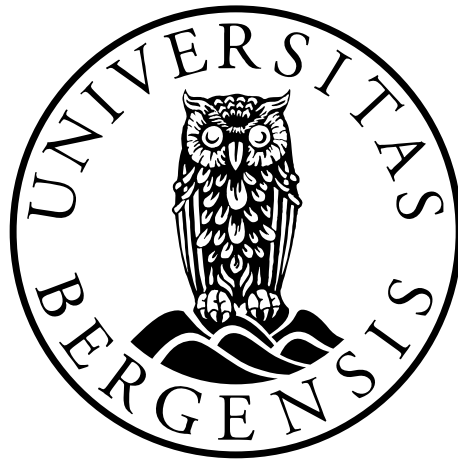


Challenges of pursuing schooling for former street and working children

The voices of adolescent girls in Bangalore, India

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*This thesis is dedicated to the girls interviewed in India
Thank you for sharing your stories - they do matter*



There was language in the world that everyone understood. It was the language of enthusiasm, of things accomplished with love and purpose, and as part of a search for something believed in and desired

The Alchemist/ Paulo Coelho

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List of Abbreviations

AISE	Adverse Incorporation and Social Exclusion
APSA	Association for Promoting Social Action
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CREATE	Consortium for Research on Education, Access, Transitions and Equity
CSC	Consortium for Street Children
CWC	Child Welfare Committee
FORUT	Campaign for Development and Solidarity
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NCLP	National Child Labour Project
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NSD	Norwegian Social Science Data Services
RTE	Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act
UN	United Nations
UNCCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WB	World Bank

1. INTRODUCTION

India is the second most populous country in the world and is also the world's largest democracy (World Bank, 2013). The country has a growing economy and is considered on the global arena to be a leading economic and political power (Norad, 2012). More than half of India's workforce is in agriculture, but the major source of income is provided through services (Country Watch, 2013). However, the services only account for less than one third of India's labour force. Despite being a leading international actor and experiencing significant economic growth over the last two decades, India is still facing continuous long-term challenges of poverty, corruption, rural-to-urban migration, discrimination against women and girls, inadequate availability of quality basic and higher education among others (ibid). The occurrence of poverty in India tends to be persistent, and tens of millions experience chronic poverty that is transmitted from generation to generation (Metha & Shah, 2003). Marginalised groups, elderly, women and disabled people are highly represented among the groups of chronically poor (ibid). Thus, the economic relations alone cannot explain why some people are not able to get out of persisting poverty (Mosse, 2007). It is evident that many of the chronic poor work as casual labourers, and experience disadvantages such as living in slum areas and minimal access to social security (ibid). For the chronically poor, the opportunities to improve their social and economic condition prove to be small because of interlocking circumstances in the society that perpetuate inequality and exploitation on many levels (ibid).

The issue of poverty is evident in the increase in rural-to-urban migration as well as the demand for informal work containing cheap labour (Zutshi, 2001). These factors are intensifying the problem of child labours and street children (ibid). Child labours also tend to be hidden in houses and factories, in order to make them 'invisible' for the public sphere (Dorman, 2008). The 'street children' labels have various meanings, but the description of street children as being 'on' and 'of' the street has been widely used in defining street children as those children living on the street by themselves and those returning home to their families at night (Joshi, et al., 2006). Street children are thus categorised as both children working on the street as well as children living on or nearby the street with their families. Working children, on the other hand, tend to work in casual labour in the informal economy

or in people's homes (Zuthsi, 2001). For the present study, when using the term "working children", the focus will be on children in domestic work. The usage of domestic work in the present study is referred to children who are working and living in other people's houses as well as children who work away from home, but live with their own families. Furthermore, it is important to note that more research has concentrated on defining street children along social constructivist lines in the recent years, arguing that "street children do not in reality form a clearly defined, homogeneous population" (de Benítez, 2011, pp. 9-10). The lives of many children do not only revolve around the street, and it is thus important for the present study to acknowledge street and working children as heterogeneous groups in order to show the multidimensionality of their lives.

In many cases, street and working children are often taken advantage of, working long hours under harsh conditions (Mosse, 2007). Moreover, inconsistency and absence in schooling is common, making the children vulnerable to illiteracy and continuation of working in the informal sector (de Benítez, 2011). In the case of India, there is a particularly high dropout rate among girls in primary school (Create, 2008). The adolescent girls in India are a vulnerable group within the Indian society on social, economic and rights-based levels (Bahwan, 2007). Girls in India face discrimination in terms of life opportunities and choices, as gender discrimination is still being reinforced in the cultural ideologies within families and social structure. The stereotyping of girls in social norms as either mothers, wives or sisters needs to be challenged to a greater extent on the local and national levels, and there is a need to see them as equal actors in the society (Bandyopadhyay & Subrahmanian, 2008).

The Indian government and civil society in India are putting efforts into increasing the number of school enrolments, especially for girls and marginalised children. In 2002, an article in the Constitution of India was inserted in order to provide free and compulsory education for all children in the group of 6-14 years as a fundamental right. The Right of the Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE) passed through the Indian government in 2002 and came into effect in 2009 (Government of India, 2012). This meant that every child has a right to full-time elementary education, and no one should be liable for paying any kind of fee in order to send their children to school. The act also puts a legal obligation on the Central and State governments in India to implement this act (ibid). The policy of promoting RTE within the Indian government is a step in the right direction, but has been debated among scholars for containing restrictions (Taneja et al., 2011). The debate is

particularly concerning the more marginalised children in Indian societies as well as the right perspective of the Act being promoted on limiting terms. The policy has certain limitations because it does not include children under and over the age of 6-14, where access to upper primary education has been relatively neglected (ibid).

Moreover, the education available to children from wealthier families has remained of a higher standard than that offered to the children of the poorest and most marginalised communities (ibid). Discrimination in the education system in India still exists with the occurrence of different types of schooling with ranging learning levels. During the time after Independence in India (i.e. after 1947) there was much focus on producing a 'modern sector' (Majumdar & Mooji, 2011). Historically, in many parts of India, education was restricted and dominated by elite and middle classes. In more recent times, education has recently been part of a globalised market and education has been conceptualised mainly within a utilitarian framework (ibid).

There is, however, an increase of elites and middle class children exiting the free-of-cost government schools and entering the private schools where fees apply (Majumdar & Mooji, 2011). Although many children from wealthier families attend private schools, there is a tendency for children from poorer backgrounds to also move from government school to private schools (ibid). The increase of enrolment into low fee private schools is due to private schools being viewed as a better alternative compared to government schools (ibid). In this regard, a debate is taking place about whether private schools are a desirable development or not. A particular concern is voiced about the privatisation, seeing a developing pattern that perpetuates social inequalities (Kumar & Rustagi, 2010). When rapid privatisation is taking place, the government efforts and commitments are unremitting, considering a tendency of budgetary constraints and lack of willingness to provide quality schools (Majumdar & Mooji, 2011). Thus, despite efforts to enrol more children into school, many government schools are of poor quality and marked by a tendency for dropping out. Since the school system in India provides both private and government schools, it establishes a division between the poor and wealthier citizens.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

There are many implications attached to the circumstances of street and working children in India. Work might be their only option in order to survive, and many children face exploitation on many levels (Zuthsi, 2001). Public harassment is also taking place on a large scale (ibid). For example, begging is the only option for an income for many children, but begging is prohibited in many public areas in India (ibid). Harassment from the police is occurring and street children are frequently looked at as criminals (ibid). As argued by Mosse (2010), the harassment of street children is an example of how certain forms of poverty become criminalised by the state. This causes a perception of street children as a problem for the society rather than seeing it as a problem caused by larger social norms and structures. Given these statements, there is a clear need to find out what the different practices entail that are leading to a life of being a street and/or working child, facing disadvantages on many levels.

Education can have a strong impact on promoting gender equality and empowerment (United Nations Population Fund for UN Systems in India, 2003). The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the related policies on education and empowerment have been applied to the policy agenda in India, and the Indian government took action by implementing Right to Free and Compulsory Education in 2009 (Unicef India, 2011). This has contributed to an overall increase in school enrolment. However, the proportion of girls who attend school in India continues to remain low in comparison to that of boys of their age. At the upper primary school level, only 40% of girls attend school (Create, 2009). The main factors influencing this disparity include poverty and the continuing hold of social and cultural beliefs such as low valuation of women in the workforce, and the belief of women as being the ones with domestic responsibilities, a symbol of women as the tradition of marriage and family (ibid). There are also concerns about whether girls have the ability to gain an education in reality, considering that a right does not always translate into action on the grassroots (Unterhalter, 2007). There is a need to put a focus on difference among moral rights and legal rights within societies. Even if girls have the legal right to go to school, family commitment and social norms might hinder them in attaining their legal right of completing schooling (ibid). In addition, caution should be taken when assuming that education contributes towards empowerment (Kabeer, 2005), because this may not always be the case if norms related to restricting gender equality remain within societies. Thus, there is a need to explore how

quality schooling can become a reality for girls in India and be a positive contribution in bettering their lives.

There is then an absence of a proper estimate of the problem within the Indian government concerning rate of dropping out in Indian primary schools and the out-of-school children. In addition, there is a lack of adequate information on the special needs for out-of-school children, planning welfare as well as school intervention programs for marginalised children (Chauhan, 2009). Although the Constitution in India guarantee rights to education, as highlighted, it does not apply a state obligation to provide quality education. The rapid increase of girls enrolled in schools and that of marginalised children can be attributed to the enforcement of alternative schools such as bridge schools and residential camps (Create, 2009). Non-government organisations (NGO), especially, are major contributors in the alternative schools aimed at marginalised children. However, the alternative schools are only meant to be temporary measures aimed at integrating marginalised children into formal schools. Little is known about whether these alternative schools are helping in the learning achievements, contributing towards empowerment and if the marginalised children are being mainstreamed. There is a need to understand perceptions of the forces that shape the marginalised children's access to quality education and how they think a better future for themselves can be realised. Thus, despite increased efforts to provide alternative schools for marginalised children, there is little documentation on the effectiveness of the intervention programs and whether these are improving the children's life conditions.

Traditional stereotypes of street and working children as 'victims' reflect public attitudes towards them, rather than any realistic representation of the characteristics of the children or their situations (Chauhan, 2009). Participation of street and working children themselves in decision-making and formulation of intervention strategies is greatly undervalued at present (ibid). In addition, caution about the law that promotes putting all children back to school should be taken, because this can be problematic. Not all of these children want to go back to school, for a variety of reasons. It is important to note that despite the fact of an increase of available schools, this does not necessarily intend a decrease of street children and child labour (Kabeer, 2001). A need for a flexible approach within programs is necessary, and seeing children as actors is crucial in the intervention strategies for street and working children (de Benítez, 2011). Therefore, there is a need to gain and understanding of the needs

of the children from their point of view in order to find out how one can best assist them in their current situation.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Given this situation, the main objective of this study is to explore the challenges experienced by adolescent girls in schooling and give attention to former street and working children's voices and everyday experiences in order to gain a greater knowledge about how to improve access to quality education as a step towards improving their life circumstances. Exploring their points of view regarding the real obstacles street and working children and the NGO face in the education perspective, will help in identifying some of the gaps that remain in promoting meaningful schooling for this group. In addition, it will also help to throw light on more realistic and effective development of interventions in improving the lives of marginalised children in India. Given the main objective and the statements, this has led to the following research objectives:

- To gain an understanding of how the girls have come to live/work on the street and become domestic workers.
- To explore the adolescent girls' own perception of education and their view about the interlink of empowerment and education
- To explore the challenges of gaining an education after having lived on the street
- To analyse if and how Association of Promoting Social Action (APSA)¹ has been able to realise the goal of integrating the street children into mainstream schooling system
- To explore and describe the experiences of the adolescent girls, giving prominence to their own voices and their future aspirations

¹APSA is a rights-based child-centered community development organisation located in Bangalore, India. APSA's work is community-based development based on the empowerment principle where the strength of the people is in focus. Further, APSA have two decades of grass-root experience and believe in the principle that all citizens have the same rights. APSA work with street children, child laborer, abandoned and runaway children as well as child victims of abuse and prostitution.

1.4 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The main focus of this study is on adolescent girls² who have been street and/or domestic workers in connection with focusing on the girls' challenges in pursuing schooling. By focusing on former street and working children that are girls, my intention is not to overlook the boys' perceptions of schooling. However, I choose to have this focus because of the relative lack of research done on former street children that are girls and because of the various structural and cultural challenges that girls face within the Indian society, including the area of education. Quantitative research on child labour and school enrolment of children in India points to a new category of the 'nowhere children' who are neither at work nor at school and hence excluded from both categories. Closer investigation has found that many girls are engaged in work that tends to be 'invisible' to the society such as begging, domestic work etc. (Kabeer, 2001; Dorman, 2008). This often results in many girls engaged in such work being unrecognised by the government and other agencies (ibid). Create (2009) argues for an increase in empirical studies that examine the status of marginalised children such as street children and girls in 'invisible' occupations. By combining the categories of street children and working children with adolescent girls, the study will highlight the less visible group (i.e., adolescent girls) who have street and working backgrounds as beggars and domestic workers (i.e., work that tend to not be recognised in statistics) and explore the connection to the girls' challenges of pursuing schooling. This will in turn contribute to the body of qualitative studies on education targeted at street and working children, and will be important for informing policy and practice in the area of education and possible improvements of life conditions of street and working children in India.

1.5 ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

The thesis is divided into eight Chapters. The aim is to give the reader a good understanding of how the research objectives came into existence and why they were important to explore. The major aim of the thesis, however, is to analyse the challenges experienced by adolescent girls in schooling in order to gain a greater knowledge on how to improve access to a meaningful education. The empirical chapters discuss the girls' experiences and viewpoints

² Throughout this research, when referring to "adolescent girls," I refer to girls who are former street and working children in the age group of 11-18 years old. In addition, when referring to "former street and working children," I mean those who have previously lived on the street and/or worked as domestic workers who are now a part of the program in APSA.

chronologically, in order to best capture the school pattern and challenges faced by the girls. The organisation of the thesis is divided in the following order:

- Chapter *two* highlights current literature on the themes of street children, domestic workers, education, as well as on challenges that girls' face of relevance for India.
- Chapter *three* gives a presentation of the various theories that contributes to the empirical analysis in the thesis.
- Chapter *four* describes and discusses the methods used prior to, during and after the fieldwork as well as the practical problems, challenges, ethical considerations and dilemmas experienced during the fieldwork.
- Chapter *five* discusses the empirical findings regarding the girls' experiences prior to becoming part of the APSA intervention program.
- Chapter *six* looks at the girls' experiences with the different APSA intervention programs of which they are part, and discusses whether these are effective or not.
- Chapter *seven* analyses the girls' future aspirations and discusses the aspect of a transformative agency.
- *Chapter eight* concludes the major findings and gives recommendations for further interventions concerning education and schooling for vulnerable groups of children and adolescents in India.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN: EMPHASIS ON EDUCATION

This chapter is going to examine literature concerning street and working children of relevance to education in India. The literature review starts by examining some of the development reports where a conceptual discussion can value larger findings about street and working children as well as the major issues that girls are facing within social contexts. This is done to grasp a better understanding of how research has expanded and shifted over the last 20 years and provide an understanding of how issues are currently addressed within policy frameworks. Furthermore, attention is given to more specific studies concerning education in order to better understand the issues, concerns and interventions that are taking place on a national and local level, because findings in development reports mainly provide conceptual approaches.

2.1 INTERNATIONAL POLICIES AND CONCEPTUAL RECOGNITION

2.1.1 Development Reports and Frameworks about Street Children

The issue of street children has been in focus since the early 1980s within larger development institutions (Consortium for Street Children (CSC), 2010). Moura's (2002) study emphasises that much of the literature written about street children initially concentrated on the street existence, descriptions of individuals living on the street, and the problems they were facing. One of the first reports on street children came from United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 1986. Much attention at that time was given to the children themselves from an adult point of view, and families were often blamed for children ending up on the street.

Panter-Brick (2002) provides a critical reflection on how the term 'street children' is problematic, but highlights how current studies have become increasingly aware of the discourse that categorises street children. Despite the increasing awareness, she argues for additional research on the local level to capture a greater variation in the life stories of children and to document differences such as age, gender or social support and to connect such information to the macro level. Furthermore, she draws attention to the fact that little is

known about interventions that are supposed to promote children's agency and participation implemented at the local level and how such interventions translate into practical benefits for the target group. Moreover, Kabeer (2001) highlights how development reports with official statistics contain limitations that can make it easy to underestimate them. Even though the calculations are only approximate, they can still give rise to new categories that highlight deprived issues. For instance, the 'nowhere children' who were neither at work nor at school and hence excluded from both categories, have since been recognised because of the figures presented. Closer investigation in the form of small-scale studies suggests that the children were often engaged in forms of productive work (such as begging, domestic workers etc.), but were not part of the formal data collection. Such studies found that many girls are engaged in such work, and get excluded from both work and educational statistics (Dorman, 2008; Kabeer, 2001).

2.1.2 Shift in Perspectives?

Today, development reports from UNICEF, UNESCO, PLAN International, Save the Children, United Nations Millennium project, among others, are still impacting the framing of policies as well as policy planning and interventions. Ennew and Swart-Kruger (2003) argue that development institutions have been and are still useful for addressing the general state of the world's street children and putting it on the international agenda. Moreover, Connolly and Ennew (1996), Ennew and Swart-Kruger (2003), de Benítez (2010) among others, argue that the explanatory frameworks in reports are becoming more aware of the environment surrounding the street children, and this has resulted in an increased usage of multidimensional approaches when reporting on street children. Thus, the definitions in reports concerning street and working children have become broader, shifting focus from the street child to the surrounding environment impacting the conditions of the children.

In addition, Ennew and Swart-Kruger's (2003) study, discusses how the analyses in the explanatory frameworks used in reports concerning street children have become enhanced. The reports are now directing its analyses away from stigmatisation of families and the problem of poverty per se, to the direction of multi-level approaches. The focus has shifted from looking at the street children as the site of the problem (i.e., being victims) to focusing on the environment surrounding them. In relation to child labour, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) (Dorman, 2008) has expressed that the multi-level approaches are

important in order to be able to understand that child labour is experienced in different ways depending on immediate, underlying and structural causes. However, as argued further in CSC (2010), and by Ennew and Swart-Kruger (2003), there are still tendencies to frame street children according to, for example, the characteristics of a ‘typical street child’, which position them into universal categories in policy frameworks. Moreover Williams (1993) argues in his article “Who are street children? A hierarchy of street use and appropriate responses” that categorisation can be useful when one is referring to the welfare and education policies, because one has to compromise with the street use in order to get a response to the problem. At the same time though, he argues that this does not necessarily guarantee appropriate responses as such. There is thus a constant struggle between defining groups of people in a matter that is applicable and the merchandise mechanism of ‘what sells’ or gets attention.

Ennew and Swart-Kruger (2003) point to the fact that estimated numbers of street children definitions and characteristics of street children are still constructed and used in reports. Chamber’s (1995) article “Poverty and livelihoods: Whose reality really counts?” on the other hand, brings in an important point when it emphasises that universal and standardised views miss much of the complexity by simplifying realities. Furthermore, Moura’s (2002) article highlights that discourses about street children often refer to a defined population, which has a consequence on how people in general perceive them, or at times judge them. This is also related to how social policies are being shaped focusing on similar issues to explain the origin of street children (ibid). Despite the fact that the category of ‘street children’ is regarded as a useful tool to highlight the recognition of the problem, the challenge lies in the idea of the discourse being a true picture of reality. In addition, Moura argues that generalisation is not appropriate since people have distinct life experiences, interpretations and expectations. Moura (2002) also emphasises the need for new discourses about street children that are not open for generalisations, where the most important participants are the children and adolescents who experience street or working life.

2.1.3 Convention on the Rights of the Child and Child-Centred Approaches

Child-centred approaches have become part of larger development institutions that have been influenced by the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which establishes children as subjects of rights and active agents (CSC, 2010). CSC (2010) points

out that legal frameworks are useful because they can contribute to putting pressure on states and bring forward research, showing gaps in policies. In this case, the CRC shifted the perspective from seeing children as victims to seeing children as agents, having their own rights (ibid). It was not until the late 1990s, however, that child-participatory approaches were fully integrated into development work. O’Kane’s (2003) article highlights case studies to show that children ought to play central roles in addressing public issues by sharing their life experiences, using CRC as a tool where the adults have to create space for children.

Berckman and colleagues (2012) argue for better insight into the lives of children, using CRC as an effective tool, rather than an instrument of prescription. The authors argue that CRC is contributing to normalise childhood according to Western notions which can lead to negative public perceptions when a child does not fit the normalised childhood picture. Moreover, Veeran (2004) emphasises that for many children, adult supervision can be absent, but this does not mean that the children themselves should be diminished from decisions affecting them. Furthermore, Berckman and colleagues (2012) request a better knowledge of the effectiveness of interventions, and not just about the needs that intervention programs are targeting in child-centred approaches. Similarly, the studies of O’Kane (2003) and Veeran (2004) shows that in the end, only the children who have been affected by the policies and interventions can tell how these have improved their lives, or not, as the case may be. In addition, Ennew and Swart-Kruger (2003) bring in the argument that rights-based paradigms commonly used by international welfare agencies have to be careful so that they do not reproduce existing power inequalities when they want to empower street children.

