

# ***Takmau Homeless Youth Survey***

***Cambodia, 2005***



***By  
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***For  
Save the Children Australia***

## **Survey Summary**

The Takmau baseline survey was designed to answer four basic questions about young people in Takmau township.

- How many children (people?) live on the streets in Takmau town?
- Where do these children (people?) come from?
- What services do they access, if any?
- What services do they need, if any?

### ***Definitions***

For the purposes of the mapping component, we started with the following definition of target young people:

*Children who sleep on the street in Takmau township and have no house*

During the mapping, a number of additional populations were identified and investigated that showed that this definition was definitely too narrow. In a number of locations in Takmau, there were groups of families who had erected temporary shelters on public or private land that did not belong to them. There is also a small community of families living on boats moored on the north bank of the Takmau River. These communities are characterised by no land. To include these young people in the baseline the definition of a target young person was changed to:

*A young person who sleeps on the street, on a boat or in temporary shelter on another's land*

The survey teams also decided that the term 'street-children' was a misnomer and inaccurate to describe the population being studied. Therefore, we have used the term homeless and vulnerable youth in reporting the results.

### ***Methods***

Two Domrei field researchers, one male and one female spent five days in Takmau town drawing detailed maps of the town and key locations. During the mapping exercise, the two researchers noted and sought gathering places for homeless people. The researchers also introduced themselves to potential respondents, explained the purpose of the study and asked for locations of other homeless people in Takmau.

Based on information gathered during the mapping exercise, a short interview form was designed along with a count form. Four interviewers and a field supervisor were trained in administering the instruments and pre-tested the interview with children working at Stung Meanchey dump.

Data collection took place in 18+ locations in Takmau town. Two teams of data collectors interviewed children and young people on three separate days with a short gap in between each day of data collection. This allowed comparison of the number of families and children found at different times and on different days of the week to compute a more reliable estimate of population size.

To avoid double counting, respondents were given a coloured wristband after the interview and asked to wear it for at least the next week. The Field Supervisor

checked and edited all questionnaires in the field before leaving the sampling location.

**1. How many children (people?) live on the streets in Takmau town?**

One hundred and eighty nine young people between the ages of 5 and 24 years were asked for an interview. Fourteen declined and 175 were successfully interviewed. Overall, the survey teams found and interviewed 123 young people between the ages of 8 and 18 years. Based on multiple population counts at different times and on different days the survey team has made the following **two estimates of minimum population size:**

- **350–400 homeless or vulnerable families (adult, youth, children, babies)**
- **~ 200 homeless or vulnerable young people between 5 and 18 years**

It is possible that pockets of homeless and vulnerable youth were not included in the sample making these figures an underestimation. However, these figures are a conservative minimum.

**2. Where do these children (people?) come from?**

Young people were asked where they were born to assess the number of migrants in the sample. Around a third reported that they were born in Takmau town while another quarter were born in other parts of Kandal province. The remaining 37% were from other provinces. However, most of the young people and children interviewed (66%) could not recall living anywhere apart from Takmau.

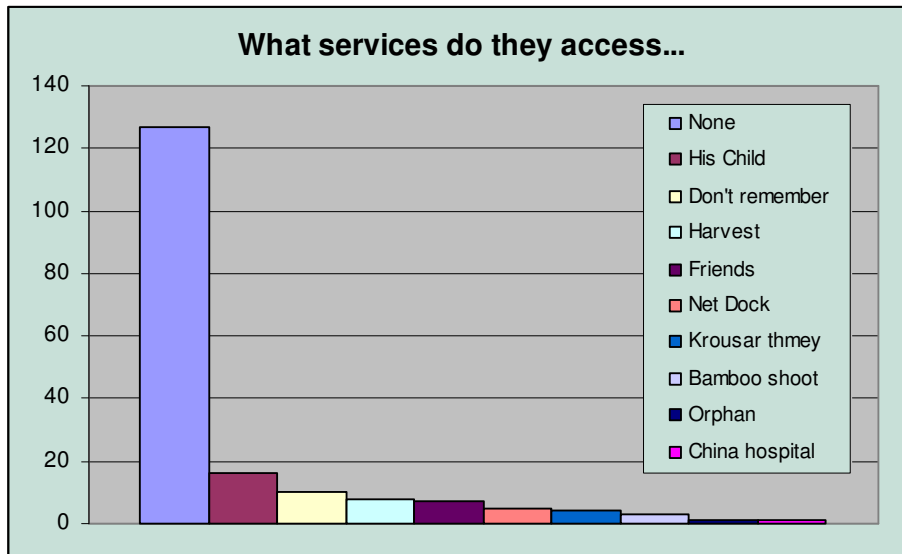
The young people interviewed also seem to be a stable population. Only 17% were recent migrants who had come to Takmau in the past year. Similarly, 19% of young people interviewed reported that they planned to leave Takmau within the next year.

