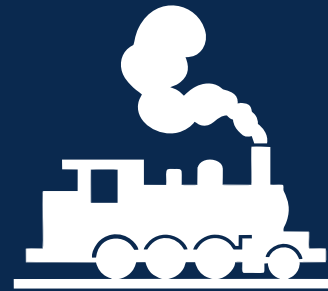


# Life World and Agency of



*Children in Contact  
with Railways*



**Results of a Research Study  
by  
All India Working Group  
for  
Rights of Children in Contact with Railways**

**September 2018**



# Acknowledgements

This has been a collective effort of which we had not imagined the scope and range when we began the journey in 2014. Without the willing collaboration and enthusiastic cooperation of many individuals and institutions we would never have been able to complete the journey four years later. There are, therefore, many to acknowledge and thank for their critical contributions.

The Sanchal Foundation initiated the study by hosting it in the first year and taking care of all the administrative and accounting procedures. It also dedicated its researchers from the Hazards Centre, Ajay Singh, Brahma Pandey, Mohammad Naeem, Priyanka Chhapola, Rahber Qureshi, and Ranjan Mehta, and administrator Pankaj Singh for different parts of the total study period. The study owes much of its depth and range to the hard work put in by these researchers, right through the period of the study and even afterwards.

Sanchal Foundation had to yield up administrative functions because of internal difficulties, and New Alipore Praajak Development Society took up the hosting function and performed all the tasks of receiving and disbursing funds, making administrative arrangements for holding meetings, and keeping up official correspondence with the many partners. Saurav Banerjee was the nodal person for this task.

There were 40 organisations who participated in collecting data from 127 stations, and a total number of 2148 child respondents. They freely dedicated their field workers to this task and were gratifyingly successful in allowing the children to select their answers without introducing their own biases. They occupy a place of honour in the last Annexure at the end of this report.

Kiran Thakre (Central), Krinna Shah (West), and Pavan Varma (South) were the chosen Academic Researchers who diligently documented interviews with children at Nagpur, Surat, and Rajahmundry stations for preparing the case studies. Avinash Shinde and Raj Kumar (Central), Hemant Naik (South), Wasim Pathan (West), Vishal/Ram Karan (North) and Bijay Das (East) were the enthusiastic Core Researchers who drew out the children at their respective stations and conducted the interviews which were eventually transformed into case studies. They also shared their valuable insights into the research methodology and the patterns of behaviour of the children on the basis of their personal experience.

The Paul Hamlyn Foundation played a key supportive role in readily providing the financial assistance for the study, and encouraging the many deliberations and discussions of the group.

Most of all, we thank all our respondents who enthusiastically participated and shared their most personal stories and insights, and provided the essence to this research.

To all, we offer our gratitude and share our excitement at the completion of this report. It represents the fruit of their endeavours as we have collectively put together whatever each had to offer.

Bharti Sharma  
Deep Purkayastha  
Dunu Roy  
G Kollashany  
Kavita Ratna  
Khushboo Jain  
Shwetank Mishra  
On behalf of AIWG-RCCR

# SOME CRUCIAL DEFINITIONS

## Who are Children In Contact With Railways?

*They are “those children whose work or shelter is located in or near the railway stations”*

## What is Agency?

*Agency “is reflected in the decisions we make, and these decisions are never 'free' choices but constrained by the environment”*

## Why this study?

*There are three categories of children in contact with railways:*

- *There are those children who are rescued and restored and do not come back to the station, so they are no longer in contact with railways.*
- *There are those children who are rescued and restored, but return to the station, hence they retain their contact with railways.*
- *There are those children who are not rescued and restored and so remain in contact with railways.*

*This study is specifically designed to “listen” to the children in the second and third categories, without making value judgements, so as to understand their 'agency'.*



# Contents

	<b>Acknowledgements</b>	
1.	<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>1</b>
2.	<b>Introduction to study</b>	<b>6</b>
	<i>AIWG-RCCR</i>	6
	<i>Evolution of Child Policy</i>	7
	<i>Research</i>	8
3.	<b>Literature survey</b>	<b>12</b>
4.	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>15</b>
	a) Methodology as visualised	15
	b) Methodology as it evolved	15
	c) The Application	16
	d) Pilot studies	17
	e) Orientation	18
	f) Mid-course corrections - the reasons for it	19
	g) Limitations of the methodology recognised prior to the study	20
	h) Challenges due to ground dynamics	20
	i) Dissemination meetings, reflections about the survey	21
5.	<b>Ethical guidelines</b>	<b>24</b>
6.	<b>Findings</b>	<b>27</b>
	6.1 <i>Background of the sample</i>	27
	6.2 <i>Agency between home and station</i>	29
	a) Place of origin	29
	b) Reason for coming to the station	29
	c) Visiting Home	30
	d) Reason for not visiting	31
	6.3 <i>The station as a venue for agency</i>	31
	a) Work at the station	31
	b) Living behaviour	32
	c) Sleeping behaviour	32
	d) Any change in station	33
	e) Reason for changing station	33
	6.4 <i>Harassment as a counter to agency</i>	34
	a) Experience of harassment	34
	b) Harassing agent	34
	c) Change in sleeping location	35
	6.5 <i>Factors that enable agency</i>	35
	a) Friends	35
	b) Assistance experience	36
	c) Assistance agent	37
	d) Issues with NGO	37

6.6	<b><i>Children's perspective for the future</i></b>	<b>38</b>
	a) Savings behaviour	38
	b) Reason for not saving	38
	c) Savings kept with whom	39
	d) Plan for next two years	39
7.	<b>Some correlations and cross-linkages</b>	<b>41</b>
7.1	<b><i>Correlations</i></b>	<b>41</b>
	a) Reason for coming to station and gender	41
	b) Reason for coming to station and visiting home	41
	c) Work and age	42
	d) Work and gender	42
	e) Work and living behaviour	42
	f) Friends at station and living behaviour	43
	g) Work and savings behaviour	43
	h) Saving behaviour and gender	43
	i) Saving behaviour and age	44
	j) Future plan and gender	44
	k) Future plan and age	44
	l) Future plan and assistance experience	45
7.2	<b><i>Cross Linkages</i></b>	<b>45</b>
	a) A1 and non-A1 stations	45
	b) Presence/absence of Railway CHILDLINE	49
	c) Trends with age	50
8.	<b>Stories of Agency</b>	<b>52</b>
i)	<b><i>Agency for leaving home</i></b>	<b>52</b>
	Family and Work	52
	Abuse	53
	Living on own terms	53
	Repeated leaving	54
	Other	54
ii)	<b><i>Agency at the station</i></b>	<b>55</b>
	Earning money	55
	Secure work	55
iii)	<b><i>Harassing agency</i></b>	<b>56</b>
	By police	56
	By passengers	57
	By others	58
iv)	<b><i>Fostering agency</i></b>	<b>59</b>
v)	<b><i>Future space for agency</i></b>	<b>60</b>
9.	<b>Major Conclusions</b>	<b>62</b>
10.	<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>65</b>
	Railways	65
	Ministry of Women and Child Development	66
	CHILDLINE	67