2.1.4 Issues Concerning Girls and their Vulnerabilities

In the recent years, international agencies have put more emphasis on highlighting the state of the world’s girls. PLAN’s campaign “Because I am a girl” and other UN reports put emphasis on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) when examining gender gaps such as economic growth, education and inequalities. The reports argue for investing in girls’ education as a means to poverty reduction and achieving gender equality within countries. They give emphasis to concerns such as child labour, child marriage, abuse and discriminating practices. These points are very valuable and important, but small-scale studies are equally needed for addressing issues of girls and their vulnerabilities. This is, for instance, seen in the case study of Chisamya and colleagues conducted in Bangladesh and Malawi,

which showed that increasing equality in one domain does not necessarily improve equality in others. The study highlighted that even though girls are increasingly being acknowledged in educational programs in which it has contributed to an increase of enrolment of girls in the country, these achievements were not reflected in the societies' traditional perceptions of gender relations in those specific countries. The discrimination experienced in school was also reflected in the community and homes, and vice versa. The above mentioned reports, and also the small scale study of Chisamya (et al.) point to the complex picture of gender issues within countries. As argued in Chisamya (et al.), traditional perceptions and social norms have to be taken more into consideration when there is a focus on achieving gender parity.

2.2 ACADEMIC RESEARCH ON STREET CHILDREN AND EDUCATION: LITERATURE OF RELEVANCE ON INDIA

2.2.1 Shape of Issues

The Indian government acknowledged the CRC in 1992, in which citizenship, participation and protection were key fields of attention (Aleya et al., 2011). A recent national study on child protection mechanisms (see Aleya et al., 2011) shows that despite the fact that the rights of the child are present, there are few signs of increases in the awareness of people concerning the rights of the child in the society. The study discusses the lack in national data on street children who are not in school, the number of institutional homes, how many are living there, and what the ones who are living in institutional homes are doing afterwards. Create (2009) argues for the need for more empirical studies that examine the exclusion of the many children in India who are not accounted for, such as street children and particularly girls in 'invisible' occupations. Books such as Ramachandran's (2003a) "Getting children back to school: Case studies in primary education," and Sondhi-Garg's (2004) "Street children: Lives of valor and vulnerability" argue that there is a long way to go when it comes to equal access to education for vulnerable groups, learning achievements, social inequality and gender issues. The studies within the books also show that even when street children go to school, they often drop out later and as a result, remain illiterate. The question is also raised of whether the government has the capabilities to ensure good quality education for all children. Furthermore, concerns are also being raised about why the government does not make room for actors such as NGOs to contribute and set their own agendas. At this moment, the gap between the government's intentions and practice continues to be wide and there is little systematic documentation of school programs that have a significant impact on primary education.

2.2.2 Concerns and Interventions – Informative versus Effective?

There is a connection in the present study between background stories of the previous street and working children and the issues of schooling. According to a study of Bandyopadhyay and Subrahmanian (2008), female enrolment has increased since the 1990s, but there is still a high dropout rate amongst girls as compared to boys, and girls constitute a large portion of the out-of-school children. A number of both quantitative and qualitative studies have addressed education inequality, and Ramachandran (2003b) is one of the key contributors suggesting that main factors influencing this disparity include poverty and the continuing hold of social and cultural beliefs that promote discrimination against girls and prevent their access to schooling. Domestic work is one of the main reasons for why many girls drop out or never enrol in school. The review of literature done in Bandyopadhyay and Subrahmanian's (2008) study indicates that the bridge schools and residential camps have contributed to an increase in girls' schooling. Government agencies and NGOs provide a range of informal education programs. These are, however, meant to be temporary measures aimed at integrating them into formal schooling, but little is known about what the girls learn and if it contributes to them being mainstreamed into formal schools and are able to complete formal schooling.

“The United Nations Millennium Project” (2005), an international report, presents examples of interventions that tend to work, such as eliminating school fees and providing conditional transfer to prevent dropout and get children enrolled in school, with a special emphasis on girls. However, the report states that the evidence is weak, because there is a lack of rigorous evaluation findings. Moreover it also states that specific interventions are needed based on local conditions. Ramachandran (2003b) argues that India has made significant improvements in primary education, but this cannot be said for secondary and post-secondary school. Ramachandran draws special attention to one vulnerable group, namely adolescent girls. Her study is one of the studies found related to evaluation concerning girls. In the survey, stated in Ramachandran (2003b), the four most common reasons cited by girls for discontinuing school are “required for work at home”, “costs too much”, “not interested in studies” and “others” (e.g. early marriage, lack of facilities in school). The four most common reasons cited by girls for never attending school are “education not necessary,” “required for work at home,” “costs too much” and “not interested” (p. 6). These answers were given, but there is however, a need to explore the causes behind the reasons given.

Brink (2001), on the other hand, refers to special programs' experiences with educators and street children in her article "Working with street children: reintegration through education." She specifically draws attention to the need for education programs to involve children, in which the teachers are acting as supporters and not as instructors. There should be focus on positive feedback from teachers and encouragement towards students. She also highlights how teaching among children and students can serve as a good approach to students who have had similar experiences, and have been able to cope with them. In addition, those students can be trained to share experiences which opens up for a dialogue about difficult problems that many of the previous street children face or have faced. She also refers to different programs such as vocational training, residential care and informal education approaches that can be adopted when working with street children in order for the children to receive quality schooling. She emphasises, however, that education should not be seen as an end goal where one ends up with a diploma, but as a process where students should learn skills in order take control of their own lives and be able to reach their potential. She regards education as a means to equip children with a sense of agency, but also recognises that collective effort is needed for this to be realised for all children, including political willingness. Harris (et al., 2011) and colleagues' study "Community reinsertion success of street children programs in Brazil and Peru" argues that the reinsertion for street children in the community was successful depending on the length of the intervention programs, education opportunities as well as services such as therapy sessions. The study showed that the residential care programs that provided basic education was successful. The program focused on teaching children in all ages to read and write properly. The children who were equipped with necessary skills and knowledge had a better chance to be successfully mainstreamed into society, because they have been provided with skills which better equip them for the labour market.

UNESCO's study conducted by Zutshi (2001) called "Education for street and working children in India" aimed to assess and evaluate the program of education for children in difficult circumstances. Information was collected from websites, census data, national surveys, field-survey of the selected NGOs and from selected NGOs' profiles, annual reports and structured questionnaires. The structured questionnaires were also for children who were part of the NGO programs and their parents. The study found that NGOs in India play a crucial role in facilitating elementary education for vulnerable children, and a number of success stories about the NGO's programs were discussed. The study points to the fact that the majority of the NGOs participating in the study do not provide statistics on reintegration

of children with 'natural' families, enrolment of children in mainstream schools and the activities that the NGOs are organising. The absence of such data makes it hard to capture achievements and whether programs are working the way they are supposed to.

Ramachandran (2006) argues that there is no shortage of research and documentations per se, but that systematic documentation of programs are lacking. In her paper "Backward and forward linkages that strengthen primary education," she makes an effort to gather some case studies from NGOs as a first step in bridging the information gap in primary education as well as bringing forward the case that fundamental changes are needed in the way the primary education system is positioned and administrated in India. Thus, since many NGOs do not provide systematic data, the present study will be useful in contributing to documentation of NGO programs. Giving attention to different approaches adopted to meet the primary education needs of out-of-school children and of children who may be in school but are potential dropouts, helps in bridging the information gap and highlights that the system needs to change in order for alternative education to become a part of the educational discussion within mainstream institutions and systems.

Taneja and colleagues (2011) argue that efforts should be made to ensure that the schools themselves become more inclusive instead of relying on bridge schools to map the children who drop out. Therefore, there is a clear call for flexible approaches within the education system in India. As Ramachandran (2006, p.21) puts it, "It is still insufficiently realised that non broad-brush, uniform strategy will or can work, more so when confronted with deep social prejudices, low self-esteem and indifferent state commitment."

2.3 BRIDGING THE GAP

The shift from studying street and working children from an adult point of view to including them as actors, where the focus is now on the social context in which they live, has pointed to the important fact that street and working children are heterogeneous groups. International policy reports are useful to grasp central international themes that frame policies and interventions on a larger scale, but the large-scale studies have some drawbacks. The definitions, discourses and statistics are used as a mean to raise attention to issues that can be problematic because of the categorisations made. Small-scale qualitative studies are thus equally important even though they have a smaller area of study. Small-scale studies can

contribute to highlight issues from the local level and point to complex pictures to show that experiences differ according to many factors, including age, gender, social, cultural, economic and political contexts. In terms of the present study, all of the girls who were interviewed had street and/or working backgrounds, but underlying structural causes in the content of their background stories all differ. In relation to previous studies in India on street and working children as well as on education, it seems that the special issue of girls and interventions targeted at them have not been given as much attention as is needed.

Studies discussed in the literature review highlight issues and concerns regarding education among girls, interventions on the state level and of NGOs concerning street and working children as well as school programs within the mainstream. The gap lies in the need for more qualitative studies in order to understand constraints and challenges within certain programs or interventions in order to grasp a better understanding of what can work as the best solution for particular groups. The request for joint evaluations in which groups from different fields come together to discuss and highlight issues is seen as necessary in order to find out what works best within a certain context. Bringing together both reports and smaller-scale studies can contribute to a better understanding of how/why one solution does not fit all. The literature review has contributed to an understanding that international and national reports should provide an increased emphasis on qualitative studies within smaller areas. The present study will highlight the 'less visible' group of adolescent girls who have a street and/or working background and link their backgrounds to their challenges of pursuing schooling. This will contribute to increase the body of qualitative studies that address intervention programs targeted at street and working children in India. In addition, it will be important for influencing policy and political practice in the area of access to education for girls living on the street and working children in India.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter presents a theoretical framework for the present research. Theories of poverty, empowerment, as well as stigma and shame are presented as theoretical lenses for discussion of the empirical chapters. The word ‘theory’ refers to a particular kind of explanation, and it is intended to explain particular phenomena (Creswell, 2009, p.61), but as stated by Strauss and Corbin (1994, in Silverman, 2010) there are several sets of concepts that are being produced within a theory, in which “theory provides both a framework for critically understanding phenomena and a basis for considering how what is unknown might be organised” (Silverman, 2010, p. 110).

However, this chapter is not intended to be a comprehensive description of all the concepts within the theories presented, but rather an emphasis will be laid on certain aspect of the theories, that are of particular relevance for the study. The purpose is to show how the three theories are useful in order to provide a deeper understanding of the empirical findings, and also how the empirical findings can enrich the discussion of certain aspects of the theoretical framework.

The three theories will contribute to a better understanding of the different factors that have impacted on the shaping of these adolescent’s opportunities, perceptions and lives. It will then be possible to highlight some dimensions of why the lives of the girls have become as they are today and how one can suggest possible solutions to improve their access to education. The aim is to look at the adolescents’ reality in the society in which they live and to highlight their lived experiences through their perceptions. These experiences are important to explore in order to grasp the problems that are affecting the girls.

3.1 CRITICAL POVERTY THEORY: A SPECIFIC FOCUS ON CHRONIC POVERTY

Chronic poverty is a term used to describe persisting poverty in which people are “trapped” in poverty over time, or for a lifetime. In most cases, their children will continue to be part of the continuation of the poverty circle (Chronic poverty research centre, 2013). The specific focus on chronic poverty is given great emphasis in the first empirical chapter and will be part of the discussion in the further chapters in the present study because it will help in explaining the constraints (e.g. below) faced by the girls interviewed in breaking the poverty cycle. Theories and concepts of poverty used frequently in development practices tend to be dominated by measurement, focusing on the *state* of chronic poverty, its characteristics rather than the underlying *causes* (Hickey & du Toit, 2007). When the characteristics are in focus, poverty is then often looked at as a matter of an individual behaviour, and consequently that it may be eliminated by improving individual needs. In addition, poverty is thus seen as an individual condition, in which people can easily judge poor people, making poverty an outcome of individual behaviour rather than on structural factors (Harris, 2006).

Poverty is a multidimensional phenomena and the reduction of poverty is not possible if there is only a specific focus on the state of poverty alone (Anad & Sen, 1997). The authors explicitly argue how the poverty indices used in development practices are limiting because the lives of human beings can be impoverished in different forms depending on the lived realities of the poor people themselves (Narayan et.al, 2000). Mosse (2010) elaborates in this aspect by emphasising that the economic aspect of poverty and its history is important to a certain extent, but he highlights the need to look beyond these conceptions in order to discuss the causes of poverty. He argues that exploitation is embedded in and reproduced by social processes. Different social processes that reproduce poverty are important to explore in the present study in order to gain greater knowledge on how to improve the girls’ access to quality education. Key authors (Harris-White, 2005; Hickey & Bracking 2005; Harriss, 2006; Bebbington, 2007; Hickey & du Toit, 2007; Mosse, 2007; Hikey, 2010) in the critical poverty debate bring in alternative views in understanding poverty, views that are needed in order to theorise about how poverty is reproduced. They take different societal variables into account, in order to see poverty as an effect of economic, political and social relations, instead of focusing on the characteristics of poverty alone. Such alternative views on poverty will be essential to the discussion of how the girls’ lives have unfolded and how they are disadvantage regarding options and opportunities in their lives.

3.1.1 Production and Reproduction of Chronic Poverty Relational Approach and Adverse Incorporation and Social Exclusion Research

A critical conceptualisation of the structural causes that generate poverty is crucial in looking at the production of chronic poverty. Firstly, a relational approach to poverty suggested by Mosse (2007) and Hickey and du Toit (2007) sees poverty as being a consequence of historical, economic and political relations and highlights how these are reproduced through social categorisations and identity. In other words, unequal growth within a society can lead to poverty, but it fails to reveal why poor people continue being in a state of poverty, and this is why the relational approach is important, because it also brings the social mechanisms in understanding the reproduction of cultural marginality and exclusion (Mosse, 2007).

Secondly, Hickey and du Toit (2007) build on the relational approach arguing that reproduction of poverty thus leads to chronic poverty. This can be theorised through the concept of Adverse Incorporation and Social Exclusion (AISE). The approach pays “particular attention to the ways in which particular groups or individuals are linked to larger social totalities- ‘societies’, national or local communities, networks, markets, institutions and systems- that shape their economic and social lives” (Ibid, p.7). Adverse incorporation brings attention to institutions such as state, market, community and household and looks at the power relations that keep people poor over time. Social exclusion focuses on the individual or group’s perspective and how they have become marginalised within societies as a result of cultural recognition and/or rejection, which are linked to resource deprivation (ibid).

By combining adverse incorporation and social exclusion into one approach, one is able to focus on relations rather than resources, in which the two concepts pay attention to how the larger social totalities are shaping the economic and social lives of individuals and groups of people. Bringing in a relational approach and AISE to the study of durable poverty in this thesis will help in assessing how the sociocultural contexts of the girls and their families have contributed to them living on the street and work as domestic workers. Moreover, the AISE approach can assist in exploring the challenges of pursuing schooling for former street and working children.

3.1.2 Production and Reproduction of Chronic Poverty - An Issue of Power

Chronic poverty is caused by interlocking sets of factors. The approach of AISE puts fourth three dimensions in the production and reproduction of poverty, and it makes links between different forms of social reality. Hickey and du Toit (2007) specifically highlights the economic, political and the socio-cultural dimensions in the production and reproduction of poverty. It is important to emphasise, however, that the dimension of power are not only direct, but can also be ‘hidden’ through organised political systems, programs, discourses, etc. (Mosse, 2010, p.1172). Power relations at different stages within these processes are highly valuable in the discussion because the different dimensions are evident when the girls’ stories unfold. The dimensions of power and ‘hidden power’ will especially be useful in the discussion of the girls’ schooling and opportunities for future schooling.

Firstly, regarding the economic dimension, poor people are not necessarily excluded from the economy, but economic institutions incorporate poor people on adverse terms (Harriss-White, 2006; Hickey & du Toit, 2007; Mosse, 2010). Poverty exists within the ‘normal operations’ of markets because economic institutions create barriers within the systems (ibid). Secondly, the political dimension looks at how the power structures within policies include poor people into the ‘normal operations’ of markets on adverse terms which prevents them from being included in the decision making, representation and organisation (Hickey & Bracking, 2005; Bebbington, 2007; Hickey & du Toit, 2007; Mosse, 2010). Thirdly, the socio-cultural dimension highlights how discrimination and inequality are based in social exclusion, which becomes institutionalised and reproduced over time. Thereby, discrimination becomes legitimised, and the discriminated groups become the ones to blame rather than the cultural regimes surrounding them (Hickey & du Toit, 2007; Mosse, 2010).

Relations between the three domains are inter-linked and help to explain what gives rise to poverty and reproduces poverty within a particular context. A multidimensional concept of power will highlight how poverty fails to become politicised, producing powerlessness, subordination and injustice (Mosse, 2010). Thus, the three dimensions can be used to discuss the girls’ schooling or in some cases lack of schooling and how the dimensions create barriers also to the girls’ future aspirations.

3.1.3 Poverty Reduction

Poverty is caused by structural factors and is an effect of social relations. Therefore, focusing on the characteristics of poor people themselves is not adequate in order to find ways to reduce poverty (Mosse, 2010). In order to reduce poverty in sustainable and durable terms, it would be important to challenge the power structures and social relationships that are instrumental in the production of poverty. For example, poor children in India and especially girls face unequal access to education, but this is not because of the fact that they are poor or girls, but rather it is the social construction of being poor that has become institutionalised that justifies the girls' situations as the 'way it is' (Hickey & du Toit, 2007). However, it is important to not neglect the importance of the voices of the marginalised people in order to find out their needs, because the poor are often marginalised from positions of power and need collective action in order to challenge structural forms (Mosse, 2010).

Scholars such as Hickey and Bracking (2005), Bebbington (2007), Hickey and du Toit (2007), and Mosse (2010), all emphasise that political mobilisation is posited as a '*sine qua non*' of poverty reduction, meaning that political mobilisation is a crucial part of poverty reduction in order to incorporate the needs and voices of poor people into the political discourse. Hickey and du Toit (2007) as well as Mosse (2010) specifically highlight that NGOs working for the needs of the poor and social mobilisation groups are ways to improve poverty, but they often face obstacles and it is rare that they are able to achieve what they intended to in the first place. Kamat (2004) highlights how recent privatisation in the economic and social sectors have influenced the work of NGOs, because donor agencies are increasingly funding money on NGO projects. The consequences NGOs can face with the involvement of donor agencies, is the pressure to shape policies and programs in an effective and efficient manner rather than to bring about any real transformation in the position of poor people. The neoliberal agenda of large development agencies cause NGOs to minimise the focus on the social and political causes of poverty in their projects. The challenge of poverty reduction lays in how much action and willingness that is actually taken by the existing power structures within the international society and by each country in reducing poverty. Challenges faced by the NGO in the present study to mainstream former street and working children into schools will be important to explore in order to find out if there needs to be further action taken depending on the local context. Moreover, the question of whether the girls are able to challenge constraints faced to transform their given situation will be important to find out, taking the present discussion of poverty reduction into account.

3.2 EMPOWERMENT THEORY

3.2.1 Historic Background of Empowerment Theory

Empowerment theory started as an applied theory focusing on how to improve the lives of poor people, with special emphasis on the needs of women (Parpart, 2002, in Saunders, 2002). Community-based development organisations were one the first who started applying approaches of empowerment (ibid). At a later stage, the language and approach of empowerment was applied to policies in the World Bank (WB), and United Nations (UN), resulting in a shift towards emphasising empowerment through economic growth (Mosse, 2007). Empowerment is often posited as a buzzword in development programs, a term that can easily be transferred into programs as a means to achieve gender equality and power to marginalised people by giving resources to the poor without taking larger structures such as gender values, norms and power relations into account. Key authors such as Kabeer (2005) and Mosedale (2005) argue that this creates misunderstandings of what empowerment really is. In relation to the present study, empowerment theory will be beneficial to throw light on the complexity of experiences and challenges of the adolescent girls in gaining an education, as well as on the NGO's obstacles in promoting and improving access to education for groups that have been disempowered.

Kabeer's (2005, pp.13-14) definition of empowerment is commonly used in academic work, meaning "to be disempowered means to be denied choice, while empowerment refers to the processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such an ability." The quote reflect upon empowerment as a process that needs to happen within a person, but that at the same time has to be realised within a social context. This points to the social context matters for the individual conception of the self. The individual concept of self is dependent on support from larger societal structures such as policies, social norms and values. The *process*, therefore, indicates that even though one has been empowered in one domain, this does not mean that it will be a continuation of empowerment attained in other life circumstances. Thus, empowerment is the processes by which "those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such ability," but the process of empowerment is explored through different forms making empowerment a process and not an end in itself.

3.2.2 Agency, Choices and Relations of Power

Given that the empowerment process is explored in different forms, Kabeer's empowerment definition highlights the various notions of power in the ability to exercise choice. Empowerment can be explored through agency, resources, and achievements (Kabeer, 1999). These three interrelated dimensions are highly valuable for the discussion of the challenges the adolescent girls face in pursuing schooling, as well as for how the girls themselves perceive education and whether they think it will contribute to their empowerment process. "Agency is the ability to define one's goals and act upon them" (Mosedale, 2005, p. 249). This is a utopian concept of what agency means, but Kabeer (2005, p.14) argues that agency is a dimension used to reflect on the process of how choices are made and put into effect. Other people, social norms, expectations etc. can influence the process of defining one's goal while people, the culture, norms, values or policies can influence how one acts upon them.

Both Kabeer (2005) and Mosedale (2005) reflect on the different forms of agency that can take both positive and negative forms. 'Power to' and 'power over' are two contradicting dimensions that emphasises the positivity and negativity embedded in agency. 'Power to' is seen as a positive dimension in which one is able to make and act on one's own life choices independently from others' constraints or opposition (Kabeer 2005). 'Power over', however, reflects that certain actors can override the agency of their people (Mosedale, 2005). Thus, agency is not only about the power within individuals and their ability to make a choice, but also about how to challenge power relations in order to be able to make an independent choice. Resources are needed in order to be able to exercise agency (Kabeer, 2005). However, resources are distributed through institutions and relationships in societies, and the availability of resources depends on the way it is distributed and claimed. Availability of resources is not always sufficient to make strategic life choices (ibid). Achievements are determined according to how the choices made and resources gathered give potential to live the lives one ought to live (ibid). This will be a crucial part of the discussion when looking at the girls' process of empowerment within the intervention programs they were part in at the time of fieldwork.

