

Home Placement of Street Children in Maharashtra, India

Dr. Neela Dabir

Dr. Vrinda Datta

Tata Institute of Social Sciences

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Neela Dabir

Vrinda Datta

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Home-Placement of Street Children in Maharashtra

Chapter I

Theme and Methodology

Street children are young people who spend a considerable time living and/or working on the streets of the world's cities. Different countries describe street children in different ways. There is no universal definition of "street children" and several interpretations are in common use, some covering smaller populations of children who live in the streets, others including the much larger sector of children who work on the streets (Thomas de Benitez 2003) Street-living children can be taken to mean those who sleep on the street the majority of the time and retain limited or no contact with their family of origin. Children who live on the streets without any parental support are a fraction of the total population of street-involved children. The majority are "abandoning" rather than "abandoned" children, who have generally left home for the street as a result of family breakdown and violence almost invariably linked to the stresses of extreme poverty. In certain parts of the world, large proportions of street-living children are AIDS orphans, or have been displaced by war (Consortium for Street Children 2002).

During the last two decades this group of vulnerable children has been identified as a group of children with special needs and a variety of projects to offer need based services for them have been developed by the Government as well as national and international NGOs. It has helped in developing a conceptual understanding of and sensitivity to various dimensions of the lives of street children.

Street children are often among the high risk and insecure groups and vulnerable to various forms of exploitation and abuses. They are deprived children, denied not only their rights as children but also their childhood. Without guidance, education and security, they are heading for an obscure future. They are miserable and need support. Most importantly, they need to be steered back to the mainstream of social life through proper education opportunities, reformation, care and rehabilitation.

In a country like India there are large numbers (11 million – conservative estimate), living in different cities and facing many challenges of survival. (UNICEF 1998) The past decade has seen that organizations working with these children have looked at them as victims of abuse or neglect or as delinquents who need protection and re-education. However in the recent times there is an understanding that children develop their own

survival strategies which results in them evolving their own micro-culture which needs to be understood, to be able to reach them (Aptekar 2004)

There are some researches which show that living conditions on the street were more often better than those at home (Guatemala) or that malnutrition was worse among working children living with their parents than among street children (Honduras) or that street children in Columbia developed a network of caring and supportive friendships (Connolly 1990, Wright et al 1993). However not all children can develop a supportive network on the street. Further these networks have their own limitations in terms of continuity and support for the development of the child. Some of them have to go through painful experiences of insecurity, exploitation and abuse. Thus it is suggested by researchers that in working with street children it is important to see how they are coping with, what they have brought with them to the street and the problems they are facing on street. Experiences of many organizations show that the services they provide are helping children to cope on a day to day basis. Further many children cannot think of long term goals and do not feel the need to put effort towards education, health care that will help them in the future. Migration of children from their home to a big city is caused by a plethora of factors which can be broadly divided into two major groups: push factors and pull factors. In moving, children not only see the lack of benefits at home but also a surplus of benefits outside home. To overcome street life and move to a better life style would require continuous and tremendous support and effort on part of the organisation and the children. Sometimes children run away for trivial reasons or fears and need help to understand that their parents care for them. Many organisations have recognised that one of the significant alternatives is to work towards home placement of children wherever possible. This is even more so in terms of children's right to family and that for any child, family will be the best place for development. Recognizing that most street children have left home because they have experienced problems and that the duration they have been away from home is long in many cases, the placement of children in homes is indeed a challenging task.

This study specifically focuses on children living on Railway platforms. There are two types of the children living on the platform: the new entrants in the city with a short term experience of street life and the ones who have been on the street for a longer duration; both having lost contact with their family. Children on the platform face many problems and are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. They are also likely to get addicted to

vices and face multiple health hazards. Sathi is an organization working with children on the railway platforms and those near other transport terminals. One of the main aims of the organisation is to establish early contact with children coming to the city and prevent them from becoming habituated to street life and motivating others who are on the street for a longer duration to go back to the families. These children are placed in their families by the staff of Sathi in different parts of India. The project of home placement receives financial support from an International organisation, 'Railway Children'. In order to understand the context of the study, it is also necessary to know the background and objectives of Railway children and Sathi.

Railway Children

Railway Children was founded in 1995 to fill an identified gap in services for street children. The need was identified during a risk assessment and analysis in 1993 at the Consortium for Street Children – a consortium of about 30 UK based organisations working with street children worldwide. The analysis identified that runaway or abandoned children were most vulnerable to exploitation, abuse and corruption during the first few days or weeks of leaving home. The same analysis also identified that few NGOs were targeting early intervention, when the opportunity for family reintegration, protection, and developmental opportunities are greatest.

Railway Children in India

Where do children go when they first run away from home? The obvious answer to this question is nowhere. But, on second thoughts, one realizes that almost all the children take the rail route where the train takes them everywhere. Obviously, when children alight at the railway junctions and the terminuses unaware and unknowingly, the magnitude of these places and the fear of an unknown destination makes them think twice before they venture out of such a place. Gradually, the junction or the terminus become their second home where, within no time, they either pick up or are eventually taught the norms of survival, having no contacts whatsoever with the outside world. They provide for an opportunity to fulfill all the basic needs, not to argue the cost at which these needs are fulfilled. It is from the railway station or the transport terminal that the children venture out or are trafficked or are befriended

From the work of several NGOS over decades, it is clear that the railways play a major role in the life of street children in India – the train thus becomes the single largest mode of transportation of runaway children from one place to another.

Railway Children currently works with twenty one NGO partners in India. Supported activities include outreach at stations through the deployment of street educators and social workers, drop-in centers, night shelters, and transit homes offering food, health care, counselling and education, including formal and vocational, family reintegration.

The organisation focuses on those "street children" (sometimes called "platform children") who have run away from home or are abandoned are alone and/or at risk and are living with little or no parental support on or around transport terminals and immediate environs.

Through different partner organisations, they continue to reach out to around 8000 children with direct services and developmental opportunities, a further 10,000 children have been reached through outreach (contact, counselling, family reintegration and referral) services. The policy of the Railway Children's Project in India is to choose to work with partner organisations, networks and initiatives that further the implementation of its purpose. It works with those agencies that:

1. Focus on early intervention with children that have little or no family contact
2. Address the child's right to a family life by seeking to reintegrate children with their families or find an alternative when this is not practicable or desirable
3. Have integrated programmes that provide immediate services and developmental opportunities.
4. Encourage a participatory approach with children
5. Encourage advocacy on behalf of the rights of these children
6. Develop linkages with other organisations and encourage a sharing environment.
7. Document their work for future learning.

SATHI

Sathi, Raichur is one of the major partner organizations of Railway Children in India. Sathi (Society for assisting children in difficult situations) has been working on the issue of platform children since 1993 and was formally registered in 1996. Sathi believes that there may be 50 such locations (railway platforms of most cities) where single children live away from home on the platforms. With their base at Raichur, they have worked at six different major platforms –Raichur, Mantralaya, Wadi, Guntakal, Pune, Mumbai and homes placed 3392 runaway children totally and are committed to expanding to other locations.

They firmly believe that home placement of runaway children is the best form of placement and have been able to place about 55% of the total number of children contacted. They believe that many NGOs think wrongly that children cannot be home placed in miserable home situations and that any home, although difficult (with a few really dysfunctional exceptions) is better than life on the platforms.

Key elements of their work are extensive outreach on the platforms from 8 – 12 hours a day, drop-in shelters at a place away from the platform, taking the child to a 30 day camp and reuniting the child with the family at a public function where government officials are called. The unique aspect about their work is the rural based camps where about 30 children who are not willing to go home participate. The components of the camp are exercises, games, teaching, group discussions on values, meditation, story telling (about famous personalities and previous runaway children). The first week consist of activities that will help the children adjust to the new environment and get used to the camp regime. The 2nd and 3rd week focus on talking about the children's experiences of staying on the platform, examining its advantages and disadvantages and reflecting on incidents of closeness with their parents or other close relatives. By the end of the fourth week, most children have overcome the fear of contacting their families and recognize its importance. At the time of reunion, government officials are called and requested to share the joy of reuniting the child with the parents, which also builds positive pressure on the parents to treat the child well. The follow up study by Sathi staff of 100 cases of home placed children conducted in the year 2004 revealed that about 80% of them had continued to stay home.

The concept and details of the programme in the Home Placement Camp were designed in consultation with Dr. Shekhar Sheshadri of NIMHANS, Bangalore. The module for the home placement camp has been used for several camps till date and a large number of children were placed back in the families after the camp. Sathi uses multiple strategies for achieving home placement depending upon the need and willingness of the child to return back to his/her family. Some children are repatriated within a few days of their arrival on the railway stations whereas others who are living on the street for quite some time and are repatriated after counseling. Some children are habitual runaways and need more inputs for repatriation. Conducting a four weeks residential camp is one of the strategies for motivating children for reunion with the family. This is mainly aimed at children who have been on the streets for a longer duration.

In this context the de-addiction and home orientation camps developed by SATHI is one of the first attempts to evolve a supportive programme for children who will return home. The camps are aimed at providing a holistic experience to develop positive attitude towards living in home with family. For the new entrants on the platform, Sathi staff tries to get in touch with the child soon after their arrival on the platform and efforts are made to send them back within a few days. They are either picked up by their parents or a staff from Sathi accompanies the child and traces the family. In a few cases, the child goes home without any escort.

Need to Understand the Strengths and Drawbacks of the Project

Sathi with the active support from Railway Children has been quite successful in its efforts of home placement of street living children and over the years they are trying to evolve different strategies for reunion with family. They also wish to expand the scope of this project to cover larger number of children. Authorities from Sathi and Railway children think that it is important to evaluate and understand how to strengthen the existing efforts and also look for newer strategies of successfully reuniting children and families. In order to have systematic documentation of their efforts, this study was undertaken by the faculty from Tata Institute of Social Sciences.

The specific objectives of the study are listed below:

1. To understand the process of selecting and preparing children for home reunion.
2. To understand and evaluate the content and processes used in the camp with focus on children's needs and abilities – to fulfil the objectives of the camp
3. To compare adjustment of children who are reintegrated with the family (with and without the camp experience).
4. To suggest appropriate changes in the camp design and newer strategies that could be used for the reunion of families and children.

Operational Definitions

Child: For the purpose of this study, the child is a person below 18 years of age.

Home Placement: Home placement is a process in which a child living on the railway platform/ street without family contact/support is motivated to go back to his family. During the process of reunion, the child and the parents are counselled or oriented for child's stay at home. The child is either picked up by the parents or being escorted by the staff to go home or he goes home without any escort.

Adjustment after Home Placement: Adjustment after home placement is a complex concept. For the purpose of this study we are looking at the following

1. Sustained stay at home
2. Relationship with the family members
3. Relationship with friends and relatives
4. Behaviour at school/workplace
5. Positive changes observed by the parents
6. Child's aspirations for future

Selection of Sample

From the records available at Sathi Office, Pune, A list of children who were part of Home placement programme and were placed in different parts of Maharashtra was obtained for the period Jan 2004 to Dec. 2005. While collecting data from the home placed children and their parents, initially a sample of 60 children was drawn by using random sample proportional to the size. It was spread over four types of home

placements -child going home on his own, parents coming to take the child home, Sathi staff accompanying the child and children having the experience of camp before home placement. The following table indicates the distribution of sample over these four groups

Table 1.1
Distribution of Selected Sample

Type of home placement	Total number in the list	Number selected in the sample
With parents	106	21
With Sathi Staff	90	18
Child going home on his own	10	2
Placement after camp	95	19
Total	301	60

It was observed that in the process of data collection we could contact only 7 children out of 19 children that were placed after the camp experience. In case of other children from the camp, 3 children had gone back to street, 9 families had migrated to other places and the neighbours informed that 3 children from these migrated families had gone back to street. For the remaining 6 migrated families, we do not know the status of the child. Since this number of camp children was too small to draw any comparisons/conclusions, we had to include 15 more children from the camp participants whose addresses could be verified to ensure their availability and 13 out of them could be traced during the home visit. Two families could not be contacted. The resultant sample therefore, is a purposive one with a strong bias to successful home placement.

In case of the children placed through other methods a total of 26 children out of the list of 41 were contacted. Therefore a total of 75 children were contacted for the purpose of this study. One could get 58 parents and 46 children (20 with a Camp experience and 26 without Camp inputs) for collection of data through interviews. The following table indicates the reasons for their unavailability. For comparison, we will compare the group of children with Camp experience with those placed without a Camp experience (combination of all other methods: with parents, with staff and self)

Table 1.2
Distribution of the Available Sample

Type of Home placement	No. in the Sample	No. of Children interviewed	No. of parents interviewed	Children left home once again	Family migrated to another place	Child staying with some relative
Camp	34	20	23	6	11	-
Other	41	26	35	5	6	4
Total	75	46	58	11*	17	4

(* three children from the migrated families)

Methods of Data Collection

- Secondary data and information was collected from the organization SATHI to evolve the understanding of the organization, its philosophy and specific efforts towards the family placement programme.
- Efforts were made to understand children's attitudes, problems and concerns at the beginning of the camp and periodically after every week of camp experience.
- Detailed observations and process recording were made by a research staff during the camp.
- Interviews were conducted with all camp teachers, coordinators to get details about how they view their role and the content of the camp.
- Selected children with and without camp experience and now staying with their families were interviewed to assess the effectiveness of the camp experience in the process of reintegration/reunion with the family and to understand their feeling, experiences of being reunited.
- Parents of these children were also interviewed to understand their opinions about the process of home placement adopted by Sathi.

Experiences during Data Collection

It was possible to observe the entire process of the camp with an exception of two-three days and record the process in detail. This was possible because the Research Officer stayed with the children during this camp and acted as a non participant observer.

During the process of data collection it was realised that a very small number of camp children were available for interview for the follow up aspect of the study and we need to have a larger sample. The time schedule for data collection through interviews of parents and children had to be extended for another three weeks as we decided to add 15 more cases of children who had been placed after camp inputs in addition to the selected sample of 60. Therefore the research team contacted a total of 75 families and could trace only 58 families. If the parents are employed as casual labourers, they often do not have a permanent place of residence and keep shifting from one place to another and therefore cannot be contacted. In some cases the address recorded in the records of the organisation was inaccurate or difficult to find. In case of slums in Mumbai, there is hardly any landmark or house number which can be used for tracing the family. In such cases we do not know whether the child was staying with the family or not. Out of the 58 families, 46 children were still continuing to stay with their families (20 with camp experience and 26 without camp experience)

Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis method was used for analysis of camp process and quantitative methods were used for analysis of data collected through interviews. Focus group interviews were audio taped and transcribed later to record the interactions.

Scope and Limitations

This study tries to examine the content as well as methodology of organizing a home placement camp for street children as a strategy to motivate them to go back home. It also highlights the perception of children as well as their parents about the interventions by Sathi and different methods of home placement. This will help in identifying the strengths and drawbacks of the home placement programme and in developing further strategies for the same for all the partner organizations of Railway Children.

This study is limited to intervention programme of Sathi in Maharashtra.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

The present study focuses mainly on children living/working on or near the Railway platforms. In most cases children after leaving home get into a train or bus and reach a city. The distance they travel can vary but their first exposure to street life for many children is mostly through the life on the railway platform. Thus platform children or railway children form a substantially large part of the community of street children. In the literature however, we find that more research as well as other academic publications are related to street children in general and not much literature specific to children on the railway platforms is available.

In the last two decades street children as a category of vulnerable children has been recognised as an important group of children demanding special attention. It is not easy to define this category of children as all street children are not alike. All the attempts to define them have so far been incomplete. One of the ways of defining them is on the basis of their relationship with their family. The first globally accepted definition of street children was framed by UNICEF in 1988. UNICEF has defined street children as those for whom the street (in the widest sense of the word, i.e. unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) more than their family has become their real home, a situation in which there is no protection, supervision, or direction from responsible adults.

UNICEF has further divided street children into three operational categories:

- 1. Children on the Street:** Forming the largest category, these are largely working children who have homes; most return to their families at the end of the day.
- 2. Children of the Street:** These children are a group who has chosen the street as their home and it is there that they seek shelter, livelihood, and companionship. They have occasional or rare contacts with their families.
- 3. Abandoned Children:** These children have no contact with their families. They are entirely on their own, not only for material survival but also even for emotional and psychological support. They include orphans, runaways and lost or destitute children.

Often these children are also referred to as "nowhere" children because they may not be traceable.

One finds that applying this definition to all the street children across the globe may not be appropriate because of the culture specific variations and differences in child rearing practices and coping strategies adapted by families living in poverty situations.

Aptekar (2004), points out that the three hypotheses on which UNICEF definition is based do not adequately explain the experiences which bring many children on the street today. For example, it does not include children who have been war or disaster victims, children with AIDS or who are orphaned because of AIDS, and many complex situations which force children to be on streets.

He has identified three major problems with the UNICEF definition.

- 1) The use of the term on and of the street becomes confusing as many children frequently move between the street and their homes depending upon such practical factors as weather conditions, family dynamics, availability of friends on the street and comparative economic conditions of the home and the street.
- 2) Many children rather than being abandoned, leave home in a measured manner, initially staying away for a night or two, then step by step spending more time away from home. It is often observed that families of the street children possess a wide variety of competencies and children are gradually initiated to life on the street as a strategy to cope with extreme poverty.
- 3) The UNICEF definition does not contain gender specific information. Street boys and Street girls cannot be referred to by a common term as street children. The predominance of street boys worldwide and especially in developing countries is particularly important. Girls began street life much later than boys, usually not before 10 years of age. Street boys and street girls relate to their families of origin differently. Boys usually remain connected with their families and contribute to family income. The street girls in contrast have more difficult and distant relationship with their families of origin.

He further highlights the importance of developing a modern definition of street children which will incorporate these gender and culture specific diversities. It is necessary to define street children in the context of how their childhood is defined. Concept of childhood across cultures differs considerably and can be problematic if we apply the UN definition of a Child.

When we look at these three gaps identified by Aptekar, it is observed that most of these observations are applicable in cases of street children in India. In case of children moving between 'of and on the street', it becomes necessary for the children to move in some kind of shelter- either provided by the family or by the agency only during Monsoon. After monsoon, for nearly 8 months, it is easily possible to survive on the streets and they keep on moving in and out of the shelter.

Consortium for Street Children in U.K. describes Street-living children as *those who sleep on the street the majority of the time and retain limited or no contact with their family of origin*. Children who live on the streets without any parental support are a fraction of the total population of street-involved children. The majority are "abandoning" rather than "abandoned" children, who have generally left home for the street as a result of family breakdown and violence almost invariably linked to the stresses of extreme poverty. In certain parts of the world, such as African countries, large proportions of street-living children are AIDS orphans, or have been displaced by war (Consortium for Street Children 2002).

Before addressing the particular circumstances of homeless street children, it is important to recognize that the use of "street children" as a reference term is, in itself, highly problematic.

Changing Perspectives

According to Panter-Brick (2002, 148) there are five powerful criticisms of the term:

1. *'Street children' is a generic term which obscures the many differences in individual children's circumstances.*
2. *It does not adequately represent how children see themselves.*
3. *It is a stigmatizing label.*

4. *It draws attention away from other children in poverty and social exclusion.*
5. *It reflects social and political agendas more than children's reality.'*

Unfortunately, however, there is no wide-spread agreement on an alternative phrase for "street children:" No term has yet been coined to capture both the peculiar nature of street life and its interconnection with other aspects of vulnerability" (Volpi 2002, 3). This interrelationship between street life and other areas of vulnerability as well as difficulties in gaining consensus over definitions indicate that this is a group of children who can easily fall through the cracks of policy initiatives. (Thomas de Benitez, 2003)

Panter and Brick (2002) further state that the turn of the twenty-first century has seen a sea change of perspective in studies concerning street youth. The presence of children living on the street has elicited emotive public concern, been given considerable media coverage, and in the late twentieth century, has become a matter of priority for national and international child welfare organizations. Publications in both academic and welfare literature have emphasized the sheer scale of the worldwide problem, have sought to explain the root causes of this phenomenon, have summarized the identifying characteristics of street children worldwide, and have documented the dire consequences of a street lifestyle for children's health and development.

The term street children itself has almost disappeared from the welfare and analytical literature, which now uses different appellations to refer to street children and other underprivileged groups. The change in perspective reflects a shift of attention from the street as the primary focus of concern (as an unacceptable or unhealthy environment for children) to the children themselves (paying close attention to the diversity of their actual experiences and their own strategies for coping with adversity). Current work tends to examine the lives of street children in light of more general analyses of poverty, social exclusion, coping strategies, vulnerability and resilience in adversity.

The term 'street children' is problematic. It serves to highlight a set of working and living conditions that diverge from accepted norms about children. Thus street children are those who occupy the public spaces of urban centers and whose activities are largely unsupervised by adults, which lead people to view them as different from other children. However, research has convincingly shown that it is important to move beyond a sole focus on the street and that there is more to the lives of children than what is revealed by

ad hoc categorizations based on the criteria of physical location, social neglect, and economic activity.

The Human Rights Perspective

Panter and Brick (2003) in their review article titled 'STREET CHILDREN, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND PUBLIC HEALTH: A Critique and Future Directions' have presented the impact of the CRC provisions on the perspectives, approaches, research methodologies and services pertaining to the street living children. The major changes being

- 1. A Change of Emphasis from “Needs” to “Rights”**
- 2. Children as Agents of Change and Capable of Participation**

Work with street children has turned away from a discourse that categorized them as children in need and emphasized their weaknesses and dependency, in favor of highlighting children's own voices as citizens and their capabilities as agents of change. This reveals a shift in the fundamental assumptions made about children (as active participants rather than underage dependents), which itself brought about fresh approaches regarding appropriate methods for research and interventions on behalf of children.

They further demonstrate how the new terminology 'Children at risk' can also be problematic in dealing with street children. Public health concerns for children "at risk" come with several important caveats. First, the risk discourse is helpful if one uses it less as a tool to categorize children and more as a tool to formulate questions of specific importance about children. For instance, one should ask not only what particular aspects of street lifestyles put children's health at risk, but also what processes enable children to cope with adversity. To turn the emphasis of risk on its head, how does one "support the social and cultural expressions of resilience and coping in ways that effectively support children's wellbeing" (Boyden & Mann 2000). The concept of resilience, found useful in emphasizing a situational and developmental perspective and in departing from earlier vocabularies of marginality, does need to be better articulated in actual research with children. Second, research questions must move beyond the search for a package of risk variables and seek instead comparative and longitudinal information on children's career outcomes in order to appraise their different capabilities to face adversity. In this

way, the concepts of risk and resilience would help to provide an overarching view of children whose rights are being jeopardized, moving forward the literature that previously tended to compartmentalize thinking about street children but that now seeks to consider this particular group alongside other groups of underprivileged children.

The Street Living Children in India

Literature on street children in India is still restricted to the perspective of treating this category of children as different from other categories of underprivileged children. Every street child has a reason for being on the streets. While some children are lured by the promise of excitement and freedom, the majority are pushed onto the street by desperation and the realisation that they have nowhere to go. Children are often attracted to Mumbai for various reasons. The push factors in their home communities include poverty, inadequate family support, and peer influence. The pull factors in the city include fantasies of meeting Bollywood movie stars, unrealistic images of city life as portrayed by the media, and the desire to explore a new life in the metropolitan city. Some street children may have run away from home or been forcibly thrown out, due to conflict with parents, broken homes, or ill treatment by family members. What is evident is that once on the street, these children are poverty stricken and they have to struggle to meet their basic survival needs. D'Souza (2004) has tried to incorporate all the associated factors in the street children's phenomenon in Mumbai. The diagram below illustrates the forces (macroscopic, mesoscopic and microscopic) that seem uncontrollable and which perpetuate and consequently produce street-living patterns in children.

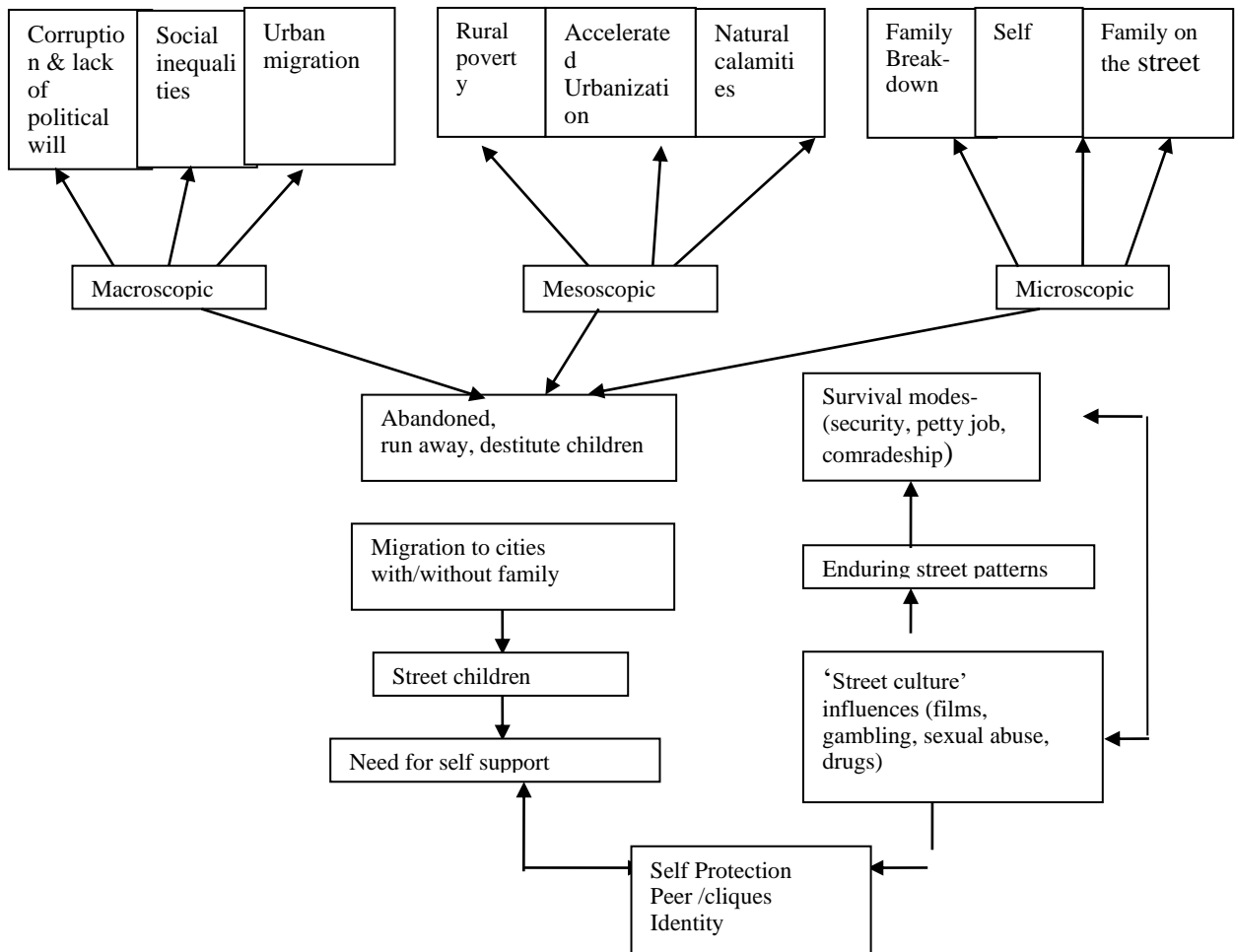


Fig. 1 -The Street Child Phenomenon-An Inverted Reality

The street children in India are of two types. Some of these children have migrated along with their parents and stay on the pavements/street or their families have been on the pavements for a long period of time and these children are born and brought up on the street itself; while others have run away from their native place for various reasons and have landed on the streets of Metropolitan cities. The push factors at their birthplace such as poverty, inadequate family support, peer influence and the pull factors in the city like fantasy to meet movie stars, unrealistic images of city life through media and desire to explore new life in the metropolitan city bring them to Mumbai. Therefore one comes across many street children who have run away from home or been forcibly thrown out, due to conflicts with parents, broken home, ill treatment by family members, or attracted to the city life through the mass media.

