

India: street children integration

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Every day and night, thousands of girls aged 4 -18 have to survive on the streets of Calcutta. They're at risk of being

harassed, exploited and abused in all sorts of ways. They are seemingly unwanted and completely unprotected. But instead of being a major problem for society, these children can develop their talents as well as their personality and grow up to be build a normal life for themselves and be responsible citizens.

Accommodation, education and re-integration of street children

Like any other child, street children are in need of adequate accommodation, caring adult guidance, education and assistance in finding suitable employment after school. Each of these must be provided to facilitate a sustainable future. Because of the huge numbers, it is necessary to address this humanitarian disaster on a large scale, in a well-organised way.

The first project started at Loreto Day School in Sealdah, Calcutta. It's just opposite the second largest station in Calcutta and NRS Hospital and accommodates about 200 girls. The 'rainbow' children - as the former street children are called - naturally mix with the 'regular' children and receive remedial teaching from older pupils on a one-to-one basis. Currently Net4kids supports three Rainbow Homes in Calcutta.

The home forms a separate entity within the school organization, with professional staff members looking after the well-being and progress of the children. The children perform

minor household duties, do their homework, and enjoy different types of recreation. The Net4kids project partners in support of these children are the Partnership Foundation in the Netherlands and Loreto Day School in India.

Provide integral help to street children in Calcutta

- Shelter and protect the children
- Offering a safe and stimulating social climate
- Facilitating educational or vocational development
- Giving a new sense of direction
- Stimulating self-respect and respect for others
- Teaching social as well as life skills



How to help

There is a wide range of options to support this project. For example:

- * Sponsor 1 child for 1 year for Euro 450
- * Sponsor 1 child for 5 years for Euro 2250
- * Sponsor 250 children for 5 years for Euro 562500

Or anything between.

Taking responsibility for changing the life of a destitute child requires a commitment from all parties involved: Net4kids Aid Foundation, Partnership Foundation, Loreto India, donors and sponsors; it is unthinkable to abandon a project

of this nature in mid-operation. Therefore it is the policy of the Partnership Foundation and Loreto India to admit new children as soon as sufficient funds have been secured.

Activities

- Education and homework
- Vocational training
- Emotional guidance
- Minor household tasks
- Helping others within the group
- Cleaning and maintenance of clothes and personal possessions
- Yoga-classes and cultural education classes
- Dancing, singing, music and drama
- Educational and recreational outings
- Lessons in social- and life skills
- Planning reintegration from the age of 17/18 years

Postcard from...

The story of Mou Mondal
 "Police rescue 10-year-old maid locked in flat for three days by employers on Puja holiday".
 (Calcutta Telegraph, 7 October 2002)
 Mou Mondal, 10, spent three days of the Pujas locked inside the New Alipore flat she works in - without food or drinking water. Mou was finally rescued by the police after being alerted by anxious neighbours, who had heard faint cries of the girl from the house. "I survived the first two days on two packets of biscuit and water from the tap. After the biscuits finished, I didn't know what to do. I was hungry and scared.....I thought I was going to die", recounted Mou, tears running down her cheeks. "By Thursday night, I



was too weak to move or shout for help, but I still tried to draw the neighbours attention. The last thing I remember is lying down on the floor and crying.....". "The girl was almost unconscious when we rescued her" an officer of the local police station said. Preliminary investigations revealed that five years ago, Mou's father married a second time and abandoned the girl and her mother, who also left soon after. Mou went then to live with her maternal uncle in a Salt Lake shanty. According to the police, a family picked up Mou from their and employed her as a maid, without any payment, a few months back. Mou is currently living in the Rainbow home at Loreto Day School, where she is blossoming, and appears to be an excellent student.

About the Organization

The Netherlands – Partnership Foundation

The Partnership Foundation was formed by a number of Dutch business people and professionals. It aims to providing a large-scale solution to what is rightly called one of the major humanitarian tragedies of our times - street children.

Millions of children have to survive in the ever-expanding cities of developing countries without adequate adult protection, guidance or support, often in great poverty and distress. We are convinced that a business-like approach in the world of charity will lead to meaningful, sustainable and tangible results.

The Foundation is committed to provide accommodation, education and re-integration to street children in India. We intend to implement their goals in a professional and transparent way, in co-operation with a first-class local partner (see below). We're planning to do this by raising funds, assisting in the paperwork, and by providing hands-on assistance in matters of management and organization. It is the goal of the Partnership Foundation to admit 10,000 children to their program (www.partnershipfoundation.nl).

As the word 'Partnership' indicates, we are aware of the necessity to co-operate with other motivated individuals and organizations if we are to succeed. Therefore, we explicitly invite



everybody who wishes to make a contribution other than indicated above to contact us. If a sufficient number of dedicated companies and individuals join in, it might become possible to start a world-wide movement whereby school buildings in every developing country will be used to accommodate street children and provide them with a new sense of direction.

India – Loreto Day School

Representatives of Loreto Ireland arrived in India in 1842 with an educational mission. They started building and running schools in the major cities of the country. Mother Teresa started her career at Loreto Calcutta and was a teacher there for almost 20 years.

Currently there are 19 first-class schools with an average of 1,600 girls in each. Each one of these schools is prepared to open a home for street children on their premises. Schools are a highly effective solution for accommodating street children, as the buildings are empty in the evenings and at night. They also provide a suitable infrastructure for a home, with all the important facilities already present, and with excellent education close at hand.

The principal of Loreto Day School is sister Cyril Mooney. She has received many national and international awards - like the Ashoka Fellowship and the Price for Christian Stewardship - for her work with the poor in India over the past 42 years. In 2007 Sister Cyril received the Padma Shri award, the highest Civilian award for Social Work in India.

Loreto Day School received the Telegraph award for the best school in Calcutta in 2002. There were 600 other schools involved. Most impressive, probably, is the prestigious UNICEF international award (NOMA) for spreading literacy and education among the poorest on International Literacy Day, 8. September 1994: Loreto Day School was selected out of 32 countries and short listed out of 100 in India. Loreto Day School is participating in the network of UNICEF, Save the Children, British Council, Rotary, Round Table, Ashoka, Childline, Science Communicators Forum, Birla Museum. Sister Cyril is chairman of the National Children's Science Congress. She is also initiator of the Training Institute of Shikshalaya Prakalpa - providing schooling for 20,000 children in the greater Calcutta Metropolitan area - and

convenor of the West Bengal Resource Group for Education of Deprived Urban Children. There are 119 Loreto schools in 12 countries over 6 continents.

Updated July 7