

EXPLORING THE CHILD PROTECTION SITUATION OF STREET CHILDREN IN COX'S BAZAR

By

Sifat Ara Nur
Student ID- 22155001

A thesis submitted to Brac Institute of Educational Development in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science in Early Childhood Development

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Brac University
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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

Student's Full Name & Signature:

Sifat Ara Nur
Student ID- 22155001

Approval

The thesis/project titled “Exploring the Child Protection Situation of Street Children in Cox’s Bazar” submitted by

1. Sifat Ara Nur (22155001)

of Spring, 2022 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science in Early Childhood Development in January 2024.

Examining Committee:

Supervisor:
(Member)

Syeda Fareha Shaheeda Islam
Senior Lecturer, Early Childhood Development
Brac Institute of Educational Development
Brac University

Program Coordinator:
(Member)

Ferdousi Khanom
Senior Lecturer, ECD Academic Program
Brac Institute of Educational Development
Brac University

External Expert Examiner:
(Member)

Dr. Dilruba Sultana
Senior Lecturer,
Educational Leadership and School Improvement
Brac Institute of Educational Development, Brac University

Departmental Head:
(Chair)

Dr. Erum Mariam
Executive Director
Brac Institute of Educational Development
Brac University

Ethics Statement

Title of Thesis Topic: Exploring the Child Protection Situation of Street Children in Cox's Bazar

Student name: Sifat Ara Nur

1. Source of population

Street children (Aged 6-8 years), parents of street children (both Mother and Father) and personnel from government, non-government, and community-based organizations

2. Does the study involve (yes, or no)

- a) Physical risk to the subjects- no
- b) Social risk- no
- c) Psychological risk to subjects- no
- d) discomfort to subjects- no
- e) Invasion of privacy- no

3. Will subjects be clearly informed about (yes or no)

- a) Nature and purpose of the study- yes
- b) Procedures to be followed- yes
- c) Physical risk- n/a
- d) Sensitive questions- yes
- e) Benefits to be derived- yes
- f) Right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study- yes
- g) Confidential handling of data- yes
- h) Compensation and/or treatment where there are risks or privacy is involved- yes

4. Will Signed verbal consent for be required (yes or no)

- a) from study participants- yes
- b) from parents or guardian- yes
- c) Will precautions be taken to protect anonymity of subjects?- yes

5. Check documents being submitted herewith to Committee:

- a) Proposal- yes
- b) Consent Form- yes
- c) Questionnaire or interview schedule- yes

Ethical Review Committee:

Authorized by:

(chair/co-chair/other)

Dr. Erum Mariam
Executive Director
Brac Institute of Educational Development
Brac University

Abstract

Street children, often invisible in bustling urban circumstances, represent an unfortunate reality molded by various socioeconomic conditions. Without adequate protection, these children become vulnerable to countless risks. Child protection is crucial for street children, as homelessness increases exposure to harm. Understanding their situation is morally imperative for establishing effective support systems.

Focused on Cox's Bazar, a renowned, scenic tourist destination facing the Rohingya refugee crisis, this qualitative study investigates the child protection situation of young street children by adopting multi-methods. Through thematic analysis of informal conversations, in-depth interviews, key informant interactions, and observations from a total of 14 participants, the study unfolds the perceptions of street children aged 6-8, shedding light on their daily hardships, varied feelings, and diverse aspirations. The study inspects the child protection risks encountered by street children, covering violence, abuse, exploitation, neglect, hazardous environment, negative coping, and forthcoming concerns, and scrutinizes existing interventions and support mechanisms, underlining gaps and challenges in providing necessary services to them. Moreover, the findings seek to inform targeted interventions and policies and foster resourceful collaborations among stakeholders, and contribute valuable insights for policymakers, GOs, NGOs, and community-based organizations to enhance the child protection situation and well-being of street children in Cox's Bazar.

Keywords: Street children; Child protection; Child protection situation; Child protection in Cox's Bazar; Street children in Cox's Bazar; Street children's rights to protection

Dedication

To all the children who once embraced street life, whose stories inspired and fueled me throughout my research journey.

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Table of Contents

Declaration.....	ii
Approval	iii
Ethics Statement.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
Dedication	vi
Acknowledgement	vii
Table of Contents	viii
List of Tables	x
List of Figures.....	xi
List of Acronyms.....	xii
Chapter I: Introduction & Background	1
Introduction.....	1
Background of the Research	1
Statement of the Problem.....	4
Purpose of the Study	6
Justification and Significance of the Research	6
Chapter II: Literature Review.....	10
Chapter III: Methodology	20
Research Approach and Design	20
Research Site.....	20

Research Participants	21
Participants Selection Procedure.....	22
Data Collection Method and Tool.....	22
Data Collection Procedure	24
Data Management and Analysis	25
Trustworthiness.....	26
Ethical Issues	28
Limitations of the Study.....	29
Chapter IV: Results/Findings & Discussion.....	30
Results/Findings.....	30
Discussion.....	48
Conclusion	57
Recommendations.....	58
References	60
Appendices.....	66
Appendix-1: Demographic Information of Participants	66
Appendix 2: Research Tools (English).....	67
Appendix 3: Translated Research Tools (Bengali).....	70
Appendix 4: Informed Consent Form.....	73
Appendix 5: Sample Transcript of Informal Conversation.....	74
Appendix 6: Sample Images	76

List of Tables

Table 1 Research Participants.....	21
Table 2 Data Collection Method.....	23
Table 3 Generating and categorizing initial codes, sub-themes, and theme.....	26

List of Figures

Figure 1: Data Analysis Process	25
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List of Acronyms

BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BIDS	Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CSC	Consortium for Street Children
CSPB	Child Sensitive Social Protection in Bangladesh
DSS	Department of Social Services
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
IDI	In-depth Interview
IDSC	International Day for Street Children
KI	Key Informant
KII	Key Informant Interview
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Chapter I: Introduction & Background

Introduction

“Every child deserves a champion- an adult who will never give up on them” (Pierson, 2013). Unfortunately, there are millions of children called “street-connected children” out there who are deprived of a responsive adult in their lives. Every year International Day for Street Children (IDSC) is celebrated globally on April 12 recognizing the resilience of street-connected children. IDSC theme for 2023 “Keeping Street-Connected Children Safe” focused on their sense of safety and the actions governments and communities can take to protect them from harm (Consortium for Street Children [CSC], 2023). This study aimed to understand the child protection situation of street children in Cox’s Bazar.

Background of the Research

Street children represent one of society's least fortunate and marginalized individuals (Cappa, 2023). The CSC (2020) defines ‘street children’ as young people who survive on the streets, whether they reside, earn a living, have support connections on the streets, or a mix of the three. UNICEF (n.d.) defines street children into three categories, i.e., *Street Living Children* who fled from their families and reside alone on the street, *Street Working Children* who spend the bulk of their time on the roads for work but go back to family regularly, and *Children from Street Families* who live with their families in the street. The Inter-NGO definition of street child is:

A street child is any girl or boy who has not reached adulthood, for whom the street (in the broadest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become her or his habitual abode and/or sources of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised, or directed by responsible adults. (Parveen, 2014)

According to USAID, four types of children are considered as street children. First, there are the *Child of the Streets*, who lack a stable home and family support, often finding temporary refuge in various locations such as shelters and abandoned buildings. The second category, *Child on the Street*, encompasses youngsters who maintain ties with their families and may even return home at night, however, they spend the majority of their days and sometimes nights on the streets due to factors like poverty, overcrowding, or domestic abuse. *Part of a Street Family* refers to children living on sidewalks or city squares with their families, often displaced by circumstances such as poverty, conflict, or natural disasters. These families lead a wandering life, and the children frequently engage in street work alongside their kin. Lastly, *Institutionalized Care* involves children who have experienced homelessness and are deemed at risk of returning to street life. They are placed in care institutions to provide them with a stable and supportive environment (Learn Child Rights, n.d.).

There is no exact data available regarding the number of street children in Bangladesh. According to a survey on street children done in eight divisions in Bangladesh, more than 30% of children among the total respondents live and sleep in public or open spaces such as streets, trains, terminals, fields, and parks that lack even the most basic amenities (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics [BBS] & UNICEF, 2023). These children, ranging in age from early childhood to late adolescence, live and work on the streets due to factors like poverty, family dissolution, urbanization, migration, displacement, and conflicts or natural disasters (Moon & Azad, 2022).

For many street children, surviving on the streets in harsh, unforgiving settings is a daily battle, and they encounter several protection risks. Child protection, according to

UNICEF (n.d.), is ‘the prevention and treatment of child abuse, exploitation, and violence in all circumstances.’ Street children face a myriad of challenges, including homelessness, malnutrition, lack of access to education, exposure to violence, substance abuse, and exploitation. The absence of stable family structures and formal support systems compounds these vulnerabilities, denying children the protection and care they deserve (Farid & Mostari, 2015).

Cox's Bazar, a town renowned for its seascapes, has gained global attention due to the Rohingya refugee crisis. Still, amid this international focus, the challenges faced by the host community's children (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2018), specifically the street children, have often been overshadowed. Street children in Cox's Bazar experience a unique blend of adversity and resilience as they navigate their daily existence on the streets. The international community, and nations worldwide, including Bangladesh, have committed to upholding their duty to protect these vulnerable children (Hossain, 2020).

The previous studies on street children mainly focused on street children’s lifestyle, causes of migration, problems, survival, and coping mechanisms, and these are mostly done in the capital. The studies did not thoroughly explore the child protection perspective, despite some general protection issues being highlighted, indicating the scope to understand the child protection situation for young children deeply. Furthermore, there is a lack of research specifically on street children living in Cox's Bazar. This study was developed on different studies done earlier in Bangladesh, expanded the scope of understanding needful intervention for protecting street children and their well-being, and guided the development of targeted interventions, raising awareness among relevant

stakeholders and providing information for policy change. Hence, this study explored street children's perception, risks related to child protection, and the existing intervention available for this marginalized group in Cox's Bazar.

Statement of the Problem

Estimates suggest approximately 100 to 150 million street children worldwide (Theirworld, 2022). The lives and work of these children on the streets have profound and enduring consequences on their development and health. Living and working on the streets exposes them to significant risks. Street children are at a higher risk of experiencing various health issues, including acute illnesses, injuries, infections, especially gastrointestinal and acute respiratory infections, and sexually transmitted diseases. They also often suffer from inadequate nutrition, mental health issues, and substance abuse. Furthermore, they are more vulnerable to abuse, sexual exploitation, and human trafficking (Roncević et al., 2013).

In accord with the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) (as cited in CSC, 2021), there were more than 1.5 million street children in Bangladesh in 2015, with estimations indicating that this figure could climb to 1.6 million by 2024. Along with the challenges related to access to essentials such as shelter, food, medical care, clothing, and education, street children face various child protection issues such as violence, insecurity, discrimination, physical and emotional abuse, forced labor, trafficking, mental health issues (Hughes, 2023). Children affected by violence have long-term adverse health, social, and economic repercussions. These include mental and physical health issues, increased health and other risk behaviors, exposure to additional violence, physical injury disability, a drop in health-related aspects, lower educational proficiency, and a drop in adult financial well-being (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], n.d.).

Evidence shows that mistreatment of children can cause immediate physical harm but can have long-lasting, multi-generational repercussions. Childhood maltreatment leads to physical, psychological, and behavioral outcomes with societal costs. These outcomes can influence each other, such as hindering brain development, causing psychological issues like diminished self-esteem, and potentially leading to risky behaviors like substance misuse (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019).

Beneath its picturesque landscapes lies a complex and pressing issue related to child protection in Cox's Bazar. The child protection situation in Cox's Bazar presents a multifaceted challenge, compounded by the presence of two distinct communities- the host population and the Rohingya refugees. While the Rohingya children have faced well-documented challenges related to displacement, trauma, and lack of entree to basic services (Hossain, 2023), it is vital to recognize that the host area's children also experience vulnerabilities that demand immediate attention. The host people in Cox's Bazar face various socio-economic challenges, including poverty, and limited access to quality education, healthcare, and sanitation facilities (UNDP, 2018) that directly influence the well-being and protection of children. Poverty and lack of educational opportunities can lead to child labor, exploitation, and abuse (Radfar et al., 2018), perpetuating cycles of poverty and hindering children's development and potential for pushing children toward street life (Abdelgalil et al., 2004).

A survey of street children revealed that 38% were pushed onto the streets due to poverty, 91% were working, 31% had injuries, half experienced workplace violence, 63% witnessed abuse, 93% witnessed scolding, and 84% witnessed physical abuse (BBS & UNICEF, 2023). These children often face adversity and neglect during their critical early

childhood development period, from birth to eight years old. This formative period, crucial for cognitive, social, emotional, and physical growth, can lead to long-term developmental challenges (Center on the Developing Child, 2007).

The Rohingya refugee influx has placed additional strain on the resources and infrastructure of Cox's Bazar has exacerbated the host community's challenges (World Bank Group, 2022), increasing unique risks for children like exploitation, abuse, and neglect, violence, and trafficking. The need for comprehensive and inclusive child protection is urgent due to the differing needs of the two communities. The situation for street children in the region is inadequately explored, requiring an in-depth investigation to understand their protection concerns and availability of services in this context.

Purpose of the Study

The objective was to understand the child protection situation of the young street children living in the host community in Cox's Bazar. The specific objectives were to explore the perception by getting insights into the experiences, feelings, coping mechanisms, and aspirations of street children and identify and analyze the risks faced by them in terms of child protection. It also explored the existing initiatives in place to protect and support street children in Cox's Bazar.

Justification and Significance of the Research

Due to the geographical position of Cox's Bazar, it is notably distinct from other areas in Bangladesh. It is a major tourist destination and shares its borders with Myanmar. The proximity to the border and the influx of Rohingya refugees since 2017 have significantly altered the socio-economic and demographic landscape of the district. Unlike other urban centers in Bangladesh, Cox's Bazar is characterized by this unique interplay of

factors, making it essential to examine the child protection situation within this specific context (Rahman, 2018).

Despite the unique and challenging circumstances faced by street children in Cox's Bazar, there is a prominent lack of research focused on this vulnerable group in this particular location. Most research on street children has predominantly concentrated on larger urban areas, such as Dhaka. This knowledge gap hinders understanding these children's unique protection risks, concerns, and vulnerabilities and impedes the development of targeted interventions and policies. This study aligned with the demand for specific context-level, in-depth understanding recommended by the recent national survey on street children (BBS & UNICEF, 2023).