Organisations working with children	68
AIWG-RCCR	69
<b>11. Bibliography</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>12. Annexures</b>	<b>74</b>
12.1 Railway's Standard Operating Procedure, December 2013	74
12.2 Minutes of Working Group Meeting, NCPCR, Delhi, April 2014	80
12.3 Information Cards for the Surveyed Children	90
12.4 Preliminary Questionnaire for Pilot Quantitative Survey	91
12.5 List of stations where the Pilot study was carried out	100
12.6 Final Questionnaire for Quantitative Survey and Logic Tree	103
12.7 Fundamental Principles shared at Orientations: Delhi, January 2017	107
12.8 List of Stations, States and Zones during Quantitative Survey	108
12.9 Field Notes of Chhattisgarh Visit, January 2017	109
12.10 Surveyor Feedback on Orientation and Survey	113
12.11 Functional ChildSpeak Application Design	115
12.12 Core and Academic Researchers and Stations for Qualitative Study	116
12.13 Orientation for Core and Academic Researchers, Nagpur, July 2017	117
12.14 Pointers for Case Study Preparation in Qualitative Study	119
12.15 Protocol for Obtaining Child's Consent	122
12.16 Child Protection Policy and Consent Form	123
12.17 Dissemination Meeting, Hyderabad, June 2018	134
12.18 Sharing Findings with Children in the South	141
12.19 Profile of Railway Station, Surat, Gujarat	143
12.20 List of Partner Organisations	153



# 1. Executive Summary

In August 2008, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) was set up by the Government of India as a statutory commission to safeguard the rights of all children. The NCPCR constituted a Working Group to formulate recommendations for 'Safeguarding the Rights of Children at Railway Platforms' and these were forwarded to the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) in March 2009. 17 months later the Ministry wrote to the Chairman, Railway Board asking the Railways to implement the recommendations, who replied that Child Welfare Committees (CWC) have been constituted at railway stations but State Governments should be approached with regard to the other recommendations. However, CWCs as set up by the Railways were not the statutory CWCs as prescribed under the Juvenile Justice Act, 2000.

A year later, in August 2012, Khushboo Jain, a research scholar and now part of AIWG-RCCR, witnessed the tragic death of a child at New Delhi Railway Station and filed a Writ Petition in the Delhi High Court alleging that NCPCR's recommendations were not being implemented. The High Court rejected any need for a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and issued specific directions to be followed by various authorities in February 2013. Nevertheless, the Railway Board and NCPCR drafted an SOP, and the Director General (RPF) Railway Board sent it to General Managers of all Railway Zones for implementation in December 2013. This was endorsed by NCPCR a month later. When Civil Society Organisations, academicians, and child rights activists protested this violation of the High Court Order, NCPCR constituted a Working Group for developing guidelines.

It was proposed to NCPCR at the first meetings of the Working Group that a study was necessary to document children's experiences in their own words so that child-support groups could respond with a care and protection policy to meet the children's requirements. Initially NCPCR agreed to supporting such a study but later withdrew the offer. Hence, a group of like-minded individuals formed the All India Working Group for Rights of Children in Contact with Railways (AIWG-RCCR) to promote the concept of agency of children, critique the SOP and take forward the study on agency. Through a series of get-togethers in 2014, 2015, and 2016 at Delhi and Bangalore, the group gave shape to both the proposed study as well as its structure. AIWG-RCCR continued to make efforts to mainstream discussion on the rights of children in contact with Railways with focus on agency of children.

As a collective, AIWG-RCCR recognises that all children in contact with railways have always been treated in a way that they need to be rescued and returned home or placed in an institution. While this mode of care and protection - where protection is ensured through custody - within twenty four hours of the child being located at the station, may be in the best interest of some children, it is given primacy over the right of children to form and articulate their own views, to assert the right to information, education, participation, dignity, and 'agency'. AIWG-RCCR launched this research to document the options which children choose, other than rescue-and-return, in their given context, and the organic support structures accompanying these options. We also wished to document their aspirations and what, in their view, was the most suitable support they required to realise them.

The first step was to search for and review the existing literature on the subject so that we could learn more about its intricacies. We discovered that there is limited secondary information on the 'agency' of children. Researchers working across a range of scholarly approaches conceptualise the agency of young people and children within the limits of the four pillars of Survival, Protection, Development, and Participation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and not to the wider understanding of Human Rights and the Right to Self Determination. But children are able to express their agency in different ways, even when the studies are not necessarily looking at aspects of "agency". Running away from conditions at home, to work and earn, to live life on their own terms, to construct relationships that are enabling (even while they may be exploitative) are all decisions they take to mark their agency.

We also realised that children's agency is placed within the way we construct childhood and the notions of where children should be and what they should be doing. When we are considering agency of children in contact with railways, who come from diverse backgrounds, have varied life situations and coping strategies, these dominant and monochromatic notions become even more problematic. The dominant trend of thinking in India on these issues may be illustrated by a booklet published by the Ministry of Women and Child Development that counts one of its “significant achievements” as the framing of a “path-breaking” SOP to be implemented by the Railways for “*rescue and rehabilitation of runaway, abandoned, kidnapped and trafficked children*” (emphasis added). The railways will have NGOs and CHILDLINE Units working with them “for restoration of children to their parents/guardians or their rehabilitation in the absence of parents/guardians”<sup>1</sup>.