Estimated Numbers of Street Children in India:

No accurate estimate of the number of street children in India is available right now. This is because of various reasons. Firstly different Govt. as well as NGOs define street children in different ways. Secondly, they are a dynamic group of children who keep on shifting from one place to another or their association with NGOs is often not long term. Many of them shift from one programme to another as per their wish and convenience. And thirdly, no serious effort to create a data base of street children has been undertaken so far. UNICEF's estimate of 11 million street children in India in 1994 is considered to be conservative. It is estimated that there are 100,000 – 125,000 street children each in Mumbai, Kolkata and Delhi, with 45,000 in Bangalore. Aggrawal (1999) estimated that India has nearly 20 million street children (approximately 7% of the child population)

Rane (2004), based on her study throws a light on the characteristics of street children in India. The majority of street children are boys (65 to 82%). Street girls are not often visible and it is difficult to trace them. But they are the most vulnerable of street kids. A large number of them (40 per cent) belong to the age group of 11-15 years, followed by the age group of 6-10 years (almost one-third of the total street child population). In Calcutta and Hyderabad there are more children in the age group 6-10 years on the streets; while in Bombay and Bangalore the 11-15 age group figure high (40 per cent and 80 per cent respectively). Out of every ten street children in India, eight are found to be Hindus. Christians and Muslims constitute a negligible proportion of the total street children. Only the cities of Madras and Bangalore have street children from Christian communities, while street children belonging to the Muslim community are in substantial number in Bombay, Calcutta and Kanpur. Among the Hindu street children almost half belong to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Contrary to the prevalent belief most of the street children in the metropolitan cities of India are not without family support. Studies indicate that as high as 89.8 per cent live with their parents or other members of their family. A majority of street children work. Almost half of the working street children are self-employed such as ragpickers, hawkers and shoeshine boys. Almost one-third of the street children work in shops and establishments. Most of the street children in India are exposed to dirt, smoke and other environmental hazards. They are constantly exposed to sun, rain and cold. The health condition of street children is generally poor and many suffer from chronic diseases like asthma and dysentery.

It is observed that the condition of the Platform Children is quite similar to the general lot of street children. A recent study by Chetna Delhi and NGOs Plan India, covering Nizamuddin, Faridabad, Mathura, Agra, Gwalior, Jhansi, Beena and Bhopal stations, also threw up some light on the physical, social and emotional well-being of the children and on the impact of four major rights (survival, protection, development and participation) of the children. Documenting the lives of children working on railway stations between Delhi and Bhopal, this study covering 682 working children (605 boys and 77 girls) has revealed that as many as 23 per cent were living in poor physical conditions. The children revealed that lack of shelter, improper medical facilities, physical and sexual abuse and lack of parental support were among the many problems they had to endure day-to-day. The research tools used for the study were participatory observation, mapping of station, case studies of children living/working on platform, meetings with railway authorities, RPF/GRPF Commandants, and with NGOs. The study found that the male-female ratio of children working and living on railway platform was 8:1 and 71.3 per cent of the total children were less than 14 years and 40 per cent of the total population was in the age group of 11-14 years. Children here are involved in a variety of work including vending, begging, rag picking, bottle picking, acrobat, cleaning, shoe shining, and selling refilled water bottle. (Gupta, 2006)

One of the major differences between the street children in general and the railway children is the fact that most railway children lack family contact.

Harassment by the Municipal Authorities and the Police

In India, street children are subjected to harassment and eviction by the municipal authorities because of their unauthorized occupation of city roads and vacant places. The Human Rights Watch conducted a study in 1996 to understand the nature of harassment of street children by the police. They observed that Indian street children are routinely detained illegally, beaten and tortured and sometimes killed by police. Several factors contribute to this phenomenon: police perceptions of street children, widespread corruption and a culture of police violence, the inadequacy and non-implementation of legal safeguards, and the level of impunity that law enforcement officials enjoy. The police generally view street children as vagrants and criminals. While it is true that street children are sometimes involved in petty theft, drug-trafficking, prostitution and other criminal activities, the police tend to assume that whenever a crime is committed on the street, street children are either involved themselves or know the culprit. Their proximity to a

crime is considered reason enough to detain them. This abuse violates both Indian domestic law and international human rights standards.

Street children are also easy targets. They are young, small, poor, and ignorant of their rights and often have no family members who will come to their defence. Police have financial incentives to resort to violence against children. Many children report that they were beaten on the street because the police wanted their money. The prospect of being sent to a remand home, the police station or jail, coupled with the threat of brutal treatment, creates a level of fear and intimidation that forces children or in some cases, their families, to pay the police or suffer the consequences.

This report documents police abuse of Indian street children and deaths of children in police custody. It is based on investigations conducted in India during February and March 1995 and December and January 1995-96. Human Rights Watch spoke with more than one hundred street children, as well as representatives of nongovernmental organizations, social workers, human rights activists, human rights lawyers, and other individuals who work with street children in Bangalore, Bombay, Delhi, and Madras. Of the one hundred children interviewed, sixty complained of police abuse in the form of detentions, beatings, extortion, or verbal abuse. All the children interviewed reported a fear of the police. Of the sixty street children who reported police abuse, Human Rights Watch recorded twenty-two detailed testimonies. Human Rights Watch was able to interview only boys for this report. Access to girls was limited because most groups working with street children do not work with girls, and because cultural norms make it improper for girls to speak to strangers, especially males.

In the study by Chetna similar observations are documented. While spending their lives in fringe occupations-begging, rag picking, bottle vending, hawking and performing acrobatics-seventy percent of the children claim they have been abused by the police. Prostitution and abuse abound. Ironically, the adult worlds, the Railway authorities, deny the presence of these children. Hideaways, to be used at night or when the uniformed men come too close, are roofs of bridges, dangling above live cables, along with dark underground pipelines. "The underground pipeline is our home for daily activity. We bathe, wash our clothes, segregate our material, and eat here," says a 14-year-old boy at Nizamuddin. (Sinha, 2006)

Exploitation by Employers

In India working street children are exploited by employers in many ways like inadequate pay, overwork and physical abuse. A study by Institute of Psychological and Education Research (IPER, 1991) reveals that 39.3 per cent working street children are paid inadequately and more than one-third of the children complained of overwork.

Lack of Recreational Facilities

Majority of children in five major cities in India do not have recreational facilities. In Bombay, however, almost half the children stated that they enjoy facilities for recreation.

Street children become victims of the subculture of the street: drug abuse, smoking, gambling, drinking, vagrancy, thieving and prostitution. Data are not available on the extent of the problem of drug abuse among street children in the country. However, the experiences of organizations working for street children indicate that a considerable number of children use tobacco and alcohol. The most commonly reported drug abuse among street children in Bangalore is petrol sniffing and ganja. There are some cases of using brown sugar among street children in Madras and Bombay.

Profile of Street Boys in Mumbai- a Recent Overview

Shelter Don Bosco, a NGO working for street children conducted a study of the migration patterns and demographic profile of street children in Mumbai. (D'Souza et al, 2003) It covered 1359 male children for whom the "street" was a "home" in every sense of the word. i.e. these children had no roof over their heads, and no one whom they could call their own or belong to in the city of Mumbai. The findings of this study indicated that along with the push factors at their hometown/village, the glamour or various pull factors of the city of Mumbai bring these children here. The largest number of children come from the Western zone of the country (56%) followed by those coming from the Northern zone (21%). Children coming from all other zones constitute less than 10% each. Nearly 1% of the children come from outside India (usually Bangladesh and Nepal). It was also observed that the number of children migrating from the western zone (Maharashtra, Gujrat, and Rajsthan) has increased sharply over a period of 4 years (1999 to 2003) from 31% to 56%. The researchers have attributed this increase to the natural calamities that took place during this period, and proximity to Mumbai. Further investigation about the

place of origin of these children revealed that Maharashtra (50%), Uttar Pradesh(9%)and Bihar(6%) are the main contributors to the body of street boys in Mumbai. After coming to Mumbai they mainly stay in the central part (48%), south part(41%) and in the northern part(11%) of the city. A large number of these street boys have spent 5-15 years in Mumbai (34%).

Characteristics of Life on the Streets

The study by Rizzini and Butler(2003) highlights some of the life experiences of street children in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. They observed that the children and adolescents perceive the street as offering the possibility of protection, release and freedom in contrast to families and communities which they conceive of as repressive, confining, and full of conflicts and violence and characterized by fractured affective ties. The narratives of the youngsters generated portrayals of two worlds where affection, security and opportunities for wholesome development appeared impossible- the worlds of the home and of the street.

Despite this, street observations revealed that the youngsters in their process of self-affirmation adopted socializing and survival strategies on the street; they clustered in groups, earned and spent money, had fun and interrelated with each other and with adults. We suggest that what unites the children and adolescents, who come from different family environments and who enter the street for quite diverse reasons, is the lack of tutelary attention from responsible adults in their home settings. We could say that these boys and girls share an experience of poverty, exclusion and prejudice, that they live in precarious circumstances where a lack of affection and feeling protected and secure, probably pushed them away from their homes and communities. As a consequence, they moved from the nucleus of the family to an urban space in search of survival, protection, leisure and freedom.

Interviews with these girls and boys showed that the journey to the street brings the lives of these boys and girls close to danger, fear and violence. We outlined various factors that are associated with this kind of life; in particular we emphasized the experience of growing up predominantly without the care of an adult. We heard, with sadness, that this route left many boys and girls without a perspective for their future, unable to remember anything good that had happened to them in their lives. On the other hand, we witnessed, with hope, the instances of solidarity, creativity and ability to overcome difficult situations of the

boys and girls. United through the experience of discrimination which they encounter daily, a large number of them showed a strong desire to be “normal,” that is, like any other youngster. In their quest for acceptance by those who are indifferent, or who despise or belittle them, i.e., the passers-by, the police, shop-keepers, society in general, the boys and girls related many ways in which they maintain their self-esteem. This manifests itself in how they take care of themselves— how they dress, what they eat— and in the way they conduct their affective relations and in what they dream of for their future.

Rane (2004) points out that the stressful past and their life experiences teach street children to distrust adults. The situations and events in their families which pushed them onto the streets have a lasting impact on their well-being. Some of them tend to develop a sense of hatred towards their families. At the same time they are resourceful with high coping capacities. Their ego remains intact in spite of living under adverse conditions. One needs to take into account their self image as an independent young person, their initiative and dependence on the group as a basis for social support and nurture as the starting point for intervention. In order to cater to their specific needs, to provide unconditional support to protect them from exploitation, and to work towards the protection of their rights, a different set of facilities/services are necessary.

The study by Chetna also highlights the lifestyle of children on the railway platforms. These runaways have become railway children, their life revolving around trains they will never legally board. In an attempt to garner a living (29 per cent of the children wanted to do this) and flee indifferent parents or relatives (applicable for forty percent of the children) these kids dodge live overhead wires, security personnel and the police, making the frenzied chaos of the station their home. In their own way, these children, most never having seen a train before, have chosen to spend their lives among the carriages. The resourcefulness of the children, more than seventy percent of whom live in community groups in and around the station, is not unlike one large game, peppered with temporary highs on correction fluids, gutkha and rubber adhesives. They rush to the station when the big trains come in, get in at a particular point and exit at precisely the moment the ticket collector comes checking.(Sinha,2006)

Interventions for Street Living Children

During the last two decades Government as well as Non Government agencies have been actively involved in developing policy as well as programmatic interventions and services

for street children. Over the years, experience of working with street children revealed that old-fashioned approach of institutionalising street children in custodial care (often through juvenile justice system) is not an appropriate or effective intervention. The street children have different characteristics and needs as compared to other children in need of care and protection. Many of them have consciously opted for life on the street because of certain life experiences. Binding them with the rigid framework of institutional care is not the right approach. They often run away from such institutions.

Benitez(2003) identifies two types of policy initiatives for street children - broad based and targeted initiatives. She further elaborates the difference between the two and demonstrates how street children run the risk of being excluded from the broad based policy initiatives.

Broad-based Initiatives

These are frequently aimed at poverty reduction, urban children at risk, social inclusion or guaranteeing human rights to all children. They can be international, national or local initiatives, which set out to address specific themes of importance to a wide range of disadvantaged children. A broad-based initiative, designed to address a specific problem faced by large numbers of poor children, is likely to be most successful for those children who have most support and fewest “anti-social” characteristics. They seem likely to be least successful for homeless street children who have very few sources of support, engaging in precarious day-to-day survival with a range of interacting barriers impeding different areas of their lives. In practice therefore, homeless children are more likely to be excluded from broad-based initiatives for children, regardless of the type of underlying approach.

Target Initiatives

The largest and most important targeted international initiative level for street children so far has been UNICEF’s regional program in Latin America and the Caribbean launched in 1988 for children in especially difficult circumstances, in which street children were given priority (Boyden and Holden 1991, 75). UNESCO and the World Bank have also targeted street children through different policy initiatives. For example, through its Global Basic Education for All Program, UNESCO funded several NGO initiatives for street children and disseminated examples of good practice during the 1990s (UNESCO, 1995). Mexico

and Kenya are examples of national authorities which currently implement targeted initiatives to address street children in their major cities. And local authorities in many cities across the world have started their own initiatives in response to local concerns and anxieties about homeless children on their city streets. In India the Integrated Scheme for street children supports NGOs to cater to the special needs of street children such as drop in centers, night shelters, nutrition, vocational training and other inputs. The home placement program is also one of the main targeted approaches to intervention with street children. Many NGOs are engaged in such interventions. Targeted initiatives recognize homeless street children as a unique group of disadvantaged children who survive in particularly precarious, but often highly visible, conditions. Targeted initiatives can work to help street-living children gain access to services that address specific, identified needs in health, welfare, housing or employment. Drop-in centers, medical and dental treatment, psychological and family counseling, access to schooling and job opportunities can all be directed at resolving homeless street children's needs. Initiatives targeted at homeless street children can help to plug "gaps in the social networks through which children, and street children in particular, can fall" (Council of Europe 1994, 47). Several hundred small, often local, NGOs around the world help plug these gaps, either in collaboration or conflict with local authorities. However, targeted initiatives are essentially reactions to perceived, existing problems, and are limited in their capacity to prevent those situations. Also, although a targeted initiative seems more likely to have immediate impacts for homeless street children than a broad-based initiative, this does not mean that impacts are necessarily positive or lasting for a child's inclusion in society. The nature and strength of impact for each child will depend, at least in part, on the type of approach adopted by governments.

Approaches to Service Delivery for Street Children

Benitez(2003) argues that only one approach, the rights-based approach, responds adequately to the legal responsibilities towards street children assumed by all governments upon ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), two other approaches are also evident in practice in many countries; they can be described as "reactive" and "protective" approaches.

Reactive Approach to Homeless Street Children

This approach sees street children primarily as a threat or potential threat to public order and safety. A key policy manifestation is the use of the juvenile justice system as a way to clear the streets and punish offenders against the common good. Under a reactive approach, homeless street children are likely to receive from the authorities those welfare and educational provisions available in custodial institutions under punitive policies. Since a policy goal is to remove delinquents from the streets, there may be attempts at rehabilitation or at instilling fear, so that on release children do not return to the streets. Any government, whether national or local, which adopts a reactive approach toward street children does so in contravention of its obligations assumed under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Protective Approach to Homeless Street Children

This approach perceives children to be both “incomplete” and “our future,” thus needing different treatment than adults; protecting them from potential social evils is seen as imperative. Under this approach, legal sanctions against homeless children are not a preferred option, since they would not be effective in helping children integrate into mainstream society. National and local welfare policies may include offering temporary shelter or longer term residential accommodation in state orphanages or children’s homes, and often there are attempts to trace families and return children to their original home environments. Shelter and protection services may be provided by NGOs, sometimes loosely coordinated by local welfare departments. Under a protective approach, children’s housing by the state is usually conceptualized as a residual welfare measure, often, although not necessarily, using inappropriate buildings which are usually poorly equipped and understaffed.

The focus of the protective approach is on outcomes, rather than process; on immediate causes of problems rather than on their structural causes. It may be charity-driven, and seeks to achieve specific goals recognized as helpful to most children in society, over improving participation or otherwise empowering homeless street children (Canadian International Development Agency 2001).

Using a protective approach, governments are likely to encourage civil society organizations to develop and work independently, under loose supervision by state social

services. This reflects both state budget constraints and governmental commitment to ensuring that homeless children are adequately protected. Government and NGO relations are likely to be superficially collaborative but in constant tension, as independently-funded NGOs chafe under government requirements to ensure that homeless children are “adequately” protected.

Rights-Based Approach to Homeless Street Children

A rights-based approach sees street children as human beings whose fundamental rights have been violated. A key policy within this approach is to ensure the legal protection of children’s rights, promoting the well-being of children through a range of social, economic, cultural and educational measures which allow street children to take control over their own lives. A central characteristic of this approach is that street children are human beings who have been pushed into a weaker position with few, if any, human rights, and have to cope with a number of additional problems specific to their situation (Council of Europe 1994, 16). Under a rights-based approach, policies are geared to outcome and process goals which emphasize the realization of rights for all children. This approach recognizes that rights always imply obligations of the state, and can only be realized with empowerment. Structural problems are addressed alongside the immediate causes of problems, and programs are more likely to be inter-sectoral and holistic. This approach is highly policy-oriented and looks at social, economic, cultural, civil and political contexts (Canadian International Development Agency 2001).

Since a child rights perspective is being actively pursued by leading intergovernmental organizations such as UNICEF (UNICEF 2002), and by key donor governments including the UK and the European Commission (DFID 2002; European Union 2000), national and local governments are finding support from the international community, and this joint action is accelerating the introduction of human rights-focused provisions for children across the world. But though a rights-based approach is a more complete and appropriate conceptual framework, it has not yet been adequately operationalised to support homeless street children.

After highlighting the characteristics of different approaches to homeless street children, Benitez suggests potentially useful broad based and target initiatives which may prove beneficial for these children

1. Guaranteeing basic education and employment opportunities for girls, so that they are better enabled as mothers to make their own choices, gain access to social services and provide a supportive family environment.
2. Broad-based initiatives for children should be carefully planned and monitored to ensure that homeless street children are not excluded from programs guaranteeing free access to basic healthcare, education or welfare. At the local level, this may mean dismantling barriers such as requirements for birth certificates, school records and parental signatures which exclude homeless street children.
3. A targeted initiative should involve homeless children as full participants in finding ways to guarantee their needs for adequate protection and healthy development
4. For effective and efficient practice, rational partnerships between local authorities and NGOs should be encouraged. These partnerships should be linked to compatible national broad-based initiatives to enhance benefits for homeless street children, with governments assuming their responsibilities for service delivery costs, encouraging feedback to inform policy-making and fostering the spread of local partnership innovations.
5. To avoid the implicit risks of children or service providers being blamed for perceived “failures” in these cases, budgets and financial reports should be detailed and available for review at planning and assessment stages. Further, to ensure that services reach children they are intended to reach, periodic assessment in terms of changes in access by homeless street children to their rights should be built into initiatives at local levels as well as into broader-based policy reforms at national levels.

When one examines the scenario in India with respect to type of services provided, their approaches and philosophy adopted by non government organizations and Government policies related to street children in India, one realizes that most of them still rely largely on Reactive and Protective approaches. As far as Right based approach is concerned, there is still lack of clarity about its operational aspects. In principle most of the service providers claim that they are committed to uphold the Rights of the Child but how to operationalise these commitments into action is the key issue.

Achievements till Date

The report by Civil Society Forum (2001) indicates that a range of measures are taken by the Government and NGOs in India to cater to the needs of street children in India.

Although inadequate as compared to the need, it is necessary to take them into account. The Government has initiated various measures for care and protection of vulnerable children, namely, the constitutional provisions for protection of children against exploitation and abandonment, the National Policy for Children, 1974, the National Plan of Action, 1972, followed by the Ratification of U.N. Convention on Rights of the Child in 1992, introduction of an Integrated Scheme for Street Children in 1998, and legislative reforms in the light of CRC such as Juvenile Justice Act 2000, Children's Code Bill, 2000. The J.J. Act 2000 has for the first time included the category of Street Children in the list of different categories of children in need of care and protection.

The Government claims nearly that 25,000 children benefited through 85 projects in 35 cities under the revised government scheme for the welfare of street children that provides for grant-in-aid to NGOs in major cities (1998-2000) (N.B. NGOs claim the scheme has many loopholes and problems in implementation). Another major achievement is in terms of establishment of joint government / NGO project CHILDLINE, a 24-hour, free, emergency telephone hotline in 29 cities, used by more than one million children in past 5 years. The National Initiative for Child Protection campaign was launched in 2000 across police, healthcare, judicial, education, labour, transport, media and corporate sectors. A broad range of NGO interventions for street children are partially supported by the grants received from the Government.

During the last few years, advocacy and sensitisation workshops are being held for members of parliament and the police on a regular basis. In training of police officers, modules on children's issues are included. There is a growing awareness and attention to children's rights in the media. In many cities, establishment of NGO training and advocacy fora has been encouraged in order to facilitate better services for vulnerable children and to avoid duplication of services.

Constraints and Challenges

The constraints and challenges while working with the group of Street Children are many and they need to be addressed in order to reach out effectively to this group of vulnerable children. Lack of implementation and monitoring mechanisms for programmes and lack of enforcement of legislation is one of the main constraints. Lack of birth registration, a uniform adoption law, children's participation and child-centered approaches by the government are another set of constraints that are faced by the children's activists and

social workers. The authorities, while carrying out the demolitions for city planning, never consider the impact of forced evictions, demolitions and displacement on children. India has the largest number of child labourers in the world. Widespread poverty, unemployment, increasing rural-urban migration, attraction of city life and lack of political will to address increasing numbers of children on the streets. Street children are subject to malnutrition, hunger, health problems, substance abuse, theft, commercial sex exploitation, harassment by the city police and railway authorities, and physical and sexual abuse. The lack of commitment on the part of the Government is revealed through inadequacy of budget allocation which in turn has a negative impact on the sustainability of projects and, in particular, on the ability of the NGOs or Government Departments to employ qualified and experienced social workers to manage projects for street children.)

A recent study of Innovative Programmes Servicing Homeless and Street Living Youth Around the World – A compilation of best practice models from Los Angeles, Mumbai, and Nairobi brings out the need for designing programs in such a way that enhances a sense of family life. Not all children are willing to go back to their families but they do like to stay in a family like structure created by the organization where a couple looks after the group of street children along with their own children. Flexible programs are more effective – organisations having an open door policy succeed in developing a better rapport with the street living children. Organizations having services that are integrated with a holistic approach seem to cater to most of the needs of the street children. And finally collaboration between the NGOs and the Government is necessary for effective service delivery. (Kristin at el, 2005)

Home placement is one of the strategies for intervention adopted by many agencies of late. Through their outreach on the transport terminals, many children are sent back to their families within a few days of their arrival. However one does not come across a much publications or systematic documentation of these interventions.

Issues Related to Research on Street Children

Aptekar and Heinonen (2003) have analysed some of the methodological implications of contextual diversity on research on street children. Almost two decades of research and work with street children have shown that there are a number of common factors that can be identified when one speaks of street children. All street children regard their form of obtaining income as “work”. Most defend their right to work. Secondly, the range of work

that is possible on the streets is limited. There does not seem to be much variation from one city to another. Finally, most street children have made a conscious decision to be on the streets, whether as working, home-living children, or as working, street-living children. They have chosen, therefore, to be agents of their own destinies.

Just as importantly, research and work with a wide range of street children shows that the situational context in which the children are found definitely affects their experiences on the streets. Research not only into the children's backgrounds and into how they experience street life is important but it is perhaps even more important to understand how each society treats their street children. All are necessary for program design.

There are many reasons for benefactors to offer assistance, but many do not understand what the street children need most. The result of this means that while many people and programs are well meaning they are not always helpful.

Reliable data collection with street children is difficult because of their fluid lifestyle, the difficulty of defining a research population and the problem of retaining contact with individual respondents. Payment for information—whether in food or money—tends to generate false data. Information is best gathered over a period of time, and replicated by independent observers to assure accuracy.

From the foregoing discussion, it is quite evident that right from terminology and definition to approaches for intervention and research on street children, there is lack of clarity. No definition is comprehensive enough. There exist many debates and issues demanding wider discussion and analysis to adequately understand them. The cultural specific and location specific needs of street children are not yet adequately researched. This review may help to provide a theoretical context to our findings and analysis.

Chapter III

The Camp Process

One of the main objectives of the study was to evaluate the camp process in detail and look at the various inputs in the context of its purpose of motivating children to go home. This 4 weeks camp also serves as a transition from street to home. The research officer stayed at the camp along with the children and was a non participatory observer in all the sessions except individual counseling. The observations related to the camp process, insights gained through the focus group interviews with the children and interaction with the facilitators are presented below.

1. Organisation of the Camp

a. Location

The camp site was 40 kms away from Pune railway station in a small village called Khanapur – there are buses and 6 seater rickshaws available for travel but one had to walk for 10-15 minutes from the camp site to get to them. Sometimes one could get a rickshaw by chance; otherwise one had to walk to the bus stop. This partial inaccessibility was to reduce the escape chances for the children at the camp.

b. Facilities

The camp was held in one hall, large enough, to hold 25 children. This was used for sleeping, eating and activities. There was no outdoor space. Water was available but no toilets or enclosed bathing space. As the children had to use open outside space for toileting it became a task of the facilitator to accompany each child when he needed to go. At times this interfered in activities also. The comfort level seemed adequate as a shelter for children but there was no play space and also the high level of echo within the enclosed hall made it in conducive for play inside the hall as well.

c. Staff

At any point of time there were two Sathi staff and one cook. Later – by the early part of third week, they were joined by a third Sathi social worker. There was a fourth Sathi staff who was there intermittently. Of the total four Sathi staff, two were facilitators (one far more experienced in conducting camps than the other two. The facilitators used Hindi with some ease and some incorrectness also. The cook was from the village.

Interviews and focus group discussions were done with facilitator and staff of SATHI. Many issues emerged about roles responsibilities and problems that they face when they are conducting the camp.

d. Experiences of Facilitators in Conducting the Camp.

Facilitators pointed out that bringing twenty five children to a camp in an isolated place is indeed a tremendous responsibility. They have be on high alert all the time because matters could be related to health, violence, groupism or even the psycho-social needs of children. Besides the facilitators, there are no adults around who would share these problems. According to them the preparation of facilitators should happen at two levels. The first is by giving adequate administrative support e.g. access to phone or some form of transport etc. This will help them to reach the organization if there is an emergency. Also, they felt that the stay arrangements should at least meet their minimum needs like toilet facilities. The second level of preparation has to be in terms of orientation to the roles and responsibilities. The new facilitators said that there was no time between their appointment and the starting of the camp and therefore they came highly unprepared for the roles and responsibilities. The senior facilitator too felt that there was no preparation for the camp. Information about children or who all will be facilitators was not quite clear.

All this non preparation did seem to have an impact on the camp programme. For example the senior facilitator felt that because the assistant facilitators were new they were not able to discipline the children due to which all through the day the responsibility was of the senior facilitator to maintain discipline. Observations showed that the new facilitators who took charge of non formal education were not able to effectively provide activities for learning. But then as days passed they did pick up the responsibilities and were able to contribute in meaningful ways. Based on everyday observations and discussions the following tasks appeared to be that of the assistants.

1. To conduct non formal education classes.
2. To guide children in hygiene and exercise.
3. To actively participate in entertainment and cultural activities
4. Keenly observe children and note change.

5. To participate in the process of encouraging children to provide their phone number and addresses.
6. To discipline children.
7. To maintain accounts.
8. To make sure supplies are available.
9. Escorting children to toilet

The senior facilitator was involved in the total management of the camp. He was responsible for the main sessions of meditation, moral sessions and children's meetings. It was this facilitator who had to put in the right inputs so that children through these various activities are able to realize their goals in life, the futility of life on the streets and how the family might be the right place for them. Observation showed that the facilitator was able to guide the children through meditation to reflect on life on platform, the family and home and also importance of giving life a chance. The consistent planning and weaving of one topic into another and drawing out issues to discuss in moral sessions by narrating appropriate stories is indeed managed extremely well by the facilitator. Though there is a lot of play with guilt, still the facilitator was able to bring about a thinking process in children.