The study carried significant implications for multiple stakeholders, offering several benefits. It can provide insights into their experiences and challenges to develop tailored interventions to address their needs. The research also empowered street children by giving them a voice and recognizing their perspectives, contributing to their sense of autonomy and dignity. The findings may guide community-based organizations and NGOs in developing more effective programs and services, facilitating stakeholder collaborations, and optimizing resources. Policymakers and government bodies can benefit from the study's findings in the child protection area, leading to systemic support enhancements for street children. The study also contributed to the research community by adding valuable insights and fostering preventive measures. Ultimately, the study may contribute to sustainable improvements, advocating for systemic changes and tailored interventions that nurture street children's growth, development, and protection in Cox's Bazar and other places.

Research Questions

This study was led by three research questions as follows-

1. How do street children perceive their street life in Cox's Bazar?
2. What are the Child Protection risks experienced by the street children?
3. What interventions are in place to address the risks of street children in Cox's Bazar?

Operational Definitions

Street Children: This study identified street children aged 6-8 who were homeless, worked and slept on the streets (*children of the street*), and who had homes and slept at home at night but spent a considerable time working on the street (*children on the street*).

Perception of Street Life: This term refers to street children's thoughts, understanding, and aspirations of their street life.

Child Protection: This refers to "preventing and responding to child abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence" (UNICEF, n.d.).

Child Protection Situation: This refers to the overall situation or status regarding street children's perceptions, protection risks, and remedies for addressing them.

Child Protection Risk: This refers to hazards, which are potential breaches and dangers to children's rights that cause harm to them.

Violence: This included physical, emotional, and sexual violence, where, as per the

The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action [The Alliance] (2019):

Violence encompasses all acts that involve the intentional use of power or verbal or physical force, threatened or actual, against a child or against a group of children that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in actual or potential harm to the child or children's safety, well-being, dignity, and development.

Abuse: Abuse refers to “a deliberate act with actual or potential negative effects upon a child’s safety, well-being, dignity, and development. It is an act that takes place in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power” (The Alliance, 2019). This included any form of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse.

Neglect: This included neglect in terms of physical, medical, emotional, educational, supervisory, and abandonment, where, according to The Alliance (2019), *neglect* is:

The intentional or unintentional failure of a caregiver - individual, community, or institution (including the State) with clear responsibility by custom or law for the well-being of the child - to protect a child from actual or potential harm to the child’s safety, well-being, dignity, and development or to fulfil that child’s rights to survival, development, and wellbeing.

Exploitation: This included economic and sexual exploitation and harmful or hazardous works, where according to The Alliance (2019), *exploitation* means:

When an individual in a position of power and/or trust takes or attempts to take advantage of a child for their own personal benefit, advantage, gratification, or profit. This personal benefit may take different forms: physical, sexual, financial, material, social, military, or political.

Community-Based Organization (CBO): This refers to a non-profit, non-governmental organization formed by community people working with street children in the study area.

Chapter II: Literature Review

“We are not a priority to society; we are invisible,”- stated by a street child in Central America (CSC, 2019). To comprehend these unnoticed individuals’ protection situations, a diverse range of national and international literature was explored in this section. The literature is described under six thematic areas: Street children and their situation, Child protection situation, Child protection situation of street children, Child protection concerns of children in Cox’s Bazar, Vulnerabilities due to geographical aspects of Cox's Bazar, and Legislations, policies, and interventions for protecting children. Each theme contributed to getting comprehensive insights into the child protection situation of street children, with a particular focus on Cox's Bazar.

Street Children and Their Situation

Previous studies highlighted street children’s situation and daily survival on street. A ‘Street child’ is a child who does not have a home and who often sleeps outside in a city (*Street Child*, 2023). Derivois et al. (2019) identified two main categories of street children: those “on” the streets and those “of” the streets. *Children on the streets* struggle to provide for their families and work long hours. While some stay in touch with their families, others go home after work. *Children of the streets* consider the streets as their home, patrol the streets, beg for necessities, and resort to stealing, prostitution, or drug use to make their lives easier. They rarely visit their family and do not even enjoy talking about them, unlike *children on the streets* (Gabriel, 2022). The phrases *street children*, *children on the street*, *children of the street*, *runaway children*, *throwaway children*, *children living and/or working on the street*, *homeless children*, and *street-connected children* have all been used in recent years to refer to children who are found on the streets. The Committee on the

Rights of the Child described *children in street situations* in the UN General Comment 21 (2017) as the children who live and work on the streets, whether they do it alone, with friends, or with family. It also encompasses a larger group of children who have developed close relationships with public areas and view the street as an integral part of their identities and daily lives. This covers children who occasionally live or work on the streets and frequently go the street with friends, relatives, or siblings (CSC, 2019).

There are respective *push* factors and *pull* factors, which are the causes or circumstances that force or motivate children to end up on the streets. Economic poverty, family breakdown or instability, social exclusion, discrimination and violence at home, inadequate housing, disasters, and internal displacements are considered as *push* factors. *Pull* factors include a sense of freedom, independence, and adventurous excitement of street life, chances of earning money through informal work or begging, the allure of the urban or city environment, and attraction to street-based friendships. Push factors typically play a more significant role in pushing children onto the streets, while pull factors may contribute to their decision to stay on the streets once they are there (Human Rights Council, 2012). Besides, aversion and discrimination, for instance, against children with disabilities, children accused of witchcraft, and children cast out from families for questioning their sexuality, as well as families' refusal to accept children's disagreement with harmful customs like child marriage and female genital mutilation, are also factors that lead them to the streets (CSC, 2019).

Studies conducted in Dhaka reveal that poverty is the primary driver of migration to urban areas, with low-income jobs and factors such as parental neglect, abuse, changes in family structure, and low socioeconomic status leading children to end up on the streets

(Chowdhury et al., 2017; Zinia, 2022). Another research highlights their vulnerability in Dhaka, with experiences ranging from disempowerment, social exclusion, discrimination, and abuse stemming from various quarters, including musclemen, police, adults, and even their own families (Hai, 2014). These hardships result in adverse health outcomes, including skin diseases, respiratory problems, abdominal disorders, and eye and ear issues due to overcrowded living conditions, irregular hygiene practices, and poor nutrition. Street children typically do not have a balanced childhood and often lack proper socialization. This imbalance in their upbringing raises concerns about their ability to grow into healthy and socially acceptable adults (Zinia, 2022).

Child Protection Situation

Child protection refers to measures and structures aimed at preventing and responding to abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence against children. It includes advancing, defending, and upholding children's rights to a healthy, productive life free from violence. (Combaz 2013). According to Child Protection Minimum Standards (2019), child protection risks include dangers and injuries, physical and emotional maltreatment, sexual and gender-based violence, mental health and psychosocial distress, children associated with armed forces or armed groups, child labor, and unaccompanied and separated children. Child abuse covers all forms of maltreatment of children, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, and it is a worldwide issue that has significant lifelong repercussions for both children and their families (Netkova & Zejneli, 2021). According to Hillis et al. (2016), over half of all children worldwide between the ages of 2 and 17 have been the victim of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse or neglect in the previous year. According to UNICEF (n.d.), child labor affects nearly 1 in 10 children

worldwide, with nearly half engaged in hazardous work. Violence against children manifests in various forms, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, occurring in homes, communities, schools, and online settings, often perpetrated by trusted individuals. Additionally, thousands of children are forcibly recruited for armed conflict (Apap, 2016), leading to extensive exploitation and abuse. Millions of migrant and displaced children face danger, detention, deprivation, and discrimination during their journeys, at their destinations, or upon return. Over 2.7 million children live in residential care, exposing them to physical, emotional, and social risks (*Children in Alternative Care*, n.d.). and children affected by conflict and disasters endure severe psychological and social consequences. Furthermore, a significant number of children globally lack a legal identity, while millions interact with justice systems as victims, witnesses, or individuals involved in legal processes, highlighting their diverse needs and vulnerabilities. Ensuring every child's rights and protection remains a pressing global concern, as drew by UNICEF (n.d.).

Bangladesh grapples with significant child protection challenges, with millions of children facing violence, exploitation, and abuse, often at the hands of those responsible for their care. Alarming statistics reveal that nine out of 10 children endure physical punishment or psychological aggression from caregivers, including parents and teachers. Child labor remains a pressing issue, with nearly 8% of children aged 5 to 17 engaged in hazardous work (BBS & UNICEF, 2019). As per the National Child Labour Survey 2022, Bangladesh has 39.96 million children aged 5-17 years, with 3.54 million working, including 2,734,044 males and 802,883 females. The number of children engaged in child labor is 1,776,097, with 1,068,212 being hazardous child labor (BBS & International Labour Organization [ILO], 2023). Despite legislation against child marriage, Bangladesh

displays one of the highest rates of child marriage worldwide, with 51 percent of women aged 22 to 24 being married before their 18th birthday (UNICEF, 2020). Child brides experience adverse consequences (Wodon et al., 2017), including educational dropout, malnutrition, maternal health risks, and heightened domestic violence. Moreover, according to UNICEF (n.d), many children are homeless, living on the streets without access to education, and children with disabilities often face exclusion, discrimination, stigma, and isolation. The low birth registration rate, at 56 percent for children under 5, deprives millions of their right to identity. Access to justice remains a challenge, with over 23,000 pending cases involving children in the juvenile justice system in Bangladesh, stressing the urgent need for comprehensive child protection measures (UNICEF, n.d.).

Child Protection Situation of Street Children

Street children face a multitude of child protection risks and concerns in their daily lives. They are often exposed to harm from authorities, including the police, and can be subjected to physical violence (Ribeiro, 2008) and denied access to necessities due to discriminatory laws. Vulnerable to various forms of abuse, street children, especially those not having birth registration or without supportive adults, can experience robbery, physical assault, and exploitation. Some are forced into street gangs, seeking protection but becoming involved in violent criminal activities and drug use. Substance use can lead to long-term health issues, adding to their challenges. These children often grapple with mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and trauma, increasing their risk of substance abuse and suicide. Stigmatization and social exclusion further worsen their mental well-being. Moreover, the legal system in many countries criminalizes them for

status offenses, leading to arrests and detentions for noncriminal acts like begging or loitering, compounding their vulnerability and lack of protection (CSC, 2020).

The study conducted by Chowdhury et al. (2017) in Dhaka found that 80.8% of street children experience maltreatment of some kind. 44% of the victims were physically abused, 9.6% were physically, emotionally, and sexually abused, and 27.2% were both physically and mentally abused. Another study by Hai (2014) reveals that street children face an array of child protection risks that leave them disempowered, excluded, and vulnerable to abuse, and many reported being bullied and harassed by various individuals, including musclemen, police, and criminals who robbed them, as well as mistreated by their parents. They were often compelled to undertake menial and degrading tasks by unscrupulous people, enduring exploitation and violence in low-wage jobs. Street girls also experienced molestation by hoodlums (Ally & Paul, 2022), with few willing to listen to their pleas for help. Furthermore, poor health resulting from strenuous labor, disease, and malnutrition was a widespread concern, exacerbated by limited access to medical care. Emotional threats loomed large as many lacked the protection and affection of parents or family members, living in constant fear and insecurity on the hazardous streets (Fantahun & Taa, 2022). A dearth of recreational opportunities further exacerbated their plight, leading some to engage in harmful activities. Social isolation was a stark reality, as their transient lifestyles hindered the development of meaningful social ties or networks. Furthermore, institutional support was deemed insufficient by respondents, failing to fully address the issues affecting street children, compounding their vulnerability and marginalization (Hai, 2014).

Child Protection Concerns of Children in Cox's Bazar

Cox's Bazar district is a hotspot of trafficking, armed robbery, organized crime, drugs, small guns, and narcotics (Lion, 2022) caused by job loss, poverty, and a vulnerable coastline where protection risk include child protection, child marriage, and GBV.

In Cox's Bazar, only 47% of children from the host community had birth registration by 2018, where street children stayed out of this process, creating barriers to accessing basic needs and safety (UNICEF, 2018). In Cox's Bazar, 22% of boys and 5% of girls are engaged in paid work, mostly in restaurants, tea stalls, or small businesses, with 28.6% of children working due to calamities or unexpected events. Child labor is deeply impacted by the father's education and income, with children who lost their father's care being more likely to work (33.3%) (Hossain, 2023).

The discussion conducted by Uddin (n.d.) in Cox's Bazar revealed stark differences between the lives of street children in Dhaka and Cox's Bazar. Along with experiencing a sense of joy in street-based activities, the young ones laboring on the world's longest beach also shoulder the role of breadwinners for their families by selling items like eggs, balloons, garlands, seashells etc. Despite their eagerness to learn, they find themselves compelled to step into their parents' shoes as providers, forsaking their education and childhood. The children's difficult circumstances highlight the importance of their hopes and aspirations as they struggle to support their families above their dreams.

Vulnerabilities due to Geographical Aspects of Cox's Bazar:

Situated in southeast Bangladesh, Cox's Bazar is distinguished by its unique geographical features, including a long coastline along the Bay of Bengal and proximity to the Myanmar border. These geographical aspects have significant implications for the

vulnerability of disadvantaged children in the area. The zone is susceptible to natural catastrophes such as cyclones, floods, storm surges, and landslides (UNDP, n.d.; Fahim & Miti, 2022). These climate-related hazards disproportionately affect underprivileged children residing in susceptible places, leading to disruptions in their safety, education, health, and well-being. Moreover, Cox's Bazar is hosting a large number of Rohingya refugees, and their exodus has put an added burden on the area's resources and services (Ahmad & Naeem, 2020). Hence, the destitute children from both communities are struggling to access essential services, and the region's closeness to Myanmar's border raises the possibility of it serving as a hub for forced labor, human trafficking, and exploitation (Ahmad & Nusrat, 2022).

Legislations, Policies, and Interventions for Protecting Children

Both international and national legislations underline the importance of protecting the rights and well-being of children and emphasize the rights and protection of children, including street children, focusing on their welfare and access to fundamental rights and amenities. Although the absence of data on street children leads to ineffective policies and ad hoc actions, prolonging many rights breaches that propel children onto the streets and persist even once they are there, a worry shared by all states (CSC, 2019).

In 2017, for the first time, children living on the streets were officially recognized as entitled entities under the Convention on the Rights of the Child when the Committee on the Rights of the Child adopted General Comment No. 21 on Children in Street situations, offering nation-states guidelines on how to safeguard children in street settings with the same respect for their human rights as any other child under their jurisdiction (CSC, 2019).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is a vital piece of the international legal structure for shielding children's rights. Many of the CRC's articles-articles 2, 6, 7, 19, 24, 28, 29, 32, 33, 34, 37, and 40 deal with the circumstances surrounding children who live on the streets. The protection of street-involved children is also aided by other international instruments, such as the UN Trafficking Protocol, International Standards on Juvenile Justice (2007), International Standards on Alternative Care of Children (2010), dealing with child labor, juvenile justice, and alternative care of children (CSC & Plan, 2011). International Labour Organization's Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (C138) and Worst Forms Convention (C182) restrict and prohibit various forms of child labor, aiming to eliminate the most hazardous child labor (Mia et al., 2022; CSC & Plan, 2011).

