

## HIV/AIDS vulnerability among street Children in Urban Bangladesh: A reality of Old Dhaka

Saidur Rashid Sumon

Jagannath University, Bangladesh



### Abstract

A growing pace of urbanization has created a number of crisis in Bangladesh, especially as regards good governance and sustainable development. The Government's structure is highly centralized, limiting local officials' authority and flexibility to adapt to local circumstances and demand. Moreover, the persisting of traditional customs, perceptions, attitudes and practices towards children within society often hamper development. Uneven urbanization, the absence of good governance, political culture, the huge pressure of ruralurban migration in recent times and the related unplanned character of the urban dwelling system all lead to the presence of a growing number of homeless or 'street' people within the city. In this context the present study aims to address the phenomenon of street children and their susceptibility to the threats and harms of sexual abuse, substance use as well as the related risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. The present study follows the UNICEF's concept of boys and girls, aged under 18 years, who live on the street or unoccupied dwellings and wasteland as their source of livelihood, and who are inadequately protected or supervised as referred to "street children" (Benitez, 2009). The study also aims to explore specific factors that render children vulnerable and affected by these behaviors. The authors attempt to examine HIV/AIDS vulnerability among street children in Old Dhaka; this is done through a field level investigation combined with a critical review of theoretical frameworks. Thus, the paper is based upon a qualitative approach which includes analysis of secondary sources of data, yet it also deals with primary data through case studies (12), KIIs (6) and FGDs (4). Snow ball sampling techniques were adopted to select respondents in this study. The overall outcomes of this paper reveal that street children have a moderate knowledge on HIV/AIDS - they have become aware of its dangers due to intervention by many government organizations and NGOs. However, due to cultural barriers such as unprotected sex and the accessibility of porn or vulgar video clippings to them, they often fail to apply this knowledge and awareness. Consequently they do engage in high risk behaviors such as drug abuse and their sexual safety measures are inconsistent, meaning that vulnerability to HIV/AIDS is maintained. Integrated as well as comprehensive intervention programs coupled with continuous monitoring and sustainable supervision are needed; through this process both factual knowledge and cultural constructions among the population must be addressed.

### Biography

Md. Saidur Rashid Sumon, has been teaching Sociology since 2013 in the Jagannath University, Dhaka in Bangladesh. Before joining here, he taught Sociology as a Lecturer and Assistant professor in another reputed public university namely Rajshahi University (second largest university in Bangladesh) for about 4 years. Previously he served in research and development organizations where he worked in various capacities for about 10 years after completing his undergraduate and graduate degree with first class [A-average] from the University of Dhaka., the mostly reputed university in Bangladesh. Later, this academic endeavor inspired him to advance his research journey through pursuing an overseas degree in Criminology at the University of Ottawa, Canada. This second degree has provided him insights on critical understanding of various sociological and criminological concerns in both Canadian and global context. In line with his rich research experience, he has enormous research and project reports; consequently contributed several publications of journal articles, edited books, and conference proceedings on children and youth, gender, crime and health related issues. Moreover, he has a keen interest to explore child rights, gender, health, crime and violence related issues by applying his sociological as well as criminological insights with a view to satisfy his academic desire for the betterment of his career. In addition, during his professional career he participated along with presented scholarly papers successfully at distinct national and international conferences/seminars. Furthermore, He participated as well as facilitated in diverse training programs under different projects by different National and International Organizations during his service period from 2004 to up to date. Currently, he is contributing to the project titled "Child Rights in Academia" as the Focal person with the collaboration of Save the Children and he is involved in several voluntary organizations like Urban Research and Development Society (URDS) as General Secretary, a member of various organizations or alliances including Bangladesh Child Rights Academia (BCRA), Canadian Criminological Association, Interdisciplinary Research Laboratory on the Rights of the Child (IRLRC) at the University of Ottawa, Bangladesh Sociological Society, Indian Regional Science Association, Lions Club International etc.

### Publications

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