

Street Children and Social Work Interventions: Evidences from Hyderabad Karnataka Region

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INTRODUCTION:

India is one of the highly concentrated countries in the world when it comes to street children, according an UNICEF estimate (Ferrara and Ferrara, 2005). Rane and Shroff (1994) have emphasised the role of institutions of Social Work in evolving systematic modules of training for personnel working with street children. D'Souza et al (20024) in their study have also documented the 'street child' phenomenon. Ferguson, et al (2005) provided profile of street children's organisations in Mumbai and review the range of services provided.

The schools of social work may play a very significant role in addressing the needs of street children in many ways. The training module may be devised and implemented with police and judiciary who deal with street children. Field action and research project may be done in order to understand conditions of street children and make direct intervention with the help of social work students. Also it can be played important role by advocating at different levels in policy formulation and designing developmental programmes. In fact, these types of activities provide good opportunities for the fieldwork placement of social work students. Further, a forum for street children may be established in order to bring together the agencies working for street children on a common platform to discuss their problems for effective working.

INTERVENTION MODULE:

Interventions need to consider the root causes of the problem, which range from personal pathology to structural failings ranging from social control to social change. The model is based on the multidisciplinary of street children. The children are innocent, vulnerable and dependent. They are also active and full of hope. But for many children the reality of childhood is totally shattered. This study on such children has highlighted certain realities regarding their state of life. Their time should be one of joy and peace and their future should be shaped in harmony. Hence based on the major findings of the study, the following recommendations are made to make the future of these nameless children brighter.

SHELTER HOMES:

The extent of the problem of street children in Gulbarga city is only growing in a steady manner. Hence it is felt that the existing shelter homes cannot reach out to all these children in need. Hence new shelter homes should be started in different parts of the city. The existing shelter homes are situated in the south zone where there is more concentration of street children. More shelter homes could be thought about in this zone. Since street children are present in all the four zones of the city the new shelter homes can be started in the remaining three zones.

The need for a shelter home was felt by the children themselves. They are very much in need of a decent place for their night rest. All the other problems like police harassment, anti-social elements, brokers and drug abuse, expressed by the children also arises because of the lack of proper shelter. Hence through the services of more shelter home most of these problems of children can be tackled.

Free shelter home services should be given a rethinking. There should also be a contribution by the street children themselves as they are daily wage earners. Apart from these shelter homes, few centres could be started near the main bus-stands and the railway station that can serve as 'open shelter' to which any street boy can come at any time. Where in basic facilities and first aid could be offered. These centres can be of help of build up rapport with new street children.

A separate shelter home should be thought about for the special care of smaller street children where food and non formal education can be provided since they cannot be encouraged to work. As it was revealed in the study smaller children usually left home due to lack of love and care. Hence a homely atmosphere can be created with a person as a 'Mother' for 4 to 5 years children like in S.O.S. village. Thus, abuse of smaller children by the grown-up boys can be avoided.

HOME FOR STREET GIRLS:

The word street child has come to refer to only boys because of their large number and the numerous services available for them. The fact that there are also street girls can not be denied even though they are small in number. It is they who are in need of protection more than the boys. Added to all the other problem of a street child, they are also being sexually abused. Hence, a shelter home for the care of such runaway, street and neglected girls could be started in the city.

TECHNICAL TRAINING:

As per the study, many children left home due to their dislike for studies. Hence it is not advisable to force them with education again. They themselves desired, that technical education can be given along with non-formal education. The technical training should be directed to get job opportunities for them.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY:

Majority of the children's' expectation from the government is only employment. They firmly believe that the government can give job opportunities for them. The efforts of World Vision and some NGO's to create job opportunities for street children should be appreciated. Through this scheme, the children have received a social status and a permanent means for their livelihood, which has brightened up the lives of many street children in the city and has paved the way for a new way of life. Similar schemes could be thought about and can be initiated by the government for the welfare of such children.

HOME PLACEMENT:

The shelter homes should not become like boarding or hostels for the street children. The children also should not be permitted to make the shelter home their permanent residence. As soon as a street child is brought to the centre, the first step should be always to trace out his/her family and find out the real reason for leaving home and the centre should try to place the children back at home immediately. If the home environment is not conducive to leave, the particular child at home then the agency can plan and start the rehabilitation process for that child.

STREET BASED CENTRE:

All the street children cannot be expected to come to the agency and rehabilitated. Since the children are hostile to the adult world, initially they hesitate to come to such centres. Hence for such children street-based centres started in their place of work where non-formal education can be given. The existing agency is already doing it very effectively.

A CENTRE FOR PROBLEMATIC CHILDREN:

The experience of working with such children showed that many of these children had number of problems. They do become addicted to drugs, a special de-addiction centre different from already existing centres could be started. Since these children are also different from the rest of the people. They are in need of a special treatment process appropriate to their situation. This de-addiction centre should also be equipped to treat the violent and problematic street children, since the existing shelter homes are not able to concentrate on such children. They are in need of a special care and understanding.

STAFF TRAINING:

The staffs who are working in such agencies should be given regular training especially in skills of counselling. They should be taught to be patient and more understanding towards these children. Each staff has to go for regular street contacts. It is there in the field that they can feel one with these children and this will help them to understand the children better. The

children expect the staff working in these agencies to be available to them at any time. They are in need of someone who can listen to them, someone with to whom they can share their troubles and problems.

LINK WITH GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Government through the effective structure is helping the neglected children of the society in its own way. It can be made more effective if services like Juvenile Guidance Bureau, JAPU (Juvenile, Aid Police Unit), Probation Officers of Social Defence and prison department are linked with the local voluntary agencies, since all of them are reaching out to the same target group. There are chances of street children becoming juvenile delinquents and vice versa. Those delinquents who do not have any one to care for can be sent to those agencies working for street children.

The service of “May I help You” booths run by the police department in the bus stands and railway stations can also be linked with these voluntary agencies. They can be of much help to these agencies in identifying the neglected children found loitering in these places and in sending them to these agencies to be rehabilitated.

There is also a strong feeling among the voluntary agencies that the health services in the government hospitals could be made more easily available to these children. It is felt that these children are neglected when they approach the government hospitals and are not given proper care. Hence identity cards can be issued to these children for better care and treatment.

TRAINING FOR LAW ENFORCES:

Law enforcing authorities like the police, Juvenile Home officials, Probation officers and corporation personnel who are immediately connected to the street children should be given a special training regarding the concept, background and nature of street children. They should also be trained in skills of counselling.

ENHANCING EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM:

One of the main reasons for children dropping out of school was their dislike for studies or fear the teachers. Hence there is a need for enhancing the existing educational system to create situation of learning especially for the rural children. This might prevent children from being runaways to a certain extent.

AWARENESS TO THE SOCIETY:

The society, which always looks at, these children with suspension and hatred need to be given awareness regarding the concept and nature of street children. A guided interaction with these street children might help in removing the negative attitude of the people. They should also be taught to help these children by giving employment opportunities.

Today, street children are an inevitable sight in almost all-metropolitan cities and developing cities like Gulbarga in India. Their number keeps on growing every day and it is considered as a serious problem. They are often labelled as antisocial elements, land in the eyes of the law enforcers, they are considered as criminals. But it should be always remembered that they too are human beings and they also have feelings like the rest of us, which should be respected. Hence, their rights as human beings and much more as children should be considered. More than mere programmes, children expect love, affection and opportunities from the society which has alienated them. If the street children grow up in an environment of trust and confidence, they will be better prepared to face the upcoming challenges of life towards turning up as a responsible citizen of the country.

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