Regulatory frameworks for protecting destitute children in Bangladesh include the Children Act 2013, the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, the Penal Code of 1860, and the Women and Children Repression Prevention (Special Provisions) Act 2000. The Children Act 2013 aims to safeguard children's rights, where street children are not explicitly addressed and are often overlooked. This act replaced the Children Act 1974 and aligns with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It established children's desks in police stations, a Child Welfare Board, and juvenile courts. It also set the minimum age of criminal responsibility at nine years and introduced penalties for those who engage in child labor. The government of Bangladesh formulated several action plans and policies, including the National Action Plan for Children, the National Children Policy, and efforts to combat child labor and trafficking (Wahedi, 2012; Mia et al., 2022). Despite theoretical rights, the actual situation shows that they are denied many fundamental freedoms. The

earlier study emphasizes the importance of understanding and addressing street children's rights violations and calls for better policies and legal measures to protect them (Mia & Islam, 2021).

Study says 84% of children have never heard of rehabilitation centers (UNICEF & BBS, 2023). The notable part of those who are aware of rehabilitation facilities are unwilling to join owing to a loss of independence, stringent restrictions and regulations, and the failure to visit street peers. Bangladesh has limited government and non-governmental involvement in addressing street child issues. The government operates rehabilitation centers and participates in projects aimed at assisting street children, while organizations like World Vision Bangladesh, UNICEF, Aparajeyo Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Street Child Foundation, LEEDO, Ahsania Mission Children City, JAAGO Foundation, Street Children Activist Network, Bangladesh Street Child Organization, Mojar School, and Apon Foundation are enthusiastically working to support and advance the lives of street children (Commonwealth Law Review Journal, 2020).

In examining the existing literature on street children and child protection in Bangladesh, it became evident that while considerable research had shed light on the challenges faced by this vulnerable group, significant gaps remained. The research conducted thus far had illuminated the multifaceted nature of street children's lives, their struggles, and the various protection risks they encounter daily. Previous studies had stressed the immense challenges street children face in the capital, however, critical gaps in research concerning the Child Protection situation of street children in Cox's Bazar exist that required further exploration.

Chapter III: Methodology

This Section illustrated the research methodology for identifying the child protection situation in Cox's Bazar. The following chapter discussed the research approach, research site, research participants, data collection methods, procedure and analysis, trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and study limitations.

Research Approach and Design

This research administered a qualitative approach to deeply explore the child protection situation of street children in Cox's Bazar. Qualitative research is ideal for revealing a complex and detailed understanding of an issue, as it allows researchers to uncover rich experiences and perceptions of the research problem (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Qualitative research involves studies examining relationships, activities, events, or materials (Fraenkel et al., 2011) using non-numerical data like text, video, or audio to grasp views, deeper understanding and expand research ideas (Bhandari, 2023). So, employing qualitative design, this study inspected street children's perception, child protection risks, and the interventions that required a comprehensive understanding of the current context.

Research Site

Qualitative researchers study natural phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), interpreting them through people's meanings to understand social phenomena in natural settings and gaining insights into experiences, perceptions, and behaviors (Agius, 2013). This research occurred in a natural setting in Cox's Bazar, focusing on areas where street children are predominantly found. The researcher reached street children and parents through community volunteers or CBO working with street kid to ensure familiarity with

the context, talked and observed directly as suggested by Cresswell & Poth (2017). The researcher also directly interviewed the four KI in their workplace.

Research Participants

Creswell (2012) defined a population as the whole group of people, objects, or events a researcher is interested in investigating, from which a sample is drawn and to which generalizations are made based on pertinent trait or criteria. This study's participants were street children aged 6 to 8 in Cox's Bazar. Also, the study involved parents of street children within similar demographics and representatives from government (GO) and non-government (NGO) agencies and community-based organizations (CBOs) as key informants. A total of 14 participants participated, including 8 street children (4 boys and 4 girls included in interview participants), 2 parents (1 male, 1 female), and 4 Key informants (1 from CBO, 1 from NGO, 2 from GO). The inclusion criteria were-

- Street children of 6-8 years old
- Parents from street families or of street children
- Key informants who have leading positions in the context and are experienced in working with disadvantaged children, including street children in the study location
- The eagerness of participants to share the information

Table 1

Research Participants

Participants	Children	Parents	Key Informants	Total
Boy	4	-	-	4
Girl	4	-	-	4
Male	-	1	3	4
Female	-	1	1	2
Total	8	2	4	14

Participants Selection Procedure

The study utilized purposive sampling to select all the participants. To capture a range of viewpoints in qualitative research, Patton (2015) emphasizes the significance of purposeful sampling, a method commonly employed in qualitative research to identify and explore data related to the research interest, involving both individuals and sites, to comprehend the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). This study employed purposive sampling to select street children within the specified age group and parents within similar circumstances. Representation of both genders was ensured during the sampling process. Key informants, including personnel from CBOs, NGOs, and government agencies, were chosen based on their expertise and experience in working with street children.

Data Collection Method and Tool

Method:

The study utilized various methods such as IDI, KII, informal conversation and observation to gather data, as suggested by Creswell and Poth (2017), to build common themes through inductive reasoning in qualitative research.

Informal Conversation. Informal conversations are a valuable method in qualitative research, providing a naturalistic and context-rich data source that can be used in everyday settings and complement more formal methods like interviews. (Swain & King, 2022; Swain & Spire, 2020). In this study, this method was used with 8 street children as the street situation was dynamic and changeable, and this method helped to build trust and rapport with them, providing flexibility to adapt and capture spontaneous insights.

In-depth Interview. In-depth interviews (IDI) apply open-ended questions to elicit information about a participant's opinions, knowledge, logic, and emotional reactions to a

specific issue (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Interviews were conducted with 2 parents. These semi-structured interviews enabled an in-depth look at their experiences, perceptions, and insights regarding the inquiry. Key Informant Interviews (KII) are conducted with experts who are knowledgeable about the issue being investigated and chosen for their role in the setting. These experts provide insights into the problem's nature and recommend solutions (World Bank, 2020). In this study, 4 KIIs were done, including 2 personnel from government officials of the DSS, 1 from NGO, and 1 person from a CBO.

Observation. Creswell (2012, p. 213) describes Observation as the process of acquiring unstructured, first-hand facts at a research location by observing individuals and their surroundings. Non-participant observation is when a researcher watches and notes actions without interacting with or participating in the activities occurring in the studied setting (Gay et al., 2015). In this study, 4 children, including 2 boys and 2 girls, were observed by the researcher (non-participant observer), which allowed real-time adaptation and exploration, helped her get non-verbal cues and comprehend emotions and interactions.

Table 2

Data Collection Method

Research Question	Technique	Participants
1. How do street children perceive their street life in Cox's Bazar?	Informal Conversation	Street Children
	IDI	Parents
	Observation	Street Children
2. What are the Child Protection risks experienced by street children?	Informal Conversation	Street Children
	IDI	Parents
	KII	GO, NGO, CBO personnel
3. What interventions are in place to address the risks of street children in Cox's Bazar?	Observation	Street Children
	Informal Conversation	Street Children
	IDI	Parents
	KII	GO, NGO, CBO personnel

Tool:

The researcher developed the tools based on research questions, i.e., Informal Conversation, IDI, KII guidelines, and observation checklist. All the tools were piloted with samples of all types of research participants, street children, parents, and key informants to check if the questions and instructions were clear and readily comprehensible to the participants and feasible within the anticipated time frame. After completing the field testing and identifying the ambiguous item, the tools were refined, adjusted, and finalized. In the process, all these tools were reviewed by the experts from the academic committee.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were gathered by in-person interaction. This involved building rapport with participants to create a comfortable environment for sharing their experiences. Informal conversations were arranged in a gender-segregated manner where 4 boy and 4 girl street children participated. At first, the researcher communicated with a known community-based organization working with street children or community volunteers who lived near the research site and made a schedule for arranging these gender-segregated informal conversations with the specified age group's street children. Before conducting informal interviews and during field testing, the researcher visited the site to become familiar with the children, parents, and environment. Each conversation took place for 45-60 minutes. Consent was taken for participation before data collection. Children could choose whether they wanted to talk in front of others (adults, caregivers, siblings, or peers) or not. Interviews were conducted with 2 parents who were communicated earlier with the help of the community volunteer to get consent and set a schedule. The key informants were initially contacted over the phone to fix the schedule, and the consent form was emailed in

advance. In both cases, the interview time was around 40-75 minutes. The researcher posed the question warmly and informally to make the data-gathering process more casual, spontaneous, and conversational. For instance, the researcher added the phrases “In your opinion” or “How do you see or feel” or “Think about you or the children of your age” while asking different participants questions. Moreover, 4 street children (2 boys and 2 girls) were observed for 4-6 hours daily, focusing on their daily activities, and working areas following the observation protocol. These children were informed about the purpose of the observation, and the researcher obtained assent from them and consent from their guardians, either parents or other adults working with/living with them. Audiotapes, images, and field notes were used to record the data with the prior consent of participants.

Data Management and Analysis

Cresswell (2012) stresses the importance of understanding text and visuals for qualitative data analysis, enabling researchers to formulate answers to research questions. Qualitative data were carefully managed and organized, including observation notes, interview transcripts, and recordings. Content analysis was employed to identify and interpret recurring themes within the data. Several steps followed the process.

Figure 1

Data Analysis Process



At first, collected data was transcribed and then categorized based on different methods (Informal Conversation, IDI, KII, Observation) used in the study; secondly, categorized data and field notes were reviewed numerous times, and the researcher underlined the data that resembled directly with the research questions; thirdly, the researcher identified different themes and issues emerging from the reviewed data; fourthly, during identification of themes and sub-themes, researcher merged own thoughts and ideas with the data sense and its relevance to the research problem and recorded the interpretation on separate paper; finally, researcher presented the data by summarizing the main points under each theme and providing direct citations from the data. Excerpts from interview transcripts and descriptions from observation notes were used. Citations under relevant themes were added to support additional information.

Table 3

Generating and categorizing initial codes, sub-themes, and theme

Transcription extract	Codes	Sub-theme	Theme
“When I do body massage to tourists, they ask me to do it well; otherwise, they will not give me money. Sometimes they give less money.” (Informal Conversation#5, 07.12.2023)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child labor • Unfair payment • Economic exploitation 	Exploitation	Child protection risk

The selected qualitative methodology enabled an in-depth exploration and provided rich, contextual insights into street children’s and key stakeholders’ experiences, contributing to an immersed understanding of their lives and the risks they encounter.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative research is trustworthy when reliable, valid, and ethically conducted, and researchers use various techniques to verify their perceptions, ensuring they are not misinformed and accurately observing and hearing their findings (Fraenkel et al., 2011). In

a qualitative study, the techniques that can be used to enhance validity and reliability or trustworthiness are triangulation, member checking, peer review, researcher's reflexivity, sufficient participation in data collection, maximum variety, audit trail, and thick description (Fraenkel et al., 2011; Merriam & Grennier, 2019).

This study used data triangulation, member checking, researchers' reflexivity, and audit trials to ensure trustworthiness. Multiple sources such as street children, parents, and key informants and different data collection methods such as Informal conversation, IDI, KII, and Observation were employed. Member checking was done with 6 participants (2 street children, 2 parents, and 2 key informants) by summarizing the data immediately after the interview and providing chances to correct the interpretation. The researcher's reflexivity was noted down after conversations with the participants. For instance, due to previous working experience with street children, the researcher had some prior thoughts about the research problem, and during 4 conversations with children and key informants, the researcher found herself emotionally connected with them. An audit trial was done to ensure the research's credibility. All the methods and tools, such as Informal conversation guidelines, IDI guidelines, KII guidelines, and Observation guidelines, were designed based on the research questions, ideas from literature, and documents and approved by the expert faculty of BRAC IED. After tool development, necessary changes were made after field tests. After data collection, the researcher thoroughly read the collected data and field notes, generated themes, and issues, and then wrote a discussion chapter comparing findings with previous studies. Throughout the process, the researcher was supervised by an expert faculty.

Ethical Issues

Researchers must adhere to ethical guidelines to ensure good research practices, including respect for participants, informed consent, conflict of interest, confidentiality, anonymity, reporting back, trustworthiness of research, and translation issues, while also considering the responsibilities of their audience, society, and academic communities (Mirza et al., 2023).

The study prioritized all the ethical considerations. Approval was taken to conduct this study from the academic committee of BRAC IED, BRAC University, and it was aligned with the rules. Participation of street children, parents, and key informants was voluntary. Researchers primarily obtained consent through community-based volunteers. Before collecting data, researchers clearly explained the study's purpose, management, and consequences again and obtained final assent and consent from the participants. Considering the street children's age, vulnerability, and potential limited understanding, the researcher took assent from the street children and obtained consent from parents or legal guardians or the mentioned community-based volunteers to avoid any physical, social, and emotional harm. The researcher also maintained the interview protocol written in the approved guidelines and used the local dialect and necessary explanation if needed. The researcher was careful about bias and beliefs and ensured equal participation. Participants' respect, dignity, and privacy were protected, and their right to withdraw at any moment was described. All the identities were kept confidential; for example, during data collection, code numbers were used for identification, and presentation was done through codes. The researcher considered the previous experience of interviewing people of different ages and was an active listener and empathetic during the interview. Building

rapport and trust through friendly and non-threatening interactions was prioritized to ensure child participants' safety and well-being, and conversations were conducted in a safe, familiar environment, ensuring the children felt comfortable and at ease during discussions. Children were allowed to take as much time as needed to talk, and the questions were asked in a child-friendly way and were repeated when needed. Furthermore, street children were observed at different times (day and night) to understand and document the scenario appropriately. Above all, the researcher kept regular contact with the supervisor to ensure all the ethical issues were followed appropriately.

Limitations of the Study

Study limitations are natural (AJE, n.d.) which refer to the design or methodology that influenced the interpretation of research findings, limiting generalization, application to practice, and utility of findings due to initial design choices, internal and external validity methods, or unexpected challenges that arose during the study (USC Libraries, n.d.).

There were some constraints in carrying out this study. As street children were busy doing their work (moving, selling, or collecting materials) on the street, conversations were sometimes distracted. Due to children's very young age and limited language skills or vocabularies, they might have expressed only some of their protection concerns. Street children who talked in front of their parents sometimes were interrupted by their parents. Reaching young street children through the community-based organization as planned was challenging due to their irregular activities and focus on children above 10 years old. Young street children in contact with the law or in conflict with the law and those who went through the rehabilitation process and continued or discontinued later could be included, which might have helped to get more insights.

