacks can be of great benefit to the young.⁹⁰ Despite their theoretical involvement in their personal *plan de vida*, the young of *Casa Alianza México* rarely view their own files, an opportunity that may only arise after the youth's request and the counsellor's acquiescence. Giving the children knowledge of their own dossier enables them to be better subjects in their own development.

A Word on Quantitative Monitoring

Casa Alianza México keeps a close account of the number of children and youth in the institution and in each phase, vertical and horizontal. This data is effectively used by the organization to monitor general service delivery and output (to help determine the availability of beds, food, staff allocation, etc.), including the need for expansion. For instance, *Casa Alianza México* currently has contact with approximately 1,800 street children, a large number when compared to other street children programs in Mexico City and worldwide. The most recent increment was monitored along all the phases: contact with more street children led to the expansion of the Crisis Center in June, 1996, which in turn led to the creation of two new Group Homes, opened in March 1997.⁹¹ *Casa Alianza México* has largely avoided weighing its accomplishments by simply comparing the total number of children assisted with the available occupancy or expected target, a common mistake of inexperienced pilot projects. The organization is aware that this process, in and of itself, does not reflect the impact of the project on its population.

On the other hand, the organization has only made limited use of quantitative analysis to monitor the process of the children and youth along the program. Much of the population's quantitative information is not gathered in one place nor is it consistently

⁹⁰ For example, the Passage House for prostitute girls in Recife, Brazil, regularly gives the children access to their personal files. The girls have found this valuable for their own development (Hart, 1992: 36).

⁹¹ See Human and Financial Resources section in this chapter for an analysis of this and other funding.

used to monitor the target group's development in the phases.⁹² Inasmuch as individual phases and projects collect data on their population and its achievements, the organization as a whole does not keep close track of the numbers of children moving from one phase to the another, nor can it compare these to the number that move down a phase or leave the institution altogether (See Appendix 2: Interview Guideline for NGO Personnel, Question 24). As indicated in Table 2, the Program Director keeps track of children who were admitted and discharged in each phase throughout the year, but reasons for the latter are not documented⁹³ and duplication of the numbers in the record provide an inaccurate depiction of the total number served.

By monitoring the movement of all children throughout the program and linking them to the general and specific objectives of each phase, *Casa Alianza México* could gain greater insight into the methodology's effectiveness. This could not only provide a better outlook of the population's activities as a whole, but an indication of probable strengths and weaknesses of individual phases and houses.⁹⁴ Comparison of such results along a time line could also help link variations to internal changes and developments, and prompt appropriate action. However, the program must avoid placing undue weight on the numerical data itself and prevent it from being used as the primary form for monitoring achievements. When the development of the child is at stake, statistics should contribute to finding out the "whys" and "hows," rather than just the "whats."

In addition to the above statistics, the program monitors the development of the child through other actions and choices that the child makes. Like other interventions for

⁹² While this is only done individually through the dossier of each child, the organization does not record the movement of the children and youth, as a whole, along their programming.

⁹³ The second phase keeps a closer track of the discharged population's activities, but even these are not officially documented. Much of the breakdown of activities of the discharged population provided in the next section are based on estimates provided by the Program Director.

⁹⁴ For example, in 1996, Iztacalco had a lower discharge rate than the other group homes (17% compared to a 42% average; see Table 2). Its reasons for maintaining a relative stable population should be assessed so that other homes can gain from Iztacalco's experiences.

Table 2: Movement of the Population Within Phases, 1996

MOVEMENT PHASE		ADMITTED	REMAIN IN THIS PHASE	DISCHARGED/ LEFT PHASE	
				#	%
STREET PHASE		1273 (contacted)	1020	253 (entered Crisis Center)	80 (remain on the street)
CRISIS CENTER		480	90	390	81
TRANSITION	Total	192	48	144	75
	- Boys	104	24	80	77
	- Girls	88	24	64	73
GROUP HOMES	Total	121	70	51	42
	- Aragón	27	14	13	48
	- Tzitzlali	27	14	13	48
	- Balbuena	25	13	12	48
	- Iztacalco	18	15	3	17
	- Girls	24	14	10	42

Source: Program statistics provided by Program Coordinator, March 7, 1997, Casa Alianza Mexico, Mexico City. Calculations are mine.

children in difficult circumstances, *Casa Alianza México* advertises its successes by showing the number of children and youth who have achieved an important personal change in their lives, such as attendance in school, family reintegration or the transition to an independent life.⁹⁵ Thus, the impact of the methodological framework can be assessed by linking and comparing the children's significant achievements (or lack thereof) to the particular objectives of each phase and project. Some phases and projects keep track of these to help in their monitoring process (as is the case with Family Reintegration, Luna, and Ollín) while others only follow the development of individual children without compiling group statistics. A one time internal evaluation (Casa Alianza, 1996) was also used by the program to assess the impact of each phase on the population. Here again, it is recommended that group statistics be compiled on a regular basis by all phases to monitor more closely the results of their work.

⁹⁵ As concrete actions, these outputs are more easily quantifiable than other changes in the development of a child, those that can be best measured through psycho-social indicators.

The Four Phases

The Street Phase is perhaps the most successful of all the vertical projects. Unlike the street work popularized in Brazil -- where educators work almost exclusively on the streets to empower children and youth and design ways for them to live a better quality of life on the streets -- *Casa Alianza's* street educators encourage the young to choose an alternate option to that of the street. They are effective at informing the street population about the alternative lifestyle offered by their organization; according to the internal evaluation, 90% of the street children who have contact with the Street Phase were aware of the responsibilities and benefits gained if they were to enter *Casa Alianza México*. Although half of these did not want to leave the streets (Casa Alianza, 1996: 22), 20% of the population's Street Phase ultimately opt to enter *Casa Alianza México's* facilities (see Table 2).⁹⁶ As further explained below, it is very difficult for street children to leave their primary domain.

The six street educators cover a large cross section of the city, managing to work with over 1,200 children and youth per year. However, when compared to the macro scale of the phenomenon, *Casa Alianza's* Street Phase is limited, unable to reach all the street children's meeting points. The Street Phase is aware that, as an integral part of the methodology, it cannot reach many more children without further expanding *Casa Alianza's* facilities. The construction of the new Crisis Center, for example, was a direct result of the growing number of children arriving via the Street Phase. As seen in Table 2,

⁹⁶ The particular circumstance of each child determines the length of time a street educator has contact with the individual prior to his or her entrance to the second phase. A youth who has lived on the street for less than a month's time is often encouraged to enter the institution rights away, even if he or she is not yet familiar with the principles of *Casa Alianza*. This is done to prevent the child from furthering his or her process of *callejerización*. In contrast, those who have lived longer on the streets may interact with *Casa Alianza's* educators for various lengths of time, even up to three years, before the educators and the youth agree to his or her entering the Crisis Centre (Carlos).

it continues to be the main source of entry for the Center with over half of the children being admitted by street educators (253 out of 480).⁹⁷

The specific objectives of the Street Phase are reflected in the educators' everyday activities and results. Due to the street educator's counselling, for example, the majority of the children they have contact with (83%) are sensitive to the risks of the streets, although particular risk actions, including aggression and addiction, continue to be carried out by the young (Casa Alianza, 1996: 23-24). As seen in Chapter 4, many of the risk activities form part of the children's everyday strategy for survival and are difficult habits to break even when they are living in a safe environment. For greater impact results, it is recommended that the phase increase awareness of the consequences in health-related risk activities (drugs, sexuality and HIV/AIDS) and provide education on children's rights. This could be done in part through frequent, small workshops offered on the streets, rather than the current practice of offering an occasional workshop at the Crisis Center. This has the potential to reach more children in a less threatening environment.

As expected, the first institutional phase, the Crisis Center, has the highest discharge rate at 81% (see Table 2). The Program Director estimates that the overwhelming majority of the Crisis Center population returns to the streets (over 60%), the remainder being transferred to other institutions or reintegrated into their families. Although some of the children who leave the Crisis Center eventually return (no statistics are available), the phase has a challenging task; it is very difficult to encourage street children to become involved with and remain in an institutional setting. Many street-related factors pull children back to their accustomed domain: drug addiction; easy access to immediate money; girls wanting to rejoin their partners; relative freedom; etc. Furthermore, the institution itself cannot respond to the demands of every child: its methodology, philosophy and principles may not suit every individual (Banda, March 7,

⁹⁷ The rest of the population arrives either on their own, are brought in by concerned individuals or are transferred from other organizations.

1997).⁹⁸ Children who eventually remain in *Casa Alianza México* are generally looking for guidance provided in an organized and strict environment.

Casa Alianza México is a well structured and methodical institution, factors that are particularly visible in the Crisis Center. The effective use of its five core principles as the underlying structure across all facets of the program exemplifies this. They are highlighted in each of the individual projects' written material, utilized and enforced by the staff and are familiar to the young.⁹⁹ For example, the principle of structure is enforced early and appears to have an impact on its population. An educator at the Crisis Center explained that every activity within the Center has a purpose and structure. In this crucial phase, the children learn about responsibility and acquiring better habits, particularly those relating to health, cleanliness and respect towards others. They learn to appreciate the difference between the cleanliness in the Center to that of the street, or even of other organizations. Two of the most commonly stated reasons for return given by those who left and re-entered *Casa Alianza México* are its cleanliness and strictness.¹⁰⁰ As one youth explained:

"The second time I came to *Casa Alianza* I entered with a friend. [I came back] because I like the home, I like the people. It is more calm, it is more organized.... I needed tranquillity, to get along well with the other *chavos*, to be able to get together, talk, go to mass...." (Alex; institutional street child explaining his reasons for returning to *Casa Alianza* after experiencing several other organizations)

⁹⁸ Unfortunately, a miss-match between the child and *Casa Alianza* is not always identified early enough by the staff to prevent his or her returning to the streets and to plan his or her transference to other organizations. In a minority of cases, children and youth continue along their developmental process in *Casa Alianza México*, and may be in the third and fourth phases of the institution when a miss-match is identified and transfers are arranged.

⁹⁹ The residents are not only aware of the principles, which are posted visibly across prominent areas of the houses, but many know them by heart and understand the reasons for their existence. While they may not consistently obey or act on them, the children and youth seem to comprehend their message and importance.

¹⁰⁰ One counsellor displayed another example of a principle being enforced. Outside of the organization he bumped into a girl who had been hurt and bruised by other street children. Due to her previous negative interactions while in the organization, she is no longer allowed to return. Nevertheless, given her precarious condition, she was invited to receive medical attention and remain temporarily under *Casa Alianza México*'s care until another program could be found for her (Miguel). The principle of urgency overtook all other considerations.

As demonstrated later, the same strict emphasis on structure that draws some children has also compromised the individual development of others. The Crisis Center, more than other phases, needs to adopt a more child-centred approach with its population.¹⁰¹

Notwithstanding the high turnover, it is apparent that the Crisis Center population is working towards overcoming their street crisis and regaining stability (the phase's objectives). The children learn and/or re-learn basic norms of conduct through interaction with others, governed by a strict, daily timetable full of activities. As indicated in the internal evaluation and confirmed through personal interviews, the young enjoy being in the Center, participate in most activities and have established close bonds and respectful relationships with peers and staff members. The majority gain respect for their bodies, develop hygiene habits and, with some reluctance, carry out their cleaning duties (Casa Alianza, 1996: 25-27). Although half continue to communicate through violent means, many recognize these as negative aspects that they want to change. All eight interviewees from the Crisis Center would recommend or have recommended *Casa Alianza* to peers who are on the street, indicating that the street is not a place for children to live in. They feel the organization has helped them the most in combating their drug addiction and aggressive behaviour and in gaining greater respect towards themselves and others.

To better combat drug addiction, *Casa Alianza* opened an internal drug rehabilitation pilot project in 1996 that receives most of its population from the Crisis Center. In its first six months, Ollín (meaning "change" in the Nahuatl language) had rehabilitated 10 of the 51 participants in the project. Participants are actively involved in an intensive drug rehabilitation that simultaneously addresses various developmental areas through health and nutrition, education, arts and sports activities and individual and group therapy. In its short history, the project received high praise from its participants, staff

¹⁰¹ See the section on Institutional Rigidity and a Child Centred Approach below.

and phase counsellors. They expected that after its first trial year, a review would recommend its expansion through personnel, physical space and funding.¹⁰²

From a purely quantitative aspect, it appears that the third phase of the program is successful at overcoming the population's street crisis. As shown in Table 2, a high proportion (75%) of the children admitted to Transition in 1996 left the phase. Unlike the Crisis Center, however, the Program Coordinator estimates that only a small percentage of those discharged actually return to the street (an average of one per month). The majority move on to the next phase, while the rest are either transferred to other institutions or reintegrated with their families.

The vast majority of the Transition residents are also initiating a re-socialization process through activities outside of the institution's premises. As shown in Table 3, all Transition residents are enrolled in school and most (83%) are in vocational training courses. Furthermore, compared to the previous phase, the majority of the population feel strong group integration, accept limits to their behaviour and carry out household tasks with little complaint (Casa Alianza, 1996: 28-30). But despite high schooling and vocational training attendance rates, many have to be pushed or constantly reminded to go or fully participate in their new responsibilities. As the name of the phase indicates, the young are undergoing a transition, re-learning to handle their independence and regaining their self-esteem. Transition counsellors feel that the phase's objectives are largely met, but counsellors from the last phase disagree. They complain that Transition residents are often transferred too early to the Group Homes; some Transition "graduates" fall short of the expected developmental attitudes and skills supposedly assumed upon entering the Group Homes.

¹⁰² Some of the young requiring a more intense rehabilitation process are directed to other drug rehabilitation centres throughout the city. The rest of *Casa Alianza's* population participates in weekly Ollin workshops on addiction and prevention and receive individual support from their counsellors and psychologists. Ollin also encourages youth to participate in community work, either within the premises of *Casa Alianza* or with the Red Cross (Carlos and Linda).

Table 3: A Cross Section of the Population's Activities in the Last Three Phases, February/March 1997

PHASE		TOTAL (#)	ACTIVITIES (#)		
			SCHOOL	VOCATIONAL TRAINING	WORK
CRISIS CENTER		68	3	0	0
TRANSITION	Total	42	42	35	1
	- Boys	19	19	17	0
	- Girls	23	23	18	1
GROUP HOMES	Total	67	63	39	7
	- Boys	53	49	28	7
	- Girls	14	14	11	0
TOTAL		177	108	74	8

Source: Statistics provided by Program Coordinator, March 7, 1997, and Psychology and Social Work internal document, February 1997, Casa Alianza Mexico, Mexico City.¹⁰³

Group Home residents are supposed to be stable and responsible (partly reflected through regular attendance in school, vocational courses and sports activities), have good behaviour (without physical or verbal aggression), respect for their bodies and solid social skills. Part of the phase's objectives are to reinforce the developmental skills learned in previous phases while further developing their emotional stability and sense of independence.¹⁰⁴ If the children's significant achievements were the only elements measured, one could conclude that the phase is fairly successful at meeting its objectives. As expected, the last phase of *Casa Alianza México* has the lowest discharge rate, at 42% (see Table 2). According to the Program Director, most children leave the Group Homes to fulfill the phase's objective: about half are reintegrated with their families and a sixth go on to live independently. The rest either are transferred to other institutions¹⁰⁵ or return

¹⁰³ Most of these statistics were compiled by Psychology and Social Work for the purpose of providing the Education Secretariat with an update on the children transferred to *Casa Alianza México* from the former public institutions. A complementary document containing data on the rest of *Casa Alianza*'s population was used to complete this table. With the exception of the 1996 internal evaluation, the organization itself does not regularly compile such data for their own monitoring purposes.

¹⁰⁴ As *Casa Alianza México*'s director indicated, Group Home residents are supposed to be stable and even better off than other lower-middle class children who live with their families (Capellán, February 20, 1997).

¹⁰⁵ In this last phase, some of the older residents are transferred to other programs that specifically help youth in their transition to an independent life. One of the few is *Fraile Bartolomé de las Casas* where youth

to the Transition phase or to the street. Furthermore, school enrolment ratios are high at 94% with the remainder being youth who work or are enrolled in other full-time activities. Sixty-seven percent of the population are also either enrolled in a vocational training course or working (see Table 3). Enrolment in day-long school programs prevents many of the remaining from participating in vocational courses.

Notwithstanding these encouraging numbers, many of the young do not fully attend to their household and personal responsibilities and perform poorly in their social activities. Counsellors concurred that many of those transferred to the Group Homes are not yet ready to be in this final phase: they continue to skip school, vocational classes and work; they ignore their personal hygiene and communicate through violent behaviour. One counsellor estimated that as many as 40% of the youth in his Group Home require constant reminders and must be pressed to carry out their daily responsibilities. According to the internal evaluation, half of the residents are also afraid to make important decisions (Casa Alianza, 1996: 31-32), an ironic turn of events given their former independence when living on the street.

The internal evaluation itself also questioned the capacity of the youth to continue on to an independent life after turning 18. As shown in Table 3, only a small percentage of the population works (10%) and some only do so for a short period prior to leaving the organization. It is apparent that the concept of work is only endorsed when the youth is close to terminating his or her stay in *Casa Alianza*. Limited work experience and life

savings,¹⁰⁶ compounded by poor developmental skills, seriously impair the youth's capacity to successfully reintegrate into society. One counsellor expressed his frustration: "[Some] leave at 18 years of age and do not know how to do a thing; it does not take very long for them to fall into prison... [where] they become contaminated." (Alfonzo)

It should be noted that counsellors do see success on an individual basis. They work with children and youth who have matured and are carrying out the expected goals of the phase, have an interest towards their family and want to be reintegrated to society. As a proud Group Home resident expressed:

"[*Casa Alianza*] has helped me the most in school. I used to be very behind [in school] and now I am doing very well. It has also helped me with courses, such as computers. I have come out with diplomas." (Manuel)

Family Reintegration: Life Options After *Casa Alianza*

The family reintegration project is an integral part of the methodology and performs one of the organization's mission statement: to reunite children with their families. In addition, and according to the project's Plan of Action,¹⁰⁷ the project helps the youth's transition to an independent life or his or her channeling to another institution and handles other child-family-related issues, such as following up on requests of family members who come to the organization in hope of finding their child.

Most of the time and resources are geared towards establishing ties between the youth and his or her family and facilitating the process of family reunification. The

are immersed in special vocational training courses, such as the popular *La Semilla* project that trains bakers, pastry cooks and confectioners. In conducting such transfers, *Casa Alianza* must be careful of keeping at the forefront the best interests of the child (transfers for the primary purpose of helping a youth become independent) rather than those of the institution (strict adherence to *Casa Alianza's* age restriction, giving up on a troublemaker, etc).

¹⁰⁶ The organization encourages the youth to save from the moment he or she begins to work. Eighty% of the youth's earnings are placed in savings by *Casa Alianza* and the rest is used for personal spending. The youth are given promissory notes to keep count of their savings.

¹⁰⁷ The methods for analyzing family relations and the possibility for reintegration were created through a highly participatory review and analysis. The results, a Plan of Action, lays out a structure that enables to plan and respond to the needs and necessities of family contact for the children and youth. The three phase Plan of Action consists of: (1) investigation, where information provided by the youth and his or her family is gathered; (2) diagnosis, where the family's situation is detected and evaluated in order to diagnose appropriate steps and; (3) plan of treatment or action (*Casa Alianza*, March 1996a).

primary focus is to ultimately enable the child to return and reintegrate successfully with his or her family (see Appendix 3 for objective). The project staff begin their work from the moment a child or youth requests to have contact with his or her family or when family contact is necessary for obtaining official documents vital to the continuation of the child's development (such as birth certificates and school documentation). Following the project's Plan of Action, the staff works with the child and the family to determine if conditions for family reunification are present, such as extent of abuse in the family, if any, and acceptance of youth's reintegration by the majority of the family members. The request, interest and perseverance of the young is usually the main determinant of the length and results of reintegration.

Due to the horizontal nature of the project, children from all phases can simultaneously be involved with the family reunification team, though only limited requests come from the first phase. Potentially, close to 800 children and youth who pass through the last three phases of *Casa Alianza* per year -- 787 in 1995 and 793 in 1996 (Banda, March 7, 1997) -- should have access to the project if demanded. However, the project is limited by the number of staff available. Each member is responsible for serving a maximum of 60 children and youth and their respective families. Thus, during the last three available years, 1994, 1995 and 1996, only a total of approximately 240, 300 and 360 families were attended to respectively, the increment due to a new staff member per year (Aida). Despite the new personnel, the family reintegration project continues to be understaffed.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ The author agrees with an external consultant and a staff members' opinion that the project needs to expand in personnel (Alemani, March 4, 1998 and Miguel). In attempting to contain the demand of children asking to re-establish contact with their families, the available staff find themselves stretching their time and energy with more children and youth than they ideally want to counsel. At any time, each staff member is responsible of foreseeing the development of family ties, reunification and transition to an independent life of approximately 40 to 60 children and their families. In practical terms, this work includes spending time for individual counseling with the child, establishing and following up contact with families through telephone calls, personal visits at their residences (local and state) and at the *Casa Alianza* offices, monitoring and evaluating the dynamics of the relationships and following up on reunifications. The

Out of those 300 and 360 families and children attended to in 1995 and 1996, a total of 98 and 92 children and youth respectively were either reintegrated to their families or helped to lead an independent life. They represent approximately 25 to 33% of all the children and youth served by the family reintegration project and 11 to 12% of all children in the last three phases of *Casa Alianza*. The majority of these were children reintegrated with their families (Aida). However, not all were able to maintain continuity in their chosen life option. As Table 4 indicates, 77% of those who were reintegrated with their families or helped establish an independent life in 1996 succeeded in continuing to follow their life option throughout the year. The remainder either chose to return to *Casa Alianza* (14%) or to the streets (9%). While these statistics only represent one year, the percentages of other years are similar (Aida).