Kabeer (1999; 2005) emphasises the importance of recognising the conditions that must be fulfilled in order for a decision to be a 'real choice.' *The alternatives*, such as the ability to have chosen differently, must be available in order to have the capacity to a meaningful choice (Kabeer, 2005). The alternatives must not only exist - but also *be seen* to exist (ibid).

In this sense, “power relations are most effective when they are not perceived as such” (ibid, p. 14). The unquestioned acceptance of power is based on the denial of choice, whereas in the circumstances of the adolescents’ girls, it will be vital whether alternatives exist for them in their given situation, but also if alternatives are seen to exist from the girls’ point of view. Kabeer (1999) emphasises that power relations are expressed not only through the exercise of agency and choice, but also through the kinds of choices people make. This will be important to reflect upon when exploring the experiences and future aspirations of the adolescent girls, expressed by their own voices.

3.2.3 From Individual to Collective – From Local to Global

Kabeer (1999: 2000), Mosedale (2005) and Koggel (2006), discuss how one can attempt to challenge injustice. Kabeer (2005) emphasises that ‘power within’ is equally important as collective action. Mosedale (2005) and Koggel (2006) on the other hand, are focusing more on a holistic perspective. The authors give more emphasis to the larger structures and processes in the empowerment processes. All these foci are important for the present study in order to look at the processes of change in the adolescents’ lives and the potential for change on an individual level as well as within the larger society in which they live. In addition, it will be useful in analysing if and how APSA as a NGO has been able to take forward the goal of integrating the street children into the mainstream schooling system as well as to discuss the RTE Act in the Indian society and connect it to the MDG of achieving primary education for all.

Empowerment and agency can be conceptualised through ‘power to’ and ‘power over’, but equally important is ‘power within’ (i.e. awareness, purpose, self-esteem) and ‘power with’ (i.e. collective power). Effective (i.e. ability to carry out ones roles in a better way) versus transformative (i.e. the ability to question, analyse, and act on the structures of patriarchal constraint) agency is used to promote longer processes of change (Kabeer, 2005). In relation to education, schooling for example, can improve the girls’ intellectual capacities, but if it does not provide them with the capacity to question and analyse injustice, it can be difficult to challenge the current power relations that seem ‘normal’ (as discussed in the earlier section), and the potential for change will be limited. Kabeer (2005) argues for the need to start within, seeing the agency of women as important to start the process of change, but institutional transformation is equally needed. For a transformative empowerment process, action needs to

be taken “from individual to collective agency, from private negotiations to public action, and from the informal sphere to the formal arenas of struggle where power is legitimately exercised”(p.16).

In the case of the participants in this study, it will be interesting to explore whether they are capable of questioning their position within the society. Mosedale’s (2005) argument of the holistic focus on empowerment processes is thus imperative. The context, such as social structures, kinship, gender relations and exercise of power must have equal emphasis as the individual level in the process of empowerment. The holistic focus can initiate the process of empowerment in the girl’s lives and help to explore what approach the NGO is taking. Mosedale highlights that collective action is required to reflect on social injustice and to be able to challenge it. Regarding the present study, it will be interesting to explore if collective action is occurring in the girls’ present situations.

3.3 THEORY OF STIGMA AND SHAME: EMPHASIS ON STATUS LOSS, DISCRIMINATION AND POWER

According to Goffman (1963), social settings that a particular society establishes can categorise human behaviours into what is perceived as ‘normal’ and ‘un-normal.’ He argues that the stigmatisation of society can function as means of social control of those groups by removing them from various forms of competition. Several authors have built upon Goffman’s theory of stigmatisation, but many have encountered criticism for having an individualistic focus on stigma and defining stigma too vaguely. Link and Phelan’s (2001) work “Conceptualizing Stigma” have taken the criticism into account and define stigma to exist when “elements of labelling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination co-occur in a power situation that allows the components of stigma to unfold” (ibid, p.366). Link and Phelan build on Goffman’s theory, but emphasise more the co-occurrence of stigma in the status loss and discrimination processes, in order to highlight how stigma processes can influence in the life circumstances of stigmatised groups multidimensional ways.

3.3.1 Status Loss and Discrimination

Poor children, girls as well as street and working children can be considered as groups who are stigmatised at different levels in the Indian society, because they experience status loss and discrimination. As Link and Phelan (2001) argue, the status loss aspect is important to

include when theorising about stigma, because when groups are labelled, a justification is constructed for rejecting and excluding them. Excluded groups thereby experience status loss and discrimination from various domains, and often face disadvantages in life chances. The concept of shame seen from the former street and working children's points of view in relation to the stigmatisation they suffer will be interesting to explore in this research. Furthermore, this can be used in order to analyse how the stereotyping, loss of status and discrimination as well as unequal power relations can affect a person's life, and find answers to whether it is possible to overcome stigmatisation.

An emphasis on discrimination takes focus away from the ones who are being discriminated against, and direct attention to the ones who exclude and reject, the ones who are executing discrimination.³ By bringing in the discrimination aspect in the theory of stigma, one is better suited to analyse the processes that lead to social inequalities and why stigmatised groups experience multiple disadvantages (Link & Phelan, 2001). Structural discrimination puts emphasis on institutional practices that can exclude or disadvantage groups (ibid). Resources and opportunities can be reduced or at times not be available at all for the stigmatised groups. These processes can be uncovered if researched, but it is harder to find the less obvious forms of discrimination that can occur in the stigma process. When people (such as in this thesis, the girls) are identified in certain ways through labelling and discrimination, it can impact the way people think about themselves. This can further contribute to low self-esteem and other constraints in their lives, making them less likely to challenge structural forms of discrimination (ibid).

3.3.2 Power

“Stigma is entirely dependent on social, economic, and political power where it takes power to stigmatise. The role of power in stigma is frequently overlooked because in many instances power differences are so taken for granted as to seem unproblematic” (Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 368). For stigma research, the need to further understand the social processes that allow one group's views to dominate so as to produce real and important consequences for the other group is important, and power relations are an explicit part of this process. In India, the challenges of pursuing schooling after living on the street can be viewed from different levels

³ This is also linked to how poverty theory will be applied in the thesis, in which emphasis is not given to individualistic matters, but rather to social ones.

within a society and involve different forms of power. The role of power can be analysed on the individual level. However, it is equally important to look at the social, economic and political constraints faced in providing quality schooling.

3.3.3 Challenging Stigma

Link and Phelan (2001) argue for a multifaceted and multileveled approach to stigma to address the mechanisms that can lead to disadvantaged outcomes and to address individual as well as structural discrimination. Furthermore, it is equally important to address the cause of stigma because the attitudes and beliefs of powerful groups need to be changed, or the circumstances must change in order to limit the power of the ones who stigmatise. This also relates to how poverty can be reduced, as well as to how important collective action is in order to overcome stigmatisation and initiate a process of empowerment.

3.4 INTERLINK OF THE THEORIES

The three theories interrelate and overlap. For example, poor people such as girls and their families in the present study, experience adverse incorporation and social exclusion, which often results in disempowerment. When groups are labelled, such as in this case the girls are labelled as poor a justification gets constructed for rejecting and excluding them. Excluded groups thus experience status loss and discrimination from various domains, and often face disadvantages in life chances. The disadvantages faced can again lead to disempowerment and durable poverty.

Furthermore, due to disempowerment, the informants in the present study are more receptive to stigma, thus the stigma attached to them can cause powerlessness. This can produce a continuous circle. The three theories will contribute in achieving a better understanding of the complex situation of the girls in relation to schooling from different perspectives and approaches. This will in turn highlight the complexity of the analysis showing that an event never has a single cause, but can be multi-causal requiring both theory and action at different levels.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter will present, explain and discuss how the research took place, the methods and strategies applied, the practicalities and challenges met, and the ethical considerations made and dilemmas encountered. A field diary was kept during the fieldwork, which was an important instrument for reflection in this particular chapter. Qualitative research methods are important because one is able to study ‘in action’ by observing people’s daily lives, listening to their life stories as well as exploring the link between social science and social reality within a community (Gibbs, 2007). A qualitative approach was important for the present study because the aim was to listen to former street and working girls’ perceptions in order to gain greater knowledge about how to improve their access to education. As Silverman (2000) argues, the methodology chapter is a place to be honest, critical and reflective of one’s own work and provide the story of how the fieldwork went. This is the aim throughout this chapter, to give the reader a good understanding of the methodological aspects of the study, one of the major factors that shape the fieldwork. The fieldwork is also a project in which some of the biggest challenges and the best experiences are encountered, often at the same time.

4.1 SITE OF STUDY AND SELECTION OF INFORMANTS

The research took place in the city of Bangalore, India within a NGO called APSA, from the beginning of June to the middle of August 2012. Since APSA’s main office was placed in Bangalore, this was one of reasons for why the research took place within this particular city. The main objective was to explore the challenges experienced by adolescent girls and give attention to former street children’s voices and everyday experiences in order to gain greater knowledge on how to improve access to quality education. The focus throughout this research was on the adolescent girls; I wanted them to be seen as agents, in order to uncover a better understanding of how they perceived their own lives and social realities. This was done through interviews, conversations and observations. In addition to the adolescents’ perspectives, interviews with NGO workers, teachers and a Child Welfare Committee (CWC) member were conducted to get a broader picture of the girls’ contexts.

4.2 THE PREPARATION PHASE – GAINING ACCESS TO THE FIELD

4.2.1 Being an Outsider and the Importance of Gatekeepers

Being a young, independent, Norwegian woman and a student arriving in the field as an outsider was challenging and at times frustrating. However, in the preparation stage, I had tried to prepare myself to have a positive and reflective focus. Even though there were a couple of frustrating moments, the research process became very interesting and rewarding in many ways because of the fact that I was an outsider. This part will be elaborated more at a later point in this chapter. Gatekeepers were crucial for this particular research since it took place in a foreign country, a place where I did not know anyone or had been before and a place where I was an outsider looking in. Gatekeepers are according to Wax (1980) third parties that may be in control of the area of research and the population. It was important to get approval from the gatekeepers who in this case were APSA, even though this did not automatically produce the approval of the ones being interviewed. The Norwegian organisation called FORUT (Campaign for Development and Solidarity), which is getting financial support from NORAD (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation) have projects in India, and access to the field was established through their contacts and willingness to assist. APSA, a rights-based child-centred NGO working at the grass root level specifically with vulnerable children in Bangalore, was interested in the research prior to the arrival and the contact with the NGO was initiated in the months before arriving in the field. Prior to the arrival in the field there were two projects that seemed very interesting for the research. The organisation's 'Dream-School' project is a place for former street children to get a chance to take exams. This is part of an integration strategy, in which try to enable children to become integrated in to the mainstream school-system. In addition, the home called Navajeevana, which is a secure environment for young women at risk, providing them with residential support seemed interesting to explore. The gatekeepers were important also when the selection of informants took place, and their assistance helped in making the fieldwork productive in many ways.

4.2.2 The Interpreter and the Researcher

Most people speak the local language of 'Kannada' in Bangalore. Prior to arrival, I had asked if it was possible for the gatekeepers to arrange for an interpreter around my age, maybe a student because it would be an advantage if it were a woman since the informants were adolescent girls. To be honest, not much more thought was given to this before the departure,

but after a while I realised that it could be a bigger problem than first thought of. Not many in this particular organisation had much time to spare, and since universities had started again after the holiday, it did not seem like they had anyone that could assist. Since I rented a room at one of the director's houses, the family there offered to help me in translating the interviews. I raised the question if this was a good idea and it worried me since it could influence the interviews because many of the informants would be aware that the interpreter used in the interviews was the director's wife. In addition, the issue of power- relations came up since I was living in their house as a guest and now had to work on a daily basis with someone that was much older than me, in which the roles would be shifted at the workplace. I would have to have the control and make the decisions regarding the interviews. However, even if she had never worked as an interpreter before, we both had to work together and try to make the best of it. It took some time before it became clear what the routines should be and how the interviews should proceed, but it was fortunate that she had the time to help me during the day. Since they offered to help, not much more could be done than be pleased and try to make the best of it, but I explained clearly how the interview procedure should be. To make a note, even though the interpreter was seen as part of the organisation, it was good in many ways because she gave better access to the field. The interviews became very effective, because the people in the organisation helped us and were productive because they were very respectful towards her. Thus, using an interpreter with a high level of respect helped in making the fieldwork productive, in spite of some bumps along the way in the process.

4.3 BEING IN THE FIELD – THE DATA COLLECTION PHASE

4.3.1 Recruitment of Informants

The directors read the interview guide and offered suggestions of how to best select the informants. The organisation had files on all the children, and they suggested going through the relevant files and write up a list of possible informants for the interviews. When going through the files, I soon realised that some of them were not former street children. In the beginning, I was a little bit worried and wondered if there were enough informants to interview. The concern was raised during a conversation with one of the directors. They explained that some of these children had a street background, but usually only for a short time. In addition, some of them were labelled as child labourer or domestic worker in the file because they were under these circumstances when APSA had rescued them. In addition, I later found out that many girls could often end up in homes as domestic workers rather than

being on the street and beg, because it was more 'secure' to live in a house or because they were girls and could 'easily' do this kind of job. It also became clear that many of them had lived part of their young lives under harsh circumstances and dropped out of school at an early age. As a result, I decided to make the recruitment wider, in which other children were included as well. After going through the files, some of the staff helped in finding out who was best to ask first for interviews and they helped in assisting throughout the whole process.

One negative aspect of recruiting informants with the help of the organisation was that not all of the staff involved in the recruitment of informants understood English, which meant that I did not have total control on the information given to the potential informants about the project. The way to solve this was to make sure that the people who helped in recruiting participants understood what the research was about and that the participants were given clear instructions about their rights and the participation being voluntary. Furthermore, when the informants came to do the interview, I as a researcher tried to make sure that it was voluntary. Two interviews had to be stopped in the beginning of the data collection period, because it was obvious that these children had not been given clear enough instructions about what this research was concerning. Even if the recruitment process was a little bit challenging in the beginning, some of the experiences from the recruitment process were very good for the further analysis.

4.3.2 Informed Consent

Once in the field it was a little bit challenging to obtain informed consent. Some of the people working within the organisation did not see informed consent as necessary as I did. The differences in opinions became evident in discussions about the issue of confidentiality as well as how much time should be spent on explaining the informants about their rights and the research. These challenges probably surfaced because of differences in culture and values, but it was necessary to find ways to solve them. In this process, I wanted to understand their way of comprehending things, as well as explaining them how important informed consent was for the research to be approved in Norway and that it was necessary in order for me to be able to conduct this research.

The gatekeepers of the organisation gave the first informed consent. Since most of these teenagers were living within this organisation, it was not possible to ask their parents/guardians for permission, since most of the girls did not have any parental supervision

or contact with their parents. As Schenk and Williamson (2005) argue, some children might not have responsible adults to look after their best interest, and gaining approval from parents or guardians is not always possible. When this is the case it is necessary to get approval from other adults/caregivers. Working with teenagers, and in cases when some were under the age of 18, it was crucial that they understood what the research was about as well as what their rights prior to, during and after the interview were.

Prior to each interview, I had to ask people who had helped me to recruit the informants if they had explained about the research. They always answered yes to this question, and this could have been the case, but the interpreter also had to ask the girls before they sat down for the interview. At times, it could get a little bit frustrating because the time used for this was sometime less than as I would have liked it to be. Each interview started by telling the informants about the research and about their rights. I never asked their name, only their age. For each interview we had to work effectively since some of the girls did not want to sit and answer questions all day long and at times had to go back to class. They did not mind for about 40 minutes, but after that some started asking how many questions were left. This was good in a way because it gave a confirmation that they were comfortable enough to ask questions and had a sense of control over the interview. They were told that they did not have to answer questions they felt uncomfortable talking about. Information was given about the possibility to stop the interview whenever they wished. However, one interview had to be stopped due to the informant's shyness, and because it was obvious from her body language that she was not comfortable. I did at times ask during interviews if they would like to continue, thinking on Davies (1999) chapter of 'ethics and politics,' in the article "Reflexive Ethnography," in which she argues that gaining consent does not have to be a single event during the interview, but rather should be a continuous process. Before the interview could start consent was given to use the recorder. The girls as well as the adult informants did not mind the recorder. They were explained about the equipment and what it was being used for. They were also told that it was better for me to have it taped since I could not understand their language and needed everything translated afterwards. In this way it was also easier to notice misunderstandings during the interviews as well as how the interpretation and interviews could be improved for the next interview.

4.3.3 Methods

Once in the field, one has to be a knower and discoverer when collecting the necessary data (Harding, 1987; in Silverman 2011). Being an outsider, the interviews could not start right away and it was important to be a discoverer throughout the whole research process in order to learn and observe more about the people, the culture and the community. Banks (2007) argues that the ultimate goal of qualitative research is to understand those being studied from their perspective. The intention is to understand, describe and sometimes explain social phenomena from the ‘inside.’ This was taken into consideration prior to the present study as well as during the fieldwork. Reading, note taking, observation and participation were constantly being applied as methods for understanding the particular society in which I was living.

Participant observation

According to Johannessen, Tufte & Christoffersen (2010, pp. 120-132), “there are several observation phases that takes place during the participant observation; going in to the field, being a part of the field and leaving the field”. These phases were taken into account while doing participant observation. I lived five minutes away from the organisation headquarters and had my working place at this particular organisation. The first two weeks of the fieldwork was spent getting to know the organisation and the people working and living there. I wanted to find out how they worked in practice, their visions and goals, as well as how they were organised. During the first week, I observed the bridge school ‘Dream School’ by sitting in the classrooms during classes and by talking to teachers and some students. A briefing by other staff members about the vocational training centre as well as about other programs they provided in the community was also given in the first week. This was also a good opportunity to introduce myself to the staff and the children in order for them to get to know my research and me. During the second week, I participated in the ‘Back to School Campaign.’ APSA staff and students walked around in the neighbouring communities to bring awareness and demonstrate about the importance of sending children to school. In addition, I participated in the ‘World Day against Child Labour’ as an audience, and got to talk to people about their impressions of this particular day and of child labour in general. By using two weeks for participant observations, insights was gained into the general opinions about issues concerning education and street children, the Indian culture as well as how a grassroots organisation in India was working on a daily basis.

During the second phase, there were three school visits and all of them were part of APSA's community program. It was planned to have two more school visits as well as visits to a government run institution/hostel for children. However, these plans had to be cancelled because I got Dengue fever. The three school visits that took place were very interesting. I got to observe what governmental schools were like; I got to be an observer in a parents meeting, and got to see how the process of recruiting children and encouraging them to stay in school took place. In addition, in one class I got to ask the children questions and they had so many opinions and answers, which was great. Even though some of the information gathered cannot be directly included in the thesis, it was good in order to provide me with more reflections on my work as well as new insights. Furthermore, notes were also taken from observations made during weekends, when I had some free time and could go into the city. It was particularly interesting to see street children in action, and pictures were taken (without showing their faces) in order to try to capture this from different angles. I did get attached to some of the children who lived at the hostel, and it was thus important for me to say a proper goodbye to them all. I felt that they needed to know why I was leaving them and that I had appreciated the time I had with them.

Interviews

The main focus of my data collection was on the adolescent girls, and interviews with them were conducted during the first part of the interview period. The interviews were semi-structured with guides indicating the larger themes to be covered, but some of the questions were changed during the interviews according to what the informant replied to the questions asked. The guides changed during the interviews and under the research period. It was important during the interviews that the adolescents could talk as much as possible without interruptions or leading questions. The interviews with the adolescents were conducted in an environment familiar to them, often at the place where they stayed. A total of 18 interviews were conducted with adolescent girls during the fieldwork. Interviews with adults such as directors of the organisation, staff, teachers and representatives from CWC were conducted after the process of interviewing the adolescent was over. 6 interviews with adults were conducted, and lasted from one to two hours. The reason why the interviews with the adults took place in the end was because the interpreter had a time frame and the interviews with adults were conducted in English, so no interpreter was needed. In addition, after the interviews with the adolescents, some time was spent on reflecting on their answers, because the interview guides for the adults were adjusted accordingly.

The bridge-school 'Dream School' in APSA	6 girls
Vocational training centre	4 girls
Girls' hostel- attended private school	5 girls
Working and living at the Navajeevana	2 girls
Self- sufficient	1 girl
Total:	18 interviews

Teachers working at the 'Dream School'	3
Directors of the organisation	2
Child Welfare Committee	1
Total	6 interviews

Altogether a total of 24 interviews were conducted, and three informal talks with staff members who spoke English also took place. They were all informed and gave consent that the information given could be used in the thesis. During the interviews in English, I was in total control, which helped in cross - checking the data. The interview guide had separate question sheets for the different groups of informants. However, some questions were posed to all the different groups. This was intended, and the reason why the interview guides were structured this way was because there were different groups of informants and it was a way for triangulation of the data. As for example, the member of the CWC got questions about how implementation of policies worked on a higher level, while the teachers got questions about the community and how policies worked on a community level.

