

Walking the streets with the Street Children

(4 players)

Instructions:

Materials: You need 4 markers and 1 dice.

Preparation: Put the event cards face down on the field with the corresponding color.

Begin: Each player represents one of the children pictured. Put your markers on the respective photo. The youngest player begins throwing the dice. If the dice shows 1, pick up the event card number 1 of your color, read it aloud and move to the first square of the circuit. If it shows any other number, pass the turn. Everyone needs to roll a 1 to get on the board.

Goal: You have to reach the center through your own picture. Before you can enter, you have to go at least one full round, and you have to have used all your personal event cards. If by the time you complete your first round you have not used them all, you have to go for another round.

Play: Take turns and move ahead according to the number on the dice. If there is anything written on the square where you land, read it out aloud. Follow the instructions on the event fields. When you are asked to take one of your personal cards, do so in the order from 1 to 4. Card 4 will allow you to move to the center.



Photo credits:

Center and bottom left: Henry/Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers

Top left: Fr. Shay Cullen, PREDA

Top right: Sprague/Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers

Bottom right: Thomas/Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers

For further information about street children and projects go to:

- People's Recovery, Empowerment, and Development Assistance Foundation, Olongapo City, Philippines, www.preda.org
- Catholic Action for Street Children, c/o Brothers E.L.C., P.O. Box 709, Madina, Accra, Ghana, West Africa, www.btinternet.com/~cas/
- Brother Alex Walsh, "Amanecer" Cochabamba, Bolivia, www.maryknoll.org
- Casa Alianza, www.casa-alianza.org

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Teachers' background notes

Street children? I don't know...

Street children are part of that very large population worldwide who live in abject poverty and who are particularly vulnerable.

How many street children are there?

No one really knows how many street children there are. An often quoted figure is UNICEF's estimate of 100 million. This number is high and includes those children who spend a large part of their day on the city streets begging, selling trinkets, shining shoes or washing cars to supplement the income of their families living in the slums and shantytowns.

Between 15 and 25 percent of street children actually live in the streets, often in groups of other children. They sleep in abandoned buildings, under bridges, in doorways, or in public parks. These are millions of children vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

Why are they on the streets?

Many of them ran away because of the physical or sexual abuse they have experienced from parents, step-parents or other family members. Others were abandoned or sent into the cities because of sheer poverty and inability of the family to cope or feed the child. Some are refugees, or war or AIDS orphans. Their situation varies from country to country. Common to all is family stress and breakdown, through poverty, armed conflict, natural disaster or disease.

Most studies show that street children are mainly boys, coming onto the street typically at around 10-14 years of age, although there have always been many much younger. Field workers are now beginning to report many more street living girls, and that new street children tend to be younger. Some children of course begin life on the streets as the children of street children.

What are their problems?

In order to survive, street children have to earn money through all kinds of menial works like helping street traders, shoeshining, windscreen washing or portering. Others beg, scavenge or resort to petty theft and prostitution. They rarely get more than a few years of elementary education and have no access to health care.

Many are addicted to inhalants such as glue, which offers them an escape from reality and takes away hunger but also causes many physical and psychological problems, including irreversible brain damage.

Many street children are victims of abuse, illegal arrest, sometimes murder, by police or other authorities. Others are recruited and exploited by drug dealers, pimps or pedophiles.

Why should we tell our children about this sad reality?

The presence of children on the street is one of the most scandalous signs of poverty around the globe. Learning about the fate of children like them, yet in completely different life situations, can help our children to become more sensitive to global issues. It will also motivate them to better appreciate their own situation and opportunities. Hopefully it will help them to grow in love and solidarity with their sisters and brothers around the world.

But why a game?

The game requires the players to assume the identity of four individual street children. The identity of the children (except for Pia) are fictional, but very close to reality. Through the identification children experience the vulnerability of street children and their exposure to the many factors that impact their lives. The lay out of the game follows the popular game "Sorry." In addition to what is provided in the bag, the players need a dice and four markers. The markers could be regular markers from other games, or any other small item (nuts, stones, coins, etc.) Each child follows his or her own story according to the event cards. Additional events, information and reflections are provided on the squares of the board. The goal for each player is to get to the inner island where they find respect, protection, and opportunities for a better future. To get there, they need to find help through some organisation that works with street children.

How can the game be used?

We suggest the game for students in 3rd grade and up. It can be used in Social Sciences or Religion classes, or in other situations where issues of global poverty and living condition of children come up. It might be helpful to do a brainstorming on street children with the group before starting the game. After the game, the students should get an opportunity to express their feelings and to bring up questions. Some follow up should be done, either as homework or as an assignment for computer class, using the links mentioned below. Ideally, this should lead to an activity where the students share what they have learned and raise funds to support projects that work with street children. This could be done, for example, as part of the HCA Lent campaigns. HCA currently provides funding for 13 projects that support street children in Thailand, Sri Lanka, Philippines, India, Tanzania, Burundi, South Africa, Madagascar, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, and Sierra Leone.

Links for further information and action

- Unicef (www.unicef.org)
- Amnesty International (www.amnesty.org)
- Pangaea, Street Children-Community Children, Worldwide Resource Library (www.pangaea.org/street_children)
- Fr. Shay Cullen, People's Recovery, Empowerment, and Development Assistance Foundation, Olongapo City, Philippines (www.preda.org)
- Catholic Action for Street Children, Accra, Ghana (c/o Brothers F.I.C., PO.Box 709, Madina, Accra, Ghana. www.brinternet.com/~cas/)
- Brother Alex Walsh, "Amanecer", Cochabamba, Bolivia (www.maryloll.org)
- Casa Alianza, Covenant House Latin America (www.casa-alianza.org)

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Gabriel 4

Gabriel 3

Gabriel 2

Gabriel 1

Pia 2

Pia 1

Carlos 1

Julio 1

Carlos 2

Julio 2

Carlos 3

Julio 3

Carlos 4

Julio 4

Pia 4

Pia 3

While you are hanging out in the park some boys tell you about Br. Alex Walsh's "Amanecer" program. You find the place and are invited to stay with them in the shelter.