Table 4: Life Options Pursued with the Help of Family Reunification, 1996

CONTINUITY	LIFE OPTIONS					
	FAMILY REINTEGRATION		LIVING INDEPENDENTLY		COMBINED TOTAL	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
TOTAL	86	100	6	100	92	100
WITHIN THE YEAR:						
continue at home/ live independently	67	78	4	67	71	77
returned to <i>Casa Alianza</i>	12	14	1	17	13	14
returned to the streets	7	8	1	17	8	9

Source: Family Reintegration statistics provided by Project Coordinator, March 6, 1997, Casa Alianza Mexico, Mexico City. Calculations are mine.

The family reintegration project of *Casa Alianza* is highly regarded by the NGO community of Mexico (Alemani, March 4, 1998). A numerical comparison with a similar methodological intervention, the family ties program of *Visión Mundial de México*, for example, indicate *Casa Alianza's* family reintegration team's success at physical

individual time spent by a counsellor on each child and his or her respective family is unavoidably undermined by the heavy load.

reunifications.¹⁰⁹ Comparisons of continuity or success of reintegrations (long term stability within the home) cannot be drawn with *Visión Mundial*, which is lacking statistics. But considering the difficult process of child-family re-adaptation, a 77 overall percentage of stability -- 78% continue to live at home and 67% continue to live independently within the year in 1996 (see Table 4) -- is a promising ratio.¹¹⁰ Many of the original expulsion factors, including extreme poverty, violence and poor communication, continue or resurface and once again may push the child out of his or her home. Nevertheless, room for improvement remains, particularly in follow-up procedures. The project has a comprehensive follow-up methodology that includes periodic visits by staff¹¹¹ and contact with and referral to local community organizations (individual or group psychology, substance-abuse therapy or other type of self-help groups)(Casa Alianza, March 1996a: 11-12). But due to understaffing and a poor administrative policy, in practice, visitations are not conducted as often as the staff deems necessary. Since a new case is assigned to a counsellor the moment a child under his or her care leaves *Casa Alianza's* facilities, the child automatically becomes low priority.

¹⁰⁹ Keeping in mind that programs that are compatible with the methodology of *Casa Alianza* do not necessarily monitor the same activities or advancements of their population, and acknowledging the existence of other factors that might affect percentage differences, some comparisons are still possible. For example, *Visión Mundial de México*, a pilot program in Mexico City and a subsidiary of the international NGO World Vision, has a similar phase-oriented methodology and includes a horizontal project geared at establishing links with the family. Of the total 265 children that *Visión Mundial* attended through the non-street tertiary work in 1995, 28 children, or approximately 11%, established some kind of contact with their families (*Visión Mundial*, 1995: 7, 13-14) and only three, or just over 1%, were physically reunited with their families. This percentage is significantly lower than *Casa Alianza's* 86 reintegrations representing almost 11% of its total population (793) in 1996.

¹¹⁰ It should be noted that an inefficient follow-up raises concerns of inflated statistics. For example, the project can lose touch with the reintegrated youth but assumes that he or she remains in the home. Or, for those whose reintegration failed, returned to *Casa Alianza* and once again returned home, the project records this as two reintegrations in the year (Miguel). Closer follow-up and monitoring should help provide more accurate information.

¹¹¹ Visits could be as scarce as one per several months or as frequent as three times per week and should last anywhere from one to three years for reintegration and two to three years for independent life (*Casa Alianza*, March 1996a: 11 and Carlos). The location of the family's home (close to the organization, on the other side of town or in another state) and the youth's wishes for continuity or lack thereof are main determinants of visitations' length and frequency (Miguel).

Increased personnel and official inclusion of all children could better look after the best interests of the recently reintegrated or independent child.¹¹²

Considering the difficulties of family reintegration and despite the relative success in the area, the project should question if family reintegration is in itself in the best interest of every child. Project members admit that this goal does not work for every individual nor should it be the option for each case. Albeit considered in the Plan of Action, other alternatives are often interpreted as "failed options" to reintegration and given less emphasis. Two project areas requiring greater attention are overcoming the family crisis and transition to an independent life.

A "Plan of Action" to overcome family related issues that prevent a child's successful development must be followed up in every case, even when family reintegration does not seem like a possible alternative. The projects need to officially recognize the importance of counselling the child (and the family if applicable) to help him or her accept and/or respect the family's actions and continue on their respective life-paths. Although most staff activities already work towards that goal, official documentation and methodology continue to stress family reintegration as the primary objective. It is therefore recommended that the project re-adapt by shifting the general objective from physical reintegration to that of emotional reconciliation for the primary purpose of helping the young overcome their family crisis and carry on with their life options, whatever those may be. Family reunification, an activity that the project has

¹¹² One counsellor explained that the Project Coordinator was going to ask of Coordination for one more staff member. While the counsellor was content with any additional help, he suggested that more than one individual, perhaps two or even three, are necessary to properly staff the entire project (Miguel). The Casa Alianza Family Reintegration project in Honduras, for example, is able to carry out weekly visits to reintegrated families because the city is relatively small (Carlos). The project in Mexico City then needs to adapt in staff size to be able to properly carry out its goal, rather than submit to the limitations of a standardized methodology.

experience with and excels at, should continue to be endorsed but as an alternate and possible result of the new general objective.¹¹³

Consequently, the project's success should be measured not just by the number of physical reintegrations, but by the children's ability to overcome their family crisis. The tools are already in place: a dossier which includes various data such as characteristics of the child and family members; a "familiogram" filled out by the entire family; a "chronological sheet" where all contacts between the child and the family are recorded; and daily meetings where salient individual cases are discussed.¹¹⁴ Through these, the project can establish indicators to systematically measure and monitor the child's development, identity and acceptance towards the family and to enable the project to follow-up on the child's actions accordingly.¹¹⁵ Statistics should indicate both the child's actual life options and the child's development in overcoming the family crisis.

Helping the youth become independent, the project's fourth specific objective, is a second area in need of attention. Despite the importance *Casa Alianza México* places on having the "necessary tools and abilities to affront an independent life" (the organization's main objective), the last stages of the process are not systematically planned. Official documentation makes little reference of procedures for a smooth transition and

¹¹³ *Casa Alianza* could learn from the experiences of other programs who endorse this type of family work, such as that of *Visión Mundial de México*. The "Family Orientation" goal is to: "support the restoration of the street child, influencing his family, building on his integration, with the purpose of attaining the reconciliation of both (child-family), so that they may be capable of bettering their lifestyle, strengthen their faith and their values" (*Visión Mundial*, 1995: 6). Reconciliation of and re-establishing family ties may be physical (return to the family home) or emotional (healthy relationship, reconciliation and pardon) (*Visión Mundial*, 1995:14), the onus being on bettering the lifestyle of the child enabling him or her to carry on successfully, alone or with the family. It is unknown what type of indicators, if any, the "Family Orientation" project uses to measure the youth's development with respect to the family. The Final Report (1995: 14) only shows the number of children who have contact with their families, indicating what type of contact exists.

¹¹⁴ The Family Reintegration project of *Casa Alianza* is recognized by Thais (a private consulting firm specializing in children in difficult circumstances) as being a highly integrated team. Their consistent collaborate work style should facilitate the methodological and practical adjustment towards the suggested new objective.

¹¹⁵ The indicators could measure, for example, the level of acceptance towards the family following telephone communication or personal visits, and where the family is envisioned in the contemplated life options of the youth.

adjustment. In practice, the family reintegration team helps the young through the search of a guest room and a job (if not yet found by the time they turn 18), filing documentation on their behalf, teaching them budget management skills and following up on their development. But many youth do not have the necessary skills to successfully make it on their own. Leaving the job search and budget management workshops as last minute preparations, and thus delegating them to the family reintegration project, further undermine their chances. Suggestions for increased child participation in the social work project will remove some of the burdens presently placed on the family reintegration project. Clear definitions and distinctions of tasks between project can also prove helpful.

Psychology and Social Work

The psychologists and social workers are integrated to the four vertical phases and work closely with the counsellors, providing additional health, emotional, social, recreational and pedagogic support to the population. Upon entry to the institution, the child is assigned a psychologist and a social worker who provide individual and continuous support to the child throughout his or her stay in *Casa Alianza*.¹¹⁶ Four social workers and five psychologists work with approximately 50 children each.

Individual psychological therapy is provided upon the advice of the child's therapist or counsellor, with Crisis Center residents receiving the most counselling. The psychology team also provides group therapy to the majority of the Crisis Center population and weekly sexual education workshops to most *Casa Alianza* residents. *Casa Alianza's* therapy is informal, adapting through experience to the needs of street children. Emphasis is placed on establishing a friendship with the children as a way to gain their trust and begin working on their street crisis. Furthermore, *Casa Alianza* has

¹¹⁶ Originally, each phase was supervised by its own set of psychologist and social worker, thus forcing children to become acquainted with an entire new staff as they moved up a phase. This set up broke up close child-staff relations and compromised program effectiveness.

established ties with various public centers where children requiring more specialized attention are transferred.

Albeit being one of the few organizations with an internal, specialized team, *Casa Alianza's* psychologists cannot provide proper and sufficient counselling to all children. Complaints emerged about the psychologists' inappropriate knowledge of street child issues, resistance to transferring children to outside specialty centers and few and cancelled appointments. Notwithstanding these complaints, which are directly related to understaffing (see Human Resources section below), the psychology pilot project could attempt to improve its effectiveness through increased specialized training courses and knowledge-exchange workshops with counsellors. As it gains more experience and confidence, the team will be better able to identify those cases it can treat from those requiring specialized outside attention. Setting up internal guidelines for counselling procedures could also be helpful.

The social work team monitors phase program activities, ensuring the children and counsellors are working toward program objectives and following closely the individual *plan de vida* of their assigned children. In their weekly visits to the homes, the social workers have shown continuity and a high degree of responsibility, despite their also being understaffed. The social workers also supervise the socialization process of the children, planning for and coordinating their three main activities: sports and recreation; school and; vocational training. As indicated in Table 3, they are very efficient in ensuring that the population is enrolled in their respected activities, but are not able to ensure their full participation. Institutionalization and limited child participation are partly to blame.

Drawbacks of an Institution

Most of the difficulties displayed by Group Home residents have accumulated throughout the entire educational process and become most apparent once they reach the final phases. The institutionalization process of *Casa Alianza* is partly responsible.

Both in theory and in practice, *Casa Alianza México* gives its population contradictory messages concerning their role and responsibilities within the institution and once they leave it. On the one hand, the organization pushes the child to develop skills and abilities to make important decisions and prepare towards a healthy, independent life. On the other hand, in the process of providing comfort and security, some staff members pamper the child. The child has to do relatively little in exchange for the "unconditional love, protection and safeguard" purported by *Casa Alianza's* mission statement. Such paternalistic attitudes prevent the child from developing these vital life skills. The institutionalized street child often acquires such characteristics as apathy and weak working values. Over-dependency on the institution causes the child to lose incentive to make it on his or her own. One counsellor described this well by saying that *Casa Alianza* "places the child in a bubble." (Alfonzo)

Similar concerns were raised over the child's detachment from society in general and from his or her socio-economic background in particular. When street children are introduced to and become part of *Casa Alianza*, they learn about and become accustomed to a higher standard of living most had never experienced. The organization's philosophy preventing children from working on the street and the practice of delaying work itself until they almost leave the organization exemplify this.¹¹⁷ In the words of a counsellor, "[in the process of] learning the easy life and adopting a bourgeoisie lifestyle, some children become ashamed of their poverty ... learning to reject their roots, including their family." (Alfonzo)

Given the institutionalized nature of the program, the root of these problems cannot altogether disappear. But modified approaches, actions and attitudes by the organization and its staff can go a long way in addressing some of these concerns. Such actions and

¹¹⁷ There have also been some cases where the Family Reunification team has refused to reunite a child with his or her family specifically because of fear that their extreme poverty will force the child to leave the family again. This is a very sensitive issue in itself, but more so when considering that *Casa Alianza* has partly contributed to the child's possible inability to adapt and embrace his or her origins.

attitudes should include greater participation of children and youth and a child-centred, rather than institutional approach. These interrelated issues are discussed below.

Participation of Children and Youth

Active participation of children and youth in *Casa Alianza México* is quite limited. They are not involved in the development of program objectives and methodology, a pedagogical role better felt left to expert adults. The young are also excluded from the formal decision-making structure for planning and reviewing phase level activities.¹¹⁸ While the organization encourages its population to be the vehicles for promoting their own change, the role of the child is limited to his or her preoccupation with building an individual *plan de vida*. But even here the young have restricted choices. As one counsellor explained:

"[They] are not involved in major programming; everything is imposed on them; they do not decide [for themselves].... The project directors and Coordination decide [on their behalf]." (Estela)

Where participation does take place, it occurs primarily at the inter-house activity level. Counsellors indicated various degrees of child participation, ranging from asking the young if they enjoyed the activities planned by the counsellors, to youth suggesting and designing activities. Their input tends to increase along the developmental phases (with the exemption of the street phase) and is largely dependent on the particular counsellor's desire and ability to promote participation. For example, Crisis Center activities are largely programmed by the counsellors and Coordination, though the young are occasionally asked for input. Street educators, on the other hand, encourage more involvement by the young, though the results are not necessarily positive:

¹¹⁸ For example, when answering how youth are involved in carrying out program activities (see question 49), assigned activities, such as cleaning, was the example provided by a Coordination member (Carlos). If the young have special concerns, they are conveyed through their counsellors or social workers to Coordination. Theoretically, they also have access to their Coordinator and Program Coordinator when the latter visit the homes and can make a special appointment to see the Director. These meetings, however, are not easily arranged and primarily address concerns of the youth's personal *plan de vida*.

"We attempt for them to propose things [activities] but the truth is that, if you do not rouse them, they will remain there [sleeping] all day. And when they are roused we are open to carrying out activities that they want to do. [But] we try to avoid street related activities [and encourage more educational games]." (Tomás)

Group Home residents are more responsive. The young may suggest outings to museums, the movies or sporting events, rent movies with the supervision of the counsellor and participate in spontaneous pick-up games. However, it is not required nor is it procedure to instruct the counsellors to promote child participation. The youth's interest and ability to propose activities, extent of group interaction, and overall success of their participation is largely dependent on the house dynamics encouraged by the individual counsellor.

The organizational structure of *Casa Alianza México* is guilty of ignoring the potential benefits that child participation can have on the actors and on the project itself. It fails to consider that the young people's *plan de vida* includes their present living arrangements, programs and activities and how the young believe these can be beneficial to their future. Increased child participation in the vocational training/work project, for example, could better achieve the organization's objectives of the young's successful socialization and transition to an independent life.

The vocational training/work project is being undermined by a combination of factors, including limited child participation, a restricted range of vocational and employment placements and limited linkage to the job market. The social work team relies heavily on vocational training courses offered by local government community centers. Although cost efficient -- an agreement between the local governments and *Casa Alianza* allow for a minimal fee per student -- the courses available to *Casa Alianza* residents are restricted according to geographical areas and to their particular schedule. Thus, as a Group Home resident explained, the young are often pressured into becoming involved in set activities that may not be of their choosing:

"I wanted the vocational course of silk-screen printing and they [social workers] would not give it to me so I switched workshops to swimming, [but] only after two months of waiting." (Pablo)

Related to this problem is the children's limited opportunity to participate in the search for their placement.¹¹⁹ They not only lose the opportunity to search for an appropriate match, but to directly learn about their interests, job hunting skills and insights about the importance of learning a trade or of holding down a job. Under the present set up, it should not be surprising that the young often skip their classes.

By becoming actively involved in the entire vocational/work related project -- from discussing the importance of work to finding and monitoring their vocational and job activities -- the young can gain greater appreciation of their activities; their participation and enthusiasm are prone to be more positive and long-lasting when they invest time and energy to devise and plan their own affairs. For example, rather than being lectured by the staff about the significance of learning a trade, the young should be provided with, and encouraged to obtain and make use of greater and ongoing access to information relating to employment issues (the job market, entrepreneurial skills, unemployment, etc.).¹²⁰ Those positive qualities that the child used while on the street -- dexterity for decision-making and leadership, survival and informal vocational skills, for example -- should be developed, rather than ignored or contained. Workshops can encourage youth to speak about their personal experiences regarding employment (Luis). Inviting *Casa Alianza* "graduates" to speak to their younger peers about their unique experiences, challenges and

¹¹⁹ As one counsellor explained, when a child is moved up from the Crisis Centre to the Transition Home, he or she "learns" from the social workers about the available vocational courses (Ramona).

¹²⁰ Increased access to contemporary information on other key topics (alcoholism, drug addiction, sexual education, etc.) is also required to encourage youth mobilization in and sensitization of other program areas. For example, sexual education workshops offered by the psychology and HIV/AIDS projects teach the population safe sex alternatives. However, there were concerns that workshops are conducted without sufficient frequency or in-depth discussion to suit the needs of the active population. Their interest in the topic is scant. The young must be directly consulted to enable them and the staff to jointly develop workshops and other activities that better reflect the needs of the residents. The suggestion of an "activity mural" located in each home, where the young can write, draw and display collected material on the topic (Miguel), could prove to be a creative and accessible method for the young to express their anxieties, concerns and awareness of sexuality.

achievements (Alfonzo) can also provide first hand accounts of what the youth can expect once on their own and of the skills and aptitudes required for independent living.

Together with the social workers, the youth should search the community, including neighbourhood organizations and local schools, to find the best possible placement. If no course is offered at the local centers, apprenticeship is an alternative.¹²¹ Similar steps should be taken to find work placements, especially when opportunities for employment can be the direct result of an apprenticeship or other innovative skills' development projects. To allow for a longer experimentation, adaptation and experience period (and for greater savings), work placements should also be planned well in advance of the youth's 18th birthday. It is important to note that Covenant House's constitution prohibits any income-generating activities for the purpose of funding (Capellín, March 7, 1997). Thus, community networking becomes more critical for an organization that cannot have any workshops within its facilities. Such pro-active research will require the social work team to be more flexible and involved with and knowledgeable about the local community where the child is based.¹²² It also requires their accepting the youth as important actors in the project. Changing the staff's perception of the young so that they (and the young) may view the population (and themselves) as active participants in their own development is perhaps the most challenging process.¹²³

¹²¹ In order to provide a sense of achievement for the young and to ensure their acquired skills are officially recognized, it is imperative that such schemes offer certificates and become linked with government and/or employers agencies. A possible problem could arise, however, with entrepreneurial training and employment related set-ups that include the informal sector. *Casa Alianza's* philosophy does not envision the child working in the streets at all and it is unknown to what extent *Casa Alianza* links street work with informal sector activities. It is suggested that the social work team, together with the youth, decide every possible vocational training/employment venture individually, keeping in mind the best interests of the child and his or her reincorporation to society. *Casa Alianza* should not judge on behalf of the young what activities are "allowed," but rather discuss with them the opportunities and drawbacks of those placements being considered. In this aspect, the organization could learn from *Casa Ecuador*.

¹²² By establishing links with the surrounding community, the organization is simultaneously opening a communication line to educate the community about street children and child rights.

¹²³ Only by witnessing the benefits of child participation will some members of the institution be willing to accede to give the young more power. Changing adult perceptions about what children are capable of doing can be a slow process.

Various counsellors suggest that, if prompted, the majority of children do participate and become actively involved in house-planning activities. To truly make the organizations theirs, the population needs to be included in its formal decision-making structure and project planning; the young must be given the opportunity and tools to discuss issues they consider important, including those concerning the running of the institution. Only through empowerment can *Casa Alianza's* principle of option can be carried out to its fullest potential.

Institutional Rigidity and a Child-Centred Approach

While not all children naturally progress and "fit" equally within each phase and home, a flexible and child-centred structure should allow room for the unique development of each child. However, *Casa Alianza México's* methodology is itself overly rigid in some cases, while in others its potential for flexibility is undermined by the adults running it. An institutional-oriented, rather than child-centred approach is standardizing the children and making it impossible for them to be treated as individuals.¹²⁴ It often forces children to substantially adapt and mold to their new settings at the expense of their development and, in some cases, their rights. Many have become strongly discouraged, had major personal setbacks or simply chose to abandon the institution all together.

The Crisis Center phase, in particular, could gain from applying a greater child-centred approach. Due to the volatility and instability of the Crisis Center population, their contact with society is kept to a minimum. Most of the children's therapeutic, psychological and other pedagogic activities take place within the physical confines of the Center. Basic education and literacy skills are provided in a limited manner. School, sports and/or vocational training outside of the institution is mostly offered to children and youth who are completing their three-month progress within the Center and are preparing

¹²⁴ This was a significant concern raised by various counsellors. One in particular voiced her frustration of Coordination treating the young as "puppets," rather than as "individual thinking persons" (Estela).

for the next phase.¹²⁵ Rarely are others who have expressed such interests granted permission to attend school or other courses and training outside of the institution.