A couple of complications occurred during the interview process. When using an interpreter, it is not always easy to get all of the information the informants are providing during the interview. I had chosen to take notes during the interviews about the informants' body language as well as the tone in their voice. However, it was not always easy to take these notes during the interview. I noticed that some of them reacted when I started writing and they became shy. It seemed like the note taking was more disturbing than the tape recorder. Therefore, for some of the interviews the notes had to be written down right after the interview. In addition, everything did not get directly translated and misunderstandings did occur. The way of solving this problem was to sit next to the interpreter when she transcribed the interviews and thereafter transcribe the interviews myself according to what was translated to me. In addition, if, when I compared my transcript to the other one, I had doubts

about what has actually been said, I asked another staff member to listen to a couple of sentences in order to make sure that there were no misunderstandings. By working systematically this way, it was easier to find the gaps and solve them. In fact, one time we had to call a girl back because there was some crucial information about her education that had not been translated. Other implications such as the interpreter asking questions without asking me first did occur, but reflecting back, this was in a way necessary in order for the conversation to flow. However, it was necessary that boundaries did not get crossed and that the informants did not feel pressured. Sometimes this was pushed a little bit, because I had to pause the interviews a couple of times in order to get control over what was being said. The last thing that made the interview process a little bit complicated at times was that the interpreter sometimes told their answer prior to asking them the question, telling me ‘they do not know how to answer that question,’ or ‘they will not understand.’ In some cases, the questions had to be adjusted, but for the most time I tried to have a pleasant tone and tell her that we should ask anyway and see if they could answer. After all, it was up to the informants to decide if they wanted or could answer a specific question. It was important for me not to undermine the informants, but at the same time to also listen to the ones who had knowledge about the Indian culture.

Field diary

As Harding (2008) argues, a field diary is useful in order to reflect upon your own role in the field during your research. It was also useful as a kind of therapy because there were many impressions and observations to relate to constantly, and writing everything down helped in processing my thoughts. I tried to write down all the experiences I had had that day or week, questions I had, things I found challenging and what I observed.

Secondary sources

During the fieldwork, I collected reports from APSA’s work and other material about street children, child labour and the Indian school system. However, APSA did not have many reports or reading materials, which was disappointing even though it was expected. This was one of the reasons why my master thesis is important, because data is lacking in this field. I did manage to find some recent books about the RTE Act, and I borrowed some books from a University in Bangalore. In addition, I gathered newspaper articles, which turned out to be very interesting because daily news concerned the RTE Act, the government schools, or about children who had been rescued or died because of child labour.

4.4 LEAVING THE FIELD – CONSIDERATIONS, REFLECTIONS AND DATA PROCESSING

4.4.1 Ethical Considerations and Dilemmas

An application containing the interview guides was sent to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) for clearance prior to the fieldwork. In the application a particular focus were on the issue of interviewing children under the age of 18. However, NSD declared that the fieldwork was not subject to notification since all information about the informants was going to be kept anonymous and that the information being transcribed would be kept confidential, without using names. In addition, NSD made it clear that other ethical considerations had to be made regarding interviewing children under the age of 16, even though this particular project was not obliged to give notification to NSD.

When conducting research with children and adolescents, one has to take into consideration and emphasise the ongoing ethical issues throughout the entire fieldwork. Key ethical issues are informed consent, protection of the participating children, anonymity and confidentiality (Powell, 2011). Since the adolescents had difficult backgrounds, the ethical considerations were very important to follow. This is why I chose to have the research proposal and interview guides approved by the directors, and why I insisted on explaining the research clearly for the participants. The adolescents were told that they did not have to answer a question if they did not wish to do so. In fact, some of the children did not want to speak about their street background, so the educational aspect and their future aspirations were in focus during those interviews. For the ones that did open up about their background, some of them struggled a bit during the interview. Some said it was hard to reflect and think about their past again, and some even cried. When this occurred, time was spent on taking pauses, asking if they would like to continue, and small talk after the interview about other things that was positive and joyful in their lives. This was done in order for them to feel that they had some positive contributions as well as that they could leave the interview on a positive note. A visual method was planned in order to get a better power balance between the interviewer and the informants. However, this did not work out because of the time frame and since the interviews went well when they got to talk openly, this became the main priority. There have been many discussions if it is ethical to interview children, but I chose to do this because as Schenk and Williamson (2005) argue, it is necessary to do research among children and adolescents in order to be able to improve their lives and meet their needs. It was, however, a challenge to listen to their powerful stories. I was asked one time what I was going to do for

these children when I had completed my research, and it was very difficult to give an answer to this question.

Coming from a rich country to a country with a high poverty level, it was hard to answer questions about my country when asked. I chose not to tell much about my own country and family. Some of the children wanted to see pictures, but I was careful and deliberate in what to expose. When leaving the field the issue of payment and giving back became a bit of a dilemma. The high level of poverty in the community made this part even harder. After a while I decided that the important thing was to give something back to the children at the hostel. Board games and candy was bought for them. It was also important to me to spend time with them and let them know why I was leaving the field since they had seen me everyday for the past 3 months.

4.4.2 Methods of Data Analysis

The data gathered throughout the fieldwork was processed with thematic coding and categorisation. By coding and categorising the data one is able to analyse the text and label the data in a structured way (Gibbs, 2007). The interviews got different labels and were organised by the girls' past experiences, present situation and future aspirations. The organised charts were then organised into different thematic categories that was found in the girls' stories. The labels were used for comparisons and analyses between the different groups of girls as shown in table (p. 42), as well as for analyses within the groups. Moreover, the interviews with the APSA staff, directors and CWC was coded and categorised into different themes. The labelling was applied when I compared the different interviews with each other in addition to the themes, which had emerged with the analyses of the interviews with the girls. The observations and participatory notes were being used effectively in order to make sure that details were not being missed.

5. PAST

PREVIOUS SOCIAL AND SCHOOL SITUATIONS

In my childhood I lived in Utharhalli. We had a tiled roof house with one room and a kitchen. My mother left us and ran away from home. My father was suffering from cancer, and there was no one to look after me, so he married again with a woman that had two sons. My step mom used to beat me a lot with whatever tools she found. She used to scar and threaten me that she would kill me one day. My father had some property, she was afraid that property would come to me. Later my father died. About two months later, I left home...

Ashna, age: unknown

This chapter explores the adolescent girls' first period in life, focusing on narratives about their family, socioeconomic and school situation. The analyses of the narratives will try to capture why these girls came to live on the street, why some of the girls ended up in domestic work, and how their previous socioeconomic situation is linked to their schooling experiences, or in some cases lack of schooling. In accordance with a multidimensional notion of poverty, the analysis will draw particularly on AISE, structural discrimination and stigma approaches in order to explore how the girls' backgrounds can be linked to their schooling situation. The approaches can assist in highlighting hindrances to the girls' ability to attend and/or complete quality schooling.

The aim of this chapter is to show how the multidimensional notion of poverty contains interlocking sets of factors that are shaping the economic and social lives of the girls and their families. It is important to note, however, that the different approaches overlap and some of the applied approaches reinforce each other. The findings can thus put focus on why there is a tendency of many children to stop attending school on the upper-primary level (Ramachandran, 2003a). Furthermore, the findings can point to reasons for the low percentage (i.e. around 40 percent) of the girls in secondary education (UNICEF India, 2012). Findings from this particular chapter will be a cornerstone for the further analyses in the subsequent chapters. The link between the girls' socioeconomic background and their schooling, or lack of schooling, can help to explain the multidimensional situations and social processes that shape the girls' access to school.

5.1 FAMILY RELATIONS AND MULTIDIMENSIONAL NOTIONS OF POVERTY

In many areas in India, there is an increase of rural to urban migration because many families move to the city to find work, or search for better living conditions (Moura, 2002). Families that move into the city often end up living under harsh conditions in slum areas (ibid). The understanding that merely improving economic needs will lead to reducing poverty is a misconception in the poverty debate. From this vantage point, the families that move into the city, who live in slum areas, and are part of the informal labour sector experience many constraints in their life circumstances apart from just the economic. As argued by Hickey and du Toit (2007), as well as Mosse (2007), the labelling being put on poor people that state their adverse economic situations, do not address the causes of poverty within a society. Thus, addressing the girls' family situations prior to the stay at APSA can put focus on the much-needed information about the causes of their disadvantaged situations that tend to endure over time.

5.1.1 Adverse Incorporation and Social Exclusion – In the Girls' Past Lives

A family's economic and living conditions can trigger the need to send children out for begging or working on the street doing jobs such as selling items or food.

I had a mother and a father. My father was a scavenger, he sent us for begging outside on the street. We used to collect all the money and bring it and give to them. They used to take all of our money and buy us some food. After that for a long time we were on the street itself.

Lavanya, age: 17

Lavanya's story is an example of how many poor Indian families are included in the economy, but on adverse terms. Low paying jobs in India are extremely ill-paid and many people having such jobs are not able to take care of their household and family (Harris-White, 2005). This is reflected in the story above about how the children had to go and beg for money. Although the father had an income, it was not enough to provide for the whole family. The children thus had to beg for money, food and clothing and live on or nearby the street in a slum area. The phenomenon of street and working children in India is part of a complex interplay of various factors, such as large-scale unemployment, cutbacks in government spending, increasing disparities in wealth, semi-organised low paid sector and so on (Zutshi, 2001). When families experience multiple constraints, it reduces the likelihood that individuals will be able to overcome poverty in the future (Prowse, 2009). The adverse

economic situation and the absence of social services can trigger deterioration in other life circumstances and continue the circle of chronic poverty.

My father burnt himself accidentally, so we did not have any money to survive so we had to give away our home. Then we made a shed, and we were sleeping inside that shed. We used to eat our food also under that shed. I had an aunt living beside my house. My mom used to borrow money from someone to give us food. My father cannot work because of the accident.

Savita, age: 11

The multiply constraints are seen in how Savita's family lose a security net when her dad got sick. Studies have shown that when adults are working in the unorganised labour sector, they lack rights, and if accidents occur, they do not have a social security net, which increases their already existing vulnerabilities (Zuthsi, 2001). In another interview with a girl called Yasmine, she specifically told about how her life was good until her grandfather passed away. When this episode occurred, the family ended up in a shed and her mother used to drink alcohol throughout the day while her brother was sent out to steal and beg. For a variety of reasons, she could not continue living with her mother so she started living with her father on the street. Her father used to leave her during the day and sometimes during the night. Such harsh living conditions can result in alcohol abuse, and domestic and sexual violence. This became evident in many of the girls stories:

In my childhood I had two mothers and one father. We used to live in a small hut. My father, mother and my stepmother all were alcoholic. My stepmother used to torture me a lot. My mother had some disease. So I was not allowed to see her. I used to like my mother a lot. I rarely saw her. I don't remember her face. I don't know my age then. Afterwards, my step mom used to send me for begging. And she would ask me to bring Rs.100, if not I was beaten up by her. Morning to night I used to beg on the streets.

Sapna, age: 15

In the conversations, the girls connected their situation of alcohol abuse, domestic violence and sexual abuse to the deprived situation they had been in:

If we had not brought enough money out of begging, my father would say, "go that brother is calling you" like that many times it happened. Even if we did not like, they would tie us up and spoil us. I would sometime protect my younger sister not to get involved. My mother

would somehow try to meet us here and there, always searching for us. But, my father tried to give her poison in the food sometimes and tried to kill her. Hirkani, age: 15

The interviews suggest that the girls have experienced multidimensional levels of poverty within their family situation. The AISE approach, explained in the theory chapter, explicitly points to how social totalities are shaping economic and social lives of individuals or groups of people (Hikey & du Toit, 2007). Firstly, regarding the economic dimension, it is evident that the girls' parents did not have enough resources to provide for them, despite that the parent had a job. The parent's are part of the economy, but are incorporated on adverse terms. As seen in the girls' quotes, the adverse economic situation of the family resulted in deprived situations of begging, living on the street, and experiences of domestic and sexual violence. In addition, the girls also had to witness their parents' misuse of alcohol, and some of the girls told about several negative episodes that were connected to the parents' lack of mental wellbeing.

Secondly, the social dimension was evident in the girls' quotes, because the girls ended up living at the street itself, and their families were lacking resources and power to positively influence their living conditions and working conditions. The girls and their families have to live under continuously poor conditions, lack access and rights to public services and secure labour. As a consequence, for many poor families, short-term needs often become more important to prioritise than long-term needs, such as investing in education for the children. The informants had experienced extreme poverty and had to survive on practically nothing. Being marginalised as a result of cultural recognition and/or rejection have been found in the findings in which poor families living on the street have come to be associated in the larger society as an unequal category. Thus, it is evident in the context that the economic dimension (i.e. part of the labour market, but on adverse terms), and social dimension (i.e. living in poor conditions, do not have the same access to services as other citizens) and not having a political voice are part of the production and reproduction of poverty for these specific families.

5.1.2 “The Nowhere Girls”

The AISE approach highlights why the living situations of the girls unfolded in such a way that was adverse to them, pointing to institutions and social systems that shape individual economic and social lives. As will be seen, the disadvantages of the girls living conditions led

to further obstacles in their daily lives, which lead them to face status loss and discrimination. The extent of paid and unpaid domestic work among children, and especially girls, in India is hard to estimate. In previous studies, a category labelled 'nowhere' has been applied for those children who work in unskilled labour and the informal sector and whom are not included in the statistics on school enrolment and child labour data (Kabeer, 2001). During the conversations with the girls it became clear after a while that many of them possibly belong to this category⁴. When raising the issue of why there are fewer girls who live independently on the street, one of the director's of APSA emphasised that girls who leave home are more likely to end up in domestic work instead of at the street itself. *"They can get some food from the family and some of the girls live in the same houses they are working, so they will get shelter and some protection. So that is why so many of the girls end up as domestic workers."* In addition, he continued reasoning that *"since they do not have education, the girls' job opportunities are very minimal. Most of the street girls do not have a shelter, so that is why they often prefer to work in a household so that they can live in their houses."* However, many of these children are vulnerable and employers take advantage of children and their families' situations:

...After I had left home I started working as a domestic maid. I was at the bus stand asking people to give me work. They used to tell me "what if some things are lost from our houses and you run away somewhere." One night I stayed at the bus stand, and in the morning some Muslim family brought me to their house for domestic work. I used to do a good job. They would give a lot of clothes for washing, which I found difficult to do. After that I slowly learnt all the work, how to clean and how the work should be done. They never used to pay me any money. They would only give me food after they had eaten, if there was anything left. If not I would sleep without food. They also ill-treated me by beating me always. I worked for a year in their house. I ran away from there and went to work in another house. At that time I used to work in three houses.

Ashna, age: unknown

⁴ It is evident that some of the discourses concerning street children are too vaguely defined. In the majority of the cases, the girls lived with family members on the street or in slum areas. People often took in girls who stayed at the street by themselves to work in their homes. These girls can easily fall into a group of 'invisible children.'

According to stories narrated by the girls, the informal conversations with staff members and the directors of the organisation, it became clear that many wealthy families take the opportunity to bring in poor children to their homes in order to get them to clean or take care of their children. At times, the wealthier families bring in children themselves from the street as exemplified above, other times it is the parents that send the children for domestic work as explained below. Also in cases when parents send their children for domestic work, employers clearly take advantage of both the children and the parents' situation.

My mom used to send me for domestic work. You know, my mother got money right. As soon as I got up I used to sweep, mop and wash utensils. They had another maid for washing clothes and cooking. I was thirteen years old then.

Ujas, age: 16

My mother gave birth to another child. I had to take care of that child while my mother was going to work. My father was everyday drinking and used to fight with us everyday. After that I left home. They sent me to some rich people's house because I had to take care of their children. My father used to come and collect my salary.

Ratnalia, age: 15

These examples point to how the informants were working in order to help out their parents by earning money or taking care of siblings while the parents were at work. Similar evidence was found in some of the other interviews with girls who were working as domestic maids. Many of the girls were very young when they first started, as young as four years old. Since domestic work requires no previous education or skills, it is often the easiest and most logical work-site for girls to be absorbed into. This could be one reason why there are more boys who are living by themselves on the street and less girls. Girls are labelled easily as someone who belongs to the home, doing the chores and taking care of the household. It is very evident that the gender dimension plays a role, in which women and girls are perceived as having the reproductive role in society. The gender roles are socially constructed and the girls are doing domestic chores because it is believed that they 'belong inside the home.' Furthermore, when groups are labelled, such as the girls and their families in this case, a justification gets constructed for rejecting and excluding them. As one of the director of APSA pointed out:

The attitude that we find towards domestic workers who are generally girls working as maids are that they think that 'she is poor, she does not have anything.' A lot of physical and emotional abuse happens, and we have dealt with hundreds of cases. Many educated and professionals, and even people who are working as software engineer, doctors, lawyers, politicians, abuse these children.

According to the findings, the general attitudes gleaned from the narratives are that child labour is acceptable because these children are labelled as poor, and the employers are thereby justifying this by 'helping' the children and parents by giving them a job. The overall social norms and values are reinforcing poverty by exploiting poor families and taking advantage of their situations. This makes it more difficult for poorer people to get out of their persisting situations. Ashna has been treated very badly over the years, without being able to do much about her situation. She worked in many homes as a domestic maid and was discriminated in all of them. She told about abuse such as ill treatment and deprivation of food. When she decided to run away, she ended up in the same situation again because she was lacking resources and power to do something about it. This points to discrimination and status loss that is giving rise to powerlessness. Thus, Ashna and the families of the other informants were being incorporated into the structures of the informal economy on terms that were adverse to them. Since Ashna was poor, it limited her chances of being able to get out of poverty because she was discriminated against and excluded from social practises. From the narrative of Ashna it was evident that the people she lived with abused her. She was seen upon as different and not as a human with the same rights as the employers. She was separated from 'normal' people, and this was also evident in the other narratives.

The reason why many of these children end up on the street and in domestic work could be the continuous stigma attached to poor people in India. The experience of stigmatisation was obvious in some of the interviews. Some of the girls, as pointed out in two of the quotes, said that their parents used to borrow money from people. When asked if they were begging, one of the girls said, "*no, not begging, he was asking.*" Furthermore, some of their background stories were already known before the interview. Even though questions were asked about their street or working background, some of the adolescents did not have any answers to those questions. When this was brought up in the interview with both teachers and directors, they all said that some of the children feel shameful and are afraid that others would judge them if people knew about their past. As one of the directors pointed out:

See, we who are working with street children, a lot of them express this. Especially the middle class thinking about the street children is that 'street children are very bad' they have bad habits, and they rob things, and they are very violent, pick-pockets and drug addicts. There are many negative opinions about the street children. And if at all the middle class wants to do something like charity, they do it on one particular day, in order to wash away their bad conscience...their perception of street children is very negative, that is why most of the street children are very angry at the society.

The sociocultural dimension highlights that discrimination and inequality is based in social exclusion that becomes legitimised over time. The discriminating treatment that the girls have faced in their daily lives when working as domestic workers and beggars are reinforcing their social exclusion. The girls have been labelled as belonging to an unequal category, being looked on as 'bad' without deserving equal rights as others. When there is a lack of support in the general society, and when the girls have daily experiences of discrimination, stigma and status loss it can cause the girls to have misconceptions, believing that is something wrong with themselves and not in the practices carried out in the society towards them. The sense of shamefulness noticed in the girls' stories when they were telling about their past, points to how processes of discrimination faced in their lives have led to the girls having low self-esteem and feeling disempowered. The discrimination that turns into status loss can result in unequal opportunities in life chances and no support system in place to provide for their rights.

5.1.3 Structural Discrimination – Policies concerning Street and Working Children

The findings presented above suggested that many of the informants have experienced being labelled as 'different' by the general population since they are poor, which has resulted in negative labelling attached to them that has in turn led to a sense of shame being experienced by them. However, according to stigma and shame theory the labelling and stigma experienced by them is also a result of structural discrimination that contributes to reinforce people's attitudes towards poorer people.

When we used to ask for money they used to beat us. Sometimes even the police used to beat us a lot when chasing us. We used to beg for clothing as well. We used to beg in the street in and among streets with many houses.

Lavanya, age: 17

Harris-White (2005) points to the fact that poor people can actively be expelled from public places and institutions, because poverty in India is seen as an individual condition. When the police are reinforcing the discrimination towards street children through openly violent practices on the street, they are justifying discrimination of street children through rejection and exclusion. Other excluding practices are also seen in the policies towards child labourers and their families. In India, there is a legislation called the Child Labour Act of 1986 (Childline India, 2012). One is violating the law in India if someone has a child who is working under the age of fourteen. There is a fine of a 20,000 Rupees and three years of prison for those having a working child in their household. However, according to the APSA director, this law has not been put into practice:

It has not happened so far in this country because the enforcement is very weak because you need a lot of evidence in the court. Why such cases fail, is that when you rescue a specific child from an employer you cannot get any records, there is no attendance register no paying register, none of this is available. So in the court such cases run for many years, by the end of the case the judge makes just a small case and is often just saying 'do not have child labours.'

When asked if it was easy to just break the law, he responded with a very definite “Yes.” This shows that if someone get caught for having a working child at their house, as shown in the quote, it will be hard to take them to court and get the people employing a child labourer convicted. This is a very good example of how a power balance gets maintained because people do not get punished for breaking the law, even if they have misused and taken advantage of poor children. The result is that child labour and exclusion of poor will be hard to address when the laws are not being enforced. It thus becomes socially accepted to misuse poor children and families, because they are labelled ‘poor.’ Poor people have little bargaining power to counteract the misuse from employers, since even at the highest level of enforcement of laws, child labour as a social problem is not being taken seriously.

Another example of structural discrimination can be found at the policy level, in the programs aimed at working children. The families can receive help, but the help is on terms that are inimical to their interests. As one of the directors pointed out:

At the national level there is a national child labour project, and its intention is that children who are working should be put into national labour project centres, and there the child

should attend this program every day and get 100 Rupees per month so that the family can get some money, since the child is not working. Similarly, there are some programs on the state level, residential centres in which the children can stay there and get care. That is how the program has evolved, but it has not been very successful, because the reason is that 100 Rupees is not very attractive, because as a street child or child labourer you can earn much more than that.

