

Preface

Social phenomena are subject to trends, hypes and fashion. During the last two decades of the previous century, the street child phenomenon was subject to academic and policy attention, for very good reasons, namely numerous children living and working in the street.

Although the problem remains as serious a social problem as before, public attention appears to have shifted to other social issues. Fewer studies have been conducted and the direct redressal appears to have taken backstage. There namely has been a paradigmatic shift: presently, in most academic studies, the street child is iconized as a social agent, with a free will and with autonomous choices of survival.

This publication is a reminder of a loathsome condition of human existence of street life in two cities in Latin America. It gives voice to the children and, in the process, realizes that there is a strong argument in favour of the traditional policies of protection rather than for the fashionable 'agency' approach which today dominates the literature on child rights.

The uniqueness of this study is the combination of a large-scale sociological survey with in-depth anthropological fieldwork. Around 1,100 street children have been interviewed in two major cities in Peru. We thank them for their cooperation and trust. For reasons of privacy, their names have been altered. We believe that a better understanding of their position will eventually lead to better policies.

Since we have taken extreme care to listen to the stories of as many children as possible and to let them speak through the pages of this book, this publication will be extremely useful for anybody working with children in such dismal conditions as street life, not only in Peru or Latin America.

Child Street Life

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Children in Peru

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