The camp process calls on a lot of skills of the facilitators to not only conduct session with children, but also to be able to understand each child. There have to be skills of observation, counseling skills, motivating children and also persuading them to tell about their family. Thus unless the facilitators are trained and given lots of skills to do all this the effectiveness of camp will be in question.

Certain physical structural constraints also made jobs for facilitators difficult. For example no outdoor space did restrict the number of activities that they could have with children. Secondly having no toilet facilities in the premises added a job as the facilitator had to escort children to the outside so that they do not run away. Thirdly there is this constant alert that they need to have to see that children don't run away.

Problems Identified by Facilitators

- Language difficulties
- New staff with no orientation
- Little time available for staff meetings
- No outdoor activities
- Disciplining children was difficult
- Children are not trusting the facilitators
- Physically and emotionally stressful for facilitators.
- Counseling children was difficult.

Based on their experience the facilitators had many suggestions to enhance the camp program. There is a need to provide intervention at child level and family level. Only working intensely with child and not with family is not going to ensure success of camp. At the child level it should not only give child motivation to go home but to understand oneself, build self confidence, to define one's interest and goals and determine his course of action.

According to facilitators the content of the camp needs to be re-looked. One facilitator felt that stories should all be reality based and that the whole camp experience should be life orientation process and not just home orientation process. The important thing mentioned by facilitator was that children through camp experience should develop coping skills and strength that will help them even if they are not going home. There should also be guidelines for observation of change so that facilitators know how to judge what change has occurred.

Working with family is important and should be a part of camp process. Facilitators felt that along with children there should be plans to work with families. It may not coincide with the camp, but continuous inputs to family in knowing the support they need, the guidance to deal with a street child who will live at home etc. There is lot of psycho-social preparation required for parents and children and therefore the facilitator feels unless one works with parent and children we may not be able to really reintegrate children with their families. The suggestion is that perhaps we need follow up camps and these should be planned with children and their families.

The new facilitator and even the senior facilitator felt that selection of children for the camp is an important aspect. However it appears that there is no such criteria and therefore you have children who were on their way home but got pushed to go to camp or there were children who had hardly been around and brought to camp and were then sent back home as the children wanted to go home. Thus facilitators feel that children must have been on platform for past 6 months, before they come to the camp. Some facilitators felt that if the NGOs shared children's history before the camp it would help them to understand children. Some even suggested that facilitators must get time for rapport building before camp activities began.

Another concern voiced by facilitators was about bringing the child to the camp on false notions. Some even questioned whether this camp is legally a correct activity. There must be some method on how we motivate children to come for camp. The facilitators also pointed out that children need to be given a choice of continuing the camp after say a initial stay of 8-10 days. This kind of flexibility may cause dropouts etc. but they feel it will be effective to work with a motivated group. It was also suggested that one can have children from one locality or one language to manage the camp better.

Overall facilitators did talk of the many problems in carrying out their responsibilities. Some of them have already got mentioned. At the personal level the facilitators talked of emotional and physical exhaustion. There was little time left at the end of day for a staff meeting so just planning for next day happens. Being away from home and family for thirty days is extremely tough. Due to lack of time and at times even not knowing each other, the facilitators felt lonely and lost. Also after all the efforts that are put in, the children in camp do not trust them .they questioned - that is the success of camp dependant only on how many children decided to go home? But the fact is that camp is having a far greater impact on every child.

e. Contact with Other Organizations

It appears that there was no contact with local organizations. As per camp guidelines, the organizers should get support from police, social service organization etc. This seemed to not be present.

f. Facilities for Children

The children were given clothes by the 2nd week. Their hair was shaved towards the end of the 1st week. They were given soap, which they had to share while bathing. Bathing was not regular – but depended on the rain and sometimes on the availability of water. The children were seen drying their clothes but they seemed to wash their clothes only towards the 2nd half of the camp. Washing clothes became a part of facilitator's instruction only towards the end of the 3rd week, beginning of 4th week.

The boys were in their platform clothes for a long time, despite the clothes being torn. Once they were given new clothes and a towel, they had only a single pair of new clothes. Washing did not seem to be an option because they would have nothing to wear when the clothes were being washed and dried. They would replace their trousers with a towel, in case the trousers were drying. They would go shirtless if the shirt was drying. Despite the obvious untidiness, it was not something that could be helped unless the children had substitute clothing.

There was some play materials provided. There were 2 carom boards, a cricket bat, and balls. By end of two weeks, they got frizz bees, rings, more balls, badminton racquets, etc., unfortunately, they got to play and use the open ground only in the last week. They also learned group games like Dog and the bone, land and water, etc. The children would fight over the carom board. Some boys would hide the striker in a bid to maintain monopoly over carom board privileges! Towards the end of the 2nd week, facilitator occasionally made attempts to make children sit in a line and then he would assign the carom board to children.

2. The Camp Programme

a. The Camp Schedule

The routine of children were very time bound and flowed from one activity to the other. The children's day started at 6 a.m. when the daily activities of body care and hygiene were happening till 7 a.m. This was followed by one hour of physical exercise which it appears children did very reluctantly. The 8 a.m. to 8.30 a.m. time is for meditation. At 8.30 was breakfast and lunch at 1 p.m. Meal times were disciplined times. Children had to sit in a line and come systematically to take their food. Children were given some leadership roles to do different things like discipline the children, cleaning the hall, washing plates, distributing materials etc. Sports and games were semi-organized so at times they were directed and at times they were left on their own. The cultural programme and children's meeting were the other activities in the evening. Here children were involved in many activities and discussions.

Table 3.1
CAMP SCHEDULE

<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>
6 AM -7 AM	Getting up and personal Chores
7 AM – 8 AM	Physical Exercise
8 AM - 8.30 AM	Meditation
8.30 AM – 9.30 AM	Breakfast
9.30 AM – 11.00 AM	Non Formal Education
11 AM – 12 PM	Moral story/ Discussion of Dhyana Topic
12 PM – 1 PM	Bathing
1 PM – 2 PM	Lunch
2 PM – 4.30 PM	REST
4.30 PM – 6 PM	Sports/Games
6 PM – 7 PM	Cultural Programme
7 PM – 8 PM	Children's Meeting
8. 30 PM – 8.40 PM	Lamp Prayer
8.30 PM- 9.30 PM	Dinner
9.30 PM – 10.00 PM	Staff Meeting

b. Non Formal Education (NFE)

In a group of 25 children the abilities of children will definitely vary as there are differences in age, experience and exposure. This group too had mixed abilities. Some children had done up to secondary schooling while some had no schooling at all. This is an important factor in planning for non formal education sessions.

The first week of activities of non formal education showed that there was no effort on part of the facilitators to understand these differences in order to plan for the activities. The first week observations showed that children basically did alphabet reading, were disciplined to sit properly, speak at appropriate times and develop listening skills. During the NFE sessions in this phase a lot of time was invariably spent on getting children to maintain discipline. They had to be made to sit in rows, not fight, maintain silence, etc. The first few days the sessions also ended abruptly if the facilitators found the children making too much noise and not paying attention to the studies. The Facilitators would use this time to talk to children about good discipline and good habits at the camp. The first few days at the camp were mainly facilitated by staff from Lok Vikas, Nasik. They saw the NFE sessions as a time where children could be given the opportunity to take charge and teach others. Right from the first week, some of the children were asked to lead the activities of reciting of alphabets, spellings etc.

The same children would come from time to time to read the letters on the board, there was very little writing practice and there was rarely an attempt made to test the knowledge of each child. The children came from diverse educational backgrounds – as a result the alphabet reading session were extremely challenging for one group and extremely frustrating for another. One child said he had known the camp was likely to be for a month but he was keen to come when he heard that boys would get a chance to study at the camp. He was keen to study but was extremely disappointed that he was getting to do only alphabets. This child would occasionally lead the alphabet reading and even tried to conduct a social studies class but the latter did not take place because the NFE class was converted into a moral session.

All activities involved all children. So it was seen that children were disinterested very easily either because it was too new or already known and also because the methodology was the same. Through the week repeating the alphabets by pointing to

the chart was the only method use. There was about 1 ½ hours given to non formal education and therefore holding children's attention for so long was challenging. The one and half hours needs to be split into various activities. It was observed when time was spent time on prayer, songs, alphabets and drawing, it was easier to keep them engaged. However the expectation that child sits quietly in rows and sings is an unrealistic expectation.

On the other hand there were children who learned to write their names for the first time. Those who had not studied much in school liked the studies here. They would come to the adults to write their names so they could learn. Children were encouraged to learn form each other and it was noticed that boys would teach each other simple things.

The second week activities in non formal education seem more varied. A question answer session was called quiz where children had to give their experiences, so there was no right or wrong answer. There was excitement in celebrating a child's birthday. Children were also given a theme to draw – their village. However, there was no supervision and so some children completed this task, while many others started doing other things.

Non Formal Education Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Reciting English and Hindi Alphabets (Most Frequent)➤ Writing work (Occasionally)➤ Story Reading (Once or Twice)➤ Quiz (Three)➤ Drawing (Few times)➤ Mud Sculpting (once)➤ Number work (Rarely)

The children responded extremely well to the drawing sessions. Most of them would draw and even show their work others adult present in the vicinity. Some of them mentioned in the children's meeting and also in informal interactions that drawing reminded them of the time they were in school. When the children were left to their own devices in the drawing sessions, some of them would even do origami or writing tables,

alphabets etc. Of course, there would be fighting too but the group was still easy to control.

One of the days was devoted to story telling. Here there were contributions from children who told their own stories and one of the boys even read out a story. This was a significant contribution of a street child and was appreciated and perhaps should be used as a motivating factor to envisage other children to become literate. Specific tasks with short term goals should be identified and children should be guided with help of these literate children to achieve these goals. It was also interesting to note that when the facilitator read a story from the book children did not feel much interested but when stories are narrated they took a lot of interest in it.

The second week, had sessions that gave the children a greater scope for creativity. During these sessions it was found the children were a lot quieter than they were in other sessions. Considering that the children were left mostly alone while they were drawing, it was commendable they did not misbehave at all and did not even make any noise. This week consisted of drawing sessions and one session of playing with mud, which ended with a fight and hence the session was abandoned.

However the mud session was a remarkable opportunity for the children to create something and get positive strokes for it. It was also a source of emotional catharsis. They were extremely talented with their hands and the level of complexity in what they created was commendable. The fight ended the session on a bad note. The laughter and the level of involvement the children showed through the variety of things they created, make one realize how much the children obviously enjoyed the session. However, during the children's meeting just one child mentioned liking it. The others who mentioned the mud session only talked about the fight.

The session with mud and the manner in which it ended make one think of how alert the camp staffs has to be for "warning signs". There were small mud fights happening in the group – children throwing small blobs of mud at their neighbours. The whole matter escalated when the blobs were thrown at boys at a distance and the boys retaliated. When the mud fight initially began, the camp staff were also laughing. Nobody probably realized how messy it would all become.

Further in the week there were no new activities in the non formal education. The literate children continued to give lessons in alphabets in Hindi and English and added either learning of names of flowers, fruits etc.

The third and fourth week saw very few activities in the non formal education session. Alphabet learning continued and on a few occasions drawing was also given. Another kind of activity they did in this period was the inter-group quiz where children were asked questions. The children would be given points for their answers and points would be deducted for indiscipline. The questions were of a subjective nature and often there was no single / "right" answer. Most questions tried to pick up what positive messages the children were imbibing – 'what did you learn?', 'why are we here?' 'why do we do dhyana?' but there was no space for questions such as 'what do you dislike?'. Once the facilitator asked "do you think about the station sometimes?" but he asked that to just one group. This quiz was perhaps a chance for the facilitator to know how far the children have reached in picking up messages from the camp. However, the children were not given the space to talk about things they dislike. There were some questions that encouraged them to talk about other children – such as "who do you trust the most?" and "who do you think is lying?". The facilitator even asked "who all plotted to escape?". The quiz was rather similar to the sort of questions the facilitator asks during children's meeting, only here the questions were cushioned by the playful format. It was a good chance for children to open up. Hence, asking children for feedback regarding the camp would have been helpful however questions were not asked in that direction. "What should be done when children do not listen to Sir?" 'what is the use of dhyana?' 'what is good here, what is bad?' /'what is the purpose behind exercise?' 'what is the reason you have become bad?' 'who all plotted to escape?' were the questions asked.

The third week had even less studies than the second week. Now there were more open sessions, children were given the chance to draw, sign, and narrate stories. The children responded rather well to stories of almost any kind. There would be a lot of laughter and some children would come more often and tell stories. The usual alphabet reading session was just once in the third week. Towards the end of the third week and all of the fourth week the children used the NFE class time to rehearse for the function on the final day of the camp. The rehearsals occupied just 4-5 children of the camp as they were the only ones selected to perform. The other children sat in rows and watched. Some of them drew in notebooks, some merely sat, and some were called out

by the camp staff for individual counseling sessions. However the individual counseling took place only in the fourth week. There was also a session on telling stories about parents/devotion to parents. But basically there were few intense activities in the third and fourth week in the non formal education session.

Overview

It was a good concept that especially the older, literate children were made to teach the younger or illiterate ones. The children were co-operative and would readily repeat after the literate boys. Be it a reading of the alphabets, the Hindi letters or English words. Asking literate children to take the NFE class served three purposes – it helped the literate ones keep in touch with what they had learned, it gave the children a chance to learn from each other and it provided children with the opportunity to conduct sessions without the control of camp staff. Sometimes children would make mistakes in spelling words or reading them from the charts, nobody would correct them and the other children would repeat the same erroneous spelling. However, the NFE session because of being repetitive and poor methods, did not seem to help children. Also the literate children were not really gaining anything besides, perhaps, pride while teaching other children. One boy, who had come especially because he was told about the studies, is as an example of the kind of children who can get frustrated with the NFE at the camp. Also, there was an absence of practical learning – be it Maths or how to write one's name.

Some learning did take place when the children were left on their own completely and allowed to form clusters. The reason they were left on their own was that the children were given a drawing task. However, some children used this as an opportunity to learn to write their names or to compete with each other on how fast they can write numbers, tables, etc. With a more structured facilitation, these clusters could have been used even well. The staff could be asked to take charge of the cluster that was most advanced and at other times the literate children could be asked to take turns to take charge of the other clusters.

The leaders appointed for the day were expected to mind the discipline of the class during NFE. As a result, there were two types of people who would control the proceedings during NFE- the leader for the day and the literate boy who was teaching the others. One of the oldest boys frequently took charge of both roles – he was leader

and teacher in the same session. Often he was the one who frequently hit other children but was reprimanded very few times for doing so. Sometimes the leaders for the day would not mind the class but let this boy do it instead. The facilitator was occasionally present during NFE class and in front of him, the leaders beat up the others less but the hitting would not cease completely.

There were a few days that the camp staffs were not present at all during the whole NFE session and sometimes even if they were present they would not intervene to correct the child who was reading incorrectly, etc. At times when camp staff left the room the children would break into fights and verbal duels. At such a time natural leaders emerged to take charge. Invariably the leaders were older boys. The same set of boys took over the leader's role and would use belts, pieces of chalk to hit the other boys. They were stopped from using the belt later but the hitting continued. The NFE session was one time when the children got a chance to exercise control over each other because the staff intervention was extremely less at this time. The fact that the same children exercised control over and over, prevented other children from getting the opportunity to exert control even if they were appointed leaders. Hence, those who were appointed leader in the morning would be able to do very little to maintain discipline during NFE.

The same things were repeated day after day – alphabets, numbers, Hindi letters, and English words. The Literate child would read it all and the children would repeat after him. Mostly the same set of children would conduct the class. There were extremely few Mathematics classes. According to the manual, children were to be taught numerous practical things- to read and write, to see the time, learn to write letters, about what to buy at the market, etc. However, these topics were not covered with the children. The children did not graduate beyond reading and occasionally writing. There were just 3 classes of Mathematics for a few minutes. In an interview with the facilitator was frank in admitting that he felt rather overworked especially because the 2 staff members sent to assist him was new and this was their first month with Sathi and their first camp too. The other experienced person who he could have shared responsibility had to leave due to various reasons. Hence, the facilitator could rarely conduct the NFE sessions the way he would at other camps and neither could he expect the Camp Assistants to do so. The facilitator did not seem to have a major syllabus in mind for the NFE, he laid greater

emphasis on the moral sessions. Hence, one can attribute the loose structure of the NFE sessions to the shortage of experienced staff.

It was also observed the shortage of stationery did hinder the session. Some children would have pencils but the others had to wait for these children to finish before they could take their pencils. The children were given a pencil each and notebooks too but these were in tatters in a few days. The stationery could have been cared for better but since the children did not do it, the stationery should have been locked up. Children complained about their drawings being torn by other boys. Things like these could have been prevented if the stationery had been locked up or at least put inside a cupboard. It would have also communicated respect for their work. Instead the stationery was kept piled up on a chair near the window and boys would take each other's notebook to write, without caring to see if they were damaging somebody else's drawings in the process.

Overall the NFE had been a good opportunity for illiterate children to get a taste of what studies can be like. It was a chance for literate children to experience a sense of pride for what they had learned. However, the sessions did not take the individual needs of the children into consideration. The facilitator or the Camp Assistants needed to have been more proactive by drawing up a clear syllabus and meeting its aims.

c. Meditation

The primary goal of the meditation exercise is to encourage children to think about a topic that ties them with what they are going to be told about during Moral classes. Also, the Dhyana sessions aim to encourage children to be silent; focusing their attention for small periods of time on either their surroundings or the images they are asked to conjure in their head. The Facilitators would speak clearly and at a fast pace. There would be brief pauses in the commentary too. After the children had been brought into a state of calm, then the topics were introduced and the children were asked to think about the topic. The topics moved from being highly concrete in the first week to being rather abstract in the last week, such as "difference between trees and seeds" in the first week and "what is your goal in life" in the last week. The topics always tied in with the moral session. Children were encouraged to give their opinions about the dhyana topic and sometimes during the moral sessions the facilitator would elaborate on what the children said.

The facilitators in the first week had to spend a lot of time to make children realize that they have to listen and that they have to learn to think if they want their mind to be fit. The first few meditation sessions were basically on making children learn to concentrate and use appropriate breathing techniques. Children were asked to think of difference between plant and seeds and stone and mud. There was generally the meditation and their discussion on meditation topic.

In the first week, some children would find it difficult to sit for dhyana – they would open their eyes, or they would keep changing their sitting position. Some would be frowning, as though trying really hard to concentrate. It was noticed that right from the beginning the facilitators were strict with the children during dhyana and would tell them to shut their eyes, a small number of children were even slapped when the facilitator found them opening their eyes. The senior facilitator, on the other hand, rarely ever slapped a child during dhyana. He would keep his hand on their head and signal that they should close their eyes.

The children were made to sit in rows and respond to questions; at times children who did not answer were kept standing. In the later part of the first week the topic was “amir or garib me kya farakh hai” and what is the difference between good man and bad man. Discussion was held on dhyana topic by giving a situation and finding solutions. Children were encouraged to think and lots of examples of Valmiki, Vivekananda were given to encourage thinking. It was observed that when children were responding to the question or situation posed there were such varied answers and showed children’s thinking as logical imaginative etc. However all their responses were not appreciated and were even ignored and when children gave desired answers, they were questioned further.

The facilitator was very systematic in creating the right concentration for meditation. Now that children have got used to meditation the facilitator took the children through a visualization exercise.

In the second week, the children were expected to think about their life on the platform. But the topics were such that they were allowed to voice only the things that were bad on the platform. They were not given any space to talk about the good things on the platform because the facilitator felt that it interfered with the process of the weaning them away from the platform. Despite being asked to evoke negative memories, this week

also gave the chance for children to think a lot about their platform life and the manual warns that in this week, children are again vulnerable to temptations of escaping from the camp to go to the platform. This did happen at the camp. One child tried to run away and in an individual session, he spoke about feeling scared at the camp and missing platform life where he was free to run away if he wanted to protect himself from people.

Some children would fall asleep in dhyān. Till the last week, in every dhyān session there would be some child or the other who fell asleep. The fact that every time it was different children who fell asleep make ones think that falling asleep during dhyān could have more to do with their individual fatigue on that day and perhaps it was inevitable to fall asleep when the dhyān involved closing your eyes and listening to a soothing voice.

The facilitator did a visualization exercise with children to contrast between platform and home. Many factors were detailed out. This helps to kindle in children the thinking about positives in the home setting. So the meditation in whole week had brought out problems of living on platform and also gave children an opportunity to bring out thoughts about home which might have been buried in their mind.

The third week talked of devotion to God, parents and country. Here the topics were abstract and children did thinking on who do you consider your God, what is devotion to one's countries. Through the meditation the facilitator once again makes children think of their village, its people, their parents, the relationship. Here there was less elaboration and just questions to direct children's thinking.

The meditation process in the last week talked of goals in life. Children were asked to reflect and see what changes have come in them. He also asked them to imagine meeting family friends etc. and how it feels. The meditation sessions also made them imagine festival celebrations in the house.

Overview

Overall, every progressing week there was a distinct change in the manner in which children responded to dhyān. The amount of movement reduced, there were fewer children fidgeting with their clothes, or trying to straighten their sitting position. In the last week, when the dhyān commentary involved thinking about the family, there were

children who would be weeping during dhyān, which made it evident that they were feeling rather moved by what the facilitator was asking them to imagine.

The facilitator's style involved getting children to imagine diverse scenes and towards the last two weeks the commentary became more and more detailed, with children being expected to imagine home, speaking to their family, etc. As a result, the children's thoughts were being directed and they were not given the chance to think about anything else besides what facilitator was telling them. The periods of silence were fewer and far between and mostly concentrated around the time he was announcing the dhyān topic. Occasionally he would try to elaborate on the dhyān topic to give the children an idea about what they were expected to think about. This would sometimes be leading, eg – "what troubles do you face on the platform? Sometimes the police would hit you, etc". The post dhyān discussion would then end up involving the recounting of those incidents. Perhaps children could be asked to think about "what do you worry about? What do you feel scared of?" after the facilitator has defined what "troubles" means.

Since the last two weeks were meant to make the children think about their homes, their family and their village. Facilitator would ensure that the dhyān commentary contained no reference whatsoever to the platform.

During focus group discussions some children revealed that the dhyān made them sit still and they have not learned to sit still for long periods of time, something they had never thought was possible before. One child said that he had changed a lot because of dhyān – he felt he had learnt new things because of dhyān. Another child mentioned that the camp had made him control his anger better. He wondered whether Dhyān could be a reason but he was not sure.

The dhyān commentary could be slower and the transition from one scene to another could be made less abrupt. Eg – "you are speaking to your family. Then you are coming out." Perhaps there can be a sentence in between about " now you have to leave them, so you wish them goodbye and start coming out."

The dhyān commentary needs to be standardized, there was a distinct difference between to the two facilitator's style. One concentrated on just calming them down by guiding their breathing (eg – take in a full breath, fill your stomach with air) while the

other tried to get them to visualize scenes. Also, while introducing topics, one repeated the topic whereas the other gave them examples to explain the topic. The only downside of giving examples to explain the topic was that the children were easily led to their answers, it was difficult to ascertain whether they had other ideas coming to mind when the topic was introduced. Perhaps the children could be encouraged to tell the facilitator what they saw in their mind when he stated the topic. For example “ When I say ‘accidents on the platform’, what comes to your mind?”.

More care can be taken so that the venue itself does not pose a difficulty in conducting the dhyana sessions. This hall had a lot of birds and also the kitchen window was opening in the hall , as a result the hall often became noisy. This seemed to be detrimental to conducting the dhyana as the children often got distracted or the facilitator’s commentary got drowned by the noises.

Also, the definition of the words in the topic should be free of examples, to prevent the children from being led to think of specific examples. The definition could be based on what the facilitator expects the children to think about. If the facilitator wants the children to talk about fears, difficulties, relationship with people, absence of help, then he should ask children questions specially about each of that.

d) Moral Session/Story Session

In the camp the time in the morning, usually between 11.30 and 1 p.m. was used for moral sessions. These sessions would take place after the NFE class and usually consisted of moral stories in additions to discussion of the dhyana topic. The children would be asked to talk about their interpretation of the dhyana topic, what they thought about when the topic was introduced. Then the facilitator would elaborate on the topic and connect it to their life on the station. The content of the moral sessions was closely related to the dhyana topic – either concretely or metaphorically. For example, the topic of difference between fruits and trees was eventually used to talk about the way a fruit cannot leave the tree till it is ripe, a child cannot leave his parents till he is mature.

In the first week, the moral sessions were held in the morning. Later, because the facilitator felt that the children were more receptive in the evenings, he started taking the moral story sessions in the evening. However, the dhyana topic was discussed 3 to 4

times a day- once after dhyān, then after NFE class, then during evening moral story sessions and sometimes in the children's meeting too.

In the first week, the moral sessions were also the time facilitator tried to communicate the purpose of the camp to the children. For example – in the moral session he spoke about giving them a chance to be all that they can. They also would say that had they had a choice to go wherever they wanted after the camp got over.

During the evening moral sessions facilitator would draw something on the board, something relevant to the story he wanted to discuss with them. Sometimes the children would watch him drawing and try to guess what he was drawing. Sometimes he would manage to emphasize his points through these drawings. For example, he drew the map of India for the session where he spoke about Major General Kariappa, he drew Shraavan carrying his parents and he would draw a train almost everyday during the moral sessions in the second week. He drew a house everyday of the 3rd week.

The main difference in the moral sessions early in the camp and the ones in the 2nd week onwards was that the story sessions were conducted in the evening. The discussion of dhyān topic was considered a part of the moral session. It was intended to take place after NFE class. However, at this camp the discussion took place more than twice a day – immediately after dhyān, sometimes after NFE, before the evening moral class and sometimes during the children's meeting.

The moral class was shifted to the evenings as the mornings were too noisy due to the kitchen work and the birds twittering inside the hall. The dhyān topic discussion immediately after dhyān was conducted to fill the time between dhyān and breakfast, especially since Sir had asked the cook to finish making breakfast before dhyān or to make it after dhyān. Otherwise noises from the kitchen would interfere with the dhyān session, which required absolute silence. Thus, the post dhyān discussion was motivated by the desire to keep children busy in that gap between dhyān and breakfast.

During the second week they spoke about life on the station. During moral sessions the facilitator would often talk against drugs as well. To hit the point home they would describe the health hazards that accompany drug habits – cancer, tuberculosis, lung problems, and possibly HIV/ AIDS if they get sexually abused if they are in a stupor.

Through this talk of disease the facilitator would often try to drive home the point that a child who lives on the platform can live only 15 to 20 years. This can be seen through the sessions in the second week. Sometimes the facilitator would explicitly say “you will die if you take so much solution or eat so much gutkha.’

Some of the Stories during the Moral Session

- Lal Bahadur Shastri
- General Kariappa
- Dr. Ambedkar
- Gandhiji
- Sharavan Kumar

By the third week, the facilitator had been working hard to get children to start considering alternatives to life on the platform. He would make it clear that he did not consider living in an organization an alternative to living on the platform. This was starkly evident in his exchange with the boy who said he did not want to go home but wanted to live in an organisation or a boarding school. By simple elimination of choices, it was clear to the children that the only acceptable choice was going home.

The facilitator also warned children about the kind of friends they made and in fact would mostly speak about how friends only use them and don't teach them good things.

The stories spoke that about certain regressive values in an extremely matter of fact way. For example on facilitator specifically said, “ parents say they want a son but what use if their son is a beggar !” Also the story of the man who stole for his daughter had actually been stealing for the sake of her dowry. Furthermore the girl said she wanted to marry the man no matter what, thus dowry was not questioned in any way even though it is against the law.

