

STREET CHILDREN

Director's Message

– Words '*The Street*' triggers in me such lovely and nostalgic feelings.

Looking back to my childhood, I can visualise the beauty of the street, so broad, sandy and clean where I would walk, play and run with other children in limitless joy. The evenings were filled with laughter and fun. The street lights introduced various games and one such game was either one chooses to be in the light or dark, when the leader called out dark, all those in the light were out. This was the simplest game that all of us loved to play because most of the time all of us would be out since we chose to be in the light.

When I grew up and started my life in a city like Bangalore – the street had another meaning – it's here that I encountered countless persons, their faces vanishing in a fraction of a second. The concept of 'Touch and go relationship' became so true and obvious. Despite this situation, the street offered ample opportunity for me and for many others like me....

I recall a life incident way back in the 1980's. I encountered two little boys on the street of St. Francis Xavier Cathedral. They looked so starved and minimally dressed, they stretched their hands out as I was walking back from church to the convent with a group of sisters. We had two buns which we gave away willingly and happily. After giving the bun, we followed them and we observed that the older brother kept a bun in his pocket and divided the other bun with his brother. When I saw this, I told the brother that they need to eat the whole bun and there is no need to keep away. But the brother responded 'no, I have to keep it for lunch'. This incident remained with me till date. Yes! So many of our children do not know from where the next meal will come. So when they receive something they try to eat it in small quantities trying to feed themselves with little at a time.

In the 1990's I worked with the street children, fascinated by the street corner children, on Saturdays I would go out with a committed group of PUC students to meet and interact with the children on the street. Through our regular interactions with them, we were able to motivate many of them to come over to Jyoti Nivas College campus, for some games, classes and health tips. Through these meetings we learned about their life, heard their stories and helped some of them to get back to their homes where it was possible. While some others, were placed in REDS (Rag Pickers Education and Rehabilitation Society) an NGO, either for their schooling or skill training depending on their age. However, some of them continued to be on the street but twice a week they would come to the campus to collect the waste papers, which we had collected for them.

The time that we spend with these children were so fulfilling and gave us the meaning of true education and a direction for our future endeavours.

Because of this and many more experiences that I have had of the street – the street become intrinsically part of my life and close to my heart.

Today as I flip through the pages of this newsletter, I am truly proud of our Post Graduate Students, taking a keen interest in the under privileged sections of our society and playing a responsible role as citizens of this marvellous country, making a difference with their touch and leaving their foot prints.....

May God bless your good effort as you continue to impact the lives of our brothers and sisters of this world!!!

A word of appreciation to Dr.Prakriti (Department of English) and all the students who have contributed to this newsletter, with their heart touching stories.

Congratulations to all the Staff of PG Centre for this initiative.....

Dr.Sr.Lalitha Thomas

National Educational Policy

Our Students Respond

- Request to extend the time for another few months for suggestions since this is going to impact 290 million students.
- NRF that is proposed by NEP should enhance the quality and prospects of research
- This policy is visionary by nature, but to bring it to a reality, the government has to identify the resources.
- "Deemed to be university" has to be phased out whereas "Affiliated University" and "Unitary University" should not be removed.
- Grading of NAAC should not be reduced to mere "YES or NO".
- Discontinuation of M.Phil. Course is not advisable because it introduces the students to research process before Ph.D.
- The inclusion of classical languages is not a welcoming proposition. For e.g. teaching classical languages like Pali, Prakrit and Persian especially in the global context. We prefer the usage of English language as it has helped to break barriers within and outside the nation.
- Reforms with respect to school education is promising but implementation would be difficult. For example, digital open schools appear problematic because majority of migratory children belong to informal labourers who cannot afford basic education.
- Ministry claims to have followed unprecedented participatory consultation process in framing NEP. But the list of consultation does not mention any members from teachers and students associations. The committee also has not included minority institutions which evidences the gross neglect of the services rendered by such institutions for many decades.
- The policy has recommended the ending of junior colleges and creating a systematic syllabus from 9th to 12th. Such recommendations will face difficulties in many states of India.



- The draft destroys the myth of autonomy by announcing the creation of apex body in matters related to education under the title Rashtriya Shiksha Ayog. The involvement of prime minister in the apex body is welcoming but it also undermines the very question of autonomy that educational sectors have.

