

BLUE UMBRELLA

HOW TO ENSURE PROTECTION OF STREET CONNECTED CHILDREN.

GUIDELINES FOR FIELD WORKERS



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Objective of Hand Book

- To develop understanding on various “protection issues” of street connected children.
- To develop understanding on “know how” and “how to work” and “what to do” to ensure protection of street connected children.

Handbook contains

- Grass root experiences.
- Some exercises.
- Reading materials
- Guidelines.



This workbook is made on principle of “Read and Follow”. That's why it is advisable to read handbook carefully.

Who is the street connected children?

In the General comment No. 21 (2017) on children in street situations the term “children in street situations” is used to comprise: (a) children who depend on the streets to live and/or work, whether alone, with peers or with family; and (b) a wider population of children who have formed strong connections with public spaces and for whom the street plays a vital role in their everyday lives and identities. This wider population includes children who periodically, but not always, live and/or work on the streets and children who do not live or work on the streets but who regularly accompany their peers, siblings or family in the streets. Concerning children in street situations, “being in public spaces” is understood to include spending a significant amount of time on streets or in street markets, public parks, public community spaces, squares and bus and train stations. It does not include public buildings such as schools, hospitals or other comparable institutions.

These children can be found at-

- Railway station
- Bus stands
- Streets/pavements/footpaths
- Outside shops/mall
- Temples/Dargah/other religious shrines or place of worship
- Red light signals/under fly over bridges, hutments
- And similar places



These children can hideout themselves to ensure own protection .Therefore it is important for field worker to develop ability to identify such places.

CHETNA's experience

The project Blue Umbrella was jointly implemented by CHETNA and CONSORTIUM FOR STREET CHILDREN. Under this project, it has been observed that children on streets usually found at places where they have opportunity to survive and hide themselves. The places like jam-packed markets, transit places (railway stations, bus stands), popular religious places and crowded traffic junctions are favorable places for these children.

These children generally live in small group of their age and interest for example – children into rag picking may form one group and children into bagging may form another group. That's why an apparent group dynamic is seen among them. On one hand these children by and large extend all possible support to peers, though this support may be positive or negative such as taking care of each other during illness or sharing substance.

While on street these children face extremely abusive situations like beating, physical and mental abuse, scolding by passerby, unhealthy living conditions, etc. These children are bound to live in these situations due to lack of alternatives. The insensitivity of citizens at large makes them almost invisible and further



vulnerable. Hence, it is important to develop a self-sustaining peer escort system where these children can lend a hand to each other.

We had experience that their togetherness can be constructively utilized to ensure protection. We practiced this by forming support group of these children at different locations to empower them to talk about issues that are affecting them. These groups then become part of larger federation called "Badhte Kadam" which means "Stepping forward". This federation of street children is able to raise issues through their newspaper called "Balaknama" (Voice of children).

We declare these locations as "Contact Points" and create connection with children through 18 well-crafted activities such as life skill workshops, alternative education, sports, art and craft, exposure visits, etc. Approximately 30 children directly benefit from these contact points.

Exercise

Check your ability to find children in street situation

Tasks

1-Identify a place like market or place of tourist interest or any other crowded place and spend two-three hours.

2- Try to make a list of children in street situation of that area as per their age, gender and physical appearance.

3- Try to observe their movement, engagement.

4-Analyse yourself and mark the tick in the list if you have seen following-

Beggar	Waste picker	Causal labour	Working at restaurant
Sweeping the floor	Shoe-shiner	Children at traffic signals.	Acrobat performers.
Vagabond.	Isolated.	Substance abuser.	Mentally-ill

How many did you identified? Any count more than four is approval of your ability.

We may presume we know all categories of children in street situation but there may be many invisible children. Hence, it is important to enhance self-ability to reach out to maximum children.

