



# Bangkok Street Children Profile October 2012

*Based on information collected between August 2010 and August 2012*



friends  
thailand  
เพื่อน เพื่อน  
peuan peuan

Prepared by Friends-International with the support of



CHILDHOOD  
WORLD CHILDHOOD FOUNDATION

Give2Asia



ADM CAPITAL FOUNDATION

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

BMA	Bangkok Metropolitan Administration
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
FI	Friends-International
GO	Government Organisation
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MoSDHS	Ministry of Social Development and Human Security
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
RTG	Royal Thai Government
SCP	Street Children Profile
SLC	Street Living Children
SLF	Street Living Family
SWC	Street Working Children
UNIAP	United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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## I- PEUAN PEUAN / FRIENDS-INTERNATIONAL THAILAND

Through its work in Cambodia since 1994, Friends-International observed growing numbers of street children traveling to Thailand. In 2005, Friends-International launched a research project, in collaboration with UNIAP, to explore the situation of children and mothers begging on the streets of Bangkok, including how they traveled there, how children and mothers survive and the process of repatriation to Cambodia. The research showed that although trafficking is not as prevalent as previously believed, unsafe/irregular migration for many different reasons is a problem which often results in exploitation, or worse, for women, men and children. As a result of the findings from this research, the Peuan Peuan program was established by Friends-International in Bangkok in 2006 with the support of UNICEF.

Peuan Peuan (meaning 'friends' in Thai) provides both emergency and longer term support services to Thai, Lao and Burmese marginalized children and their families. This is done in close collaboration with and supported by the Royal Thai Government (RTG), the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) and other organizations.

In 2009, the Peuan Peuan program expanded to Aranyaprathet, Sakaeo Province at the border, providing services to children working in the Rong Kluea market and to young migrants.

In 2010, the Peuan Peuan program was invited by the MoSDHS to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which brings together the Royal Thai Government and others agencies to address the issue of the homeless, beggars, and victims of trafficking in the Bangkok Metropolitan area.

In April 2012, the Peuan Peuan Program and the MoSDHS signed a 3 year collaboration agreement to provide services to vulnerable children and youth, including capacity building for sustainable social reintegration.

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## II- INTRODUCTION

### Why a Street Children Profile?

In order to carry out its work in the most productive way, it is necessary for Peuan Peuan to have a good understanding of the number and situations affecting street children in Bangkok.

Undertaking such a study on a regular basis allows for better analysis and understanding of the ongoing changes within the target group.

### Defining Street Children

There is no set definition of what constitutes a Street Child. The UN has defined the term Street Children to include 'any boy or girl... for whom the street in the widest sense of the word... has become his or her habitual abode and/or source of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised, or directed by responsible adults'. However, this definition needs to be specified towards the great number of children working and/or living with their families on the streets facing the same potential risks. To overcome this definitional limitation, a 3-fold definition of street children is used by Friends-International distinguishing between: Street Living Children (SLC), Street Working Children (SWC) and Children of Street Living Families (SLF):

#### **Street Living Children:**

'Children who have cut ties with their families and live alone on the streets'

#### **Street Working Children:**

'Children who spend all or most of their time working on the streets to provide an income for their families or for themselves, but who return to a caregivers home very regularly'

#### **Children from Street Living Families:**

'Children who live with their family on the streets'

**Note:** Friends-International decided to include babies accompanying their begging caretaker on the streets of Bangkok into the category of street living families (although many of them regularly rent a room when their financial situation allows it) because those children spend the large part of their time on the streets, including night time.

The 3-fold definition of street children applied in the Street Children Profile is thus 'not based on the social or economic backgrounds of the children, or the types of activities they perform (which are mostly viewed as survival behaviours for living), but rather on the physical contact with the street setting as compared to their contact with their families<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> UNODC

[http://www.unodc.org/pdf/net/egypt\\_street\\_children\\_report.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/pdf/net/egypt_street_children_report.pdf)

The Friends-International target group is children and youth between 0 and 24 years old. However in the present document, only information about children (under 18 years) has been used. This is because the children and youth residing in the Government Shelters that Peuan Peuan supports are all under 18 years of age.

## Survey Methodology and participants

Two complementary methods have been applied in the present survey. The first method assembles Street Children Snapshot Surveys and the second gathers the information collected from Case Management files of individual children.

**(1) A street children snapshot survey** is a periodic count that produces primary data estimating the number of street children on one specific day in one geographical area (in the present document the city of Bangkok) 3 snapshot surveys targeting street children in Bangkok have been conducted between July 2011 and July 2012.

The snapshot surveys were conducted by staff and volunteers of the Peuan Peuan program, together with staff from partner organisations:

- The Woman and Child Welfare Protection - Department of Social Development and Welfare (DSDW) - MoSDHS
- Bureau of Social Development – BMA
- Non Formal Education (Pratumwan)
- District official (Klongtoei, Klongsan and Pratumwan)
- Mirror Foundation
- The Hub Sai Deak foundation

The geographical areas to conduct the surveys were based on the experience of the outreach workers from Peuan Peuan and from partners. The teams surveyed the areas from 6.00 am to 1.00 am.

All persons participating in conducting the surveys were briefed in advance on the methodology. The guidelines for the snapshot survey are:

- Introduce yourself to the child and briefly explain the purpose of the survey;
- Short interviews based on the FI communication standards
- Never force the child to answer;
- Ask if the child has met another survey staff on the day of the survey

Street children snapshot surveys provide quantitative information (number of children, age range, gender)

**(2) Case Management** The second section contains information obtained from 100 street children's individual Case Management files (i.e. street children who have received support from Peuan Peuan).

Case management is the process of supporting a specific child to be safe and to build their future. It is a



collaborative effort between a Case Manager (a social worker) and a child and their family. It is usually a long term process lasting for a few years until the objectives initially set by the child and the case manager are achieved.

Some case management forms were incomplete as children voluntarily provide information and do not always wish to provide all information, such as the reasons to why children have left home. Peuan Peuan staff does not pressure children for explanations in order to avoid possibly reinforcing their trauma. Usually the children express this information when they feel ready and comfortable.

The figures and statistics cited in this Profile are not representative of the entire street children population in Bangkok and only provide estimates on the numbers and situations of street children in Bangkok.

The Bangkok street children profile was prepared thanks to the support of the ADM Capital Foundation, Give 2 Asia and World Childhood Foundation

The views expressed in this document are expressed by Friends-International and do not represent the views of World Childhood Foundation, ADM Capital Foundation, Give 2 Asia or any other partners.

### **III- MAIN RESULTS**

#### **OVERALL**

##### ***Information based on snapshot surveys***

An average of 135 street children (42% females) were met during each snapshot survey

17% were street living children

30% were street working children

51% were children of street families or begging babies with their mothers

2% of all children met were at risk of becoming street living.

37% of the sample was between the 0 to 5 years old;

46% of the sample was between 6 to 14 years old;

17% of the sample was between 15 to 17 years old

49% of all street children were Thai children

45% of all street children were Khmer

5 % were Burmese and the 1 % unable to identify their nationality

57% of street children mentioned begging as their occupation, making begging the primary activity.

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**Information based on children's case management files**

51% of street children mentioned begging as their occupation, making begging the primary activity.

Khmer (Cambodian) street children have come to work/live on the streets because of poverty and economic reasons.

Thai street children have come to work/live on the streets because of family problems and/or domestic violence.

16% of all street children registered in Peuan Peuan have spent less than 1 year on the streets permanently.

7% of all street children registered in Peuan Peuan have spend more than 1-3 years on the streets permanently.

9% of all street children registered in Peuan Peuan have spent more than 3 years on the streets permanently.

68% of all children registered in Peuan Peuan have spent between 1-3 years on the street temporarily.