You have reached the goal.

You run away from the correction center and join a group of older boys in the street. They protect you, but they also make you help them in their robberies. You are afraid, but you have nowhere else to go.

Move 1 square back.

You ask people for money and food, and because you are so young they often give you some. Sometimes you also pick pockets on a bus. One day, someone catches you, and you are sent to a child correction center.

You miss your next turn.

*Carlos, 10 years old
Cochabamba, Bolivia*

When you were 3 years old, your mother abandoned you. Your father abandoned you when you were 4, leaving you with a neighbor. She raised you but you were feeling bad because she was not your mom. When you were eight, you started hanging out in the streets.

Start your journey.

You begin to realize that the street is high risk with many dangers. Someone tells you about the services of Casa Alianza, and you are admitted to their crisis center. If you decide to stay, you can later move on to a more permanent home and get some education.

You have reached the goal.

In jail, some of the adult inmates are into drugs. They ask you to join them as a dealer and promise you good profit. When you leave jail, they hook you up with one of them outside.

You miss your next turn.

One of your friends gives you the opportunity to become part of his gang. They assault people with sharp weapons. In one of these incidents, police catches you and put you in jail.

Move back 1 square.

*Julio, 15 years old
Tegucigalpa, Honduras*

You have been living on the streets for almost five years. When you were 10, your parents died, and the only family you had left was one older sister. You left for the streets and soon some friends introduced you to sniffing glue. You like it, because it helps you forget all your bad feelings for some time. You steal from women and older people to buy your food and drugs.

Start your journey.

When you are 9, you find work as a live-in servant girl. You work from dawn until late at night for a very low wage. You have a place to sleep, but you still go to bed hungry. You dream about a better life.

You miss your next turn.

You meet a man who offers you a better servant job for a wealthy family. Unknown to you, he has sold you into slavery. Now, you work even harder and are physically abused. The abuse gets reported to authorities who take you to live at the People's Recovery Empowerment, and Development Assistance Foundation (PREDA). There you get a new chance to continue your education, and you become an advocate against child abuse.

You have reached the goal.

At the wake of your grandfather you meet your father for the first time. But he ignores you and does not even call you his daughter. You feel very hurt and alone.

Move 1 square back.

*Pia, 12 years old
Manila, Philippines*

You were brought up by your aunt and grandparents who also cared for five other cousins and did not pay much attention to you. Since you were eight, you have been sleeping in the streets and earning some money as a parking attendant and a cleaner. In grade 3 you dropped out of school.

Start your journey.

A friend takes you to meet a fieldworker from CAS (Catholic Action for Street Children) who invites you and your sister to visit their house of Refuge. At this day-center, street children can play, rest, wash, take classes and receive medical treatment. After a few visits, they tell you about a sponsorship program to learn a trade and get off the street.

You have reached the goal.

You got word from home that your mother is very ill. You try to work even harder to send her more money for her medicine, but after three weeks she dies. Your siblings are being split up among relatives. You are very sad and worry for them.

You miss your next turn.

A gang of older boys catches you on the way from the market to your sleeping place. They beat you up and take all the money you had saved this month to send back home.

Move 2 squares back.

*Gabriel, 13 years old
Accra, Ghana*

You were born in a village in the countryside where you lived with your parents and seven brothers and sisters. Two years ago, your father got sick with AIDS and died after your family had spent all the money on medicine. Your mother could not maintain the family, so you and your older sister came to Accra, looking for jobs. You are working as a porter in the market.

Start your journey.

An estimated 100 million children live and work on the streets in the developing world.

So Jesus said again, "I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly."
(John 10:10)

Police caught you when you were stealing food in the market and takes you to a juvenile detention center.
Move 4 squares back.

Jesus, however, called the children to himself and said, "Let the children come to me and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." (Lk 18:17)

Take one of your personal cards.



Street children often resort to petty theft and prostitution to survive.



Most street children (75%) have some family links but spend most of their lives on the streets begging, selling trinkets, shining shoes or washing cars to supplement their families' income.

"Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Mt 25:40)

A street worker takes you to a center where street children get free medical care.
Move 1 square forward.

Many street children are victims of abuse, sometimes murder, by police, other authorities and individuals who are supposed to protect them.

Today you were not able to find enough food and go to sleep hungry.
Move 1 square back.

Each child has the right to be protected from abuse and neglect. Un-Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 19

Take one of your personal cards



In most developing countries there are fewer street girls than boys. However, street girls are more vulnerable than boys.

Take one of your personal cards.

The rainy season began, and you got sick from being wet and cold. You miss your next turn.

Take one of your personal cards

One of your friends had a good day working at the market and shares food with you.

Move 1 square forward.

Many street children are addicted to sniffing paint thinner or glue, which offers them an escape from reality, and takes away hunger. This causes hallucinations, pulmonary and kidney problems, and brain damage.

Some children came, with their families or alone, from the country side in order to find jobs in the city.



Someone stole your shoes while you were sleeping.

Move 1 square back.

Jesus called a child over, placed it in their midst, and said, "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me." (Mt 18:5)



Take one of your personal cards.

Many street children are escaping from physical and sexual abuse by their parents or step-parents.

You meet a social worker who offers to enroll you in a reintegration class for street children to continue your elementary education.

Take another turn.

About 25% of the street children actually live in the streets, often in a group of other children. They sleep in abandoned buildings, under bridges, in doorways, or in public parks.