Articles

Making a Positive Difference

As part of our required 30 hours of community service, I had the opportunity to work with a non-profit organization called Vathsalya Charitable Trust. Established in 1988, VCT's vision is to preserve families by meeting their needs through community programs. They aspire to develop these programs and reach the wider migrant communities of India, bringing awareness and advocacy to this population. They also work towards providing a sustainable environment for healthy mothers, children and families by providing Nutrition, Education and Counselling. The problems of poverty, illiteracy and homelessness seem to fall hardest on the children of migratory families, these families struggle to find basic child care and nutrition let alone education. Parents often become helpless or hopeless. While some are forced to settle for job options, some parents even turn violent and abusive; leaving these children in spaces they don't feel safe. Children are provided with an enabling environment and safe spaces are built through family counselling. Three verticals achieve this goal – Income Generation, Child Development, and Educational Sponsorship. For children, living below the poverty often means living with malnutrition, illiteracy, and neglect. Struggling parents often don't have the time or means to look after their children. They are left unattended in unsafe spaces like construction sites or near main roads. These children have no access to education or medical care. The inconsistent lifestyle and income of migrant families mean that many children are never enrolled in school and many more drop out. The Child Development program supports these children whose home environment doesn't provide them with the care and structure a child needs. The program provides day care as well as informal education to underprivileged children. Due to a lack of time many parents are unable to provide children with adequate emotional affection and affirmation, this makes individual attention that much more necessary. Children are taught from a well-designed curriculum adapted to their needs. Outside this curriculum, learning is also facilitated through the DRAMUDA program (Drama, Music, and Dance). The nutritional needs of these children are also met through lunch meals.

Education shouldn't be a privilege, it should be a right. An increasing number of children, girls, in particular, fall through the cracks of the education system. These children have dreams which they never reach, either for economic or social reasons. Having even a high school degree drastically increases their earning potential and puts them closer to their goals. The Education sponsorship program looks out for children who have great potential. Their education is financed with the help of sponsorships. Regular house visits are conducted along with close monitoring of academic performance. Students who require further support are given counselling and their families participate in economic and family strengthening programs. Many children who come to VCT come from single parent households, where the mother is the sole breadwinner. Most women receive no help from the extended family. Not only is the situation difficult for the mothers who often work multiple jobs and still don't make enough to survive, but children also suffer as they aren't given the security and stability they need. The Income Generation Program reaches out to these mothers and provides them alternate means of income. Having their own business means that their hours are flexible and they are able to keep their children with them while they work, while also giving them a sense of empowerment. The women also work closely with project officers who ensure that their business is reaching its full potential. They are provided with training programs to help them effectively manage their families and business and are also given short-term loans to help them in setting up small businesses. VCT also provides jewellery making classes and ways to generate income through making jute products.

My experience at VCT exposed me to a wide range of harsh conditions that children in unfortunate circumstances are exposed to. It also taught me the importance to using a wholesome, well-rounded and nuanced approach in dealing with problems that our society faces. I'm also grateful to Jyoti Nivas College for not just imparting education but also making us socially active and aware young women through the community service requirement.

Diya Rajan
II MA(Eng)

“The presence of even a single poor child on the street means a million defeats for mankind” – Mehmet Murat

Do you even realise how blessed you are? Most of us are blessed because we have a family waiting for us after we get back home, but not all are fortunate enough to have these in their lives. Many children in India are deprived of this feeling of a good family and home. We have a house to stay in but ever wondered how street children spend their entire life near bus stations, railway stations, markets and footpaths. There are almost 20 million street children in India, and statistics reveal that India has 17 million child labourers- the highest in the world. Most of the street children in India are boys, but that does not mean girls are not homeless, they are subjected to worse conditions in terms of prostitution. The main problem for many kids on street is family, even though poverty is the main issue. These kids end up working in factories, and being illegally employed in hotels, and construction sites. Most often they are exploited by their employers who constantly abuse them. And we can most commonly see these kids on street selling newspapers, flowers etc. They get into the habit of chewing tobacco, drugs and smoking which would affect their health to a great level. Conditions of homeless girls are even worse making them vulnerable to prostitution. It is said that there are more than 3 million sex workers in India and they enter in as early as before the age of 18 years. To reach out to these young kids, many NGO's are working by giving them free education and shelter. Increasing public awareness can also be helpful in this regard. The government should also look into these matters and help to overcome such issues and should look after these kids and take special care. If all of us do our little part in helping such poor kids and getting a smile on their face, we could make India a better place.