It was then decided to have a study divided into two phases. In the first phase, a schedule was to be administered to about 1,000 children<sup>2</sup> across India, who have spent more than one month at the station, in collaboration with other child rights groups. In the second phase, it was proposed that detailed histories of some selected children be collected around issues emerging from the first phase. Considerable time was spent on preparing a questionnaire and putting key safeguards in place: for minimum standards; for preventing surveyors' biases; and taking back the findings to the children. The questionnaire was embedded into an Application designed for mobile phones and tablets to ensure objectivity and data protection. For this second phase, only 55 children from 5 zones were to be included (given that a minimum of 11 children had to be selected in each zone to cover the range we had in mind), who have spent more than six months in contact with the railways, and also some adults who have lived and grown up at the railway stations, so as to capture a longitudinal story of decision-making.

Pilot studies of 50 respondents were carried out in Delhi, Bengal, and Karnataka to test the schedule and make it simpler and more accessible to the children. Four one-day zonal orientations were held during the first phase in early 2017 for all the surveyors (from the various partner NGOs) at Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, and Bangalore. Some of the fundamental and non-negotiable principles behind the study were shared with the surveyors through a set of ethical guidelines. They carried out the survey of over 2,000 children by mid-2017. The Core and Academic Researchers for the second phase were also selected by then. A four-day orientation workshop was held at Nagpur with these Researchers in July 2017. Pointers on how the case studies were to be recorded were compiled along with a protocol for confidentiality and child protection. They compiled 62 case studies by early 2018.

Several mid-course corrections took place during the course of the study and a few limitations were identified and dealt with as best as possible. By March 2018 the results were being disseminated among partner organisations, and a set of reflections emerged on what AIWG-RCCR was learning through the process, as much as from the findings. The larger picture of agency that emerges from the survey data is that half the children are coming to the railway station to earn money, another quarter wish to live on their own terms, and three-fourth retains regular contact with their families. Only one-tenth did not wish to stay in touch with their families at all. The railway station, by its very nature as a venue for a large number of customers, provided opportunities to collect bottles, beg, and sell all kinds of goods for survival; it also gave space to sleep and play, and make friends.

Over half the children were experiencing harassment<sup>3</sup> at the station, mostly by the police, and some by other children. Over two-third of those being harassed moved to safer locations at the station, while another half searched for happier environments suited to their terms. More than two-third had friends at the station to call upon for sustenance (mainly for food and illness) and one-third depended upon NGOs. About a quarter, though, were apprehensive that NGOs would 'rescue' them and deprive them of agency.

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Women and Child Development, Significant Achievement of Three Years 2014-2017, pg 26

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise specified, when we say children we refer to the age group between 4 to 19 years; although in 11% cases young people older than 19 have also been interviewed with the understanding that they would have been at the station earlier in their period of childhood and so would provide a longitudinal view of how children remain in contact with railways.

<sup>3</sup> The word “harassment” is used here to paraphrase what the children were saying in various languages about persons or events that troubled them or disrupted their lives

Over half the children also had some perspective for the future because they were saving money, either for themselves or their family. Even half of those who were not saving, said they did not earn enough to save, and a little less than one-fourth did not know how to save. But aspirations to get a good job, wanting to learn a skill to be able to earn, and wishing to remain at the station because it provided the opportunity to survive, were scattered through the sample.

Some correlations between gender, age, work, family connect, living and saving, future plans, and helping hands also revealed the dynamics of 'agency' as the children made decisions to optimise their survival within changing situations. Certain cross linkages with the revenue size of the station, the presence or absence of a Railway CHILDLINE centre at the station, with gender, age, work, harassment, and future plans also cast light on the behaviour of the children while making choices. But it was the stories of agency collected in the second phase that gave further clues into the deeper patterns underlying choices. While these stories confirmed the quantitative data, they also revealed the connections with the children's aspirations to live on their own terms, keep connections with families, and the experience of a string of violence and abuse at both home as well as at the station.

Thus the case studies illustrated how the children responded to uncertainties by acquiring multiple identities in work and shelter distinct from that of 'runaways'. A thrust for finding safety from harassment came across powerfully in the case studies, with many little tales of changing jobs, locations, trains, and even stations in search of safe havens to live and work in and plan for the future. The children's stories indicate harassment as a continuous state of being, marked by periodic episodes of violence. The police are firmly placed as agents of extortion, extracting money out of the meagre earnings of the children. Many of the care institutions, the NGOs, older children, passengers, other people working at the station, seem to be embroiled in the cycle of exploitation and competition. The extent of violence to maintain these relationships of power is a severe indictment of how care and protection is absent for most vulnerable children.

The main factor that enabled agency was the presence of friends at the station, although as often as not, the children were left fending for themselves. The case studies also point to another set of protective relationships with actual or adopted 'relatives' (uncles, aunties, *didis* and *bhais*), or with other workers at or outside the stations. The payment of protection money to the main harassers, the police, also figures in how children take decisions to continue to stay at the station. In some very specific circumstances, such as illness and schooling, the children relate how NGOs have helped them, although some expressed their apprehension that the NGOs may separate them from livelihoods and friends. In the case studies there is an emphasis on saving for both themselves and their families, and choosing jobs that can sustain them over time. They choose whom they will help and depend on, and are clear about the implicit contradiction between the objective of rescue-and-restore (which many NGOs adopt) and their own necessity to adapt and survive.

A set of conclusions have emerged from the quantitative data as well as the qualitative case studies and these have challenged some of the propositions we began the study with. For instance, we realised that not only were there possibly multiple strategies, but that there may be conflicting strategies also. We also realised that extracting real value from the stories children tell requires more time and patience than what we had set aside. It also required a very sympathetic non-judgemental mind on part of the researcher - especially to respond to their demands. We also concluded that some critical areas of enquiry have not been covered in this study, such as: the relationship between the children and their biological or adopted families; how do they visualise concepts of care and protection and safety; what values do they attach to child labour and sexual activity; and how do changes in society make them more or less vulnerable.

The main conclusions, though, are that the majority of children are with families and not 'runaways', and their sense of 'agency' as well as 'responsibility' to family comes across strongly. Hence, rescue- and-return is not a viable policy for all children in contact with railways. The children also have a strong sense of living life on their own terms around themes of 'fun' and work, freedom from boredom and school, rebelling against parental control, liberation from long working hours, escape from caste taboos, or being financially independent. But they all reveal a sense of personhood, of identity linked to dignity, and



of the desire to carve out one's own path - whether free of family ties or not. The broad canvas also yields many complexities to the word 'abuse', ranging from abandonment to oppression, beatings and psychological harassment at the hands of individuals with power, members of family, step-parents or friends.