50% of all street children have stopped attending school

32% of all street children study

18% never attended school, also some of them are under school age

**29% of all street children said they have been victims of sexual abuse.**

33% of all street children said they have previously lived in a government shelter

67% of all children never lived in the shelter

**BY CATEGORIES**

**STREET LIVING CHILDREN**

74% were males

15% were 0 to 5 years old

58% were 6 to 14 years old

27% were 15 to 17 years old

81% were Thai children

**STREET WORKING CHILDREN**

29% were females

13% were 0 to 5 years old

62% were 6 to 14 years old

25% were 15 to 17 years old

75% were Thai, 22% Khmer, 3% Burmese



**CHILDREN OF STREET FAMILIES (INCLUDING BABIES WITH BEGGING CARETAKERS)**

17% were females

50% were 0 to 5 years old

50% were 6 to 14 years old

100% were Thai

Based on data collected, **Friends-International estimates that there is a minimum of 150 street children** (including street living children, street working children and children from street living families) at any given time in Bangkok.

Due to the mobility of street children, Friends-International estimates that there are between 300 and 1,000 street children in Bangkok over a 1 year period.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

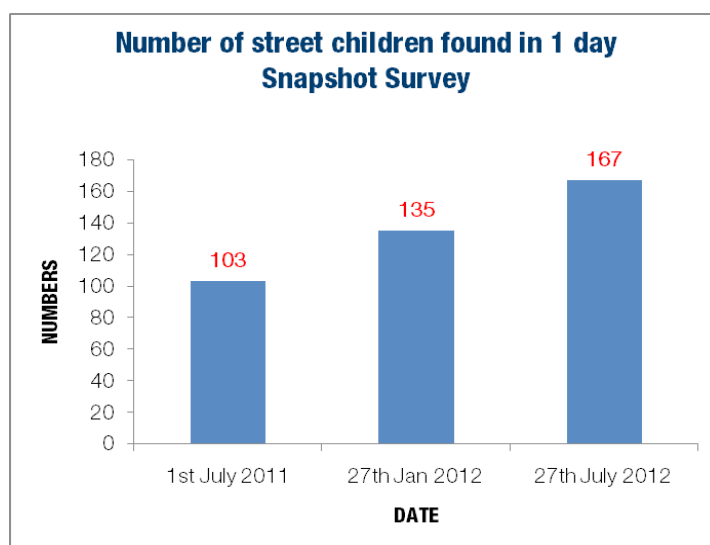
- Peuan Peuan to continue working with Thai and foreign street children via outreach, case management and work in Government shelters.
- Peuan Peuan to strengthen local referral services with both NGOs and government agencies to improve the range of services they are able to offer to street children.
- Peuan Peuan to focus on developing and increasing activities with Thai street children and youth in Government shelters.
- Peuan Peuan Outreach Team to focus on improving engagement with Burmese street working children in Bangkok.
- Results from the street children profile will assist in development of a strategic plan in working with Government and Non Government partners to deliver tailored services best suited to the needs of the beneficiaries. These services can incorporate child-focused initiatives in psycho-social activities with beneficiaries and specific services for youth improving the engagement with services and addressing their needs.

## IV- INFORMATION BASED ON SNAPSHOT SURVEYS

Conducted between July 2011 and July 2012, the purpose of the snapshot surveys is to provide basic demographics on street children in Bangkok, including a rough estimate of the number of children.

During the 3 surveys the team met an average of 135 street children in one day ranging from 0 to 17 years.

The surveys were conducted by the Peuan Peuan teams, with the support of social workers from the MoSDHS, the BMA, district office Klongtoei, Klongsan, Pratumawan and Mirror foundation.



1st snapshot survey was conducted on the 1st July 2011: 103 children were met

2nd snapshot survey was conducted on the 27th January 2012: 135 children were met

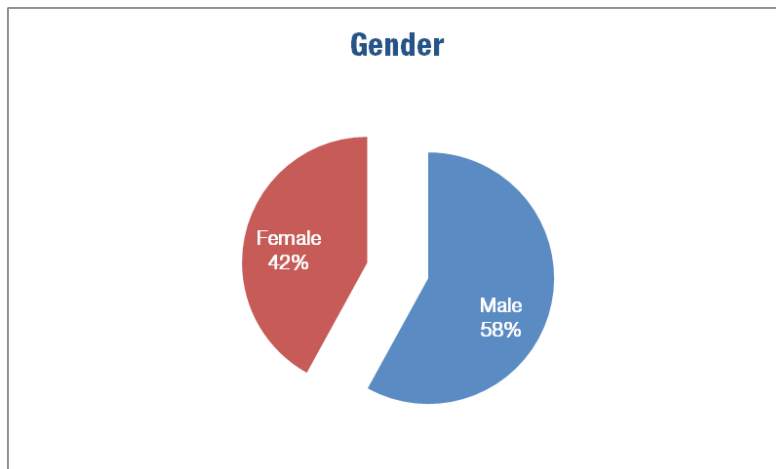
3rd snapshot survey was conducted on the 27th July 2012: 167 children were met

## A- GENERAL FIGURES – ALL CATEGORIES

The first part of this quantitative analysis highlights the characteristics of all different categories of street children population in Bangkok. It will be followed by a specific analysis for each category of street children in order to identify the specific trends and characteristics of each category.

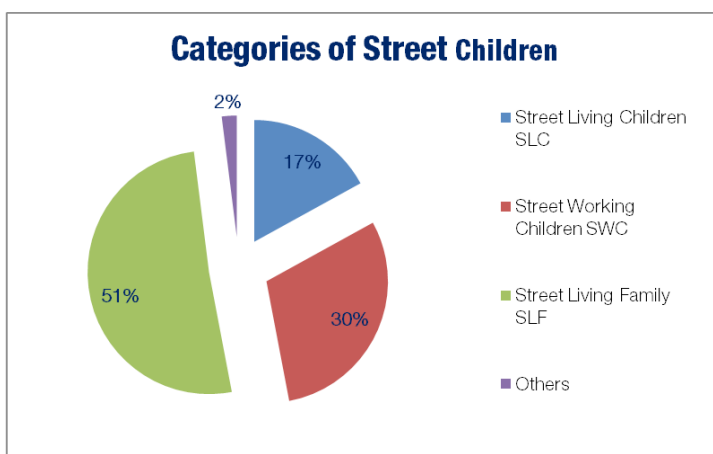
## Gender

Over the 3 surveys the team met an average of 135 street children during each survey, 42 % of them were females.



The gender distribution shows a majority of males (58%) consistent with other countries in the region; however this distribution varies in the different street children categories.

## Categories

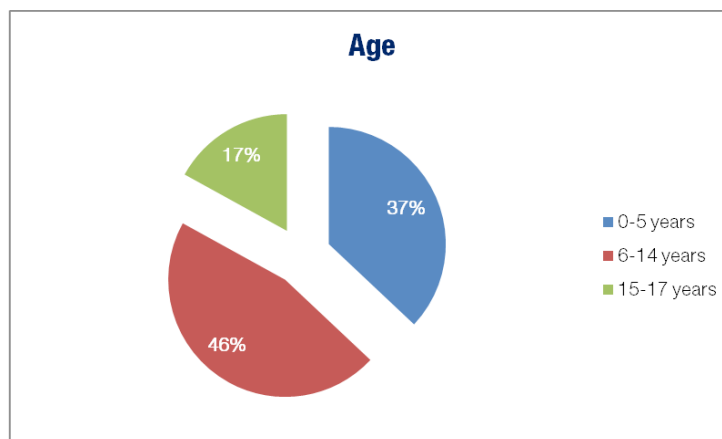


On average over the 3 snapshot surveys:

- 17% of children met were street living children
- 30% of all children met were street working children
- 51% of all children met were children of street families or begging babies with their mothers
- 2% of all children met were at risk of becoming street living.