While many children may benefit from this seclusionary approach, some strongly disapprove of it. Esmeralda was very frustrated that she could not go to school until she moved up to the next phase, which could only be done by complying with the structure of and three-month timeframe set by the institution. Another youth, eager to attend school or a vocational course, complained that "with the time I'm losing I could [be] learning lots of stuff." (Julio). To partly ease his frustration, he joined the Ollín project in the daytime. Although he is not addicted to drugs, he finds Ollín's activities to be much more intense, creative and school-oriented than the Crisis Center's.¹²⁶ A Crisis Center counsellor strongly encouraged education and training outside the institutional setting, explaining that total seclusion from society may not be the best alternative for every child in the second phase. This is especially so if they are being denied their right to education.

That a mini-school within this phase is being contemplated should be commended. (Ramona). If created, the informal education project should focus on basic education, teaching and reinforcing literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills that directly relate to the children's reality. It would also have to be flexible enough to address the various developmental levels of the Crisis Center population. But in and of itself, the school project cannot be a substitute for the formal education courses offered by the state system and demanded by mature Crisis residents. The individual child should be given the benefit of the doubt concerning his or her readiness to interact outside of the institution.

The Crisis Center is made up of a mosaic of children with different ages, backgrounds, experiences, length of time having spent on the streets, levels of drug

¹²⁵ As shown in Table 3, in February 1997, only three Crisis Centre residents were enrolled in school. All three were being prepared for their transition to the next phase.

¹²⁶ Related concerns raised by Crisis Centre residents is boredom, disinterest in the general activities, and dislike for the violent and disrespectful behaviour of some residents towards others or towards the educators.

addiction, etc. This phase must attempt to adapt itself and be more open to responding to the mixed group and the children's individual needs, not vice versa. Children who are bored and distracted by others' disruptive behaviour should be stimulated by alternate and more appropriate activities, rather than risk their eventually adopting such a behaviour or abandoning the program altogether. To work with a more child-centred and participatory approach, it is suggested that the criteria for dividing working groups at the Crisis Center should go beyond age and sex to include an assessment of maturity and developmental level of each individual child. Furthermore, *Casa Alianza México* should contemplate granting Crisis Center residents greater access to outside facilities and do away with the strict three-month Crisis period to fast track some children to the next phase. These decisions, of course, must be made in consultation with the young.

A more child-centred and participatory approach is also required when a child is moved from one facility to another.¹²⁷ There are concerns that premature moves and frequent transfers do not always take place with the best interests of the child in mind.

Numerous individuals -- the psychology and social work team, Coordination and counsellors -- are responsible for deciding a child's readiness for the next phase or why his transfer to another Group Home. However, their opinions, leverage and reasons for transference vary and do not always conform with a child's capacity to undertake the responsibilities of the new phase. For example, a possible reason for phase mobility, according to counsellors, is the emotional closeness of the decision-maker and the child; distorting their judgment of the child's maturity. Group Home counsellors also complain of transfers being carried out despite their opinion and of often being left out of the decision-making process. Decisions may be carried out by biased individual personnel and/or for administrative motives -- not for the child's best interests. It should be noted

¹²⁷ Whereas there is presently only one female group home, the male population is spread among five different group homes.

that the opinion of the youth is also seldom considered, depriving them of the opportunity to participate in their *plan de vida*.¹²⁸ The young resent this.

Similar concerns arise with transfers between Group Homes. They may be a result of "extraordinary circumstances," where the security of the child could be at risk, such as in the case of physical aggression or sexual abuse by a youth in their previous home or neighbourhood. Other, more questionable reasons, include a counsellor's inability to "control" the child, the common restructuring of the population by ages or levels of maturity, or a youth's drug-consumption relapse. It appears that the organization is, at times, supporting the transfer of troubled youth between the Group Homes rather than seeking to identify, confront and resolve the youth's problem.¹²⁹

In any transfer, a child is temporarily destabilized. Although strong efforts are made to ensure continuity of school, this is often not the case with other activities which are located in the old neighbourhood, such as vocational training, work and recreation programs. Since the homes are scattered throughout the city, some at long distances from the Crisis Center and from one another, children are forced to re-initiate their extracurricular activities near their new homes. The child is also forced to leave his contacts at the previous home and establish relationships with new counsellors and housemates. A frustrated counsellor voiced the setbacks such changes have on the counselling process:

"You get to know the boy, you work with him and everything and suddenly they [Coordination] change the boy to another home and one has to start all over again. And [in sarcasm] they [the counsellors] ask [Coordination] that for how long will they [the "new" boys] stay here [in this Group Home]." (Estela)

¹²⁸ As one counsellor voiced: "They are treated like merchandise," when the youth are transferred without being consulted (Estela).

¹²⁹ One counsellor was clearly frustrated with transfers resulting from drug consumption, explaining that youth often experience setbacks which are expressed in the form of occasional drug use. Rather than allowing them more time to adjust and mature in a familiar environment, Coordination uproots them. The counsellor claimed that this type of transferring destabilizes the youth and, in at least one occasion, has contributed to a boy leaving *Casa Alianza* altogether (Jimena).

Thorough use of the dossier can best ensure that a child is indeed ready to move on to the next phase; the child's development (through the use of psycho-social indicators) should be systematically measured and matched up against the established criteria of the phase. Since all decision-makers contribute to the dossier, reference to it will allow for greater consensus. However, the youth's opinion must also be factored into the decision and he or she should be in full agreement. Furthermore, relocations should only take place if their overall benefits outweigh the negative consequences they have on the child -- as in the case of personal security and legitimate advancement to the next phase -- and every effort must be made to ensure that a smooth transition takes place.

Human and Financial Resources

Staff Recruitment, Training and Working Conditions

A large and growing organization, *Casa Alianza México* had 114 full-time paid employees at the time of the research. Approximately two thirds are phase and project counsellors, street educators or professionals working directly with the young. The remainder are administrative and directorate staff (Coordination) and personnel providing general services. The organization also relies on 92 volunteers and part-time service providers who are involved in almost every phase and project. Showing a high level of enthusiasm and competence, most volunteers continue their commitment to the organization after their services, either by joining the paid staff or through donations to *Casa Alianza*.

Recruitment and training is relatively extensive, although areas for improvement remain. In addition to learning the institution's philosophy, principles and phase/project objectives, a new counsellor is immersed in all the phases to become familiar with the program's methodology. Other staff, including cooks, security guards, administration and volunteers are taught the mission and basic principles of *Casa Alianza* and are directed as

to how to treat the young. Volunteers also learn the street child and counsellor profiles and have personal interviews with their respective placement coordinators.

Through staff comments and actions, it is apparent that training procedures encourage continuity and respect of the principles and values of the organization and bring about a general sense of belonging. Nevertheless, counsellors suggested the need for greater focus on the methodology, including its history and relevant changes (what has worked, what has not and why), and for consistent training. Some received little methodological background and, to the detriment of the young, had to learn about the street child developmental process mostly through experience; on-the-job assistance from project coordinators was not deemed sufficient. Furthermore, if increased child participation can indeed be endorsed and applied, methods for its promotion must be disseminated to current and incoming staff. Increased participation and cooperation must also be encouraged among the staff and management.

To upgrade and supplement their skills, the staff also has access to various courses and workshops offered by the administration, which searches for experts among the community. Topics include HIV/AIDS in Mexico, addiction, family violence, self reflection/evaluation, etc. The strong support and demand for courses prompted other topic suggestions the staff recognized as vital for service delivery improvement and impact: youth work dynamics and child participation, response to crisis situations, the rights of the child, basic first aid,¹³⁰ and more self-reflection and stress-release methods.

As indicated by the vast majority of the interviewed staff and young, and confirmed through observation, counsellors and children enjoy warm relations. The counsellor-child

¹³⁰ Street educators are only taught how to apply the medicine they carry in the first aid kit, but are not told what medicine is being dispensed and why. Counsellors and general staff from other phases and project have no first aid training and the organization's nurse is only accessible at the Crisis Centre from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. Aside from calling the administration and sending children to the Crisis Centre to be treated, the staff is not prepared to handle a medical emergency.

dynamic changes somewhat between phases,¹³¹ but for the most part, once the ice is broken, the counsellor often becomes the primary communication outlet for the child and the individual whom the latter trusts the most. A collective standard of behaviour is also set to avoid developing highly personal relationships that may have negative effects on the child. To prevent the young from identifying and substituting the staff with a member of their own family or peers -- father, mother, brother, sister, boyfriend, girlfriend -- the young refer to the counsellors as "educators" and are reminded that they have their own family. The practice of routinely working in pairs also allows for monitoring and continuity of contact with children when a worker leaves. Despite such precautions, some become emotionally dependent on staff whom they identify as a parent or lover. There have also been isolated cases of counsellors responding to the advances of and becoming romantically involved with the child. Stricter hiring procedures in the selection of potential counsellors, introductory and ongoing discussions on relationship issues, and greater access to therapeutic counselling can help develop and maintain balanced counsellor-child relationships. The fine line between what is healthy and important to children and dependent and abusive behaviour must not be crossed.

Aside from these incidents, the institution faces other more general human resource challenges that are common of NGOs serving disadvantaged groups. Understaffing -- partly due to the rapid expansion experienced by the organization in June 1996, which added greater pressures to the already shorthanded projects -- and a high turnover of overworked and underpaid personnel are undermining the healthy development and best interests of the young.

¹³¹ For example, due to the nature of the street work, children by and large consider street educators to be friends; their relationship is fairly leveled. Once the counsellors established greater authority inside the institution, the balance changes. Children in the Crisis Centre who are deciding whether to stay often identify the counsellors more as those who impose rules. As they stabilize and move on to the next phases, the young better understand the counsellors' role as the providers of guidance (María).

Despite their commitment and good intentions, phase and project counsellors, street educators and professionals working directly with the young experience a high turnover rate. The Transition and Group Homes are the most vulnerable, with sometimes as many as three counsellors leaving the organization in one month.¹³² In fact, most of the front line workers are relatively new to the institution, having been with *Casa Alianza* for an average of one to two years. A high turnover is particularly damaging for institutional street children, a population whose trust is difficult to gain.

The characteristics of front line workers -- most are young (in their 20s), single and possibly experiencing their first full-time position directly related to their education -- may lead one to believe that some view this experience as a stepping stone for future career objectives (Krøvel, April 15, 1997). But most of the interviewed staff indicated a strong commitment and dedication to the young and a high degree of personal satisfaction in playing a part in their developmental process. The nature of the particular worker combined with the difficult working circumstances, including dense and long working hours, poor remuneration, lack of decision-making power and other problems with Coordination were the main reasons given for frequent turn over.

The administration and staff concur that all phases and projects require greater personnel. In most cases, a staff increment of 30% or more was suggested. Counsellors from the last two phases complained of a heavy workload compounded by long hours (a 19/5 hour schedule consisting of 19 hours of work and 5 hours of rest in a 24-hour period). Due to frequent staff shortages caused by sickness, course-attendance and meetings, and firing or quitting, official working hours are often extended leaving the young with exhausted counsellors.¹³³ In losing their breathing space, counsellors not only

¹³² Three counsellors intended to quit soon after the personal interviews: one had already found another job, another quit by the time the field research was completed and a third was to wait a few months on condition of a possible salary increase.

¹³³ For example, after one counsellor left the institution the repercussion was immediately felt in his and other phases. The counsellor on hand took an extra shift (leaving her with 72 hours without rest or shower) until a counsellor from another phase came to relieve her for the day. Frustrated that it was the second day

fail to work at their potential with the young, but may also unconsciously carry over their frustration and discomfort onto the children.¹³⁴ An additional counsellor shift with a revised shorter schedule and/or daily visits from youth workers or psychiatrists to coordinate house activities could help relieve the last two phases (Jimena). Moreover, additional counsellors at the Crisis Center could be used when the Center reaches its full capacity or could act with short notice to substitute for those phases that are temporarily shorthanded. These and/or other personnel-related solutions must be found to improve service delivery and provide greater quality and individual attention to the child.

Group Management and Cooperation

In theory, *Casa Alianza México's* management methods and structure support group cooperation and participation within projects. Activities are planned in weekly phase and project meetings, while salient issues and concerns are carried up along a vertical decision-making structure; the coordinators of each phase meet weekly with the program director who continually reports to the national director. Important decisions take place at the directorate level with the national director and, where applicable, the funds, development and training directors and the systematizer (Carlos).

The weekly meetings endorse flexible planning and management by linking knowledge building with action and embracing error. In addition to monitoring the child, they act as regular progress reports, indicating areas of success and those requiring revision. They have also proven to be successful in promoting high levels of support and team building within the horizontal projects and the first phase. Working relatively independently from other projects, The Family Reintegration, Luna, Ollín and Street

in a row she was covering for staff shortages in other phases, the relieving counsellor explained that had she not come, the on-hand counsellor would have had to work for another eight hours. As is, the latter was on her own covering a shift that officially required two counsellors. They were vehement about the shortage of staff in all phases of *Casa Alianza*.

¹³⁴ One counsellor explained: "... [Y]ou become tied to your own problems [in addition] to theirs [the children's]. You must be able to pass judgment, [think with] clarity to choose your decisions ... because you are working with the lives of the children and [with mine]. It is very heavy work." (Alfonso)

Phase teams display high levels of cooperation when planning activities, sharing experiences and suggesting important methodological-related decisions. These are, unfortunately, not experienced to the same degree in other phases. Lack of effective team work, poor inter-group communication and limited decision-making power at the phase levels are some of the difficulties that lead to ineffective programming and poor monitoring of the child. Ineffective team work is mostly the result of high staff turnover in the latter phases. The high turnover, as mentioned above, is partly due to poor inter-group communication and limited decision-making power.

Communication links are not only weak between phases and projects (see Individual Monitoring of the Child), but also among front line workers and their superiors. *Casa Alianza's* linear hierarchical structure creates an atmosphere of subordination that inhibits open access to higher level management. Meanwhile, messages are not always conveyed across weekly meetings to superiors or are lost as they go up the decision-making ladder. The same vertical management style and strict hierarchical guidelines also limit the decision-making role of front line workers. Coordination takes charge of major decisions, workers are ranked in order of importance and responsibility and support staff at the bottom of the scale (cooks and watchmen) do not participate in management debates. Decision-making concerning the systematization and adaptation of the methodology, for example, often excludes front line workers, those who may know the projects best.¹³⁵ Project monitoring and evaluations,¹³⁶ and even some daily operations and decisions, occur from the top down with limited staff consultation and/or

¹³⁵ As indicated, the young are excluded from the decision-making process altogether.

¹³⁶ Front line workers and the young have little if any knowledge about the various studies and analyses of conducted for and by *Casa Alianza*. The results are not divulged among its members but are rather kept aside under the care of the Directorate, giving the impression that access is monitored. If such studies are indeed available to staff members, it is recommended that they be advertised in an announcement board or placed in an open space where they can be easily accessed (Miguel). Sharing information should be viewed as an opportunity to stimulate ideas. An open space could also serve as a resource centre for the staff and a library for the young. It may hold other relevant material, such as *Casa Alianza's* written methodology, counselling strategies, children's rights and self-help books for the staff and key issues (employment, drug addiction, sexual education, children's rights, etc.) and pleasure-reading material for the young.

approval. As one counsellor expressed: "Coordination does not live here [in the Home] and does not know [exactly what goes on] but it carries out the decisions." (Estela). Some attempts on behalf of front line workers to discuss suggestions for improving daily activities and methodology, management methods and working conditions have been met with resistance by Coordination. The fear of repercussion by Coordination have prevented other workers from speaking up and sharing their ideas with management.¹³⁷

Respect, teamwork and mutual dependence are important when working in a stressful situation. Supportive and flexible management supervision and greater decision-making power and independence from Coordination become necessary not only to improve project management and human resource relations, but to encourage child participation. As Ennew explains, "children will be quick to spot the hypocrisy of being told they are equal with adults if adults do not treat each other as equals" (1994: 137).

Funding and Allocation of Resources

From the outset, it must be noted that very limited information on financial resources were made available to the researcher. The local Board provides annual reports to the monitoring body JAP, however, neither these reports nor other sources containing detailed expenditure information are accessible to the public and non-managerial staff within the institution. This type of closed policy does not lend itself well to external and internal participative cost-effective evaluations. This lack of accountability should be considered a serious shortcoming to the operations of the organization.

According to the director, NP \$2,000 (new pesos) is the average cost of serving an institutional street child per month, although costs vary according to phases and projects. With a fluctuating population of between 180 and 240 children in the last three phases,

¹³⁷ One counsellor explained of warnings given to counsellors who suggest changes: "... that if they do not like the work they are free to go; that like them there is another thousand waiting who would take their position and would even take it for less [pay]" (Miguel). In addition to promoting tensions and preventing legitimate staff participation, this type of attitude can push out those counsellors who are concerned with the best interests of the child.

one can only estimate that the organization spends between NP \$4,320,000 and NP \$5,760,000 per year (or between US \$432,000 and US \$576,000)(no other information was available on the volume of total financial resources). How exactly the organization allocates its resources is unknown. Aside from the following information on the financial campaign, only a general estimate of expenses was provided: 95% of expenses are used towards servicing program delivery (includes staff salaries, maintenance, material, etc.) and the remainder is for administrative purposes.

Casa Alianza México's is funded mostly by donations. Approximately 45% of its funding comes from its American parent organization, Covenant House. The remainder is obtained locally from the government (DDF), not-for-profit organizations and fundraising events and campaigns (Capellín, March 7, 1997). At the time of the research, an extensive three-phase financial campaign was underway to obtain a total of US \$7 million in donations. The first phase successfully raised a third of the total towards the new Crisis Center and administrative offices, opened in June 1996. With the second phase underway, another US \$250,000 is being raised towards: the development of two new projects in 1996 (Luna for HIV/AIDS and Ollín for drug rehabilitation), one in 1998 (Mums and Babies for young mothers) and five new Group Homes; hiring more front line workers; continuing the family reintegration of as many children as possible; and obtaining the commitment from private companies to contribute clothing, food and hygienic products. The third phase intends to raise US \$200,000 towards a trust fund to help finance future operation costs of the organization (Casa Alianza, 1996a and March 1996b).

Fundraising targeted at the Mexican population, expansion of service delivery to meet growing demand and the creation of new projects for better quality service are some of the apparent objectives of this financial campaign. Attracting funds from local resources is particularly important for diminishing dependence from its parent organization. Program and project creation and expansion are indeed increasingly reaching

a greater number of young people -- thus approaching the financial campaign target of serving 270 institutional street children (Casa Alianza, 1996a) -- and are providing for a more comprehensive intervention.

Unfortunately, the quick expansion has been somewhat uneven and, in some cases, has simultaneously brought a temporary decrease in the quality of service. The most apparent mismatch is the delay in hiring sufficient human resources (especially front line workers) to keep up with project expansion and population growth. The latter has also forced the female Transition and Group Homes to stray from stated methodology; filled to capacity, the female home has been forced to temporarily close its doors to some girls who are ready to move to the final phase (they remain in the Transition Home). Apparent administrative preference of some Group Homes over others have also led to uneven provision of services, isolation from the institution and feelings of rejection by the children and staff.¹³⁸ For effective expansion, *Casa Alianza* needs to prioritize the needs of its older projects and provide a more balanced management growth.

One of the greatest criticisms of *Casa Alianza's* program is its inability to respond to the large population of street children in the city. As discussed in the concluding chapter, the micro-scale and institutional nature of such programs (and the inability of this organization to rely on income-generating activities)¹³⁹ means that *Casa Alianza México* can only reach a limited number of children and can only do so at the very expensive cost of NP \$2,000 per child per month. Despite extensive networking and joint programs with the public and private sectors, the organization is fairly inward looking; its inclusive approach -- creating horizontal projects targeted mostly at *Casa Alianza's*

¹³⁸For example, the standard practice of access to a telephone line -- to allow for daily communication among projects and for emergency purposes -- has been delayed for three years in one group home. Despite the institution's financial capability for expansion, lack of financial resources, remodeling and a physical relocation have been the reasons given for this delay.

¹³⁹ As previously stated, Covenant House's constitution prevents it from developing income-generating activities. As such, the organization has eliminated the possibility of supporting itself.

population -- further constrains the potential to reach and/or create joint community projects that serve a larger number of children in the city.

Casa Ecuador

At the time of the field research *Casa Ecuador* was in the process of reviewing its methodology and formulating a new plan of action. While some changes were already apparent -- the new methodology was outlined and in the process of being implemented -- other areas of restructuring were still in the early stages of planning. Considering this transition, the analysis praises and makes critical comments on current programming and expected changes.

Individual Monitoring of the Child

Casa Ecuador uses various methods and instruments for assessing the child's individual development: a personal dossier created upon the child's entry to the institution and which is accessed by all; additional personal dossiers created and used primarily by the separate teams; a daily updated information link notebook; and regular technical and advisory meetings (Casa de la Juventud, 1997b: 35-36, 49, 54).

