



Stopping the abuse of children
living on the streets.

RAILWAY
children
THE VOICE FOR STREET CHILDREN WORLDWIDE



In India, there are more than 12 million children living on the streets.

The Need

Street Children in India

The estimated number of street children globally runs to hundreds of millions. Approximately 12 million of those street children are in India. India has more street children than any other country in the world.

There are more than twice as many boys living on the streets of India than girls. Street girls are often not visible and tracing them is very difficult. This is because commonly they are trafficked for commercial or sexual purposes.

Some children leave their homes or are forced to leave their homes. Some are abandoned due to extreme poverty, family conflicts, abuse, and neglect. Others are lured into human trafficking by false promises of lucrative opportunities. Many of these children use public transport to leave their homes and often end up making railway or bus stations their "home" on the streets.

Children on the streets are at risk. They are vulnerable to becoming victims of violence, sexual abuse, trafficking, drugs, and even murder. They are deprived of basic human needs of warmth, health and nutrition, shelter, education, training and recreation.

Though progress has been made towards supporting and rehabilitating street children, a lot more still needs to be done to reach out to these millions of children who are at risk.



The Reality

The transport terminal often becomes the focal point in the life of a runaway or abandoned child. Research indicates that within 20 minutes of arrival at a transport terminal, an unaccompanied child will be approached by a potential abuser. If the child manages to avoid this fate, he will become part of the community of children living in and around the transport terminal. To fit into this community the new child will follow the 'unwritten rules' of the group, which are very often exploitative in nature. When the child embraces these rules, he becomes part of the gang.

The Mission

Building effective partnerships to promote early intervention and secure the child's rights to a family and/or extended communities.

Bringing about change

The idea behind Railway Children began in 1993 (when David Maidment, Chairman of Railway Children (former Controller of Safety Policy with British Rail), was on a business trip in Mumbai. David was deeply moved by the many street children he saw at the main railway terminal, and was haunted by the image of a 7 year old girl beating herself to elicit sympathy and money. On his return he researched all organisations working to help street children and saw a gap in the structure of aid. No-one was focusing on early intervention. In 1995 Railway Children was launched, to stop the abuse of children living alone and at risk on the streets through early intervention.

Railway Children India

Since India has the largest number of street children in the world, Railway Children set up its first project in India in the year 1996.

Railway Children India works primarily with children who are at risk in and around the transport terminals. It works in partnership with local organizations also focused on transport terminals. Since 1996 Railway Children has grown from reaching out to about 200 children annually to over 17,000 children each year. We are now in partnership with 23 voluntary organizations, and have a presence in 59 locations in 12 states of India, where we are positively impacting the lives of thousands of children.

What we do

Railway Children focuses on children whose lives are spent on the streets without any adult support. These children are alone and at risk. Railway Children works towards ensuring these children are acknowledged and their basic rights are met. Railway Children raises awareness among people in different sectors of society of the issues affecting street children. It collaborates with government departments, recognizing that lasting solutions lie in the hands of both the government and the general population.



The Vision

A world of safety and opportunity for children at risk on the streets.

Railway Children works in partnership with local voluntary organizations that work with children, focusing our strategies on early intervention to provide:

- A point of contact for children just arriving at transport terminals and other early destination points.
- Family reintegration, shelter, healthcare, education, training, protection and, above all, friendship.

The Early Intervention Strategy

The intervention strategy at Railway Children focuses on early intervention and social reintegration.

- **Early Intervention:** Worldwide it has been seen that a child at risk is often found in and around transport terminals. Since 20 minutes is the average length of time a newly arrived child at the terminal has before being approached by a potential abuser, Railway Children believes that early contact with the child is crucial for their safety. Intervention before the child begins to regard the terminal as “home” is vital in preventing the child from moving on to the streets. This early intervention also helps initiate the rehabilitation process and prevents problems that could impact on society at large.
- **Social reintegration:** The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child states that home is the best place for any child to grow. Railway Children firmly supports this and wherever possible and desirable works towards the reunification of the child with his/her family an community.







Railway Children's Partner Support Program

Railway Children has adopted a dynamic participatory approach in building partnerships with voluntary organizations. It selects locations for partnership keeping in mind the following factors for assessment:

- Magnitude of the problem
- Visible need
- Role of voluntary organizations and government systems in that location.

Railway Children builds a strong alliance with its partners by adding value to them. This is achieved through partner support and training and capacity building.

Through partner support and training, Railway Children strengthens the abilities of its partners to build sound, transparent, credible and cost effective programs for children at risk by offering assistance to partners in planning, monitoring and evaluation. Organizational building support and technical support is also provided if needed.

Training is an integral part of capacity building and in the last few years Railway Children has conducted training on result-based management, HIV/AIDS, perspective building, and financial management system, for all partners across India. Railway Children has also initiated two national level training projects; Ehsaas, which trains on issues of sexuality, psychological safety and HIV and funded by the Elton John Aids Foundation, and Samyak, a pathfinders program for the learning community of field level workers.

Sharing best practices

Due to our wide presence through visits to partner organizations, hosting of workshops and meetings across the country, partners all over India are exposed to effective, cutting edge programs which inspire and inform their own programs.

Networking and advocacy for social change

Railway Children is working towards strategic social change by influencing attitudes, policies and practices of decision makers at different levels. Following such initiatives, the involvement of authorities such as the Railway Protection Force in the rehabilitation of children is greater.

Allied Projects: Disaster Intervention

In the aftermath of a disaster, children are the worst affected and they need to be reached out to before their quality of life declines even further. While Railway Children does not focus primarily on relief and disaster management, it has assigned a special contingency fund for such emergencies. Railway Children has responded to disasters such as the Orissa cyclone in 1999, the Kolkata Tollygunj fire in 2000 and the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2005 through its partners.

Railway Children is working with its partners to reach out to vulnerable, traumatized and abandoned children in defined Tsunami affected geographical areas, and assists in the recovery phase of disaster management. It has focused all efforts on the healing and rehabilitation of these children.

The Journey Ahead

The ultimate aim of Railway Children India is to ensure that all children already on the streets are helped to leave the various transport terminals in the country and that new runaways don't end up in these exploitative environments. In order to fulfill this, Railway Children India will support child-friendly interventions, working on the principle of protection and participation at the strategic points, and will engage all the significant players who will aid in achieving this goal.

Railway Children Worldwide

Railway Children works with over 40 partner organisations with 117 projects worldwide across Africa, Asia, South America and Europe. Last year we helped over 24,000 street children and for the first time ever spent over £1 million on street children projects.

Railway Children works in partnership with local organisations that focus on early intervention and family reintegration. This is in keeping with our founding principle that a family environment is the best place for a child to grow.

To support this focus Railway Children activities are broadly divided into three key areas-

- Capacity building in terms of organisational development of partners i.e. Financial systems, management structures, governance, child protection

- Capacity building in terms of the intervention with the child. This involves initiatives such as partner exchange visits and requires continual learning and research on our part, including the documentation and dissemination of this learning. This work can have a broader impact than just the partners we fund.

- Ensuring a regional and/or national overview and perspective. This results in facilitating practical links for partners, particularly useful in family reintegration. It also enables us to look strategically at the bigger picture, identify areas of need and engage with policy makers and key influencers to lobby for lasting change.

The portfolio of partners we have developed has given us the credibility to speak with authority on the issues affecting street children.



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