The desire to 'escape' from insufferable conditions has spilled over into the station as a location for agency. It manifests in the choice of occupation that will optimise earning. Harassment is a lived daily experience with the railway police seen as the main culprits followed by other youth or adults. But the children also relate how wrongful charges, extortion of money and sex, unwarranted confinement, and beatings without cause complete the repertoire of the men (and women) in uniform. The fundamental query the children pose is: why is working treated like a crime? They are persecuted by train passengers, by older children, family members, and even peers. And the culture of male persecution seems to have been internalised with those who have been persecuted in their childhood turning into persecutors themselves as they grow into adults, although there are also instances of mentoring.

There are also hopeful nuggets of how agency overcomes, or tries to overcome, harassment and extortion, revealing a much richer tapestry of self-assertion and mutual cooperation. In this, friends and 'mothers', 'uncles' and 'aunts' and 'brothers' and 'sisters', play a critical role in structuring a different kind of 'family'. Several modes of coping with exploitation, harassment and abuse, and surviving through conditions of un-freedom come through. These include earning and saving enough to set up their own units; moving away from the locus of harassment by changing location; cooperating with groups of friends to protect each other; linking with actual or adopted 'relatives' and others at or outside the stations for saving money or getting loans, paying protection money to the police; or taking shelter with NGOs for specific circumstances.

There is, certainly, diversity among this set of general trends. Girls are differently located than boys both in terms of vulnerability as well as options. Age differentials also dictate what the children can or cannot do. 'Criminal' activities pay more but that is offset by the costs to be paid for avoiding persecution. The railway station is not always the locus of all activities although it occupies a unique position around which many activities can be constructed - which is conditioned by the scope and safety it offers. And it is from this large canvas that some recommendations have emerged, both after due consideration of what the data and the stories are revealing, as well as on the basis of suggested actions by members of the partner groups and advisers and experienced individuals with whom the preliminary findings and stories were shared through disseminations and consultations.

The recommendations are presented with two clarifications: firstly, we have omitted normative statements but retained all the specific action points; and secondly, this is a continuous process of engagement and we expect the recommendations to get further refined over time and space. They include key suggestions to the Railways to revise their SOP, set up open shelters, amend railway law where it is in conflict with the interests of the child, and set up a separate institution within the Personnel Department for participatory care and protection of children. For the Ministry of Women and Child Development we propose the abandonment of the rescue-and-return paradigm as the only mode: to be replaced by decentralised consultative bodies at the local level where the views of the children can be periodically and systematically heard; and units at the district level to design and implement preventive measures. These bodies could be set up by reforming the *Yuvak Kendras*, the *Bal Kendras*, and the Integrated Programme for Children in Street Situations.

Reform is also required in the Special Juvenile Police Units, the Child Protection Services, the Child Welfare Committees, and the Integrated Child Protection Scheme through regular training and orientation courses that look at alternative modes of care and protection that have been documented in this report. Consultation with children and their active associations is at the heart of redesigning care and protection, and children must be given the opportunity to articulate their own considered needs through Children's *Gram Sabhas*, *Bal Panchayats*, Children's and Youth clubs, and working children's associations. And support has to be provided through all these channels to the spirit of entrepreneurship and survival against odds displayed by the children. Critical needs for skill development, banking



assistance, loans and credit lines, vocational education, and market support have to be incorporated into child care and protection policy by the Ministry.

For CHILDLINE, and other organisations working with children in contact with Indian Railways, we recommend that they should critically examine trends and gaps in their experience of rescue-and-restore, and see how to link up with educational, vocational, skilling and financial assistance for protection and survival. They must also provide regular avenues for hearing the views of children and to create platforms that would include these views in policy and practice. They have to retrain their personnel to be seen by the children as points of assistance, rather than as agents for rescue-and-restore. They can evolve a community-based implementation and monitoring system along with a grievance redressal mechanism. They can issue identity cards that would help in decriminalising the children's activities as also lighten the load of harassment that they have to bear. Sexual abuse is a tricky area which can be dealt with only if CHILDLINE can put in place pre-emptive protective measures and grievance redressal mechanisms, rather than depend only on punitive action.

For child-support organisations, the challenge is to respond to the needs of children, other than rescuing and restoring them all the time. Most have already experienced this in their field work, and they must respond if they do not wish to be alienated from the very constituency they claim to serve. They can create structures within to collect information about conventions, laws, policies, and schemes, in order to place them before the children they work with, their families, and informal care-givers as well as official protectors, to elicit the informed views of all in a transparent manner. Joint and participatory research within the different forms of practice can also be promoted by them to assess whether practice is following accepted principles. But, in particular, child-support organisations can play a critical role in forming associations of the children to collectively assert their views and their right to be recognised as active agents. In the process they can consider how to draw in all service providers into the frame for larger collective efforts that bring synergy.

And for ourselves in AIWG-RCCR, we commit to enlarge our scope and reach by appealing to the partner groups to join the group; to promote participatory studies so that the children can get an avenue to discuss and advance their views; to engage with Railways to redesign the SOP and help design and set up a specialised institution; to make concerted efforts with the Ministry to substitute the one-dimensional rescue-and-restore paradigm with a multi-dimensional child-agency led policy; and to assist CHILDLINE and other child-support organisations to re-evaluate their practice and frame a broader structure that will assist children in what they choose to do in what they think is in their own, and their families', best interests as holders of rights.

## 2. Introduction to study

### AIWG-RCCR

In August 2008, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) was set up by the Government of India as a statutory commission to safeguard the rights of all children. The NCPCR constituted a Working Group in March 2009, which formulated “Recommendations for Safeguarding the Rights of Children in Contact with Railways”, and these were forwarded to the Ministry of Women and Child Development. In August 2011, the Ministry wrote to the Chairman, Railway Board regarding implementation of the recommendations, and the Chairman replied that Child Welfare Committees (CWC) had been constituted at Railway Stations. However, the fact is that the CWCs set up by the Railways were not the statutory Child Welfare Committees prescribed under the Juvenile Justice Act (JJA), 2000.