Reporting synthesized information on the child, the personal dossier is the most comprehensive instrument. All project areas are supposed to record on a weekly basis the child's most important achievements and setbacks. However, due to staff shortage/excess work and general negligence, the dossier is not regularly filled in. In contrast, the information link notebook (holding daily important positive and negative behaviour of the young) is thoroughly used. In each of their shifts, counsellors, psychologists, medical staff and social workers (henceforth front line workers) are required to refer to the notebook. It primarily serves as a guide to recent developments of individual children; new data is entered at the end of each shift and incoming staff are updated by reading the recorded information (Casa de la Juventud, 1997b: 22).

Regular meetings among front line workers and the director and between the staff and the youth contribute both in the planning and approval of program activities and the monitoring of the child. Although not always adhered to its weekly schedule, technical meetings allow for front line workers and other general staff to discuss salient cases and record evaluation notes on the personal dossiers. In addition, advisory meetings take place approximately every three months from the moment the child enters the second phase. Front line workers, the program director and the concerned child meet to discuss his advancements and setbacks, to re-emphasize and/or add new personal goals and time frames for their completion and, in extreme cases of non-fulfillment, to return to the previous phase or terminate his assistance within the institution (Casa de la Juventud, 1997b: 22-23). Thus, a thorough assessment of the child's capacity to continue onto the next phase is carried out by members of the various support areas and by the child. These meetings, key for monitoring the process of the child, and the program's flexibility in moving the young along phases accurately reflect the child's developmental level within the methodology. As one counsellor explained: "Those that are in their phase, deserve to be there. You can see the difference in their ... work [and] school [attendance]." (David)

Despite the above, the program recognizes the need for closer individual daily monitoring, including more staff and placing greater emphasis on the construction and follow-up of the child's life plan. The organization was considering assigning a staff member to each child, that he or she may act as a tutor who can closely guide the child in his life project (Casa de la Juventud, 1997b: 43). If implemented, this could prove to be an important source of support for the child, especially in an environment where personnel shortage limits the individual attention received.

It is important to note that individual psycho-social evaluation indicators were being developed at the time of the research and were expected to be completed and functional by the end of the year (Mario). These are vital for calculated and collective

decision-making and for ensuring the comprehensive development of the child. For effective monitoring and access it is expected that the indicators be incorporated into the personal dossier, which should be used regularly.

Quantitative and Qualitative Monitoring: The Five Phases

Only in 1996, under the systematization process of QUIERA's program, did *Casa Ecuador* begin to keep a closer account of the number of children in the institution for purposes other than service delivery and output. Recently compiled statistics indicate the population's place of birth, age, schooling level and admission process (Casa de la Juventud, 1997a) and a separate register booklet contains the number of monthly admissions, discharges and total population since 1993. Although reasons for every discharge should also be recorded in the booklet, they have not been registered in a consistent manner. According to the register, in the 15 months of 1996 and early 1997, the program had an average of 19 admissions and 18 discharges per month, compared to 10 admissions and 11 discharges per month in 1995. One of the reasons for greater population movement in the latter months is a higher overall population average: 59 residents per month in 1995 compared to 69 in 1996/1997.¹⁴⁰ Stricter adherence to the methodology -- discharging those children who do not conform with *Casa Ecuador's* dynamics -- and recent shortage of personnel are also contributing factors.

Like *Casa Alianza*, this organization also does not monitor the movement of children, as a group, along the different phases¹⁴¹ and is losing the opportunity to gain greater insight into the effectiveness of the methodology. Only very general estimates on population movement within the phases were provided to the researcher. Such limited information undermines the quality of any internal and external monitoring process or evaluation, including this one.

¹⁴⁰ *Casa Ecuador's* maximum physical capacity allows for 80 children.

¹⁴¹ The above averages, for example, are not phase specific.

The first phase, Transition, is the exploratory stage, when the child learns about the workings of the home, rules and responsibilities and decides if he wants to live in *Casa Ecuador*. Three main conditional points are introduced as the basis for change: development in school; in vocational training or work; and commitment to undergo drug rehabilitation, if necessary. Within this first month or so, some basic changes directly related to the phase's objectives do become apparent, including adherence to scheduled activities within the home (meals, cleaning, sports, etc.), a desire to leave behind their drug addiction and school initiation. In contrast to *Casa Alianza*, an educational assessment and initial informal refresher classes take place as soon as the child joins this first institutional phase. *Casa Ecuador* has a qualified teacher who works individually with the child, preparing him to re-enter the formal school system or monitoring his advancement in the open system, and assisting the general population with homework and other school related matters. As soon as it is possible,¹⁴² a child in the Transition Phase is enrolled in the formal school system.

Although no statistics are available, program staff indicate that the largest number of admissions and discharges occur in this phase. As an introduction to the program, this phase is relatively successful at sensitizing potential candidates and identifying those who are not initially compatible to *Casa Ecuador's* methodology and life model (the phase's first objective). Usually within the first week the child decides if he can pledge himself to the program. It is important to note, however, that staff shortage (leading to less individual attention) was also given as a reason for the high turnover: "With more people

¹⁴² None of the Transition children were attending formal school at the time of the research (see Table 5) because the government's schedule for the year's enrolment was past due. *Casa Ecuador's* teacher was providing informal schooling while waiting for the next formal school year to begin. General delays also occur because schools require official documentation for enrolment, documentation that can only be accessed through the child's family and a process that may take a few weeks' time. In cases where a new resident does not want to talk about his family and a month's time has passed, some schools accept *Casa Ecuador's* temporary documentation making the institution responsible for the child (Dora and Verónica).

[personnel] we would have better results; less youth would leave." (Nora).¹⁴³ Although it has a capacity to host 12 children, given the high turnover, the phase often has about half this population. Those discharged are generally channeled to other programs, but many also return to the street.

The Formative Phase, the largest and most critical phase of the program is also the one experiencing the greatest challenges. About 40% of its population leaves the program, some to be reunited with their families, to join other organizations or to return to the street. So long as the phase's turnover does not exceed 50%, the program deems it acceptable (Mario). However, it is not so much the physical turnover but the slow or stagnant development of some of the young that question this phase's success.

As the objectives of the Formative Phase indicate, the young begin constructing a *plan de vida*, setting short- and medium-term goals. They start and continue attending social activities outside of the home (school, vocational training, work, sports) and become fully incorporated in house dynamics. Although the child is expected to attend formal schooling, either in the regular or open system, not all are enrolled. As shown in Table 5, 24 out of 31 children in this phase, or 75% are students; this discrepancy is accounted largely by the program's flexibility in allowing some older youth to work full-time, without attending school.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, some show positive changes in their daily habits, including in discipline, personal hygiene, and adherence to scheduled activities, and are willingly enrolled in drug rehabilitation programs. As a counsellor explained:

"[Many] view the move from Transition to [the] Formative [Phase] as a prize¹⁴⁵ and know that to move on they need to carry out their responsibilities." (Nora)

¹⁴³ Not surprisingly, children who enter the organization voluntarily rather than through other channels (transferred from government bodies or other organizations) tend to show greater potential for remaining in the program (Perla).

¹⁴⁴ Seven youth in this phase were working full-time in April 1999, with three others working part-time while also attending school (see Table 5). See full explanation of *Casa Ecuador's* work philosophy in the Horizontal Projects section.

¹⁴⁵ The more privacy available in the next phase, three to four per room as opposed to eight, is one of the greatest incentives to move up the developmental levels.

Table 5: A Cross Section of the Population's Activities, April 1997

PHASE	TOTAL (#)	ACTIVITIES (#)		
		FORMAL SCHOOLING	VOCATIONAL TRAINING	WORK
TRANSITION	4	0	0	2
FORMATIVE	31	24	4	10
SOCIAL STABILITY	14	14	5	7
DETACHMENT	10	6	1	8
PRE-INDEPENDENT	4	2	0	4
TOTAL	63	46	10	31

Source: Statistics provided by Program Systematizer, April 1997, Casa Ecuador, Mexico City.¹⁴⁶

However, the majority have difficulty reaching their expected objectives. A salient concern is lack of respect among the young and toward the staff. For example, the population constantly turns to verbal abuse and physical violence to get out frustrations and solve conflicts.¹⁴⁷ Older youth tend to be rough on the younger children and stealing is not uncommon (Oscar, Esteban and Angel). Most also need constant reminders to carry out their house and school responsibilities and to do them efficiently. Staff shortage and financial difficulties are having a particularly negative effect on this crucial phase. The cancellation of internal vocational training courses (only four out of 31 Transition children are enrolled in external workshops; see Table 5), lack of alternate structured activities and restricted individual monitoring on a daily basis limits the quality of socialization and individual attention required. The relative liberty and high degree of interaction that this phase has with society must also be questioned.

All of *Casa Ecuador's* population is given a great degree of individual space to manage their activities and free time. It also has a high degree of interaction with people outside of the institution; whether it be to go to the local variety store or hang out with

¹⁴⁶ This table was especially made for the researcher upon request. The organization itself does not regularly compile such data for their own monitoring purposes.

¹⁴⁷ It should be noted that the high degree of violence and swearing as a means of communication is partially learned from the environment of the local community. For example, *Casa Ecuador's* residents were taken out of a local school because the students are very rough; they are violent to the extent that they bring knives and guns to school. A school teacher remarked in surprise that it was the local *Barrio* children, not those "of" the street (of *Casa Ecuador*), who were the trouble makers. Wherever possible now, *Casa Ecuador* sends its population to various schools outside the immediate neighbourhood (Nora).

school peers, the open door system encourages the young to continue their bonds with various domains. Many indicated their relative freedom as the main reason for their preference of this institution over others. While some feel they have developed a high sense of "self " and can relate well to society (especially those in the older phases), the development of others is being hindered. For example, a youth who has been in the Transition Phase for several years indicates his like for the open door system and his dislike for it being monitored:

"[I don't like] that they close the door ... at night.... Those who work and go to school can come in [and out] and you can ask for [special] permission to be out later but you have to carry out your house, school and work responsibilities."
(Jacobo)

Those who develop best with a greater degree of structure usually do not last long in the organization, and the few who stay are unsatisfied.¹⁴⁸

This relative liberty is both a result of *Casa Ecuador's* institutional principles -- respect of decisions and sense of life according to the individual characteristics and circumstances of the child -- and inability to enforce stricter phase differentiation within one home. Limited day-to-day individual monitoring and few structured activities outside of school, work and drug rehabilitation programs leave some children with more unstructured time than what *Casa Ecuador* would like to provide. In fact, under the separate housing system (see below), the organization would like to make some methodological changes for the first two phases; they include a more intensive internal schedule of activities and a semi-open door system (to segregate new residents more from the negative influences of their street friends)(Vallejo, March 17, 1997).

However, once the young reach the next phase, a positive development process and permanence in the program are almost guaranteed. About 80% of the Social Stability

¹⁴⁸ For example, one youth expressed the desire for strictness: "I liked [institution] because the discipline was like in the army; that things have to be in order; that there are no excuses.... Everything should be done by force: school, work, assignments, being clean....." (Lalo)

population remains and goes on to the next phase of the program. Only a small percentage of those who leave do so to return to the street; most are reintegrated with their families or move out to live on their own with a secure job (Mario). In the Social Stability Phase, the young have already acquired a high degree of social and emotional stability, in accordance with the phase's objectives. This is displayed through their positive attitude and ongoing participation in their daily activities and with their relationships with their peers and adults. Most no longer have to be told to do their chores or go to school, and in some cases they start to develop a life outside of the institution. For example, some search for employment without waiting for the social workers' initiative while others develop close friendships with school peers. As shown in Table 5, all Social Stability children attend school and all but one are either working or undergoing vocational training.

Pending additional resources, the program intends to create and relocate its services to different centers, each but one or two housing a different phase. This would be done primarily to mark a sharper physical differentiation between the developmental phases, as is done in *Casa Alianza* (Vallejo, February 22, 1997 and *Casa de la Juventud*, 1997b: 42). Currently, the entire population share living and eating areas. While this permits youth in the advanced phases to serve as positive role models to the others, it has also allowed children who are struggling in their development process or younger children to be negatively influenced by those in lower phases. As one staff member explained, the high level of interaction between phase populations "dilutes" their work and achievements (Mario). Individuals could indeed benefit from living in a separate space that is suitable for their development level, where they can focus on their life-plan without daily negative distractions from within and out.

Be that as it may, *Casa Ecuador* must take caution in avoiding some of the pitfalls experienced by *Casa Alianza México's* expansion. The physical division of the program could potentially disturb the current levels of interaction and relations between different

project personnel and the high degree of youth participation in general program activities that may be planned from the central base. Given *Casa Ecuador's* practice of moving children both up and down the developmental phases, physical transferences could prove more destabilizing than helpful. To ensure the best interests of the child are primordial, similar precautions as those suggested for *Casa Alianza* should be implemented here.

Detachment Initiation and Pre-independent Phases: Addressing Issues of Institutionalization

The length of stay in the Detachment Initiation Phase varies according to the circumstances of each youth -- waiting for the end of a school year or to earn sufficient savings before moving out -- a decision which is made jointly by the staff and youth in the advisory meetings. Such flexibility, however, has encouraged many residents, most in their late teens and even early 20s, to remain indefinitely at this level. At the time of the research, the phase's primary objective -- to prepare the youth towards their imminent separation from the program -- was not being met in its totality.

A greater degree of independence compared to the rest of the population is clearly demonstrated in the pride these youth take in purchasing personal objects and maintaining and adorning their individual rooms according to their needs and taste. Monetary decision-making skills are learned and their savings grow. Youth who reach the Detachment Initiation Phase have indeed displayed consistency in their school and/or work. Most residents have either gone on to junior high or high school and/or have held down a job for at least six months (see Table 5). Most have developed an active social life outside of the institution while some also show strong leadership roles within house activities. They no longer ask for supervision, but do turn to staff for advice. Drug consumption is virtually non-existent and, where occasional cases of relapse exist, the youth is demoted to the previous phase until he has battled his addiction.

Be that as it may, most cannot take the final step of moving out of the facilities. Many are afraid, not so much of losing the financial support provided by the organization, but of the possible initial failure when making important social and economic decisions on their own. *Casa Ecuador* has, until recently, been unable to follow-up on the independent youth's development. Thus, aware of having to make some of their most important decisions of their lives without the organization's support, the youth have delayed the process. They also are ambivalent of breaking with the emotional bonds they have generated with their house peers after so many years of interaction. With little pressure from the organization to become independent and without guidance or incentives once on their own, it is not surprising that many have remained in *Casa Ecuador* years past their 18th birthday.¹⁴⁹ Such dependence on the organization is one of the greatest drawbacks of *Casa Ecuador's* program.

This problem directly lead to the creation of the new Pre-Independence Phase. In an effort to break ties with *Casa Ecuador* and to ease their transition to an independent life, youth in the new phase are forced to detach themselves from the physical space of the program and make decisions with increasing levels of responsibility. The social work team monitors their transition and helps them find a room, sign the lease, pay for part of their living expenses and plan their budget, among other tasks. Although financial assistance ceases after six months, monthly follow-up will continue for a year. At the time of the research the phase had just been inaugurated. Four youth (including the university student) were among the first of 15 or so *Casa Ecuador* residents to begin the Pre-Independent process (Mario).¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ For example, one particular youth excels at school (a university student) and although he has savings, lacked the ambition to work. Continuing to support him, the program had been unsuccessful in instilling in him an urgency to work or live on his own.

¹⁵⁰ Some Formative and Social Stability residents who are 18 years of age and older are also being prepared for the Pre-Independent Phase, part of the organization's attempt to adhere to its new age guidelines.

Time will tell how effective the Pre-Independent process is at meeting its objective: to follow-up on the development of those beneficiaries who have just left the facilities to live independently. Having just begun the initial implementation of the new phase, it is also difficult to evaluate its impact on the population. It can be said, however, that many of the youth were nervous but proud of the prospect of leaving *Casa Ecuador*. Although many have been in the Detachment Phase for years, the guarantee of program support in discussing choices and making important decisions has encouraged them to plan for their move. A follow-up period after the six months has also provided them with a sense of security.¹⁵¹

After years of sustaining youth who are too old for the institution, *Casa Ecuador* must be commended for finally taking action and for doing so in a theoretically sound scheme. No other local program appears to have such a comprehensive follow-up plan to help their population move out on their own (some counselling or the transference of youth to yet other institutions is the norm). In addition to the added phase, other measures could be taken to break the dependency on the institution. They involve implementing guidelines that, from the moment children enter *Casa Ecuador* and throughout their entire development process, emphasize to the young their transitory stay in the program. The different phases and the children's medium and long term goals should include activities and clear timelines that reflect the program's transitory nature in the child's life.

For example, the target group specifications that were officially re-established with the new 1997 program objectives (boys between the ages of 10 and 18) should be strictly adhered to. Throughout its history, *Casa Ecuador* has proven to be fairly flexible in accommodating various groups of street children, allowing institutional street youth over

¹⁵¹ A former resident who left the organization some years back explained that he had a very hard time getting used to living on his own (without schedules, food, etc.). He temporarily lived on the streets again, but has since been working, studying and renting his own room. He enjoys visiting *Casa Ecuador* and would have liked to receive the follow-up process that is now being offered (Tacho).

18 years of age and the occasional girl¹⁵² to remain in the program. Although such flexibility is necessary in exceptional circumstances, their extended stay should be prohibited. The program, its methodology and new plan of action are not set up to address the developmental needs of those outside the target group; their stay could work not only against their best interests, but against those of the general *Casa Ecuador* population.

Casa Ecuador is already beginning to move in the direction of age restriction. The new program proposal has established a general timeline for the population. A child's development process through *Casa Ecuador's* methodology (excluding the last phase) is expected to last between four and six years according to the circumstances of the individual child. Furthermore, fast-tracking is now being encouraged for those youth who enter *Casa Ecuador* later in their lives, closer to the maximum age limit (*Casa de la Juventud*, 1997b: 28-29). Other steps, such as the implementation of a maximum time limit in each phase and effective use of the upcoming indicators, could better monitor the development of the child within the phases and along the program.

Horizontal Projects and Other Methodological Issues

The program has numerous horizontal projects that attempt to address various developmental needs of the child. Some are more structured than others, but in general, the organization is attempting to increase program quality and effectiveness. Having limited resources to internally address horizontal issues in a comprehensive manner, *Casa Ecuador* is increasingly making use of local and government contacts to find suitable programs where the population can be directed to. Internal horizontal projects -- Social

¹⁵² It is not uncommon that in their search for protection, street children turn to those programs with whom they have familiarity. In one instance, after having been evicted from their sleeping quarters, 40 street boys and girls presented themselves at *Casa Ecuador* at 4 am. They were temporarily welcomed and most were eventually transferred to other institutions or returned to the street. An expecting mother and her partner did not want to live on the street but had no program that would take them. *Casa Ecuador* allowed the family to remain, helped the young father find a job and three months after the birth of their daughter, assisted in their move to an apartment. As the director explained, "[in attempting to do good] I broke all the rules." (Vallejo, February 22, 1997).

Work, Medical Care, Psychology, Pedagogy and Educational Auxiliary -- assess the individual needs of the child during his initial interview, at advisory meetings and as specific situations arise. Together with the child the professional teams decide where they can best address their issues.

The psychologist provides general counselling in various areas, including drug addiction, self-esteem, aggression and family orientation. With respect to drug addiction, for example, the psychologist evaluates the child's level of addiction and directs him to the appropriate drug-counselling clinic. She works one-on-one with the easier cases and, when internal counselling is insufficient, children are directed to various community programs ranging from twice a week therapy workshops to intensive overnight rehabilitation centers. Approximately half of those addicted are able to leave drugs for a long period of time or are completely rehabilitated (Rosa).¹⁵³ When relapses occur, the young are directed to the next level of counselling or, if they refuse to attend, are forced to leave the institution.

It should be noted that due to *Casa Ecuador's* open-door policy, lax enforcement of rules and physical location -- in heart of the "rough" *Barrio Tepito*, where marihuana, cocaine and soft drugs are easily accessible -- its population is particularly prone to taking drugs. Although current rules prevent drug consumption within the home and officers monitor the doors to prevent drugs from entering, rumors that some are able to introduce and use drugs in the home were confirmed through interviews with the staff and the young.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, a handful of children who have addiction problems are not being attended to by the program. Such lack of action seriously undermines the rehabilitation process of the young and is cited as one of the reasons why children leave or do not advance along the phases (Carmen). A more thorough initial assessment, closer daily

¹⁵³ This average includes both internal and external drug counselling.

¹⁵⁴ In one occasion, an intoxicated child entered the home and was allowed to remain and have contact with the rest of the population for a few hours despite the staff's awareness of his condition.

individual monitoring and strict enforcement of house rules are necessary to improve the quality of the drug rehabilitation project.

The family orientation as a project in itself is relatively new and has gained even more importance under the new plan of action. Its main objective is to “re-establish ties between the child and the family” (Mario); to encourage ongoing communication, motivating the child and the family to reconcile as part of a long-term process. While the project views the family as “the base of society” and the ideal place for the child (Casa de la Juventud, 1997b: 55), it is also aware that a child's reintegration is not always in his best interests. Thus, emphasis is placed on relationship building, not necessarily physical reintegration. However, the project has no official indicators to monitor the child's identity and acceptance towards the family as it relates to his ability to surpass his family crisis. For effective monitoring, it is suggested that the systematization of psycho-social indicators also include a category for family reconciliation.