Kritika R
II MBA

Count Your Many Blessings

Working hard the entire week, everybody looks forward to the weekends, to rest and relax, to enjoy the Sunday morning sleeping for extra hours and to spend time with their loved ones. Life moves on at a regular pace for all of us. We are not aware how the day begins and how it ends. Every night before we go to sleep there might be something for us to cherish and smile. But, darkness does exist beyond light. For me it was a beautiful, pleasant and a calm Sunday morning, when I was driving back home after my Sunday service and something bizarre caught my sight that affected me for several days. A little boy in tattered clothes who was three or four years old was selling flowers. I ignored him when asked to buy the flowers but later he convinced me to buy them. I took the flowers from his hand, paid him the money and thought he would leave, but he caught my hand thanked me and told me that his mother had given these flowers to him and asked him to sell it on the streets to earn their living. He also added, that he did not have a father and he had his lonely mother and a little sister whom he had to take care of. That innocent smile, easy going expression on his face, literally captured my attention for a while. It was quite obvious that life was a struggle for him, fighting every moment for his and his family's survival. How when life seems to be colourful to other children, this little one had begun to work like an adult. Is this the age to work for his family?

Immaculate Sandra N
IIMBA



Abandoned Voices...

In 1994, the Commission on Human Rights used 'street child' as "any boy or girl for whom the street has become his or her habitual abode and/or source of livelihood and who is inadequately protected, supervised or directed by responsible adults". Bangalore, the Silicon Valley, a metropolitan vastly developed city and IT centre with 6 million people has more than 60,000 children living on the streets. They live by collecting trash, washing cars or selling newspapers, or by begging. Most of them are ill-fed and sick, and some are sexually abused. Each child has his/her own story that is indicative of the push factor of being on the street. Some are not aware how they have come there. The

statistics of crimes against children by National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) states that crimes against street kids are dismissed or not many crimes are reported. In SudhaGundaPalaya I see a number of kids wandering around the streets begging, looking forward to someone who could give them some money or food. When I asked a few about why they are here, the answers were not just many. Some do not want to go to school because they do not like children, some want to see the city, some want to have good tasty food on the streets. They don't know where their parents are. Some said their parents are not bothered about them. So, for them, the street becomes the place where they can find so many people and food. So they think that they enjoy their life there. Childhood is the most beautiful period of a person and the street kids need a healthy and happy childhood. They have the right to education and enjoy their life like everyone else. We need to be compassionate towards them because in most cases, it was not their choice to be abandoned for no fault of theirs.

*Alpha T Benny
II MA(Eng)*

COLOR THEIR WORLD

Home is where we all belong to, but there are kids who do not have a home to stay in, There are kids who are thrown away into the pits or who are forced to leave homes and they loiter around the streets to feed their tummy, at night sleep on footpaths without even a piece of cloth to cover themselves from heat or cold. "STREET" is the habitual abode for these kids and it is our responsibility to talk to them and help them in their Struggles and educate them rather than exploiting them for our own needs. So, it is our social responsibility to uplift these kids. These kids are the Future of the country. Witnessing the struggles of these kids we cannot keep our eyes closed. We have to raise our voices for them. Let us try and add colour to their world. As human beings even they have the right to enjoy this world and not be subjected to any sort of violence. There are a lot of struggles these kids undergo like, child trafficking and being forced to beg. They are also victims of drug abuse and when they don't receive money to eat they steal and they grow up to be the greatest crime makers of the country.

LET US TOGETHER COLOR THEIR WORLD!!

Street Children in India

"There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children" Nelson Mandela, Former President of South Africa