A year later, in August 2012, Khushboo Jain, a research scholar, filed Writ Petition (Civil) 5365 of 2012 before the Delhi High Court alleging that NCPCR's recommendations were not being implemented. While this case was ongoing, NCPCR held a meeting with the Chairman, Railway Board and agreed to develop a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for smooth transfer of the children to their parents/guardians or to the child care institutions through the CWCs. A Working Group constituted by NCPCR drafted the SOP and it was sent to the Railway Board for inputs. However, prior to this the High Court had rejected any need for an SOP and issued specific directions on 13.02.2013 to be followed by various authorities. But, without considering the Court's directions, on 11.12.2013 an SOP [Annexure 12.1] was issued by the Railway Board to General Managers of all Railway Zones for implementation, and the NCPCR endorsed this a month later.

In this Railway SOP the old “raid-and-rescue” tradition was continued, with children at the stations being 'rescued' and put into shelter homes prior to their restoration, even though the 'Shelter Home' has been replaced by the 'Open Shelter' in policy. Provisions for a single NGO to be nominated at a station to rescue the children; referring even those children who are not in contact with the railways (but have been 'rescued') to the CWC; and vague mention of 'child protection measures': were some of the other issues that violated the High Court's Order. When Civil Society Organisations, academicians, and child rights activists protested against this, NCPCR constituted yet another Working Group for developing guidelines on safeguarding the rights of children in contact with railways.

At meetings of this Working Group, the performance of the rescue-and-restore approach was debated in detail, it was also contested vigorously by some of the NGOs who had seen that it was neither solving the root problem of why children were at the stations, nor providing short-term relief to many children [see Annexure 12.2 for the minutes of the Meeting of the Working Group held on 15.04.2014 by NCPCR]. It was recalled that, in its Resolution for considering a National Policy for Children, dated 26<sup>th</sup> April 2013 (and published in the Gazette of India dated 11<sup>th</sup> May 2013), the Ministry of Women and Child Development had acknowledged that:

“children are ... capable of forming views and must be provided a conducive environment and the opportunity to express their views in any way they are able to communicate, in matters affecting them; ... children's views ... are to be heard in all matters affecting them, in particular judicial and administrative proceedings and interactions, and their views given due consideration in accordance with their age, maturity and evolving capacities.”

Other provisions in law that fed into the discussion were the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; UN General Comment no.12 (2009) on “The right of the child to be heard”; UN General Comment no.14 (2013) on “The right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration”; Recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on the India Country Reports; and UN General Comments on the Rights of Children in Juvenile Justice and in Street Situations.

The sixteen fundamental principles listed in the JJ Act 2015 were referred to: in particular Section 3(iii) on the Principle of Participation, “Every child shall have a right to be heard and to participate in all processes and decisions affecting his interest and the child's views shall be taken into consideration with due regard to the age and maturity of the child”; and Section 3(iv) on the Principle of Best Interest, “All decisions regarding the child shall be based on the primary consideration that they are in the best interest of the child and to help the child to develop full potential.”

This accepted right of the child to *participate* and *to be heard* while taking decisions in the *best interest of the child* lies at the root of what several participants recognised as the “agency” of the child. Hence, it was proposed to NCPCR that a study was necessary to document the children's experiences in their own words to understand their requirements and aspirations which could contribute to make our responses to them meaningful. Initially NCPCR seemed to be amenable to the idea of such a study to inform policy. But later it retreated and it was seen that the Working Group was negating the principle of child participation while framing policy. But some of the individuals from various parts of India involved in these discussions felt it was important to critique the SOP and pursue the study on agency of children, and that is how the *All India Working Group for Rights of Children in Contact with Railways* (AIWG-RCCR) came into being<sup>4</sup>.

A series of get-togethers in 2014, 2015, and 2016 at Delhi and Bangalore gave shape to both the AIWG-RCCR as well as the proposed study. At the first meeting itself, it was decided that, irrespective of outcome of the NCPCR-led Working Group, this informal group will continue working on the issue. A token initiative was taken to create a corpus, with money contributed by all the seven participants. Subsequently it was proposed that a study of this nature be conducted and necessary financial support obtained for it. At the same time, efforts continued to mainstream the discussion with the NCPCR with a focus on “agency” of children, but with little success. In the meantime, the Railway's SOP was modified to be implemented across 20 railway stations with the focus being on “safely” removing children from the station premises by the railway authorities in partnership with NGOs and CHILDLINE<sup>5</sup>. A comparative analysis of these different SOPs is required but has not been attempted in this study.

## Evolution of Child Policy

It is useful to understand how child policy in India has been shaped by national and international developments, so as to historically situate the rescue-and-restore approach. When the League of Nations was founded in 1924 after the First World War, the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child was adopted to take care of orphaned children left from the war. After the Second World War, from the 1940s to the early 1950s, many countries won freedom from colonial rule and their leaders sought to revive their war-affected economies by ensuring the survival of the new born children as future citizens. Thus, in 1959, 187 countries recognised the right of children to take their own decisions under the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. In 1973, the idea of children changed from 'citizens' to 'workers' (in development) and the International Labour Organisation revised earlier Conventions on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment. In 1989, the UN adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child, mainly to improve the living conditions of children in the developing countries.

### The Welfare Era

Thus, India followed the prevalent welfare approach after Partition of the sub-continent into two nation left many orphan and abandoned children in 1947 (Balakrishnan 2011). The new State took over the role

<sup>4</sup> The founding members were Anant Asthana (Advocate), Arlene Manoharan (ex-National Law School of India University, now independent child rights activist), Bharti Sharma (child rights activist), Deep Purkayastha (Praajak), Dunu Roy (Hazards Centre), G Kollashany (Communities of Knowledge and Practice), Kavita Ratna (The Concerned for Working Children), Khushboo Jain (Research Scholar), & Rama Vedula and Sachin Sachdeva (Paul Hamlyn Foundation). Subsequently Shwetank Mishra (Paul Hamlyn Foundation) joined after Rama Vedula left.