The first day the discussion centred on issues related to street living. This was done by starting the discussion on difference between seeds and trees and then moving on to differences between facilitator and camp children. The children brought out many significant differences like facilitator were clean, does not live on platform, did not beg and one child even pointed out that facilitator saved money. To bring out the importance of cleanliness the facilitator then called out to the two brothers among the camp children

and asked children why they were different. Children pointed out they were fairer so they looked cleaner. However this may not be the most appropriate method to emphasize the point of cleanliness as it may create differences in interaction of these brothers with the rest of the group. The facilitator was then focusing discussions on the food on the platform and children were able to appreciate the food of the camp and children give examples of the kind of food they ate. Since this was the first day, there was a lot of talk on cleanliness.

The facilitator further brought out the point about the need for being clean and efforts that they must take for this. Further during the week children were told the king Midas story to emphasize the point that even one has a lot of wealth it has no value if the loved is not around. Putting other people's needs before your needs was another focus. The observations showed that the facilitator was able engross children in the stories. He used lots of voice modulation, gesture and facial expressions children responded by asking questions. A lot of analogies were used to make children understand some significant messages that came from the story. The facilitators also said important things like "Each of you had a talent, some enthusiasm to become something but it was suppressed. We are trying to give you a chance to build this further and make something out of yourself".

During the moral session children were given to play some games with a purpose. For example the facilitator wanted the children to blind fold one child and others guide him to draw moustache on the boy figure drawn on the blackboard. After the game facilitator brought out very effectively, how it is easy to lead someone to wrong ways and few people really help in the right way. There were many stories told about boys like them who stole or who ran away and the response from the children showed that they could identify with these characters and the facilitator assured that just like the boy in the story was helped so too this camp will help them to find solutions to the problem.

In one of the sessions on the biggest mistake I have made children narrated (most of them) that running away from home was the biggest mistake children gave the reasons why they ran away from stealing to having been beaten or badly treated. The facilitator asked many questions to each child to make them think about the situation they are in and how they should change it. Observations showed that sometime children responded by giving the desired answers. The children who were among the last to get a chance to

answer were so tired of listening and waiting that they agreed that they were bad children and they needed to improve. Some of the group processes need to be made effective. Children could be made to discuss in groups certain questions and then the discussion be held in the larger group. Some children had language problem or were unable to relate to the large group. In such situations, small groups help could them and the monotony of the question answer would be lessened.

There were many stories that centred round children who wanted to live on platform and examples were given as how it does not help and children were asked to visualize how long the life on platform will be appropriate. Begging, cleaning the train or sharing solutions with friends such issues were discussed to make children express their feeling, fears and expectations for the future.

The questions and statements made to the children often suggested that the facilitator was either underestimating the extent of the child's fear of being beaten up or the facilitator's distrust of the child's account of being beaten up. For example in one post dhyana discussion session, a child was asked why he ran away from the hostel that his uncle and aunt had put him in. He spoke about being beaten up by his teacher. The facilitator asked whether the other boys were beaten up too and whether they ran away too. The boy said he was not the only one beaten up. The facilitator asked him "then why did you run away? Did she hit you more than them? And why would she hit you more than them, were they her relatives?" The facilitator seemed to trivialize the child's reasons for running away. Similar statements came up now and then, sometimes the facilitator would say 'how much will they hit, some time or the other the beating will stop' or 'if they beat you won't die.'

Sometimes the children would be given the example of other children to motivate them to improve their discipline. "Other' Children were either children from previous camps, from the neighbouring ashram or schoolchildren. Once when the facilitator asked the children whether school children were like them, one child said they were different because they went to school and stayed at home.

The facilitator also talked a lot about platform and station where through stories and discussions the facilitator tried to tell the children that they have come to this camp and what it is offering them and now is the opportunity to think of all the alternatives and

choose something which would give them a good life. Comparisons were given that parents hit you once or twice but here (at platform) every other day you get beaten up. The facilitator also made children realize that life is a journey and though journey is difficult they must find their way. He talked of optimism and need to address the problems and issues and how these thoughts would make them move towards a better life. There were many sessions on addiction that children have and examples how children are not able to think, move or understand what is happening to them. In discussing sexuality and the problem of HIV/AIDS children were able to express knowledge that they had and were able to listen to the impact of addiction and sexual behaviour on their lives.

In one of the sessions children were asked to do role play as to what problems new children face on platform. The groups of boys showed various skits of drugs, begging, bullying etc. The children were able to enact through which many of their experiences were visible. Thus a series of sessions on life on platform, the difficulties and problems were held. It was meant to create an understanding about how platform life is hard life and not the only life. That the child must question why he is doing this and that he could aspire for a better life. Though this camp ultimately should motivate children to go home, the facilitators did not keep bringing it up in their sessions. Often it was talked of as alternative to street life. The processes did make children think and respond and reflect.

The further story session included talking of devotion to God, Nation and parents. In the third week, the children were to be introduced to the idea of home and family. However, to do a recap of the previous week's sessions the facilitator conducted a quiz on the first day of the third week. This quiz helped review the stories, the themes and the dhyana topics of the previous week. The children were asked questions pertaining to actual details of stories or the benefits of certain activities of the camp, such as dhyana. Children were also asked abstract questions like 'what is life?' the answers for which had been communicated through earlier classes. Some children were able to recall the analogies that Sir had used to explain concepts like what is life. The analogies had morals attached to them. For example, 'what is life? Life is a journey and we can become whatever we want in this journey. Life is like a glass; it can break and not be mended easily. So we must treat our life carefully.' The children enjoyed the inter-group competition, the allotment of points for answers and the moral session became

extremely interactive. However, the answers of the children could not be seen as an indicator of whether they had internalized the values the facilitator had tried to communicate. Also, the fact that the facilitator was giving them points, it's not clear whether they gave their true opinions about the dhyana topics like 'is begging good?'

The following session had a story to make children understand goodness and badness is within each individual. The children were also told stories of Shravan to drive home the point of devotion to parents. However there were many abstract concepts like parents have not given you birth but god has. The facilitator in this session did not want any questions but just attention from children. With a story and song and many statements of how children torment their parents by going away from them, the facilitator was able to emotionally shake the children. The children through this constant statements and dialogues were made to believe that they were the cause of parents sorrow and most of them started crying. In fact the lights of the hall were switched off and this further created an atmosphere where children felt lost and repented having left home.

The next few sessions talked on Guru-bhakti where faith and trust in teacher was being emphasised. Stories of Eklavya were told and the facilitator also gave lot of examples as to how the children in the camp have not developed trust in spite of so much that the facilitator were doing for them. The facilitator talked of how they have sacrificed their comforts, being with family so that they can spend time in the camp and help children. Children were told about giving respect to earn respect and that there is so much learning happening which they can take back with them.

In the following sessions one of the facilitator narrates his own story of leaving home and eventually not finding his parents. The facilitator through this incidence emphasizes that at least they all know where their parents are and therefore must go to them.

In one of the concluding days one of the children pointed out that support of organization is like family support. However, the facilitator talked of it not being permanent and also that still there are differences between home and organization. Again through analogies the facilitator tried to tell children the difference between platform, organization and home. Time and again the children were told to reflect on all what they have heard and learnt and that these will guide them to make right decision. Further, that only their

parents love them. Even if children wonder how parents or neighbours will treat them it should not worry them and they must still make efforts to go to them.

Overview

The story session was the most enjoyable session for all the children. The facilitators were very skilled in doing dhyana topics, with stories and evolve a meaningful learning for children. The variety of stories that the facilitator could narrate is really amazing. The stories were mythological, historical, current and even personal experiences were excellently woven in the story sessions. The great ability of the facilitators to narrate the stories with so much expression was evident from the fact that children were always engrossed in the stories.

Though the efforts of facilitator are worth appreciating, the discussions from stories centred on creating a feeling a guilt among the children. The session on parents was emotionally stressing and intense feeling may have erupted in children. They were feeling upset and concerned about their families. The children could be asked some standard questions during post dhyana discussion especially if one is trying to get background information on them. These questions could also help us know about the depth of their individual issues that have to be tackled during individual counseling sessions. The questions the children were asked were often sporadic and in some cases, the questions would give away the facilitator's agenda. Some children get cross questioned more than others, as a result the others get the chance to see what kind of responses attract the facilitator's attention and what kind don't. Though the facilitator would try to explore further even if a child said he wanted to go home or school so that children did not start seeing these as 'model answers', it was evident that giving any other answer besides this one was likely to evoke a lot of questions from the facilitator.

Also, a moral session following a light NFE session did not seem as effective in getting children involved. Their energy levels seemed lower –they seemed to ask few questions and overall seemed to be restless much more. Having a good deal of singing in the evening served to focus their energy more effectively for the moral sessions. Drawing and studying did not seem to do that as effectively.

3) Children's Perceptions of the Street Life and Camp Process

Data related to children's perception is collected over the period of 4 weeks through the informal interactions, focus group discussions and observations during different sessions. The research officer had focus group discussions with children after an interval of ten-twelve days at camp and also some where at the end. The focus of these discussions was to understand children's perceptions of life on the street and their feelings/experiences in the camp.

a) Life on the Station

In the first session, in the process of telling about their station life, some would tell about drug habits – about the jobs- about how they spent their money. One child specified that he never wore torn clothes and hence used money to buy new clothes. One child spoke about enjoying his independence on the station because he could eat whatever he liked, whenever he liked, he was earning on his own and he did not have to live with his parents. The same child also said that he would get jobs easily but when he was with his younger brother, people would hesitate to hire him because the younger brother could be a liability (also since he was under the legal working age).

Other children also spoke about the pleasures of living on one's own – they could wander as they liked, eat whatever they liked, they could earn and spend the money on themselves without sharing it. After hearing them speak about this one boy said that he felt sad hearing them speak about enjoying station life because they could eat and wander wherever they wanted, he felt bad that they were not thinking about their family members.

So, the freedom to do as one pleases was a major theme regarding station life. One child spoke about living on the station because he had no choice – his parents were dead and his brother threw him out of the house. They talked about many aspects of life on the station.

i) Fear :

When asked what they were afraid of on the station, the children almost unanimously spoke about being afraid of the police. They spoke about beaten up, or being put in jail

for begging. Some children were caught for selling gutkha. One child said he was not scared of the police at all because he used to work in a police station – he used to be asked to clean it up, etc. one child said he had never been beaten or arrested by the police but he still felt scared of them. One child said he was afraid of the station master and the ticket collectors. Some children spoke about being scared of facilitator.

ii) Things they Liked:

When asked what they like about the station, one child said he liked the drugs and how he felt high while inhaling solution. He also said that one fix could get you good sleep. Then he even said he had forgotten about all that now that he had come to the camp.

iii) Sources of Help on Station:

When asked whose help they get to take on the platform, the children said their friends helped them. Some took the help of 'sir' (assumed to mean 'social worker') and some went to the doctor on their own. One child said he went to stay with his uncle when he hurt his foot but after his foot healed he ran away. When asked whether they like to take the help of people from the station or outside the station, some children said they preferred taking help of people outside the station. However, they clarified, it is important to become acquainted with these people well.

iv) What they Missed about the Station:

In exploring whether the children missed the platform. Some boys spoke about missing cigarettes. I asked them whether there was anything else they missed or perhaps anything they wanted to do once they got out of the camp. To this one child answered that he wanted to take revenge with facilitator once he got out of the camp because Sir had forced him to get bald. Some children spoke about missing the small things they did on the platform – such as an eating ice cream etc. one child spoke about earning and losing money on the platform. He spoke about having regrets about not being able to punish the thief who stole the money(this boy had saved up to buy a phone). This child also spoke about the small things he spent his money on such as clothes, watching movies etc. he seemed keen to explain that he was a clean well kept boy who spent money on games but not on drugs, etc.

b. Expectations from Camp:

When asked what they expected to see at the camp – some children spoke about learning alphabets – some others said they thought they would get to swim in a river. One child said he expected that he would get to have a lot of food and a lot of fun. Some children spoke, saying that they did not know they were coming for a camp –they just thought they were coming for a picnic. One spoke about being told that they would get to climb a mountain and he was really excited about that. Some said they thought the camp was for studying.

Some children even thought they would get the chance to work, such as washing vessels or cutting grass. One child said he had no idea what to expect from the camp but when he saw the studying sessions in the camp he felt happy because he had always wanted to study. Some thought they would be getting the chance to play games like cricket. Some thought they were coming for 5- 6 days or just 1 or 2 days.

Few children said they did not want to stay here but did not say why. One said he would stay only for a few days and then leave because he really wanted to study in a hostel. He said he left home because they did not let him study there and instead they just made him work.

c. Feelings about the Camp

i) Feelings about Camp in the First Few Days:

In the process of explaining why the camp exercise was difficult, one child started speaking about how scared he was when he first came to the camp. He'd thought it was a jail but now he felt settled and did not feel as scared, in fact he liked it. When asked to elaborate on what he liked, he started by saying he liked the mountains and he liked playing bat and ball. Then another child joined in by saying they had been promised they would bathe in the river, climb the mountains, play bat and ball but none of that really happened and he felt trapped after coming here, he felt like he was in jail.

ii) Likes and Dislikes at the Camp:

When asked what they liked about the camp, some children just kept saying they really liked the camp. Very few provided actual reasons. Getting the chance to study was one

reason and another was 'getting the chance to work". It is possible they were referring to studying even when they said ' I like to study ("kaam karna achcha lagta hai"). Some said they liked exercising. One child said that the camp reminded him of home.

When asked what they did not like. One child said he did not like the talk about eating and playing that took place at the camp. One child said he did not like the camp because he did not have any friends here, his friends had gone by the third day. The other children just kept saying they liked everything.

When asked them how they felt about the structured nature of the camp. By asking "when you live by yourself you do things as per your wish but out here you have to follow a time table. What do you feel about that? Do you feel tired? Do you find it difficult?" The children said that they liked to study, to exercise, and to work. They liked the fact that everything was on time – right time to eat, to sleep, to study.

iii) Frustration about the Camp:

Some children said they were counting the number of days left for the camp to get over. When asked about the reason for doing so, some children frankly said that they were waiting to get out of the camp because they did not like it here. One child who'd joined the camp a week after it started, said he was waiting to get out too. Hearing this some other children told him that they had come long before him and he should imagine how much more bored they themselves were. To understand their underlying feelings, they were asked pointedly – 'what is there outside that is not there here (at the camp)?' and the first answer from them was 'We will never trade our freedom' (*translated*). When the children were asked where they would like to go – some named religious places like Haridwar, Vaishnodevi and Swami Samarth Ashram. Some children mentioned that they thought they would leave after the picnic they had been told about but then the social workers left and a few days later the camp started.

iv) Change in Their Feelings towards the Camp:

In the discussions at different intervals children were asked how they were feeling at the camp, comparing to how they initially felt. There were different expressions while talking about the changes- both positive and negative responses.

I am missing my parents

I have stopped consuming drugs after being in the camp

I do not like the camp because I feel it is like a jungle with so many mosquitoes

'I find it easier to adjust at the camp after I made friends'

'I have my first Muslim friend at the camp'.

'I want to go home and implement what I have learned at the camp. I want to tell others about his learning at the camp.'

'I thought of my parents but had never thought of returning home but now at the camp I have slowly become impatient to see them again'.

'I was keen to go back to the station and only work, nothing else; I do not want to go home'.

'Children who run away must definitely come to Sir. Sirs are very good and have good things to teach the children – such as being obedient, eating properly. Despite the Sirs being so good, the children would often behave badly and some would even think badly of Sir'.

'I would help in getting kids from the platform to the camp, because I want them to get the chance to transform the way I did. I want other children also to acquire greater knowledge, learn that station is a bad place and so on.'

'I would bring other children but I would run away because I could not bear to be at the camp without inhaling his solution. I want to earn some money and then go home '

One child spoke about feeling good about getting to study at the camp because he left his study many years ago, after his sister got married. He did not explain the relationship between his studies and his sister getting married even when asked in private later.

It can be seen that the camp evoked quite mixed feelings among the children. It is probably related to their home situation and kind of life on the street. By and large most children were thinking about going home but some were quite firm on not going home. Such children need further inputs in understanding their situations.

c) Opinion on the Camp Sessions

i) General Impressions

Children were asked how they entertained themselves. Some said they fought with each other to pass the time and have some fun. Others enjoyed teasing each other or singing songs. However nobody mentioned games, books that were available in the camp. Some children said they really enjoyed the wrestling match they had a few days ago. Some children said they liked the study sessions.

Children were asked which stories they liked most. Some children said they liked stories about kings going to war. Another child mentioned being reminded of his parents when he heard stories about children from the station who died while begging.

Some children said they liked doing dramas and also liked being divided into teams for quizzes. One child said he did not like quizzes because he had to do all the talking if his team had to win points because he was stuck with boys who did not speak much.

ii) Experience with other camps:

Some of the children had attended camps organized by other agencies. They spoke about their experiences either at a shelter, or a children's home or a remand home. They compared the present camp experience with the other experiences. Some felt the camp was too restrictive unlike the shelter (Pune centre etc) where they could come and go as they wished, watch films, play games etc. Many children spoke about remand homes, but none of them told how or when they had this experience.

iii) Session on Meditation:

Some children said they enjoyed doing dhyān Others did meditation (dhyān) as per instructions. Whereas some children were frank in talking about how a few of them make sounds to make others laugh, while doing dhyān. When asked if they felt sleepy, they named other children but did not admit to be feeling sleepy themselves. About their thoughts of during dhyān, some children said they thought of the station – what difficulties they faced, what they did wrong, and so on. They spoke about being beaten up, being referred to as thieves.

iv) Children's Meetings:

Children were asked whether they ever really spoke about their likes and dislikes during the children's meeting. Some children said they were afraid of being beaten up by Sir's belt some children were scared of punishment. There was more space needed to have been made for children to express themselves without fear of any punishment. A relationship needed to have been established where the children would not fear punishment. One child told about some child being hit, because of which he sat quietly in a corner. Another child was afraid that this boy had died and that is why he was sitting so quietly. Another child shared that he expressed himself freely but he also hid a few things. He did not elaborate on what he hid and why he hid it.

v) Distribution of Clothes

Regarding clothes they received a few children said the clothes were second hand. Another child said that all the children had not received new clothes. Some received more than one pair, and some received only a shirt or only a pant. One child, who was giving all the boys a bath before they wore the new clothes, did not get a new pair because the clothes of his size got over by the time he finished bathing all the boys. The children seemed to be accepting the fact that everybody did not get new clothes, they felt like it was normal for someone to get things and someone else to not get things.

vi) The Moral Sessions:

When the children were asked which moral sessions they liked most. Some said they liked the story of Lal Bahadur Shastri. Some said they liked the story that taught them - Do not beg, do not cheat, be ambitious, do not abandon your mother.

Many children said they did think of home. Some thought of it during meditation sessions. They felt that they had started thinking of home more often now that they are attending camp. One child spoke about having a step mother and how he was afraid she would throw him out if he went home. He said he often thought about his father who would take care of him despite being drunk often. He spoke about his father for some time, saying that he wanted to apologise to his father for running away without telling him. This boy remembered how affectionate his father had been despite being alcoholic. Some children said they remembered their siblings. One child spoke about having run away from home after he mistakenly wounded his older brother in a fight. The children were clear in saying that the meditation sessions made them miss home the most. Some

children said they missed their mother. One child stated clearly that his father had done nothing for him and he had no reason to miss him, but he missed his mother a lot and imagined that she must have been deeply pained by his running away.

Children spoke about the moral session in which many of them wailed and cried thinking of their mothers at home who were missing them. This session was seen by the facilitator as the most motivational session of the camp. The children were asked what they liked about the session – they said they liked the story that had made them cry. Further, whether they liked the story or whether they liked the crying – some children answered by saying they liked both. One child who had punched the glass window in a fit of crying during the moral session spoke about feeling intensely angry with him for running away from home the way he did. He said he could imagine his mother standing before him and felt that if he'd had a knife in his hand he would have stabbed himself with it. He even said that he'd never cried in front of anyone and this was the first time he did so.

Another child asked the research officer what one could possibly get by crying so much or breaking glass like this, he wondered whether one could get one's parents like this. This child was trying to suggest that crying and punching glass was all futile and destructive. Hearing this boy, another boy tried to suggest that crying had nothing to do with trying to get people back; he said "if your mother died, would you tell yourself she is not going to come back, so why cry?" Then one child pointed to the brother duo at the camp and asked me whether it was really possible that these brothers' parents were enemies in the manner that the brothers made them out to be. The brothers spoke about the moral session in which everyone was crying. They said they did not miss their parents at all. The older brother said he was a little unsure of how to handle the other boys who were crying so much, the younger brother said he felt like crying too because he was reminded of his friend at home when the story was being told.

vii) Learning in the Camp:

When asked about what they had learned, children referred to some stories such as the Shravan story and the other one about parents being one's true Gods (the story that made them all weep). When asked further a bit about the theme of serving one's parents that was brought up by the Shravan story, one child said that he wanted to take care of his parents like that. To this a boy attempted to remind him that his parents were also

begging on the station, so how would he serve them. The boy replied that he was thinking about the future. He and others also said that they really wanted to study and make something.

Some children said that they learned that consuming drugs was bad. Some felt they had learned the importance of parents. Some learned the importance of cleanliness and good food. Some felt that they were better behaved now. One child spoke about the experience of teaching other children to read and write at the camp. He said that he and another boy taught the children something – some who did not know anything at all, had finally learned something.

d) Concept of a Good Home and Good Family:

The children gave their idea of a good home and a good family. Children responded by saying that a good home is in a building, or is a bungalow with a car. Some said a good family is one that does not fight but stays amicably and its children do not run away. Another felt a good family has good education and there are no thieves in the house. Another said that a good house and good family is one that stays away from sins such as robbery, but instead they are trustworthy.

e) Difference in the Camp and Railway Station

Some children spoke about how they were when they lived on the station. Descriptions contained references to being dirty, unruly hair, eating left over food, dirty or torn clothes, bad company, doing drugs, etc. they felt that coming to the camp had changed a lot of that – they ate good food, wore cleaner clothes, heard good things from Sir and also made good friends. The children were asked about the difference they found between the friends at the camp and friends at the station. One child said that friends at the station only taught bad things like smoking and doing drugs. Some other children referred to the fact that on the station they were subject to beatings and being dirty etc but now at the camp they were clean and had learned to meditate, which was something they had never done before. Some referred to having learned that the station was like a fire, or like a knife – that it could kill them. They felt that the major change in them was that they did not want to live on the platform. They realized now how living on the station could be very dangerous. One child felt that getting used to having facilities like bathing water, soap, good food, studying sessions etc was a big change for him. One child felt

that he had started using better language and reduced his abusive language. Another child felt that he had learned the difference between good and bad, which is why he no longer thought about stealing the way he did when he was on the station. Another child learned that he should live with his parents and also study and work hard.

g) Problems at the Camp

Children were obviously finding it difficult to adjust to the change from living on station/street to the staying in the camp. They expressed their problems either verbally or through actions. A few of them tried to run away whenever there was a chance to do so. Some of the problems shared by the children are listed below.

The question was “some children run off, what are the reasons that make them feel like doing so”. Some children spoke about being beaten up, another child just said that children ran away because they did not like it at the camp. Another child said “When “Sir” beats us up we feel frightened. They said they will take us for a picnic and here they are beating us. So the child feels like running away.” One wonders whether the children wanted to escape because they felt frustrated by being in one place. So when asked if children would run away even if the boys were taken for an outing. Some children said that nobody would run away. Some could run away from the picnic spot where they were taken, some children were still confident that nothing of that sort would happen while others said they felt the boys could try to run away.

h) Decision to Go Home:

Children were asked whether they had anything else to say about going home after the camp. Somebody said ‘all the children should leave now.’ He said that most of the children would go home. He also felt that Sir had spent so much of his energy in explaining about home that he felt most children would go home. He said that he too thought that he would never go home but Sir helped him change his mind in one day. The child told me that for many days he did not feel moved by what Sir had said but what he said in the session made him think that he must go home. He was asked what had Sir said that made him think of going home. the child spoke about Sir saying it was not correct to leave home the way they did, that they must in fact stay at home and learn some skill – in fact they should try to learn a skill at the camp too. Then the children went on to say that Sir had told them that if in these 6 days the children have had a change of heart, then they must be fed eggs. The others shared that other Sirs have also told the

children that if they have a change of heart (and decide to go home) then each boy would be given sweets.

One particular boy was asked for his opinion on what made boys change their mind. He said that the stories helped – the stories they were told at the camp. I asked him what had helped him change his mind, he said that hearing Sir's stories did it for him, he felt that he would go home if Sir took him and even if Sir did not, he would go home and beg for forgiveness. He said that the manner in which Sir told the stories touched his heart and made him cry.

i) Resistance to Go Home

On the whole many children had expressed their wish to go home but there were a few who did want to do so even after the four weeks inputs at the camp. They had their own reasons to feel that way. There were four children in the camp who had said they won't go home. These children were thinking of staying with an organization and most probably studying. They were asked what did they think the camp was aiming to do, did they think they were going to be sent back home, the oldest boy in this group said that he knew there was pressure on the children to consider going back home but he also knew that they would not be forced to go home. He felt that the facilitators tried to find out what the children wanted. One child added that one of the facilitators had said that the Sir had nothing to gain from sending these children, once the camp was over they did not have any stake in what happened to the children. The children said that one of the Sirs went so far as to say that whether the children died or lived were of no concern to the facilitators.

Children were asked whether they had always been sure that they did not want to go home. They answered saying yes. One child said that he was sure he would not go home because too much had happened in his village. When an attempt was made to know what he meant, he explained that he knew some boy who had been arrested for consuming solution and that many others had been hooked to solution because of him. Now that boy was in jail, so he was afraid of being met by the same fate. He also said that the last time he ran away from home he made another boy run away along with him. Now he did not know where that boy was and he was afraid that boy's family would question him or beat him up. He said that he had tried going back once but that boy's

family told him that only if he brought the boy back would they allow him to enter the village.

The brother duo was also in this group. They said they were clear about not going home ever. On asking what did they fear about home, the elder brother said that there was nothing to fear at all. They just did not want to go back home because their parents did not support their desire to study. Also the parents considered the older brother a curse on the family because their father lost his job after he was born. They also said that their parents often told them that they wished they had killed them when they were born. The older brother said that he had no desire to escape quietly, that he was comfortable telling his parents and leaving home. He also said that his father once told him openly that he can leave home if he wants but he should leave all the clothes that his parents had given him. He explained to me that by going naked it was really his parents who would feel insulted, not him. He said that he eventually left home quietly, with all his clothes, because his younger brother had failed despite tuitions and he was afraid their father would demand that they pay him the tuition money.

When asked if they were scared of being forced home, they said they were not because they would escape again. They said they did not have to live on the station when they had shelters and organizations to go back to. The children said they wanted to live in a Centre and work in the day to earn money. One child admitted that he had actively been thinking of not returning to the station only in the last few days. He was now thinking of living in a Centre rather than living on the station. He felt that the attraction had always been drugs but now he did not feel as keen on drugs. So there was even less reason to go to the station.

One child clarified that even if there was no centre to stay with, he would have still worked anywhere and lived in any other place he could find. He asked the other boys if they knew the timings at Lok Vikas in Nasik. They told him that Lok Vikas allowed the children to come and go as they pleased. One child said that he was looking forward to working in a tea stall. So the older brother said that it would be a better idea to study. Hence the other boy said Lok Vikas put children into a hostel to study. The older brother asked him what they would do if Lok Vikas shut down and could not pay for their hostel then the children discussed the difference between centre and home. One child felt that it was easier to get out of home but tougher to get out of the centre. The other boys disagreed with him. They felt that one was free to do as one pleases in a centre.

They also began to talk about the things they learned at the camp. It began with one of them saying that he would never have to come to the camp again now that he had come once. Then another child said that coming to the camp again would be like a revision for him the way they had revision in school for children who repeated classes. Then he told that he had studied till 8th standard but they had never learned anything about drugs. He said the camp taught him about the harmful effects of drugs. He also said that what he learned at the camp from Sir and the other children convinced him that he would never live on the station. He said he used to always live in the Yuva Centre but assumed that it would be easy to live on the station too if he ever needed to. But now he was certain he did not want to stay on the station. He had always stayed at the centre and had no idea that children got beaten up and treated so badly on the station. He could now see that living on the station was not an option open to him, which is why he would rather stay where he worked.