The high proportion of street families (51%) can be explained by the high number of poor families from Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar who are attracted to migrate to Bangkok due to its relative economic prosperity and the perception that it will provide profitable begging opportunities.

## Age

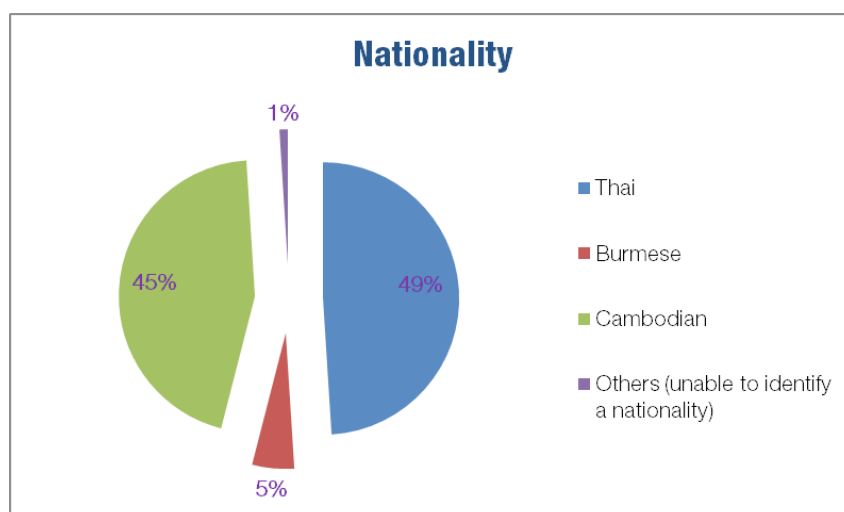


- 37% of all children interviewed were between 0 to 5 years old
- 46% of all children interviewed were between 6 to 14 years old
- 17 % of all children interviewed were between 15 to 17 years old

The size of the 0-5 year old group (37% of the total) can be explained by the high proportion of children of street families among the street population in Bangkok. Many of these begging families have babies and young children.

It is very common that adult beggars (mostly females) are carrying babies in order to earn more money from begging activities. The importance of the 0-5 age group (accompanied by mothers, relatives or caregivers and coming largely from Cambodia) is one of the main characteristic of the street children population in Bangkok. 17 % of the sample was composed of youth aged 15-17 years old.

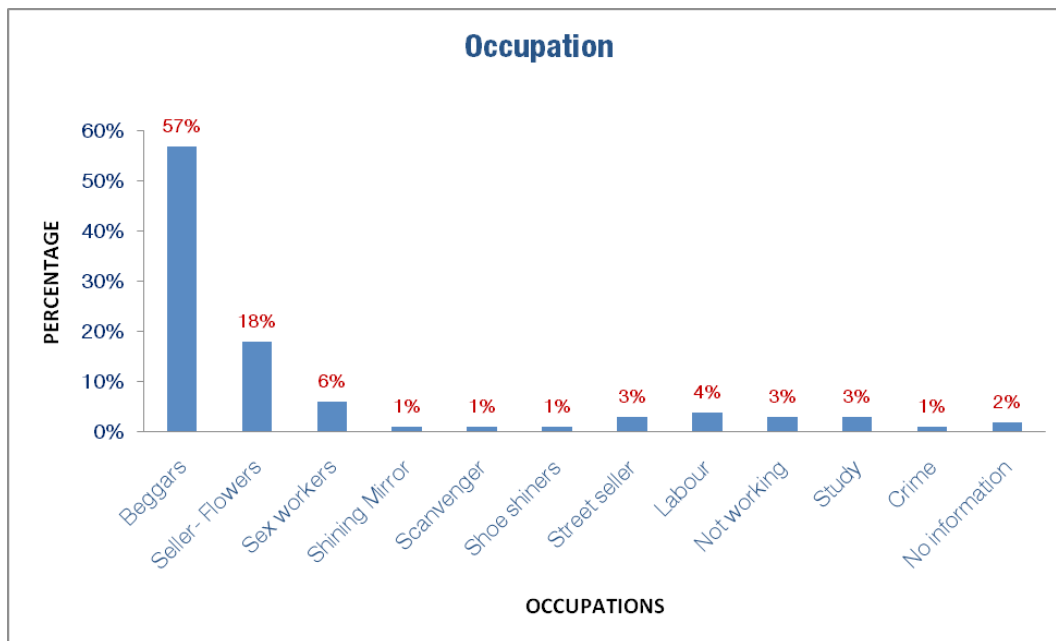
## Nationality



- 49% of all street children met were Thai
- 45% of all street children met were Cambodian
- 5% of all street children met were Burmese
- 1% were unable to identify their nationality

The surveys show a majority of Thai (49%) and Khmer (45%) street children. The second part of the Street Children Profile will outline the different characteristics of Khmer and Thai street children.

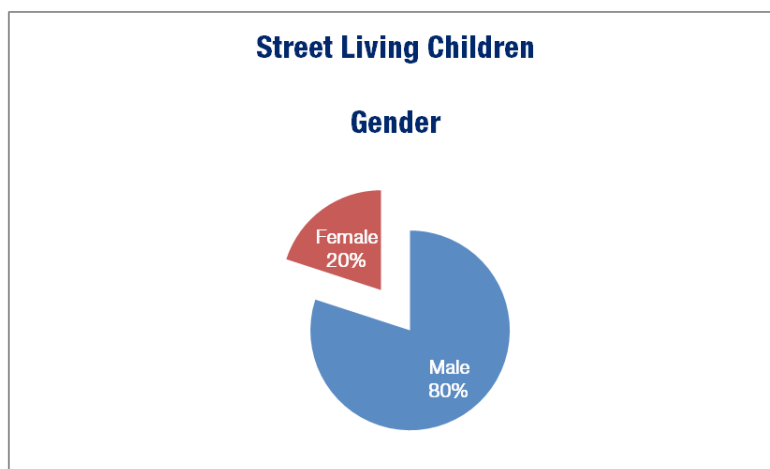
## Main Occupation



This finding indicates that begging is the main activity of children on the streets of Bangkok. Selling flowers and sex work also emerge as significant occupations. All other forms of income generating activity appear to be insignificant.