Chapter IV: Results/Findings & Discussion

This chapter is discussed in two segments. In the 'Results' part, findings or results emerged from the informal conversations, IDI, KII, and observations done with 14 participants are presented to provide an overview of street children's perceptions, child protection risks, and related interventions in Cox's Bazar. All data were categorized into 3 main themes and 16 sub-themes to illustrate the child protection situation of street children in Cox's Bazar. In the 'Discussion' part, findings are discussed thoroughly considering the responses, observations, field notes, and researcher's reflections and compared with the existing literature. Lastly, a conclusion and recommendations obtained from the study.

Results/Findings

The results from the data were merged, and described in themes and sub-themes.

Demographic Information

Among the 14 respondents, eight were street children aged 6-8 years including 4 boys and 4 girls; 2 were parents aged 26 years including 1 male and 1 female; and the 4 were key informants aged 35-50 including 3 male and 1 female. All the street children were out of school and engaged in earning money by any means. Neither of the parents has any academic background; one worked as a garland seller in the beach areas, and the other was a homemaker. All the key informants except one had a Master's degree; two were doing non-government jobs, while the other two were government job holders. All of them had experience in working with street children (see demographic information table in Anex-1).

Theme 1: Street Children's Perception of Their Street Life in Cox's Bazar

This research aimed to explore street children's perception of their street life. The first theme intended to discover street children's perceptions by understanding their

experiences and aspirations collected through informal conversations, observations, and interviews with parents. This theme was divided into several sub-themes to learn about their daily life activities, causes and feelings of being on the street, and future aspirations.

Sub-theme 1.1: Daily Life. Data from conversations, interviews and observation showed that the street children in Cox's Bazar lived near the beach points- Kalatoli, Shugondha, Labonee, Kabita Chattar, Samati para, Nazirar Tek dried fish villages, Peshkar Para, Kutubdia Para, bus and train stations. Daily life and activities varied for the *children of the street* and *children on the street*. *Children of the street* who don't return home at night mostly sleep near hotels or hotel balconies, restaurants, under trees, around government buildings, police boxes of beach points, and on beach sand. On the other hand, *children on the street* who return home at night used to stay with family members in tin shed "semi-paka" houses or temporary thatched houses. These were tiny houses of one or two rooms and few raw toilets outside.

On this cold morning (7 am), 2 girls and 5 boys of different ages are sleeping, covering themselves in individual sacks in front of the police box. Girls have blankets, but the boys have only the sack to cover up. (Field note, 9.12.23)

These *children of the street* woke up on their own time or were woken up by the authority person of the police box or security guards of the hotel yelling at them. Most *children on the street* used to wake up around 6 a.m. Then, if they had money preserved from the previous day, 'children of the street' bought snacks from nearby tea stalls. Otherwise, they didn't do breakfast. Both *children of the street* and *children on the street* couldn't have three full meals daily. Children said they could afford only 1-2 meals per day. They drink water from shops and most of them use public toilets around the beach area, paying 10 Tk during the daytime.

It's found that *children of the street* don't go to schools or madrasas in the morning and *children on the street* don't go to school regularly, but half of the participants found go to a nearby madrasa in the morning.

Street kids spend nearly 6-12 hours for earning purposes. They engage in begging, body massaging, collecting debris, horse riding, singing songs for tourists, collecting, scaling, and drying fish, pottering, and selling various things, including toy, garland, water, fish and materials made of shell, oyster, or pearl. Their daily income was around 200-500 BDT. Most street children have at least one friend with whom they play on the beach areas.

Sub-theme 1.2: Reasons/Factors Behind Choosing Street Life. No exact number of street children was found available in the study place. However, only some participants shared that the approximate number of children who sleep in the street at night was between 159 and 200, based on the previous survey data in 2018. This number fluctuated depending on the tourist season or off-season. The number of working children who spent significant time on the street was still being undetermined. Another key informant from government authority said that the number was 771 according to a survey conducted in 2015 where street children were found in various situations on the streets. The majority of participants agreed that the number of younger street children aged below 8 years was less than the number of street children aged above 8 years.

Several factors play a role in leading children toward street life. Low economic status is the prominent factor identified by most participants. Familial factors such as parental conflict, the separation between parents, polygamy, parental death, and parental sickness also led them to the streets. A child said, "My mother died of a heart attack. Then my father got married again and didn't come back" (Informal Conversation#5, 7.12.23).

Migration was found as another factor. Due to river erosion or natural disasters, families were relocated, and children came to the street. Some participants remarked that children from Rohingya camps were turning into street children, and the number is increasing.

Cox's Bazar's geographical location itself played as a factor. As a tourist hotspot, various income opportunities are generated for low-income people during the tourism season. Also, having a large coastal area, children and adults could earn from fishing and other sea resources. So, children ended up on the streets, or families sent them to the streets for extra income. Even after seeing the glitz and facilities of the tourist town, children from villages and different parts of the country had come here and started living on the streets. Other factors that provoked children to be on the street were lack of food, abusive behavior at home, a victim of trafficking, abandonment, and drug addiction.

Sub-theme 1.3: Feelings on Being on the Street. There had been mixed reactions and ambivalence among street children about being on the streets. Though most of them said they enjoyed being on the street, selling different things, and earning money, they also mentioned they were hurt being on the street in various ways. The majority of them said they felt sad about how others used to treat them. According to a child, “I don’t feel good. Police beat us” (Informal Conversation#6, 8.12.23). Almost all the children agreed they enjoyed street life while they played with their friends, peers, and siblings.

Few of them feel that being on the street wasn’t a good matter, as one stated, “It feels bad to be on the road. Because it's not good to be here” (Informal Conversation#8, 9.12.23). Few of them don’t like the work they used to do, and half said they worked due to parental influence. One child specified, “I like riding horses. I feel bad collecting iron”

(Informal Conversation#5, 7.12.23). Another child said, “I like to work but don't like to do body or head massage” (Informal Conversation#7, 9.12.23).

Sub-theme 1.4: Future Aspiration. Almost all the children spoke of their future dreams except one. They wanted to be or do something when they grew up. Most of the street children wanted to do better work to earn money. Some of them mentioned their willingness to work at construction sites, hotels, or restaurants, “I will do any job. Now I get 200-300 taka which I give to my grandmother” (Informal Conversation#5, 7.12.23).

Only a participant remained silent when asked about aspiration. A few of them wanted to start own tea stalls. Some children wanted only to continue their studies rather than specifying about any dream. Few children wanted to be teachers and doctors. Few of them also doubted their dream due to their situation, “I can't go to school if I work at the beach. How can I become a doctor if I can't study?” (Informal Conversation#7, 9.12.23). Most boys wanted to work in hotels, while no girl wanted to. Again, girls mostly shared their willingness to continue education, while boys didn't mention much about education. Few participants hoped to be in a better situation in the future.

Exploring street children's perceptions unveiled the diverse aspects of their everyday existence. Various obstructive factors influencing their family life were identified for their choice of street life, and they exhibited ambivalence, experiencing both pleasant and destructive emotions. Their aspirations revealed some kind of resilient spirit, striving for better opportunities in future life.

Theme 2: Child Protection Risks/Concerns Experienced by Street Children

Next to the street children's perceptions, this research sought to find out the child protection risks or concerns experienced by the street children. Hence, the second theme

aimed to identify child protection risks or concerns through informal conversations, observing the street children and interviewing the parents and key informants. The second theme was segregated into several sub-themes to understand different forms of violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect faced by street children (some images added in Annex-6).

Sub-theme 2.1: Child Protection Risks or Concerns. All the participants admitted that street children faced diverse forms of child protection risks at Cox's Bazar including violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation. One KI stated, "You will see many children lying on the road. They are living in different types of risk" (KII#3, 10.12.2023).

Sub-theme: 2.2 Violence. Every participant uncovered that street children, regardless of being 'children on the street' or 'children of the street', faced different types of violence in their surroundings, including physical, emotional, and sexual violence.

Physical Violence. Almost all street children experienced various physical violence, such as shaking, hitting, kicking, beating, pushing, and slapping. A child shared,

Those who are older there want to beat me sometimes..... During fish collection, when we boarded on the boat, the boatmen beat the children with sticks. Then, the children jump from the boat. I also jumped from the boat and swam away. (Informal Conversation#3, 28.11.2023)

Children shared that they were beaten, pushed away, and pinched by "Maroni" (adults work at a boat and someone like a dealer), "Kitkot" owner, and other adults. Parents and key informants also agreed that street children experienced some physical violence during their work at the beach. A parent shared, "Sometimes children are thrown from boats into the water" (IDI#2, 28.11.2023). According to a key informant, "They are also subjected to physical assault. Sometimes they don't understand because and sometimes, they get used to torture, which poses a big risk for them" (KII#4, 11.12.2023).

Emotional or Psychological Violence. All the street children shared they experienced emotional or psychological violence, such as insulting, hurting, scolding, scaring, coercing, threatening, humiliating, and degrading behavior from others. Key informants and parents also agreed about the emotional violence the street children faced. A child voiced as- “...and I don't like people insulting me..... I feel scared when “Maroni” comes to beat me” (Informal Conversation#2, 28.11.2023). Another girl shared, “Others take my collected fish forcibly..... I feel bad when boys cut my fish (collected) bag/polythene” (Informal Conversation #4, 05.12.2023). A key informant shared,

In neighborhood hotels or fruit shops, they work to unload or load goods from fruit carts. People or shopkeepers often abuse these children by using their parents' names, which is embarrassing for them. They repeatedly hurt them by asking about their birth. It undermines their dignity. (KII#1, 8.12.2023)

Socially Stigmatization, Discrimination, and Isolation. Street children, parents, and key informants agreed that street children were stigmatized and discriminated socially. A key informant reflected, “The police were also beating the child while talking to him. When I questioned, he said that they were spoiled and didn’t know manners” (KII#3, 10.12.2023). Another participant shared,

Many others misbehave with them unnecessarily because of previous bitter experiences. In the tone of bullying, in the tone of indifference, or by beating and insulting the child, they possess such an attitude and judgment that a street child means a thief, a pickpocket, or a robber. As a result, innocent street children are often abused. (KII#1, 8.12.2023)

While street children were asked to share about the people who help them if they face any problems, almost all the children disagreed on finding any helper during their needs on the street and agreed on being isolated from others. A child reflected- “No one helps me when I am in danger or trouble” (Informal Conversation#2, 28.11.2023). Another

stated, “I can't sleep with my friends. They have blankets. I don't have. So, they don't allow me to sleep with them” (Informal Conversation #6, 8.12.2023).

Sexual Violence. A few of the young street kids were found to face sexual violence, whereas all the key informants mentioned street children, especially adolescents, are vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation. One girl child stated,

An uncle asked me to go with him to the garden once. I chased him away with a brick. This happened 3-4 times; people asked me to go with them. I didn't go...Another day, a Kitkot owner uncle offered me 20 tk. to go with him, but I didn't go. I ran to home. (Informal Conversation #7, 9.12.2023)

Sub-theme 2.3: Abuse. The majority of the street children faced certain levels of abuse from parents and peers, as shared by the participants and also observed.

Physical Abuse. Physical abuse included beating, hair-pulling, slapping and hitting by the caregivers or parents. A 6-year-old child shared, “If I go home without collecting any fish, my mother beats me or pulls my hair.... I have to work against my will. My mother forced me to come here” (Informal Conversation #4, 05.12.2023). One of the parent participants shared, “My son is very naughty. I beat him with brooms that much that a new broom doesn't last longer than 5 days. From childhood, he has been beaten a lot for his bad habits” (IDI#2, 28.11.2023). In observation, it was found that a girl aged 4/5 years was doing heavy work as directed by her mother, such as pouring water by pulling a tubewell and carrying it (Field note, 28.11.2023).

Emotional Abuse. Emotional abuse included scolding, dishonoring, shaming, and intimidating. A child said, “My parents beat me. My father used to name-calling and say bad words to me” (Informal Conversation#3, 28.11.2023).

Sub-theme 2.4: Exploitation. Data revealed that street children were being exploited in several ways, including physically, economically, sexually, and politically.

Child Labor. The most common form of exploitation faced by street children was child labor. They were begging, selling, fishing, entertaining, and working in fish markets, shops, hotels, and restaurants. A child said, “I have been working as a fish collector for two years. (Informal Conversation#2, 28.11.2023). According to a key informant,

Those involved in child labor are at great risk; those involved in beach peddling or hotel business are at risk. Many children are engaged in labor in the dried fish village and go fishing with fathers by boat. Parents are exploiting children due to their economic incapacity, using them as a source of income. (KII#2, 7.12.2023)

During field visits, their sufferings were observed-

After collecting fish from the sea, an 8-year-old street child carried heavy weights like a bucket of fish and a fishnet. He tried to share some weight with his younger sister, but she couldn't help. The siblings stopped every few minutes while walking and carried away the fish. (Field note, 11.12.23)

Economic Exploitation. The children involved in labor were deprived of their fair pay, and sometimes, police or security people asked for money from them. A child shared, “Sometimes I’ve to pay money to police to get permission to work on the beach.” (Informal Conversation #1, 25.11.2023). A parent stated, “The police beat the children when they go for selling. We have to pay the police a bribe for work permission” (IDI#1, 25.11.20.23).

Though the authority prohibited body massaging, some street children were doing it, and they used to entertain tourists by singing songs and riding horses. A child shared, “When I do body massaging, the tourists ask to do it well. Otherwise, they would not give me money. Sometimes they give less money” (Informal Conversation#5, 07.12.2023).

Sexual Exploitation. Children and parents did not mention sexual exploitation for the young street kids, but one parent shared that the older children were usually victims of this type of exploitation. Key informants also agreed that adolescents were victims of sexual exploitation mostly, although a few young street kids might also witness it.

Other Exploitations. The key informants shared that street children were being trafficked or abducted. Some also shared that politically involved personnel used street children to create unrestful or conflict situations in exchange for a small payment. A key informant stated, “They are being victimized by gangs, and due to political instability, they are being used for political purposes in various situations.” (KII#4, 11.12.2023)

Sub-theme 2.5: Neglect. All the street children were found to be neglected in different ways: abandonment, denial of basic needs and rights as citizens, lacking supervision, etc.

Physical Neglect. All of them lacked basic amenities such as shelter, food, clothing, treatment, hygiene, and sanitation facilities. A child reflected, “If there is food in the house, I will eat otherwise I don’t.....A few days ago, I got dizzy and fell” (Informal Conversation#5, 7.12.23). A parent stated, “Several months back, he almost broke his arm by jumping. He could not get treatment due to lack of money” (IDI#2, 28.11.2023).