Since the boy looked a bit wistful, he was asked what happened, he said he wanted to go home sometime during Diwali – not now but much later, with money and new clothes. I asked him whether he missed his family. He said he missed his mother and sister, he wanted his sister to study even though he did not study much himself, he was certain his sister should not be like him. Later more information was available about his family. He had a step father who drank a lot but was good to him. He beats him sometimes but the boy explained that he beats him only when he used foul language against him. He shared that his mother often told him that he would get a job in the company in which his biological father was. His father died of drinking some medicine.

One child said that he was glad he came to the camp because the Sirs were placing him in a good organization, perhaps one better than Yuva in Mumbai. In fact this had made him trust Sir more. He felt that Sir had the option of just sending the children to Remand home if they refused to go home but he did not do that, which meant he really cared for their welfare. He said that sir's efforts to find them a good organization helped him trust Sir more.

This boy also spoke about the session in which everyone cried. He said he was afraid that Sir would manage to convince him to consider going home. He was afraid of having a change of heart at this juncture. He admitted to feeling like crying himself but he stopped himself. He said he could not possibly have laughed when everybody else was

crying. He felt like going home just because his friends lived nearby. He said that he did not like the way in which everyone was made to stand in a queue for the bathroom at the camp. He also did not like Sir's constant suspicion that they would run away. He said he did not like to be doubted like this. He wondered why they were constantly being escorted like this. He said he could understand if one Sir escorted them but the fact that there were 3 to escort them to the bathroom in the morning really irked him.

However, this boy admitted that he could understand Sir's concern after one boy tried to run away in the 4th week. He said that he could imagine that many children had not improved and still wanted to run away from the camp despite Sir having told them so many things. He said that he would beat up any child who tried to run away because a child who runs away at this juncture was really just ungrateful because Sir had taken so much pain to help them all and taken great care of them in the middle of a jungle, when he had no reason to do so much.

Children were asked how they felt when they got to know the camp was for a month. One was worried he would never be allowed to go. The others seem to have accepted it. One boy said that he was told they were free to go wherever they pleased once the camp was over. Two of the boys in this group had known that it was a 30 day camp even before the camp started. One boy also said that Sir had assured him that nobody would be pressurized to go home. This statement from the boy suggested that there was a possibility of children knowing this was a home orientation camp. The older brother said that this could have been a two day camp if the children had improved in two days but obviously the camp would be lengthened if the children did not show improvement in that period.

The brothers spoke a lot about looking forward to going to the hostel. Actually, it would be safer to say the elder brother spoke while the younger one just answered in monosyllables. The older one mostly spoke for both of them, the older one felt grateful for all the help he was given by Sathi, Yuva, Lok Vikas. When probed further to know whether he wondered why they helped them, he said that the 'why' did not matter, the fact that they were helping was the most important.

What prevented them from even entertaining the possibility of going home, one boy said that his family consisted of beggars and they did not have a home anyway. The older

brother said that the boys who had run away the first time or even 2nd time were more likely to want to go home. This was based on the assumption that their parents took care of them well, etc. He felt that some children got swayed by what Sir said (especially in the session where they cried) and believed that it was better to go home. He felt that such children would return to the platform soon. He also said that children who had a step parent would be mistreated at home and hence were less likely to go back home. This boy also asserted that it was obvious from Sir's talks that it is part of his duty to send them all home, yet he did not want to go home.

Then the other boys spoke about how this older brother was stronger and would survive well on the platform but they did not feel as sure about themselves. He said he ran away from home and lived on the platform only because of the problem in his village (the possibility of his being thrashed for not bringing back the boy who he ran away with) he said he hated being addicted but did not believe he could get out of it. The other children tried to explain to him that it was possible to leave addiction and that he must at least try. He said that he knew it was in his hands but he just could not leave it. Then another boy said that he would be able to leave his addiction if he was put in the Bhiwandi Remand home in fact over there he would beg to be let off and he would promise to never touch drugs again. The older brother felt that the camp at least taught boys about what happened if they took drugs, *"If he repeats it, he will be responsible but surely he will not do it out of innocence. Suppose he had died...then everyone would have felt bad thinking that he did not know the repercussions of addiction. If he does it knowingly and intentionally, he will be responsible for spoiling his own life."*

These responses certainly indicate some hope about the positive outcomes of the camp for all types of children – even if the children were not going home, they were leaving with some knowledge about drugs and about the risks of living on the platform. Perhaps they would, after all, be making more informed choices. There was pressure to consider home but there was no real force, there was still some hint of 'self determination' – children could make their own choices, these four children who were choosing to not go home seemed to be a proof of that.

j) Feelings about the Camp Getting Over:

The children were asked how they felt about the camp getting over soon. One child said he was happy because he was looking forward to going back to the station and smoking again. He said he had a strong craving and did not want to stay without his 'solution' for much longer. He was asked as to what he would do if he was not allowed to return to the station, he responded by saying that he would go home and then run away to the platform. At this point another child asked what he would do if a boy called Ganesh caught up with him on the station to take revenge for being put into the remand home for being caught with the solution he had given him.

k) Feedback about Facilitator

Feedbacks about the facilitators are gathered indirectly through their responses which mainly described the actions they liked or disliked. In one of the focus group discussions, one child made a reference to the fact that facilitator had supported his decision to observe the Ramzaan. He said that Sir was Hindu but had supported the Muslims and he liked that a lot. He said it had made him very happy.

This was used as a cue to ask the other children what they liked about the facilitator. To this one child began to compare facilitators saying that some had not taught them all as much as other had taught through his stories. The other children also said that they had really enjoyed these stories and learned a lot from them. One child said he learned to look at the station and life in a new way – see life as glass that can break any moment.

Some children started speaking about what they liked about the camp. One child pointed out that most children had been really thin when they came to the camp but now they had put on weight. One child pointed out that because of sir, they got the chance to eat some very nice things such as sheera.

Some spoke about the previous facilitators having beaten them a lot and not taught them anything. One said that when they earlier spoke about being beaten up by them, they thrashed them further and said they should not have complained.

One child said that he enjoyed talking in children's meeting. He said that after Sir came, arrived, he felt comfortable standing straight and talking his mind. However, when the earlier facilitators were around, he would avoid talking because they would beat the

children with belts on any pretext. An other child responded by saying that he was afraid of saying the wrong thing and getting beaten as a consequence.

Some felt that it became easier to trust Sir after he told them stories and taught them to meditate. Drugs or accidents could kill them long before their time. Living at home was equated with a longer life. They felt that Sir had their welfare at his heart and this was one thing they began to believe more and more, which is why they began to trust him. His giving them biscuits and tea made them feel that way too.

I) How They Would Organize the Camp:

Children were asked what they would like to change about the camp or what they would do differently if they got the chance to organize a camp like this. These also reflect their likes and dislikes.

- We would ensure that there would be an outing for the children.
- I would let the children run free and even if they ran away he would not stop them it is their decision whether they wanted to run away or not.
- There should be idols or pictures of God or Goddesses at the camp.
- I would beat the children so much that they would get disciplined in three days. The boys were pampered at the camp. I had been told not to beat the children but if I was allowed to I would set them right much faster. My hands have toughened up by beating the children in Remand Home (When probed further he admitted to be believing that children get disciplined when beaten up and spoilt when they are pampered. Then the older boy (who advocated that children be hit) spoke about the time children did not listen and had to be hit so that they kept quiet.)
- We feel that beating is wrong.
- I would make sure I would not beat the children like the earlier facilitators. I would not want them to go through the pain I went through. I also would give them all that they asked for.
- We want singing sessions, play time and story sessions
- The stories helped us think about good things and stop thinking bad things like drugs.
- Meditation had really helped me calm down and I want to have more meditation

at the camp that I would organize

- This camp should have had more play time

It can be seen from the responses that children do value the impact of stories and meditation, not all appreciate punishment and would like to include more fun activities in the camp.

4) Group Dynamics during the Camp Process

When the children first came to the camp many of them were afraid because they did not know what to expect. They all had their own ideas about what they were getting into – some thought it was a remand home, some thought it was a jail. Slowly they started playing games and introducing themselves to each other and some of them felt less scared.

The older boys took charge – they would tell the others where to go, what to do, how to get blankets to sleep, etc. There would be a lot of beating up now and then, and as a result there would be a lot of crying and complaining too. However, it was noticed that most children were beating children who were their own age. The older boys beat the older boys and the younger boys beat the younger boys. Sometimes the leader boys would beat just about any child without worrying about age. However, the leader boys mainly Masood (name changed) would make sure that nobody picked on the youngest or the weakest children. For example if someone beat up a very weak child, Masood would punish them and give them a sound thrashing for revenge.

Most children knew each other from remand homes or from seeing each other on the platform at some point. Some had even met at shelters. As a result they knew each others 'true stories' but they rarely told the Camp staff about these truths. For example, some children would know where a child lived or why he ran away. No matter how much they fought, they never blackmailed each other. Some children hated each other and would talk about beating each other up after the camp but they never threatened to tell the Camp staff about the true identity of the child. Perhaps everyone had reasons to blackmail each other and hence silence was the safest option.

Children really came together during play time. Children would group and regroup in different ways at play time. Some children would hoard the carom board by hiding the striker and thus ensure that nobody got to play without them. Besides the striker there was nothing to hoard. During free time, before meals and at play time the children would invariably get into fighting and screaming, over the smallest things. The situation was quite volatile because when elders were not present, it was like 'law of the jungle' – the oldest boy would end up being in charge and he would have a free reign over beating the others.

During open sessions of non formal education, when the children were left free to do what they liked the children would actually be quiet. They would be painting and drawing, writing, origami, etc. At this time, a leader was not required at all. The groups would be engaged in common activity. The boys who went to school sat together and had competitions revolving around speed of writing. The boys who were fond of drawing sat together and so on. The group seemed to spontaneously be formed on the basis of equal skill. Those who did not know to write, sat together and learned to write their names after asking a literate boy (who sat elsewhere) to teach them. Those who knew origami sat together and taught each other more origami. Rarely did an extremely skilled person sit with someone who was without any skill at all.

Some children resented the boys who got special favours for helping out in the kitchen. For example, one boy would get to drink tea while preparing tea for the Camp staff. The other children resented him for it. One young child would help wash kitchen vessels and the other children felt that he was doing this to get on the good side of the camp staff and get away with the mischievous things he did most of the time.

Most children had a group to hang around with or at least had one close friend. The few who did not have any friends at least had partners for playing games. Invariably the quiet boys paired with the quiet boys and the aggressive ones paired with the aggressive ones.

The child who ran away from the camp did not make any friends at all. He was extremely friendly with the camp staff and would crack a lot of jokes and keep them in good humour. He would also be very attention seeking, would keep asking the camp staff to

look at what he was doing. When he finally ran away (after attempting to do so once before), none of the children got to know. The Facilitators were always careful about him because they felt he could try to escape but the children never got a whiff of his plans. He seemed to have no relationship with them at all.

Children often learned about what was acceptable and what was not when they saw other children being beaten up or scolded. As a result, punishment would end up setting an example for the other children. The punishment did not seem to bring them closer to each other, it only made them scared of the facilitators and more weary about not doing something that the Facilitator would not approve of. When researcher spoke to children during focus group discussions, they overtly sided with the camp staff when it came to punishments. They mostly seemed to agree with the reasons that the camp staff beat or scolded someone.

When the children would sit with researcher and informally talk about themselves they would also swap stories about the station life. They would tell her and each other about their train journeys, the jobs they did and the money they made and so on.

Towards the end of the camp there were very few children who actually exchanged numbers or addresses. Perhaps children do not think about these things. Some children who were not going home made plans of finding work for each other and perhaps living together, but there were only 4 children of this kind. The remaining seemed ready to go home and carry on with a new life.

5) Individual Counselling at the Camp

It was not appropriate to be present during individual counseling sessions .This short report is based on some conversations of the counseling sessions heard from the outside .This was possible as the sessions were held outside the Room of the process recorder .Also conversations were held with facilitators about individual counseling sessions.

Individual counseling sessions were carried out in the 4th week. One child at a time was called to the place sufficiently far away from the hall and the other children. Usually one staff member handled one child, occasionally there would be two people.

The children were asked basic questions about when they ran away, which stations they lived at, what work they did, etc. these sessions provided information for the Before – After Register maintained at the camp. The ‘Before’ register is an account of the information that the children provide about themselves when they first come to the camp. The After register is the latest information and this one is often considered the more truthful one.

Since the counselling sessions are to collect information, the session ends up being a bit of an interrogation. The child is asked about whether he wants to go home and what his address is. Obtaining the address, landmarks near the house, names of various members of the family – all these details are essential in helping a child get home. Obtaining the address is the most time consuming (according to the Staff) because the children often seem to have forgotten names of roads, etc.

Besides address, the child is asked a bit about his family life etc to explore his feelings about home. During individual sessions, some children told facilitator and / or the other camp staff members, intricate details about their life. One child spoke about having been sexually abused, another witnessed a murder, another spoke about his father being in jail for killing his wife (the child’s mother). These are details that can be difficult to discuss in open sessions – after all children have a sense of privacy too, which often gets forgotten.

The sessions are also aimed at helping the child make decisions about what to do when they reach home. for example, one child kept saying he wanted to work in a garage. The counseling aimed at convincing him to study instead. Another child said he wanted to work in a hotel, since this child was educated already the facilitator tried to convince the boy to work in a garage because the job was longer lasting and he also felt that the child would learn better skills in a garage. The facilitator tried to downplay the work done at a hotel.

Facilitator often said that the counseling sessions were meant to motivate the children. “Motivate” implied “encouraging them to make the right decision” and invariably the right decision ended up being, going home or taking a proper job. Their biggest aim was to convince the child that station life was not good and hence it was not an option. Based

on their experience the counsellors identified some key factors to be kept in mind in counselling. They said one should not ask direct questions, there should be eye contact, occasionally touching the child on head or shoulder to establish rapport .The facilitator should accept what child is saying without showing disbelief. It was also felt that training is essential to do this task.

6. Parents Meeting and Closing Ceremony

The camp ends with a parents meeting in Sathi Office at Pune and a formal ceremony of handing over the children to their parents. Parents are invited to Sathi office on the last but one day of the camp and are given some tips to look after their children with love and affection. It was observed that most of the parents were from a lower income group with meagre resources for taking care of the children. Some of them expressed a feeling of helplessness as the child was a habitual runaway.

The interactions with parents showed that they revealed the variety of reasons children leave home. Parents were able to identify the reasons why children left home and were even committed to rectifying the situation. However it does raise a concern as to what situation/environment we are sending children back to. Do we have enough information to feel confident about children going back home. The organisation like Sathi would have to do much more work with families before and after the camp to ensure the home environment is conducive to children's development. This will ensure success of the reunion of children with families.

Having looked at the camp process, it would be now important to see how children adjust after they return home. This information is presented in the following chapter.

Chapter IV

Adjustment after Home Placement

In this chapter, we plan to present the data collected from children and their parents after home placement. These children have been home placed by Sathi over a period of 2 years (2005 and 2006). A total of 75 cases of children were traced from the addresses available with Sathi. Some basic data was collected from the records before interviewing the children and their parents. Of these 34 children had attended the camp organized by Sathi, 21 children were picked up by their parents, 19 children went home with a staff members of Sathi and one child went home without any escort. For the sake of comparison, we will be merging these categories of mode of home placement into two categories: Home placement after Camp and Other methods covering children with home placement without the experience of camp.

Information collected is presented in following sub sections

- A. General profile of the children
- B. Family Background of the Children
- C. Transition from home to street
- D. Life on the street
- E. Process of home placement
- F. Experiences of home placement: Children and Parents
- G. Success of home placement efforts
- H. Adjustment with the family and others after home placement
- I. Perception of Self and Aspirations
- K. Parents' expectations

A) General Profile of the Children

In this section we plan to present the profile of children who were part of the selected sample. Since all 75 children who were a part of the selected sample could not be contacted during visits by the research team, the data related to profile is based on three types of data –data from the records of Sathi (n=75), information obtained through interviews during the home-visit by the research team. It pertains to 46 children and 58

parents who could be contacted during the home visits. In 17 cases the whole family had migrated and so could not be traced whereas in 12 cases the children had left again. Therefore one may find different size of the sample depending up on the source of data.

a) Geographical Locations

Children selected in this study come from different parts of Maharashtra. They belonged to 17 different districts of Maharashtra. Following figure indicates the geographical distribution of the children.

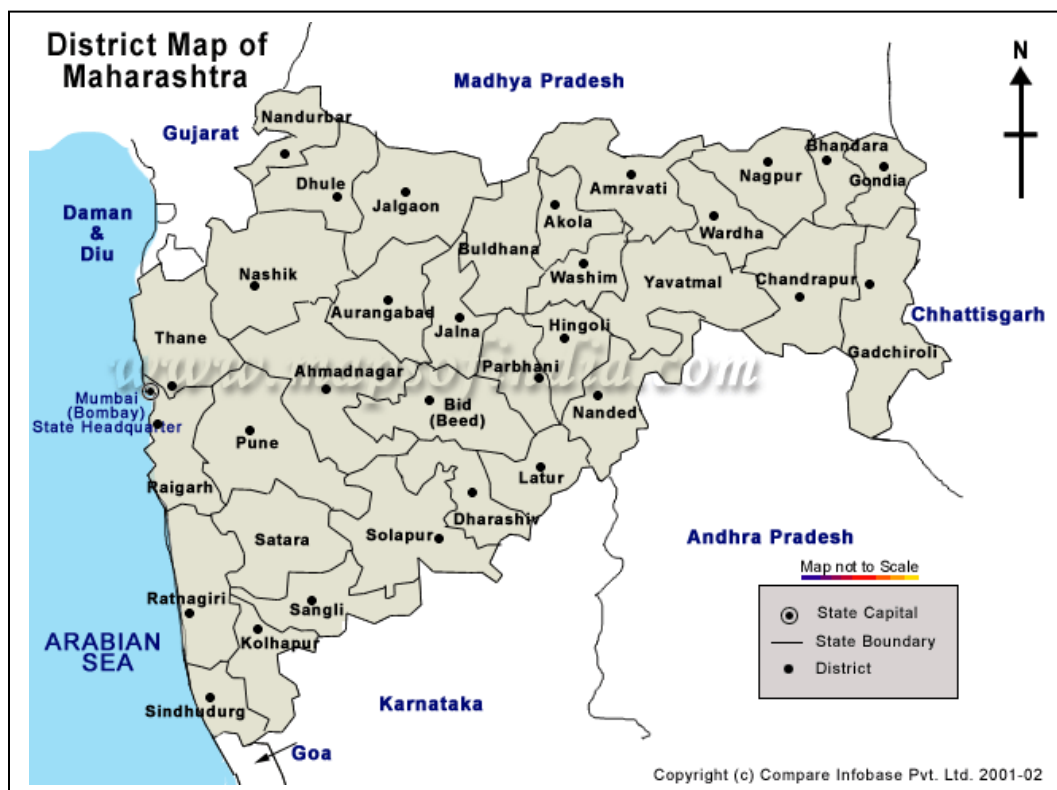


Fig. 2- Map of Maharashtra

Table 4.1
District-wise Distribution of the Sample

Sr. No.	Districts	No. of children selected in the sample	No. of children available for interview
1	Pune	19	11
2	Solapur	10	3
3	Mumbai	9	4
4	Thane	9	5
5	Kolhapur	5	5
6	Sangli	4	2
7	Beed	3	3
8	Latur	3	3
9	Jalna	3	3
10	Usmanabad	2	1
11	Satara	2	2
12	Buldhana	1	-
13	Ahmednagar	1	-
14	Nagpur	1	1
15	Parbhani	1	1
16	Aurangabad	1	1
17	Vijapur ?	1	1
	Total	75	46

Geographical distribution of the sample is not really representative of the incidence of leaving home at those places as the selection of the sample was purposive. However, it can be seen that higher number of children were from Pune, Solapur, Mumbai and Thane.

b) Age

It was observed that majority of the children (63%) were from the 11 to 15 age group followed by those from the 16 to 18 age group (31%) and only 4% of the children were from the younger age group of below 10yrs. There was not much difference in the age profile of children from the camp and children placed through other methods.

c) Education

It can be seen from the data that children with education between 5th and 7th standard formed the largest group (46%) and children with no education were lowest in number. Between the two groups, camp children had lower educational qualifications as compared to children placed through other methods

Table 4.2
Level of Education

Level of Education	Method of home placement		Total
	Camp	Other	
Up to 4 th Std	8(40%)	3 (12%)	11(24%)
5 th to 7 th std.	7(35%)	14(54%)	21(46%)
8 th to 10 th std	1(5%)	8(31%)	9 (20%)
No education	4(20%)	1(4%)	5 (11%)
Total	20(100%)	26 (100%)	46 (100%)

d) Current Occupation

Most of the children in this study come from lower socio economic background and therefore it is not surprising to see that a large number of these children were not going to school.

Table 4.3
Child's Occupation after Home Placement

Occupation after home placement	Method of home placement		Total
	Camp	Other	
Attend School	4(20%)	11(42%)	15(32%)
No School /no work	13(60%)	12(46%)	24(52%)
Employed	6(30%)	7(27%)	13(28%)
Working in family occupation	9(45%)	7(27%)	16(35%)

Only 32% of the children were in school after home placement. This percentage was relatively lower among the children from the camp. It can be because of the fact that they were on the street for a longer duration. Some children worked with the parents in the family occupation and in addition worked with someone to earn wages. Little more than half of the children were neither going to school nor did they work.

B) Family Background of the Children

a. Type of Family

The family background of the children revealed that majority of the children (63%) were staying with their biological parents whereas almost one fourth of them were staying in a single parent family. The percentage of children staying in a family with a step mother or step father was relatively low (4 % and 3% resp.) Five percent of the children were staying with a relative (uncle).

b. Number of Family Members

It was observed that for majority of the children (59%), the family size was 5 to7 and families with 4 and less members formed the second largest group (35%). Number of children coming from large families with more than 7 members was quite low (6%)

c. Parent's Occupation

Information related to the occupation of parents revealed that only 3% of the fathers were engaged in a Government job. A large number of them (40%) were employed as labourers, 16% of them were farmers and 11% of them were engaged in some business. In case of mothers, a little more than half of them (51%) were homemakers 28% were employed as labourers, 8% were engaged in farm work and 5% of them earned a living through domestic work.

d. Family Income

Majority of the families in the sample (66%) had a very low income of less than Rs. 2000/- a month. Families with an income of Rs.2000 to Rs.4000 a month formed the second largest group (29%). Only 5% of the families had a monthly income of more than Rs.4000/-.

e. Family Assets

This is one more way of understanding the financial status of a family. The following table indices the assets owned by these families

Table 4.4
Type of Assets Owned

Type of Assets	Method of Home Placement		Total N=58
	Camp N=23	Other N=35	
House	3 (15%)	20 (57%)	23 (40%)
Land	7 (35%)	8 (23%)	15 (26%)
Household consumer goods	-	9 (26%)	9 (15%)
Truck	-	1(3%)	1(2%)
No Assets	16 (70%)	10 (28%)	26 (44%)

In case of families in our study, it was observed that a large number of families (44%) did not have any assets of their own. Families of children placed through other methods,

were relatively better off in terms of assets such as ownership of house, land, consumer goods and vehicles.

e. Type of house

Almost half of the families (48%) were staying in a simple semi pacca or hut type of house whereas 28% of the families were staying in a properly built concrete house. The remaining 24% of the families were staying in a rented accommodation.

It is quite evident from the information on the occupation and housing that majority of the children came from poor or lower class families.

Looking at various aspects of family background of the children, it is evident that most of these children came from poor families where parents were engaged in low paid occupations. Many of them did not own many assets. More than one fourth of the children came from single parent families or families with a step parent. These can be some of the factors contributing to a situation that pushed children on the street. Comparison between the two groups indicates that families of children from camp were relatively poorer as compared to those placed through other methods.

C) Transition from Home to Street

a) Triggering Incident

Children do not take the decision to leave home without a reason. For some the situation at home is not very conducive and over a period of time, the child starts believing that he/she need to go away from this painful/problematic environment and some incident serves as a last straw. The decision to leave home is triggered by some incident either at home or outside. It can be scolding/beating by parents, fear of punishment, quarrel with friends or peer pressure to explore city life. The records indicate that in majority of the cases (59%) the triggering incident happened at home and for the remaining cases some disturbing factor outside home was identified as the main reason for leaving home.

b) Reasons for Leaving Home

This data is based on the children's responses during the interview. They were asked to state the reasons for leaving home. It was observed that a large number of children ran away because of frequent beating by the parents (59%). In most cases they received beating and scolding for not going to school or not going to work. Second common reason was found to be beating or torture by relatives, employers or school teachers (22%). A few children came to the city with their friends and wanted explore the city life or were misguided by someone and they did not know how to go back (5 to 10%). Some children ran away because they lost some money given by their employer or parents and were scared of beating. Therefore they decided to leave home and come to the city.

c) Period of Stay on the Road and Pattern of Leaving Home

Many agencies working with street children have placed social workers at strategic points like railway stations, main bus stands where a large number of children can be identified immediately/within a few days after their arrival in the city. These children are then helped to go back if they wish or they are at least in contact with the agency workers for further inputs. Some children are found to be habitual runaways. They keep on moving between the street and home but it can be a first experience of street life for others. The following tables indicate the period of stay on the street before they were sent back to their families by Sathi. and their frequency of leaving home.

Table 4.5
Period of Stay on the Street/Platform

Sr. no.	Period	Method of Home Placement		Total
		Camp	Others	
1	1 to 2 days	-	22(54%)	22(29%)
2	3 to 5 days	1(3%)	7(17%)	8(12%)
3	6 to 10 days	-	4(10%)	4(5.3%)
4	11 days to 1 month	9(26%)	4(10%)	13(17%)
5	Above 1 month	24(71%)	4(10%)	28(37%)
	Total	34(100%)	41(100%)	75(100%)

Table 4.6
Frequency of Leaving Home

Sr. no.	Frequency	Method of Home Placement		Total
		Camp	Others	
1	1 st time	13(38%)	28(62%)	41(55%)
2	2 nd to 5 times	18(53%)	13(38%)	31(41%)
3	6 th to 10 times	3(9%)	-	3(4%)
	Total	34(100)	41(100)	75(100)

It can be seen from the data that most of the children who were placed after the camp experience were on the street for a longer duration. It is also evident that the majority of children enrolled in the camp have been habitual runaways and children who were repatriated without a camp experience were the first timers in a large number of cases. This is in tune with the policy of Sathi. The agency believes in early intervention and therefore the social workers try to facilitate the process of repatriation of the children soon after their arrival to the city. But for camp inputs priority is given to those who are on the street for a longer duration or who have repeatedly left home for some reason or the other. Therefore even when we see that some of the camp children were on the street for a very short duration, they were selected on the basis of their frequency of leaving home.

d) Efforts by Parents to Trace their Children

When a child leaves home without informing anyone in the family, it is a trauma for the parents as well. They make all possible efforts to find the child. The parents in this study were no exception.

The first place to inquire is with the relatives and acquaintances (62%). Some of them went to the railway station, bus station and nearby city and neighbouring villages to look for the child. Very few went to the police station to lodge a complaint. Giving advertisement in the newspaper and television was tried by 7% of the parents. One of them reported that in order to search for the child he did not have money so he had to take a loan. A few of them approached a fortune teller or village priest to pray to god. Other places where they tried to trace the child include orphanages, temples, work place of the child, and jail. One can see how desperate the parents must be when they

realised that their child is missing. They try to search at every possible place where they think that child may go.

In this efforts to trace the child parents took help from the relatives (60%), neighbours(36%), police and other government servants (21%), NGOs (38%), local leaders (9%), and child's friends(5%). In 6 cases however the parents mentioned that before they could notice that their child is missing, they received the information of his whereabouts. These children were immediately repatriated to their parents.