As Mosse (2010) points out, when poor people lack political voice and representation, their needs tend not to appear on any political agendas, and the lack of voice creates powerlessness, subordination and injustice. The structural discrimination that takes place is not always as noticeable when looking at how there are certain policies directed to help street and working children. However, the programs aimed at street and working children do not always take into account the voices of the children themselves or those of their families, which result in a continuation of the problem.

5.1.4 Disempowerment through Structural Discrimination

Harris-White (2005) emphasises that poverty is governed by social norms in which poor people can actively be socially excluded. The deprivation developed from social norms has been very evident in the narratives. The overall families are not seen as part of the solution, but rather the policies are working to take the child away from the poor family and give a small amount of money back to the parents.⁵ This is maintaining the stigmatisation of these families as they are excluded from a solution instead of being a part of it. ‘Solutions’ are made on contradicting terms, because poor people do not have a voice in the society resulting in a continuation of stigmatisation. This makes it hard for poorer families to challenge the opinions that other people have towards them when they are not capable of exercising agency.

The stigma towards these children and families in the Indian society suggests that it is something wrong with the street and working children as well as their families instead of believing that it is the actual process of exclusion, social norms and attitudes created by the more powerful people in a society and their actions that are leading these children to be begging on the street as well as living there. Mosse (2010) shows that social processes that perpetuate inequality and exploitation underpin poverty, making poverty a cause of structural

⁵ Each family gets a 100 rupees stipend per child per month to send their children to school.

rather than individual factors. As argued by Metha and Shah (2003), lack of social networks and the ability to improve living conditions is impacting their ability to escape out of poverty. They argue that social protection is important in Asia in order to get out of poverty because the poor are easily excluded from social protection.

Furthermore, the production of disempowerment is recognised in how the girls were used in domestic labour and begging. The girls who were on the street begging did not receive any help from society at large. In addition, those children working in homes are seen upon as poor, and the gender role of seeing girls as someone belonging to household chores legitimises wealthier families to take these children as domestic workers into their homes. These findings can be explained through social exclusion that argues that marginalisation occurs within a society as a result of cultural recognition and/or rejection, which is linked to resource deprivation. The underlying social structure which enforces gendered norms leading to the acceptance of girls doing household chores, and the argument of ‘helping’ the poor by giving them work is only exploiting the poor families and their children. Thus, discrimination and ill treatment becomes legitimised as a result of the social norms that are practiced. As discussed in this part, poverty is not an individual matter, street and working children end up in these situations because of many factors, such as harsh living conditions, parents’ low paying jobs, alcohol and domestic violence. In addition, social norms that stigmatise and put the blame on the families themselves, excluding them instead of including them in the part of the solution to improve the lives of their children and themselves. The real obstacles faced by the families are not taken into account and the continuation of discriminating practices of poor people result in poverty to persist with the disadvantages it entails.

5.2 SOCIAL SITUATION AND SCHOOLING

In India, the social and economic background can be linked to what kind of education one receives in terms of quality and resources (Ramachandran, 2006). The economic divide is evident because it is often the most marginalised groups who are attending government schools. Even though the Indian government has tried to enforce policies on getting children to enrol in school, there has been evidence of insufficient efforts in keeping children in school, as many do not even finish fifth grade (ibid). Access to school is an issue that is present in political debates, while other issues such as social inequality and gender issues are given less attention. In Kabeer’s study (2001), there is heterogeneity in the relationship

between work and education in children's lives, and this was also found in the present study. The implication is that the correlation between child labour and poor education outcome does not have to be oppositional. Thus, if the correlation is strong, measures taken to improve education can succeed in addressing the other issue of child labour, but if the correlation is weak, it might succeed in increasing the demand for education but not necessarily decrease demand of child labour (ibid).

As seen in the first part of this chapter, one of the informants said, "*my mother was poor, so she did not have any other choice than to send me as a domestic worker.*" This persuades in asking, under what circumstances are parents left with choices and power to choose in the best interest of the child? There are several factors limiting the girls' opportunity to receive a quality education and to complete schooling. Rather than looking at the conditions of the situation, a deeper understanding of the various causes needs to be addressed in order to gain an understanding of how their social situation can be linked to their schooling experiences and choices. Most of the informants were first generation learners, because their parents had not had the opportunity to go to school. In most of the cases it was the parents or caregivers who chose to put their children in school, take them out of school, or place them somewhere else in order for their children to have a fair chance of gaining a quality education.

5.2.1 Structural Discrimination and Stigma: Reflected in the Girls' Schooling Experiences

As seen in the AISE approach, discrimination constitutes a central dimension in the process of social exclusion, in which socioeconomic disadvantages become hard to overcome (Hickey & du Toit, 2007). The girls in the present study are not necessary excluded from schooling, but forms of 'inclusion' such as offering access to school on adverse terms and exclusion such as discriminating practices in norms and school practises can limit the girls' possibilities of staying in school and getting a quality education. Structural discrimination can highlight how institutional practices can exclude or disadvantage people.

'Dropping out' versus Exclusion

A common word in the literature for children who leave school is 'school drop-out.' According to Williams (1993), the label 'drop-out' puts the onus on the child for leaving school and it gives the impression that it is the child who has made the decision to drop out. He continues by arguing that it is better to use 'school exclusion,' because the cause should

not be based on the child itself. However, the cause is due to the environment surrounding the child, an environment that can lead a child to stop attending school. During the interview with one of the directors and some of the informal talks with the staff, they all listed several causes for dropping out emphasising that it was not due to one particular reason. Some of the factors they mentioned; *“the children are first generation learners, the school quality is not good enough and the environment is not always child and girl friendly. In addition, financial reasons often lead to low interest and self-esteem.”* Moreover, the interviews with the informants confirmed that the reasons for school exclusion are many and complicated. Begging, domestic work, gaps in schooling, language difficulties, failing in classes, punishment, above age, and living under harsh conditions were among the most apparent factors mentioned by the informants themselves that led to school exclusion.

Seven of the informants stopped going to school because of domestic work. They all had to assist in bringing in extra money to their families, but other circumstances were evident as well. Since most of the informants were first generation learners and since all of them were girls, school was not a priority for the parents and caregivers, as the girls' role is mainly confined to taking care of the family. In Zarine's case however, the quality of education at the school could be the reason why her aunt had decided to take her out in the first place.

Mhm.. I did go to school, government school. I had parents, but they left us and went somewhere. Then our grandparents came to take care of us. I went to a government school I studied there from 1st grade to 5th grade. Mmm.. My aunt said that she would change me to a better school. We waited for a transfer certificate from the previous school, but it took a long time to get it. During that time I worked. Zarine, age: 12

In this case the quality of schooling, was not discussed during the interview, except when the informant mentioned that her aunt would transfer her to a better school. While discussing school quality with the staff, one of them replied; *“the present school system that offers free and compulsory education offers education of such poor quality that the children are not gaining knowledge. They are just coming and going.”* Even though the overall school system is enforcing free and compulsory education, the quality of education leaves much to be desired. Children are registered when signing in to school, but not followed up if they stop attending school. In many cases the school itself is linking the responsibility back to the parents and the child by not following up why the child stopped attending school. In addition,

when a child is punished for not doing homework and coming late to school, the child's circumstances are not taken into account. These findings indicate that the free and compulsory education system does not take into consideration social inequalities, because the state is more concerned about the access, rather than the quality of education and the outcome of education services provided. This gives an example of how poor groups get 'included' in the school system, but at the same time excluded, thus ending up dropping out.

The findings also indicated that many of the informants did not stop attending school only once, but several times. In two of the narratives, the gap in schooling resulted in being excluded from school because they were too old for joining the same grade from which they had dropped out. Salma was a previous street child, but was silent about her past during the interview. Her story, however, indicates that there were gaps in her schooling. She is telling that she went to a government school til fourth grade. Then she was referred to the CWC. She then studied from fifth to eight, and then she had to drop out because she was already 18 years old. Prema was put in a girls' home when she first came to a hostel and studied there from sixth to eight grade. After eight grade, the teacher told her that she was above age. '*You should be fourteen years old, and not sixteen years old*' she said. This is an example of social exclusion by institutional arrangements, because the children are left out of school due to circumstances other than the fault of the child. Both of the girls were then referred to APSA. In these cases, the informants got a new opportunity, but it could have easily put an end to their schooling.

No schooling – Total Exclusion

Two of the informants never experienced going to school, and remained illiterate. As a result, they experienced other disadvantages in their life opportunities. They were excluded and experienced status loss and discrimination from various domains.

My father works at a construction field laying tiles, and my mother used to assist him by helping my father. We had a small hut to live in. I have two brothers and two sisters younger than me. My brothers and sisters are studying. My brothers go to English medium school. My parents never let me go to school they would ask me to work at home doing household chores. I used to tell my parents that I would like to go to school, but they said no. I felt very bad when my siblings went to school, and not me. I was thinking, why are they not sending me to

school? I would also like to read and write. I always wished to go to school. When I told my mother she would say, 'why do you want to study, what are you going to do?'

Revati, age: 17

When asked if she ever shared her interest in studies to anyone else apart from her parents, Revati said, “*no, I never asked anyone.*” Cultural regimes surrounding the girls that emphasise gender norms as well as the economic dimension might have influenced the parent’s decision to not send her to school because her role as the oldest sibling and her gender played a very central role. She was expected to replace her mother’s role when her father and mother had to go to work. When Ashna, who had worked in other people’s homes most of her young life, was asked if she at some point had felt that she should go to school, her answer was “*no interest.*” When asked why, her answer was, “*my parents never sent me to school. I have never been to school. I am not interested.*” The girls have never experienced the ability to develop a sense of achieving what they aimed for themselves, which enforces disempowerment.

Access to Schooling on Discriminatory Terms

I did go to school. I was living with my grandmother because my parents had six children, four girls and two boys, so that was too much for my parents. When I was little I had to do a lot of work, but I wished I could be in school like other children. I told someone about my wishes and I started government school and went til sixth grade, but then my mother took me out and I was sent as a domestic maid, so that I could earn some money.

Priya, age: 17

Poverty and the need to supplement the family income make it very difficult for the girls to maintain school attendance in the long-term. This was evident in Priya’s quote, but was further emphasised in stories of the informants who worked and went to school at the same time. The girls who were sent to school by their parents or caregivers had to strive extra hard in order to keep up with schoolwork and the responsibilities in the household. As Ujas pointed out during the interview: “*after finishing all the work at home I used to go to school. And then I had to continue after I got back.*” Social norms that are related to gender roles (see Chapter one) are evident for many girls in India. Even though she did go to school, her labour

was needed at home that resulted in a doubled workload. When asked if this impacted her motivation, she answered:

The teachers used to scold me saying ‘why I was always late.’ They used to beat me and make me stand in the sun for half an hour and they made me do sit-ups. That time my body was so painful that I had to stay in bed. I used to feel very shy in front of others. I used to think I should try to be on time for school tomorrow, but that never happened. Ujas, age: 16

One of the directors pointed out, “*when a child is not performing at school because of circumstances at home, they are not happy in the classroom, and are then seen as lazy or not coping with the subjects.*” In the school circumstances, the teachers put the responsibility on the girl and were blaming her for not performing in the class. This resulted in making Ujas feel that she was the cause of the problem instead of finding a solution to her problems. The girls’ wishes to go to school did not correspond with the social reality of the family situation and schooling experience. In Ujas’s case, she ended up leaving school, which exemplifies how discriminating practices faced by parents on an economic level and by the girls in school can prevent marginalised children from participating on par with other children.

Another example of structural discrimination was found in the interview with Lali who started private school due to failing in classes at government school.

When I had not paid my fees in time they punished me by making me stand outside in the sun til evening. They even did not let me eat lunch. I even felt giddy and fainted once. And I was ill for three months. They gave two weeks for paying fees, but I had not paid within that time. I could not attend my exams. I was still failing in some of my classes. Lali, age: 17

When the other informants who had experiences with both school systems were asked what school she preferred, she said government school. When asked why, she replied; “*because there I got everything free of cost so there would be no competition. At government most have the same background as me, but in private school they all have good families.*” When asked what she felt about that, she replied, “*the children coming from families and had parents used to tell me, ‘we have parents and come from a good home’ they used to tease me like that. I used to cry because I had to say that I came from my grandmother’s place.*” Both of the informants experienced discriminating practices by the school administration and from

students themselves. This indicates that economic, political and sociocultural dimensions in the production and reproduction of poverty are evident in how the school system is managed and how the education is delivered to marginalised children within this system.

The dimension of power as 'hidden' through organised programs and discourses can be seen in the narratives of the girls. Although schools existed, there were indirect challenges including poor quality of education, fees and punishment. School availability was thus available, but on terms that were adverse to them. The sociocultural context that practiced discrimination and exclusion was the major mechanism in impacting the girls' schooling experiences. Considering the challenges faced within the existing school system, questions can be raised as to whether schooling is a good thing and empowering in itself. Providing school availability is not sufficient in the effort to eradicate poverty and to empower women and girls. In addition, the disadvantages that many poorer children are facing in the school system points to how political systems reinforce policies that have a hidden agenda, making the political system more beneficial for the richer parts of the society. This is especially evident in how schools are provided for children in India, but quality, the learning achievements, and experiences in school are not taken into account as part of the responsibility of the government.

5.3 CHAPTER CONCLUSION. INTERRELATIONSHIPS AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings indicate that power relations at different stages in the girls' social and economic situations contributed to a situation of multidimensional poverty. AISE approach and discrimination and stigma approach revealed how poverty was reinforced on various levels. Families have been incorporated into the structures of the informal economy in terms that are adverse to them, which has impacted the lives and schooling experiences of the girls. Living and/or working on the street or working as domestic worker is due to the existing structural forms of discriminating practices which these girls experienced in many of their daily activities. Larger social totalities such as markets, institutions, and political forces and practices played a large part in shaping their lives. Many of the families were impoverished in several of their life domains, lacking power and a voice to change their situations. Since the girls were looked on as 'poor,' a justification among people was developed to reject and exclude them.

In the school policies, the state is emphasising access, rather than school quality. This is an example of how certain forms of poverty is being reproduced through practices, making people socially excluded over time. Moreover, it is evident that the state did not deal explicitly with dropouts and the relations to child labour. Some of the girls who were enrolled in school had to drop out because their labour was needed at home. No one followed up the girls when they left school. The ones who did not receive any schooling were 'invisible' to the society, the ones who went to private school experienced discriminating practices, and the ones who did get access to school had to tackle other challenges at the same time. If the causes of child labour could be directly addressed coherently with strategies on education, as discussed earlier in the section, there could perhaps have been prevention strategies developed for the girls to receive schooling and not ending up on the street or as domestic workers. However, this is undetermined because the narratives from the girls show that the social constructions have become institutionalised, but the current situation needs to be challenged in order to address the underlying causes of poverty, rather than its manifestations. The girls' schooling or lack of schooling is clear evidence of how the girls have been discriminated in the Indian society.

The next chapter will explore how the multidimensional poverty aspect experienced in the girls' social background and schooling experiences has impacted their situations today. Do the adolescent girls feel inclusiveness and belongingness in their present situations? What are the adolescent girls' own perceptions towards education and do they think education will contribute to their empowerment? Furthermore, are there ways to prevent social and school exclusion as well as poverty?

6. PRESENT

THE ISSUES OF INCLUSIVENESS, BELONGINGNESS AND EDUCATION FOR ALL

As shown in chapter five, the girls have experienced various schooling situations. The majority of the girls did not have continuity in their schooling. In the cases where the girls attended primary school, the majority of them did not complete the required school years. All of the girls ended up in hostels after being put there by their parents/caregivers, or rescued from domestic work and/or street lives. However, the girls experienced different options in terms of schooling after coming to the hostels.

This chapter addresses empowerment approaches devoted to the intervention strategies provided by the NGO for former street and working children. In addition, this chapter will examine whether the empowerment methods applied by the NGO are effective in terms of the girls' continuation of schooling and being mainstreamed into society. The chapter thus contains two different sections that are interlinked, starting with a discussion about the role of NGOs, exemplified by APSA and their educational programs, and then moving on to the girls' perceptions about the intervention programs aimed at them. The intention is to analyse how the NGO's programs are working towards preventing social and school exclusion and poverty from a local-ground perspective, and to highlight potential gaps that remain in promoting quality education for this group.

Empowerment theory will be the main analytical lens, but aspects from poverty theory as well as stigma and shame theory will also be applied. These are applied in order to grasp the process of empowerment from both a local and group perspective, in addition raising questions about the larger educational structures in India. As shown in chapter five, primary education is offered, but for many children in difficult circumstances, merely providing access does not ensure that they will complete their schooling. The NGOs are thus playing a large role in facilitating primary education for children who have dropped out of school, and for those who have never have attended school (Zutshi, 2001). However, as highlighted in the literature review, attention needs to be brought to the approaches adopted to integrate out-of-school children into formal schools and examining if these are effective (ibid).

6.1 ROLE OF THE NGO IN THE PROCESS OF EMPOWERMENT

A part of APSA's vision towards education is to achieve an appropriate education system that involves qualitative learning for all as a tool in the way of bringing about social change and a just society. To achieve its visions, APSA is combining paradigms of self-sufficiency at the micro level with advocacy campaigns and policy planning at the state and national levels. For the former street and working children, the goal of APSA is to bridge the gap of schooling, and thus to give the children a basic education. This will equip the children to take necessary exams and for some to continue school or, and in some cases to enrol again in the school that they left in the first place. The organisation is thereby trying to mainstream the children into the 'regular' society. APSA is promoting basic skills in learning programs to assist children with skills to take care of themselves and cope in everyday life. This is part of APSA empowerment strategy towards bringing social change and a just society.

6.1.1 Reaching Out Informing and Providing Programs as Means in the Empowerment Process

"If the parents do not want to send their children to government school [because of poor teaching] they should come and get help at APSA." A week before school starts after vacation, teachers and students are walking around in the slum areas situated close to APSA. During this afternoon, three hours are spent walking in the heat, giving out flyers to random people, shouting out powerful sentences, and hanging posters at different buildings. One of the organisation's cars has big posters on it, showing pictures of working children with a cross over it. This campaign, with the loudness of the car and people protesting, is bringing awareness in the neighbouring areas.

When approached about the goal of this campaign in the slums, a number of replies were given. Firstly, APSA wanted to inform people in slum areas about the right to free education. Secondly, education today is not only a right but it is also compulsory. Parents will get punished if they do not send their children to school. Thirdly, the government schools are not always the best options for the children, because of the poor quality of education provided. Therefore, rather than letting the children quit school, they should get help from APSA. This awareness campaign is thus a mean to inform people about the right to free education, in addition to showing that help is given to vulnerable families by the APSA organisation.

APSA work with two approaches within communities: an institutional approach and the outreach approach. The institutional approach provides services such as the Dream School, shelter program and training centre. The outreach approach, on the other hand, focus on having staff members in the field that are directly in contact with children and parents. They have educational programs, meetings, as well as interactions between teachers, parents and students. During the fieldwork, four government schools for which APSA had outreach programs were visited. APSA arranged afterschool programs, and information classes about RTE to students and teachers. Moreover, APSA also arranged meetings with parents. One of the APSA staff explained why out-reach programs are essential for the local people, despite the fact that educational schemes have been introduced in schools:

At the moment, there are programs in government school concerning the RTE Act. A committee of 13 parents of school children, one teacher, one head master, one educationist and one student is working for a better school environment. This is a powerful committee; however, many of the parents are illiterate in this committee, and what happens at times is that many parents who are part of this committee sign papers without knowing what it says. Many teachers know that parents will not speak up and use this for their advantage. What APSA is doing is to try to build capacity and give power to the parents by giving awareness programs of their rights and tell them what their roles are. APSA also has child rights clubs in order to give training to active students and tell them about their rights – awareness. In many schools there are not enough uniforms to all children, not scholarships to all children, and there can be one toilet for 200 children. In addition, some teachers can also ask students to come and work at their home. This is why it is important to train these children so they know that this is not their role.

The programs provided by APSA are examples of how the organisation is trying to empower people through awareness work. Despite schools increasing in numbers and rights-based programs becoming a part of the school programs, the quality is not optimal, according to APSA. Giving afterschool education lessons for children, who are struggling with subjects, can help in assisting to keep children at school. This is an example of how APSA is trying to cope with structural discrimination among children and adults in poorer areas. It is evident according to the APSA staff that there are obstacles in providing quality schools. The hindering factors include the lack of support among some of the teachers and lack in funding from the government in applying needs-based programs for children at government schools. It

can take a long time for the children and parents to recognise their rights, how the system works and until they are able to take part in the educational schemes as equal partners, compared to the ones with higher education or more power. Additional support from teachers and government is needed according to APSA. There is a gap in the empowerment process because APSA feels that they do not have the necessary support from local and national power structures.

Furthermore, the organisation is also promoting their vocational training centre to children in slum areas, because the few centres that the government has can be very hard to gain admission to because of steep competition. APSA is trying to reach out to the youth who are unemployed, but adolescents who have lived at other hostels are also attending this program. However, all of the ones who apply are not secured a place at the centre. This is because the APSA centre does not have the capacity to take them all in. This shows that NGOs do not have the capacity to give vocational training to all of the youth who apply, which results in an imbalance where the demand overrides the capacity. Thus unequal access to education, rights as well as opportunities for the marginalised youth continues to be part of the larger reality.