<sup>5</sup> CHILDLINE is India's first 24-hour, free, emergency phone service for children in need of aid and assistance. Any adult or child can dial 1098 for emergency needs as well as for long-term care and rehabilitation. It has brought together the government of India, treet and community youth, non-profit organisations, academic institutions, the corporate sector and concerned individuals to work for the protection of the rights of all children in general. A special focus is on all children in need of care and protection, especially the more vulnerable sections. For more information, see <http://www.childlineindia.org.in/index.htm>

of providing for these children with the then Indian Prime Minister Nehru being given the symbolic title of *chacha* (Uncle). Following this, the First Five-Year Plan (1951-56) laid emphasis on the health and nutrition of the child; the Central Welfare Board was set up in 1953 to tackle infant mortality in partnership with the World Health Organisation. The Second Plan (1956-61) continued with the extension of health and social services for women and children in rural areas; the Children's Act was introduced in 1960 for the care, protection, and rehabilitation of neglected or delinquent children. The Third Plan (1961-66) shifted focus to education and the Kothari Commission was established in 1964 to advise on a standardised educational system. This trend continued in the Fourth Plan (1969-74) with the National Education Policy proposing compulsory schooling up to 14 years.

### Welfare to Development

The Fifth Plan (1974-79) saw a landmark shift in focus from welfare to development with the adoption of a National Policy for Children defining children as 'a supremely important asset', with some recognition of the special needs of street children, children with HIV/AIDS, with disabilities, the girl child etc. The Integrated Child Development Services was launched combining many services; *Anganwadi* centres were opened providing basic health services, pre-school and health education for expectant mothers. The National Health Policy during the Sixth Plan (1980-85) focused on the educational, health and nutritional status of children. For the first time, the plight of working children was also recognised. The National Forum for Working Children was formed in India at this time. The National Policy for Education was revised, this time with an emphasis on retaining female students, as ferment about affirmation of their personhood rose in the youth everywhere.

### Development to Rights

In the Seventh Plan (1985-90) period the Department of Women and Child was established in the Ministry of Human Resource Development; and the Government of India repealed the Children's Act to replace it with the Juvenile Justice (JJ) Act. The National Child Labour Project was started in areas with a high number of working children, as the globalised economy projected the need to 'protect' the child from labour. During the Eighth Plan (1992-97), India ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, but with reservations on outright banning of child labour; several schemes focused on preventing female infanticide; a National Plan of Action for the Girl Child was adopted. This trend continued into the Ninth Plan (1997-02), when a new JJ Act was passed: although much of this thinking revolved around the child's value in the global market. Funding agencies began pumping money into rescue and rehabilitation of trafficked children.

The Tenth (2002-07) Eleventh (2007-12) and Twelfth (2012-17) Plans saw a shift to a "rights" based perspective in which the concept of children's participation began to emerge in policy making, as well as the affirmation of the adolescent. Programmes such as the Integrated Child Development Scheme, Early Childhood Education, Girl Child and Child Protection, laid particular emphasis on rescuing children who have fallen out of the system and are now in need of care and protection by the state. The JJ and Child Labour Acts were again amended, while the Integrated Child Protection Scheme emerged along with the Protection of Children against Sexual Offences Act - but none of these gave any importance to child participation in policy formulation. Thus, the child at the periphery continues to be excluded, while a paternalistic approach prevails in care and protection regardless of the needs of the child. All children out of the dominant system are tackled through 'raid-and-rescue', partly because that is where the international funding is available.

## Research

It is within the above historical trend, therefore, that AIWG-RCCR acknowledges that the field experience of several NGOs indicates that implementation of the SOPs in certain stations has led to conflict between children, individuals in uniform and NGOs<sup>6</sup>. The single-minded "rescue and restoration" approach for such

<sup>6</sup> See the views articulated by participants at the NCPDR meeting of 15.04.2014 - Annexure 12.2.

children only seems to exacerbate their problems. Hence, children who leave home, either on their own or under compulsion, have always been seen as in need of care and protection and the policy understanding is that they have to be rescued and restored home, or rescued and institutionalised. This right to protection - where protection is to be ensured through custody - is given primacy over all other recognised entitlements of the child such as forming and articulating their own views, the right to agency and dignity, right to participation, right to education, and the right to information etc., as delineated under UNCRC and JJ Act 2015.

In principle, the Juvenile Justice Act accommodates the twin concepts of children in need of care and protection and children in conflict with law, but the current practice in its implementation restricts the autonomy of the child. The SOP, for instance, creates a standard procedure for children in contact with the railways although they are a very heterogeneous group comprising children of various age groups, developmental stages, needs and motives. The National Policy for Children, 2013, on the other hand, recognises children's agency and states that children must be provided an environment that is conducive and the opportunity to express their views in all matters affecting them.

The Policy also states that “safety and security of all children is integral to their well-being and children are to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect, violence, maltreatment and exploitation in all settings”. Thus, at AIWG-RCCR we look at protection flowing from agency, not only in present formal mechanisms, but also in terms of alternatives that children have themselves created or chosen in what they feel is their best interest in their given context.<sup>7</sup>

For many “lost” or “trafficked” children, the policy of rescue-and-restore has worked. But, as evidenced by some agencies involved with restoring children to their homes, a certain number of children leave home again. Two studies by Sathi found that 74.5% of those who had attended rescue camps remained at home, but 27% had run away from home after restoration with families<sup>8</sup> - and these may be conservative figures. For some, the family itself is on or near the stations. Thus the rescue-and-restore approach may result in situations where the child is neither rescued nor restored, as the child leaves home again or the home itself is at the station.

We recognise that “*children in contact with railways*” is not a homogeneous group. For the purpose of this study, therefore, we define them as those children whose work or shelter is located in or near the railway stations. We also recognise that there is a need to identify the reasons children leave home or come to the station, and how they cope with the outside world. We therefore seek to promote the idea, from a child's perspective, that the child has “agency” as reflected in the decisions the child makes, within the constraints of the environment, and that this should be considered while framing laws and policies in India engaging with children.

For children in contact with railways, railways seem to be intricately related with their lives. In spite of the risks involved, the railway premises and adjoining areas seem to provide support and survival mechanisms. These children seem to have redefined surviving vulnerabilities through unwritten norms, structures and systems existing in and around railway spaces.