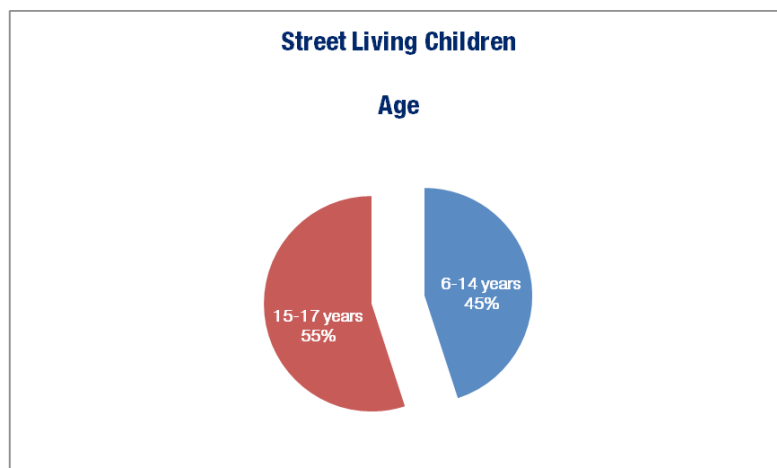
## B- STREET LIVING CHILDREN

### Gender



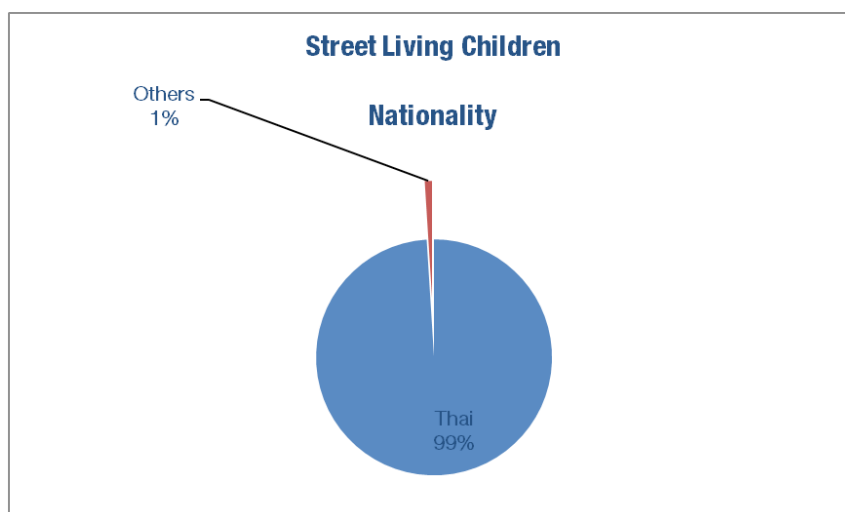
The gender distribution within the SLC category reveals an outstanding number of males (80%), reflecting the vulnerability of females living alone on the streets, similar to other countries in the region.

## Age



- 45% of street living children were between 6 to 14 years old
- 55% of street living children were between 15 to 17 years old

## Nationality



99% of street living children were Thai children.

This high percentage of Thai children can be explained by the fact that children coming from other countries with the objective of earning money most often are with relatives or caregivers. It is also important to remember that children coming from other countries live in illegal situations, without visas or working permits. It is thus more difficult and dangerous for foreign children to be living on the streets where the risks of police arrest are higher.

## Street living case study

Koo is a 17 year old boy originally from Nong Bua lam Poo Province. Koo's parents separated when he was very young and as a result he went to live with his grandmother.

Conditions at the grandmother's house were not good, and Koo suffered physical abuse and was not attending school.



At the age of 7 Koo ran away from home and began living on the streets in Bangkok. Over the next ten years he was to remain on the streets where he survived by begging. He was also addicted to sniffing glue. During this period he was placed at various times in Government Shelters - including Ban Khon Khean, Ban Phumvet and Ban Metta.

Koo lived in the RTG Shelter of Ban Khon Khean from the age of 9, but he ran away from the shelter at the age of 13, and returned to living on the streets.

Peuan Peuan conducts regular outreach activities in those areas with high numbers of street living children. The objective of outreach is to provide emergency help when needed (particularly medical assistance), and to deliver life skills training on topics selected to keep children on the streets safe (HIV/AIDS, Drugs, Child Rights, etc). Peuan Peuan also run a 24 hour Hotline that street children can call in an emergency. Peuan Peuan Outreach Team met with Koo for the first time when he was living on the street at Sapanput, Bangkok in 2009. Case management was opened and he was assigned his own case worker.

“Case Management” refers to the system whereby every Friends International beneficiary has an allocated social worker with whom they meet regularly to agree and progress the actions needed to build a better future for the child or young person.

The case worker traced Koo’s grandmother and a visit for Koo to see his grandmother was facilitated in 2010. A family assessment was carried out, but family reintegration was not possible due to his grandmother being very old and having no income to support Koo.

Koo returned to Bangkok and the Peuan Peuan team maintained contact through street outreach. During this period Koo was placed in the RTG shelter Ban Phumvet on several occasions. But on leaving the shelter he always returned to living on the streets.

In June 2012 Koo informed his case manager that he would like to become a monk back in his home town, where he would also be able to have contact with his grandmother.

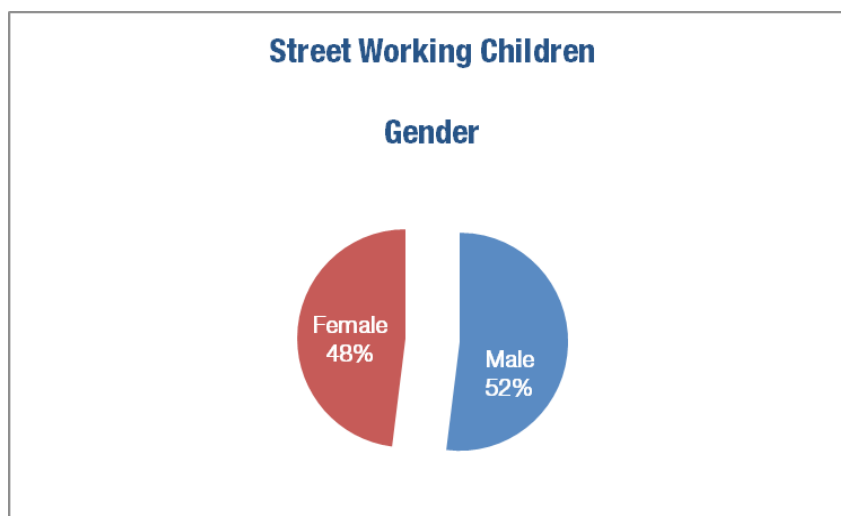
A training place at a monastery was arranged, but due to problems arising at the pagoda, some with Koo’s involvement, he was unable to continue the training and was requested to leave.

He went to live for some time with his grandmother and Peuan Peuan kept in contact with him and worked with him to find a job.

In September 2012 Koo began work as a security guard in Pathum Thani. He is now financially independent and has his own place to stay. Peuan Peaun continues to follow up with Koo and his progress.

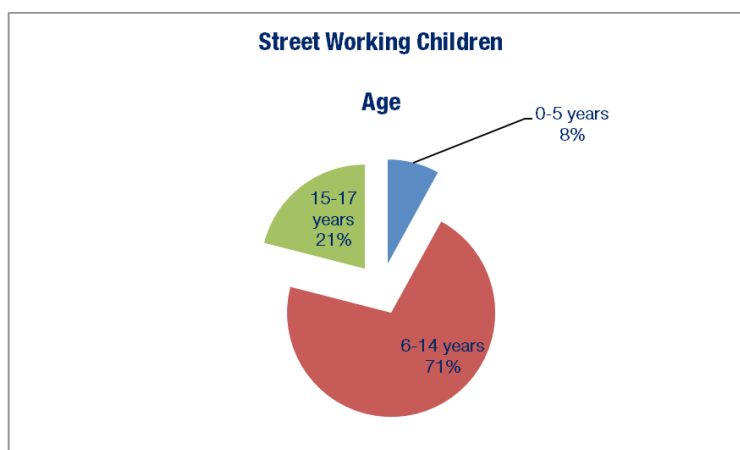
## C- STREET WORKING CHILDREN

### Gender



The street working children category has a balanced gender distribution (48% females and 52% males), consistent with other countries.