Around the world millions of children are found homeless, sleeping into the streets, seen begging, peddling with wares and are even part of petty crime. Many children are deprived of the most basic human needs like food and clothing apart from housing. In India alone, although there is no well-structured data and number available, it is estimated that India has more than 400,000 street children, and 18 million children work on streets and 5 – 20% have no connection with their families. India makes up for 1/5th of the world's street children, a large part concentrated in metropolitan cities of India; with factors like migration, urbanization, dismantling of family structure, domestic violence, political unrest, rapid economic growth, child abuse and most importantly poverty playing a role in children moving from their homes in the first place. What does this say about our society, a society that is celebrated as the largest democracy, emerging superpower and a country to reckon with. Ideally, street children in India should be protected under the Integrated Child Protection Scheme and Juvenile Justice Act but so far whether its hunger, or health, provision of safe drinking water or

quality education, which are a part of India's Sustainable Development Goals, has not been taken up by the government seriously and it is reflected in the fact that the government currently doesn't even have an official estimate of the number of children living on streets. With little protection or support from adults, deprived of education and healthcare, the situation of children in the street make us vulnerable to criticism of the social and economic conditions of India. According to UNICEF, violence against children includes anything that amounts to neglect, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and exploitation of children. One of the most common and, at the same time, ignored sights in the metros of India today, is that of street children, who can be spotted in every nook and corner, because successive governments have failed in protecting and providing shelter to them. They are an ignored lot, because as a society, we ostensibly lack empathy in helping them and being concerned for them. In the national capital, New Delhi, there are over 51,000 street children, and they are everywhere. You can see them at metro and railway stations, bus stands, under flyovers and footpaths – begging, rag picking, selling newspapers, pens, and flowers for livelihood. The negligence by both the government and society makes them vulnerable to violence. If a country's future lies in the hands of its children, the condition of these children is definitely a cause of concern.

However, it would be unfair to expect that the government alone could eradicate this problem. The civil society should come together to find solutions for this. Our approach to these children should not be 'welfare-based' but 'rights-based'. It is essential to understand that it is a fundamental right of these children (like all other children) to be given/provided protection, safe environment, education, and health benefits. It is also referred to as the "three Ps" – Provision, Protection and Participation. And if we want to see changes in our society, active participation of the decision-makers and academicians in drawing a roadmap of social intervention for addressing the problems of street children is needed now. All said and done, one could write articles of such kind days on end but what counts is our collective effort as a society towards this mammoth problem. And at the end, one can only dream of a society that is devoid of such social issues.

*Stephanie Felix
II MA(Eng)*

None to look at migrant street children?

OUR BUREAU

Lingiah, a daily wage labourer, is often seen around Paradise circle looking for odd jobs.

Hailing from Adilabad district, he moved to the city a few months back with his family of four children and a wife who is currently six months pregnant. Lingiah's children, aged between 8 and 14 years, are child labourers employed to sell small toys, balloons, flags etc at various traffic signals in Secunderabad.

Lingiah's is not the only family from Adilabad who are leading a nomadic life in Secunderabad. There are close to 15 such families, from the district just near the Paradise-Patny stretch. It is not surprising that most children are employed as child labourers.

However, what is surprising is that these children are seen selling their wares openly in front of the traffic police and the city police who regularly patrol the area.

"We pay the police whenever they raise the issue of child labor," claims Lingiah. "What are we supposed to do? If everyone doesn't work, we can't eat three meals in a day. If we had enough money, do you think



A child begging in city

we won't want our children in schools," asked an agitated Krishna, another migrant.

However, it is the condition of these children which is worrisome. Most of them suffer from severe breathing problems and are also subject to street violence. "I am constantly worried about my teenaged daughter. Some-time back the daughter of

These children are seen selling their wares openly in front of the traffic police and the city police

one of our associates in our village was cheated by a paan shop guy who made her pregnant and then left her. And if that's not

enough, many young guys from other street gangs harass our girls," says a worried Andalam. According to these peo-

ple, they are seldom helped by the police or anyone else. "The other day, a politician from our district came to the nearby Mahankali temple and when we went there to seek help for housing, we were not even acknowledged. We feel bad, as we are nothing short of being invisible being migrants in this city," adds Lingiah.

The absence of farm work or MNRGA work as assured by the government is one of the biggest reasons for these people to migrate from the district. While some children were going to schools in their hometown, many didn't even have a chance to see the inside of a classroom ever.

"I would like to wear a uniform and go and study. But who will look after my sisters?" asks 11-year-old Sita. While some parts of the city have travelling schools to cater to the needs of migrant children, the absence of any such solution is leaving the children not just illiterate, but also prone to gang violence and drug addiction.

"What's the point of talking about education when basic needs like housing and employment is not provided to us? We will always remain invisible," says a woe-

This article is based on Lingiah's life. From Adilabad he moved to the city a few months back with his family of four children and wife. Most children are employed as child labourers in order to earn money to add to the family income. Lingiah's children who are aged between 8 and 14 years are child labourers. They used to sell small toys, balloons, etc at various traffic signals. They are not allowed to go to school because they need to work for their family. According to Lingiah "If they don't work they can't eat three meals a day".