It was also brought to our notice by one of our interlocutors that prior to the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 (see Box at the end of this section) protection discourse focused on welfare, but after India submitted its first report in 1997 the discourse has shifted to 'agency', although, paradoxically, the parameters of agency - such as best interest, welfare, protection, etc. - are still decided by adults and the State, at best with a concern for the participation of the child in implementing what they have decided. So, without considering UNCRC to be sacrosanct, how can children bring in the component of their own agency into the discourse, and how best may we assist them?

<sup>7</sup> These need to be seen within the context of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, the United Nations General Comment No. 10 (2007) on Children's rights in juvenile justice, and the United Nations Resolution 64/162 on Guidelines for the Alternative care of Children.

<sup>8</sup> Sathi (2008)



Hence, AIWG-RCCR launched this research with:

The Research Hypothesis:

There are options which children seem to have chosen in their present context and each of these options is accompanied by its own organic support structure.

The Research Objectives:

To document what choices children are opting for, what is the basis for these choices, and how these choices have eventually panned out.

To document children's aspirations and what, in their view, was the most suitable support they required to realise them.

The Research Framework:

There are three categories of children:

- There are those children who are rescued and restored and do not come back to the station, so they are no longer in contact with railways.
- There are those children who are rescued and restored, but return to the station, hence they retain their contact with railways.
- There are those children who are not rescued and restored and so remain in contact with railways.

This study is specifically designed to “listen” to the children in the second and third categories, without making value judgements, so as to understand their 'agency'.

Therefore, understanding the systems and methods adopted by children to survive on the station premises will help in understanding whether different strategies are required rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. The study is expected to help shed light on the diversity of children in contact with railways. It will ask whether, apart from the prevalent rescue-and-restore approach, they require additional and multiple modes of intervention to be developed in partnership with children.

## **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (In child-friendly language, as published by UNICEF)**

*Based on the principles proclaimed in: the Charter of the United Nations; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the International Covenants on Human Rights; the 1924 Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child; the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Declaration on Social and Legal Principles relating to the Protection and Welfare of Children, with Special Reference to Foster Placement and Adoption Nationally and Internationally; the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice; and the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict; the States Parties agreed to:*

**Article 2:** *All children have these rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what their parents do, what language they speak, what their religion is, whether they are a boy or girl, what their culture is, whether they have a disability, whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis.*

**Article 3:** *All adults should do what is best for you. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children.*

**Article 5:** *Your family has the responsibility to help you learn to exercise your rights, and to ensure that your rights are protected.*

**Article 6:** *You have the right to be alive.*

**Article 12:** *You have the right to give your opinion, and for adults to listen and take it seriously.*

**Article 15:** *You have the right to choose your own friends and join or set up groups, as long as it isn't harmful to others.*

**Article 17:** *You have the right to get information that is important to your well-being, from radio, newspaper, books, computers and other sources. Adults should make sure that the information you are getting is not harmful, and help you find and understand the information you need.*

**Article 40:** *You have the right to legal help and fair treatment in a justice system that respects your rights.*

## 3. Literature survey

The first step in preparing for the study was to search for and review the existing literature on the subject so that we could learn more about its intricacies. All the literature we could locate has been listed in the Bibliography at the end of this report. To our surprise, we discovered that there is limited secondary information on the agency of children per sé. Researchers and scholars working across a range of scholarly approaches seem to conceptualise the agency of young people and children within the limits of the four pillars of Survival, Protection, Development, and Participation in the UNCRC, and not to the larger understanding of Human Rights and the Right to Self Determination.

Some describe the agency of young people and children as 'constrained'<sup>9</sup> (Panelli et al. 2007), others as 'thin'<sup>10</sup> (Klocker 2007) or 'tactical' (Honwana 2005). However, in general terms, 'agency is understood as an individual's own capacities, competencies, and activities through which they navigate the contexts and positions of their life-worlds, fulfilling many economic, social, and cultural expectations' (Robson et al. 2007: 135). According to Bordonaro and Payne (2012) even though children and young people are driven by forces that account for their agency, on the contrary, they are indicated to possess 'ambiguous agency'<sup>11</sup> and identified as 'social problems' when deviating from social norms.

While agency of children is defined in the literature, we failed to locate many studies on agency of children in contact with railways, although a few exist for working or street children. Of the 37 documents that were acquired through a literature search, only 3 touched on children in contact with the railways. Lori McFadyen<sup>12</sup>, in "Voices from the Street" described the stories of Rahul, Pradeep, Amir and Chinta Ram (aged between 10 to 12 years) who had all run away from home because of fear of beatings, being made to work without pay, losing money, and accusations of theft.

In another study, "A Situation Analysis of the Children Staying on Railway Platform" by Swarup Ratan Pal conducted in 3 cities of Rajasthan, as many as 64% of the children had run away from home and were staying at the platform, 60% were between 10-14 years, 47% had left home due to poverty, 37% due to abuse at home, and 60% were involved in rag-picking/plastic bottle collection. Shopkeepers seemed to have a positive attitude to these children, providing food, and keeping their money; while police, local goons, and railway Train Ticket Examiners (TTEs) had a negative attitude and beat them frequently. Personnel of the Government Railway Police (GRP)<sup>13</sup>, Railway Protection Force (RPF)<sup>14</sup>, and passengers expressed ambivalent attitudes, some treating the children well, others considering them as thieves.

In "Runaway Train: Railway Children and Normative Spatialities in India", Jonah Steinberg has lucidly captured how solo children exercise agency in staking claims to the railway space by ignoring, transgressing, and defying its lines, barriers, compartments, and boundaries, "to assert their own modes

<sup>9</sup>Meaning how young people in the majority world of adults are constrained by various structures and cultural expectations of family responsibility, yet assert their agency within such limitations as they balance both household and individual needs.

<sup>10</sup>Such as for child domestic workers in Tanzania who are bound into contracts of various forms.

<sup>11</sup>Children and youth are made agents but in a way that makes it possible to 'save the children' while sidestepping important practical issues such as, for example, what is the relationship between agency, legal responsibility and the limits of individual freedom in society, and crucial questions associated with the legitimacy of social interventions.

<sup>12</sup>Detailed references are given in the Bibliography at the end.

<sup>13</sup>The Government Railway Police are responsible for the prevention and detection of crime only on the railways. They have to maintain order at railway stations and in trains (control of passengers and vehicles, preventing over-crowding, arrest of persons committing nuisance, transport of the sick, clearing station premises of beggars, checking for left property, removal of dead bodies, and reporting commission of offences); as well as enquire into accidents on the railways and rendering assistance to railway officers and to the traveling public.