Like in other horizontal areas, *Casa Ecuador*'s family project makes extensive use of external organizations to carry out its objective. Once a week, two front line workers carry out interviews and family orientation sessions with the child, and with the child and his family. After initiating the communication process, they transfer the cases to external government and private organizations that specialize in family counselling and are located close to the family's community. Though the internal project is not nearly as comprehensive as that of *Casa Alianza*'s, a simple numerical comparison identifies it as being fairly efficient in carrying out initial reintegrations. Ninety out of the 190 children in *Casa Ecuador* in 1995, or 47%, were reintegrated. It is important to note that not all cases resulted in reintegration with the original family unit: over 20% were incorporated into the households of other family members, most commonly uncles and aunts or older siblings, and a minority went on to live with substitute/adoptive families.

Although extensive community networks and the search for alternate family like arrangements enable a large proportion of *Casa Ecuador*'s residents to "return" to a family like environments, no official statistics are available on the level of success or continuity within the family after reintegration. One staff member indicated that more than half of reintegrations fail; some children return to *Casa Ecuador* while others go back to the street (Nora). Like *Casa Ecuador*, most local organization are restrained by their limited resources and are unable to monitor the child-family relations after reintegration. This is an area the project would like to expand if resources become available, and that, as previously mentioned, is essential to guarantee the well-being of the child. In the meantime, it is suggested that *Casa Ecuador* work closely with other programs that have proven to be successful, such as that of *Casa Alianza*,¹⁵⁵ and provide the population with access to intra-family abuse and violence-related workshops.

Casa Ecuador's philosophy on work was carried over from the governmental run program which strongly emphasized youth gaining employable skills. While school is seen as necessary in the child's formation, the concept of work is understood to be almost as important, especially if the boy is already in his mid to late teens. So long as the youth have been in the program for some time and are progressively developing along their new life plan, older youth may work full-time without attending school.

According to their age (15 years or older), background and personal interests, the youth are encouraged to work or undertake vocational training as early as in the second phase. However, if upon entrance to the institution the youth already has a job that is deemed acceptable by *Casa Ecuador*, he is not prevented from continuing it.¹⁵⁶ The program obtains official working documentation and encourages technical training so

¹⁵⁵ As part of the systematization process, representatives from *Casa Ecuador* were visiting other tertiary organizations throughout the city, including *Casa Alianza* and *Visión Mundial*, to learn from their experiences. Some exchange and joint programming were being contemplated.

¹⁵⁶ See Table 5, where half of the Transition population at the time of the research was working. Transition and Formative phase residents tend to continue working in areas where they have had experience, such as street performance, singing and shoe shining.

youth can learn safer and higher remunerative trades. Once in the third phase, where more concrete long-term goals are being formed, youth begin to save and by the time they enter the next phase, most hold a steady job and all have opened up a savings account.¹⁵⁷ Youth in the higher phases work in fields requiring more experience, training or adherence to regular schedules, such as baking. The fourth phase requirement to furnish their rooms with items bought with their own money is an effective means of encouraging financial decision-making and economic independence, besides providing them with a sense of pride (Casa de la Juventud, 1997b: 23-24, Vallejo, July 2, 1996). As Table 5 indicates, almost half of the total population works, with a higher proportion of youth working in the higher phases.

Vocational training is strongly encouraged but, as Table 5 shows, only 10 out of 63 children are enrolled in such courses. At one time, the program serviced various vocational training workshops within its facilities: silk screening, glass blowing, printing, woodwork, computer, jewelry making, painting and photography. Some were able to sell their final products, earning income for both workshop maintenance and personal savings. Due to financial cutbacks, however, they were forced to close down. With some of the material remaining in the facilities, the occasional workshop is opened when part time-volunteers or other members are able to lead classes, but minimum financial support further contributes to their uncertain state.¹⁵⁸ Children miss them:

"I learned a lot in the workshops; I learned jewelry making, ceramics ... but now they are closed. I hope that they open up again soon." (Jacobo)

Under the new plan of action and private trust, *Casa Ecuador* foresees re-opening some of the workshops and was already searching to obtain donated computers and other

¹⁵⁷ Those who do not work are given a nominal weekly allowance.

¹⁵⁸ For example, an daily art class for the younger children is run on a voluntary basis by an older *Casa Ecuador* resident. Once a week, two community volunteers also teach origami to the population in the first two phases. These workshops are not directly geared at gaining vocational oriented training, but at developing other social, cognitive and creative skills that may serve the child in various capacities.

needed materials. Meanwhile, the program is sending youth to government training centers and is also tapping into community projects and the private sector to provide its current population with some vocational training. For example, *Casa Ecuador* and a computer company created a special pilot course to train five youth in computer basics. If successful, upon graduation the youth will be hired by the company as salespersons. Creative projects, such as these should be multiplied and especially targeted to older children in the Formative phase. While *Casa Ecuador's* population does not experience nearly the same level of apathy towards work than *Casa Alianza's*, some of the earlier suggestions, such as access to information on the job market and greater pro-active research for vocational training and job opportunities by the young, should be applied.

Sports, culture and leisure activities are endorsed, but are not an integral component of the program. The *Mundialito Callejero*, a soccer tournament for street children held approximately every four months and an initiative of *Casa Ecuador* is the exception. Encouraging exchange among different groups of street children, the *Mundialito* is open to participants from street children programming and from teams organized directly by children "on" and "of" the street.¹⁵⁹ Most of *Casa Ecuador's* population is able to participate and they do so enthusiastically. Other structured sports and leisure activities must also be incorporated into the daily routine, especially that of the first two phases.

The same can be said for other health-related areas, including sexual education¹⁶⁰ and the promotion of a healthy body. Current medical care focuses more on diagnosing and

¹⁵⁹ The participation of street children in the *Mundialito* and other recreational and cultural activities offered by the organization, and the organization's provision of legal, medical and other support and information to this population continues through the ad-hoc, volunteer work of the Night Brigade project. Its cessation could endanger the close relations the program has built with many of these street children. Where financial resources available, the program would like to officially reincorporate the Night Brigade project into the methodology.

¹⁶⁰ Sexual education is provided on an individual basis by the psychology, medical, social worker and education teams. AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases and general sexuality issues are discussed and condoms are distributed. Group workshops provided by external programs are also available, but are sporadic. To avoid gaps and duplication, these efforts must be integrated into a comprehensive sexual education project.

curing diseases than on preventive health care. Issues such as nutrition, body image and hazardous work should be addressed (Mario). Adding these responsibilities to the objectives of the appropriate horizontal projects and incorporating them as monitoring indicators of the personal development of the child can best ensure they be carried out.

One particular area deserving praise is *Casa Ecuador's* attempt at community work. It promotes the open education system from its home base and, with the participation of other programs, has conducted a few prevention workshops with the surrounding community of *Barrio Tepito*. Covering such key topics as family abuse, communication and drug consumption, the courses address causes leading to the street child phenomenon. A few times a year it also holds a large cultural or sporting event, where the local community is invited and can learn about the work of *Casa Ecuador* and other preventive programs. Approximately 75 families are served every year. Unfortunately, these initiatives arise only when additional finances and/or teachers become available; they are not based on a planned project nor is any follow-up possible. As discussed in the concluding chapter, this is a key area that should be expanded.

Casa Ecuador's level of child participation also deserves praise. Child participation is higher than that in *Casa Alianza* in many respects. Although it is not a "self-managing program" and the young are not directly and officially involved in its methodological planning (Mario), various participatory channels encourage their input into both their personal development and larger programming issues. As noted above, important decisions concerning the child's life plan usually take place in the advisory meeting, where the child is a key participant. General accessibility to the director (the door is, literally, always open) and other staff members was apparent. Furthermore, the director and the population hold a meeting at least every two weeks where upcoming activities, new projects and opportunities, and major events are decided and announced. It is a space to reflect and discuss salient issues of concern. Similar ad-hoc meetings also take place with

staff members and often creative and practical ideas result. For example, the Detachment Initiation population suggested some of the components that were officially incorporated into the new Pre-Independent Phase: grocery assistance for the first six months and a monthly meeting between phase participants and *Casa Ecuador* to discuss their transition with staff members and the general population.¹⁶¹

Some, especially those in the last phases, participate more than others but there is a general interest on behalf of both the population and the staff to involve the young in the program. Staff members acknowledge the benefits child participation brings to *Casa Ecuador*; the new plan of action wants to expand child participation and disseminate information on children's rights and responsibilities as part of its short-term goals (*Casa de la Juventud*, 1997b: 42). Although no specific methods are mentioned, official channels for management input and greater incorporation of youth planning and implementing in horizontal projects should be included.

Human Resources

Casa Ecuador is run by 30 staff members who are paid by the private trust, the Social Protection Department and the *Delegación* of Cuauhtémoc. Approximately half are professionals working directly with the young, the other half composed of personnel providing general services and directorate staff. A few university students volunteer and other community members provide part-time assistance to the organization (Mario).¹⁶²

Very similar concerns to those of *Casa Alianza México* present themselves in *Casa Ecuador*. Some are fairly manageable while others are particularly acute: serious

¹⁶¹ Other examples of children's participation include: reaching a consensus between staff and the population to discipline members attempting to steal and damage the organization's computer; the creation of a youth honour committee made up of residents in the last phases to help staff enforce house rules (with the "graduation" of its members from the program, it eventually dissipated); the re-opening of the art class for the younger population, on the initiative and direction of a youth member of the program; and another youth resident assuming the position of "technical soccer director" to help out in the *Mundialito*.

¹⁶² Although the majority of volunteers enthusiastically participate in the program, *Casa Ecuador* lacks an official training process to effectively sensitize them to the population. Unfortunately, without effective training, their contribution to the program will remain limited (Mario).

understaffing in most areas leading to long working hours and underpaid personnel are undermining the individual attention and healthy development of the young. All interviewees indicated a 30% or higher increment in personnel, but key areas needing urgent attention include Educational Auxiliary (counsellors), Psychology, Social Work and Workshops. In addition, the existence of three separate hiring bodies means variations in salary, working schedule and benefits for similar jobs, thus causing tension among staff members. The inability of the program to recruit part of its personnel (those from the government) also leads to negligence and poor initiative of some members (Mario, Nora and David).

Initial and ongoing staff training is available both internally and through inter-institutional workshops, such as those offered by *Casa Alianza*. These, however, apply by and large to professional staff only; general service workers are not systematically taught about the methodology itself, despite their direct contact with the young and the extra help they often provide to front line workers (Marcos and Hugo). This hindsight has proven to be directly counterproductive to the methodology's objectives. Where training is provided, it is deemed insufficient. Staff recommend further training in such areas as children's rights, first aid, handling crisis situations, group dynamics, etc. (Nora, Carmen and Dora). Furthermore, training for all staff must emphasize the need to strictly adhere to house rules, particularly no drugs and no violence; professionalism must be displayed by all members. The directorate recognizes many of these difficulties and has incorporated "improved working conditions" as one of its long term goals in the new plan of action (Casa de la Juventud, 1997b: 42). No details are yet provided, but without increased financial support and the ability to directly select personnel, staffing improvements are limited.

As indicated by most interviewees and confirmed through observations, child-staff relations are generally warm. One salient concern, however, is the need for greater

reflection and sharing between some staff and the young and to tone down the rough verbal and physical interaction.¹⁶³ As one youth explained:

"Staff treatment towards the young should be more [intellectual] and more social. The staff wants to grab and punch the young.... I do it myself but I know I'm not supposed to." (Eduardo)

Casa Ecuador also has a collective standard of behaviour to avoid developing highly personal relationships that may have negative effects on the child. Children address the staff by their first name, rather than as *tíos* (uncles) or *papás* (parents) as is done in some Mexican institutions, and are reminded that they are their friends and counsellors, not their families (Mario). However, this organization also experienced a case where a youth and counsellor became romantically involved. The same hiring and counselling suggestions recommended for *Casa Alianza's* staff apply here. Furthermore, the behavioural standard should be expanded to address the aforementioned physical interaction and include communication guidelines based on the rights of the child.

Staff participation, displayed in daily decision-making concerning the young, in the technical meetings and towards planning and evaluating *Casa Ecuador's* programming, is relatively better than *Casa Alianza*. In theory, *Casa Ecuador's* management methods and structure encourage group cooperation and participation. Due to *Casa Ecuador's* relatively small size, physical space (contained within only one home) and limited number of personnel (one or two staff members per "team"), the different projects are able to maintain ongoing, open communications links with one another. The encouragement of interaction between areas (Casa de la Juventud, 1997b: 31, 55) through the mandatory technical meetings and otherwise help provide a quick response to special cases and (despite the previously mentioned difficulties) maintain a fairly low personnel turnover.

¹⁶³ In two instances, for example, the researcher witnessed corporal punishment. Despite the partial cultural acceptance of this behaviour in Mexico, one would expect child related programs to be progressive and familiar with children's rights. Adults must teach by example, especially when working with a population that is aggressive and has a low self-esteem.

Be that as it may, for a more holistic development of the young, greater interdisciplinary work and coordination of project areas are required. Some basic structures are already present. As a staff member explained:

"There isn't any one area [project] that weighs more than the other. Everything complements (each other's work), except the directorate, which has more weight."
(Nora)

This last comment requires elaboration. The director, the initiator of the new methodology, carries much of the planning and management burden. From approval of new education techniques, to weekly meeting with the children, to dispersal of weekly funds, the director is personally involved in all areas of the program. Viewing him as a charismatic, paternalistic and authoritative figure, most of the staff follow his lead and is afraid to directly contradict him, should their opinion differ. This hierarchical wall greatly restrains participatory planning, implementation and management in daily operations and in the systematization process of the new plan of action. His centrality could be dissipated by providing greater decision-making power to the technical council as a whole; that it may meet weekly and carry out important decisions and actions with or without the director's attendance (Mario). Workshops and counselling on participatory management and group dynamics could also be useful.

Funding and Allocation of Resources

It should be noted that information on *Casa Ecuador's* funding and resource allocation is as inaccessible as that of *Casa Alianza's*, and the same criticisms of such closed door policy apply. With these restrictions, the following can only provide limited discussion on the organization's financial situation.

According to the systematizer, NP \$1,000 is the average cost that *Casa Ecuador's* private trust contributes monthly per child. Considering that Social Protection provides for half of the organization's funding -- through personnel, food, material and lodging -- the average cost of serving a *Casa Ecuador* resident per month is approximately NP

\$2,000, the same as that spent at *Casa Alianza*.¹⁶⁴ Serving an average of 60 to 80 children at any one time, one can estimate that *Casa Ecuador* spends between NP \$1,440,000 and NP \$1,920,000 per year (equaling to between US \$144,000 and US \$192,000). About 60% of total funding is directed towards the expenses of the child (lodging, food, material, etc.) with the remainder going toward servicing other program delivery components and administrative purposes.

Relying on external resources since its inception, *Casa Ecuador's* financial difficulties have become increasingly acute. Financial support from both Social Protection and the private trust has considerably diminished over the last few years thereby increasingly straining the quality and availability of services: the closure of internal vocational training workshops, large reduction in personnel and basic materials to maintain projects, street work's state of abeyance, difficulty providing basic needs such as food and clothing to its population, etc.

To make matters worse, at the time of the field research funding from both sources was being threatened. The pact with the Social Protection Department was coming to an end. Ironically, the pact also created government dependency, in itself an obstacle for the autonomous development process of the civic association. The private trust originally created to ensure the project's continuity proved to be incapable of providing secure alternate sources of income. Internal ineptitude and dependency on government funds not only discouraged the private trust from developing novel ways of attracting or generating income, but it also limited its own ability to gather funds. With the apparent cessation of government funding, the trust was ready to cancel the project altogether. In response, *Casa Ecuador's* management team was searching for a new private trust to guarantee

¹⁶⁴ One must be careful of making financial comparisons between the organizations without having complete funding and resource allocation information. For example, although funding in *Casa Ecuador* appears to have less reach than in *Casa Alianza* -- with fewer and less comprehensive internal horizontal projects, a physically decaying home, etc. -- given the latter's financial campaign, the organization's daily operational expense components could vary widely from *Casa Ecuador's*.

continuity, secure funding for the project and become autonomous from Social Protection (Casa de la Juventud, 1997b: 4-6). The Social Protection Department has temporarily extend its support while the program finds new sources of income.

As previously mentioned, in the process of streamlining its services and enhancing programming quality to its target group, the program has increased collaboration with other actors and has transferred out some of its population. However, the program has undervalued the potential of its vocational training workshops as income-generating activities, not only for the young, but for the program as a whole. With some initial funding and proper planning (including feasibility studies), the organization should attempt to tap some of the unmet needs of their community. Those dormant workshops that have the greatest potential in providing local goods and services should be reopened and/or new workshops based on the feasibility studies findings should be created. Of course, securing a new board of trustees holds the key for *Casa Ecuador's* short term survival.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Casa Alianza México and *Casa Ecuador* are considered to be two of the most effective rehabilitative interventions available in Mexico City. By linking their most relevant strengths and weaknesses to the previously identified guidelines for action, it is hoped that these and other programs may learn from their experiences.

Casa Alianza México and *Casa Ecuador* are generally effective at conceptualizing the development process of the child in order to intervene within a holistic framework. The methodological phases and horizontal projects that make up the framework of the programs are fairly comprehensive; they generally understand and conceptualize the child's environment and the partial role their intervention plays in the larger educative development process of the child. Although not every project is having the desired impact on its population, both organizations are able to identify various conditions affecting the child and have created projects or established collaborative links with other programs to enhance their own interventions. *Casa Alianza México's* family reintegration, HIV/AIDS and drug rehabilitation projects and *Casa Ecuador's* work philosophy deserve praise. Other projects, including the psychology and social work teams of both organizations and *Casa Ecuador's* family orientation projects must be improved.

The methodological approaches of both interventions are based on the developmental process of the child. In encouraging the child to leave the street, the programs offer not only an alternate physical living arrangement, but comprehensive, educative approaches that urge the child to pursue alternate life-paths. Theoretically, the *plan de vida* of each individual is constructed according to his or her experience. In practice, however, both organizations must place greater emphasis on the autonomous decision-making process of the child. *Casa Alianza*, in particular, needs to find a better

balance between its rigid institutional structure and accommodating to the *plan de vida* and best interests of each individual child. Ironically, *Casa Ecuador's* lack of structured activities and the high degree of social interaction available to children in the earlier phases are undermining the developmental interests of this more transient population. Strict enforcement of rules and a more comprehensive educative process for the first two phases are required. Of course, staff increase in both organizations, and particularly in *Casa Ecuador*, can also ensure that the child's activities and choices are continuously tracked.

Both organizations are increasingly making use of monitoring tools to follow the development process of the child along the phases and projects: the use or creation of psycho-social indicators, a comprehensive personal dossier and regular advisory meetings. Areas for improvement remain, however. For *Casa Alianza*, the psycho-social indicators must be filled in comprehensively, accurately and on schedule by all staff members so that they become the primary monitoring tool. *Casa Ecuador* must be careful of doing the same when it begins using its own indicators. Both organizations also need to extend monitoring after the child leaves the organizations and to regularly monitor the child's concrete actions along the phases. If complete, accurate and focused, statistics can help measure the effectiveness of a phase, project or program as a whole, indicating areas of strength and weaknesses and in need of targeted research. As this analysis indicated, when accompanied by subjective judgment, quantitative monitoring can help identify reasons for setbacks and successes.

The compact project cycle and group management structure of both organizations have proven to be fairly flexible in adjusting to new situations. For *Casa Ecuador* -- with the addition and elimination of internal projects and phases, fluctuation in personnel and material, change in ownership and programming, etc. -- this flexibility has proven vital for its survival. With the help of the systematization project of QUIERA, *Casa Alianza México* and *Casa Ecuador* now have written information on the history of their

organizations, daily activities and operative concepts and are implementing or have implemented internal evaluations. Both organizations, however, need to build more on the capacity and strength of the young and the staff. Not surprisingly, limited participation at the highest levels and weak communication links are representative qualities of the Mexican social construction, where authority is exercised through hierarchical structures and relations between people are often based on lack of trust. As suggested by Dallape, such organizations need to sensitize all personnel to using concerted action to modify some of the dysfunctional policies and procedures of their organizations (May 1996: 292). Supportive and flexible management supervision and greater decision-making power and independence from the top (be it from Coordination or the director) are vital to improve human resource relations and project management and cooperation. Disclosure of funding and resource allocation to its staff (and the public) can also improve cost-effectiveness, not to mention enhanced project credibility to the public.

Institutional responses and micro-level interventions have several disadvantages, some of which have been partly overcome by *Casa Alianza* and *Casa Ecuador*, and others require further action. For instance, institutions are generally unable to accommodate those in most need: street children who cannot conform to the acceptable forms of social behaviour of the institution (those who have been on the street the longest, suffer from serious drug addiction, etc.). The same characteristics that make *Casa Alianza* a "clean" establishment -- a structured environment and strict rules against drugs, arms, violence and sex, for example -- and therefore a favourite welfare agency with the public, prevent some children from becoming involved with or remaining in the institution. Even in *Casa Ecuador's* relative liberty, the program cannot welcome heavy cases of drug addiction in its facilities, for example, without compromising the development process of others. In a city where institutionalization is more the norm than

the exception, alternate forms of interventions that can reach the most marginalized must be expanded.