According to a key informant,

They suffer from skin and seasonal diseases such as cold and phlegm during the cold season. Young children cannot rest or sleep properly without a good sleeping space. It hinders their development. There is no good defecation system. They have to pay to use public toilets...They eat open food or what they can get, and because of using unclean hands, they are often sick and malnourished. (KII#1, 8.12.2023)

Emotional neglect. Street children were found emotionally neglected as one of the children shared that after his mother died, his father had left and married another, and it was painful for him to think about them (Informal Conversation#5, 7.12.23).

Lack of Legal Documents. Lack of legal identity was another protection concern for street children. Half the street kids who participated in informal conversations were unaware of birth registration. After the Rohingya influx, birth registration had been suspended for a particular time in Cox's Bazar, and key informants said financially low-

income families neglected the birth registration process. Due to a lack of birth registration and legal identity, they couldn't avail of other benefits and faced various challenges in accessing services, even for basic ones (KII#4, 11.12.2023).

Inadequate Supervision. The *children of the street* were found unaccompanied and living, roaming, and working here and there with no adult supervision. The *children on the street* remained inadequately supervised most of the day and almost unsupervised during their working hours. A child shared, “I got lost 1 or 2 times before. My mother couldn't find me for several hours” (Informal Conversation#3, 28.11.2023). A KI shared,

Many children are in parentless care; their mother or father may get married somewhere else, parents may be separated, and the child may be the 4/5th number in the family. But this child is at greater safety risk. (KII#2, 7.12.2023)

Due to parental mental health issues, street children were being neglected and stayed with no supervision from a legal guardian. In this study, one of the street children's parents had a mental illness for which he was living on the street the whole day and earning money on his own (Informal Conversation#8, 9.12.23).

Educational Neglect. Despite aspiring for education, most of the street children who took part in this study were out of any educational institute; all of them were found not going or continuing education in formal school, though half were found irregularly involved with madrasa. One parent shared, “I don't care about this boy's future; he only likes to roam outside and collect fish” (IDI#2, 28.11.20.23). Another parent shared, “My child's name has been cut from the madrasa register, too, due to inability to pay the money” (IDI#1, 25.11.20.23). One KI stated, “They do not get the opportunity to develop talent, deprived of academic skill development. Their physical and mental development is affected. Where their development is hindered, their protection is hindered, their safety net crumbles” (KII#4, 11.12.2023).

Sub-theme 2.6: Risks due to Natural Disasters and Environmental Hazards.

Street children were detected with protection risk due to natural and environmental hazards.

Risk from Natural Disasters. Disasters caused displacement of the street children and their families. On one hand, when the disaster hit each time, *children on the street* had to leave their temporary homes near the sea and hilly areas, or a few of them stayed at risk at their homes. After the disasters, their home and belongings got destroyed every time. On the other hand, *children of the street* had no safe place to stay other than the hotel's outside balcony or under-constructed building. Few of them mentioned renting a room during severe storms. A child stated, "When it rains, I have nowhere to take shelter. I stay like this. Other children don't want to keep me either" (Informal Conversation#6, 8.12.2023). Parents and key informants also shared about street children's suffering - "During the rainy season and winter, they suffer more" (KII#1, 10.12.2023).

Risk from Environmental Hazards. It was visible that street worked and stayed in hazardous places mostly without any adult supervision. Also, their sleeping places were unhealthy and unsafe. Almost all the children said they got injured or fell sick while they worked on the street, such as feeling dizzy, having body pain, headache, rashes, skin disease, scabies, burning due to hot sun, cuts due to sharp materials or debris, broken body parts due to accidents, etc. One child shared, "When I go to collect fish, I get dizzy and headache because of the hot sun" (Informal Conversation#2, 28.11.2023). Parents expressed apprehension about their children working in an unsafe environment. One parent shared,

My child is at risk of falling into the water. Small children jump into the boat. Big boats can come and push. I worry about him when he delays. Many children go there to find fish. Water waves can wash them away. (IDI#2, 28.11.2023)

Some of them shared they don't have safe areas to play: "There is no nice playing place here" (Informal Conversation#3, 28.11.2023). Key informants added that the children were injured and found as victims of road accidents several times.

Sub-theme 2.7: Negative Coping Mechanism. Street children were found adopting negative habits to cope with their harsh reality. They were involved with substance use even at early ages and developed aggressive behavior and attitudes to tackle challenging situations. The observation found that the 8-year-old boy smokes with a group of 5 street children (Field note, 9.12.2023). A parent stated, "Some children are taken out of the house by the parent or stepmother, then they smoke cigarettes or take drugs. They take gum (a chemical used for shoes)" (IDI#1, 25.1120.23).

Sub-theme 2.8: At-Risk Concerns or Future Concerns. Street children, parents, and key informants shared their concerns for the future due to current street life. Few children talked about losing opportunities to access education, lacking access to daily living and necessities, and suffering from sickness. Parents shared they had no hope for their children. Participants also added they were at risk of- developing risky behaviors and other child protection concerns such as abduction, trafficking, sexual violence, involvement with drugs, prostitution, gangs, conflict with the law, etc., in the future. One parent shared,

My son mischievously kicks, slaps, or throws sand at small children as they cross the street. Later, others come and complain..... If children work outside, they become naughty. They become disobedient and learn to steal. Some children over 10 years of age smoke cigarettes and take weed. My child may also be at risk. The night scenario is bad here. Children are abducted and killed at night, especially children aged 10-16 years. (IDI#2, 28.1120.23)

One of the key informants shared, "In the case of male street children, they somehow get by, but in the case of girls, they end up in prostitution" (KII#3, 10.12.2023).

Another key informant shared,

It is seen that despite having a family and address, the children fall prey to gangs and get involved in drugs, or they have to live on the streets to get drugs. We have served many children who consume gum, readily available here..... Street children are being used to transport drugs. (KII#4, 11.12.2023)

Data collected from informal conversations, interviews with parents and key informants, and observation show that both the *children on the street* and *children of the street* in Cox's Bazar face various types of physical, emotional, or psychological, sexual violence and abuses from adults, other street adolescents, peers, and parents in their daily lives. These young kids are also being neglected, exploited, socially stigmatized, discriminated against, and isolated. Due to their circumstances, they are exposed to harmful coping mechanisms and are at risk of additional child protection concerns in the future. Though *children on the street* have family connections at a certain level, and their caregivers are somewhat concerned about these young kids, they are helpless to support and protect their children because of a lack of awareness and financial incapability.

Theme 3: Interventions to Address the Risks of Street Children in Cox's Bazar

Along with the perception and child protection risks, this study intended to identify existing initiatives and support to protect street children in Cox's Bazar. Therefore, the third theme explored the existing supports for street children, which was further divided into sub-themes to find out the existing services, expected support and services, challenges in providing services, and necessary measures to improve the child protection situation.

Sub-theme: 3.1 Existing Services. Almost all the children and parents shared that there was no service for them. It's found that they mostly didn't know about any services and couldn't name any services provided to them other than mentioning a few individual supports. However, a key informant shared that, according to the Children Act 2013, government service was provided for them under the 'underprivileged children' category.

Accordingly, few government services were available, but more is needed. The Department of Social Services (DSS) worked with district administration and the police department. As per the Children Act, DSS helps children who run away from their families return to their parents or extended family members if they agree. They check the family's environment through social workers or volunteers and, if appropriate, return to them. If no other way is available, DSS connects them to suitable institutions like care, rehabilitation, and training centers for impoverished children. There were two government rehabilitation centers, Sheikh Russel Children's Training and Rehabilitation Centres for boys and girls, where vulnerable children from 6-18 years could stay and study. These centers also worked as one-stop centers where children with vulnerability or protection concerns were brought for support. 16 types of underprivileged and endangered children were provided services by social workers. A participant shared,

There were two units- Case Management and Crisis Management. For any child under crisis management was undertaken for a risk assessment. If the risk assessment required long-term services, they were taken into case management. If there was an opportunity to return the child to the family, they sent the child to the family. A child between 6 and 18 who comes here can initially stay for 2 years. If needed, they could stay longer with the permission of the District Steering Committee and the District Commissioner. (KII#4, 11.12.2023)

Regarding non-government services, parents and children disagreed about any available services. Key informants—said there is no specific non-government service for them currently. Some children may get irregular or one-time support services from non-government agencies and voluntary organizations. 'Nongor' is a non-government organization helping in the rehabilitation of drug-addicted children referred to them.

During disasters, some street children and their families were taken to cyclone shelters; however, after returning to their living place, they didn't get any other government or non-government services to repair their destroyed houses. Parents seemed to mistrust

the government and non-government services. However, a few children said that sometimes they got support from individual people in the form of food, money, or clothes.

Sub-theme 3.2: Expected Support and Services. When street children were asked about their expected support, most uttered about basic needs such as education, treatment, housing, and toilet, while one didn't say anything. Some of them wanted a good play area and toys, and some of them wanted to get help for getting a better job. All the parents asked for schools free of cost for their children and working opportunities for them so that they could earn money to run their families. They also wanted better shelter, health facilities, and vocational training for parents as they lacked literacy skills. A parent stated, “It will be better if there is a good govt. school here. A hospital will be helpful, too. As our living is uncertain, we wish to have a place in the govt.’s shelter project” (IDI#2, 28.11.2023).

Sub-theme 3.3: Challenges in Providing Services. Several challenges were identified. There is a lack of adequate information about street children. Though somewhat government services were available there, and all key informants agreed about the lack of funds, resources, and workforce. No specific government project for street children exists in Cox's Bazar, and the non-government services were mainly community-based projects targeted to vulnerable children, not specifically targeting street children. A key informant shared that due to inaccurate data and unknown situations, bringing them under government services was a major challenge (KII#2, 10.12.2023).

Previously, there were some NGOs and voluntary organizations that served these street children, but due to a lack of resources, including human and funds, those were closed or doing irregular activities. One key informant shared, “The current measures for street

children are limited to meetings and seminars.... Various organizations say they are working, but that is not visible” (KII#3, 10.12.2023).

Lack of internal and external coordination among various stakeholders, such as government and non- government organizations or actors is another challenge shared by all the key informants as reflected by one key informant, “Coordination is important here. For example, there are specific roles of social service, judiciary management, police, private or voluntary organizations, and other people in society which are not coordinated” (KII#2, 10.12.2023). Although government has rehabilitated centers separately for boys and girls; due to a lack of human resources and technical capacity, they struggle to reach and address the street children’s needs.

Due to a lack of information and birth registration certificates, street children failed to get access to education and other services. Most key informants agreed on difficulties related to mainstreaming the street children. They said that sometimes street children didn’t want to stay in rehabilitation centers because of the habit of their independent street life, drug addiction, or lack of a friendly environment in the rehabilitation center. The other participant argued that the rehabilitation centers lacked proper management and open space for children’s play, and sometimes they faced humiliated behavior.

Sub-theme 3.4: Necessary Measures to Improve the Child Protection Situation. Participants of KII shared about the possible approaches to improve the child protection situation in Cox’s Bazar. They focused on long-term solutions rather than short-term or temporary initiatives. Comprehensive information on street children must be collected and recorded as shared by the informants. The coordination between government and non-government organizations needed to be strengthened. One key informant

suggested developing a common online platform where information on every organization working for underprivileged children can be preserved. This will help to understand the situation and identify the service gaps (KII#4, 11.12.2023).

They also suggested increasing institutional support such as rehabilitation or accommodation centers for street children, either by government or non-government initiatives or joint initiatives, where they can be rehabilitated for a long time, access their basic needs, and stay at night daily. The rehabilitation centers should be friendly places for street children where they don't have to face humiliation or feelings of confinement. A KI shared, “In any government land, where street children are mostly found, shelter homes can be built for a safe night stay..... Giving them shelter and food is fine, but they should also be allowed to play in the open air” (KII#3, 10.12.2023).

Key informants suggested undertaking specific projects for the family or community to which they belong. Efforts should be made to reintegrate street children with families or extended family members. A holistic approach involving community sensitization and parental counseling needed to be adopted. They emphasized the need to address bigotry in our social system, strengthen children's surrounding communities, and work with related individuals to ensure safe access for children returning to the community after institutional care. They also highlighted that schoolteachers and health workers should be sensitized to address the reasons behind a child's dropout and to ensure they receive necessary health care. (KII#4, 11.12.2023)

As one of the challenges is mainstreaming street children, the technical capacity or skills of government facilities and staff should be increased through technical support and professional training. Staff should be trained on understanding the psychological status of

the street children, how to counsel them to return from the street, and, most importantly, efforts needed to sensitize and increase the positive attitudes of the staff.

Participants suggested that a system should be in place where street children get access to online-based support to access their basic needs regardless of their identity. Besides, ensuring their basic needs, they suggested arranging vocational education and life skill programs, including awareness of drug addiction and daily coping mechanisms. One KI stated, “They should develop skills in arts and crafts or handicrafts so that they can earn money by doing risk-free work alongside their education” (KII#1, 8.12.2023).

Key informants also suggested finding a way out on how local resources can be used systematically to improve low-income households' economic situation, which might help reduce child labor. Lastly, it is found that more professional research is needed to understand the overall situation, the challenges, how to deal with them, and find a comprehensive and effective strategy.

Data from different sources indicate that a holistic strategy is required to improve the child protection situation of street children in Cox's Bazar. In this approach, keeping children in the centre, govt and non-government stakeholders need to work jointly to involve their surrounding communities. Alongside taking immediate measures to ensure their access to necessities, long-term initiatives such as strengthening the community and improving the economic situation are required to promote a protective environment for the children living “on” or “of” the street.

Discussion

The study aimed to explore the child protection situation of street children in Cox's Bazar. The findings revealed the perceptions of street children about their street life, child

protection risks, and existing interventions. The observations and learnings from the results had been discussed under all three themes.

Theme 1: Street Children's Perception of Their Street Life in Cox's Bazar

The study identified similarities and differences between the two categories of street children: *children of the street* and *children on the street*. The study result indicated that the *children of the street* were more flexible about their sleeping, eating, and working time than the *children on the street*. Street children mostly stay near the beach points, especially those crowded with tourists, beach area police boxes, bus stations, restaurants or hotel zones, fishing points, and dried fish villages near the sea in Cox's Bazar. *Children of the street* work in these places as well as sleep at night, and *children on the street*, after their work, return to their homes at night. They earned around 250-500 BDT daily, spending 6-12 working hours in the street. Children of both categories were found missing one or two full meals daily and needed to pay for safe drinking water and toilet facilities. A survey showed that street children frequently seek shelter in slums, with over half returning to sleep with their families; many stay in public spaces (BBS & UNICEF, 2023).

