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UN REPORT SAYS 60 COUNTRIES NEED TO TAKE ACTION ON CHILD SURVIVAL AND SAFTY

100 million kids live on world's streets

THE UN has estimated that about 100 million children around the world are forced to live wholly or partially in the streets, although reliable figures are practically impossible to calculate.

Many such children are among the 300 million who are subjected to exploitation, violence and abuse around the world, according to the same source.

Most street children are to be found in poor countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East, although the problem is also acute in parts of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

In its 2008 report on *The State of the World's Children*, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) lists a total of 60 priority countries for action on child survival and safety, of which al-

most two-thirds (38) are in sub-Saharan Africa.

The list also includes the whole of the Indian subcontinent, the main southeast Asian nations, and Brazil, Haiti and Mexico in the Americas.

Although the actual numbers of street children in each region are unknown, an idea of the scale of the problem can be gained from social indicators such as primary school enrolment and the prevalence of child labour.

The UNICEF report estimates, for example, that in sub-Saharan Africa no less than 40 per cent of girls and 36 per cent of boys are not enrolled in primary school. In the same region, 35 per cent of children aged between five and 14 years are drafted wholly or partially into the labour force.

In South Asia, nine per cent of girls and 10 per cent of boys are not at primary school, while 13



educated, and nine per cent of children have to work.

Such children, and countless others in other regions, are likely in many cases to find themselves in the streets, cut off from family, schooling and healthcare.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which came into force in 1990, states that every child should as far as possible have the right to "grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding".

The convention further guarantees the right of the child to education, and to that end seeks to ensure that primary education is "compulsory and available free to all".

per cent of children are obliged to work, the report estimates.

And in Latin America and the Caribbean, 10 per cent of primary-school-age boys and nine per cent of girls are not being