The institutionalization of children also generally undermines their ability to learn the full range of social and emotional skills they will need as adults (Ennew, 1994: 88-89). Notwithstanding the extensive methodological programs of *Casa Alianza* and *Casa Ecuador*, their population (especially that of *Casa Alianza*) demonstrated difficulties in developing to their full potential, despite already being in the last phases, and in making a successful transition to an independent life. There is also be a discrepancy between the more middle-class like values of institutions like *Casa Alianza* and the lower-class background of the children. As Dallape explains:

"Will children who have lived in such institutions be able to adjust when they leave? The expectations created in them when they are living there is that they will have education, training and employment that will allow them to maintain a similar standard of living. Their role models are the people who look after them. Will these expectations be met?" (Dallape, May 1996: 288-289)

Some *Casa Alianza* and *Casa Ecuador* graduates are reintegrated with their families while others are able to hold onto jobs, get married and raise a family. Nevertheless, poor follow-up on behalf of both institutions have failed to thoroughly record the ability of children to survive once they return to the environment from which they came, especially (in the case of *Casa Alianza*) after becoming accustomed to a semi-secluded lifestyle that differs considerably from that of their communities.

The best way to address these roadblocks is to embrace the CRC in the methodologies and educate and retrain the staff and children about their rights and responsibilities, including ways to share knowledge and power. *Casa Ecuador's* strong embrace of the child's liberty and self determination -- displayed by its work philosophy matching that of the young, high degree of interaction between the child and society and of child participation -- and its incorporation of the new Pre-Independent phase can go a long way in retaining and further developing the positive social and decision-making skills

a child requires in his or her "reincorporation" to his or her community. To enhance and strengthen the child's sense of empowerment and self respect and his or her capabilities for autonomous decision-making, *Casa Alianza* must build mechanisms where the young can identify their needs, and take part in the planning, implementation and evaluation processes of programming. Increased child participation can also best ensure that the values and actions of the organization are representative of those of the young.

Often dependent on outside funding, micro-scale programs are also not sustainable. Most are unlike the unique *Casa Alianza México*, who has the extended financial backing of its mother institution and the initial resources to invest in a massive financial campaign. *Casa Ecuador* and other interventions struggling to survive must further increase their collaborative links with other programs and create income-generating activities to help ensure their sustainability.

As these case studies demonstrated, institutions are also not cost-effective; given their limited funding, micro-scale programs in general can only serve a small fraction of the total population in need of assistance. *Casa Alianza México* and *Casa Ecuador* are indeed "jewel boxes," focusing more on quality rather than coverage. For example, other micro-scale projects of Mexico City include the Recovery Program of *Visión Mundial*, a filial of World Vision (serving approximately 600 children), Educación con el Niño Callejero or EDNICA (serving 70 children), and El Caracol (serving only 10 children). Even the relatively large *Casa Alianza México* who claims to target half of Mexico City's children "of" the street can only reach 6% of all the estimated children working and/or living on the street (1,800 out of the 30,000 total estimate). With the phenomenon growing, micro-programming alone cannot keep up with the demand.

Casa Alianza México and *Casa Ecuador* are aware of their limitations and the partial role they contribute towards a comprehensive street children's intervention. The organizations identify their work in the larger context of the street child phenomenon, but

their missions, objectives and target groups clearly labels them as rehabilitative micro-scale interventions. *Casa Alianza*, in particular, has done little to attempt to tackle the multiple interrelated processes contributing to the distress of urban children. As one counsellor explained:

"One sees a noble objective [working in this program] but it must be improved because, later on, this will surpass *Casa Alianza* because one attacks the symptom, not the sickness, not the poverty.... Daily one works with the child but every time more go on to [live on] the street." (Alfonso)

A comprehensive intervention to the street child phenomenon must combine both preventive and rehabilitative actions -- preventing children and youth from choosing the streets as an alternative way of life, and working with those who have already made that decision and live under severe conditions. Primary intervention tries to reach the child before he or she becomes involved in high-risk behaviour, thereby preventing deterioration and suffering which are much more difficult and expensive to cure.

Unfortunately, the probability of *Casa Alianza México* intervening in primary prevention is quite slim. As previously mentioned, the organization is part of the larger Covenant House Latin America, whose focus lies on "rehabilitation and defense" of children; in its 18 years of experience, it has not become directly involved in preventive community work. Greater primary intervention may also occur by supporting and/or collaborating closely with other organizations who do. While *Casa Alianza México* has established various agreements with other rehabilitative programs, the institution is generally disconnected from preventive programming and the local community. Save for public education campaigns, its inward looking services are strictly oriented to address the needs of "its" street children and their families. At least through inter-institutional collaboration, *Casa Alianza* must attempt to go beyond its curative, compensatory approach to address the root causes leading to the street child phenomenon.

In contrast, *Casa Ecuador* has realized the necessity to address problems presented in the children's marginal communities and has begun some preventive work, albeit limited. Given its location and access to the local community, the organization should further push its facilities as a center for greater community activity and programming, to further sensitize members on the issue, preserve the family and encourage mobilization. Income-generating and micro-business programs, for example, could also be offered to community members, adults and children alike. Providing employment opportunities or imparting training to families of child workers, street children and children "at risk" can help contain the street child phenomenon at various fronts. In the long run, it is organizations such as these that can evolve and attempt to change the social conditions that create the circumstance leading to the phenomenon. Providing funding availability, *Casa Ecuador* has the potential to become an effective actor in preventive programming, an under-developed level of intervention in Mexico City.

This paper should serve as an introductory work to the analysis of street children programming. Future evaluations of *Casa Alianza México* and *Casa Ecuador* should go beyond and cover other areas that are not addressed nor thoroughly analyzed in this study. For instance, once *Casa Ecuador* establishes psycho-social indicators, the organization will be able to conduct an impact assessment that can more accurately measure the effect the program is having on its population. Furthermore, if *Casa Alianza* and *Casa Ecuador* compile complete group statistics on the concrete actions of their target groups, the organizations, their phases and projects will be able to carry out systematically focused evaluations of their work.

The programs could also benefit from a comprehensive cost-effective evaluation, one that seeks the consultation and participation of the staff and the young, not only management and donors. As well, *Casa Alianza* should consider conducting further

research into gender issues, attempting to identify and systematically apply those methods of intervention that work best for the male and the female population.

Future research must also be conducted on other interventions, government and non-government, working in Mexico City. Given the lack of coordination among and regulation of the numerous street children programs, research should involve both individual evaluations and a thorough situational analysis of the types, levels and foci of interventions. It is only by identifying and studying the actors and by connecting and sharing information and best practices for intervention that a more comprehensive and uniform approach to the phenomenon can be achieved.

The identified guidelines for action may serve as a starting point to preliminary examine other existing and emerging interventions. However, it is hoped and expected that, when conducting research and evaluations, other progressive philosophies and guidelines for intervention emerge. Street children programming, and the ideas that create, shape and evaluate their strategies, must continue to evolve and adapt to best reach children out of place.

Appendix 1: Macro Socio-Economic Structures:

Contributing Causes to the Street Child Phenomenon in Mexico

"The casual factors are complex, but fundamentally rooted in poverty and subsequently in family disintegration." (Baker and Knaul, 1991: 6)

A variety of interrelated processes contribute to the distress of urban children. They may affect the children directly, such as parental conflict, or indirectly, through the economic, social and physical environment created by multiple interrelated macro- and micro-level structures. The processes or causes leading children to leave their households are many and may include, for example, war, natural disasters, poverty and intra-family abuse and disintegration. These processes have, in fact, pushed children out of their homes since time immemorial. However, the socio-economic structures that contribute to the development of these processes differ and change according to place and time.

As Baker and Knaul point out above, poverty is a catalyst of the street child phenomenon, and poverty itself is a result of various interrelated macro- and micro socio-economic factors. While the last fifty years have experienced an increase in the levels of wealth and well-being in the population of the developing world (as the socio-economic indicators demonstrate), poverty and unequal distribution of wealth remains. This section shows, through a case study, how various socio-economic structures linked to the modernization of one particular country, Mexico, have lead to an increasing number of street children and youth. The following should not be taken as a comprehensive analysis of all contributing factors in the one country, but as a general overview of some of the larger socio-economic variables that push and pull children and youth to the streets of its cities.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ The author is aware that different disciplines may choose to focus on particular factors and provide alternate theoretical perspectives on the causes contributing to the phenomenon of street children. A sociological study of growing intra-family violence and abuse in Mexico City or a psychological study of

Economic Overview

Since the 1940s, the shift away from an agrarian society reoriented Mexico's economy toward industrial production. An import substitution industrialization (ISI) policy was encouraged by fiscal incentives and protection against imports. With high government spending, considerable overseas investment and massive foreign borrowing, as well as petroleum discoveries and increases in the product's prices, the Mexican economy grew by over 6%, on average, between 1958 and 1982. The "Mexican miracle" of 1945-65, and the stabilized development period that followed made Mexico one of the leading Latin American countries in industrial production.

However, ISI's development strategy eventually proved unsustainable, leading to structural and macro-economic imbalances. Its protective nature created low quality goods at low levels of productivity and high prices, capital rather than labour intensive production (which is much more abundant in Mexico), a favouring of industry against agriculture and a bloated bureaucracy. Rapid growth was accompanied by high fiscal deficits, a growing rate of inflation and increasing trade deficits. The Mexican indebtedness to foreign creditors was spiraling out of control to such an extent that by the Summer of 1982, the country had an external debt of US \$80 billion, of which \$60 billion represented loans to the public sector. International and local factors caused the Mexican debt financing to become saturated: interest rates were on the rise; a global recession lowered demand for Mexican primary exports; and the fall of the oil market prices destroyed Mexico's profitable monoculture on oil. With its foreign reserves all but exhausted, the government was forced to declare a temporary moratorium on its debt service (Barkin, 1990: 96 and South America..., 1997: 443, 446).

the characteristics of the street child and his or her family, for example, may offer different perspectives It is important to acknowledge that these views complement each other and jointly increase the knowledge of the phenomenon and possible paths of action.

After Mexico defaulted its debt payments in 1982, the country experienced an economic crisis that had serious repercussions throughout the 1980s. Local and foreign investments and oil exports plummeted, production in some sectors fell to a standstill, factories closed and hundreds of thousands of workers were laid off. The local currency, the *peso*, continued to fall while capital flight increased. In return for a US \$4 billion loan, the IMF required the government to implement austerity measures designed to bring cuts in every area of state spending, including social programs and subsidies of basic goods (Adler Hellman, 1994: 7). In the 1983-88 period, consumer prices increased by almost 4,000% while annual GDP growth averaged just 0.1%. Meanwhile, real wages decreased about 40 to 60%. In addition, Mexico's earthquake of 1985 left damage of approximately four billion dollars and tourism revenues fell drastically (Fatemi, 1988: 106 and South America..., 1997: 446). The Latin American "lost decade" was most certainly experienced in Mexico.

The austerity program of the 1980s also spelled out an end to the ISI development strategy; the National Plan for Development of the government of President Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988) called for a rapid increase to economic liberalization and deregulation. Starting with the last three years of his *sexenio* (six year presidential term) and continuing with his successors', Carlos Salinas (1988-94) and Ernesto Zedillo (1994-present), the national trade regime has been liberalized in various ways. Mexico joined the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT, and since 1995, the World Trade Organization or WTO) in 1986 and within a year's time, the country opened up 85% of its trade to GATT members. Deregulation encouraged foreign investments and reduced the role of the state in various sectors. Administrative procedures for the approval of direct foreign investment were simplified and by 1992, import licenses were required for fewer than two percent of all imports and the average tariff was 11% (South America..., 1997: 446). Furthermore, Mexico's export became more diversified, reducing its

dependence on oil. Trade liberalization was consolidated on 1 January, 1994, when the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Mexico, Canada and the USA came into effect. That same year, Mexico was admitted into the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Trade liberalization and an exchange rate band system succeeded in lowering the inflation rate; a rising factor since the 1982 crisis, inflation plummeted from 114% in 1988 to around 7% in December 1994 (South America..., 1997: 446). A broadening of the tax base and a more efficient tax collection, a reduction in domestic interest rates and wage and tax restraints (the result of a pact with labour and business leaders) helped to stabilize the economy. Direct foreign investments increased from US\$ 1.7 billion in 1985 to \$8 billion in 1994 and private investment triggered an annual average GDP growth rate of 2.5% in the 1990-94 period. Nevertheless, the exchange rate band proved unsustainable. As the peso appreciated in real terms, the balance-of-payments grew a deficit. Compounded by domestic instability¹⁶⁶ and rising interest rates in the international market, the currency suffered a loss of confidence in 1994. An extensive withdrawal of investment funds and a rapid decline of foreign reserves led the overvalued peso to a devaluation crisis in December of that year. Despite the government's removal of the exchange band ceiling, its delay in producing a credible plan to control devaluation exacerbated investor nervousness. Only a massive rescue program, headed by the US government in January 1995, succeeded in preventing default on debt payments and in temporarily supporting the Mexican economy (South America..., 1997: 446-447).

Once again, the government committed itself to emergency stabilization measures, consisting of strict control on money supply, reductions in public spending (including

¹⁶⁶ On 1 January 1994, the day NAFTA came into effect, an indigenous revolt in the southern state of Chiapas gained international headlines. The EZLN, or *Zapatistas*, brought to light the situation of the marginalized rural indigenous peoples through their demands to their right to land and democratic representation/self-government. A few months later, the ruling party's (PRI) presidential candidate was assassinated and tensions grew surrounding the presidential and congressional elections in August.

health, education, housing and basic subsidies), increased taxes and wage constraints. Despite the improvement of the balance of payments, the volatile *peso* continues to deteriorate confidence among local investors and changes in international markets threaten capital flight (South America..., 1997: 446-447). The Mexican economy once again entered into a deep recession, making it the most severe crisis of the past 50 years: in 1995, the economy contracted by 6.6%, the rate of inflation increased to 35% and more than 500,000 people became unemployed. Between 1990 and 1996, wages lost almost 60% of their purchasing power, severely lowering the consumption capacity of families. Although the country's growth rate has since re-bounced quickly, its three year average period since 1995 has fallen short of the 3% mark. Rapid gains in employment levels have also been unable to reduce open unemployment or raise the incomes of persons employed in low productivity sectors. A slight increase in the underemployment rate continues and real wages remain depressed (ECLAC, 1997: 33-35, 49; ECLAC, February 1998: 21-24, 27-28 and INEGI, 1997: 109).

Poverty and Unequal Distribution of Wealth

It is important to highlight that Mexico's economic development has been accompanied by large poverty levels and an unequal distribution of wealth. Prior to 1982, industrialization and modernization did stimulate a process of real improvement in the living standards for all social groups. However, the economic crisis that began in 1976 with a decline in the real purchasing power of salaries, reversed this trend for small farmers, salaried workers and professionals. And notwithstanding the impressive overall growth rates of the 1960s and 1970s, the rapid economic expansion contributed to one of the most unequal patterns of income distribution in the world. The largest shares of the benefits from growth were consistently appropriated by capital, the elite business class. While in 1958, the richest 5% of the population had incomes 22 times those of the poorest 10%, by 1980 the ratio differentiation had grown to 50 (Banco Nacional de

Comercio Exterior in Adler Hellman, 1994: 2). Large segments of the population who were living in poverty have experienced malnutrition, illiteracy and serious health problems (Barkin, 1990: 79-82).

Moreover, the social costs of the 1980s debt crisis and the recent *peso* devaluation have not been born equally by all social groups in Mexico. The last two decades have been marked by contractions of the middle class and a growing number of people living in poverty. Meanwhile, the poorest members of the population have been bearing a disproportionate burden of the effects of economic austerity measures and structural adjustment programs.

Partly as a response to the growing marginality of the 1980s, the federal government announced in 1988 the creation of a demand-based poverty alleviation program, the National Solidarity Program (PRONASOL). Making rapid and widespread impact in many parts of Mexico, PRONASOL has proven to be, in some cases and under certain conditions, an effective means of capacity development and empowerment at the grass-roots level. However, it has been largely unable to reach the poorest of the poor. Given the scope of the enormous national poverty levels and social and economic inequalities, PRONASOL continues to be limited (Cornelius et al., 1994: 3-26 and Opp, March 1, 1996).¹⁶⁷ Nor can it combat the burden of the latest crisis. In 1992, about 40% of the population, or 44 million people were estimated to live in conditions of poverty, of which 16.1% were found to be in extreme poverty (CNAFI, 1995: 153). The 1995 *peso* crisis has increased the volume and proportion of those living in poverty. According to the World Bank, at least 60% of Mexicans, or 55 million people were living under the

¹⁶⁷ PRONASOL aims to target the poor through community oriented initiatives, effective participation and joint state-community/neighbourhood responsibility. It has grown considerably in size, providing short-term material benefits and a potential for political and social change. Nevertheless, critics question not only its ability to reach the poorest of the poor but its efficiency as it relates to the manipulation of funds for political purposes. While communities can select and participate in projects, the presidency and cabinet have control over the program content, spending priorities and allocation of funds. It has also become partly politicized, through the exercise of patron-client relations correlating amount and allocation of funds to elections (Cornelius et al., 1994: 3-26).

poverty line in 1996 and 20% were considered to be in extreme poverty (in UNICEF, December 1996: 1). While the proportion of poor in the rural areas is larger than that in the urban centers, the number of urban poor is currently much higher in volume. The poorest of the poor are indigenous peoples, peasants and settlers living in the surrounding urban slums. Over half of the poor are under 18 years of age (UNICEF, December 1996: 4).

Urbanization, Marginalization and Family Disintegration

Mexico's path toward economic modernization has born enormous social costs on its population. A multitude of interrelated macro-level processes -- capital intensive industrialization, neglect of agricultural production, rapid urbanization, unemployment and under employment and poverty, among others -- and micro-level processes -- parental conflicts, lack of cooperation within the family, degraded community environmental and social conditions -- contribute to the phenomenon of the street child.

Agricultural Neglect

An inefficient land distribution and subsidization systems and overall neglect of the agrarian sector have left an impoverished peasantry, many of whom have migrated to the cities in search of better socio-economic opportunities. Agricultural laws, policies and statal organisms, created theoretically to abolish the *latifundios* (large owned family estates) of pre-revolutionary Mexico have, in effect created a socioeconomic setting that has maintained millions of Mexicans poor over the last seven decades. The agrarian reform created an *ejidatario* system of land distribution where the majority of the *ejidos* (small community-held farm properties) were not parceled out, meaning investment, retirement, vending and renting were compromised due to lack of insecurity; unused land was in constant threat of being expropriated back to the government. It also led the national government to distribute over three times the cultivable surface land. The countryside was transformed from a *latifundio* to a *minifundio*, where tiny parcels of land forced over 70%

of properties to become unsustainable. Most of the lands are so small that many crops and modern technology are unsuitable. Despite having distributed over 100 million hectares of land by 1992, over four million peasants are landless, a larger number than that previous to the 1910-1917 Revolution (Pazos, 1996: 45-51).¹⁶⁸

In addition to the inefficient *ejidatario* system, increased investments towards industrialization over agriculture, both under protectionist and liberalization policies, decreased agricultural production for local consumption. ISI signified decades of neglect of and misspent investments towards peasant agriculture. The distribution and subsidization of water, fertilizers, grains and technical assistance was bureaucratized by national organisms that inefficiently spent and pocketed millions of pesos (Pazos, 1996: 49-50). From 1982 to 1988, the Mexican Ministry of Agriculture was forced to drop its budget by 37% (Pugh, May 1992).

In 1992, the Salinas' government brought a historic reform to the land tenure system in order to promote agricultural competitiveness and lessen the dependency on the government for financial inputs. The traditional *ejidatario* system has now given its members rights similar to those of private ownership, including the security of tenure, the ability to sell their land to other *ejidatarios* and the right to enter into joint ventures with the private sector (Roett, 1990: 9). Despite the much needed reforms, critics explain that it being implemented at the time of economic liberalization, peasants will be unable to compete against the growing local and foreign agribusiness. With low technological development and availability of natural resources and minimal subsidies compared to those of the United States, traditional, small-scale peasant agriculture is being displaced by large, modern firms (Acosta Urquidi, October 28, 1993).

Economic liberalization policies and structural adjustment programs have affected the traditional agricultural mode of production and changed the country's physiognomy.

¹⁶⁸ Agrarian government leaders have also used the system as a political tool to control large contingents of *ejidatarios*, with threats of invading unused *ejidos* or promises of distributing more land.

Small farms using traditional cultivation methods for basic human foodstuffs production have been shifting away to large mechanized agribusiness producing animal feeds and luxury fruits and vegetables for export. This transformation has resulted in reductions in nutritional levels for important segments of the population (Barkin, 1990: 88). Meanwhile, the surplus labour of displaced peasants who do not find work in the new agribusiness enterprises have continued to make their way to the urban centers, contributing to the rapid urbanization of Mexico.