**3. What services do they access, if any?**

First, young people were asked if they knew of any organisations working with children. Most respondents (59.4%) did not. **Only 71 respondents had heard of an organisation that worked with children.** The following table shows the organisations known to young people in Takmau, the number of respondents who were aware of each NGO and the number who reported that they had accessed services at each organisation.

<b>Organisation</b>	<b># of young people aware</b>	<b># who accessed services</b>
Friends/Mit Samlanh	21	7
Christian (His Child)	20	16
Krousar Thmey	9	4
Harvest	9	8
Net Dock (?)	5	5
Bamboo Shoot	4	3
Butterfly	1	0
Orphan	1	1
China Hospital	1	1
Don't remember	16	10

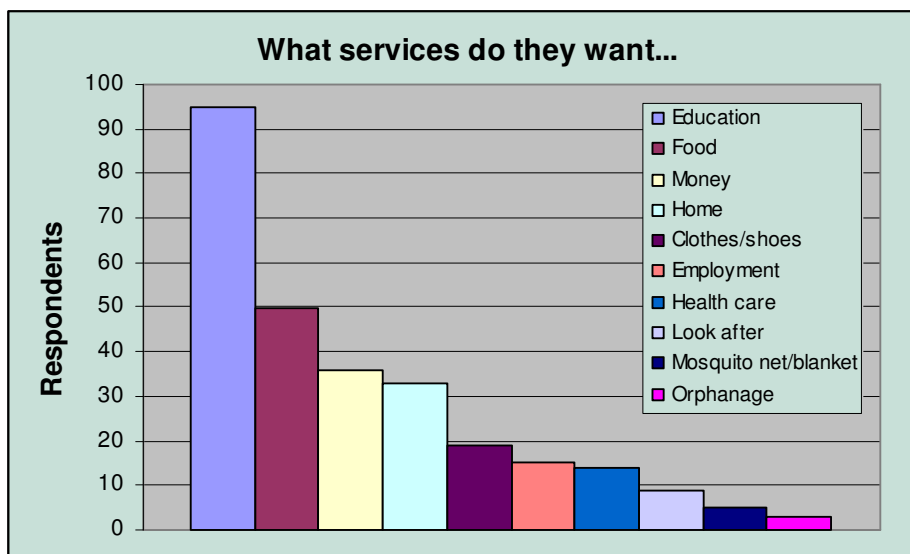
Some young people were aware of or had accessed services at more than one organisation. This means that the figure above for services accessed does not show the number of young people who used NGO services but rather the number of occasions that NGO services were used. Overall, **127 young people (73%) reported that they had never used any NGO services for children.** The following graph shows this comparison.



#### 4. What services do they need, if any?

To assess the need for services in the most direct fashion, all respondents were asked if they wanted an organisation to help homeless young people in Takmau. Not surprisingly, only three respondents (2%) answered 'no'.

All respondents were asked what they wanted from an organisation if one were working in Takmau. The results were rather surprising, demonstrating the singularity of this population of young people. The following graph shows these results.



The most common need expressed by respondents was for education (55%). Apart from education, young people reported very basic needs linked to survival – food, shelter, clothing and medical care. A very small proportion of respondents reported that they needed money (21%). These results are in contrast to many other socio-economic surveys conducted in Cambodia with comparatively wealthier populations where respondents commonly request material possessions money and food. This result highlights the extreme vulnerability and difficulties faced by these young people. It also demonstrates how these young people are excluded or unable to access existing services.

### ***Conclusions***

Homeless and vulnerable young people in Takmau represent an extreme population with multiple severe problems. The qualitative data gathered during interviews shows that these children are not a homogenous group from similar backgrounds. For example, the small proportion of migrants in the sample came from 14 different provinces and municipalities of Cambodia. They are a “grab-bag” of victims of different social problems in Cambodia. These young people are variously:

- **Single and double orphans**
- **Landless and dispossessed**
- **Children of handicapped parents**
- **Children affected by domestic violence**
- **Drug addicted**
- **Petty criminals**
- **Gang members**
- **Victims of rape and other forms of abuse**
- **Vulnerable to trafficking**
- **Mentally ill and developmentally delayed**
- **Starving and malnourished**
- **Illiterate and excluded from education**
- **Extremely poor**

Although the background to their problems varies widely, their reported and apparent needs are remarkably similar with education as the primary need.

### ***Recommendations***

***Build a bridge...*** There is a critical need for a targeted outreach and referral service for young people in Takmau township. Existing services for children are not reaching Takmau. However, a shelter or orphanage is probably not required – there are already at least two operating in Takmau. A resource and referral centre and an outreach team could serve the needs of these young people by supporting, advocating and linking them to the many existing services in Takmau and nearby Phnom Penh. Young people’s needs are extremely basic and the approach to meeting them is straightforward – what is lacking is a bridge between this disenfranchised group and the services they desperately need. This simple intervention could make a huge difference to the lives of these young people and their families.