

PRESS RELEASE: 20th November 2007

Abuse of Children on the Streets Highlighted by Charities Report

Thirty-one countries top the league table of shame compiled by a consortium of 53 charities. The league table highlights the visibility of children living and working on the streets in 69 countries and is part of the first international report focusing on street children.

A new report published by the Consortium for Street Children, *State of the World's Street Children: Violence*, is based on research across the world and highlights children's exposure to violence and criticises charities and governments for not doing enough to protect children.

The report argues that all children on the streets are there due to violence. Violence has become the most significant factor driving children to the streets and deters them from returning home. It emphasises that families should be supported and a culture of violence-free household should be encouraged. The report also recommends that communities should assist in the reintegration of street children and provide support for those children unable or unwilling to return home.

The report is critical of charities and governments which use street children as poster pictures of extreme poverty and vulnerability, while failing to help them with policies and aid. It argues that government neglect and apathy has often resulted in the use of violent tactics to cover-up the problem or to pretend these children do not exist. States must provide legal protection and foster a culture of respect within institutional services and public spaces. Ensuring that the juvenile justice and welfare systems are sensitive to street children's needs is critical to reducing their exposure to violence.

The exact number of children living and working on the streets around the world will never be known, but their numbers run in the tens of millions. Street children are often separated from their families, not enrolled in school and often not even registered at birth all of which means that their needs cannot be met by government or charities. Swift action is needed to ensure that another year does not pass with more children forced onto the streets.

Alex Dressler, Executive Director of the Consortium for Street Children said: 'It is very sad that urban street children, often pictured alone and vulnerable, has become such an iconic image for anti-poverty campaigners and yet development policies and funding simply don't reach them. Fighting poverty alone is simply not enough when we know that violence plays such a significant role in driving children onto the streets. Whilst economic migration, extreme poverty and the death of HIV+ parents are all major causes of children ending up on the streets, there are literally millions of children who will never return home because they are too scared to do so having suffered violence and abuse from their families. These children face daily violence and abuse from the police, sex tourists and even each other. With more focus in developing countries on preventing violence and abuse at home, and by reaching out to children already on the streets and providing them with rehabilitation, education and security they so desperately need, the vast number of children living and working on the streets in the world could be significantly reduced.'

Dr Jacinthe Ibrahim, Child Protection Adviser for the Egypt office of Plan International said: 'Working with street children is an extremely difficult job. Children who have already taken to the streets come to us with all sorts of injuries received from the public, the police or other youngsters. There are over 200,000 homeless children in Egypt. It is a real tragedy that there are so many children living on the streets in Egypt and around the world today. We need more

support to help keep children off the streets and to rehabilitate those that have left their homes. These children should have the protection, care and support they rightfully deserve.'

Ends

For media enquires please contact either James Georgalakis at EveryChild on 0207 749 2444 James.Georgalakis@everychild.org.uk or Sandra Brobbey at Plan UK at Sandra.Brobbey@plan-international.org.

Spokespersons from the *Consortium of Street Children* are available for interview. Case studies of street children, photography and copies of *State of the World's Street Children: Violence* are available on request.

Notes for Editors

State of the World's Street Children: Violence, is launched on international Children's Day, Tuesday 20th November at an event in Westminster Palace. Any media wishing to attend must contact those listed above in advance.

The *Consortium for Street Children* (CSC) is a rapidly growing network of 50+ international NGOs which work globally through their network of local partners. The CSC works with and through their members to improve the quality and stability of projects to serve street children and to prevent further generations of children from being forced to live and work on the street. By acting together as a group, the CSC aims to achieve improvements for street children with a collective strength, reaching wider audiences with a greater voice. For more information go to: www.streetchildren.org.uk

EveryChild, which is a member of the Consortium, is an international development charity working in 15 countries around the world. EveryChild works with children who are, or are at risk of being, separated from their family or community. www.everychild.org.uk