Urbanization

Mexico, as in much of Latin America, has experienced an unprecedented rate of urbanization, more a result of rural-urban migration than of natural population growth.¹⁶⁹ Mexico's total urban population has grown by 4.9, 4.8 and 4.6% in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s respectively (US Dept. of Labour and STPS, 1992). In 1970, nearly 35% of Mexico City's residents, and over 50% of those over 20 years old, were born outside of the urban center (Messmacher in Alvarez Enriquez, 1995: 120). Currently, 75% of all Mexicans are urbanized (UNICEF, 1997: 89).

Since the 1940s, parallel to industrialization, Mexico City and other urban centers have received great migratory waves, newly settled urbanites that contributed to a permanent urban demographic growth. The post World War II urban-biased industrialization policy attracted job-seekers to urban areas while the stagnant agriculture pushed farmers out of the country side, particularly in the 1960s. The real or perceived facilities available in the cities with respect to employment, access to schooling, health and other social services continues to be a pull factor behind rural-urban migration, just as the lack of land, employment, lower earnings and poor living conditions of rural areas

¹⁶⁹ Please see "Urban Report." (In NACLA: Report on the Americas. Vol. XXVIII, No. 4, Jan/Feb 1995) for various articles commenting on Latin America's urbanization, urban social disparities and struggles for survival.

lacking social infrastructure operate as push factors.¹⁷⁰ It is important to note that a large proportion of this urban migration has consisted of children and youth and young families in search of employment opportunities.

To a lesser extent, natural population growth has contributed to Mexico's rapid urbanization. As a whole, Mexico experienced high natural population increases in the 1950s and 1960s-1970s of 3.1 and 3.3% respectively, a growth that has only begun to decline in the 1980s (US Dept. of Labour and STPS). Mexico's current total population is of approximately 91 million, almost half of which are children and youth. The past high rates of fertility, the increase in number of women in their childbearing ages and declining mortality rates have contributed to a high percentage of young people: children under 18 comprise 47% and those under 15 comprise 36% of the total population (CNAFI, 1995: 153). Despite that youth are already slightly declining as a percentage of the total population, their absolute numbers will continue to increase (Baker and Knaul, 1991: 6). Such growth will have a significant impact in the urban centers; a larger percentage of Mexican children and youth (ages 15 to 24) live in cities than the urban population percentage as a whole (Baker and Knaul, 1991: 6).

Mexico City or the Federal District (DF), in particular, has experienced a unique territorial, demographic and economic growth. Its double function as the political capital and national hub for economic development has stimulated migration and strengthened centralization; it has become the primate city of Mexico. Mexico City's population has grown from 1.7 million inhabitants in 1940 to 7.0 in 1960, 11.6 in 1970, and reached 18.7 million by 1990 (US Dept. of Labour and STPS, 1992). Territorial expansion and the consequent conurbation with residential and industrial municipalities of neighbouring State of Mexico, known as the metropolization of the city or the creation of the *zona*

¹⁷⁰ The rural-urban income distribution gap has steadily grown and was especially acute during the lost decade; between 1984 and 1989, rural income per capita decreased 20 times more than the urban (Alarcón, 1993).

metropolitana de la ciudad de Mexico (ZMCD), have not sufficed in alleviating the high demographic density level. The natural demographic slowdown and the displacement of a growing number of Mexico City's residents towards the neighbouring municipalities have considerably diminished the growth of the Federal District. Nevertheless, its already huge population will continue to add hundred of thousands of people to this primate city. The ZMCM currently represents over a fifth of the national population (and one of the worlds largest) in an area that is approximately one percent of the national territory. It provides 36% of the gross national product (GNP) and contains 50% of the national bank credit (Alvarez Enriquez, 1995: 113-121).

While the resources needed to satisfy the basic needs of the Mexican population are considerable, the high level of concentration in Mexico City has made a metropolitan area in high demand of infrastructure and services. Compared to rural areas, the 16 *delegaciones* (municipalities) that make up the Federal District¹⁷¹ have a more established and complete infrastructure: 96% of households have drinking water, 93% have sewage and 99% have electricity (INEGI Census, 1990, in Alvarez Enriquez, 1995: 121-122). Despite this urban-biased, centralized usage of resources -- these statistics being considered among the best in the country (see Beristain in Randall, 1996: 391-395) -- the demand for metropolitan services are constantly higher than their supply, the principal social needs are not being attended in a sufficient nor satisfactory manner nor are they being properly distributed. Almost half of all housing experience overcrowding. Added to these problems are the dangerous levels of environmental pollution and the escalating levels of crime and violence, product of the economic crises, agglomeration and marginalization (Alvarez Enriquez, 1995: 121-123). The municipal and district governments will continue to meet unprecedented challenges by just attempting to maintain the city functioning and preventing living conditions from worsening.

¹⁷¹ Please see Figure 1 for a map of the Federal District.

Meanwhile, the level of marginality within the Federal District is much lower than in many of the neighbouring municipalities where approximately half of the population of the ZMCM lives (Alvarez Enriquez, 1995: 122-123). It is largely in these surrounding urban slums, or *barrios populares*, where levels of extreme urban poverty can be found and where the street child phenomenon originates. The majority of this population is made up of migrant origin, with many young families in their reproductive years contributing to the already high incidence of un- and under-employment.¹⁷² A high density population marks a saturation of available space, settlements with overcrowded, poor housing structures, many lacking land security. Access to health and education are severely curtailed. Limited public services and urban planning also mean lack of: drinking water, sewage, electricity, pavement, roads and communication services, green spaces, open areas and facilities for recreation. Children and youth are the most vulnerable group exposed to the effects of such detrimental living conditions.

Unemployment and Under-Employment

This marginalized population has been unable to benefit from the perceived employment opportunities of the city. Despite the recent decline in population growth, the population is still growing and currently, approximately one million Mexicans enter the work force each year (Cameron, 1992: 217). Meanwhile, the rapid increase of the urban population has been met by a slow and retarded economic growth that has been unable to create sufficient formal employment. The capital intensive technologies of the industrial sector have also been ill suited to accommodate the excess labour supply. Many of the new migrants, peasants turned into low-skilled workers, have joined the job search in the saturated industrial and expanding tertiary sectors. Where formal employment has

¹⁷² It is important to note that in a Mexico City survey (UNICEF, 1996: 29), over 80% of children "of" the street claimed to come from families of five or more members.

closed opportunities, much of the surplus labour has found alternative means of production and subsistence in the growing and extremely competitive informal sector.

While the informal sector expanded in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s as the Mexican economy grew,¹⁷³ this sector has experienced the largest growth rates during the recession years. As stated above, the lost decade signified job losses, the reduction of real earnings in the formal sector and high inflation. With a slow recovery shattered by the second recession of 1995, the need for families to obtain an income to survive have resulted in a large creation of informal jobs. An inefficient welfare system -- with no unemployment insurance and minimum old age pension -- signifies that those searching for work cannot rely on a safety net to support themselves and their families.

The GNP has a positive correlation with formal employment, but when the GNP decreases, it is inversely correlated to informal employment; in a recession, the net participation rate of the informal sector increases yet the incomes received by informal producers fall (ILO, 1991: 10). Thus, the rate of informality has increasingly grown in the last 20 years, with the lost decade reflecting the highest growth rate at 9.5% between 1983 and 1988 (US Dept. of Labour and STPS, 1992: 3). According to a 1988 National Employment Survey, of an economically active population (EAP) of 36.8%, 37.9% belonged to the informal sector. Approximately one third of the EAP continues to belong to this sector with 11.5 million informal producers in 1995 (Informe de Gobierno in Medina, Sept. 8, 1995).

Working Children and Youth

Just as the informal sector has been a permanent fixture in the Mexican economy, so have informal jobs provided an ongoing means through which the young help support

¹⁷³ With a rapid growing population, the formal sector has been unable to meet the increasing demands for goods and services; the surplus labour has taken advantage of this opportunity. For example, due to the unequal distribution of labour, the informal sector started catering to the particular needs of the growing salaried workers (US Dept. of Labour and STPS, 1992: 2-3).

their families. However, the participation of the urban young in the informal sector has increased within the context of economic austerity measures and structural adjustment programs. Mexico has experienced an increase in the incorporation of children and youth, women,¹⁷⁴ and even the elderly into the labour market. The income of a single family member holding one job was once considered sufficient to support a middle-class household; yet the crisis of the 1980s and the current recession have altered this pattern. Economic pressures have resulted in a decline in the quality of life in the population, expressed in part by the devaluation of the employment force -- in view of the supply of low quality jobs -- and declining earning levels -- with higher competition and falling real income levels. Bread-winners are in constant search for alternate, higher paying jobs (formal or informal) and/or are forced to carry out more than one economic activity. Despite these efforts, it has become indispensable for many households to have other members contributing to the family income (Alvarez Enriquez, 1995: 117-120). While for decades, this has been the reality of many of the marginalized households in rural areas and urban slums, the crises have particularly worsened their levels of well-being and intensified the competition for sources of income. Thus, the poor households are forced to expend all their energies and resources, including human resources, in order to survive; more of their children and youth are working, with longer hours and under more dangerous conditions (please see below).

A 1993 national study estimated that the economic participation rate of children between ages 12-14 and 15-19 is of 19.6 and 47.5% respectively (INEGI/STyPS, 1993).

¹⁷⁴ The last three decades have experienced changes in women's economic participation outside of their home. Whereas in 1970, 16% of Mexican women 12 years and older said to be economically active, in 1979, it was 21% and by 1991 it had reached 31% (INEGI in Blanco, 1996: 316-317). The socio-demographic characteristics of women in the labour-force has also undergone some changes, especially in the 1990s. The highest rate of women's participation in the labour market has shifted away from young (from 20 to 24 years), unmarried, and childless women, to women in the 35-39 age group. Whereas traditionally, women left the labour-force at the time of marriage or when they had children, presently women with conjugal unions and with children are joining or remaining in the labour market (Blanco, 1996: 316-318).

In absolute terms this is a significant number; as indicated above, 47% of the population, or approximately 43 million Mexicans are children (CNAFI, 1995: 153). The largest group of child labourers between 12 and 17 years of age are found in the agricultural sector (over 40%), followed by those who carry out services, commercial and manufacturing activities (Robles Berlanga in Cruz, August 6, 1998). Although statistical data varies, one survey approximates 115 thousand children and youth to be working on the streets of the main urban centers of Mexico (National Survey in Cruz, August 6, 1998).

Street-based working children and youth have increased within the context of the worsening economic crises of the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁷⁵ However, the streets are not the exclusive area where the most severely deprived urban children take refuge in search of alternative means of survival; children in extreme poverty are increasingly seeking work in less visible areas. This is in part due to the diversification of economic or paid activities in closed areas and the competition with adults for territorial street spaces.¹⁷⁶ With the onset of the 1995 economic crisis, hundreds if not thousands of families have taken to the streets for the first time in search of alternative means to enable them to subsist. This leads to a battle between adults and children, both for the best-located territorial spaces and for the best days and schedules for work. Furthermore, the City's measures for

¹⁷⁵ One of the manifestations of economic setbacks and social cuts are high rates of school drop-outs. During the last decade, the average years of schooling increased by one year to 6.4 years, half the increase of the previous decade. This slowdown occurred because secondary school graduates did not move on to the next education levels and because there was a drop in the proportion of children entering primary school in relation to the total in the corresponding age cohort. Both phenomenon can be explained by the need for children to join the work force at an earlier age and the postponement of school entry because of the high complementary expenses (such as transportation and school materials) which are no longer affordable (Lustig, 1996: 160).

¹⁷⁶ For example, one of the traditionally female child labour activity in Mexico, as in the rest of Latin America and other Third-World regions, is domestic work. Over two million of Mexican children between 12 and 19 years of age are under the domestic servitude of middle and upper class households (Robles Berlanga in Cruz, August 6, 1998).

relocating street vendors¹⁷⁷ pushes children to diversify to other geographical areas of the city and to seek increasingly risky ways of obtaining an income (UNICEF, 1996: 9-11).

Children "of" the Street

As street-based working children and youth increase their ties to the street, their process of *callejerización* may begin. The street can become the child's principal "school of life" and the central element in the child's work experiences (the street as a *modus-vivendi*). However, not all those who eventually have become children "of" the streets used to work for their families. Some have been awarded little household, schooling and/or income-generating responsibilities, leaving them a sense of void and lack of belonging that they sought to find on the streets. Others have wanted to search for adventures, wanting to experience the streets, its various consumer and entertainment possibilities, while developing ties with children and youth with similar interests (Quiera et al, 1997: 50-51). While these are some of the motives leading children into adopting the street as their primary means and space for livelihood, the causes of the street child phenomenon are much more complex. Acting as the catalyst, poverty induces a conjunction of micro-processes -- including family disintegration and domestic abuse -- that interact to push and pull children to the streets. The economic hardship facing the marginalized urban populations contribute to the inability of the household to satisfy the basic material and affectionate necessities of the child.

Like other cities around the world, the urban centers of Mexico are experiencing a diminishing fabric of social support for children, not only within the family, but also in the community. Multigenerational households and other traditional support networks and customs traditionally available in the country-side are breaking down: economic, social and cultural pressures are no longer able to provide the extended family with the support

¹⁷⁷ For an overview and analysis of street-vending relocation, please see the author's "The Formalization of Street-Vending in Downtown Mexico City: An Analysis and Critique of a District Relocation Policy" (unpublished paper, Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University, December 1995).

it used to ensure to its adult and young members. Thus, the scarce collective responsibility of the local community to respond to the crises situation of its children are insufficient. Urban households have become isolated, fragile and insecure units. Children and youth, in particular, experience decreasing opportunities for socialization. Absenteeism of over-working parents and the lack of facilities to promote safe peer interaction within the children's own community condemn the young to long hours spent without adult supervision, whether working for income-generating activities, in household chores or interacting with other isolated children. The experiences of marginalization, lack of opportunities and uncertainty of the future exacerbate the stress levels of the young. The *barrios populares* of the ZMCM house many children "at risk" of taking to the streets.

While it may be difficult to classify a typical "ejector family,"¹⁷⁸ some interrelated circumstances interact to create crises situations in urban marginalized households.¹⁷⁹ Coupled with limited or diminished access to services such as education, health and counselling, poverty, unemployment and overcrowding, family disintegration and inter-family abuse lead to an increasing number of children to break family ties and turn to the streets.

"Ejector families," are typically characterized as being dysfunctional and/or disintegrated.¹⁸⁰ Lack of economic resources, an uncertain future, deaths, promiscuity and

¹⁷⁸ "Ejector families," or *familias expulsoras* is the common terminology used among researchers and street-workers to label those families that push children out of their homes.

¹⁷⁹ After visiting two "ejector families" with Family Reunification members of *Casa Alianza México*, the counsellors explained that both have similar characteristics that push children to the streets. Both were extremely poor with many children to care for, whether they be their own or of another family member. The father is either absent or is from a second marriage/common law. Antecedents of violence and alcoholism are present. One of the teenage mothers has a family history of living on the streets; her grandfather and mother both lived on the streets when they were young. She is categorized as a "street girl" and has children who would be "of" the street were the grandmother not taking care of them.

¹⁸⁰ Two separate studies on street children in Mexico City found that over 50 % of "ejector families" are either reconstructed or uniparental. Please refer to Quiera et al. Las familias de los niños y las niñas de la calle: Estudio de las familias involucradas en el Programa de Reintegración Familiar de la Fundación Casa Alianza, México, I.A.P. (Mexico: Grupo Noriega Editores, 1997) p. 35-41 and Sánchez, Marie Pierre. Las

low levels of well-being contribute to their disintegration. Unable to find a job and/or a permanent source of income, for example, the father loses authority and self-esteem. Absenteeism, alcoholism and violence become temporary sources of escape from the pressures of survival. A lack of communication and space for a healthy family relationship often push the young to leave their homes (Hernández Landa, 1992: 10-12). Moreover, many of these families become single headed households, mostly by mothers who make enormous attempts to economically maintain the children left behind. The young ones are the primary victims: not receiving adequate parental attention, having to work in even more precarious circumstances and suffering from the separation of the parent.

Unable to provide for their families alone, many single parents are often forced to establish a series of short-term relationships, bringing about a series of problems for the reconstructed household. The new "step-parents," often males, are frequently unwilling to care for children fathered by other men and develop a conflicting, if not abusive relationship with the children. The legitimate parent rarely defends or protects their young, acquiring an attitude of indifference or favouritism towards the partner. If they are not physically pushed out of their homes, many children and youth choose to further weaken family ties because they perceive the streets to be preferable to the living conditions at home (Sánchez, 1996: 22-24).¹⁸¹

As mentioned above, intra-family abuse is a common response to the socio-economic pressures of survival, but little is known about the dimension of the problem. The cultural norms in Mexico have generally determined it to be a private matter, as is

Niñas Olvidadas de la Ciudad de México: Un Primer Acercamiento a su Problemática (UNICEF: Mexico, October 1996) p. 22-24.

¹⁸¹ Unfortunately, the level of disintegration has reached such extremes in many households that it is common to find generations of families whose members lived and live on the streets. Aware that in light of household crises other members of the family have used the "solution" of escaping to the streets, the child reacts in the same manner. The transmission of this attitude may be intergenerational or may be caused by children abandoning their homes to join their sibling(s) (Quiera, 1997: 53-54).

still reflected in much of the legislation.¹⁸² Whether it be active -- physical, sexual or psychological aggressions -- or passive -- negligence or abandonment -- abuse is one of the leading factors pushing children to the streets. According to the Family Reintegration Program of *Casa Alianza México*, child abuse exists in all the "ejector families" of Mexico (Quiera et al., 1997: 50-53). In an open survey questioning street children the reasons for having left their homes, the most common response was maltreatment (child abuse) given by 44% of the respondents (UNICEF, 1996: 28). This II Study demonstrated, in comparison to the First Study of 1992:

"a greater tendency towards inter-family abuse and a greater impact of throwing the minor to the street, even though he/she will remain there even to satisfy his/her primordial needs. In a context of poverty, the family acts as an expulsion element and the street as a retentive element." (UNICEF, 1995: 27)

In particular, sexual abuse creates strong traumas in its victims, most of whom are girls. The children are often afraid and embarrassed to speak up and openly react against their aggressors, most of whom are living under the same roof. If and when they do so, they are treated as liars by their mothers. Accepting submission from the male authority, the mothers are incapable of interfering properly; facing the probable risk of losing their partner or male bread-winner, or themselves also being victims, they often choose to remain silent thus becoming accomplices to the abuse. Life on the streets becomes the victims' best perceived alternative for escape (Sánchez, 1996: 24-26).

The conditions in which millions of Mexican children are living today are linked to the economic, demographic, social, cultural and other changes currently facing the country. Directly or indirectly, all of the above macro- and micro-processes are contributors to the street children phenomenon. However, the current macro-economic

¹⁸² Only in 1995 was the first national law passed to prevent and deal with intra-family abuse. While it's punishment has been criticized for being weak, it actually contradicts the civil codes of 14 states that maintain the "right to correction" or corporal punishment. Please see Albarrán de Albul, Gerardo. "En el Distrito Federal la infancia no es prioridad: se multiplica la producción de niños que viven, crecen y mueren en las calles." (In *Proceso*, June 17, 1996) p. 5-7.

policies of structural adjustment and rapid liberalization have curtailed spending on social services, reduced formal employment opportunities and wages while forcing prices of basic goods to rise. These measures are having devastating effects on the increasing numbers of marginalized families. With the ever-growing levels of poverty in the urban environment, the number of children "on" and "of" the street -- in addition to the number of those considered to be at risk of entering these phases -- continues to grow.

Appendix 2: Interview Guidelines

Interview Guideline for NGO Personnel (English)

Name and position:

Address:

Date:

I. INTRODUCTION

1. - When was this program established?

2. - What are the program's objective? Is there a written pamphlet/report?

3. - How many children ON the street and OF the street are there in Mexico City (according to you or your organization)?

ON the street (thousand):	10-15	15-20	20-30	30-40	40-50	more _____
OF the street (thousand):	bellow 2	2-3	3-4	4-5	more _____	

II. TARGET GROUP

4. - How many children OF the street did the organization serve during 1996: _____
1995: _____
1994: _____

5. - For 1996, what are the ages of the target group (%)?

0-5 ___% 6-10 ___% 11-14 ___% 15-17 ___% 18 and above ___%

Please explain

6. - Where is the target group born (%)?

D.F. ___% State of Mex. ___% other states ___% other country ___%

7. - What percentage of the target group is native: ___%

8. - What percentage of the target group is: male ___% female ___%

III. METHODOLOGY

9. - What is the defined methodology by which the organization carries out the program?

- Is it planed out in writing?

10. - Is this methodology different from the one initially used at the creation of the program?

Please explain

11. - Has the methodology been validated?

- To what extent can it be reproduced or transferred?

A) FIRST PHASE

12. - In what parts of the city does the organization (street educators or brigades) make contact with the target group? surrounding neighbourhood of crisis center/home downtown area

various points in the city (# _____) other _____

13. - What are the days and hours of operation of the street educators/brigades?

every day/night every other day/night every three days/nights every week other _____

working day: _____ to _____; _____ to _____ working night: _____ to _____; _____ to _____

14. - Is there a recommended number of children that must be contacted or that must be brought to the crisis center / transition phase during each period of operation? no yes (#) _____ Please explain

15. - Why do you think the children become involved in the program?