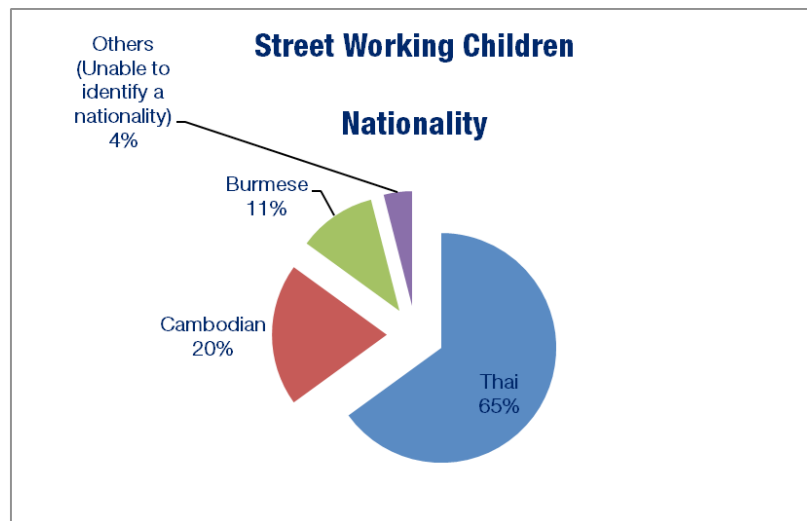
### Age



- 8% of street working children were 0 to 5 years old
- 71% of street working children were 6 to 14 years old
- 21% of street working children were 15 to 17 years old

In comparison to the street living children category, the majority of street working children are younger with 67% aged under 15 years old;

## Nationality

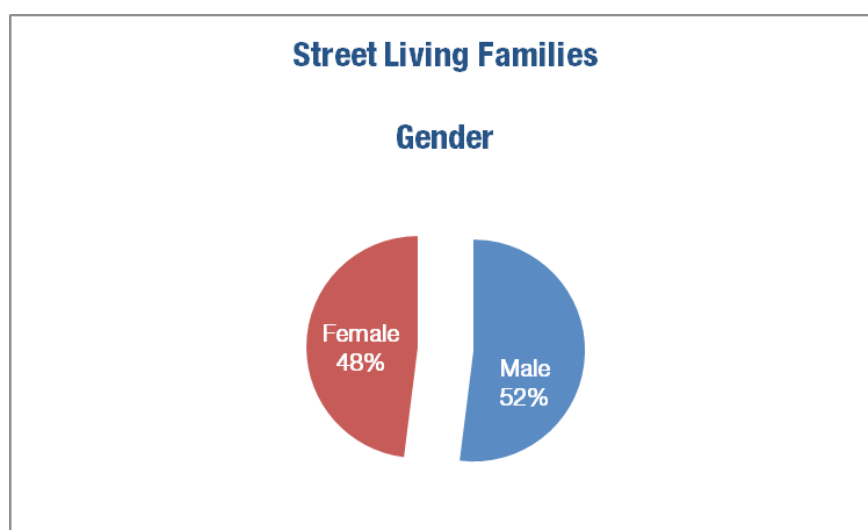


- 65% of street working children were Thai
- 20% of street working children were Khmer (Cambodian)
- 11% of street working children were Burmese
- 4% of street working children were unable to identify their nationality

The proportion of foreign children was higher among street working children than among street living children; again due to the fact most children coming from other countries are migrating to Bangkok in order to gain money (from begging, scavenging or other informal activities) and often come with relatives or caregivers.

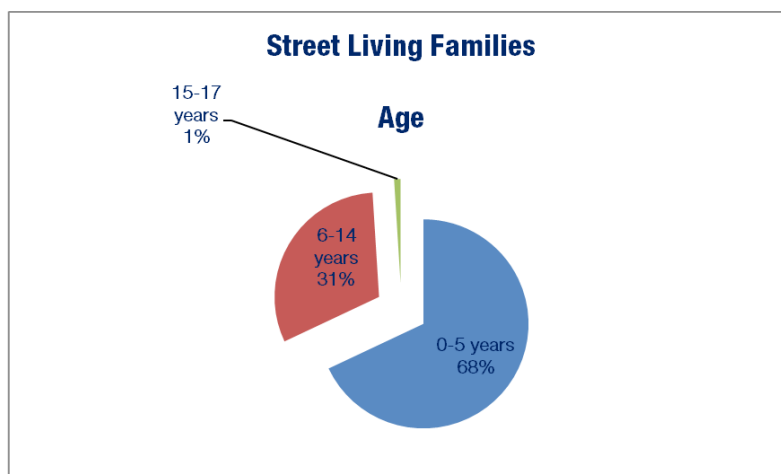
## D- STREET LIVING FAMILIES

### Gender



The group of children of street families and begging babies with mothers had an equal gender distribution.

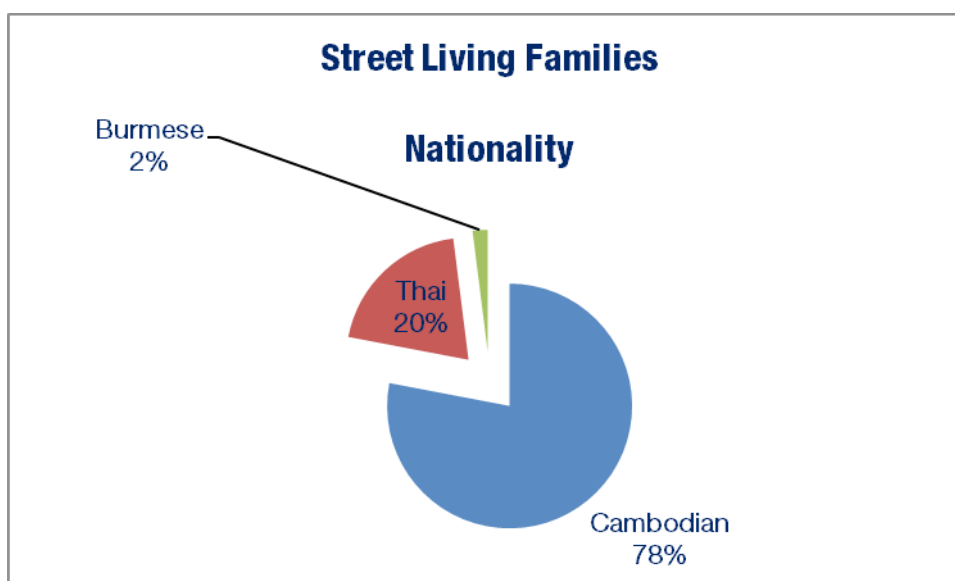
## Age



- 68% of children of street families were 0 to 5 years old
- 31% of children of street families were 6 to 14 years old
- 1% of children of street families were 15 to 17 years old

The street family category shows a contrast in age structure compared to other groups. This is linked to the motivation of the street families, migrating to find money in Bangkok mostly from begging and very often “carrying” very young children which is more likely to attract people’s charity.

## Nationality



- 78 % of children of street families were Khmer (Cambodian)
- 20 % of children of street families were Thai
- 2 % of children of street families were Burmese

The category of children of street families and begging babies with mothers is composed primarily of children (78%). This can be explained by the fact that families coming to beg on the streets of Bangkok are using young children under 5 to maximize the revenues of their begging activities.

## **BMA Collaboration case study**

Following the loss of their livelihood due to flooding in Surathani Province in 2011, the Sawopat family migrated to Bangkok. The father had previously worked on a rubber plantation and the mother has mild learning difficulties. The family has 2 boys aged 5 and 7 years old.

Upon arrival at Hualumpong Train Station in Bangkok the family were robbed of their belongings, including their ID documentation.

The family had to resort to living on the street, where they accessed food and washing facilities at the BMA Center In Suan Lumpini. This situation continued for several months.

In May 2011 the BMA contacted Peuan Peuan to co-ordinate working together to help this family.

BMA staff liaised with the Education Department and arranged for the children to begin attending a local school. Peuan Peuan provided the children with school material support in the form of uniforms, books, etc. Peuan Peuan opened case management for the family and assigned them an individual case worker. A room was rented for the family and emergency food support was provided.

Peuan Peuan staff identified a job placement for the father as a security guard and assisted him in getting the ID documentation required.

Following difficulties in managing money and problems at work, the father lost his job and the family ended up back on the streets.

Peuan Peuan staff were able to re-stabilize the family quite quickly. The family were re-housed and the father gained another security job. Both boys are now in school and doing well, and the family are financially independent and regularly visited by Peuan Peuan staff.