6.1.2 Working towards Education for All - Mainstreaming and Bridging the Gap

APSA provides education and vocational training programs to try to mainstream children into formal schools and bridge the gap between underprivileged children and children who are more affluent in order to develop greater social equality and justice. The Dream School is providing both non-formal classes for children in distress as well as formal education through a bridge course that prepares middle and high-school dropouts to take up to seventh and tenth grade standard public exams. When the director was asked to explain how the Dream School is functioning compared to a government school, he replied:

In government schools, they are mainly focusing on textbooks, while here we are dealing with multiple methods that are no formal methods. Our learning materials are very child centred and very activity based learning, so that the child thinks it is very interesting. Teaching is happening through songs, games etc. Our teachers are also bi-lingual. Each teacher knows different languages. We have life skills education, human rights education etc. so many things so that the children would like to study. In government schools, there will not be space for this. So, for many of these children, if they are entering the government school, they will drop

out again. The education in the government school is not interesting to them and is not a joyful learning, and it is not making the child to participate and give interest to their needs. Ultimately though, we want them to be back into the mainstream education system that is why after seventh grade, we put them back into the mainstream.

It is evident that by providing bridge schooling, the children are usually satisfied that they are getting a second chance to learn. The problem is not the bridge school itself, an option that clearly is necessary in order for previous street and working children to receive further education, but what happens after they have completed the program at the Dream School itself. APSA is trying to mainstream children who have not completed fifth and seventh grade exams as well, but the findings of this study suggests that it is problematic to bring them into formal school, according to APSA staff because limited support from home and the quality of the schools are obstructing factors in the implementation strategies.

It is very difficult to mainstream the children into schools, because people are grown up with the mindset of being satisfied at very limited terms, when it comes to education. Lack of family support, mainly. The institution is there, I think because of the lack of family support the children will not be there.

Teacher in Dream School

The limited family support due to first generation learners was seen as a source of why some of the adolescents were not being mainstreamed, according to the majority of the interviews conducted with APSA staff. “*Being satisfied at very limited terms,*” points to how necessary the awareness work applied by APSA is, because according to APSA, many people are disempowered, and do not question why they have limited options in life compared to other citizens. As will be seen in the interviews with some of the adolescent girls, some of them are not sure what will happen to them after completing Dream School, which supports this impression of lacking follow-up after APSA’s courses are completed.

We are not a hundred percent satisfied with the success rates, because many are happy just by completing tenth grade. But we are looking for much more than that. We are always open to see that they move out further than the tenth grade and go into professional forces, but we have not been successful and I think it is because of the family, lack of family set up. Something we need to think of, like we have many thoughts about that there should be

alternative family care, wither foster care, something that will keep them going. The set up is very important in order for the children and adolescents to move forward.

Teacher Dream School

As seen in chapter five, the living and family conditions of these girls led them to drop out of school or not going to school at all. If they are being mainstreamed into formal schooling, they are still in need of a support system, so that they do not go back to being working children. Even in cases where the families are supportive towards education, this does not necessarily mean that they have the resources to help them continuing their schooling or the support from the school system. This is seen in many of the stories from the girls. Thus, APSA can promote effective empowerment within communities in the form of capacity building for parents and schooling and/or life skills training for children, but empowerment also has to become a realisation within a person in order for transformative agency to be exercised in which can challenge existing power structures. Only such an agency can equip families with necessary resources to provide education for their own children, and transform mainstream education to become more inclusive and of higher quality. According to the APSA staff, the poor quality in schools is making their work in mainstreaming children into schools harder. This is an obstacle of transformative agency:

In the state of Karnataka the government school is facing so many problems. Lack of teachers, learning materials, uniforms etc. It is so many problems, so it is hard to get the children back to the formal school. This is the responsibility of the government. There is also a huge gap between the numbers of primary schools that are available compared to the high schools.

Teacher in Dream School

Lack of responsibility from the government in providing necessary resources is obstacles in preventing social and school exclusion. In order for APSA to have an influence at the state level and to get resources to implement their projects, according to APSA staff it needs to cooperate with the state authorities. As explained by the director:

NGOs have very little resources, and we say that the state is the duty bearer and the responsible part. Earlier we were always blaming each other, but now we have come together and we are working together and we are both open to criticism, and in one way we are trying to bridge the gap so that something happens collectively.

However, frustration is also noticeable in many of the interviews and informal talks with the directors of APSA. *“The politicians do a lot of talking, but little of the talking is actually translated into action.”* The challenge here is that it is not easy to collaborate with the state because priorities of the politicians are not coherent with the issues this particular organisation is facing. The politicians have the power to act, but many of the projects that the NGO wishes to undertake are not given priority by the policy makers. When money and resources are given, they are made available for short-term projects only. As an example, vocational training centre provides direct training as a strategy against poverty and unskilled, underpaid child labour. The residential training is from six to twelve months and APSA provides for a follow-up team that supports the students in the workforce. The vocational training programs comprise desktop publishing, electrical work, tailoring as well as screen-printing and stationary making. However, only the ones who have completed tenth grade are qualified to participate for desktop publishing and electric work. The adolescents have to fit into training programs with limited resources and are being put into programs based on their level of schooling.

Furthermore, limited resources means that APSA cannot provide the best alternative for all of the children, because they have a variety of social and schooling backgrounds. In addition, when children come from different schooling backgrounds, their needs are not always coherent with the outcome of the programs. In two of the cases, APSA did not take into account that two adolescents were illiterate. Both of the girls were put in tailoring given that they were lacking motivation and desire to start schooling. As will be shown, this did not necessarily mean that they did not have a wish to learn. As discussed by Kabeer (1994), NGOs have a challenge in their work when it comes to empowering women and girls because it entails that the NGO activities must not only provide programs but also provide the girls with cognitive abilities to analyse their own problems and situations so that the girls are able to come up with their own strategies and a feeling of willingness leading to ‘I can.’ This shows that although APSA may provide programs to promote the empowerment of children, unless there is a process of ‘empowerment within’, the girls may not be in a position to take up opportunities provided to them. ‘Power within’ is very important in order to integrate the former street and working children into mainstream schooling systems and to pursue schooling, but as emphasised by APSA, resources and support from those who have ‘power over’ are equally needed for social change and a just society.

6.2 THE ADOLESCENTS' SCHOOL AND LIVING SITUATIONS

All of the informants have been involved with the APSA organisation at some point in their life. Some of the girls had been sent to another hostel, while others are still part of the APSA program. This particular section aims to look at the current impressions that the adolescents themselves have towards the different programs and interventions targeted at them, as well as exploring the girls' perceptions of education. This can address the girls' educational needs and explore whether there are gaps in the interventions. Some of the girls' information about their educational background will be emphasised, because the majority of the girls experienced different options in terms of schooling after coming to hostels.

6.2.1 Girls at the Dream School

There is a class called the National Child Labour Project (NCLP)⁶ at the Dream School. The NCLP is a place for previous child labourers and street children to receive non-formal bridge education (Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2012). As discussed in chapter five, these children have never been to school and need to learn basic skills before being mainstreamed into formal education. The other group is based on giving children who have dropped out of school at one or another stage in their life an opportunity to start again, and offers fifth, seventh and tenth grade exams. The pupils take the exams at a local school, but they attend the bridge school at APSA for their studies. For the ones taking the seventh grade exams, the mission is to make them able to go on to a formal school to attend eight grade. The government plan concerning bridge schools that is cited in their annual report (Government of India, Department of School Education Department of Higher Education Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2012) is to mainstream children who have dropped out into age appropriate classes.

Education is traditionally understood to be a resource and should likely lead to a form of agency and, consequently, to achievements. However, in the cases of the majority of the girls, the process does not unfold in this way. As propounded by Kabeer (2005), education can be seen as a resource in which schooling has the potential to increase capacities and cognitive ability, but there can also be constraints in deeming education as a route to empowerment.

⁶ NCLP is a government initiative program that is for the main part being implemented by NGOs in order to put child labours into special schools so that they become able to mainstream into formal schools.

I came through one of the staff working at APSA. My mother used to work in her relatives' house, where they came to know that I was working somewhere else. That is how I was brought here to continue my studies. It is nice over here at the Dream School, but I do not know if my mother will allow me continue my studies after tenth grade. Ujas, age: 16

One of the issues as pointed out by Ujas, is her uncertainty of whether the schooling received will help her to continue with further studies, once finished with the program at APSA. Previously, Ujas has experienced multiple dropouts from different schools, because her mother had to place her in domestic work to get money. Schooling is now providing Ujas with a resource to improve her skills, but Ujas is not certain if schooling can be a guarantee against her returning to domestic work. As seen in Ujas' example, Ujas' mother was poor and worked in the unskilled labour force as a maid. She took her out of school a couple of times so that Ujas could earn money. As discussed in the previous chapter, livelihood strategies can be constrained by economic, social and political dimensions. In this particular situation, taking Ujas out of school did not necessarily mean that her mother did not want her to study. As shown, her mother put her in domestic work also for her to continue schooling, but the mother was constrained by her unskilled work and her poverty that limited her power to impact the situation of her child. As discussed in chapter six, stigma attached to groups of poor people in India can limit their ability to exercise choice and act upon them, because they are being prevented from equal participation in political, cultural and economic dimensions (Hikey & du Toit, 2007). Sending children to a hostel might be the only solution for families in order for their child to continue with schooling since the children are provided with a safe place to stay and a secure school environment.

I felt very sad that I was not being able to go to school. My aunt found this APSA hostel and asked whether I was happy to go there. I like APSA more compared to the previous school because here they do not beat us, and we get things if we ask. For example, we ask for bed sheets they will give us this, if we ask for clothes they will give us this as well. Savita, age: 11

This indicates that the hostel is a solution for the girls to continue schooling. Kabeer (2005) argues that poverty and disempowerment can be interlinked, because when one is not able to meet one's basic needs, one has to depend on others such as the NGO in this case as seen in the quote provided by Savita. As a result, there is not an alternative choice. Salma, as told in chapter five, could not continue at the previous school she attended because she was too old,

despite that this was her chance to start school again instead of working. Thus, the bridge school provided by the NGO is therefore a solution for the girls to be able to continue schooling.

As discussed by Link and Phelan (2001), excluded groups experience status loss and discrimination from various domains and often face disadvantages in life opportunities. Schooling in this sense can be a positive tool for the girls in building their self-confidence. However, as discussed by Kabeer (1999), empowerment is grounded in how people see themselves, but this is in turn linked with how they are perceived by those around them and by their society.

I just happened to meet one lady who works at APSA. So she approached me and asked whether I was willing to come to a hostel, so they brought me to APSA. I feel happy coming here, and want to stay here only. When I was living at the street I used to miss school and would want to go to school and study till tenth grade, because I want to get a good name. [H: What do you mean by getting a good name?] I want to get a good name by studying well.

Yasmine, age: 11

This shows that the schooling offered by APSA is a resource that can contribute in giving the girls a greater sense of agency, but it is uncertain if they will be able to actively exercise choice and achieve the life they want. The experience of stigma and social discrimination can prevent the process of empowerment within from occurring, as the girls feel disempowered due to the poor status that they have in the larger society. In Ujas's case, she knows that she had to work because her mother is poor, and she is still unsure of whether she has to continue working after completing tenth grade. This shows that she does not believe fully in herself that she has the same right to have a meaningful job as other people do.

Kabeer (2005) and Hikey and du Toit (2007) point to how social constructions can become institutionalised, which can limit the changes associated with education in terms of achievements. Chronic poverty can be very hard to get out of, and education as a route to empowerment can have a limited role if the larger institutional and social arrangements continue in discriminating poor people and women. As in Ujas' and in the other girls' cases, whilst they may receive education, their social and economic conditions are mediated by several constraining factors, such as chronic poverty, poor status within the mainstream

society and social discrimination. The external factors restrict the girls from achieving what they want for themselves, and hence restrict achievements from unfolding. Thus, although education is seen as a resource, in cases such as these, it may have only a very limited empowering effect in the sense of achievements unless changes also can take place in other areas of their lives. Social discrimination needs to be conquered and other opportunities for the girls such as gaining employment after they have completed their education needs also to be taken into account as part of the empowerment process. Ujas faces the risk of ending up in the same situation as her mother, despite the fact that she is in a school situation where opportunities are given to her. Even though opportunities are given to the girls, if they do not experience power within and achievements, then no matter how many opportunities are given to them, they may feel unable to take these up, as highlighted in the example given by Ujas. Thus, the process of going from resources, agency and achievements does not unfold this way for all of the girls interviewed. Constraining factors faced by the girls within the society need to change in order for education to have an empowering effect on the girls.

The Dream School can help in increasing the children's capacities in cognitive capabilities in exercising choice and teach them learning skills that can equip them in other domains. However, as the findings indicate, the ability to make a choice for these adolescent girls is limited, because of sociocultural and economic constraints experienced in their life domains outside of the Dream School itself. These constraints are embedded in structural factors such as policies, cultural and social processes that can be hard to challenge. Some of the girls expressed that they missed their parents, siblings and other family members, but the majority of them wished to stay in the Dream School. This was despite the fact that they did not know for how long they could stay or whether they could continue with future schooling even though all of them wished to do so.

6.2.2 Girls at the Vocational Training Centre

According to the APSA program, youth aged 17-18 years old receive training for six months up to a year, with a follow-up process of two years once placed in jobs. The larger part of the youth participating in the program lives at the APSA centre, but some are day pupils who live at home. The objective of this program is to strengthen personal competence, increase chances of gaining successful employment, teach good learning habits and create awareness about critical health issues. However, it was unclear as to whether the girls actually thought

that the program was beneficial. As discussed, empowerment is the ability to make decisions on matters that are important in one's life. There are however various notions of power in the ability to exercise choice, because resources are needed to be able to exercise agency. Although many of the girls have developed self-confidence, it is hard to predict whether they will reach a particular level of achievement.

When I was at home I joined tailoring class, but only for a week. They shut down the unit. I then came to APSA and joined the tailoring program here instead. I do not wish to continue my studies, because I failed in one subject in tenth grade. Before coming to APSA I used to help my mother in making incense sticks. If we made 1000 we could get 15 rupees. When I was working I used to think that if I were able to do well in math, maybe I would have continued further studies.

Lali, age: 18

It is clear that Lali was working in a low-paying job before coming to APSA, and if she had not been part of the program she would probably still have been working in a low-paying job under harsh conditions. From this point of view, this particular training is better, but according to her, she still thinks about further studies. The experience of limited agency is occurring because of limited resources and 'power over.'

When I first came to APSA and started schooling, my parents came to know and they came and brought me back to the village and I had to work as a domestic maid again. The Childline⁷ came to know and they brought me back to APSA. My parents do not come and see me now. I am in tailoring class. [H: Would you like to go back to school?] The language that I know is not spoken in this state so I am afraid that I will not be able to learn this language, so I am a little bit frightened in continuing schooling. The teachers have told me that I can start in tenth grade at the Dream School, but the language is very difficult so this is the reason.

Priya, age: 17

The AISE approach highlights how the larger social totalities are shaping the economic and social lives of individuals and groups of people (Hikey & du Toit, 2007). In the girls' cases, since they have limited choices in schooling, this is impacting their economic and social lives because they are not able to complete school. Since the girls have not been able to make own

⁷ Childline is a child protection centre with widespread Children's phone emergency outreach service where children can call a free number for protection and care.

life choices, it has resulted in lack of ability to live the life they ought to live, as govern by the larger social totalities. For some of the girls, vocational training was not viewed as a means to improve their living circumstances.

I came to APSA in the middle of a school year, so I was told to join tailoring class for the time being. This was because the teacher told me that I was too old so I had to leave the hostel I was staying at. I can appear for tenth grade in the next academic year that starts in June. I want to pass my tenth grade. Everyone says 'if you pass tenth, then you can stand on your own feet.' That is why I wish to pass 10th, so that I can find a job. Here at the hostel, some parents come and visit their children. I have nobody to visit me. Prema, age: 16

Empowerment theory highlights that there are different types of agency that can take both positive and negative forms. People, norms, values and policies can influence how one acts upon them. Despite the fact that the majority of the girls liked being part of the program, the specific courses offered were not their own choice of study, but one of few options at this stage in life.

Since the other hostel offered me a job as a teacher for rescued children I stayed there for a while. But it was not exactly a teaching job, they used to ask me to wash utensils and look after the younger children by giving them bath, cleaning etc. That is why I escaped from there. I joined a garment shop, because I shared my problems with that shop owner. He gave shelters in his house, but even there I was asked to do the maid job. Later, the director of one hostel called APSA and sent me here so I could join the computer course. I like learning computer. I have learned to work on coral draw and Photoshop. Lavanya, age: 17

Lavanya was in the process of completing the vocational training program and was starting to prepare herself to enter a new phase of starting in a job and moving to Navajeevana home. She spoke a little bit of English and she told me one day, “*I do not really want to get a job. What I want is to continue my studies, but I cannot afford to. Now I have to work and try to save up money to continue my studies.*”

The girls' limited agency and lack in resources point to the girls not being able to make the choice they wanted to. All of the girls had a lack of continuity in their previous schooling pattern, and they had experienced different constraints. As argued in empowerment theory,

some conditions must be fulfilled in order for a decision to be a real choice. The alternatives must exist, such as the ability to have chosen differently. However, the alternatives must not only exist, but also seem to exist (Kabeer, 1999:2005). For the majority of the girls, the training they received was not the ideal choice, and for two of the girls it was an activity in order to hopefully have more options later in life. According to the findings, the constraints faced (i.e., economic, social and cultural constraints) are impacting the girls' limited decision-making. Thus, the findings indicate that when the girls do not think that they have other options, they accept the choices offered to them, without questioning why their options are limited.

6.2.3 Living at Navajeevana

The residential support for young women at risk is an extension of the training program at APSA. This particular place is provided for the adolescent girls who have finished vocational training and who are placed in jobs. This project started up because many of the girls were lacking a safe place to stay as well as the necessary skills to provide for themselves. These girls do not have parents or caregivers for support and have to cope on their own with the support from APSA. From one of the interviews with a girl who was part of the program, I was able to go and visit the Navajeevana home. The building had basic facilities. All the girls had to sleep in the same room on the floor, and they only had a locker for their belongings. The first informant started telling how she had ended up at Navajeevana:

My parents used to scare me saying they would kill me. When I was living with my parents in Mumbai, my father was drunk and abused me while I was sleeping. My parents start blaming me, though it was not my mistake. I felt very bad and I left home [she was pregnant at this time]. My younger sister came with me. We just went on a train, not knowing where we were going. When we got off the train one uncle helped us and put us in a hostel. I was there for 2-3 days and then I was sent to another hostel. Thereafter, I had to go to the CWC, after that I came to a new hostel again. I came from that hostel to APSA. [H: Did you start school when you came to APSA?] No. I joined tailoring training. I am working in a garment factory now. [H: Why did you not start school?] From childhood I was not sent to school, that is why". [H: What do you feel about the tailoring class?] Even now I think a lot, if I had studied I would be in college by now. My life has changed like this! [H: What do you think about your work today?] I like to work. I make shirts. I get a salary of Rupees 4500 a month. [H: Do you know

how to read and write?] *No I tried to, but I could not. I tried to learn how to write my name.*

Revati, age: 17

As discussed in chapter three, even though some resources are available, it does not necessarily mean that the empowerment process will unfold leading to achievements. As seen in the quote, resources such as a job and housing were available for the girls, but empowerment had not unfolded. This further estimate that empowerment is seen as a process not an end (Kabeer, 2005), and giving the girls tools are not necessarily helping the girls to realise their own potential.

After joining tailoring class at APSA I got a job at a garment factory. I wake up when everyone else is waking up. I am a helper at the factory. I put tags, label, button the shirts, and do ironing. I will go in the morning and get back in the evening. When asked if something is ever difficult today, she replied: I wish many times that I could live with my parents. They are not here so it is very difficult to live alone. Even orphans get some sort of help [crying]. When I am doing work with the other girls it makes me forget about my past.

Ashna, age: unknown

It is evident when comparing the two stories that the girls experienced limited agency because others have made the choices for them. Resources, such as a job and a place to live, for these two girls are not enough to be able to exercise agency and become empowered. As seen in their background stories as well, both of the girls have been through a lot, and have been working since they were very young. However, none of them learnt how to read and write, and since they are still illiterate, even small things like being able to tell the time and write their names, are not manageable. This is contributing to always having to be dependent upon others. Considering the difficulties that many of the girls have experienced and the time frame of the vocational training centre, this particular program is a positive contribution to extend the safety net for the girls and allow them to explore their independence. However, the findings show that despite the fact that they have got a job and place to stay, the two girls had received no schooling, and were still illiterate after coming to Navajeevana and placed in jobs. They had to rely on other people and they think it is too late for them to learn how to read and write.

6.2.4 Girls at the Private School

Prior to the interviews, I had requested to speak with adolescents who had already been mainstreamed into formal schools and who were back with their families, but this was difficult to achieve. Before arriving at this private hostel, I was told that these children were mainstreamed, but they were not living with their families: they were staying at a private Christian hostel. Some of the girls had been rescued from the street and had been placed at a private hostel after coming to APSA.

The conversations with the girls indicated experiences of discrimination at many levels. As pointed out in stigma and shame theory, when people are identified in certain ways, it can impact how the person thinks about themselves and result in self-esteem and other constraints (Link & Phelan, 2001):

One aunty and uncle came to know about our situation, that we had been sexually abused. They approached us and asked, 'Do you like to continue begging like this, you will die one day with a serious disease.' At that time we did not know what they were talking about. We were so frightened of our father that he would beat us a lot. For many days I was so disturbed thinking about the dreadful disease, and if I was going to die, who would take care of my sister? Then I told the aunty⁸, 'please send me wherever you want to'. She asked me whether I knew my mother's address. They gave money and sent us to Bangalore to my grandmother's place. My mother and grandmother decided to think about us. When I reached Bangalore, we met one of the APSA staff, and my mother cried for his help, and brought me to APSA. I stayed with APSA for two years. My mother used to take me home during holidays. I was in the NCLP class at the Dream School. All those days I had been suffering a lot. Still I felt it was very difficult to start with studies. When I came to the private hostel I was put into 4th grade at the private school. I tried to learn...It was so difficult here, but the sisters⁹ helped me in my studies. I like it here now. I am in 7th grade. [H: Do you ever talk to any of your friends at school about your background?] "Many times I have felt like talking, but I never shared anything with my friends, not even with the counsellor, during my counselling." [H: The other students in your class are much younger than you. What do you feel about that?] "I know, but I never felt anything wrong. I am learning well. I will move up in my life." Hirvani, age: 15

⁸ The term aunty is used when addressing people who are significant older than yourself.