16. - Why do you think the potential beneficiaries do not join the program?

B) ALL PHASES

17. - What services/activities are offered in each phase ?

IV. PERSONAL MONITORING

29. - What type of program/system is being used for monitoring of the development of each individual child (How do you quantify a child's individual improvement)?
30. - Is the same system used throughout all phases? Please explain
31. - Is the target group's individual monitoring followed up after leaving the organization?
- if so, for how long?
- how often? every: month ___ months year other ___
32. - How effective do you find this system? Please explain

V. PROJECT CYCLE AND EVALUATION

33. - Does the program have a written project cycle?
- What stages does it consist of (for example, analysis, design, implementation, evaluation)?
34. - How flexible is it to new ideas/findings/obstacles? Please explain
35. - Who carries out the evaluations? internal experts internal participative process
external experts (representing: ___) other ___
36. - Does a structure exist for the process of planning and adopting decisions?
37. - To what extent are those working directly with the children involved in the decision-making process?
- fully involved partially involved scarcely involved not involved Please explain
38. - To what extent have the target group participated in the development of the programs' objectives and methodology?
- fully involved partially involved scarcely involved not involved Please explain
39. - Is there a procedure/mechanism through which the target group can express their concerns relating to the program?

VI. FINANCIAL RESOURCES

40. - What was the volume of financial resources in: 1996 ___
1995 ___
1994 ___
41. - What is the average cost of serving a child per year?
42. - How are the yearly expenses divided (%/year)?
- educational and social services ___%
- administrative and maintenance services (operational) ___%
43. - How is the organization maintained (%/year)?
- collections/donations ___% benefactors/patrons ___% inheritance ___%
- income-generating activities ___% other ___%
44. - Where do these sources originate (%/year)?
- local community/private ___% Mexican community/private ___% International community ___%
- D.F. government funding ___% Federal government funding ___% other ___%

VII. HUMAN RESOURCES

45. - Number of staff working full time ___ and part time ___
46. - Personnel (#): board of directors ___ professional ___ technical ___ administrative ___
general services ___ vigilance ___ other ___
47. - To what extent are human resources capable of carrying out the program in terms of:
- numbers: sufficient could increase by 10% could increase by 20% could increase by 30% or more
- Could it be incremented? Please explain
- training/retraining: sufficient some could use retraining many in need of retraining
- Could they be better trained/retrained? Please explain
- relationship with children: very good good satisfactory poor Please explain
48. - Number of volunteers working full time ___ and part time ___
- How enthusiastic are the volunteers (level)? high medium low
- What level of competence do the volunteers have? high medium low
49. - Is the target group involved in carrying out some of the activities of the program?
- If so, which activities?
- What is their level of motivation? high medium low

Interview Guideline for Street Children in Organizations (English)

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL QUESTIONS:

□ Speak about my project and my emphasis on institutions: I am going to ask you some questions. Answer what you feel conformable with; do not answer if you do not want to (it is confidential).

- Date and place of interview:
- What is your name?
- gender?
- age?
- ethnic group?
- birth place (how old were you when you arrived to Mexico and why did you move here)?
- Did you live on the street?

EXPERIENCE IN THE INSTITUTION:

- I was told by _____ that you have been here for _____ time: days, weeks, months, years
- How old were you when you entered here (what year was it: 19__)?
 - Have you been in other institutions? Which ones?
 - Why did you leave _____ institution?
- How did you arrive to _____ (this institution) (i.e.- did the institution approach you, where you interned under the direction of the government, entered alone, via friend's advice...)?
- Has it been difficult to adjust to a new home? Why?
- How big is it (capacity)? Do you like it like this?
- Does it have open or closed doors? Do you like this system? Why?
- Do you know if the institution has a development mechanism to help you (so that you may form an alternate life-option)? Tell me about it?
- Do they incorporate you in their methodological development and in their actions (do they as for your opinion)?
 - If so, do you participate with enthusiasm (do you like being asked)?
 - The policies and actions reflect the ideas that you and your friends give?
- Is there a procedure through which you can complain (about the institution)?
- Do you like the personnel? Why?
- Do you feel comfortable speaking about your concerns?
- Do you like the facilities (the building, cleanliness, maintenance...)? Why?
- What do you like most about the institution? Why?
 - What do you think the institution has helped you in the most (i.e.-physical, intellectual, emotional, social development)?
 - What other factors have helped you while in the institution (what do they help with and how)? (i.e.- friends...)
- What do you like least about the institution? Why?
- What do your friends think about the institution? Why?
- Would you or have you ever recommended this institution to a child/youth living on the street? Why?

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS:

- What other institutions do you and your friends know of?
 - What is your/their opinion about them? Why?
 - Which institution did (do) you like the best? Why?
- What is your general opinion of the institutional systems?
- If you could make any changes, what would you change?

- Anything else you want to tell me about your experiences?
- Any questions?

IV. SEGUIMIENTO INDIVIDUAL

29. - Qué tipo de programa/sistema se usa para el seguimiento del desarrollo individual de cada niño(a) (Cómo se cuantifica el mejoramiento de cada niño(a))?
30. - Este sistema es utilizado a lo largo de todas las etapas? Favor de explicar
31. - El seguimiento individual de la población continúa después de que esta salga de la organización?
- Si sí, por cuánto tiempo?
qué tan seguido? cada: mes ____ meses año otro ____
32. - Qué tan eficaz encuentra este sistema? Favor de explicar

V. CICLO DEL PROYECTO Y EVALUACION

33. - Tiene el programa un ciclo por escrito?
- En cuáles etapas consiste (por ej. análisis/seguimiento, planeación, ejecución, evaluación)?
34. - Qué tan flexible es para la adaptación de nuevas ideas, encuentros u obstáculos? Favor de explicar
35. - Quién lleva a cabo las evaluaciones? expertos internos proceso interno participativo
expertos externos (representando a : ____) otro ____
36. - Existe una estructura para el proceso de planificación y aprobación de decisiones ?
37. - En qué medida participan en el proceso de decisiones aquellos trabajando directamente con la población atendida ? involucrados por completo parcialmente involucrados
casi no involucrados no involucrados Favor de explicar
38. - En qué medida participan en desarrollar los objetivos y metodología del programa la población atendida?
involucrados por completo parcialmente involucrados
casi no involucrados no involucrados Favor de explicar
39. - Existe algún procedimiento/mecanismo mediante el cual la población atendida pueda expresar sus inquietudes acerca del programa?

VI. RECURSOS FINANCIEROS

40. - Cuál fue el importe de recursos financieros en: 1996 ____
1995 ____
1994 ____
41. - Cuál es el costo de promedio de atención por niño(a) por año?
42. - Cómo se dividen los gastos anuales (%/año)?
- servicios sociales y de educación ____ %
- servicios administrativos y de mantenimiento (operativos) ____ %
43. - Cómo se mantiene la organización (%/año)?
donativos ____ % benefactores/patrones ____ % patrimonio ____ %
actividades que generan ingreso ____ % otro ____ %
44. - De donde provienen estos recursos (%/año)?
comunidad local/privada ____ % comunidad mexicana/privada ____ % comunidad internacional ____ %
fondos gubernamentales del D.D.F. ____ % fondos gubernamentales nacionales ____ % otro ____ %

VII. RECURSOS HUMANOS

45. - Número del personal de tiempo completo ____ y de tiempo parcial ____
46. - Personal (#): directivo ____ profesional ____ técnico ____ administrativo ____
servicios generales ____ vigilancia ____ otro ____
47. - En qué medida los recursos humanos tienen la capacidad de llevar a cabo el programa en términos de:
- números: suficiente necesita incrementar al 10% al 20% al 30% o mas
- Podría incrementar? Favor de explicar
- preparación/capacitación: suficiente necesitan actualizar algunos necesitan actualizar muchos
Podrían actualizarse/prepararse mejor? Favor de explicar
- relación con los niños: muy buena buena satisfactoria mala Favor de explicar
48. - Número de voluntarios trabajando de tiempo completo ____ y de tiempo parcial ____
- Cuál es su nivel de entusiasmo? alto mediano bajo
- Qué tan competentes son? alto mediano bajo
49. - La población atendida está involucrada en llevar a cabo algunas de las actividades del programa?
- Si sí, que actividades?
- Cuál es su nivel de entusiasmo? alto mediano bajo

Interview Guideline for Street Children in Organizations (Spanish)

Guía para entrevistas con niños de la calle en las organizaciones

INTRODUCCIÓN Y CUESTIONES GENERALES:

☐ Hablar de mi proyecto y mi énfasis en las instituciones: te voy a hacer unas preguntas, lo que quieras contestarme bien y lo que no también. No tienes que contestarme lo que no quieras.
(es confidencial)

- ☐ Fecha y lugar de entrevista:
- ☐ Cual es tu nombre?
- ☐ sexo?
- ☐ edad?
- ☐ grupo étnico?
- ☐ lugar de nacimiento (qué edad tenías al llegar a México y porqué te mudaste aquí)?
- ☐ Tú viviste en la calle?

EXPERIENCIA EN LA INSTITUCIÓN:

- ☐ Me comentó _____ que has estado aquí _____ tiempo: días, semanas, meses, años
- ☐ Qué edad tenías cuando entraste aquí (en qué año fue: 19__)?
 - ☐ Has estado en otras instituciones? Cuáles?
 - ☐ Porqué te saliste de _____ institución?
- ☐ Cómo llegaste a _____ (esta institución) (por ej.- te buscó la institución, fuiste internado bajo la dirección del gobierno, entraste solo, vía amistades...)?
- ☐ Te ha costado trabajo adoptarte a un nuevo hogar? Porqué?
- ☐ Qué tan grande es (capacidad)? Te gusta así?
- ☐ Tiene puertas abiertas o cerradas? Te gusta ese sistema? Porqué?
- ☐ Sabes tú si la institución tiene un mecanismo de preparación para que te ayude (y formes una opción de vida diferente)? Cuéntame de él?
- ☐ Te incorporan en su formación metodológica y en sus acciones (te piden tus opiniones)?
 - ☐ Si sí, participas con entusiasmo (te gusta que te pregunten)?
 - ☐ Las políticas y acciones reflejan las ideas que tú y tus compañeros dan?
- ☐ Hay algún procedimiento por el cual te puedes quejar (de la institución)?
- ☐ Te gusta el personal? Porqué?
- ☐ Te sientes cómodo hablando de tus asuntos?
- ☐ Te gusta el inmobiliario (el edificio, limpieza, mantenimiento...)? Porqué?
- ☐ Qué te gusta más de la institución? Porqué?
 - ☐ En qué piensas que te ha ayudado mas la institución (por ej.- desarrollo físico, intelectual, emocional, social)?
 - ☐ Qué otros factores te han ayudado estando dentro de la institución (en qué te ayudan y de qué forma)? (por ej.- amistades...)
- ☐ Qué te gusta menos de la institución? Porqué?
- ☐ Qué opinan tus compañeros de la institución? Porqué?
- ☐ Le recomendaste alguna vez o le recomendarías a algún niño/joven de la calle que se quede en esta institución? Porqué?

CONCLUSIONES EN GENERAL:

- ▣ Qué otras instituciones conocen tú y tus amigos?
 - ▣ Qué opinan de ellas? Porqué?
 - ▣Cuál institución te gustó (te ha gustado) más? Porqué?
- ▣ Qué opinas en general sobre los sistemas institucionales?
- ▣ Qué cambios sugerirías que se hagan si pudieras hacerlos?

- ▣ Algo más que me quieras decir sobre tus experiencias?
- ▣ Alguna duda?

Appendix 3: Methodological Phases

Casa Alianza México

Casa Alianza México's first phase consists of outreach on the streets. Six days a week street educators establish new contacts or follow-up with those children who have been previously identified at various meeting points throughout the city. The main objective of the Street Phase is to propitiate in the young an interest towards an alternative option to that of the street. In the process of establishing a respectful relationship, the educators attempt to sensitize the children and youth about the risks and consequences of a street life, generating in them a desire to reduce violence and other risk activities while highlighting their positive qualities. Non-formal education, recreational activities, health related services (drugs, sexuality, HIV/AIDS) and education and information about their rights and responsibilities are also provided. A *plan de vida* (a development life plan) is initiated with those showing an interest of leaving the street life and are welcomed into the residential facilities offered by the second phase. Working in pairs, male and female, six educators reach approximately 1,200 children per year (Casa Alianza, 1994: 28-45, January 16, 1999, and March 1996a; and Tomás).

The second phase of the methodology, the Refuge or Crisis Center, offers basic services (shelter, food, clothing) in a structured environment in addition to psychological and medical treatment, drug counselling, and formal and non-formal education. The methodological emphasis is placed on their overcoming their street crisis, or as the general objective indicates, to attain the youth's stability enabling him or her to interact with others through basic norms of conduct (without violence, sex, stealing and arms). This phase is particularly important in determining whether the young remains in the program. In the Crisis Center, the *plan de vida* continues as the young participate in setting attainable short and medium term goals. Usually in a period of three months, after having regained some stability and self-respect, they are prepared for the public school system

and passage onto the next phase. Twenty six educators and additional technical staff serve between 90 and 130 children and youth at any one time (Casa Alianza, 1994: 46-101, January 16, 1999, and March 1996a; and Banda, March 7, 1997).

The Transition Homes continue to offer those services provided at the Crisis Center, but with a methodological emphasis that promotes the socialization of the children and youth. The general objective of this third phase is for the child to gain the emotional stability that may allow him or her to initiate a socialization process, raising his or her self-esteem and desire for an independent and productive life. Through the development of long range goals as part of their *plan de vida*, the young begin their re-incorporation into society through regular public school attendance, sports classes and/or vocational training outside of the institution's premises. The young remain in this phase between four to six months, depending on the personal development of each individual. Two transition homes, one for girls and one for boys, operate in conjunction with other institutions, the Delegación Benito Juárez and Ayuda y Solidaridad. A staff of 12 attend a total of 40 to 50 children and youth daily (Casa Alianza, 1994: 102-133, January 16, 1999, and March 1996a; Capellín, February 20, 1997).

The Group Homes attempt to replicate a positive family-like environment where the youth can attain further responsibility, security and independence while continuing to pursue their education, labour or vocational training and social development. This fourth and last of the residential phases' general objective is to support the youth so that he or she may have a similar life to that of other children his or her age, so that the youth may be reintegrated to his or her family or form an independent life. Each home houses an average of 14 to 17 boys or girls, thus providing a more personal attention than in the previous phases. The youth remain at the home until their 18th birthday or until they have completed their education or vocational training. They are prepared to either reintegrate to their families or to learn vocational and life skills indispensable for independent living.

Seventeen educators shift in pairs, male and female, to provide attention to the four male and one female Group Homes located through Mexico City (Casa Alianza, 1994: 134-162, January 16, 1999 and March 1996a).

In addition to these development phases, *Casa Alianza México* has numerous other horizontal programs. The one program that was established prior to the completion of the four developmental phases and that is considered an integral element of the methodology is Family Reintegration. Its general objective is: "To achieve the reincorporation of the child and youth to his or her family nucleus, trying to generate a favourable atmosphere in the dynamic and structure of his or her family, that favours communication, active and responsible participation of all its members" (Casa Alianza, 1996a). As previously indicated, the vast majority of children "of" the streets have a family, but have chosen not to live with them. Offered to all phases, Family Reintegration's primary role is to investigate the family-child relationship of those children and youth who voice an interest in re-establishing ties with their families. If conditions are adequate (no abuse, economically able to sustain child, mutual desire, etc.), the child is reunited with the family and regular follow-up visits are conducted to ensure the child is adapting to his or her family environment. As indicated in one of its other four specific objectives,¹⁸³ the program also offers "independent living" workshops for those youth who will be leaving the organization upon becoming of legal age (Casa Alianza, 1996a, January 16, 1999).

Casa Ecuador

One of *Casa Ecuador*'s original phases, street work, no longer forms part of the official methodology, although volunteer groups continue to occasionally provide their services. Night Brigades used to approach street children in various points of inner-city slums to provide food, medical care and recreational activities while inviting them to enter

¹⁸³ The Specific Objectives are: "(1) Attend to the wishes of the boy/girl and youth of reestablishing links with his/her family; (2) Detect the family problematique and implement a Plan of Treatment or Action; (3) Provide support and advice to the boy/girl or youth and the family and; (4) Attend to the youth who have finalized their process in *Casa Alianza* and are beginning an independent life" (Casa Alianza, 1996a).

Casa Ecuador's facilities (Vallejo, July 2, 1996). With the rise of transportation and financial difficulties and the acknowledgment that the majority of the children and youth arrived to the facilities on their own, street work was phased out in 1995. The current street work volunteers provide support and promote recreational activities while encouraging children and youth to seek an alternate lifestyle, but they do not necessarily encourage their entrance into *Casa Ecuador's* facilities. The program continues primarily for the purpose maintaining a relationship with street children and with the prospect that, in the future, it might be re-incorporated to the methodology (Casa de la Juventud, 1997b: 9 and 1997a: 45-50; and Romero).

Thus, at present, *Casa Ecuador's* first phase begins at the institution itself. An interview is conducted with the child where he learns of the rules and responsibilities required for entering and remaining in *Casa Ecuador*: a desire to improve one's personal quality of life, no drugs and involvement in educational and vocational/labour activities. In a period lasting anywhere between 15 days to three months, the child is incorporated into a structured environment, becoming involved in non-formal schooling, sports and recreational activities, and the maintenance of the home. Emphasis is placed on changing his street attitudes and showing an interest in accepting the new living conditions. The objective of the Transition/Induction phase is: to measure the capacity for the young to adapt to the new life model offered by the project; to help them create new discipline and hygiene habits for harmonious co-habitation; and establish the bases upon which the project and the children can build commitments in an ambiance of trust and open communication. Anywhere between two to 12 children and youth are in Transition at any one time (Casa de la Juventud, September 1996: 4-5 and 1997b: 18-20; and Romero).

The objective of the second phase, Formative/Re-socialization, is: to propitiate the child's permanent incorporation into the house dynamics so that he may form a *plan de vida* and create short, medium and long term goals; facilitate his acceptance of social

norms; and introduce him to schooling, vocational, recreational, sports, cultural and other activities that contribute to his overall development and self-esteem. In addition to participating regularly in these various structured activities, those children and youth who are identified as having specific problems (drug addiction, learning disabilities, etc.) are referred for internal or external help. The phase with the most volume, with an average of 30 to 40 children and youth, is often also the determinant in the child's decision to remain or abandon *Casa Ecuador's* project. Maintaining a continuous 12 month period of positive development is a prerequisite for entrance into the next phase. Five dormitories sleeping eight children each are used in Formative/Re-Socialization (Casa de la Juventud, September 1996: 28-30 and 1997b: 20-23).

As its name indicates, Social Stability is the phase where the child has acquired a higher degree of emotional and social stability, allowing him to continue along with his development process within the *Casa* and with the outside environment. The objective of the phase is to consolidate the achievements attained in previous phases, in particular, the adoption of participative attitudes and actions aimed at the child's personal progress (such as study, health and group socialization). While he continues to be regularly involved in the maintenance of the home and in recreational and cultural activities, special emphasis is placed on schooling and vocational training/job creation. Monetary saving skills are also developed. Fourteen to 16 children are usually in this phase, housed in larger and more private dormitories of three or four beds (Casa de la Juventud, September 1996: 30-32 and 1997b: 23-25).

The objective of the fourth phase, Detachment Initiation, is to prepare the youth towards their imminent separation from the project by ensuring: a secure and dignified incorporation of the youth into his independent life; the affective bond generated during his stay in the project does not act as an obstacle in this process; and a natural scission that will firmly conduce him to a responsible adult life. In this phase, the youth carry out

many of their medium and long term goals set out in their *plan de vida* while continuing to be active in the home's activities. The majority attend both school and work, advancing well in the former and, from the latter, obtaining a regular source of income and savings that will help lead them towards economic independence. Ten to 12 youth are usually in this phase, their length of stay dependant on the individual characteristics of each youth. Before the transition to the final phase, a youth must be considered stable in every aspect and deemed capable of making important social and economic decisions. Each is in the privacy of his own room, responsible for its maintenance and the purchase of furniture and objects deemed necessary for his living (such as bed, dresser and/or stereo which he will take with him once becoming independent)(Casa de la Juventud, September 1996: 32-33 and 1997b: 25-27).

The Pre-independent Process' objective, the newest and final phase, is to follow-up on the development of those beneficiaries who have just left the facilities of *Casa Ecuador* to live independently. For a period of six months immediately following the exit of the fourth phase, the project monitors the youth's adjustment in his new living conditions and provides economic help towards rent, food and, in some cases, schooling material. Periodic visits are made by the social work team to his living, working and/or schooling facilities to asses his transition and to provide help with necessary documentation. The support provided in this new phase is to ensure that their first independent and most important steps of the youth's new life will be a success. It is partly a response to the lack of alternate available projects for youth with these characteristics, especially for those over 18 years of age, and to encourage those youth in the fourth phase who are ready to live on their own to take that step. At the time of the research, four youth had just initiated their Pre-independent Process living outside of *Casa Ecuador's* facilities (Casa de la Juventud, 1997b: 27-30).

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