## V- INFORMATION BASED ON INDIVIDUAL CASE MANAGERMENTS

For the qualitative analysis of the Profile of street children in Bangkok, the Peuan Peuan team, in junction with the Department of Social Development and Welfare, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security and BMA have collected information from 100 street children's individual Case Management files.

“Case Management” refers to the system whereby every Friends International beneficiary has an allocated social worker with whom they meet regularly to agree and progress the actions needed to build a better future for the child or young person.

The information in this section is not representative of the global street children population in Bangkok. It provides a profile of a limited number of street children who have been registered with Peuan Peuan services between August 2010 and August 2012. This information, combined with the snapshot surveys quantitative data, is intended to provide a more holistic picture of the profile and situation of street children in Bangkok.

### Gender

Category	Males 0-5	Males 6-14	Males 15-17	Males Total	Females 0-5	Females 6-14	Females 15-17	Females Total	TOTAL
All	10	44	20	74	5	14	7	26	100
%	14	59	27	100	19	54	27	100	100

The data shows a large representation of males (74%) among the total number of street children registered by Peuan Peuan. This figure is rather different from the gender distribution found in the snapshot survey results. This is explained by the fact that the Peuan Peuan team focus on opening case managements for children living on their own without, or with very limited, adult care, who are in most cases male, similar to other countries.



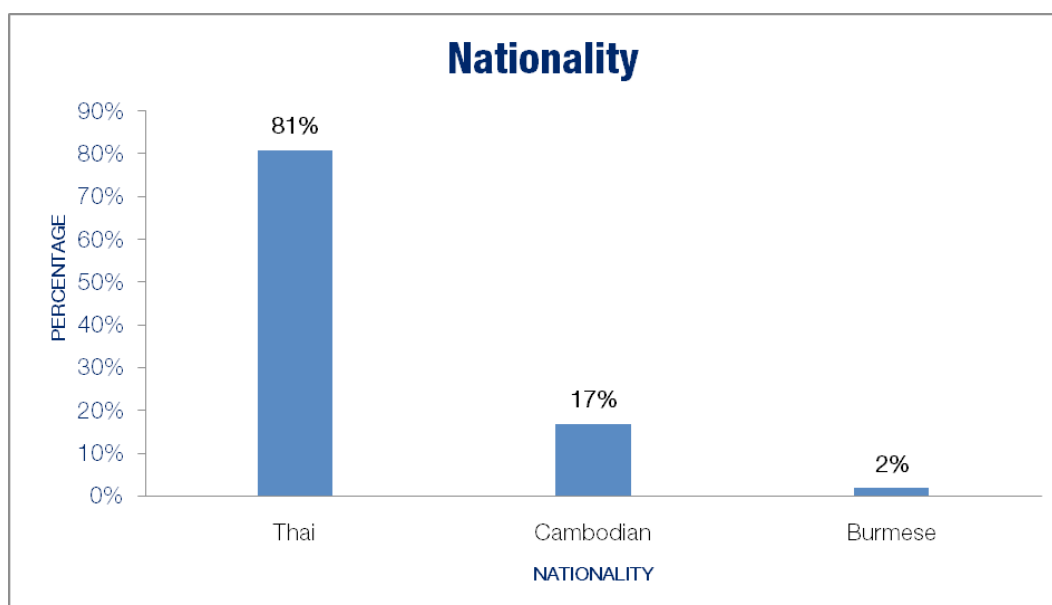
## Categories

Category	Males 0-5	Males 6-14	Males 15-17	Males Total	Females 0-5	Females 6-14	Females 15-17	Females Total	TOTAL
Street living	0	9	10	19	0	0	0	0	19
Street working	6	32	11	49	3	11	6	20	69
Street family	4	6	0	10	2	0	0	2	12

The data shows a higher proportion of street working children among the total of all street children (69% compared to 31% of the snapshot survey sample), an important proportion of street living children (19 %) and a much smaller percentage of children of street families (12%)

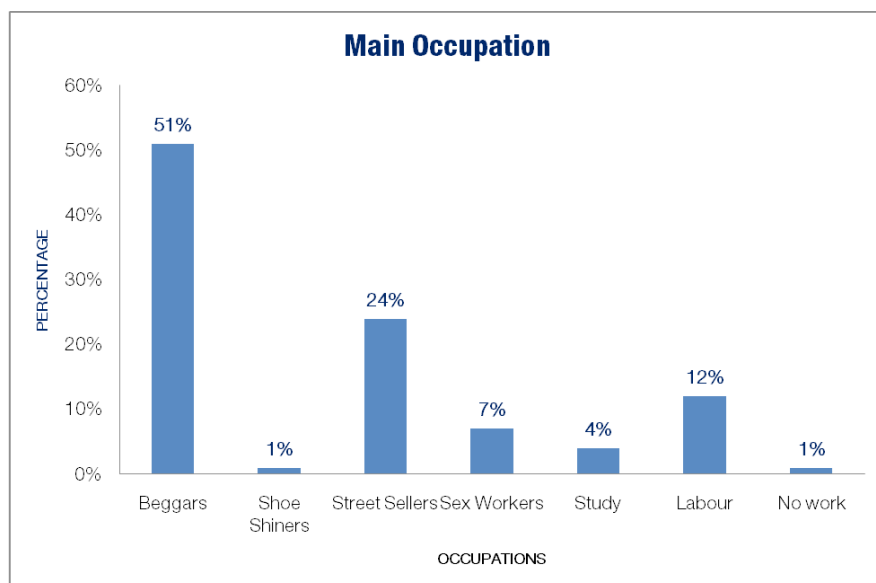
This can be explained by the fact that the Peuan Peuan case managements have focused on street living children as they are living on the streets on their own and face higher risks than other categories.

## Nationality



Again, this finding reflects Peuan Peuan's greater focus on opening case managements and providing individual social work support to the most vulnerable group – those living on the streets without adults-who are predominantly male Thai children (81%).