These children sell their wares in front of traffic police and city police. Lingiah claims that "they pay the police whenever they raise the issue of child labor". A 11 year old said that "she would like to wear a uniform and go to school, but also realizes that she can't afford". The solution for this problem can be done by setting up a Child Welfare System, and working toward such children's wellbeing. In the early 1990s, facing pressure from non-government organizations (NGOs), the Indian government created the "Scheme for Assistance to Street Children," which was launched in February 1993 which still has not done much for the children

or their welfare. Scholars and agencies have suggested various strategies to help street children, through NGOs.

Namitha Ramesh
II MCA

An Incident

Once when I was little girl, my father took us out to a new city for the first time. As we were walking down a busy street, I came across a boy holding his little sister, torn clothes, thin and malnourished, I couldn't help but pity them. Every city I step in, I see more and more children on the streets either begging or selling different wares. I feel helpless and empty, it breaks my heart. From a young age we are taught about helping each other and that charity is love in action. If we have learnt anything at all, why do we still see such children on the streets in every city in the world?

Contribute,
Make an impact, take initiatives
Pave way but
Will we do it to help or to look good ?
Will we be setting a Positive or negative impact with our actions?

If one imagines walking down a street, dogs barking unceasingly, wind breathing over the cold empty streets, leaves rustling unevenly, echoes of footsteps around yet lonely. They have nowhere else to go, no roof, no walls, and no cosy rooms to live in. There's the whole world but no place can they call home. Desolate, uncared-for and helpless. One can feel sorry for them but are we ready to make this world a better place?

S. Leishipem Sophia
II MCA

"Street Children"

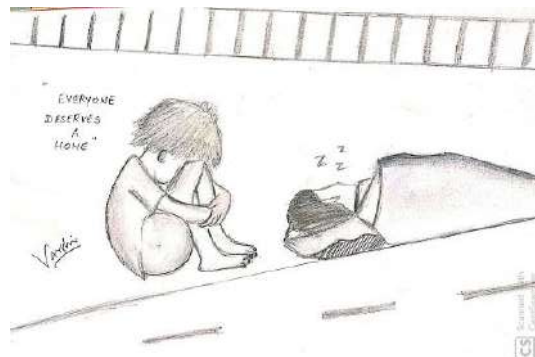
"No child chooses to live on the streets. Sadly, even in our modern, globalized world, many children continue to be robbed of their childhood, their rights and their future. Lack of legal protection and adequate structures only aggravate their state of deprivation: they have no real family or access to education or health care. Every child abandoned or forced to live on the streets, at the mercy of criminal organizations, is a cry rising up to God, who created man and woman in His own image. It is an indictment of a social system which we have criticized for decades, but which we find hard to change in conformity with criteria of justice." Pope Francis.

God calls children a blessing and a gift. Their spirits are filled with innocence, joy and laughter. They are such a blessing that deserve all the love, happiness and care from their parents and others. They deserve to have a shelter. They deserve food to quench their hunger. They deserve clothes to protect their body. And of all, they deserve education for survival. Fortunate are those children who have everything in their life for survival and to lead a happy life. But what about those who don't? What about those children who can only dream of those things? What about those children who deserve all the rights as others but are betrayed with all the false hopes? Yes! They are the street children. They are the ones who spend most of their time in streets for survival by either begging or by selling things such as cigarettes, sweets, flowers, etc under the supervision of employers inside or outside the family. Some are also involved in illegal activities like drugs, prostitution or robbery for their survival and for their family. It's so obvious that these circumstances occur because of social conditions like poverty, lack of education, lack of laws and ignorance of the government, political parties and of all, the common people who don't want to take an initiative to make the lives of these children better and beautiful. But we also can't ignore the work done by. NGOs play a major role in making the lives of these children better by sponsoring money for their education and providing free food and clothes; which makes the street children to dream big that they can live their life happily with what they truly deserve. It is said by Nelson Mandela that "History will judge us by the difference we make in the everyday lives of children." Thus it is our duty to ensure that every child can survive and thrive....

KarenChristy
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Budeshna Bose



Vandana



Budeshna Bose



Budeshna Bose