How to establish a “Contact Point”

- Identify the locations where you see concentration of street children.
- The ideal size of contact point would be where at least 30 children can be found.
- The place of intervention should be in vicinity to the work place/stay of these children.
- An area of intervention should be approximately 10x10 square for intermittent/regular group interaction.
- Preferably this place should be a public place such as –park or playground or similar place which is safe for children.
- Negotiate time and meeting place with children and ensure your presence accordingly.
- Prepare a constructive child friendly engagement plan to create bond.



One need to have patience and clarity while establishing contact point as a good selection will pay you later.

What to do to initiate protection

- Create regular connect with children to understand their protection issues.
- Develop in-depth understanding of individual child as much as possible.
- Make support group of children and ask them to identify two leaders.
- Ensure monthly meeting of children to ventilate and resolve issue of concern.
- Map out key stakeholders who affect these children on daily basis and create opportunity of interface among them.



- Develop a negotiated plan of engagement with children consist of activities that directly or indirectly promote their protection. For example-Engagement through education and recreation, organize visit to police stations or local hospitals etc.

Protection issues may vary with time, place and situation hence you may need to be ready to response to the issue.

CHETNA's experience-

We have experienced that the protection issues may differ with time, place and situation and hence it is important that we should develop clarity with the change of protection issues. It is not indispensable that the protection issues of a group or a child are similar. To work on protection issues, it is important to confer with the children on the protection issues and as far as possible, a collective approach should be negotiated. If we look at protection issues then, they can be two or three types.

The first type of protection issues can be such that children create themselves. For case in point- stay on the station/market or run away from the home even after the shelter is available.

The second type of issues emerges as a result of the first type of issues. Like, because of being in the market, they beaten by the people, torture by the police and the watchman, troubled by the elder boys of their own group.

The third type of issues can be those which make children vulnerable due to living in such places-railway station, bus stand and prominent marketplace. The presence of vagabonds and outsiders is not considered good at these places. Therefore, there will be disparity in approach and stakeholders to solve all these issues.

In our work, we must clearly identify those stockholders due to which these children are affected and at the same time, we must also see the protection issues in a legal context. For example - we cannot endorse any children to live on platform even if he wants the same. But we have to explain to him that the station is not safe for him and an alternative can be for him a shelter home or any available space. It is also important for the person who ensures security to get the legal information. It is also important for you that the laws of the state in which you are working, what it says about the protection issues of such children, what are the special schemes in the state that these children can get and what are the recourses available for them. So that when we work for the protection of children, we are aware of all this information. At first, it seems all difficult but when you get hold on information and begin to understand the protection issues then you are in a position to give a solution. It is extremely important that patience should not be lost in the beginning.

How to evaluate impact?

Children should be able to recognize protection options and able to use.

⇒ **ASK THEM.**

Children make use of peer support which develops during intervention in the absence of frontline workers.

⇒ **HEAR THEM**

Children should be able to approach appropriate authorities in the time of need.

⇒ **EMPOWER THEM**

The authorities are familiar with the issues related street connected children.

⇒ **MEET THEM**

Stories of change and data.

⇒ **KEEP THEM**



A good impact will be that which makes both implementer and beneficiary satisfied.

Do's and Don'ts to ensure protection of child during intervention.

It is important to ensure protection of children during our intervention. Following can be done-

Do's	Don'ts
Make your own child protection policy.	Don't raise hope and make false commitments.
Let all visitors sign and read this before they come in contact with children.	Don't conflict with stakeholder/s who taking time in convincing about these children.
Tell children about various helpline numbers.	Don't provoke children against stakeholders.
Train children to extend help to peers when required.	Don't take children away from contact point without informing peers and guardian.



Please remember our one wrong step can put children into difficult situation. Hence, it is important to be prepared and well planned.

Yes, you can do it

We know you have these strengths-

Sensitive,

Helpful

Committed,

Child-friendly

Honest

Creative

Patient

Sincere

Hard-working and many more.



With children one need to prove his/her strengths rather than claiming them. We are sure you can do it.



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