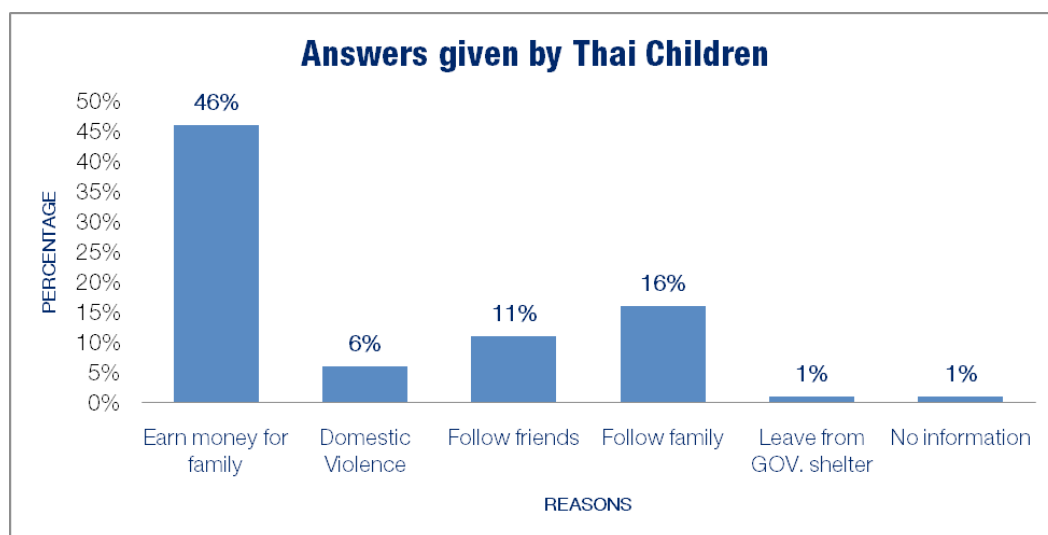
## Occupation



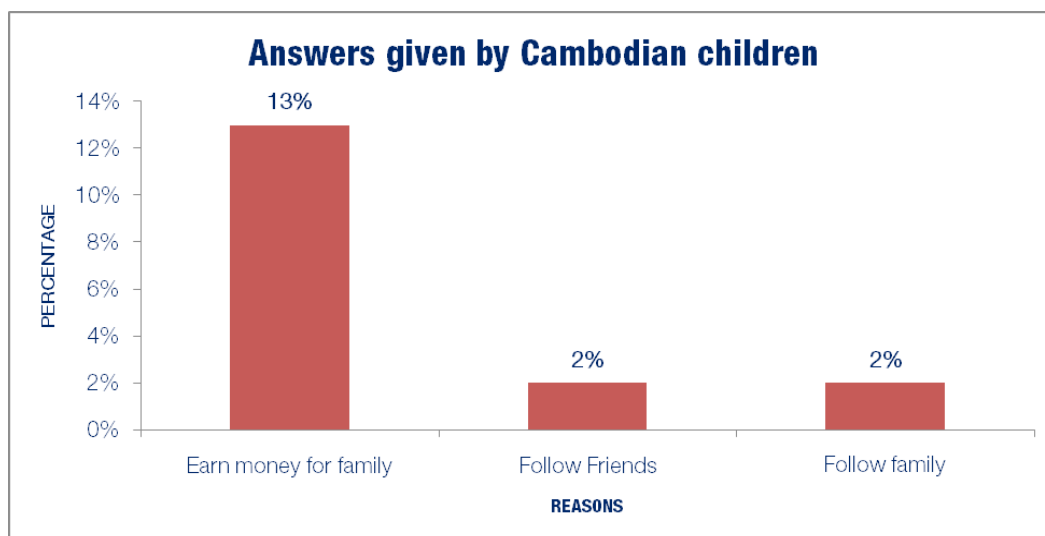
51 % of street children mentioned begging as their primary activity, making begging the main occupation. Street sellers (24%), labour (12%) and sex work (7%) followed as the remaining main answers.

## Reasons for working/living on the streets

Answers given by Thai children (81% of the sample):



Answers given by Cambodian children (17% of the sample):

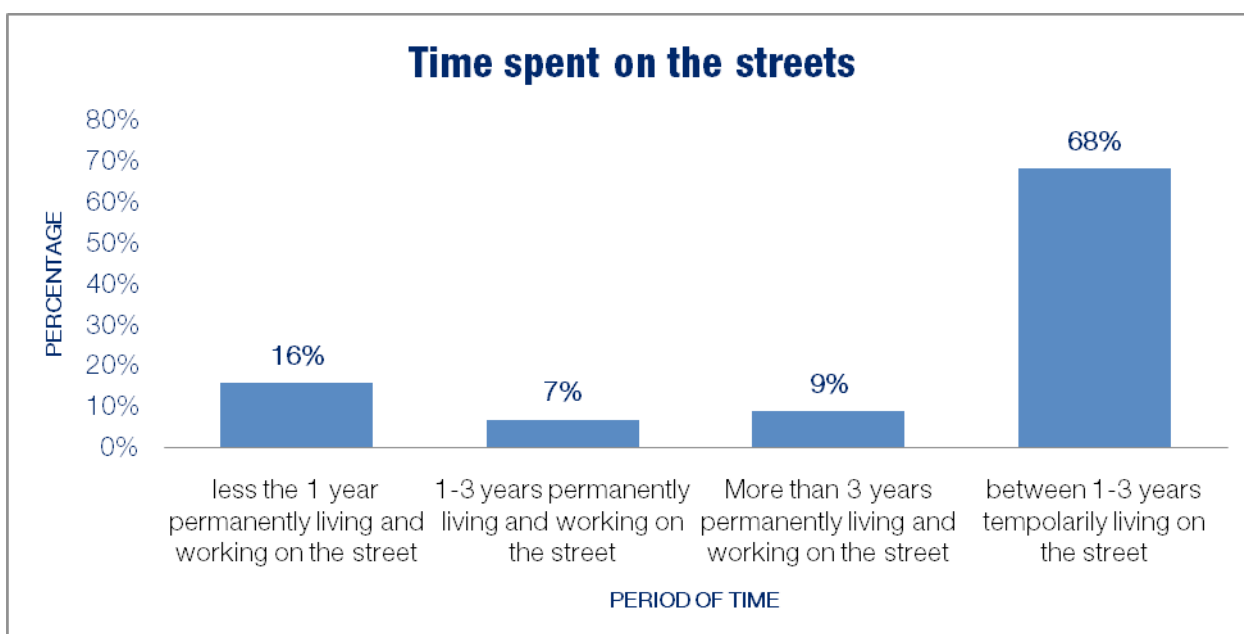


The comparison between the reasons given by Thai and Khmer children confirms some of the findings in the first part of the Profile;

A larger number of Thai children have come to the streets due to domestic violence, family breakdown or following their friends. This explains why a majority of Thai street children are living on the streets and have cut ties with their family.

The majority of Khmer street children have come to Bangkok in order to earn money to support their families, which explains why majority of them are only working on the streets, keeping more or less regular contact with their parents, relatives or caregivers.

## Time spent on the streets:

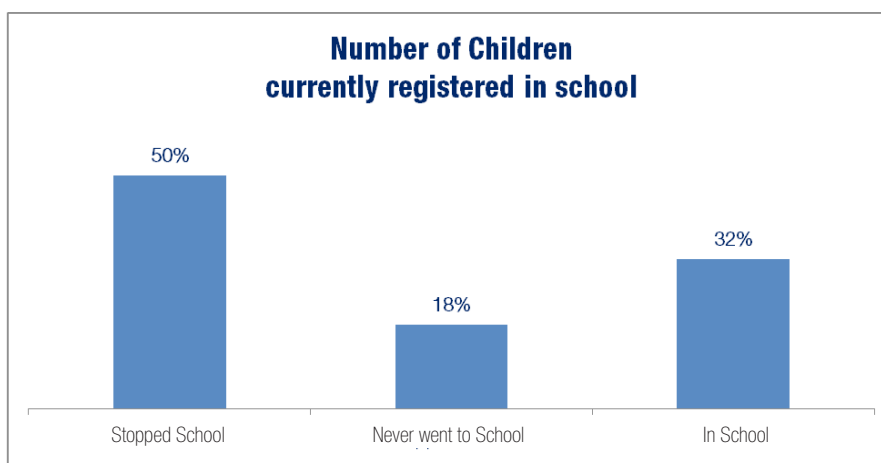


- 16 % of all street children registered in Peuan Peuan have spent less than 1 year on the streets permanently.
- 7 % of all street children registered in Peuan Peuan have spent more than 1-3 years on the streets permanently.
- 9 % of all street children registered in Peuan Peuan have spent more than 3 years on the streets permanently.
- 68% of all street children registered in Peuan Peuan have spent between 1-3 years on the street temporarily.

The analysis of the time spent on the streets shows similar results for the different nationalities. A large majority of children have spent one or several years on the streets.

This finding indicates that living and working on the streets is not a temporary situation for the majority of street children in contact with Peuan Peuan, rather it's an ongoing, long-term situation.