It is important to note that most children have pointed out that the situation at home –either excessive beating, fear of punishment were the triggering incidents as well as main reasons for leaving home. Or even when they had run away because of fear of others outside home, family failed to give them the sense of security and assurance of safety. On the one hand we believe in child's right to a family and feel that family is the most desirable place for the child to stay and on the other hand we find that lack of conducive environment in the family was largely responsible for pushing them on the street. At the same time in case of habitual runaways, it is possible that children are ambivalent about their decision, they keep on being off and on the street, shifting from home to street and vice -e - versa as neither could really satisfy their needs.

Parents do make a lot of efforts to search the child using all possible contacts and NGOs in the neighbourhood. However, not many take help of the police to trace their children.

D) Life on the Platform/Street

Children's experiences on the street largely depend on the time spent on the street. The longer they stay on the street; they are likely to get exposed to the threats as well as pleasures of life on the street. They get different inputs/treatment from the persons they come in contact with. The peers, N.G.O. staff, police, employers, anti social elements and many others have an influence on their life. The newcomers may not have the skills to cope with the challenges of taking care of themselves whereas as time passes, they learn to protect themselves and are more equipped to live by themselves. Therefore it is

necessary to understand what kind of life experiences children in our sample had while staying on the street.

a) Type of Work on the Street/Platform

Once the child leaves home, he has to struggle for his survival. The first and foremost need is food. On the railway station, it is probably easy to get some food either from the passengers in the train or from the shop owners on the platform. The kind of efforts they do to get food are not really planned but depends more on the spontaneous decisions they take. The newcomers usually follow the other children on the street and over a period of time they choose multiple ways of satisfying their needs. The following table indicates the work status of the children as recorded by Sathi staff.

Table 4.7
Type of Work on the Street

Sr. no.	Work	Camp Participants	Others	Total
1	Begging	7(8%)	10(24%)	17(23%)
2	Sweeping	9(27%)	2(5%)	11(15%)
3	Hotel work	3(9%)	1(2%)	4(5%)
4	Free/ no work	15 (44%)	30(73%)	45(60%)
		N=34	N=41	75(100)

We have already seen that the camp participants were on the street for a longer duration as compared to those who were placed without a camp experience. Therefore we see that percentage of working children higher among the children from the camp. Children who were not working but were staying on the street for a longer time may be getting some help from the some organizations or religious places where food is distributed on a regular basis. They may also be getting some job once in a while or were engaged in petty crimes like pick pocketing, shoplifting etc. These activities are usually not considered as occupation. Such activities are usually not reported by the children to the agency staff till they develop confidence in the worker. Therefore we get a large number of responses as no work.

b) Addictions

It is a common observation that most Street children are an easy prey to different types of addictions. Once on street, they get exposed to various means of addictions. Peer pressure is the main contributing factor in addiction. This also helps them to cope with various hardships in street life. The kind of addictions they get exposed to are based on easy accessibility as well as cost of the addictive substances. The following table indicates the incidence of addiction among the sample.

Table 4.8
Type of Addictions (multiple ans.)

Sr.no.	Addictions	Camp	Others
1	Smoking	14(41%)	4(10%)
2	Gutkha	8(24%)	4(10%)
3	Alcohol	3(9%)	-
4	Solution /solvent	3(9%)	3
5	Tobacco	2(6%)	3
6	Sexual	2(6%)	-
7	Nothing	15(44%)	32(78%)
		N=34	N=41

It can be seen that reported cases of different types of addictions is higher among the children from the camps. Smoking and other ways of tobacco consumption seems to be the most common form of addiction among children. Here again one can relate it to their longer duration of stay on the street and frequency of running away. This data reinforces the importance of early intervention for children leaving home and adopting a life on the street. Especially addiction to solution /solvent (solution used for erasing) containing alcohol is found to be another problem. It also explains the reason for having de-addiction as one of the objectives of the camp. In fact it is observed that the incidence of addiction is much higher than what is reported. Once they start sharing their experiences in the camp, more children start disclosing their habits and addiction.

c) Harassment on the Street/Platform and Health Problems

Only two children have reported experience of harassment on the road and no health problems were reported in any of these cases.

d) Participation in the Services Offered by Sathi or Other NGOs

Once on street, children may get in touch with some staff of a street children's organization. In this case most of the children have been selected from those helped by Sathi staff but while conducting home placement camp, Sathi also recruits some children referred by other street children's organizations. Since the information on the profile of children is based on Sathi records, we get more information on the inputs by Sathi.

Table 4.9
Participation in NGO Programmes (multiple answers)

Sr. No.	Type of Service	Children from the Camp (N=20)	Others (N=26)
1	24 hour Shelter	20 (100)	20 (77%)
2	Night Shelter	-	18 (70%)
3	Drop in Center	-	1 (4%)
4	Meals	20 (100)	25 (96%)
5	Non Formal Education	20 (100%)	20 (77%)
6	Recreation	20 (100%)	4(15%)
7	Medical Help	16(80%)	2(*%)
8	Saving Scheme	2(10%)	1(4%)

It can be seen that the children from camp had utilised the services more as compared to others. This is explained by the fact that they were on the street for a longer duration and therefore needed these services more than the others who were repatriated within a few days after leaving home.

e) Feeling of Homesickness

We have seen that most children had left home because they wanted to run away from some negative experience or because of fear of punishment or were excited to explore

city life along with their peers. Very few were on the street because they lost contact with their relatives and did not know how to go back. Most of them had taken this decision to leave home because of some triggering incident. Life on the street is quite different. It is full of challenges and uncertainties. Therefore it is natural for them to feel home sick or miss near and dear ones when they are away from home. Eighty percent of the children said that they did miss home. Further probing revealed that most of them missed their mother and father (80%). Very few of them stated that they missed their siblings or other relatives like grandmother.

Looking at the experiences of children living on the streets, we realise that children who stay on the street for longer time are either children who shift between home and street or are not really sure whether they want to go back. They may get used to the life on the street. The kind of freedom they get on the street and the facilities offered by NGOs are more often better as compared to the situation at home. City offers many opportunities for petty jobs, entertainment and a sense of anonymity. They also develop their own coping strategies to face the adversities of street life. As time passes, they also develop a feeling that they are likely to get scolding and beating once they go back and feeling of homesickness becomes less disturbing over a period of time. Some of them may not even think of the option of going back. For some addiction is a major impeding factor and it becomes a major preoccupation. The contact with NGOs is also not necessarily consistent with such children. They may pick and choose different services from NGOs across the city

E) Process of Home Placement

The process of home placement can be short and relatively simple for those who are repatriated within a few days after leaving home but for others who have been on the street for a long time, it is not so.

a) Period of Contact with Sathi

Sathi has two main strategies for repatriation or home placement of children living on the street. First one is a preventive strategy which stops children from being street living children. Sathi staff locates them as soon as they enter the city –either on the railway station or bus stand at common places where street children are found in large numbers.

Then they make immediate efforts to trace their families and send them back. For others who are on the street for a long time, there is a need for a series of inputs. Many of them are reluctant to reveal details of their families, do not give correct information and avoid any discussion on going back. Many of them are victims of addictions. At Sathi, organizing home placement Camp is one of the ways of getting these difficult children together and providing systematic inputs to bring about a change in their attitudes, weaning them from the addictions and helping them to take a decision. This study provides an opportunity to look into the process of home placement using both the strategies.

Table 4.10
Period of Contact with Sathi

Sr. No.	Period of contact	Camp Method	Other Methods	Total
1	Less than 10 days	26(76%)	37(90%)	63(84%)
2	11 days to 1 month	6(8%)	2(5%)	8(11%)
3	Above 1 months	2(6%)	2(5%)	4(5%)
	Total	34 (100%)	41(100%)	75(100%)

It can be seen that a large majority of children were either sent back home or joined camp within the first ten days after coming in contact with the children. Another 11% of them were in contact with Sathi staff for 11 days to 1 month and only 5% of them were in touch with them for more than a month. We know that all children recruited in the camp are not necessarily the ones who are identified by the Sathi Pune Staff but are also those referred by other organizations.

b) Earlier Experience of Home Placement

We have already seen that percentage of habitual or repeated runaways was higher among the children from the camp as compared to those placed through other methods. Therefore more than half the children (62%) from the camp had an earlier experience of home placement as compared to 22% of the children placed through other methods. Majority of the camp children reported that they had returned home on their own whereas others were picked up by their parents. But none of them had an earlier experience of camp inputs before home placement.

c) Year of home placement and Period of Stay at Home after Last Home Placement

The data indicates that majority of the children with camp experience were from the recent camps conducted in the year 2005 and a large number of children who were placed through other modes of transport were from the earlier year. This is because we added a purposive sample of 13 children selected on the basis of availability for interview and they were from the recent camps held by Sathi.

We have already seen that many children in this sample were habitual runaways and therefore we tried to find out their period of stay at home after the last attempt of home placement. It was observed that children placed after camp experience were recently placed as compared to the other group.

Table 4.11
Year of Home Placement

Sr. no.	Year of Home Placement	Camp	Other (parents, staff, self)	Total
1	2004	02 (5%)	36(95%)	38 (51%)
2	2005	32(86.5%)	05(13.5%)	37 (49%)
	Total	34(45%)	41 (55%)	75 (100%)

Therefore the time of stay at home after the last home placement efforts varied from less than 3 months to 12 months. This period was longer for most children placed through other methods as compared to the camp children.

d) Motivating Factors in the Decision to Go Home

Majority of the children from both groups said that the thought of going back home was a culmination of different inputs and events. The following table indicates the range of factors which finally helped them to take a decision to go home

Table 4.12
Motivating Factors in Decision Making Process

Sr. No	Motivating Factors	Frequency		Total N=46
		Children from Camp	Others	
1	Interaction with social worker	16 (80%)	21(81%)	37 (80%)
2	Problems faced on the street	15 (75%)	7(27%)	22(48%)
3	Observing other children going home	15(75%)	7(27%)	22(48%)
4	Parents came searching for me	7(35%)	8(31%)	15(33%)
5	Missing family and friends	13(65%)	9(35%)	22(48%)
6	Missing home life	12(60%)	17(65%)	29(63%)
7	Camp Inputs	12(60%)	N.A.	

It can be seen that there were various reasons specified by the children. In most cases there is little difference among the two groups except for problems faced on the street and impact of other children who went home. These responses are given by more children from the camp as compared to the other group. This may be due to the fact that majority of the children placed without a camp experience were placed within a short time after leaving home.

It is important to note that majority of the children from both the groups (75% and 65% resp) have said that they felt happy when they started to think about going home and the rest of them reported that they were feeling anxious and were scared about the plan of going home.

F) Experience of Home Placement through Camp

a) Process of Recruitment

Ideally all children should be taken to the camp site on the same day and should receive the inputs together. The camp module is designed for 4 weeks of inputs with a designated programme for each day. But in reality it is not always possible. There are

some constraints due to the method of recruitment. These children come from different locations and achieving the target of recruitment on the same day becomes difficult.

Therefore among the 20 children in the sample, only 70% had attended the camp right from the first day, rest of them joined the camp after 1 to 5 days. They were all motivated by the agency staff to attend the camp.

It is a common practice that the children are not given all the details of the camp in terms of location, duration and purpose. It is felt that if all these details are shared, most of them would not be willing to attend the camp. Therefore they have been told that they are going for a picnic or going to visit Pune. Some of them are told that they are going for a one day picnic. Although this practice has been decided in order to get hold of the boys to attend the camp, it is definitely detrimental in terms of building trust and gaining their confidence and cooperation. This was also observed in the camp process. Many children expressed their unhappiness about the way in which they were brought to the camp. Other implications in terms of accessibility of information about the camp location and participants in the camp are explained elsewhere.

Thus one cannot say that children had volunteered to join the camp but were brought to the camp site under some other pretext and then pushed into the camp process. Since the site of the camp is away from the city without much access to transport facilities, and there is constant supervision by the camp organisers, there is little scope for the children to escape.

Eighty percent of the children came to know the duration of the camp within 1 to 3 days after joining the camp. Only three children said that they knew about the duration of the camp right from the beginning whereas one child reported that he got this information only after two weeks.

We tried to find out the reaction of the children to this practice of not giving all the details of the camp in the beginning. It was observed that a majority of them (65%) did not find it objectionable whereas 20% of them said that they were scared. One of them said that he was sad about it and another child said that he was happy that the camp was for four weeks. These reactions are a reflection of the fact that most children did not mind being treated this way. Probably because of their expectations or experiences of relationship

with adults or guardians, they did not mind such a treatment. Or because they realised that the camp was for their organised for their benefit, they did not find it objectionable.

Two children reported that they tried to run away when they came to know that the camp was for four weeks whereas 55% of them reported that some of their friends tried to run away.

The responses of the children do point out towards the need to reconsider the method of recruitment and make it appropriate in order to protect the child's right to participation and decision making.

b) Daily Routine in the Camp

Children were asked to remember their experiences during the first few days in the camp. Children described a variety of things that they could remember. It included play (70%), good thoughts /discussions (45%), exercise (40%), guidance (15%), non formal education (10%), haircut (5%) and food (1%).

It can be seen that according to the children participating in the camp food, education and counselling were the least important inputs to mention but they did remember play as well as discussions.

In order to get more details of their perception of the camp routine they were asked to share the activities they liked and the ones they did not like. It was observed that story telling session was liked by 75% of the children followed by exercise (45%), games (40%), meditation (40%), songs (35%) and education (35%). It is quite evident that street children are like any other children who like to listen to stories, like to play and sing. Among all the inputs in the camp the story session has had a lasting impression for most of them. These stories were woven around their street experiences and a moral attached to it. These moral messages were reinforced through discussions and recap exercises.

When asked to narrate the negative experiences, 90% of the children said that they do not have any negative experiences or cannot say what they disliked about the camp.

Only one child mentioned beating by the facilitator and another child mentioned that he did not like that they had to eat rice every day and no chapaties were given.

In terms of intensity of positive impact of different activities in the camp, 85% of them feel that the stories had the most powerful impact on them. Very few of them mentioned counselling and meditation.

c) Process of Decision Making

The camp design is such that during the first two weeks there is no direct discussion on benefits of staying at home but a lot of indirect inputs are given to highlight the problems of staying on street, hardships of the parents while raising children, need to recognise parents efforts, right and wrong behaviour, importance good behaviour etc. The facilitators start talking to children in small groups, or individually whenever possible. It helps them to judge the feelings of the children, to develop a rapport with them and get the correct information about their family.

Children were asked to recall the period in the camp when they started feeling the need to go home. The response to this question was varied. Thirty five percent of the children said that they developed this feeling after two weeks of camp inputs, 30% of them said that it happened after listening to the stories in the camp, 15% of them said that they got this thought during the last ten days of the camp and a few of them mentioned that they decided to go home during meditation, after they were beaten by the facilitator, and when they observed that parents were coming to pick up other children.

The final decision to go home however came at different stages in the camp. Eighty percent of them said that the decision to go back was their own decision whereas 30% of them give credit to the counselling sessions. One of them said that he decided to go home only on the last day of the camp.

d) Available Options for the Children

The main objective of the camp was to motivate the children to go home. Although it is desirable that all children should be staying with their families, it is not necessarily the right option. Some families are not in a position to offer a conducive atmosphere for the

child to develop. The reasons can be many but in such cases, one needs to assess whether sending back to a problematic family is the right option? Without assessing the family situation and feelings of the children towards their family, motivating each child to go home is not a right strategy. From the responses it appears that the camp facilitators were not really offering any other options to the children but sending them home was the most important objective. When children were asked if they did not want to go home, what they would have done, the responses of the children included no other option (75%), staying on the street again (10%), staying with uncle (5%), Staying with a friend (5%), and working in a hotel (5%).

e) Suggestions for the Camp Organizers

It is interesting to note that in spite of being in a camp that was not based on voluntary participation, children seemed to have a positive feeling about the whole experience. Most of them said that they did not have any suggestion; they found the camp quite interesting. Only one suggestion was given by one child. He felt that they should improve the quality of food and should not give only rice every day. Many children are not used to eating so much of rice.

From the experiences of children at the home placement camp it is evident that there is a need to reconsider the process of recruitment in such a way that children are better informed about the nature, duration and location of the camp and efforts should be made to move towards trust building and voluntary recruitment. In terms of inputs children have appreciated the stories and games sessions the most. They have been motivated to go home through the camp inputs. But children could not think of any other option to home placement. The organisers should also be open to the fact that immediate home placement at the end of the camp is not necessarily the best option to life on the street. There should be discussion on possible options to street life. At the same time it is interesting to note that in spite of being in a camp that was not based on voluntary participation, children seemed to have a positive feeling about the whole experience.

G) Experiences of Home Placement through Other Methods

Among the children placed without an experience of camp, we have two categories : children who were taken home by the parents and children going home with a social worker from Sathi. Whenever a street child comes in contact with Sathi staff, they start interacting with the child and find out his whereabouts. The moment the child reveals the details about his parents, their address etc. they start efforts for his repatriation. Sometimes, the child knows a vague address and the parents cannot be contacted by phone or otherwise. Some parents are not in a position to come to Sathi Office to pick up the child and request if he can be escorted by the social worker. The decision to escort or call parents to pick is need based. Let us look at the process of going home in both the modes of home placement. When both of these options are not possible, then the child is sent for a home placement camp.

a) Children Going Home with Parents

A total of 14 children went home with their parents. Most children felt very happy to see their parents and received the same response from the parents as well. Two of them said that they thought that their parents would scold them but fortunately it did not happen that way. They had also thought about the alternatives if parents had not come to pick them up. Most of them said that they would have returned home using other options like going back without escort, going with a social worker, going with other children's parents etc. Only 4 of them said that they might have continued to stay on the street or have started working. The children know that their parents were advised to be kind with them. Parents were told by Sathi staff that they should not beat or scold the child, send him to school and take greater care in future.

b) Going Home with Social Worker

A total of 12 children in the sample were escorted by a social worker in the process of home placement. Almost half of them have said that they were very happy to go back but the rest of them had mixed feelings. Some of them were scared that father may get angry or they may receive scolding. One child said he was happy as well as scared during journey. The social workers interacted with them to know more about their family and general situation at home. They were also advised to behave well, obey their parents, go to school and not to leave home again. Most of them have said that even if

they had gone home on their own, the family would have welcomed them in the same manner. Children feel that the social worker was friendly and treated them well. Only one child said that he was a bit scared of the social worker. Some of them feel that if the social worker had not made the efforts to take them back, they probably would have been on the street for a long time or would have looked for a job. Two of them said that they would have liked to stay in the shelter.

It is a clear indication that for children placed through these two methods, the desire to go home was very strong and they felt relieved with the assurance of going home. Most of them were happy that Sathi could help them to go home.

H) Success of Home Placement Efforts

One of the indicators to measure the success of home placement programme is in terms of the percentage of children who continue to stay with the family after their home placement. In order to assess the success of camp method in comparison with other methods (escorted by staff, picked up by parents, children going home without an escort) one should look at the original sample of 60 children who were selected using the stratified sampling proportional to size.

It was observed that out of the 19 children from the camp **one could contact only 7 children (37%)**. Six children (31.5%) had left home again (this includes 3 children whose families had migrated, the relatives and neighbours informed that these children had left home again and were back on the street.). In case of 6 children (31.5%) we could not get any information as the whole family had changed the residence and their new address could not be obtained. Thus one can clearly see that 31% of the camp children were back to streets in spite of the inputs received in the camp and parents migration. We do not know about another 31.5% of the children whose families had migrated to other places. They may or may not be staying with their families.

In comparison, in case of the 41 children who were placed through other methods, one could find 63% of the children who continued to stay with their families and 4 children (10%) were staying with some other relatives. These 4 children may not be staying with the natural family but were living with a foster family. It is possible that the parents had found this alternative to make sure that the child does not leave home again. **As a result one may say that home placement through other methods was successful in 73%**

of the cases. Only 12% of them were back to street and 14% of the families had shifted residence and could not be contacted.

Comparison between the two groups indicates that success rate in terms of numbers was higher (almost two times) when children were placed within a few days of their arrival on the street and their families also seem to be more stable and economically better off. But in case of camp children who were on the streets for a longer duration and many of them were repeated runaways, success rate is lower. The reasons for this difference between the two groups can be traced through their family background, and reasons for leaving home. It is possible that these children were not satisfied with the quality of life at home or the home situation had not really changed and still continued to be difficult for them to cope with. So they had found the option of living on the street more attractive.

These observations once again reinforce the importance of early intervention and the need to strengthen camp efforts in order to get a higher rate of success. One needs to accept that every child in the camp may not be having favourable conditions for home placement. Since the children in the camp have spent more time on the street and many of them have been habitual runaways, there is a need for additional inputs to decide a proper option to living on the street. Emphasis on home placement without proper assessment of home situation, close follow up after home placement and family support programme to help them look after their child is not the right strategy. These children demand extra attention. The push factors that force a child to leave home are left unattended and therefore we find that in spite of the concentrated inputs for 4 weeks during the camp, home placement programme has a limited success rate.

I) Relationships with the Family and Others after Home Placement

Another way of assessing the effectiveness of the home placement programme is to look into the way in which children are able to adjust with the family members and others in their neighbourhood. Considering the two types of children in our study it is important to see whether these two groups experience different treatment at home and neighbourhood and have to use different strategies to adjust with the family members and others after the process of home placement.

The children from the camp were staying independently on the street. Their life style on the street is quite different as compared to that after home placement. The expectations on both sides may or may not match. In case of habitual runaways, the family may not be sure about the possibility of success. The fear of losing the child again may be there. Similarly for children it may be difficult to face the inquiries / comments by family members, neighbours and relatives. To get into the family norms of discipline and daily routine is another expected adjustment for them.

Children who were sent home without a camp experience, the period of stay on the road was relatively short. The trauma of leaving home may be difficult to forget for both the children as well as their family members. At the same time it must be easier for them to continue with their earlier routine of attending school or going to work.

An attempt was made to look at the how children were coping after being back in the family. Similarly family members also may have to make extra efforts to make the child comfortable. Therefore it was important to look at the process of reintegration/adjustment through the perception of the child as well as that of the parents.

a) Feelings towards Family Members

It was observed that children have expressed their feelings in a variety of ways. The expressions indicate both love as well as fear in their relationship with the father. The responses were as follows:

i) Feelings towards Parents:

Parents are the most important adults in children's life. The children in our study are no exception. After the home placement, it is possible that parents have tried to provide special attention and made efforts look after the needs of their children. One also needs to keep in mind that majority of these families were from the lower socio economic background. It is encouraging to that children have been able to understand these efforts in most cases.

Table 4. 13
Relationship with Parents

Sr. No.	Father	Mother
1	He takes care of me (72%)	She takes care of me (91%)
2	I like to stay with him (59%)	I like to be with her (91%)
3	He understands what I need (63%)	She makes sure that I get what I need (93%)
4	I am scared of him (57%)	I am scared of her (41%)
5	He scolds me (61%)	She abuses me (57%)
6	He punishes me (20%)	She gives me punishment (93%)
7	N. A. (22%)	N.A. (4%)

It can be seen that children are able to describe their feelings towards their parents. These options were not given to them as ready answers but depending upon their responses, the investigators ticked the appropriate options. They recognise that their parents care for them, they also said that they like to stay with their parents but at the same time they are aware that parents can scold, punish if they do not listen to them. The perception of feeling of love and affection is comparatively more common in case of mother as compared to father. But at the same time a large number of children have mentioned that punishment is more often given by mother and not by father.

There was not much difference between the two groups in terms of these responses.

ii) Relationship with Siblings and Other Relatives

Like parents, siblings are equally important in the life of a child. A large number of children (90%) in our study were seen to be happy to be back with their siblings. Most of them (83%) have said that they like to play with their siblings and are not scared of their elder brother or sister. As many as 30 % of them have reported that they do consult their siblings and share their secrets with them.

When probed further, all children reported that their siblings are also happy to have them back. In most cases their siblings are engaged in household work (80%) while a few of them(7%) help in the farm. The percentage of cases where the siblings were attending school was relatively small (54%).

In case of other relatives like grand parents, uncles, aunts and cousins also children have expressed positive feelings wherever applicable.

iii) Friends

Most of the children in our study are above 10 years of age and therefore friends are an important part of their social network. Only one boy has reported that he has no friends. After home placement, majority of the children (91%) did not face any difficulty to mix with their old friends and 41% of them could make some new friends as well.

The activities of the children involving friends include playing (76%), chit-chatting (26%),going out or roaming around (11%), studying (21%), working at the same place (9%), looking after the cattle (2%).

It seems that children do not necessarily share the fact that they had left home in the past. While a larger number of children said that their friends are aware of their being on the street for some time as many as 41% of the children said that their friends did not know about it. One can see that some children do care about their image in the friend circle and avoid sharing their experience of being on the street or they do not all look at it as adventure to boast about.

iv) School and Work Place

More than half of the children (52%) were working, 37% of them were attending school and 11% were not engaged in anything –no school, no work. Most of them do not seem to have any problems at school or work place. School going children find it difficult to study Maths and English and find other subjects relatively easy to study. Working children however feel that they have to put in a lot of hard work.

No one reported any maltreatment as such. But when probed further some of them said that they do not like certain things at school or work place. These things include beating by teachers or scolding by supervisors (13%). One of them does not like the friends who are getting addicted to smoking. Only 15% of the children reported that their teachers/employers complain about them. Majority of them seem to be having a cordial relationship with their teachers or employers (74%).

It is encouraging to note that majority of the children feel that they do not experience any change in the attitudes of way of behaviour among the peers and others in their social network because of the fact that they had left home and were on the street for some time. The difference between the two groups was not very sharp in these matters.

It can be said that in terms of social adjustment there is no difference among the children placed after camp and those placed using other methods. On the other hand, one can say that because the family and social network was generally supportive and non threatening, these children continued to stay home.

v) Perceptions and Expectations Related to Family

Children always have some expectations from their family and these are usually based on their exposure to other families in their social circle-friends and relatives. In order to understand how children view their own family and member within in comparison with others or what are their opinions about the behaviour of their family members, we had given some statements to the children to complete.

**Table 4.14
Perceptions/Expectations Related to Family**

Sr. No	Statement	Response	Method of Home Placement		Total (%)
			Camp(%)	Other(%)	
1	I feel that my father often	scolds me	45	35	39
		remains busy	20	31	26
		loves me	5	19	13
		stays out of station	5	8	7
		N.A.	25	8	15

2	Compared to other families, my family is	better	50	62	57
		okay	10	-	4
		poorer	35	38	37
		stayed away from the main town	5	-	2
3	I feel that other families in my village are generally	good	85	77	80
		okay	5	23	15
4	I feel that my father should	not scold and beat	55	61	59
		love me	10	23	17
		come here	5	4	4
		not consume alcohol	5	3	4
		N.A.	25	8	15
5	I feel that my mother often	keeps working	45	27	35
		is good to me	10	38	26
		scolds me	15	11	13
		pays attention to me	20	23	22
		N.A.	10	-	4
6	I feel that mother should	not lose her temper	25	38	32
		love me	40	31	35
		not ask me to work	5	-	2
		not worry about me	15	3	7
		fulfil all my wishes	-	12	7
		No comments	-	19	11
		N.A.	10	-	4
7	My and siblings and me often	play together	65	57	61
		stay together without problems	15	23	20
		fight with each other	20	8	13
		attend school	5	12	4
		N.A.	10	-	4
8	Compared to my siblings my family treats me as	equal	70	88	80
		one who had run away	15	23	20
		not being a good child	5	8	4
		N.A.	10	-	4

It can be seen that children's perception about their family members and others families in the neighbourhood is generally positive and they feel that parents should be loving and caring. They do not like scolding and beating by parents. It is encouraging to note that majority of the children feel that after coming home, their parents treat them on par with other children. Only a few of them have experienced discrimination because they had left home. More than one third of the children have observed that their families are

poorer as compared to other families in their town. A few children have expressed their unhappiness about alcoholic father. They feel that their father should not consume alcohol.

Differences between the two groups are also not very sharp but in terms of positive and negative responses the children placed through other method seem to be more positive.

