

The Street and Working Children Program



1. Drop in Center

Operational in Old Delhi and Nizamudin providing day and night care for about 1200 children a month.

2. Vocational Training

Operational in New Seemapuri reached out to 700 girls.

3. Shelter Home

Based in Haryana providing boarding, lodging and great nurturing environment to 40 erstwhile street children.

Project Concern International's Street & Working Children Program

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), India has the largest population of street children in the world. The streets of Delhi are home to around 100,000 who mainly abandoned or orphaned with excessive poverty being the root cause. The children who leave their homes find shelter at railway stations, bus depots, market stalls, slum settlements and waste dump sites with little prospect of a better future. Contradictory to common belief, very few street children beg. Many work as porters, rickshaw drivers, rag pickers or indulge in other options. As a vulnerable group they prone to high drug

use and acquiring sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV.

Since 2000, PCI has been working on improving life opportunities for children on the street by providing them a continuum of services that address their wellbeing. As these needs are met, the child's ability to take control over his/her destiny also strengthens and thus a life of deprivation and destitution can be modified into a life of empowerment and growth. PCI supports the street and working children through innovative and wide-ranging services that include outreach, drop-in centres, a short-stay



home, vocational training centre, counselling, and comprehensive health care. The program is funded by RCUK, GE and Boeing and is planned in a very exhaustive manner and each service is step ahead for repatriation. PCI focuses on early intervention and repatriation.

PCI's outreach workers are the backbone of the initiative. They are trained and are also a child's first link with PCI. The outreach workers and peer educators interact with the youth during day and late-evening at all major railway stations, bus-terminals and market places. These workers network and liaison with the police and other



agencies working with children which has helped in creating a wide network. To date PCI has outreached and connected to over 10,000 children.

Vocational Training Centre is located in New Seemapuri (Delhi). The centre provides vocational training knowledge and assistance to adolescent girls (14-20 years of age). The program reaches out to about 700 girls yearly and the trades taught include: computer literacy, cutting & tailoring, beautician, mehendi making, screen printing, painting, loom weaving, paper-bag making, candle making and crochet.

PCI runs two Drop in Centres (DIC) that provide children with basic nutrition, shelter, counselling, education and life-skills training. The duration of the stay varies with an average stay of four and six months. Each DIC has a caretaker, cook, a non-formal education program, a counselor, outreach worker, peer educators, vocational trainers and a part-time yoga teacher. The focus is to motivate the children to reconsider their lives on the streets and the peer educators,

outreach workers and counselors play an important role in this process.

Counselors are placed at all PCI centres as they help children cope with the challenges that come with living on the street and also work with them to modify high risk behaviours. Group sessions addressing common issues such as personal hygiene, delaying sexual activity, drug rehabilitation, HIV/AIDS awareness, and reproductive health are regularly conducted.

The **Shelter Home** is for the most disadvantaged children and is located in Bhango village (Block Tauru, Mewat district, Haryana) and houses 40 boys. The home is staffed with experienced professionals who help assess and address the children's need. The overall development of the child is looked into by providing nutritious food, health check ups and education. The home provides non-formal and remedial education, and a concerted effort is made to integrate children into the formal school system. The older children at the home are taught vocational training which help

them earn a living. The nature of trades taught include: computer literacy, paper recycling and micro-business management.

The focus of work at PCI is always towards creating a safe home for the child as we believe the life on the streets is a nightmare. PCI has a team of trained staff who trace the children's backgrounds to help them return to their families. This process includes working with child, motivating him to go home and working with parents helping them to provide adequate care for their child, and following up on the child's status over time. Over the years, PCI is proud to have restored over 900 children to their homes.

CHALLENGES FACED BY THE TEAM:

- Poor co-ordination between the GO-NGO authorities/ working with the street and working children.
- High vulnerability of children on street.
- Counselling and repatriation are time consuming processes involving behavioural change.