Street children of both categories in the study were out of school, and some of the *children on the street* were involved with Maktab/ Madrassa. The current number of street children is unidentified, and the latest data on *children of the street* in city areas found around 200 according to a 2018 survey where the number of young street children aged 6-8 years is less than the number of adolescents. This also agreed with the study led by BBS & UNICEF (2023), which found the majority of street children belonged to age 10-14.

The causes leading children to the streets are found to be versatile in this study, including low economic status, familial issues like conflict, separation, polygamy, death,

and sickness of parents, migration due to natural disasters, Rohingya refugee crisis, and geographic factors like tourist hotspots like Cox's Bazar. Other factors include lack of food, abusive behavior, trafficking, abandonment, and drug addiction. The appeal of urban amenities and separation from families also contributed to children living on the streets. This study highlights the complex interplay of economic, familial, and environmental factors that contribute to the phenomenon of street children. Other studies also found children ending up on the streets for various reasons, with poverty (Chowdhury et al., 2017) and hunger emerging as primary factors compelling them to adopt street life and rapid urbanization, driven by families seeking employment opportunities in urban areas, was another significant contributor (BBS & UNICEF, 2023).

Street children expressed mixed feelings about their lives on the streets, which agreed with other studies' findings (Myburgh et al., 2015; Rosemary & Cree, 2012). The emotions associated with street life vary, reflecting a complex and nuanced perspective among these children. While a majority enjoyed the experience of selling different items and earning money, there was a sense of pain or discomfort in various aspects. Many felt sad about how they were treated by others, including instances of violence and brutality. Despite this, the majority find joy in street life when interacting with friends, peers, and siblings. Some expressed a negative view of being on the street, stating that it felt terrible and was not a desirable situation. Additionally, some disliked the work they did, with some attributing their activities to parental influence.

Street children's future aspirations were diverse, with most expressing dreams of better work to earn money. Some expressed willingness to work in hotels or restaurants, while few other considered starting a tea stall. Some aimed to support themselves, their

family, grandparents, and others to continue their studies, like becoming teachers or doctors. However, some faced challenges due to daily work during school hours. Boys preferred working in hotels, while girls favored continuing education. Despite the challenging circumstances, street children hoped for a better future and improved life situations. Hai (2014) also found similar aspirations among street children in his study. Another study showed that despite facing challenging conditions, many children in street situations aspired to improve their lives in the future, and those not living with their families expressed a desire to reunite with their families by acquiring work skills, following parental guidance, avoiding negative habits, seeking forgiveness for wrongdoings, and showing a willingness to attend school (BBS & UNICEF, 2023).

Theme 2: Child Protection Risks/Concerns Experienced by Street Children

The study detected various forms of child protection risks including violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect faced by street children in Cox's Bazar. Other studies remarked that despite legal rights, children still face hardships like poverty, homelessness, mistreatment, neglect, diseases, inconsistent education access, and varying acceptance of legal frameworks (Mia & Islam, 2021).

Street children face physical violence, such as beating, shaking, kicking, hitting, and slapping, and emotional violence, such as humiliation, fright, insult, and threat, often during their working hours or on the street. Young children aged 6-8 years mostly witnessed physical and emotional violence, with sexual violence being less common. They were stigmatized and socially discriminated against, feeling isolated and helpless as they were unable to get help for their needs. In a study conducted in Sudan among street children

aged 6-18 years old, physical abuse was found to be the most prevalent (93%), followed by verbal, moral, and sexual abuse (Hassan and Satti, 2023).

Street children also experienced physical and emotional abuse by their parents and peers. They unwillingly had to work for their parents or caregivers, and if they couldn't work enough to earn, sometimes, they were beaten by their parents. The street kids were emotionally abused scolded or belittled by their parents and peers. A survey by BBS and UNICEF (2023) revealed that 63% of street children experienced abuse and harassment, with pedestrians, transport workers, and other children being the primary perpetrators. Some children reported instances of law enforcement beating them, extorting compensation, confiscating their belongings, and falsely accusing them of charges.

Street children were victims of exploitation including child labor, unfair payment, and extorting money by police or other security people. They were involved in degrading work such as begging, entertaining tourists by body massaging and singing, and risky and hard jobs like horse riding, collecting, scaling, and drying fish, and selling things for long hours despite extreme weather conditions. According to another study, street children are primarily involved in begging (Chowdhury et al., 2017). Another study said that a significant number participated in marginal occupations such as begging, street vending, picking remnants and edibles from dustbins, prostitution, and selling flowers to passersby (Hai, 2014) while another article agreed that in Cox's Bazar, the beach kids work at selling items, fishing, gathering driftwood, and offering visitors massages (Andrewday, 2015). The result indicated young street kids were less vulnerable to sexual exploitation than adolescent ones, and they were sometimes abused by political personnel for their interests.

Neglect is a usual child protection concern for street children, who suffer from caregivers' failure to fulfill their basic needs like shelter, food, clothing, medical care, education, and WaSH facilities. They lack legal identity due to birth registration and roam the street without adult supervision. Hai's (2014) study highlights the significant impact of parental absence, lack of close relationships, and absence of affection on the emotional well-being of street children, leading to constant fear and insecurity as they navigate the dangers of street living without guardianship or protection from hoodlums and miscreants.

Street children were found to adopt negative coping mechanisms such as substance use, smoking, and developing aggressive behavior. Another study also identified that children in street situations were adopting hazardous and addictive behaviors early in life, with drug abuse and smoking (BBS & UNICEF, 2023).

This study found that street children often stayed, worked, played, and slept in unsafe environments, with injuries and illnesses often occurring while working on the streets. They frequently walk long distances barefoot and are exposed to natural disasters like storms, heavy rain, and cyclones. These disasters caused temporary displacement and damage to dwelling places, leaving children vulnerable and often residing on outside balconies of hotels or restaurants. A study by Chowdhury et al. (2017) revealed that shelters like parks, stations, slums, markets, verandas, and terminals lack proper weather protection, exposing children to harmful elements like smoke, dust, sun, and rain, making their living conditions hazardous.

The study suggests that the current street life poses a significant risk of future protection concerns for young kids. They may lose opportunities to access education, lack access to daily living and necessities, and suffer from illness. They may develop risky

behaviors and be at risk of other child protection concerns such as abduction, trafficking, sexual violence, involvement with drugs, prostitution, gangs, conflict with the law, etc.

Theme 3: Interventions to Address the Risks of Street Children in Cox's Bazar

The study showed that street children and their parents in Cox's Bazar are unaware of the government and non-government services available to them, only mentioning a few one-time or individual assistance. The national survey also found that most of the street-living children didn't have information on rehabilitation centers (BBS & UNICEF, 2023). Street children and their parents wished to get their basic needs fulfilled. They also longed to have a good job to run their families and fulfill their needs.

The Department of Social Services (DSS) provides services for street children under "disadvantaged children" category, including case management and rehabilitation facilities. However, these initiatives face challenges due to limited resources, technical capacity, and human resources. Non-government support is limited to community-based activities and supporting government services, but these are insufficient to address street children's comprehensive needs. There is no specific government or non-government service in place to address these needs, and voluntary initiatives targeting these children were irregular due to various circumstances, including a shortage of human resources. According to the Department of Social Services portal (n.d.), the Bangladesh government has been found operating various child protection services under the social protection unit of DSS, in collaboration with international agencies like Capitation Grant for orphans, Child Sensitive Social Protection in Bangladesh (CSPB) to reduce violence, abuse, and neglect against children, and the Toll-free hotline- Child Helpline 1098 to protect them from violence, torture, and exploitation. Additionally, 13 “Sheikh Russel Shishu

Proshikshan O Punarbasan Kendra” aligned with the motto of “Not a single child sleeps on the street; Not a single child will live such inhuman life,” and 5 Centers for Training and Rehabilitation of Destitute Children were in place for rehabilitation of distressed children.

The study highlights challenges in providing services for street children, including lack of information, limited operational and technical resources and budgets for targeted projects, coordination between government and non-government organizations, inadequate management of rehabilitation facilities, and limited vocational opportunities. The absence of birth registration creates barriers to formal services, while an efficient workforce and psychosocial support services are needed to understand street children's emotional state and address their unwillingness and inconsistency during rehabilitation. There was a scarcity of studies explaining the service provider's challenges in supporting street children in Cox's Bazar or Bangladesh, while other studies in Bangladesh found coordination as a challenge (RAPID Bangladesh & UNICEF, 2020) and in abroad found that stakeholders struggle (Aransiola, 2013) to address street children's challenges due to insufficient skills, inadequate facilities, and simultaneous operations among various stakeholders.

Participants suggested several measures to address the child protection situation in Cox's Bazar, including documenting detailed information about street children and establishing a common online platform to preserve information on government and non-government organizations' activities for insolvent children which would help to strengthen the coordination among agencies and compare the needs and availability of services. This research also recommended suggested implementing both temporary and long-term institutional care for street children, enabling them to access basic needs and long-term rehabilitation, improving the management system and promoting a more child-friendly

environment in existing rehabilitation centers. Another study similarly underscored the urgency of government and organizational intervention to address the pressing issues confronting street children and advocated for the immediate establishment of rehabilitation institutions by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the recruitment of researchers for further investigations (Hassan & Satti, 2023).

Street-child-based projects should be tailored to the needs of children, their families, and the community, promoting a holistic approach to protect them from obstacles. Reintegrating street children into their families is crucial. The study emphasized the need for technical capacity, skills development in government structures and social workers, and positive attitudinal behavior to improve childcare. A study marked that ethical attitude, expertise, and understanding of people are critical hurdles for treating offender children in various stages in Bangladesh (Ferdousi, 2020). An online system for street kids, even without birth registration, and life skill and awareness programs can improve their daily coping. Cox's Bazar, a renowned tourist spot, can also benefit from local resources like fishery, salt, sea, betel-nut, and indigenous industries, preventing child labor and improving economic status for low-socioeconomic families.

This research shed light on different aspects of the child protection status of the street children living in Cox's Bazar by exploring the daily lives of street children and highlighting their struggles and aspirations. It identified child protection risks like violence, exploitation, neglect, and hazardous living conditions and highlighted limited awareness and resources and the need for accelerating existing support initiatives along with targeted inclusive interventions and community-based full approaches. The findings complemented the existing research done on street kids in different regions of the home and abroad.

Conclusion

This study titled 'Exploring the Child Protection Situation of Street Children in Cox's Bazar' was conducted to understand the overall situation regarding child protection of street children in Cox's Bazar. Following the qualitative approach, this research discussed the perception of street children, describing their daily lives, feelings, and aspirations, as well as detecting the child protection risks and current programs.

Diverse push and pull factors lead young children toward the streets. Findings revealed that children 'on' and 'of' the street were deprived of basic needs and involved in humiliating and degrading work even at early ages. This vulnerable group, one of the most invisible entities in society, faced or was at risk of complex child protection concerns, including different forms of abuse, violence, exploitation, and neglect daily. They needed urgent care and services to fulfill their fundamental needs, with a protective environment.

Although various agencies have been working on improving the child protection situation in Cox's Bazar since the influx, the street children remained neglected in this regard. Addressing the child protection concerns of street children is a critical imperative that aligns with international and national frameworks. The UNCRC (OHCHR, n.d.), Bangladesh Child Act 2013, National Children Policy 2011, and SDG target 16.2¹ collectively emphasized the need to safeguard the rights and well-being of all children, including those living on the streets. Recognizing the unique challenges faced by street children, it is a must for governments, NGOs, voluntary and other civil society organizations to collaborate in implementing effective strategies.

¹ SDG Target 16.2: "End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children". (*Sustainable Development*, n.d.)

A holistic and sustainable approach can be taken to ensure accessibility of street children in all primary and social protection services through complying with the existing policies and legislation, maintaining strong coordination among agencies, and engaging a trained workforce. This will ensure that every child enjoys a safe, nurturing, and supportive environment conducive to their development and future success regardless of their state.

Recommendations

Street children are one of the unprotected, vulnerable populations. Based on this research findings and literature review, the following recommendations are given-

- A systematic process needs to be set up to collect and document data on street children, which will help to know the whole picture, identify, take initiative, and reintegrate them.
- A common platform needs to be established and strengthened to ensure systematic and coordinated child protection services for all children, with particular attention to the most endangered children, including children ‘on’ and ‘of’ the street. In this regard, a strong collaboration among government, nongovernment organizations, other civil society, and community-based organizations is required.
- Necessary initiatives should be taken to identify the gaps and effective implementation of the Children Act 2013. District and Upazilla Child Welfare Board, in coordination with the Department of Social Services, need to monitor the whole situation.
- An active and effective referral system needs to be established and should be well-informed among all community members including children.
- Tourist police, Beach Management Committee, people involved with business in tourist spots, and community people should be aware of their attitudes, behavior, and acts toward children and child protection issues and know the referral pathway.

- A robust case management process should be in place to accelerate child protection services for street kids, and identified ones should be reunited with families or extended families, and the families should be brought under government social protection services.
- Information booths can be set up in each tourist point, beach area, terminal, station, and hotel zone to identify and support children who are coming to the street.
- Integrated programs (including child protection, livelihood, education, health, and DRR) should be adopted to ensure the holistic needs of street children and families.
- More rehabilitation centers should be in place, and existing centers need to be well-equipped with materials and trained human resources that ensure a child-friendly environment and facilitate children's holistic development.
- Street kids need be brought under community-based initiatives including, early childhood care for young ones, and make aware of their rights and the protection services available.
- Besides mainstream education, vocational training should be available for street kids and their families to help them improve their economic situation by utilizing local resources.
- The birth registration process should be simplified and easily accessible for street kids whose families/parents are unidentified to avail any services requiring a birth certificate.
- Social workers should be trained enough on child development, psychosocial support, and child protection issues to ensure quality child protection services.
- Further study is needed to understand street children's situation comprehensively and at a large scale. Also, it needs to explore the developmental impacts of child protection concerns/risks faced explicitly by street children. Moreover, there is also scope for further research on the effective mainstreaming of street children in their community.