From the foregoing discussions it is evident that children are quite free to express their experiences and expectations from their family and siblings. They are able to appreciate the concerns shown by their parents and at the same time are not very happy about the scolding by their parents. The acceptance in the family seems to be good in most of the cases. They also seem to be doing well in terms of reality orientation and have not answered in a stereotypical manner. They could very well report about what is the reality and what is desirable.

vi) Feelings after Home Placement

At the time of data collection, all the children in the study were staying at home for a period of 3 to 12 months. It is not possible to have significant changes in the situation at home as compared to the situation which forced them to leave home. Success of home placement is actually dependent on how children cope with this situation. An experience of living outside home is a significant event in children's life. It can have some lasting effects on their personality. Camp children are having a longer experience of street life and concentrated inputs through the camp. An experience of street life can give them some skills to accept the situation and cope with it. Children from the camp had received some inputs to understand the threats and problems of being on the street along with the need to recognise the efforts of the parents to look after them. They are also helped to understand the responsibility towards their parents. Let us see how children perceive these changes. The changes should also be seen in the context of the difference in their duration of stay on the road and inputs received from the agency.

a) Changes in Self after Home Placement

A large number of children from the camp (85%) agreed that there is some change in their personality as compared to the other group (54%). All of them except two (both

groups) have said that staying at home is much better than staying on the street and their parents are paying more attention to their needs. More children from the camp (95%) feel sorry for their decision to run away as compared to the other group. This is because of the fact that in 35% percent of the cases from the other group, leaving home was not their decision. They had been on the road because they were separated from their guardians by accident. They missed the way or got into a wrong bus/train by mistake.

b) Changes in the Situation at Home

All the children except one feel that the reason for which they had left home is no more all that prominent and they can cope with it now. We do not have the details of the changes but it is also possible that children are not finding it intolerable and are able to accept the reality.

Majority of them from both the groups said that they don't receive frequent comments/taunts from their family and friends for their act of running away.

c) Fear / Anxiety

It may be recalled that fear of beating or scolding was one of the prominent reason for leaving home. But it is encouraging to know that a large number of them (41%) reported that they are not scared of anyone. Others did have some fear of scolding by father, ragging by friends or harassment by employers. Percentage of children who do not have any fear is greater among the camp children.

d) Likes and Dislikes

Favourite activities of the children include playing, watching movies, going out with friend, and swimming. A few of them mentioned that they like to drive a tractor, work and study. All of them except one mentioned that they wish to forget their life experiences while on the street. That was the most unpleasant experience in their life.

vi) Coping Strategies

We know that in most of the cases in this study, the family situation is often problematic in terms of poverty, alcoholism, unemployment etc. leading to lack of resources and opportunities. These problems are sure to have an impact on the children. So they were asked to share their strategies to cope with difficulties. Children shared that when things are really difficult they prefer keeping quiet, going out with friends, just sleep, or do nothing. A few of them reported that they are always living with difficulties. Thus children here are trying to live with difficulties rather than running away from them. In India millions of children are facing these problems on a day to day basis. The children in this study are just an indication of how children from poor families have minimum expectations from life and learn to seek happiness in whatever they have.

vii) Self Confidence and Aspirations

It was observed that children have a realistic perception of what they are able to do and what they would like to do when they grow up. Almost half of them said that they can work and earn money. Some of them could even specify the nature of work that they can do. It includes farming, catering business, driving, work in garage, get a job in Arms Forces. Only 13% of them said that they can study. Almost all of them who feel that they can study were from the other group. Only one child from the camp felt that he could study.

Sixty three percent of the children feel that education will help them in their life. Their aspirations for occupations in future are similar to their perception of abilities. Seventy five percent of the children have thought about an occupation/vocation. Some of them want to do some business, become a mechanic, work as a driver, have a small shop, work in the farm etc.

ix) Parents' Expectations

Children are aware of their parents' expectations as well. Parents expect that the child should stay home, do some work at home, go to school, should not get angry, help in farm, should not wander, should earn money.

Responses of the children related to their current situation indicates that almost all of them admit that staying at home is much better than staying on the street and their parents are paying more attention to their needs. More children from the camp (95%) feel sorry for their decision to run away as compared to the other group. It is encouraging to know that children do not receive frequent comments/taunts from their family and friends for their act of running away. All of them except one mentioned that they wish to forget their life experiences while on the street. Children have a realistic perception of what they are able to do and what they would like to do when they grow up. They are also aware of their parent's expectations from them

J) Parents Perception of the Home Placement Programme

A total of 58 parents were contacted for this study and in 12 cases it was not possible to meet the child but parents were available for the interview.

i. Efforts to Trace the Child

The incident of a child running away from home is a traumatic one for the family and the parents in this study are no exception. The kind of anxiety and stress experienced by the parents is quite high and it was expressed by all the parents. They tried to trace the child through all known sources. The most common step was to enquire with the relatives and friends (62%). Relatively smaller number parents (16%) approached the police for help. Some of them (8.9%) had to take a loan for the expenses to search the child. Other places/sources for search included news paper (5%), railway station (20%), nearby city(22%), nearby villages (14%),etc. Only two parents said that they did not take any efforts to search the child. Support mostly came from relatives and neighbours. In case of children placed within a few days after being on the street, most parents mentioned about the help received from the N.G.O.

Parents of those who had run away for more than once, reported that they were taking care of the child with greater attention. Some of them said that they were not scolding the child and were trying to fulfil his demands. In a few cases, the child was sent to the native place or was admitted in a boarding school.

ii) Experience of Reunion

Parents had a feeling of gratitude towards the agency staff, and they were very happy to get the child back. More than half (56%) of the parents observed that the behaviour their son has changed after attending the camp. They observed that the child was more calm and quiet, did not roam around like earlier, behaving well and was willing to work.

iii) Advice by Social worker and Changes in the Child

Parents reported that the social worker has advised them to take greater care of the child and not to punish him, to send him to school, etc. Most of them have reported that their child is behaving well, some of them are concentrating on studies, and are having a good relationship with everyone in the family.

iv) General Opinion about the Process of Reunion

The parents are generally happy about this programme and have clearly expressed their gratitude towards the agency. Many of them have a general idea about the various inputs during the camp. They also know the kind of activities children were involved in while living on the street. This information was mainly gathered through their interaction with the children. Only one parent reported that their child received occasional beating from the facilitator during the camp. Two parents also expressed that their child was not interested in living with the family; he was forced by the agency staff to go back. These two boys had run away within a few days after home placement.

For children who went home with their parents, we come across similar responses expressing gratitude towards the agency.

Many of them feel that now the child will not go back to street and is well adjusted at home. They gave many reasons for having such a feeling- the child is well behaved, obeys them, and does not get angry so frequently. They are also taking extra efforts to retain the child in home. The efforts are in terms of paying more attention to the needs of the child, buying a T.V., making food of his choice, etc.

Needs of the Parents :

The main expectation is related to help in tracing the child. A few of them feel the need for financial assistance and placement of staff at the bus stands. Some parents have suggested that after home placement, the agency should help in vocational training, formal education, give financial assistance and more information on how to take care of children.

It can be seen that parents are quite concerned and worried when a child runs away and feel very happy about the process of re union. All of them have feelings of gratitude towards the agency. Most parents have observed positive changes in the child's behaviour after reunion. Some of them have also expressed the need for further inputs by the agency after home placement

Having looked at the camp process and the comparative analysis of the different methods of home placement, we wish to present the Conclusions and Recommendations.

Chapter V

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

The summary, conclusions and recommendations in this chapter are drawn from data presented in the earlier chapters. It would also be appropriate to put the findings and conclusions vis-à-vis the objectives of the study.

This study is undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To understand the process of selecting and preparing children for home reunion.
2. To understand and evaluate the content and processes used in the camp with focus on children's needs and abilities – to fulfill the objectives of the camp
3. To compare adjustment of children who are reintegrated with the family (with and without the camp experience).
4. To suggest appropriate changes in the camp design and newer strategies that could be used for the reunion of families and children.

Data for the evaluation of the camp was collected by process recording and focus group interviews with children, facilitators and significant others. For understanding the adjustment of the children after home placement, data was collected through interviews of the child and his parents.

Summary of the Findings

I Process of Selection and Preparation of Children for Home Reunion

It was observed that there were four types of strategies for home placement of children: parents being called to pick up the child, child escorted by the agency staff for home placement, child going home on his own and child being placed after participation in the camp. In this study we have tried to compare the camp method with the other methods of home placement.

a) Selection of Appropriate Method of Home Placement

The method of home placement largely depends upon the profile of the child. Children placed through other methods are tapped within a few days of their arrival on the street and the efforts to send them back start without any delay. Most children who were placed through other methods were on the street for short duration varying from a few days to one or two months.

The camp children had spent a longer time on the street; many of them were habitual runaways and had an earlier experience of home placement before participation in the camp. They were more likely to get addicted to vices. As a policy, it is decided that children who are on the street for more than three months and are not willing to disclose information about their family, are reluctant to go home should be included in the camp. Many of them are addicted to consumption of solution/solvent, tobacco and alcohol. In terms of agency inputs as well the camp children had received more services from Sathi or other NGOs before home placement.

b) Preparation for Home Placement

In case of children placed through other methods, the motivation to go home is stronger and influence of street life is weak. Therefore the process of preparation for home placement is relatively easier and faster. Once the child's family is contacted, most parents come to pick up the child. In case the child is not able to give proper address or parents are unable to travel, the agency social worker accompanies the child and contacts his family. In this process, the child and his parents are given a few basic suggestions to avoid such situations in the future. Children placed through these two methods, felt relieved with the assurance of the possibility of going home. Most of them were happy that Sathi could help them to go home.

For the home placement after participation in the camp, the situations are quite different. These children go through structured experiences during the camp which are specially designed to motivate them to go home. During the period of four weeks the children go through a variety of inputs through sessions of story telling, games, meditation, non formal education, moral sessions, and individual counselling. All these inputs are aimed at helping the child to understand the problems of living on the street, advantages of

living in a family, family relationships and mutual obligations and reflect on their decision to leave home.

Most children disclose the address of their parents after 2nd or 3rd week and then the process of contacting parents starts. By the end of the camp a large percentage of children meet their parents. Before taking the child home, a group session is organised with the parents on how to take greater care of the child and avoid repeated incidents of running away. Since the inputs through the camp is a planned activity aimed at working with children who are otherwise difficult to motivate, and the requirements of resources for the camp are quite high, it is necessary to examine the observations related to the camp process in greater details.

II Camp Process

a) Selection of Children and Data base

The facilitators reported that they usually select those children who are on the street for more than three months or those who are habitual runaways. Records from the intake forms of the camp children indicated that this norm was not followed in case of 5 out of 27 children. These children were brought to the camp within a few days of leaving home. It seems that more attention was given to make a viable number of 25 or more for conducting the camp activity.

b) Orientation during Recruitment

Most children do not know all the details of the location, duration and purpose of the camp. In fact these details are not disclosed in order to ensure that most of these children agree to participate. They are told that they are going for a picnic or camp for a few days. Children are given a rosy picture of walking on the mountains, playing and so on to make them agree to participate in the camp. However, many children in the focus group (during the camp) and in individual interviews have expressed a feeling of disappointment as the camp did not contain the promised activities. At present when children go away suddenly and don't come back ever or may come back after a month. Children do have their own support system and a sense of belonging. Proper information to the child would help him to keep significant others informed about his whereabouts. This will also reduce the trauma for his peers who may feel responsible for him. Therefore getting children to camp on false notion/promise is not correct. It may also

create hindrance in the adjustment process of the children in the camp, as they feel restless, angry and may even be non cooperative and may also resort to running away from the camp. In fact such responses were received from some children during the interviews. Although getting children to the camp on a false pretext is done with a good intension, it is not right from the child rights point of view. A few parents and children also found this process to be problematic.

In addition, some basic procedures like intimation to a local police station, keeping information with someone at the railway station from where the child had come for the camp, informing the concerned child welfare committee were not followed. This can create a problem in case of any casualty during the camp. It also poses a problem for parents who are trying to get in touch with the child. They cannot get any information of the child's whereabouts after he left the street. It was observed that this kind of process may invite legal action against the agency. This seems to be a concern among the facilitators as well. The legality of having such a camp can also been questioned.

c. Location of the Camp

The selection of the camp site is an important aspect which determines the quality of camp programme. Though many factors are kept in mind in seeing that the place does not make it easy for children to escape, those factors should not be the only things considered in the selection of camp site. The camp location was found to be quite far from the city and ensured that children cannot escape so easily. But it was difficult for the facilitators to organise for different needs of the children during the four weeks.

d. Physical Infrastructure at the Camp

The camp site lacked many basic facilities like toilets, proper place for bathing and washing, outdoor space for play activities, etc. The cooking facilities were also bare minimum. Facilitators had no space for conducting any counselling sessions with the children or even a space for them to unwind or rest. One big room for all activities can become quite monotonous for the participants as well as facilitators. It can also be very strenuous for the facilitators to remain with the children for whole day through the four weeks.

In this camp, children had to go outside for toileting which required that facilitators accompanied them every time –especially during the night. This is an added workload which can be easily avoided. When children were asked to shave their heads due to lice, many children were upset as they associated this with a ritual followed after death of family members.

Food was found to be adequate in terms of quantity but lacked variety. Every day only rice was offered which many children did not like. The stationery for the NFE classes was not adequate. There was hardly any arrangement for keep the material in a safe place after use. It resulted in misuse of the already scarce material by the children.

e. Staff

The whole camp activity was managed by one senior facilitator, two newly recruited facilitators, a cook and some periodic support from Sathi Pune. Staff at Sathi Pune office also helped in the pre camp coordination, contacting parents and conducting the meeting of parents and handing over of children to parents. The camp process demanded a very highly motivated and skilled staff to take children through a variety of experiences over a period of four weeks. At present there is one facilitator from Sathi who seems to have a good understanding of the camp process. It was observed that the senior facilitator was excellent in many of the required skills and had the expertise to strike a chord with most of the children on individual basis as well.

It seems to be a practice to train new facilitators by involving them in the camp process along with an experienced staff. However this creates a lot of pressure on the senior facilitator and certain activities of the camp may not happen at the optimum level. Change of facilitators during the camp period was observed and it did have an effect on the participants. Somehow there is a lapse in terms of proper guidelines to the facilitators specifying the dos and don'ts. This resulted in some wrong practices like beating, scolding, giving false promises etc.

In the first week, there were frequent changes in the personnel and their responsibilities. This was detrimental to the camp process as this was the time of initial adjustment of the children. The staff situation stabilised once the senior facilitator took the charge. The

new staff took time to understand their roles and responsibility –probably because of inadequate orientation. They were more effective after the first two weeks.

The most effective sessions were story telling and meditation. This feedback came through all different sources – focus group with camp children, observations during the camp as well as the individual interviews with children. These were the most liked sessions and the engagement levels of children were also high. The weaving of the mediation topic with the theme of the story and the discussions thereafter was managed remarkably well by the facilitator. He is also the counsellor on one to one basis. However only one person capable of handling such serious sessions can be very stressful and he is likely to experience emotional as well as physical burn out.

e. Community Support at Camp Location

Community contact was not accorded enough importance as mentioned in the camp manual. Such a situation of misunderstanding did not arise in this camp probably because of the fact that children's contact with the neighbourhood was totally missing. After establishing initial rapport and trust with the children, it is possible to take them out in smaller groups and community contacts can be used for this activity.

f. Recreation

The play material and choice for recreation was found to be extremely limited in terms of quantity and variety. Play activities were further restricted because of unavailability of open space.

g. Non Formal Education

Non formal education is one of the regular activities in the camp schedule. However, considering the fact that the children are at different levels of educational achievements, it is not appropriate to have a common NFE activity for all. Therefore some children may be excited about the basic educational inputs; others get bored with the same inputs. No innovative methodologies are used for teaching children who have been away from school for a long time.

h. Meditation, Story Telling and Counselling Sessions

Meditation and story telling sessions were the most well planned activities in terms of sequencing of themes, discussions to be conducted, linkages with real life experiences of children and thought provoking effect. The meditation process was very effective and helped children to reflect and think about their own life on the platform. The facilitator was able to engage the children in the stories through his language, voice modulation, body language. It encouraged active participation from the group.

The facilitators had a stock of a wide array of stories from mythology, history and case histories of people. Responses from the children indicated that they were very inspired by these stories and in some cases they could very well identify with the characters.

Though the stories were very effective in many ways, one needs to examine the appropriateness of constant stress on children to admit that they made a mistake, or they were guilt of either leaving parents in a state of misery or being involved in drug abuse or some anti-social activities. More time should be spent in encouraging children to express their opinions or share their experiences as a response to the issues emerging out of the story and not always expect them to say how they should be moving towards the expected changes in their life. Children over a period of time learn to give a politically correct answer and may not share their real feelings.

The same facilitator takes care of individual counselling. He tries to talk to children in person whenever there is some opportunity to do so- evening, during NFE class time etc. Usually during these sessions children do disclose their details, parents address and desire to go home.

i. Transition from Camp to Home

Towards the end of third week quite a few children express the desire to go home and some were still reluctant to go back. It was observed that sensitivity to the problems faced by the child before leaving home and the push factors was limited. The discussion didnot revolve around resolving some of the issues at home like alcoholism, poverty, lack of security etc. It was only shown that most of the problems like beating, abuse or

poverty were also present on the platform and at times in larger proportions, so home life was better.

Very little emphasis was given on building the child's capacities to cope with the home situation. Even those children who expressed the desire to go back on street after the camp, should have gained certain skills to protect themselves from the physical and psychosocial threats on street and be equipped to ask for help from appropriate organizations/authorities such as child line, police station, hospital etc.

Through the camp process, the child does not get a clear assurance that Sathi /referring NGO would be willing to extend support to the child to find other alternatives in case he finds it difficult to stay with parents.

j. Inputs in the Reunion Meeting

The inputs in the reunion meeting are more of one time inputs for the parents and it is done in a group meeting. This interaction is quite inadequate in terms of making family assessment or counselling of parents. The whole experience is quite emotional for both parents as well as children.

I. Medical Care

Facilities for medical care were found to be inadequate. There was only one medical check up somewhere in the middle of the camp. Considering the fact that many children are used to consume alcohol, solution/solvent or tobacco, facilities to take care of withdrawal symptoms are missing. De-worming of all children, treatment for scabies and other infections should be a part of the camp activity. Medical care needs to be given serious importance. It would be advisable to have a medical check up before and after the camp. During the camp there should be a facility of a doctor on call.

Overview of the Camp Process

There needs to be a re-look at the existing programme. It appears that the programme is basically creating a lot of guilt feeling in children about going away from home, having a bad existence on street and depriving parents of their love. The process is so intense that children do start feeling guilty or intensely emotional about their family. It does not recognise the factors in the child's environment that pushed him on the street. Focus of

discussions should be that not all children leave home out of choice but they may be victims of circumstance or non supportive family environment.

The whole effort of the camp is focused on making children come to the decision of going home. But the question is will this change last and whether the family is in a position to sustain the child at home. Looking at the results that only 37% of camp children continued to stay with their families is an indication that the camp process need further improvements. Secondly in the camp many children voice that they do not want to go home but would like to explore alternatives to street life.

III Adjustment of Children after Home Placement: a Comparison of Camp and other Methods

Before looking at the various aspects of adjustment after home placement it would be pertinent to understand the profile of the children and parents who participated in this study.

General Profile of the Children Included in the Study

Children selected in this study come from different parts of Maharashtra. They belonged to 17 different districts of the state. It was observed that majority of the children (63%) were from the 11 to 15 age group followed by those from the 16 to 18 age group (31%). Children with education between 5th and 7th standard formed the largest group (46%) and children with no education were lowest in number. Between the two groups, camp children had lower educational qualifications as compared to children placed through other methods

Only 32% of the children were in school after home placement. This percentage was relatively lower among the children from the camp. It can be because of the fact that they were on the street for a longer duration. Some children worked with the parents in the family occupation and in addition worked with someone to earn wages. Little more than half of the children were neither going to school nor did they work.

Family Background

Looking at various aspects of family background of the children, it is evident that most of these children came from poor families where parents were engaged in low paid

occupations. Many of them did not own many assets. More than one fourth of the children came from single parent families or families with a step parent. These can be some of the factors contributing to a situation that pushed children on the street. Comparison between the two groups indicates that families of children from camp were relatively poorer as compared to those placed through other methods.

Transition from Home to Street

It is important to note that most children have pointed out that the situation at home – either excessive beating, fear of punishment were the triggering incidents as well as main reasons for leaving home. Or even when they had run away because of fear of others outside home, family failed to give them the sense of security and assurance of safety. On the one hand we believe in child's right to a family and feel that family is the most desirable place for the child to stay and on the other hand we find that lack of conducive environment in the family was largely responsible for pushing them on the street. At the same time in case of habitual runaways, it is possible that children are ambivalent about their decision, they keep on being off and on the street, shifting from home to street and vice -e -versa as neither could really satisfy their needs. Parents do make a lot of efforts to search the child using all possible contacts and NGOs in the neighbourhood. However, not many take help of the police to trace their children.

Life on the Street

The experiences of children living on the streets, reveal that children who stay on the street for longer time are either children who shift between home and street or are not really sure whether they want to go back. They may get used to the life on the street. The kind of freedom they get on the street and the facilities offered by NGOs are more often better as compared to the situation at home. City offers many opportunities for petty jobs, entertainment and a sense of anonymity. They also develop their own coping strategies to face the adversities of street life. As time passes, they also develop a feeling that they are likely to get scolding and beating once they go back and feeling of homesickness becomes less disturbing over a period of time. The presence of peers as a strong influence in their life, who may have also gone through the same set of experiences may also help to continue being away from home. Some of them may not even think of the option of going back. For some addiction is a major impeding factor

and it becomes a major preoccupation. The contact with NGOs is also not necessarily consistent with such children. They may pick and choose different services from NGOs across the city

Preparation for Home Placement

In case of children placed through other methods, the motivation to go home is stronger and influence of street life is weak. Therefore the process of preparation for home placement is relatively easier and faster. Once the child's family is contacted, most parents come to pick up the child. In case the child is not able to give proper address or parents are unable to travel, the agency staff accompanies the child and contacts his family. In this process, the child and his parents are given a few basic suggestions to avoid such situations in the future. Children placed through these two methods, felt relieved with the assurance of the possibility of going home. Most of them were happy that Sathi could help them to go home.

For the home placement after participation in the camp, the situations are quite different. These children go through a structured experience during the camp which are specially designed to motivate them to go home. During the period of four weeks the children go through a variety of inputs through sessions of story telling, games, meditation, non formal education, moral sessions, and individual counselling. All these inputs are aimed at helping the child to understand the problems of living on the street, advantages of living in a family, family relationships and mutual obligations and reflect on their decision to leave home.

Most children disclose the address of their parents after 2nd or 3rd week and then the process of contacting parents starts. By the end of the camp a large percentage of children meet their parents. Before taking the child home, a group session is organised with the parents on how to take greater care of the child and avoid repeated incidents of running away.

Adjustment after Home Placement

Success Rate

Comparison between the two groups indicates that success rate in terms of numbers was higher (almost two times) when children were placed within a few days of their

arrival on the street and their families also seem to be more stable and economically better off. But in case of camp children who were on the streets for a longer duration and many of them were repeated runaways, success rate is lower. This clearly emphasises the importance of early intervention and the higher possibility of success in such cases. The reasons for this difference between the two groups can be traced through their family background, and reasons for leaving home. It is possible that these children were not satisfied with the quality of life at home or the home situation had not really changed and still continued to be difficult for them to cope with. So they had found the option of living on the street more attractive.

Relationship with family and Others after Home Placement

It is encouraging to note that majority of the children who were staying with the family feel that they do not experience any change in the attitudes or way of behaviour among the peers and others in their social network because of the fact that they had left home and were on the street for some time. The difference between the two groups was not very sharp in these matters.

It can be said that in terms of social adjustment there was no difference among the children placed after camp and those placed using other methods. On the other hand, one can say that because the family and social network was generally supportive and non threatening, it had a positive impact on children's wish to stay home and these children continued to stay home.

Children were quite free to express their experiences and expectations from their family and siblings. They were able to appreciate the concerns shown by their parents and at the same time were not very happy about the scolding by their parents. The acceptance in the family seemed to be good in most of the cases. They also seemed to be doing well in terms of reality orientation and did not answered in a stereotypical manner. They could very well report about what is the reality and what is desirable.

Responses of the children related to their current situation indicated that almost all of them admitted that staying at home is much better than staying on the street and their parents are paying more attention to their needs. More children from the camp feel sorry for their decision to run away as compared to the other group. It is encouraging to know

that children do not receive frequent comments/taunts from their family and friends for their act of running away. All of them except one mentioned that they wish to forget their life experiences while on the street. Children have a realistic perception of what they are able to do and what they would like to do when they grow up. They are also aware of their parent's expectations from them

Parents' Perception of the Home Placement Programme

Parents are quite concerned and worried when a child runs away, put in a lot of efforts to trace the child and feel very happy about the process of re union. All of them have feelings of gratitude towards the agency. Most parents have observed positive changes in the child's behaviour after reunion. Some of them have also expressed the need for further inputs by the agency after home placement

Conclusions

Looking at the results presented so far, it can be said that Sathi and Railway Children are putting in a lot of efforts to intervene in the lives of children on the railway platforms in different parts of India and help them to reunite with their families.. Although this study is restricted to the state of Maharashtra, it does give a fair idea about their efforts and the importance of early intervention at the entry point. The happiness of the parents and the child in the process of home placement was quite evident and it is a great service for both child as well as his parents. Those children, who continued to stay at home after reunion, had expressed gratitude and satisfaction about the role of Sathi and its staff. Children had identified the inputs by the social workers as the one of the main motivating factors in their decision to go home.

It is necessary to understand that while working with this group of children no strategy will guarantee 100% results. It was observed that the success rate of the home placement is higher among children who were sent back within a few days of their arrival in the city. The reason for leaving home is in most cases related to poverty related factors and family disintegration is seen to be affecting 25% of the children. Parents are concerned about their children and do make a lot of efforts to trace them.

The organization of a motivational camp for children who are on the street for a longer duration is an innovative strategy developed by Sathi. The modules of the camp are

aimed at bringing about an attitudinal change among the children towards their parents and families. The effort towards establishing the child's right to family is very important. The positive changes in the behaviour of the child after camp were reported by some of the children and parents. The impact of the camp process was clearly observed on majority of the children. It does initiate a process of reflection in the child but along with the desire to leave street life, a sense of guilt is developed in the children through the sessions over a period of time. One needs to re-examine the appropriateness of such an impact. In most cases the adverse conditions at home were the root cause of child's decision to leave home. Discussions on how to cope with adverse situations at home are not adequately dealt with.

The camp does motivate a lot of children to go home as an immediate effect but in reality it was found that not many are able to cope with the home situation or resist the attraction of the street life. That is where more support is needed to sustain their wish to stay with the family.

There is a need to broaden objectives of the camp. The camp should help children to think about their long term and short term goals. It should give children options to choose from, it should give some inputs for children's self confidence and self esteem. Family assessment and long term work at the family level is not included in the programme. Follow up and linkages with local organizations or other social networks are also lacking. The fact that a few children did have a resistance to going home even after the inputs of the camp or higher number of camp children left home within a few days after reunion indicates that although camp motivates majority of the children to go home, one cannot say that home placement is the only option for all children in the camp.

Recommendations

1. It is essential to continue the extensive outreach at the transport terminals in larger cities to identify the new arrivals of children and start working with them as soon as possible. This helps to prevent the increase in the incidence of street children.
2. In order to further enhance the success of these efforts, one needs to have some analysis of the reason for leaving home and assessment of the family situation. Wherever there are signs of weak family support or extreme poverty being the reason for leaving home, ways and means of supporting the family to take care of

the child should be thought of. This is equally important for children who are in school and who have left school. Involving the parents, child and some local organization for long term measures will ensure that the child continues to stay at home and is sustained in the education process as well. It will help in reducing the possibility of the child entering into the labour market or going back to street.