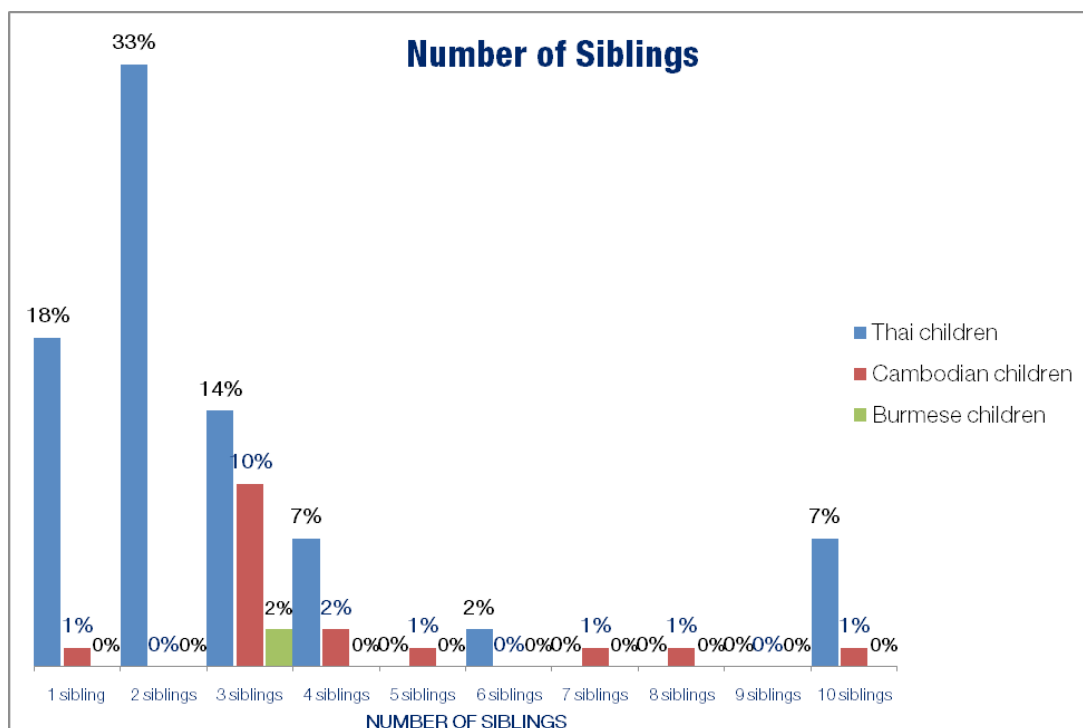
## Education



- 50% of all street children have stopped attending school
- 18% never attended school, including the ones of under school age
- 32% Study in school

The percentage of children currently registered in school was low; 32% of children were studying at the time of the survey, showing the need to support street children in Bangkok to access non-formal education programs and to reintegrate them to the public school system.

## Number of siblings

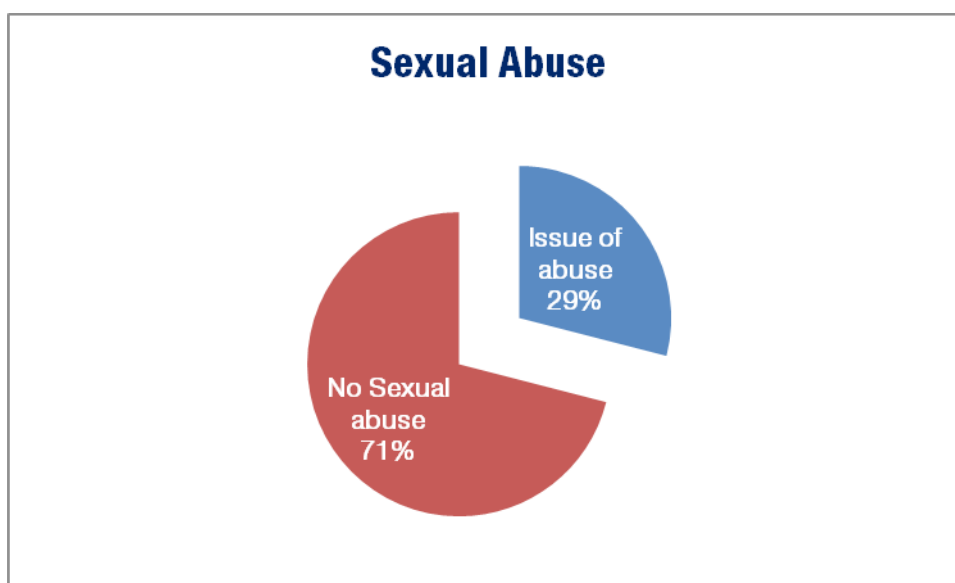


- 20 % of Thai children had 4 siblings or more. (81 individual's case management of Thai children)
- 35 % of Cambodian children had 4 siblings or more. (17 individual's case management of Cambodian children)

The graph highlights a clear tendency of Thai children having on average fewer siblings than Khmer children, which is consistent with the general demographic tendencies in both countries (Cambodia's fertility rate in 2005-2010 was 3.2<sup>2</sup> ; Thailand's rate was 1.82 for the same period).

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2007).

## Sexual Abuse



**29% of all street children registered in Peuan Peuan between 2010 and 2012 said they have been victims of sexual abuse.**

This high percentage reinforces the need for providing protection and support services to street children in Bangkok.

The above information has been obtained from case files. Peuan Peuan staff have not specifically questioned children on the streets about their experience of sexual abuse.

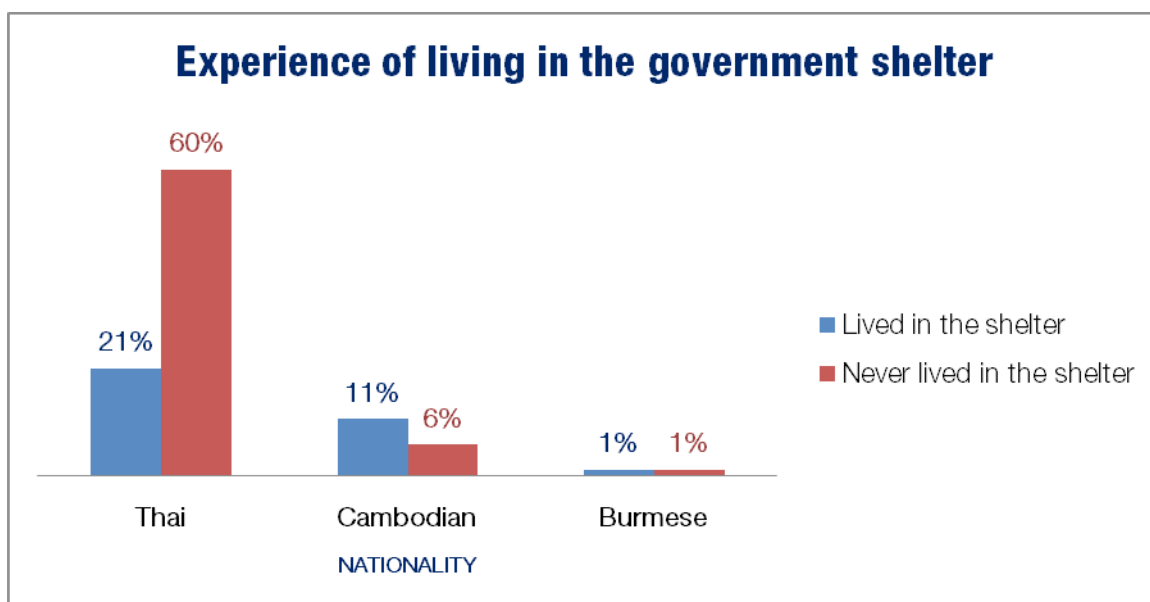
This very high figure indicates the importance of child protection and working towards preventing children from going to live on the streets and working to support and reintegrate those that are already living or working on the street.



## Previously lived in government shelter:

33% of all street children said they had previously lived in government shelter

67% of all street children had not previously lived in government shelter



The finding that 1 out of every 3rd street child that Peuan Peuan works with have previously lived in a Government shelter suggests that there is much needed work to be done on supporting the successful reintegration and rehabilitation of children from Government shelters.

The results indicate that the work on sustainable reintegration from Government shelters could help reduce the number of both Thai and foreign children living and working on the streets in Bangkok.

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