⁹ Sister is a name referred to people who are older than you, as a form of respect.

Most of the girls were not willing to talk about their past to other people at the school. The girls' narratives indicates that they had experiences of being perceived by the general people as 'dirty' and 'bad.'

I will not think that I am from a poor family. Whenever I feel sad when I think, I will sit and cry and pray to God. I talk to my friends sometimes, but I do not tell the schoolgirls." When asked why not, she replied, "they will just ask me 'where is your mother and father?' and I will say 'I do not have anybody.' I have my sister and brother, and for me they are like my parents.

Sapna, age: 15

Most of the girls were afraid that if they told their friends about their past, they would be treated differently, as indicated below.

I was very happy to come to APSA. They were looking after me well. After a year in APSA, they brought me to this hostel where I am today. There were other children who also got rescued from the street, but some of them ran away. I am happy going to school. I never tell any of my school friends about my background. If I tell they will tease. We lie saying that we have everyone, but we come from a hostel to study. If I told them about my background they would look at me as very cheap.

Sneh, age: 15

The interviews exemplify that the girls seemed happy with the living conditions and that they felt supported at the hostel. However, the quotes also showed that even though they got support, they still felt a sense of difference at school compared to the other adolescents. The shame they have felt when living on the street is still with them in their current situation when they are with other girls from different backgrounds at the private school. This is apparent from their narratives when they say that they lie about where they live and also about their families. It is evident that the girls' background experiences have impacted their level of self-confidence. Similarly, the differences they are experiencing in school can indicate that discriminatory practices towards poor people are still being practiced. The girls are ashamed of talking about their past and have to handle many of the complicated issues on their own. The stigma experienced can make them less likely to challenge structural forms of discrimination that in turn can lead to their level of empowerment being constrained. The girls do not feel that they can talk openly and be accepted for who they are in the private school.

6.2.5 Independent Girl

Ura is living by herself together with some friends. She was the only girl I was able to reach who had been a part of the APSA program and who was now living on her own. She did, however, not talk a lot during the interview. She had a lot to tell about her background, but when it came to her situation today, her statements were rather limited. Kabeer (2005) argues that it is the inequalities in people's capabilities to make choices that are relevant, rather than the differences in the choices they make. Even though the girls have choices in the intervention programs, it is evident that the inequalities of the choices are part of the problem for the majority of the girls.

At the hostel the school was good and they were taking care of me very well. Their teaching was good. I continued my studies til class 12th. I failed in one of the subjects in 12th. Later I was sent to my grandmother's place to stay there. After some days the director of my hostel called APSA and requested them to join me in skill training. That's how I came to APSA and joined computer training. After completing my training I was placed in a job. I do want to study further, but I cannot find anyone who can help me continue. But I would not give up my job if I started studying again. I think I would have done both. Ura, age: 18

The findings show that Ura's choices are limited. She needs her job in order to be able provide for her daily needs, which is also a relevant concern for the girls at the vocational training centre. Moreover, the concerns highlight that it is not always the girls' decision to get those jobs. The girls are not the ones who make the choices aimed at them rather other people make decisions for them.

6.3 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

Firstly, the girls' perceptions towards schooling and limited capability in deciding about their own future have been impacted by limited access to school and lack of continuity in their schooling as well as experiences of being excluded from formal schools at a certain age. Since they have not had access to school previously or have experienced gaps, they find some classes difficult and also have problems with motivation. In addition, the interviews indicate that many of the girls have had to change hostels multiple times, which has also resulted in a lack of continuity in their schooling. As shown, the girls at the private hostel who had been there from a young age seemed more motivated because they knew that they would stay there

for a longer period of time. This highlights that the time frame of the intervention programs aimed at the girls' most likely need a longer timeframe. Some of the girls are still not able or willing to stand on their own feet at the result of the APSA intervention programs.

Secondly, limited access to school at a young age has turned into limited choices in school, and exclusion of choices. There are choices that do exist for certain groups, but those choices are not available for the girls' given their socioeconomic backgrounds. Since the girls have inconsistency in their schooling, and come from a poorer background with already limited choices, other choices also get limited in the prevention programs provided by the NGO. A connection is seen between how discrimination and exclusion faced at different stages in their life have resulted in a lack of motivation to continue with schooling even while being part of the APSA program. Some of the girls' stories show that the decisions made for the girls' education is not always consistent with their wishes. When talking to one of their teachers at the training centre, she explained that some of the girls, especially the ones receiving tailoring training, were not always motivated and asked frequently for breaks, or complained about not feeling well. It shows that giving the girls the tools or resources is not always empowering. Choices for these adolescent girls are limited by sociocultural and economic backgrounds, but choices are further constrained due to the need to put them in programs that do not have enough resources to give them equal choices as compared to children of higher socioeconomic backgrounds. The empowerment methods applied by the NGO through vocational training is effective in providing the girls with limited resources, but when the NGO has limited resources itself, each child is not given the essential care they require.

Thirdly, despite the intervention programs being a positive contribution to the girls' lives, when considering the limited choices in their previous living circumstances, these limited choices are impacting the girls' access to resources today. In the first place, they have not been able to go to schools that provide quality teaching. Because of their socioeconomic background and limited family resources, these girls were forced to drop out of school, causing gaps in their schooling at a very young age. This has, in turn, limited their access to resources in the future as young adults. In this way, the state of continually lacking resources and consequently, choices becomes a continuous circle. After coming to the hostel access to resources are not optimal for them to make ideal choices, because of limited choices experienced in their background.

With the NGO's constraints of getting funding, the girls have been forced to fit into pre-existing programs that may or may not be suitable for them or in accordance with their wishes. The findings indicate that the girls ended up in specific programs based on their age, schooling level, learning abilities as well as their level of motivation. The specific programs on the other hand, had limited options for the girls. Some of the girls were not motivated to continue schooling. The older girls who had no previous schooling had to choose vocational training. If a girl had limited schooling and not completed tenth grade, she could only choose between printing and tailoring. As a result, the NGO could not always equip the girls with the necessary skills in order for the girls to become more independent, and thereby to experience a process of empowerment.

Kabeer (1999) highlights that the resources available do not always translate into actualised choices. She also highlights that "how changes in women's resources will translate into changes in the choices they are able to make will depend, in part, on other aspects of the conditions in which they are making their choice" (p.443). In the case of the two girls at the Navajeevana home, fitting into a certain program will not help them in the empowerment process when the programs are not giving them resources, such as reading and learning skills. The reading skills could have contributed in making them more self-confident, and start a process of self-awareness to develop a transformative mind of thinking. Part of the vision of the intervention programs within the NGO is to mainstream vulnerable children back into society. However, being mainstreamed might not be the best solution for the girls who do not have the skills to read and write, because it can be difficult to be independent. Moreover, the offer being given is a positive factor for the majority of the girls, but as pointed out, in order to achieve transformative empowerment, far more is required than merely being inserted in already existing ready-made programs.

Fourthly, stigmatisation is still evident in schools for the ones who have been mainstreamed. This is evident in the stories from the girls who attend private school, because they try to hide their backgrounds in the fear of being discriminated against. It is a challenge to mainstream children with underprivileged backgrounds into schools, and especially into private schools, if discrimination is part of the daily life at the school. This shows that inequality within the school system creates barriers for girls to continue with formal schooling because 'being poor' is labelled as something that is bad. Since many of the government schools are not providing good quality teaching methods, it can be hard to mainstream the girls at the Dream

School back into government schools. In addition, private schools are not always the best solution because of the girls' experiences with shame and discrimination.

Fifthly, for all of the girls, inequalities experienced in one domain have contributed to inequalities in other domains. Kabeer (1999) argues that if inequalities go unchallenged in one sphere, it increases the chances of being reproduced in other spheres. The inequalities faced in the girls' different life domains can make it difficult for them to be mainstreamed into formal schooling, because they are lacking the necessary resources, both internal and external in the first place. As seen in some of the narratives, being mainstreamed could lead to a repetition of their previous deprived situations, such as working in the informal labour sector. That is, there are multiple challenges of pursuing formal schooling for former street and working children, because inequalities faced in their background are still evident in their situation today, despite the intervention programs being offered to them. The intervention programs might not be sufficient to mainstream children into school and the society, because many of the girls could end up in the same situation again, after the program has ended.

APSA has many good intentions and provides good alternatives for adolescents without many options in their life. The NGO is often the rescue centre for many of the previous street and working children. However, there are a number of challenges that the NGO is facing, and in the case of the adolescent girls, it is clear that the intervention programs are not able to provide the girls with the optional choices and opportunities. Without improvements in the choices, resources and access for marginalised children in schools, the vicious circle of poverty, discrimination and social exclusion with limited choices and resources will continue, and chronic poverty will not be addressed. There are still gaps between the goals of the NGO, the state policies, or in some cases the lack of interest from the state policies, and the reality of the lives and opportunities of the adolescent girls. The next chapter's intention will try to capture how the adolescents' backgrounds and today's situation are influencing their future aspiration and self-identity. Importantly, this can highlight issues that need to be tackled in multiple domains, and not only through education policies and interventions.

7. FUTURE

ROLE OF SELF-IDENTITY AND EMPOWERMENT

The United Nations Millennium Project Report (2005) argues that women's empowerment means having equal capabilities, resources and opportunities, but more importantly they must have the agency to use those features in order to make choices and decisions. Furthermore, rather than empowerment being a concept or thought of action, women must be capable of exercising agency, and put the abilities into action according to their needs and wishes. As shown in chapter five and six, the girls' socioeconomic contexts limited their choices in schooling, and for some of the girls, limited agency was a reality after being part of the intervention strategies. This chapter will look at the future aspirations of the girls and explore whether their background and their present situations have shaped their self-identity.¹⁰ Connection will be made between effective and transformative empowerment. The viewpoints given by the girls about their future aspirations, in addition to exploring how intervention programs might shape the girls' ambitions, can highlight processes that need to be taken into account in order for the girls to make meaningful choices and take control of their own lives.

7.1 THE ADOLESCENT GIRLS' FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

Economic development in a country does not necessarily reflect a just society that promotes equality, equity and freedom to choose (Kabeer, 1999). This is important to have in mind since India is one of the countries that have experienced a high economic growth and is being considered to be a leading country in the global arena, as mentioned in the first chapter. Kabeer (1999) emphasises the need to understand and check the evidence of women's agency against the outcomes or consequences of the choices they make, or the achievements they are able to obtain. The alternatives, such as the ability to have chosen differently, must be available in order to have the capacity to make a meaningful choice. Power relations are also expressed through the type of choices people make, in which rules, norms and practices can play major roles when exercising choice (ibid). Given that the girls experienced different

¹⁰ The term self-identity is regarded as awareness of and with oneself made up by past experiences and ones' future aspirations.

offers at APSA, their future aspirations might be influenced by their present situation. The girls' future aspirations can point to factors that shape their choices, and to whether there are limitations of their choices. However, the alternatives of a choice must not only exist, but also be *seen* to exist.

7.1.1 Girls at the Private Hostel

The majority of the girls have lived at the private hostel for a couple of years. As seen in chapter six, the girls are attending private school along with other Indian children. Prior to attending the private school, the girls had their level of skills assessed, and were thereafter placed in a grade that corresponded with their needs. The private school placed the girls in a class dependent on their level of skills rather than according to their age. When the girls at the private hostel were asked towards the end of the interview how they viewed their future and where aiming for in their life, they all replied quickly, having high expectations for themselves.

I want to become a doctor. My mother is not educated like me and she is suffering in her life. My brother is still on the street along with my mother. My sister and me are over here. We did not find any good place for my brother. At least I want to be educated well, and look after my mum and brother.

Hirkani, living at the private hostel

Most of the girls wanted high status jobs to look after their family in the future:

I want to become a doctor. I have confidence. I will definitely study well and look after my parents and sisters.

Juhi, living at the private hostel

According to the findings, a high status occupation is important because it will provide them with economic resources. A safe occupation in terms of economic and social accountability will contribute in giving not only them, but also their families better living conditions. As seen in the quotes, the girls reason their choice by expressing that their parents are not educated and that they want to take care of them. However, constraints were noticeable when some of them gave reasons for why they wanted a certain occupation:

I want to become a lawyer, but it is my sister's wish. I want to become a doctor, but everyone in my family wishes me to become a lawyer. [H: Why?] There are problems in my family. My mum's brother does not want to give anything from the property they have. My mum's family is ill-treating her, and look at her very cheap. She has been alone ever since my father committed suicide by drinking poison right after my birth. Right now my mother is staying with my sister, but my brother in-law is an alcoholic...I want to look after my sister and mother. I want to help those who are in need of anything. Sneha, living at the private hostel

This exemplifies several factors that are influencing the girls' situations in making an actualised choice. Their family's circumstances are influencing many of the girls' capacity to make an actualised choice, because they feel a need to help them out of their situations with the use of economic resources. Becoming a doctor is seen as increasing the chances of gaining higher status, and the girls thus see it as their responsibility to take care of their family. The girls' surrounding environment is most likely contributing in shaping the girls' choices and how they are thinking when they are exercising choice. This is very evident when they are both expressing other peoples' needs, such as in this case their siblings and parents, without even mentioning their own needs for the future. This indicates that the girls are putting other people's needs first, before thinking about their own wellbeing.

All of the five girls who were interviewed at the private hostel were clear in future achievements with schooling. Since the girls are being recognised and can pursue a degree according to their choice, it is most likely shaping their self-confidence towards setting larger goals for themselves. The role of self-identity, however, is reflected in their previous experiences and in their present situations. Choices of studies were reasoned by being able to provide for family members and help those who were in need.

7.1.2 Girls from the Dream School

The girls who attended the Dream School had gaps in their schooling, but were given a second chance to take exams in order to finish school. NGOs, such as in this case APSA, can equip the girls with learning skills as tools in the empowerment process.

Teacher, that is my dream job. I want to give good education to the children who have not been to school. I want to help those children so that they also can become like us and grow old, and get a job.

Zarine, attending Dream School

It was noticeable during the conversations that all of the girls' future aspirations were influenced by their surrounding environment, since the majority of the girls at the Dream School wanted to become social workers and teachers:

From my childhood I wished to become a teacher. Whatever I have learnt I would like to teach others. I would like to study well and become a teacher, so that my mum can stop going to work, I would like to earn and look after her well.

Ujas, attending Dream School

In addition, it could also indicate that the girls perceived the occupations as a caring role, given that the girls who stayed at the hostel had been receiving help from teachers and social workers.

I wish to become a social worker, because I have faced a lot of difficulties in my life. I do not want other children facing problems like me and I want to really help them.

Ura, living on her own, (was previously a part of the APSA program)

Kabeer (1999) highlights that structures in the society can limit the choices that women and girls have. Moreover, the girls have limited resources and might not have received or developed room for reflecting on their unequal position within the society. The perceived gender norms in occupation, such as girls being expected to pursue a caring profession, can influence their choices of which the girls might not be aware. However, the Dream School is providing the girls with learning skills, and there is clear evidence that the girls believe that they can achieve something, thus developing an increased sense of agency within themselves. The girls dream of a certain occupations but since they are 'dreaming' about it, this could indicate that there are still some doubts as to whether they are able to actually achieve this goal. The girls are establishing an increased sense of agency within by attending the Dream School, but they question whether their dreams will become realised considering their backgrounds.

7.1.3 Girls at Navajeevana

As seen in chapter five and six, Ashna and Revati, who are living at the Navajeevana home, have never attended schooling. They started vocational training when they were placed at the APSA hostel in their teenage years. When Ashna was asked about her thoughts about education, and how she imagined her future, she replied:

I do not see why girls should be educated. There are so many educated people who are working in similar jobs like we do, in Garments. We also do the same job.

This captures some important points in terms of education as an empowering process. Ashna has witnessed that her co-workers who had an education were still in low-paying jobs. As emphasised by one of the directors at APSA, students from private schools are more likely to get a better-paid job compared to students from government schools, despite having the same occupation. There is a tendency for the ones who study in private schools to be recruited by good companies (i.e. gives economic and social benefits) because of their educational background, which results in people remaining in their same socioeconomic situation. Thus, those who have studied at different economic schools will go into different job markets. As shown by Ashna and the director this can be related to how empowerment is something that needs to occur within a person, but at the same time a realisation within a given social context is needed (see Chapter four).

Ashna has experienced that education does not always give people better benefits or equal chances in life. When asked what she would do after her stay at Navajeevana, she replied; “*Get married and go that’s all. One aunty said she would get me married.*” Ashna does not see other opportunities in her life except from getting married, because the constraints faced by being depended on others are limiting her chances to become independent. Furthermore, even though she did not see education as important because people ended up in the same jobs as herself, she was holding something back. When asked if she had a dream for herself, she started to open up more:

I want to help children who are in need of help. This is how I feel now, that I should help orphans. If I had education, I had wished to become a doctor. My family situation was such I could not go to school.

This exemplifies how limited agency, resources and achievements influence the role of her self-identity. Learning how to read and write would most likely improve the girls' self-confidence, as has been exemplified by the other girls who did attend school. Ashna's reflections concerning people's impressions of her as an illiterate shows that this has become part of her *identity*. This *identity* is shaping people's impressions of her as a person. When labelling and discrimination takes place, Link and Phelan (2001) argues that it impacts the way people think about themselves and this can limit their opportunities in life. Ashna likes to be with other people at her workplace, which shows that the group belongingness is important for her self-worth, but she does not see an option other than to get married once her stay at Navajeevana has ended. Her wish of helping others is, however, being neglected because she does not believe that she is capable of pursuing this. A lack of 'power within' results in a lack of 'power to':

I did think, if at all I had studied, I would have become doctor, engineer, madam, nurse, but my dreams are not fulfilled. If at all I had studied like other children, I would have learnt how to speak English. Now, I do not have any education, how can I learn?

Revati, living at Navajeevana

The quotes reflect how limited capabilities as a result of no schooling are influencing the thoughts about their further path. The quote indicates that 'power within' such as self-esteem and self-confidence are assets that are necessary before being able to take the next step towards empowerment:

I do not know anything I even do not know how to count. People laugh at me saying 'you have become so big don't you know anything?' When asked if she had an opportunity to read and write and if she would she consider learning she replied, *'at this time being I do not have any interest. In my childhood I had.'*

Ashna, living at Navajeevana

In both of the cases, a sense of worthlessness is noticeable. This is possibly due to the lack of learning abilities, which limits the girls in gaining a greater independence in their daily lives. The vocational training has not been able to equip the girls with confidence. 'Power within' is lacking and, as a result, the next step of empowerment (i.e., 'power to') is not present. The girls' ambitions are low because they do not believe that they are capable of achieving their wishes. Lack of 'power within' as well as 'power to' is evident, as both of the girls perceive

themselves as being different from others because they cannot read and write, and since they constantly have to depend on other people. As shown in the quotes, the girls' limited sense of 'power within' and lack of 'power to' is an obstructing factor for the girls to achieve what they want for themselves. It is apparent that the girls are not experiencing 'power with' which could open opportunities for the girls to reflect on their situation and also enable them to recognise their capabilities together as a group. Therefore, 'power within' plays a crucial role for the girls' self-identity and motivation as well as in the realisation process of being worthy of a quality education and life.

7.2 NATURE OF EMPOWERMENT

7.2.1 Distinction between Effective and Transformative Agency

Effective agency refers to the ability of being able to carry one's roles in a better way (Kabeer 2005). Learning how to read and write is providing the girls with certain cognitive skills and thereby enhancing their effective agency and also facilitating the process of 'power within'. However, effective agency can be somewhat limited in promoting the ability of the girls to lives they really want to. Transformative agency, on the other hand, is the ability to have power to influence the economic, social and political structures in the society in which one lives (ibid). Transformative agency is thus seen as a process that address inequalities, and most importantly a process that promotes long-term changes to take place (Mosedale, 2005). Transformative agency is fundamental in addressing social inequalities and also in checking their reproduction.

The APSA intervention programs have equipped the majority of the girls with tools to start the process of 'power within.' APSA has been successful in promoting effective agency, to a certain extent, as they are providing the girls with learning skills (i.e. reading and writing), security (i.e. a safe place to stay and provision of food), and social space (i.e. a space for children from similar circumstances and age to come together and form relationships and associations). As reflected by the ambitions of the girls, gaining literacy and completing tenth grade have enabled many of the girls to see possible opportunities in their future and to believe that they are capable of achieving something in their life. The different offers provided by APSA have played a part in shaping the girls' future aspirations and ambitions. There are, however, noticeable variations in the answers provided by the different groups of girls. The girls at the private hostel showed more confidence and a belief in being able to

pursue anything they wished for. The girls had been given a greater control over and say in decisions that affected their life prospects. The majority of the girls at the APSA centre were also thinking about their future aspirations, however, most of them expressed that their future aspirations were their 'dream job,' hence it is evident that they are still unsure as to whether they will actually achieve their goals after completing the program. The two girls living at Navajeevana were found to be somewhat in lacking self-confidence. Their illiteracy was an obstacle in their daily life, in as they were dependent on other people around them to tell them when it was time to go for work, what bus to take and so on, resulting in them facing limitations in achieving full independence. Despite the opportunities presented by the APSA program, these girls were found to be restricted due to their lack of skills and abilities. However, they wish that they could help other children who have been in similar situations as themselves, which emphasises that they are aware of their vulnerability within the society, but they do not know how they can challenge it.