3. While recognising the importance of camp inputs for street children who are not inclined to go home and are on the street for a longer duration, one needs to work on improving the quality of the whole planning and organization of the camp. It is essential that at the camp venue, facilitators have an easy access to phone, medical help and transport to nearest city.
4. The recruitment of the children for the camp should be done according to the guidelines. They should be in touch with the Sathi staff or with the staff of the referring agency for a few months in order to have a proper rapport with the child.
5. From the experiences of children at the home placement camp it is evident that there is a need to reconsider the process of recruitment in such a way that children are better informed about the nature, duration and location of the camp and efforts should be made to move towards trust building and voluntary recruitment. The orientation should be given in such a way that the children do not get a feeling of being cheated. It would help the children if they were told that they will be taken out for few days because they are working hard, they don't get time to play and meet other people, the camp will help them to do lots of different things and the duration would be decided in consultation with the children after a few days. In such a situation there will be some amount of mental preparation of the child to stay away and also help the child to put away his belongings in a safe place, make some arrangement at workplace and even inform his peer group of him being away.
6. Appropriate information should be sought to see if any permissions are needed to safeguard the agency and the children. It is important that the camp authorities should keep the detailed information on list of children, their association with NGOs along with photos of each child. These records should be with all the concerned NGOs, Child Welfare Committee and the police stations.
7. Better infrastructure and facilities should be provided at the camp sites. It should have enough toilet facilities for a group of 25-30 children. Similarly clothes for children have to be available in plenty. When children are coming prepared for a one day picnic, none of them can be carrying their own clothes. Providing a set of

new clothes can also prevent some of the infections they might be carrying from the street. There may be many street children who want to dress well and maintain some hygienic living and they must be taking effort to do so when they are on streets. Such children when get only one set of clothes may feel highly pained to live like this.

8. Participatory decision making in matters like hair cut to control lice, treatment for worms and other health hazards may help in getting more cooperation from the children and it is not required to be done on a mass scale. Discussions coupled with information sharing may go a long way than just forcing them to follow decisions of the facilitators. Food needs more variety. Even within a limited budget, it is possible to have more nutrition and variety in the food. Suggestions from children on the menu can be sought periodically. Better infrastructure would go a long way in improving the efficiency of the staff and comfort level of the children.
9. One should have at least two experienced facilitators either as a residential facilitator or visiting daily for a particular session. Another suggestion is to have a female facilitator along with other male facilities. The observations showed that presence of a female adult (in this case the process –recorder) brought out different group dynamics and also the sharing by children with her was different than that happened with male facilitators. Female facilitators can be brought in for certain activities like counselling, craft activities or NFE.
10. Sathi should have pool of trained facilitators. Training should include a good grounding of child development and behaviour, child rights and counselling of children. They should be trained in skills for conducting various sessions with children. From each of Sathi's branches, one or two trainees can be identified for facilitators training. Similarly ongoing sessions at periodic intervals to take care of their needs for updating their knowledge and skills should also be planned.
11. The camp can get inputs from other sources also. It will be of great value to the children to have a counsellor or a child psychologist as a team member. To understand individual needs of the children, give them the appropriate inputs and for motivating them towards a better life will be the task of the counsellor. The counsellor is better equipped to make children understand where they are and where they want to be and what actions will help them achieve that it. The counsellor will be able to discuss with facilitators the possible activities/sessions that may be included to reach out to children.

12. Support should be taken from local community leaders, volunteers, NGOs, police etc. This will ensure that there is no misunderstanding of the people in the neighbourhood regarding the purpose of this camp. Out door activities should be possible where children can be taken out in smaller groups or soliciting help from community volunteers may also be possible. These volunteers can help in conducting recreational activities for the children or NFE activity.
13. Facilities for recreation for children need to be properly planned. When there is a group of 25 children it is important to have toys and games that encourage group play or the number of games/toys available are adequate to keep everyone occupied. There should be efforts on the part of facilitators to introduce a variety of games. Some children can be encouraged to play these games on their own as well. Games like hidden treasure, dodge ball, and two and threes etc. can be introduced to the children. Such games require minimum materials. The recreation time should be fully utilized by children to play and not be wasted in waiting for a chance to play with games. Better planning, more innovation and availability of play equipments can give enough enjoyment to children. Facilitators need training to conduct joyful activities for children of this age group. Reading story books can be an activity for literate children. A collection of story books/comics/activity books with colourful pictures in different languages and daily newspaper will also provide a good option for children when they are not too keen on physical activities or after meals.
14. Some local NGO having experience in conducting classes for out of school children can be involved to make NFE interesting for all children. Help can also be sought for getting proper teaching aids and learning materials. The teaching material can be of different levels as per the profile/needs of the group. In a period of four weeks, interested children can be given substantial inputs in education. Use of drawing, quiz, and clay in the non formal education activity needs to be more creative and well planned. Expecting the facilitator to be expert in all activities is rather impractical. One may think of having a larger team with different skills or draw resources from the community for specific activities.
15. Children should not be given an impression that going home is the only option to living on the street. The organisers should also be open to the fact that immediate home placement at the end of the camp is not necessarily the best option to life on the street. There should be a discussion on possible options to street life. Some children are quite reluctant to go home and express the wish to get admission in

some shelter or Ashram school. They should be given a chance to use this option as a transit arrangement and gradually help them to go home. Parents also should be explained the whole process well so they can also cooperate in the plan. Sathi should identify a few residential institutions for children and make use of their facilities in such cases. Observations from the camp reinforce the need to question the assumption that every child in the camp can be sent home. For some children camp is just a beginning of a process to wean from the street but family is not necessarily the right place to go back. They may need a supportive shelter that helps them to develop and enjoy their childhood. Most families of the camp children were poor and had very little resources to look after child's needs.

16. Additional support in different ways can be organised in order to ensure child's stay at home. It can only be done with continued work with the family along with the child. Camp can also be used as a tool for family assessment and then appropriate plan can be worked out to make the reunion successful and sustainable. Follow up on a regular basis by Sathi /referring NGO and networking with support structures from the family's place of residence has to be worked out. Support structures can be from the relatives, local Panchayat, school teacher or neighbours coupled. Sathi can design a plan of family assistance based on the needs of the family to ensure that poverty does not become the main factor to hinder child's education. In case of older children, who cannot probably join the school, assistance for vocational training will help to increase the potential of better life for the child.
17. Since railway stations serve as the main entry points for street children, services at the railway station to cater to the basic needs of these children are very essential. Sensitization of the concerned authorities and networking with them is very important.
18. There is very little documentation on the various strategies or best practice models for home placement programmes and alternatives for street children. There is need to explore how the process of home placement can be strengthened further in order to help a large number of children. Further research is needed to develop the model for family support after home placement including family assessment, possibilities of community support and networking. An action research to work out these strategies can be taken up with a few districts or states where the incidence of children leaving home is high. This will then provide realistic guidelines for strengthening the home placement project.

The study definitely brings out the usefulness of the Home placement programme of Railway Children and Sathi. This is a unique programme designed for motivating street children to go home. It is a very important service for street children and their families. With improved facilities, proper family assessment, provision of more options to street life, stronger follow up and networking and a well designed family support programme it will go a long way in reuniting these children with their family.

Sathi Home Placement Camp

Case studies

These case studies are from Home placement camp at Pune which was observed by the research officer. In order to protect the identity of the children, the names have been changed. The purpose of including these cases is for our understanding of the variety of problems faced by the children and impact of camp process on them

Raju - (Difficult to trace family)

This boy was among the oldest boys in the camp. Right from the beginning it was noticed that he was comfortable taking charge of the other children – he would serve food, he would order them around and even hit them, regardless of whether it was appropriate or not. He said that other children often chose him as the Leader at the camp. He would spend most of his time at the Nasik Centre – Lok Vikas and was appointed the Monitor in that centre too. The facilitators often said that they trusted Raju a lot and felt that they could entrust him with responsibilities. They never feared his running away from the camp.

When the children were given new clothes, Raju was entrusted the responsibility of getting them to have a bath with dettol and then wear the new clothes. By the time it was Raju's turn to have a bath and wear new clothes, the clothes were all over and there was nothing left for him to wear. The other children mentioned this in the Focus Group discussion, and when Raju was asked how he felt – he said he did not mind. He said he could understand that things like this happened sometimes.

At first Raju seemed comfortable with the other children but there seem to be no bonding or close friendships. But one could see his closeness to another 'leader' Ahmed at the camp. Raju and Ahmed would both help out in the kitchen, wash clothes and vessels, help in getting the other children to have a bath and wash their clothes too.

However, eventually they had a major fight and came close to beating each other up. The exact reason for the fight was not clear but according to the facilitators, both of them mostly ended up arguing when Raju would hit someone or order someone around and Ahmed would think he was getting aggressive for no reason.

Towards the end of the camp, Raju seemed to have no close friends but had cordial relations with almost everyone.

What Raju told about himself – Raju lived on the platform and later at the Lok Vikas Sanstha in Nasik. He sold wada pav to earn a living. He said he often drank alcohol. He said he had a very bad temper and if he ever got angry, nobody could really stop him – not even his mother. He said he had two brothers – one lived with his dad’s younger brother and one lived with his maternal grandparents. He said his mother died when he was very young and his father was an alcoholic. He told he used to live with his dad’s brother too but had eventually run away from the boarding school they put him in. He told that he was very attached to his younger brother and misses him sometimes when he thinks of him.

He also said that Vaishnodevi was the only place where he felt at peace / ‘*mann poora shaant ho jata*’ and hoped to go there again. Earlier in the camp when the children were asked where they would like to go after the camp – he was clear in saying that he wanted to go to Vaishnodevi - a religious shrine in North India.

He said he did not get along with the children at the camp and that they would fight a lot, make a lot of noise and never listen. The other children also started sidelining Raju later, they did not seem afraid of him beating them up. They would leave him out of what they were doing and if he asked them to do anything they would say “who are you to say that!”. They treated Ahmed (the other leader in the camp) very differently, even though he too had not been ‘elected’ leader, he just assumed leadership – he would shout, yell, and beat children. The main difference between Ahmed and Raju seemed to be that Raju had a real bad temper – he would get into fights and not just stop at beatings. If children questioned his authority, he would retaliate by fighting, while Ahmed if questioned would retaliate by just being more authoritative.

Individual counseling – Towards the end of the camp, Raju had made it clear that he wanted to live with his maternal grandparents and little brother. He did not know the address but knew the way. In individual counseling sessions they tried to obtain the address from him but he was not able to tell them the address. He even said that he did not know his grandparents’ name. This seemed surprising, because he was about 15-16

years old and had been away from home for only 4 years (according to him). So the facilitator tried to explore whether Raju was lying and using this strategy to prevent people from actually taking him home.

He was asked about his family. They already knew that Raju did not have a mother. During the Counselling session at a later stage, Raju broke down and cried for a long time. He said that his father had been in jail for killing his mother and that even after coming out of jail he was an alcoholic. (His father was in jail for abetting suicide, because Raju spoke about his father having beaten his mother a lot and that she killed herself in the hospital.) He said it was true that he did not know his grandparents' names but he would really want someone from Sathi to come with him so that he could show them the way home.

When Sathi staff tried to trace at the place where Raju said his grandparents stayed (Ujjain), they found the records of missing children at the Police Station. In those records, they found a very old record of child named Raju who seemed to look like Raju and had been missing since the age of 6. They realized that this record could be of Raju and it seemed to explain why Raju did not know names – he had probably been too young to really comprehend names of elders. We do not know whether it would be possible to trace his grandparents.

Masood (Mistake in selection)

Masood was about 13-14 years old. He did not seem to have any friends at first. He was seen playing and singing but he seemed really quiet in person. In fact he never even spoke to the researcher the way other children did. He would not ask questions or smile or try to catch researcher's attention like the others. He seemed in a world of his own even when he was in the company of other people.

He was very resourceful – when shirt buttons broke, or someone got hurt he seemed to know what to do. He himself had a lot of bruises and skin problems. He had a very bad itching problem and also had a lot of boils on his body. His skin problem and boils were the reason he was not made monitor. The facilitator once explained to him that monitors had to enforce discipline and sometimes other children would end up beating the monitor, so if Masood became the monitor and the children beat him on his boils he

would feel a lot more pain than anybody else. Masood did not like this explanation at all and he would crib about it sometimes.

He would say he ran away from his village and that his parents were dead. He said he ran away because he found village life boring. He seemed educated and willingly admitted to having studied till the 4th. When one of the Facilitators confronted him about it, asking how he had studied till the 4th if he ran away from the village at age 4 , then Masood kept quiet and said he had a headache and wanted to sit down.

When researcher finally had the chance to speak individually to Masood he told that he did not trust people because they often get him into trouble. He told about some friends of his on the platform who stole his money and on another occasion someone got him beaten up.

Masood's resourcefulness, his unwillingness to trust people and his skin problems, seemed to fit the stereotype of a runaway child who had been on the streets for a long time.

About camp : He said he liked listening to stories and playing games. He cribbed that they were not allowed to roam freely. He felt that if children were given freedom, they would not run away. He said the children need to be allowed to play outside too.

Towards the end of the camp, four children had started keeping the Roza. In this period, many truths came 'tumbling out' because children like Masood felt that God would punish them for lying during Roza. Masood told everyone where he lived and that he had both parents. His father worked in Saudi. Masood had also decided that he wanted to go home. What was most amazing was that Masood had been away from home for only a month before he was finally picked up for the camp. He said he had lied earlier because he thought that the social workers who picked him for the camp were actually going to put him in a Remand home or send him home. He thought that if he said he had no parents they would let him go because they would think that there was no home to send him to.

Masood's mother was sent a telegram and she came to Sathi office to pick him up. In the parent counseling session we got to know that Masood had been put in a madrassa

where he was beaten up on a number of occasions. He would complain to his mother but she did not want to take him out of the madrasssa because she felt he may have been punished for a proper reason, since she knew Masood was extremely naughty. From other people, she even got to know that he was chained on one occasion, she then spoke to the teachers at the Madrassa and even assured Masood she would take him of the madrassa soon. Before she could do that, he ran away.

Masood and his mother had a tearful reunion and he apologized for running away. He told her he had run away with another boy who was a street-smart child and supposedly a local thief as well. His mother was happy to have him back but angry too that he had run away.

Masood's mother had been in search of him ever since she got to know he had run away and she managed to visit each and every place he had been to, narrowly missing her son each time. The last place she went to was Nasik and after that she received no news of him. Nasik was the place where Masood was picked for the camp and hence it was understandable why nobody was able to tell her where Masood went after Nashik. However, this particular incident pointed to the importance of communicating the names of children at the camp, to the station authorities of the stations from where the children are picked up, so that there is no problem of parents wondering why nobody knows where their children went from that station.

Manoj and Rahul (Cases of repeated Runaways and not willing for to home placement)

Manoj was a 16 year old child who had run away from home with his younger brother, Rahul who was 9years old (Rahul even had a speech problem, he would lisp and was unable to pronounce 'd'. he would say 't' instead,). They had both run away about 8 times. The first time Maoj ran away, he ran alone but after that he took his brother along too. They were both adamant about not wanting to go home. They said their parents beat them, their mother did not cook and their father forced them to join him in his business of selling handkerchiefs on the road.

They were both clean, well groomed children. They were carrying numerous pairs of clothes and slippers too. In fact the younger brother was carrying books as well. Their

well kept look would work against them because people would keep asking them why they had to run away from home, they obviously came from a good family, etc. Even the facilitator would tell them that they had slippers and clothes and their parents obviously cared for them, which is why they gave them all these things.

Despite this, Manoj was clear in saying that they would not go home. He said his parents did not give them both money and resources to study. They said there pressure on Rahul to do well in school but the parents did not give them books etc to do well. Rahul said that he had failed in one exam because he was unwell and after that his parents refused to co-operate with his study plans.

Manoj would try to teach the other children. He even attempted to have a Civics lesson. He had studied till the 8th standard and many of his answers reflected the things he knew – he spoke about freedom fighters, Bharat Mata , the freedom struggle and so on. The children seemed fond of him too. They would include him and his brother in their play, and he usually knew what most children were thinking or doing. He would tell about it sometimes. He and the others even made plans of running away after beating up by the facilitators. This plan came out in the open but nobody got punished for it. In the last few moral sessions, the children had started sharing personal stories of what they felt and thought at the camp. In one such session some children said that Manoj had made the plan to escape and they had all joined him in the plan.

Manoj truly seemed fearless. He never worried about what punishment he could get for not giving the desired answers – he would openly state he did not want to go home, that he felt “Sir” was always trying to send them home, that there was no God and the only God he believed in were his own hands because they helped him do labour and get money. He had been through a number of observation homes and remand homes with his brother. He was usually sent home from there or he ran away.

He often spoke about having lived at the Yuva centre and not on the station. He said he planned to continue living at the Yuva centre and doing work, he believed that social worker over there would help him get good work. He wanted his brother to study while he himself worked to earn enough for both of them.

Earlier Manoj had been clear about wanting to study and that he had come to his camp also because he thought he was going to get the chance to study. But now he had changed his mind and wanted to work instead.

Individual sessions - The Facilitators often said that Manoj and Rahul looked like they came from a good socio-economic status. Manoj later admitted in an individual session that his father worked in a multinational company and that he was an engineer. He also said that he had an older sister who lived with his father and stepmother. He said his biological mother had committed suicide because of his father's affair with the woman who is now his stepmother.

Eventually Manoj decided to live in another institution which Sathi chose. He was firm that he did not want to go home.

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Data Collection Tools

Tata Institute of Social Sciences Study of Home placement of Street Children Schedule for Children

Personal Information (available in the records)

1. Name
2. Home placement year
3. Mode of home placement :
 - Camp
 - Self referral
 - Taken home by Parents
 - Escorted by social worker of the agency
4. Duration of stay on the platform
5. Occupation of the child on the platform
6. Number of times runaway
7. Addiction type / consumption level
8. Reason for leaving home

9. Type of family –
 - Both biological parents
 - Step mother and father
 - Mother and step father
 - Single parent Mother/ Father
 - Relatives as guardians
 - No. of brothers
 - No. of sisters
10. Father's occupation
11. mother's occupation
12. Type of house
13. Guardian
14. Relation with guardian
15. Any particular event that served as a trigger for running away from home ?
 1. Particular event at home
 2. Events outside home
 3. Problem at family (specify)

II) Information regarding NGO contact –

1. Did you receive help from any NGO? If yes specify

- Duration of contact with the NGO
- How did you come in contact with the agency?

- Support from other institutions besides NGO?
- Before present placement, the child was previously placed by
- Any harassment at platform

- Child's health
- Food assistance
- Clothing assistance
- Medicine assistance
- Family reaction

- Triggering Problem/event solved or not

- Child's future plan

III) Present information: (Obtained from the child at time of interview)

- Age :
- Education : upto 4th Std..
5th to 8th Std
8th to 10th Std
- Current Occupation:
 1. Attending School
 2. School drop out
 3. Engaged in family trade/business/agricultural work
 4. Working with some one (specify the nature of work)

- 4. Period of stay after home placement:
 - Up to 3 months
 - More than 3 months to 6 month
 - More than 6 months

- 5. No. of Members in the family:
 - Upto 4

- 5 to 7
- More than 7

6. No. of siblings:
Ordinal position of the child:

IV. Inputs by the NGO if any

Participation in the services offered by the agency

1. Drop in shelter :	yes/no
2. Night shelter:	yes/no
3. 24hr. shelter :	yes/no
4. Meals :	yes/no
5. Non formal education:	yes/no
6. Recreation :	yes/no
7. Health related programmes :	yes/no
8. Saving scheme:	yes/no

V. Motivating factors for going back

1. Did you miss home while on the street? Yes/no
2. If yes what all did you miss? If no? What was the reason for not missing?
3. What finally pushed you to take the decision of going home?
 - Interaction with the social worker
page 148
 - Problems faced on the street
 - Missing family and friends
 - Parents came searching for me
 - Seeing other children going home
 - Inputs in the camp
 - Missing home life
 - When you first started to think about going home, what did you feel?

(in case child's answer is vague, then the RI could further ask - Were you anxious, scared, happy, sad or excited ?) Explore the reasons behind the answer

VI) Process of home placement

A) For self referral cases, also ask –

- Did your parents/family know that you were coming home? Yes/No
- if yes, How did you communicate this to them?
- How did they feel about your coming home?
- Why did you decide to go on your own and not with a social worker?
- Did you ever feel forced to go home?
- When I reached home alone I

B) For children accompanied by social worker

- How did you feel about being accompanied by the social worker while going home?
- what did you and the social worker talk about in the journey home?
- Do you think your parents would have reacted differently if you had not come with a social worker?
- How did you feel towards the social worker? Was he like a friend? Or were you scared of him?
- Before going home, did the social worker talk to you about how to live at home? What do you remember about what they said?
- What do you think would have happened if you had not agreed to go home?
- Did you ever feel that the NGO was forcing you to go home?

- When I was going home with the social worker I

C) For children who went with the parents

- How did you feel when you saw your parents again?
- How did your parents react when they saw you?
- Did you expect your parents to react the way they did?
- What would you have done if your parents had not come to take you back?
- Did the NGO talk to you about how to live at home? What do you remember about what the NGO told you?
- Did the NGO speak to your parents too? What do you remember about what they told your parents?
- What do you think would have happened if you had not agreed to go home?
- When my parents came to take me back I

D) For children placed after camp experience

1. When did you attend the camp organized by Sathi?
2. Who motivated you to go for this camp?
3. What was told to you about the camp?
4. With what expectations did you agree to attend the camp?
5. How many other children did you meet at the camp?
6. Do you remember what happened during the initial few days?
7. When did you come to know that it is a long duration and not 2-3 days?

8. What was your reaction to this information?
9. Did you or any of your friends try to run away during the camp ?
10. Which activity in the camp you liked the most? Why?
11. What did you dislike about the routine in the camp?Why?
12. How did you start feeling about your home/family during the discussions in the camp?
13. How and when did you take the decision to go home? Did you feel any pressure about it or it was your own decision?
14. Which session do you remember to have a strong impact on you?
15. What other options were offered if you were not too keen on going home?
16. Any suggestions for making the camp more enjoyable?

VII) Changes after coming home

Family

How is your relationship with your family ?

If you feel upset whom do you talk to?

How is your relationship with your father ? (tick all that the child expresses)

- I fear him
- he is caring towards me
- He is abusive
- I like to be with him
- He gives lot of punishment
- He makes sure we get what we need
- Other _____

How is your relationship with mother (tick all that the child expresses)

- I fear her
- she is caring towards me
- She is abusive

- I like to be with her
- She gives lot of punishment
- She makes sure we get what we need
- Other _____

How is your relationship with your brothers and sisters?

Who do you enjoy with most among your siblings?

Are you scared of any of your siblings?

Do you share secrets with them?

Are they happy you are back?

What kind of work do your siblings do around the house?

Do your siblings go to school or to work? do they help you in your school or at your workplace?

How is your relationships with the others in your family at home?

Grandparents –

Uncles -

Aunts -

Cousins –

I feel that my father rarely

Compared to most families, mine

I wish my father would

I feel that my mother rarely.....

Most families I know usually

I wish my mother would

My siblings and I

Compared to my siblings my family treats me like I

Friends

Do you have friends?

Was it difficult to adjust with old friends once you came back home?

Have you made new friends now that you are back home?

What do you do when you are with friends?

Most of my friends don't know that I

when I am with my friends I

when I am not around, my friends usually

School/Work

Are you going to school/work? (specify)

How do people treat you in school/work?

Do you find it difficult to study? What do you find most difficult?

What do you find easiest while studying/working?

If you don't go to school/work what would you like to do?

Does anybody ill treat you in school/work? If yes, how?

What do you dislike most about school/work?

what do you like most about school/work?

Do your teacher/employer complain about you? Yes/no (explain)

In school/at work my teachers /boss.....

When I am in school/work I feel/do.....

Neighborhood

Do you have friends in neighbourhood?

How do the friends' parents treat you?

What kind of activities do you do in the neighbourhood?

Do you visit other people's house?

Do you like living in the town/village that you live in?

1. **Routine after coming home**

Could you tell me your daily routine now that you are home? (The RI could encourage the child to start from the smallest of things – when do you wake up? Then what do you do? Essentially account for every hour in the child's day so that the child himself does not filter out details.

What do you like most about staying at home?

Do you feel people treat you differently because you had run away?
Yes/No (explain)

VIII) Perception of Changes in self. Perception of others' attitudes towards self

1. Do you think living outside home has changed you in some way?
2. What is the difference between(insert child's name here) of the streets and (child's name) at home? (eg - what is the difference between Rajeev of the streets and Rajeev at home?)
3. Do your parents complain about you? Yes/no (explain)
4. Do you feel you get more attention now? If yes in what way?
5. Do other people frequently remind you of the fact that you had left home? who are these people? Yes/No

6. How do you feel about having run away ?
7. Do you think the reasons you ran away from home still exist? *(for this RI may have to specifically mention the reason the child had given previously)*
8. In what way do you think your parents have changed ever since you came back?
- Giving more attention to my needs
 - Scolding has reduced
 - Beating has reduced
9. I am afraid of
10. I like it when
11. When circumstances get tough, I
12. I want to forget the time I
13. I believe I have the ability to
14. I dislike it when
15. What would you like to do when you grow up?
16. Do you think education will help you to do better?
17. What do your parents want you to do? .

Tata Institute of Social Sciences
Study of Home placement of Street Children
Interview Schedule for Parents

1. Economic status of family
 - a) Land owning
 - b) Means of livelihood
 - c) Family income (combined salary)
 - Upto Rs. 2000/- p.m.
 - Rs.2001 to Rs.4000/- p.m.
 - More than Rs. 4000/-p.m
 - d) Assets
 - e) Any changes in the socio-economic conditions of the family in the past year?

2. How long was the child on the streets?

3. What efforts did you make to trace your child?
4. Who supported you most when your child ran away and you were looking for him –
 - Relatives
 - Neighbours
 - Child's friends
 - Local Panchayat leader
 - Other government workers
 - Police
 - NGO's
 - Other

5. For Children who have run away more than once – what efforts were made by the parents to prevent the child from running away again?

6. Experience /process of reunion

A) If camp child, then ask

- a) When you met the camp teachers what did you feel about them? Were they helpful or interfering?

- b) Do you feel the camp helped your child in any way? Do you notice any changes in your child?

- c) Has the camp given you some advice as to how to work with your child so that he adjusts better?

- d) Any suggestions to the NGO about how to conduct the process of reuniting child and parent?

B) If child returned with NGO staff

- a) When the NGO persons brought your child home what did you feel?

- b) Did your child express any positive things about NGO Staff? If yes describe.

- c) Did your child express any negative things about the NGO staff? If yes, describe.

- d) If the NGO Staff had not got your child home, how do you think you would have found your child?
- e) Has the child come back willingly or by force?
- f) What advice did the NGO staff give you regarding the child and how you should deal with him?

C) Child returning without any escort

- a. When your child came home, how did you feel?
- b. Do you feel your child should have received some more help from an NGO?
- c. Do you wish you had some been given some advice about how to deal with your child now that he has returned home?

D) Children received by Parent

- a. How did you receive information about where to find your child?
- b. How did you feel when you got information about your child?
- c. How did you feel about the way in which the NGO dealt with you when you went to pick up your child?

d. How did you feel when you were first reunited with your child?

e. Did you receive any suggestions about how to deal with your child now that he has returned?

f. Any suggestions to the NGO about how to conduct this process?

7. Perception of Child's adjustment at home

1. Now he has been with you for nearly _____ months/years what changes have you found in -

a) His behaviour (describe)

b) His studying habits

c) His work in the house

d) His behaviour at workplace/school(whatever is applicable)

e) His relation with father

f) His relation with mother

- g) His relation with brother/sister
- h) His relation with other members of the family
- i) His relation with friends
- j) His relation with neighborhood

2. Was it difficult for the child to adjust to home- life?

Yes / No

In what way ?

3. Did he say anything about life outside home? (Describe)

4. How do you feel when he talks about his life outside?

5. Do you feel he is now determined to stay at home? What makes you feel so?

6. How are you ensuring that child feels like staying at home?

7. If your child were to run away again, what do you think you will you do?

8. What kind of support do parents need when their child has run away?

9. How can organizations help you or other parents like you?