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Appendices

Appendix-1: Demographic Information of Participants

Detail Demographic Information

Characteristics	Children	Parents	Key Informants	Total
Participants' Gender				
Boy	4	-	-	4
Girl	4	-	-	4
Male		1	3	4
Female		1	1	2
Participants' Age				
5+ - 7	3	-	-	3
7+ - 8	5	-	-	5
9-18	-	-	-	-
19-28	-	2	-	2
29-38	-	-	2	2
39-48	-	-	1	1
49-58	-	-	1	1
Current Living Place				
Nazirartek	3	1	-	4
Somitipara	3	1	-	4
Labonee Point	1	-	-	1
Kolatoli Point	1	-	-	1
Other (Cox's Bazar Sadar)	-	-	4	4
Participants' Education				
No formal Education	8	2	-	10
Pre-primary	-	-	-	-
Primary	-	-	-	-
Secondary	-	-	-	-
Higher Secondary	-	-	-	-
Graduate	-	-	1	1
Postgraduate	-	-	3	3
Participants' Occupation				
Informal work	8	2	-	10
Government Job	-	-	2	2
Non-government Job	-	-	2	2

Appendix 2: Research Tools (English)

(i) Informal Conversation Guidelines for Street Children

Section A: Demographic Information

Name: Educational Qualification:
Age: Occupation:
Gender:

Section B: Street children's perception about their street life in Cox's Bazar

1. Can you tell me about your day? (For example, where you stay most of the time, where you go, what you do, what you like to do, what you enjoy doing, whether you study etc.)
- 2.1. How do you feel about being on the road? (Sometimes good/joyful, and sometimes bad/difficult)
- 2.2. Do you always have a place to sleep or rest? Do you have trouble getting enough food and clean water, staying clean or using the toilet?
3. Do you have any friends on the street? Can you talk about your friends or acquaintances on the street? (What do you like to do with friends /acquaintances?)
4. What do you want to do in the future?

Section C: Child Protection risks experienced by street children

5. Have you ever been scared or in danger while living or working on the street? (Can you name any situation/incident when you felt scared?)
6. How do adults, or other children treat you? Can you tell me some facts? (Trying to do some-thing undesirable, hurt physically/mentally. What do you do if something like this happens?)
7. Have you ever felt sick or in pain while working on the road? Can you tell me any such incident? What do you do, where do you go if you get sick or have an accident?
8. Have you ever had someone ask you to do something you didn't want to do?
9. During an emergency/disaster/cyclone, what happens to your living place? what do you do? (separation from family/friends, accommodation difficulties)
10. What do you do (how do you earn money)? Tell about your work in detail.
11. Do you ever feel sad/distressed/anxious while living/working on the road? When and why? (Have you ever been treated unfairly?)
12. How do you solve any problem on the road?(Who does help you or what do you do?)
13. What problems do you think you might face later/in the future because of living or working on the street?

Section D: Interventions to address the risks of street children in Cox's Bazar

14. Are there any organizations or individuals that do help you? Can you name them? What kind of help do they offer? (eg food, medical, education, sports/entertainment, or any other support)
15. What do you think would be better for you or other children like you/your friends?

(ii) IDI Guideline for Parents

Section A: Demographic Information

Name: Profession:
Age: Child's Age:
Gender: Baby's Gender:
Educational Qualification: Child Occupation:

(Answer questions thinking about your child and/or other children living in similar situations)

Section B: Street children's perception about their street life in Cox's Bazar

1. Talk about your child's daily life and routine (Where does he usually live/ what does he do).
2. Why and how did your child start living or working on the street?
3. What do you think about your child's feelings of living/working on the street? What did he share with you about his experience?
4. Do you know about your child's dreams or wishes? What does he want to do in the future? What is your wish for your child's future?

Section C: Child Protection risks experienced by street children

5. Does your child face any risks or dangers while on the road? What are those? (Any physical, mental, social or other harm your child has suffered by older people or other street children, exposure to drugs etc.)
6. Does your child face any challenges/difficult situations on the road? If yes, what are they? (In terms of food and shelter; medical care if sick or injured; access to clean water and sanitation facilities; access to education; how does street life affect him?)
7. Is your child engaged in any work? How does she feel about it and how do you feel?
8. Mention some such incidents if your child has faced physical harm/torture/suffering while on the street or working. How did your child react/behave in those events?
9. Have you ever been suddenly separated from your child? What did you do/how did you deal with such a situation?
10. Can you tell about any coping strategies your child uses to protect themselves and stay safe while on the road?

Section D: Interventions to address the risks of street children in Cox's Bazar

11. Are there any organizations, individuals or projects that have provided any help or support to your child? Can you describe the type of support? Is this support enough?
12. What needs to be done or what advice do you have to help or improve street children's situation?

(iii) KII Guideline

Section A: Demographic Information

Name:	Educational Qualification:
Age:	Profession:
Gender:	

Section B: Child Protection Situation in Cox's Bazar

1. Talk about the current situation for street children in Cox's Bazar. Do you know any information or statistics regarding street children in Cox's Bazar?
2. What types of child protection risks do street children commonly face in Cox's Bazar? Who is at high risk in child protection? What are the reasons?
3. How the laws, policies and regulation working or what measures or services are available for child protection and welfare of street children in Cox's Bazar and to combat abuse or exploitation- (a) Government, (b) Private, (c) Voluntary and others

4. How does your organization coordinate with other stakeholders (eg, government agencies, NGOs, community-based organizations and law enforcement agencies) to ensure the welfare of street children?
5. What is your opinion on the effectiveness of current programs aimed at reducing child protection risks of street children in Cox's Bazar?
6. What are the challenges in providing child protection services to street children?
7. According to you, what steps or measures can be taken to improve the child protection situation for street children in Cox's Bazar? (Specific recommendations or any work or successful practices followed in other areas or countries that would be helpful in improving the child protection situation of street children in this area.)
8. Do you want to add more on child protection situation for street children in Cox's Bazar?

(iv) Observation Guideline

Name of Child Observed:	Weather Conditions:	Date:
Age:		Place:
Gender:	Settings:	Observation time:

Contextual Observation:

- What is the condition of the road or area? (Environment where the street children stays/works)
- Are there any visible signs of child labour, exploitation or abuse?
- Is there any interaction between the street children being observed with other street children, adults or authorities in the area?
- Are there shelters, facilities or NGOs providing services?

Indicators related to Child Protection:

1. Perceptions of street life
 - a) Any statement or gesture that reflects his perception of street life.
 - b) Any coping strategies used by street children in daily life (how the child manages food, money, or other necessities; what behaviors or skills he/she has demonstrated);
2. Child Protection Risks:
 - a) Where does the child sleep or live?
 - b) Is the child's parent or guardian present or is the child alone on the street?
 - c) Does the child have access to clean water, food and sanitation facilities?
 - d) Is the child facing any specific risks, eg. neglect, violence, torture, substance abuse?
 - e) Is the child likely to be exposed to any dangerous situation, such as a risk or unsafe environment?
 - f) Are there any visible signs of malnutrition, inadequate clothing, or health problems?
 - g) Are there any signs of distress?
 - h) Are there any signs of social exclusion or inclusion?
 - j) Is a victim of physical or verbal abuse or other threats?
 - j) How does the child interact with peers and adults (acquaintances or strangers, helpers or abusers)?
 - k) Is there any obstacle for the child to go to school?
 - l) Is the child involved in child labour? Is the workplace/type of work risk-free?
3. Interventions and Support Services:

- a) Are there any government or non-governmental organizations actively involved in serving street children in the area?
- b) Are there any support or services available such as shelter, food, education, or health care?

Appendix 3: Translated Research Tools (Bengali)

(i) Informal Conversation Guideline for Street Children

সেকশন এ: জনসংখ্যা সংক্রান্ত তথ্য

নাম: শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা:
বয়স: পেশা:
লিঙ্গ:

সেকশন বি: কল্লাবাজারে পথশিশুদের পথজীবন সম্পর্কে ধারণা

- ১। তুমি কি তোমার সারাদিনের কাজ সম্পর্কে বলতে পারো? (যেমন-বেশিরভাগ সময় কোথায় থাকো, কোথায় যাও, কী করো, কী করতে পছন্দ করো, কী করলে ভাল লাগে, পড়াশোনা করো কিনা ইত্যাদি।)
- ২.১। রাস্তায় থাকতে তোমার কেমন লাগে? (কোন কোন সময় ভালো/আনন্দ লাগে, আর কখন খারাপ/কঠিন লাগে)
- ২.২। ঘুমানো বা বিশ্রাম নেয়ার জন্য জায়গা পাও সবসময়? পর্যাপ্ত খাবার ও বিশুদ্ধ পানি পেতে, পরিষ্কার থাকতে বা টয়লেট ব্যবহার করতে অসুবিধা হয় কি?
- ৩। রাস্তায় তোমার কোন বন্ধু আছে? রাস্তায় তোমার বন্ধু বা পরিচিত মানুষদের সম্পর্কে বলতে পারো? (বন্ধুদের সাথে কী করতে ভালো লাগে/ বন্ধু বা পরিচিতরা কী করলে ভালো লাগে?)
- ৪। ভবিষ্যতে তুমি কী করতে চাও?

সেকশন সি: পথশিশুদের শিশুসুরক্ষা ঝুঁকি

- ৫। রাস্তায় থাকতে গিয়ে বা কাজ করার সময় তোমার কি কখনও ভয় লেগেছে বা বিপদে পড়েছো? (যেকোনো পরিস্থিতি/ঘটনার কথা বলতে পারো যখন তোমার ভয় লেগেছিলো?)
- ৬। বড় কেউ, বা অন্য শিশুরা তোমার সাথে কেমন আচরণ করে? তুমি কি কিছু ঘটনা বলতে পারো? (অপছন্দনীয় কোন কাজ, শারীরিক/ মানসিকভাবে কষ্ট দেয়া বা ক্ষতি করা বা করার চেষ্টা করা। এমন কিছু হলে তুমি কী করো?)
- ৭। রাস্তায় কাজ করার সময় কখনও অসুস্থবোধ করেছিলে বা ব্যথা পেয়েছিলে? এরকম কোন ঘটনা বলতে পারো? তুমি অসুস্থ হয়ে পড়লে বা কোন দুর্ঘটনা ঘটলে কী করো, কোথায় যাও?
- ৮। এরকম কোন ঘটনা ঘটেছে যে কেউ তোমাকে এমন কিছু করতে বলেছে যা তুমি করতে চাওনি?
- ৯। কোনো জরুরি অবস্থা/দুর্যোগের/ ঘূর্ণিঝড়ের সময় তুমি সাধারণত যেখানে থাক সেখানে কী অবস্থা হয়? তুমি কী করো? (পরিবার/বন্ধুদের থেকে আলাদা হয়ে পড়া, থাকার জায়গার অসুবিধা)
- ১০। তুমি কী কোন কাজ করো (কীভাবে অর্থ উপার্জন করো)? তোমার কাজ সম্পর্কে বিস্তারিত বলো।
- ১১। রাস্তায় থাকার/কাজের সময় তোমার কি কখনও দুঃখ/কষ্ট/ দুশ্চিন্তা হয়? কখন এবং কেন? (এমন হয়েছে যে তোমার সাথে ঠিক আচরণ করা হয়নি?)
- ১২। রাস্তায় কখনও কোন সমস্যা হলে তুমি কীভাবে সমাধান করো? (কার সাহায্য নাও বা কী করো?)
- ১৩। রাস্তায় থাকার বা কাজ করার কারণে পরবর্তীতে/ভবিষ্যতে তোমার কী কী সমস্যা হতে পারে বলে তুমি মনে করো?

সেকশন ডি: কল্লাবাজারে পথশিশুদের সুরক্ষা ঝুঁকি মোকাবেলায় হস্তক্ষেপ/ পরিচালিত কার্যক্রম

- ১৪। এমন কোন সংস্থা বা ব্যক্তি আছে যারা তোমাকে সাহায্য করেছে/করে? তাদের নাম বলতে পারো? তারা কী ধরনের সাহায্য করে থাকে? (যেমন-খাবার, চিকিৎসা, শিক্ষা, খেলা/বিনোদন বা অন্য কোন সহায়তা)
- ১৫। তোমার মতে তোমার জন্য বা তোমার মত অন্য শিশু/ তোমার বন্ধুদের জন্য কী ব্যবস্থা করলে/কী করলে ভালো হবে মনে করো?

(ii) IDI Guideline for Parents

সেকশন এ: জনসংখ্যা সংক্রান্ত তথ্য

নাম: পেশা:
বয়স: শিশুর বয়স:

লিঙ্গ:

শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা:

শিশুর এর লিঙ্গ:

শিশুর পেশা:

(আপনার শিশু এবং/অথবা অনুরূপ পরিস্থিতিতে বাসকারী অন্যান্য শিশুদের সম্পর্কে চিন্তা করে প্রশ্নের উত্তর দিন)

সেকশন বি: কল্পবাজারে পথশিশুদের পথজীবন সম্পর্কে ধারণা

১। আপনার সন্তানের দৈনন্দিন জীবন এবং রুটিন সম্পর্কে বলুন। (সে সাধারণত কোথায় থাকে/ কী করে)

২। আপনার সন্তান কেন ও কীভাবে রাস্তায় থাকা বা কাজ করা শুরু করেছে? বিস্তারিত বলুন।

৩। রাস্তায় থাকা/কাজ করার ব্যাপারে আপনার সন্তান কেমন অনুভব করে বলে আপনি মনে করেন? সে তার সেই অভিজ্ঞতা সম্পর্কে আপনার সাথে কী বলেছে?

৪। আপনার সন্তানের স্বপ্ন বা ইচ্ছা সম্পর্কে আপনি জানেন? সে ভবিষ্যতে কি করতে চায়? আপনার সন্তানের ভবিষ্যৎ নিয়ে আপনার ইচ্ছা কী?

সেকশন সি: পথশিশুদের শিশুসুরক্ষা ঝুঁকি

৫। আপনার শিশু রাস্তায় থাকাকালীন কোন ঝুঁকি বা বিপদের সম্মুখীন হয়? হলে কী কী? (বড় বা রাস্তার অন্যান্য শিশুদের দ্বারা আপনার সন্তানের কোন শারীরিক, মানসিক, সামাজিক বা অন্যান্য ক্ষতি হয়েছে, নেশাজাতীয় দ্রব্যের সংস্পর্শে আসা ইত্যাদি।)

৬। রাস্তায় আপনার সন্তান কি কোন চ্যালেঞ্জের/ কঠিন পরিস্থিতির সম্মুখীন হয়? যদি হ্যাঁ হয়, সেগুলি কী কী? (খাদ্য ও থাকার জায়গার ক্ষেত্রে; অসুস্থ হলে বা আঘাতের পেলে চিকিৎসা সেবার ক্ষেত্রে; বিশুদ্ধ পানি এবং স্যানিটেশন সুবিধা; শিক্ষার সুযোগ পাওয়ার ক্ষেত্রে এবং রাস্তার জীবন কীভাবে তাকে প্রভাবিত করে?)

৭। আপনার সন্তান কি কোন কাজে নিয়োজিত? এটি সম্পর্কে সে কেমন বোধ করে এবং আপনি কেমন অনুভব করেন?