APSA has promoted effective agency and has been part of shaping the girls' future aspirations, but the majority of the girls are still restricted in achieving full transformative agency because most of them are unable to challenge the larger structures that underpin their subordination and marginalisation. This is evident from the stories by the girls where they present with agency in certain aspects of their lives (i.e., study and work), but have limited agency in other aspects (i.e., addressing the inequalities they face in choices opportunities). Koggel (2006) argues that people who have limited agency are still able to direct their lives to a limited extent, but to be able to live the life one values, one needs transformative power to remove barriers in order to change one's life circumstances. Thus, APSA has been instrumental in promoting effective agency of 'power within', but 'power to' and 'power over' were not evidenced as a result of the intervention programs.

A manifestation of effective agency is evident within the organisation's work when exploring the girls' future aspirations. However, the question whether the girls will acquire a more fuller notion of agency in their futures is difficult to predict. Transformative agency is needed in order for the girls to gain a greater control of decisions regarding resources, as well as for having power to influence the economic, social and political processes that affect their life. The findings indicate that the majority of the girls do not feel that the situations they have experienced or find themselves in have occurred because of injustices they have suffered in the society. As seen in the interviews with the girls at the private school, they are still anxious

that people will find out that they are from a poor background. The girls perceived being poor as a consequence of individual behaviour, rather than a product of societal norms. Most of the girls are not questioning why they do not have right to equality or the same rights and opportunities as other people in India. In addition, many of the girls wanted to help vulnerable children, but when asked if they felt that the government or other institutional bodies should had more responsibility for vulnerable children, the reply tended to be a question mark. The responses given indicate that they are not aware about the role of the state in ensuring entitlements and rights for all. The findings indicate that the majority of the girls are not in a position to realise or question their subordinate status in society and they are still experiencing discrimination in terms of limited options in schooling and work and so on. Despite effective agency taking place within the organisation's work, the majority of the girls did not show evidence of transformative agency.

As Kabeer (2005) highlights, education is considered to be one of the main tools for achieving gender equality and empowerment of women and adolescent girls. Education as a resource can bring positive changes in women's lives, but as quoted, "it is the social relationships that govern access to the resource in question that will determine the extent to which this potential will be realised" (Kabeer, 2005, p. 1). In order for transformative agency to unfold, processes need to take place at the individual and the societal levels simultaneously. Firstly, at the individual level, the girls need to develop critical awareness in order to understand that they are products of an unfair system. Secondly, changes need to take place at the societal level where the structures of power need to change in favour of underprivileged communities. Policies enforced on the national level such as 'education for all' does not necessarily give equal opportunities or promote empowerment. This supports Kabeer's (2005) argument that availability of resources is not always sufficient to make strategic life choices, it depends on the way it distributed and claimed by different populations. The majority of the girls did not have a say about resources and decisions that affect their life prospects. This points to the importance of having intervention programs that can help to promote full agency, because actors and social norms that have blocked the girls' realisation in the past, continue to create obstacles in which the girls' aspirations for their future cannot be realised.

7.3 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

The intervention programs have been part of shaping the girls' self-identity and future aspirations. Effective agency is evident for the majority of the girls, which emphasises the necessity of providing tools in order for the process of 'power within' to unfold. This highlights that the nature of empowerment process is complicated. Giving the girls tools has not contributed to 'power to' or 'power over,' but it has been part of shaping the 'power within'. Effective agency has not enforced the girls to question the social norms, the power structures, and the inequalities that underpin their status in the larger society. In order for the future aspirations to become a reality, and for real change to take place outside of the intervention programs, the girls' voices must be heard and be translated into action, and this is where transformative agency becomes important. This supports the essence of empowerment theory, as actions need to be taken from the individual to the societal, from private to public, and from the informal to the formal sphere.

8. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The present study explored the challenges experienced in pursuing schooling by former street and working children who were girls in order to gain a greater knowledge of how to improve access to quality education as a step towards improving their life circumstances. Since the challenges of pursuing schooling from the adolescents' and the NGOs' perspectives have been discussed extensively in Chapters five, six and seven only the major concluding remarks will be emphasised in this chapter. The purpose will be to highlight remaining actions in order to promote meaningful schooling for this group. Additionally, the conclusion will throw light on a more realistic and effective development of interventions in improving the lives of marginalised children in India.

Challenges of pursuing schooling according to the present study are linked to the girls' deprived situations within the Indian society. All of the girls experienced structural discrimination and stigma in their schooling experiences, as well as outside of the school itself, prior to becoming a part of the APSA intervention program. Firstly, school exclusion occurred in the case of the informants of this study due to the multidimensional notion of poverty and discrimination that they faced in their lives. These structures shaped the economic and social lives of the girls and predicated subsequent deprivation and marginalisation in their schooling situation, evidenced by dropping out of school, gaps in schooling, failing in classes, being punished by their teachers and so on. Most of the girls expressed a wish to go to school like other children, but justified their school exclusion due to the deprived situations their families were in. Thus, despite the availability of schools, the structural constraints of work and poverty were factors that prevented the girls from being in a position where they could pursue continuous and quality schooling.

Secondly, the findings of school exclusion emphasise that providing access to schools, as a step to eradicate poverty and promote empowerment, is insufficient to overcome the challenges that many families in India are facing. Some of the girls have never been to school due to the interlocking sets of factors that shaped their economic and social lives. For the girls who did attend school, the combined factors of a poor school environment and the necessity to work at home (and outside the home) in order to help out their families prevented them

from staying on in schooling. Most of the families needed an extra income to survive and the girls thus had to work instead of attending school. Moreover, the girls also told about discriminating practices that they faced in school which points to the lack of a supportive environment in government schools. Discrimination took place at multiple levels within the school context even in the private schools, which led to poor treatment of those girls who attended these schools also. Thus, the challenges faced in pursuing schooling exemplify that providing access to schooling does not necessarily lead to a decrease in child labour and the number of street children.

The challenges of pursuing schooling faced in the girls' lives prior to becoming part of the APSA programs resulted in further challenges after becoming part of the intervention. That is, the obstacles that the girls experienced earlier in their lives continued to impact their situations in the intervention programs offered. A pattern was found in how the girls' past situations of schooling shaped their options at the intervention programs. For many of the girls, the offers given were not sufficient to suit their needs. The girls at the Dream School enjoyed schooling and wished they could stay at the Dream School instead of being mainstreamed into a formal school. The vocational training's limited resources resulted in limited options for the girls who were part of this program. The lack of funding and support from the government in providing effective schooling programs for marginalised children also resulted in limited choices for the girls. The girls had to follow a specific program according to their previous schooling background and present motivation, which resulted in being part of activities that were not the girls' preferred option. Moreover, APSA also faced challenges of mainstreaming children back into formal schools due to low quality in schools and lack of a support system for the marginalised children outside of school. Thus, challenges of pursuing schooling and the incapability of exercising choice were due to the environment surrounding the girls, which continued to produce limitations and drawbacks.

APSA is providing tools in order to assist the girls, but the tools given are not sufficient for the girls to live the lives they want to live. While most of the girls at the Dream School expressed an appreciation towards getting a second chance to learn and develop their skills, it became clear that the girls at the Dream School did not know what would happen to them after completing the program. The girls at the vocational training center had to fit into existing programs and the decision that was made for them was not consistent with their wishes. The two girls who lived at Navajeevana were pleased that they had a place to stay and

a job, but both of the girls lacked a belief in accomplishing their personal goals. When examining the future aspirations of the girls, noticeable differences were found in the answers given by the girls living at the private hostel and the ones being part of APSA's intervention program. This may point to that the girls at the private hostel feel more secure regarding their future because they know that they can stay at the hostel for a longer period of time and are attending classes in school based on their level of skills.

However, concerning the high number of marginalised children who drop out of school or who are totally excluded from school, the APSA intervention program is necessary because it provides the children with a form of effective agency. However, the continuation of the adverse situations for the girls and the limited capacity of the organisation, show that fitting people into pre-existing programs will have certain limitations in promoting transformative agency among marginalised populations in the Indian context. The intervention strategies, such as bridge schools and vocational training, implemented by NGOs have limited resources and power to turn around the adverse situations that the girls have been caught in. Despite the NGO's awareness activities at the grassroots level and the continuous work on the macro level, larger issues such as in this case child labour, school exclusion and poverty are not sufficiently impacted on also as these issues do not get the necessary attention and funding from the government. As a result, APSA is faced with challenges in mainstreaming marginalised children back into formal schools and into the overall society. Thus, it is evident that the adverse situations that resulted in problems for the girls in the first place continue to be obstacles in achievements once completing the intervention program.

Moreover, the present study raises the question of what the findings tell us about the issue of poverty. It is certain that the girls' challenges in pursuing schooling are not due to the characteristics of being a street or a working child, but rather to the causes that led them to become a street or working child in the first place. Mere access to resources will not improve the girls' situations alone when their subordinate position in the larger society have been produced by larger structural factors based on social and political norms. This study found that the obstacles experienced early in the girls' lives have had a continuous influence later in life also. The discriminating practices in school resulted in continuation of child labour and poverty. Offering poor quality of schooling to the marginalised sections of the society without any fundamental changes taking place in their positions within the society and polity does little to alleviate the cycle of chronic poverty. The dependency of the intervention programs

further reduces their agency when the girls are not able to translate the resources they are given into preferred achievements. Some of the girls are, examples of how the larger system create barriers throughout peoples' lives, enabling exclusion over time. The experiences outside of the intervention program are preventing the girls from improving their life circumstances in the long run. This supports Hickey and du Toit (2007) and Mosse's (2010) alternative view of understanding poverty; viewing poverty in a relational way and as a cause of social totalities that are shaping the economic and social lives of individuals and groups of people. Transformative agency is thus needed in order to challenge the existing power structures and social relationships that are instrumental in the production of poverty in the girls' lives.

This brings in the last point of the concluding remarks. The RTE Act has been applied in India, but this study has shown that the quality of education needs to be in focus, rather than the providing mere access to education. Also in the case of marginalised populations, such as those that the informants of this study belong to, education can hold very minimal meaning for them when issues of poverty and exclusion play such a pivotal role in their lives. For example, many of the girls in this study withdrew from school because they had to assist their household with an extra income. Even if the girls had compulsory and a right to education during their childhood, it would not have helped in some cases. The Indian State and schools in India are facing problems with keeping track of children who drop out of school. When the government is providing schools for children, this does not necessarily mean that children will remain in school, as discussed. Implementing an international scheme where the goal is to get all children to start school will most likely be insufficient if other resources are not available to the family that the child belongs to. The stories from the girls showed that school dropout occurred because of poverty, rural-to-urban migration, child labour, stigma and discrimination, or the belief that education was not a necessity given the perceived gender norms and the adverse situations in the workforce. The RTE, however, is a step in the right direction, but as the present study has consistently shown, laws at the higher level are not enough without effective effort taken at the grassroots in order to reduce poverty. Action needs to be taken in multiple areas simultaneously, providing schools is not adequate for enforcing empowerment and to improve life circumstances. Therefore, offering poor quality of schooling for the more adverse sections of the society without additional support in other areas is insufficient to ensure that children actually remain in the schools that they have been enrolled in.

Moreover, it is also important to examine the issue of how a right can be implemented into actions that promotes equal opportunities for all sections of societies. The present study has shown that the challenges in pursuing schooling do not only concern the issue of education, but is equally embedded in the issues of the multidimensionality of poverty, gender inequality, discrimination, and unequal power relations within social structures. In order to improve access to quality education as a step towards improving life circumstances, action needs to be taken at multiple levels. There are different ways in which education can serve as a tool in the empowerment process and in the eradication of poverty and the following are some recommendations about how this can be achieved: Firstly, the Indian government could provide higher quality and activity based teaching to all of its citizens. Increased budget spending would be a necessity in order to provide quality government schools. Secondly, instead of focusing on access alone, more efforts should be made on providing good quality education within the school system, which would help to retain children in schools and prevent dropouts. Thirdly, secondary education can be given more emphasis, because no free schooling options are available after turning 14 years old, as seen in the girls' stories. To be able to continue with further schooling after primary school could perhaps assist in tackling the problems of adverse working and living conditions. Thirdly, education and literacy programs should be provided for adolescents and adults, because as the present study has shown, illiteracy is having a negative affect on one's self-identity. Fourthly, economic and social support for parents is needed in order to provide for their own and children's lives. Fifthly, providing birth registration for citizens in India could be a starting point in addressing dropouts and put the "nowhere children" back to where they belong, namely in school. Sixthly, temporary measures such as bridge schools are only meant to be for a shorter time frame. Given the large number of adolescents and child labourers in India, vocational training should be given more priority and value within the government schemes. Additionally, increased resources should be put into prevention strategies in order to give the ones who are already in deprived situations a possibility to be heard. Moreover, qualitative and quantitative studies could also be given more attention within intervention programs in order to highlight the needs of the different groups of marginalised people.

These factors could be additional tools in the empowerment processes for marginalised children. It is evident form the primary findings of this study that the girls' stories and the NGO's interventions are a step in the right direction. Despite experiences of being excluded,

stigmatised and discriminated against, the girls in this study have experienced an improvement in their life situations as a result of their affiliation to APSA, even if this improvement is arguably somewhat partial and limited. It was also seen that the girls aspire to achieve something in their lives and have hopes and dreams for their future. However, as the findings of this study indicate, there is a lot more that needs to be done and achieved before the girls can have truly transformative and positive experiences in their lives as young adults. As a first step, however and in order for improvement of life circumstances of marginalised people to take place in India, the voices of its citizens need to be heard and recognised, which also includes listening to the voices of the adolescent girls in Bangalore, India.

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Appendix 1

Interview guide

Former Street Children: Adolescent Girls

This interview guide is prepared in order to gain an insight and understanding of how the former street children had to come to live at the street. In addition, the interview questions are prepared in order to explore the challenges experienced by adolescent girls in schooling and give attention to former street and working children's voices and everyday experiences in order to gain a greater knowledge about how to improve access to quality education as a step towards improving their life circumstances. The interview guide also provides questions regarding future aspirations in order to explore the experiences of the adolescent girls, giving prominence to their own voices and their future aspirations. The interview guides might change and be adjusted after conducting some of the interviews.

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM FORMER STREET CHILDREN

1. How old are you?
2. Can you tell me about your background/childhood?
(Where did you grow up? Did you go to school?)
3. Did you go to school before you were living at the street?
4. If no, why not?
5. If yes, did you like going to school?
6. Why did you leave home?
7. Can you tell me a little bit of the daily life at the street? (Your daily chores, routines, thoughts about street life etc.)
8. What decisions did you have to make for yourself when living at the street?
9. Did you want to go to school when you were working at the street?
10. What do you think were your main learning's?
11. What was hard about living at the street?

B. LIVING AT APSA:

1. How did you come to APSA?
2. Why did you come to APSA?
3. How do you like it here?
4. Have there been any changes in you life after coming to APSA?
5. What is your favourite activity at APSA?
6. Are there any activities that you do not like? Why?

C. THE ADOLESCENT GIRLS PERCEPTIONS ABOUT EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT

1. Why do you go to school?
2. What do you feel and think about going to school?
3. How was it to start school again after living on the street?
4. Are there any difficulties by starting school again? Why? Why not?
5. How is the school you are attending now differ from the one you went to when you where younger?
6. What do you think about the 'Dream School' here in Bangalore?
7. Would you like to continue in a formal school? Why or why not?
8. What do you think will be different from this school compared to a formal school?
9. Is there anything you would like to change at your school?
10. Do you think there is a difference in the number of boys and girls at your school?
11. Do you think there is a difference in the treatment between boys and girls at your school?
12. According to you, what are the pro and cons by continuing with your education?
13. Can you describe to me how you want a good school to be like if you could decide?

D. WHAT IT IS LIKE TO BE AN ADOLESCENT GIRL IN INDIA- THEIR OWN PERCEPTIONS, VOICES/PARTICIPATION AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

1. Can you tell me a little bit about how it is to be young, like you, in your society?
 2. Do you think life is more difficult for you because you are a girl? Why? Why not?
 3. Do you enjoy interacting with the APSA staff? And do you think they give importance to your opinions?
 4. How do you think decision- making can be improved where the voices of the youth can be heard within your community and society?
 5. How do you think your future will look like?
 6. What are your future plans and goals?
 7. Do you want to get a get job?
 8. Is there any particular job you see yourself doing when you finish your education?
 9. What is your dream job? Why is this you dream job?
- Is there anything you want to tell me about or bring up that we have not talked about during this interview?

Appendix 2

Interview Guide

NGO Workers at Association for Promoting Social Action

This interview guide is prepared for NGOs workers at APSA in order to map the challenges the NGO face in the education perceptives, which will help to in identifying some of the gaps that remains in promoting meaningful schooling for this groups.

A. APSA AND THEIR PRACTICES:

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and how you got involved with APSA?
2. Can you tell me about the background of APSA and how APSA is working on a daily basis?
3. APSA is a child-right centred organisation. Can you tell me how you are working to include the voices of the child?
4. Has the work of APSA changed since you first started? In what ways?
5. Can you tell me about how your particular organisation is working with street children and schooling?
6. How does the teaching staff work at APSA?
7. How do they work with the children?
8. In your APSA 'Dream School', how does it function compared to the formal school?
9. According to you, why do you think children drop out of school? Is there anything that should be done differently in order to avoid this in your opinion?

B. APSA AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

1. What do you think are the social norms and values regarding education in your community?
2. Do you think the overall community see education as important? Why? Why not?
3. If parents are not sending their children to school, what do you think is the reasons for that?
4. According to you, how do local people treat street children?
5. What do you think the local people think about your organisation and the 'dream school'?
6. Do you think people treat boys better than girls regarding education?

C. APSA AND THE REGIONAL/NATIONAL PLAN

1. What policies are in place for street children at state level to impact the lives of street children in Bangalore?
2. Can you tell me about how APSA is working/cooperating with the regional and national stakeholders?

3. Is APSA facing any challenges on the regional and national plan? And if so, what challenges are you facing?
 4. How are you working towards improving the rights of the child?
 5. What is your opinion of the Right to Education Act?
 6. What actions is APSA taking regarding the Right to Education act?
 7. According to you, have APSA achieved some of the goals when it comes to child rights and schooling on the city level? If so, how?
 8. In what ways are you working in order to get street children back into formal school?
 9. What are the challenges your NGO is facing regarding getting street children back to formal school?
 10. According to you, is there anything that would be needed to improve in order to get more children back to formal school? If yes, what?
 11. Do you think the children benefit from getting an education?
- Are there any issues/thoughts you would like to add that have not been raised during this interview? Anything you feel is important to discuss further?

Appendix 3

Interview Guide

Activists/ academics

A. BACKGROUND:

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
2. What is your education?
3. What is your occupation?
4. Are you part of any organisation working for child rights?

B. THEIR REFLECTIONS AND POINT OF VIEW ON CHILD RIGHTS IN INDIA

1. How are the child rights in India implemented in the society?
2. There are many street children in India, how do you think the government is working towards improving the lives of street children and giving their rights?
3. How do you think the public view girls?
4. In your opinion, do you think girls and street children have limited rights in the society?
5. How do you think the public view street children?
6. Are you aware of NGOs that are working with street children? If yes, what are your opinions regarding these NGOs? (good, active etc.)
7. According to you, what do you think about the child rights and the way they are implemented in the Indian society?

C. THEIR VIEW ON EDUCATION AND EQUALITY

1. In your opinion, what should be done differently or be improved in order to get more children back to school and keep them in school?
2. According to you, what do you think are the factors that limit girls' choices to education?
3. What do you think about formal schools?
4. Why do you think children drop out of school?
5. What are your thoughts about girls gaining an education in the Indian society? Is this important? Why? Why not?
6. Do you think the government is doing enough to provide equality within the education system? Why? Why not?

D. VIEWS ON THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

1. What do you think are the social norms and values regarding education in your community?
2. Do you think the overall community see education as important? Why? Why not?
3. What are the reasons for keeping children out of school do you think?
4. Do you think people see a difference between boys and girls regarding education?

E. THEIR VIEW ON ADOLESCENTS IN THE INDIAN SOCIETY

1. According to you, how are adolescents looked upon in your society?
 2. Do adolescents have a 'voice' in the Indian society do you think? Why? Why not?
 3. Do you think there should have been done more to improve their rights?
 4. Do you think adolescent's rights can be improved within the Indian society? If yes, how?
- Is there anything you feel is important to discuss further?

Appendix 4

Interview Guide

The Government Child Protection Services and Child Welfare Committee

1. What is your recognition/position?
2. Can you tell me about your academic background?
3. For how long have you been carried your current post?
4. Can you tell me how the Indian government is working on the national level to ensure the child rights? And can you tell me how they work on the state level?
5. How is the state level government working in implementing the Right to Education act?
6. How are your policies that are connected to education school policies implemented into the local level?
7. Are there any challenges in implementing national level policies to a local level?
8. What are the regional programmes that are being implemented for the benefit of street children in Bangalore city?
9. (How are the regional and national practices providing the rights of the girl child?)
10. (Can you tell me, if possible, how the regional plan in Bangalore is working towards vulnerable children as well as adolescents? Are there different practices in regard to adolescent's rights and well being compared to that of children?)
11. In your opinion, what do you think could be done in order to cope with the high amount of drop out children in school?
12. What do you think could be done in order to decrease the numbers of street children?