৮। এরকম কিছু ঘটনার কথা বলুন যদি আপনার সন্তান রাস্তায় থাকা বা কাজ করার সময় শারীরিক ক্ষতি/ নির্যাতনের সম্মুখীন হয়ে থাকে/ কষ্ট পেয়ে থাকে। সেই ঘটনাগুলোয় আপনার সন্তান কী প্রতিক্রিয়া/ আচরণ করেছিল?

৯। আপনি কি কখনও আপনার সন্তানের কাছ থেকে হঠাৎ বিচ্ছিন্ন/ আলাদা হয়ে পড়েছিলেন আপনি এমন পরিস্থিতিতে কী করেছিলেন/ কীভাবে মোকাবেলা করেছিলেন?

১০। আপনি কি এমন কোনো কৌশল বা মোকাবিলা করার উপায় সম্পর্কে বলতে পারেন যা আপনার সন্তান নিজেই রক্ষা করতে এবং রাস্তায় থাকাকালীন নিরাপদ থাকার জন্য ব্যবহার করে থাকে?

সেকশন ডি: কল্পবাজারে পথশিশুদের সুরক্ষা ঝুঁকি মোকাবেলায় হস্তক্ষেপ/ পরিচালিত কার্যক্রম

১১। এমন কোন সংস্থা, ব্যক্তি বা প্রকল্প আছে যা আপনার সন্তানকে কোন সাহায্য বা সহায়তা প্রদান করেছে? আপনি কি সে সহায়তার ধরন বর্ণনা করতে পারেন? এই সহায়তা কি যথেষ্ট?

১২। আপনার সন্তানের মতো শিশুদের সহায়তা বা উন্নতির জন্য কি করা প্রয়োজন বা আপনার কী পরামর্শ রয়েছে?

(iii) KII Guideline

সেকশন এ: জনসংখ্যা সংক্রান্ত তথ্য

নাম:

শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা:

বয়স:

পেশা:

লিঙ্গ:

সেকশন বি: কল্পবাজারে পথশিশুদের শিশুসুরক্ষা পরিস্থিতি

১। কল্পবাজারে পথশিশুদের জন্য বর্তমান পরিস্থিতি সম্পর্কে বলুন। কল্পবাজারে পথশিশু সংক্রান্ত কোন তথ্য বা পরিসংখ্যান জানা আছে কী?

২। কল্পবাজারে পথশিশুরা সাধারণত কী কী ধরনের শিশু সুরক্ষা ঝুঁকির সম্মুখীন হয়? কারা শিশু সুরক্ষার ক্ষেত্রে উচ্চ ঝুঁকিতে রয়েছে? কারণগুলো কী কী?

৩। আপনার জানামতে, কল্পবাজারে পথশিশুদের শিশু সুরক্ষা ও কল্যাণে এবং নির্যাতন বা শোষণ মোকাবেলায় আইন, নীতি, এবং বিধি কীভাবে কাজ করছে বা কী কী পদক্ষেপ বা সেবা রয়েছে- (ক) সরকারি, (খ) বেসরকারি, (গ) স্বেচ্ছাসেবী এবং অন্যান্য

৪। পথশিশুদের কল্যাণ নিশ্চিত করতে আপনার সংস্থা কীভাবে অন্যান্য স্টেকহোল্ডারদের (যেমন, সরকারি সংস্থা, এনজিও, সম্প্রদায়-ভিত্তিক সংস্থা এবং আইন প্রয়োগকারী সংস্থা) সাথে সমন্বয় করে থাকে?

- ৫। কল্লবাজারে পথশিশুদের শিশু সুরক্ষা ঝুঁকি কমানোর লক্ষ্যে বর্তমান কর্মসূচীগুলোর কার্যকারিতা সম্পর্কে আপনার মতামত কী?
- ৬। পথশিশুদের শিশু সুরক্ষা পরিষেবা প্রদানের ক্ষেত্রে চ্যালেঞ্জগুলি কী কী?
- ৭। আপনার মতে, কল্লবাজারে পথশিশুদের জন্য শিশু সুরক্ষা ব্যবস্থা উন্নত করতে কী কী পদক্ষেপ বা ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া যেতে পারে? (সুনির্দিষ্ট সুপারিশ বা অন্য এলাকা বা দেশে অনুসৃত কোন কাজ বা সফল পন্থা যা এই এলাকার পথশিশুদের শিশু সুরক্ষা পরিস্থিতি উন্নত করতে সহায়ক হবে।)
- ৮। কল্লবাজারে পথশিশুদের জন্য শিশু সুরক্ষার বিষয়ে আপনি কি কোনো আরও কোন তথ্য যোগ করতে চান?

(iv) Observation Guideline

সেকশন এ: জনসংখ্যা সংক্রান্ত তথ্য

পর্যবেক্ষণরত শিশুর নাম:	আবহাওয়ার অবস্থা:	তারিখ:
বয়স:	সেটিংস:	স্থান:
লিঙ্গ:		পর্যবেক্ষণের সময়:

প্রাসঙ্গিক পর্যবেক্ষণ:

- রাস্তা বা এলাকার অবস্থা কী? (যে পরিবেশে পথশিশু আছে)
- শিশুশ্রম, শোষণ বা নির্যাতনের কোন দৃশ্যমান লক্ষণ আছে কি?
- এলাকার অন্যান্য পথশিশু, প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক বা কর্তৃপক্ষের সাথে পর্যবেক্ষণরত পথশিশুদের মধ্যে কি কোনো মিথস্ক্রিয়া ঘটছে?
- সেখানে কি আশ্রয়কেন্দ্র, সুবিধা আছে বা এনজিও পরিষেবা প্রদান করে?

শিশু সুরক্ষা সম্পর্কিত সূচক:

- ১। রাস্তার জীবন সম্পর্কিত উপলব্ধি
- ক) রাস্তার জীবন সম্পর্কে তার উপলব্ধি প্রতিফলিত করে এমন কোন বক্তব্য বা অঙ্গভঙ্গি।
- খ) দৈনন্দিন জীবনে পথশিশুদের ব্যবহৃত কোন মোকাবেলার কৌশল (শিশু কীভাবে খাদ্য, অর্থ, বা অন্যান্য প্রয়োজনীয় জিনিসগুলোর ব্যবস্থা করে; কোন ধরনের আচরণ বা দক্ষতা সে প্রদর্শন করেছে)
- ২। শিশু সুরক্ষা ঝুঁকি:
- ক) শিশু কোথায় ঘুমায় বা থাকে?
- খ) শিশুর বাবা-মা বা অভিভাবক তার উপস্থিত আছেন নাকি শিশু রাস্তায় একা থাকে?
- গ) শিশুর কি বিশুদ্ধ পানি, খাবার এবং স্যানিটেশন সুবিধায় প্রবেশাধিকার/অ্যাক্সেস আছে?
- ঘ) শিশু কি কোনো নির্দিষ্ট ঝুঁকির সম্মুখীন হচ্ছে, যেমন- অবহেলা, সহিংসতা, নির্যাতন, নেশাজাতীয় দ্রব্যের অপব্যবহার।
- ঙ) শিশু কি কোন বিপদজনক পরিস্থিতির সম্মুখীন হতে পারে, যেমন কোন ঝুঁকি বা অনিরাপদ পরিবেশ?
- চ) অপুষ্টি, অপরিষ্কার পোশাক, বা স্বাস্থ্য সমস্যাগুলির কোন দৃশ্যমান লক্ষণ আছে কি?
- ছ) মন খারাপ/ কষ্ট বা চাপের কোন লক্ষণ দেখা যাচ্ছে?
- জ) সামাজিক বিচ্ছিন্নতা বা অন্তর্ভুক্তির কোন লক্ষণ আছে?
- ঝ) শারীরিক বা মৌখিক অপব্যবহার বা অন্যান্য হুমকির কোন শিকার হচ্ছে কি?
- ঞ) শিশু কীভাবে সহসার্থী এবং প্রাপ্তবয়স্কদের (পরিচিত বা অপরিচিত, সাহায্যকারী বা নির্যাতনকারী) সাথে মিশছে?
- ট) তার স্কুলে যেতে কোন বাধা আছে কি?
- ঠ) শিশু কি শিশুশ্রমে জড়িত? কাজের জায়গা/কাজের ধরন কি ঝুঁকিমুক্ত?
- ৩। ইন্টারভেনশন ও সহায়তা সেবা:
- ক) এলাকায় পথশিশুদের সেবায় সক্রিয়ভাবে জড়িত কোনো সরকারি বা বেসরকারি সংস্থা আছে কি?
- খ) আশ্রয়, খাদ্য, শিক্ষা, বা স্বাস্থ্যসেবার মতো কোনও সহায়তা বা পরিষেবা বিদ্যমান আছে কি?

Appendix 4: Informed Consent Form

TITLE OF RESEARCH

Exploring the Child Protection Situation of Street Children in Cox's Bazar

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

This research will be conducted as a part of my master's degree requirements from the Institute of Educational Development- BRAC University, the study aims to understand child protection situation of street children in Cox's Bazar.

RISKS

No threat will be made to the participants for contributing to the study directly or indirectly. Street children/ parents/ key informants will be contributing to the study results which will be primarily used as a degree requirement.

BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

There are no direct benefits for the participants in participating in this study. However, their participation will contribute to the understanding of the child protection situation for the street children and the needful strategies for them.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information gathered from the participants during research will remain strictly confidential.

FURTHER USE OF INFORMATION

Some of the information collected from this study may be preserved for further experiments. However, in such cases, data and information shared with other researchers will not conflict with the maintenance of confidentiality of information.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. It is up to the participant to decide whether to take part in the study. If the participant decides to be a part in this study, s/he will be required to sign a consent form. After signing the consent form, the participant is still free to withdraw at any point without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this study will not affect the relationship the participant has, if any, with the researcher. If the participant withdraws from the study before the data collection is completed, the data will be returned to participants or destroyed.

Thanks for cooperating in this study. For any query, please contact the researcher at sifataranur@gmail.com.

CONSENT

I understand the aforementioned information and got the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any point of the research without giving a reason.

Participant's Name & signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 5: Sample Transcript of Informal Conversation

Note: The following informal conversation was done around a beach area at night (around 10:30 pm). The child who took part in this conversation was roaming around with some other children and was found to be buying cigarettes with them. Assent was taken from the child, and consent was taken from a nearby shopkeeper who seemed to be close to this child.

Section A: Demographic Information

Name: IC-8

Educational Qualification: No.

Age: 8

Occupation/ work: Begging

Gender: Boy

Section B: Street children's perception about their street life in Cox's Bazar

1. Can you tell me about your day? (For example, where you stay most of the time, where you go, what you do, what you like to do, what you enjoy doing, whether you study etc.)

Ans: *I live alone. I seek money from people. I eat breakfast with whatever money I get. When my money runs out, people from the hotel give me rice at noon. At night, if I have money, I eat, and if not, I spend like this (without eating). I don't do anything else all day. My father pulls a rickshaw. His brain does not work properly. He is mad.*

2.1. How do you feel about being on the road? (Sometimes good/joyful, and sometimes bad/difficult)

Ans: *It feels bad to be on the road. Because it's not good to be here. A brother sometimes teaches there near Sea Palace on Friday. He gives me snacks sometimes. My name is listed in their register.*

2.2. Do you always have a place to sleep or rest? Do you have trouble getting enough food and clean water, staying clean or using the toilet?

Ans: *My house is at Samitipara. I don't stay there. I sleep here on the corner, below this hotel, or on the street. In the morning I take breakfast from a nearby shop.*

3. Do you have any friends on the street? Can you talk about your friends or acquaintances on the street? (What do you like to do with friends /acquaintances?)

Ans: *Yes, I have friends. We, 5-6 children stay here. We try to stay together.*

(Note: He seemed confused while answering this question).

4. What do you want to do in the future?

Ans: *I will work when I grow up. I will work in a hotel.*

Section C: Child Protection risks experienced by street children

5. Have you ever been scared or in danger while living or working on the street? (Can you name any situation/incident when you felt scared?)

Ans: No answer.

6. How do adults, or other children treat you? Can you tell me some facts? (Trying to do some-thing undesirable, hurt physically/mentally. What do you do if something like this happens?)

Ans: *If I look for money, some people give me money, some people slap me. Sometimes, someone buys breakfast for me if they don't give money. Sometimes, elder ones pinch me. The problem is that adults beat. I tell one shopkeeper if I face a problem. The shopkeeper then rebukes them and chase them away.*

7. Have you ever felt sick or in pain while working on the road? Can you tell me any such incident? What do you do, where do you go if you get sick or have an accident?

Ans: *I sometimes have accidents at "Scotboat". I fell while running. I don't go anywhere when I feel sick.*

8. Have you ever had someone ask you to do something you didn't want to do?

Ans: *No one force me. I do things on my wish.*

9. During an emergency/disaster/cyclone, what happens to your living place? what do you do? (separation from family/friends, accommodation difficulties)

Ans: *During the rainstorm, I entered the empty place outside the hotel where there is a roof or balcony.*

10. What do you do (how do you earn money)? Tell about your work in detail.

Ans: *I beg and seek money from other people.*

11. Do you ever feel sad/distressed/anxious while living/working on the road? When and why? (Have you ever been treated unfairly?)

Ans: *No.*

12. How do you solve any problem on the road? (Who does help you or what do you do?)

Ans: *If I bring a drum of water for that shop (nearby handcart), the shopkeeper let me have breakfast. No one else helps. The shopkeeper sometimes gives me rice. I, with other children, eat together on a paper.*

13. What problems do you think you might face later/in the future because of living or working on the street?

Ans: *I didn't go to school. I studied in Madrasa for some time before. I couldn't continue my study after my mother got married and left.*

Section D: Interventions to address the risks of street children in Cox's Bazar

14. Are there any organizations or individuals that do help you? Can you name them? What kind of help do they offer? (e.g. food, medical, education, sports/entertainment or any other support)

Ans: *The shopkeeper from a nearby shop gives me food. I don't get any help from others.*

15. What do you think would be better for you or other children like you/your friends?

Ans: *It will be good to get a job in a hotel. A brother said he would give me a job when I grew up. He said he would help me to study too.*

Appendix 6: Sample Images

Note: The photos were taken with participants' permission for data recording purpose.



Raw toilet, Samitipara (Field Observation, 25.11.23)



Collecting fish from cart, Nazirartek, (Field Observation, 28.11.2)



Skin problems, Labonee, (Field Observation, 07.12.23)



Waiting for help, Sugondha (Field Observation, 09.12.23)



Collecting firewood and debris, Nazirartek, (Field Observation, 05.12.23)



Carrying heavy bucket full of fish, Nazirartek, (Field Observation, 12.12.23)