<sup>14</sup>The Railway Protection Force is entrusted with escorting of passenger trains, providing general security on the platforms, protecting railway property, removing any obstruction in movement of railway property to ensure smooth train operations, and preventing any cognizable offence against the passengers.



of movement through it. They keep fashioning their own innovative strategies for circumventing power, hiding and surviving; enacting their own clandestine economies; mounting their own resistance” (2012:13).

In another study, Steinberg (2015a) explores a complex set of naming strategies child runaways deploy for strategic self-positioning to circumvent forms of power that seek to define, fix and track the children. Steinberg (2015b) also describes how, in the event of death of a railway child, instead of grieving and mourning, children disappear or avoid the situation as the death threatens their very livelihoods and draws authorities' negative attention to them. Therefore, for children inhabiting railways, narratives of death are a fundamental feature of the space they navigate and as an inevitable destiny they may face sooner than later, and thus must accept.

Railway Children had also conducted a study, but as the title “Beyond Survival - A status report on livelihood programmes for street youth in India” suggests, it was about children on the street and the range of vocational training, formal/non-formal education, livelihood training, job placement, loans, and career counselling available; in the belief that the “best way to mainstream a child at risk is to provide him/her with formal training ... and skills training that is need based”. There was no data presented as to whether the children had actually been “mainstreamed” or not.

Studies published by The Concerned for Working Children and *Bhima Sangha*<sup>15</sup> in Karnataka documented how working children came in touch with the *Sangha* and were enabled by the presence of such a support group to deal with their multiple problems of work, skill training, access to loans, schooling, bondage, separation from family, care of siblings, lack of *anganwadis*, sale of alcohol, child-friendly governance and budgets. The case studies also identified how directives of the Supreme Court of India and the raid-and-rescue operations of NGOs did not provide any real alternatives, neither did they respond to the children's demands that their “voices be heard”.

Another study by Dr Barnabe D'Souza, titled “Children in Adult Garb”, revealed that the main reasons why children left their home were: to help their parents, escape physical abuse and poverty, and aspirations to become rich by working in the city. 44% of the respondents had lived in some centre or shelter but had left because they felt that their “freedom” was more precious than staying and being educated in a centre where they were bound by rules and everything was done under supervision. 68% of the boys desired to go home in the future but only after establishing their identity as earners, while 32% did not wish to go home for fear of repercussion or loss of “freedom”.

There were several studies from outside India. A few seemed relevant for our purpose. One discussed children's agency and shock (Chuta 2014, Young Lives) in Ethiopia, showing how children from poor backgrounds do not remain passive in events of crisis to the family but have their own responding mechanisms, even when anticipating crisis. The author notes that poor children are “capable social actors who shape their difficult circumstances, as well as being shaped by them. Despite their inability to bring about structural changes, children nevertheless employ a variety of strategies to make their situations more bearable” (cf. Chuta 2014:18. Lieten 2008:116).

Two studies from Johannesburg by Save the Children and Jill Swart Kruger & Louise Chawla respectively, enabled children to express their views about their daily living conditions within liquor stores, poor public transport, fast traffic, poor waste management and security, and to generate recommendations for improvement of public spaces; and to review the Growing Up In Cities<sup>16</sup> approach to participatory action research with children, and summarizes children's descriptions of their lives at four sites. Both studies find that children are well able to evaluate their environments and recommend thoughtful ways of

<sup>15</sup> The Concerned for Working Children is a not-for-profit secular, democratic development agency based in Bengaluru that focuses on working children and their needs; and the Bhima Sangha is an affiliated organisation of working children based in Karnataka. The studies are listed in the Bibliography.

<sup>16</sup> UNESCO's Growing Up in Cities initiative is a programme to involve children in evaluating their urban environments and planning how to improve the conditions of their lives.

improving them.

In two other studies from Tanzania by ILO and Edith Chenga Chamwi, one relates the story of Hamisi from Makumira who was disappointed by the terrible conditions in the mines he had run away to but did not make the fortune that he had heard about; while the other is about four street children from Moshi aged 10 to 18 years, and their fears of returning home because their parents would beat or abuse them, along with their compulsion to “battle consistently to find sustenance” and the assertion of 13-year old Mbuni that “those of us who are bringing home the bacon, we are our own pioneer, and we don't need to listen to anyone”.

Olga Nieuwenhuys poses the need for a postcolonial perspective to open up spaces for “views and experiences that tend to be systematically dismissed if not simply ignored”. She cites sex workers' children's “vision of themselves and of their struggles to eke out a place in society”, as opposed to making them “easily understood to 'mainstream' society”. She looks at attempts to find in African fiction different conceptions of children and their roles in armed conflict than those produced in the North. According to her, the analysis of children's agency needs “to confront political situations in which children and youth are under attack for disruptive behaviour ranging from alcohol and drug abuse, religious fanaticism, hooliganism, senseless violence to organized crime and terrorism”, and to accept the “invitation to look at the other side of the picture or even turn the world upside down”.

Sharon Stephens, in her introductory essay on how participants at a conference in Bergen sought to explore various aspects of the current global politics of culture, in relation to the everyday lives of children, asks “how do children themselves experience, understand, and perhaps resist or reshape the complex, frequently contradictory cultural politics that inform their daily lives?” Referring to the myth of a happy, safe, protected, innocent childhood, she observes an “increasing obsession with the guarding of boundaries of the body, sex roles, the family ... and increasing anger at children who cannot or will not fulfil their expected roles”. She argues that street children are not only seen as children *at risk*, but increasingly *as the risk*, and the crucial task for researchers is to understand the role of the child in the structures of post-colonial modernity as “active, creative participants in society” - even to the extent of “rethinking the nature of children's rights claims”.

The major lessons we gathered from the literature survey were that children are able to express their agency in different ways within the given social and economic restrictions, even though the authors of these studies are not necessarily looking at aspects of “agency”. In addition, children's vision of themselves may have to confront dominant (Western) cultural and political ideas that may also be alien to native society. Running away from conditions at home and treasuring their “freedom” on the streets where they were “free” economic agents are markers of this agency. And, examples such as the *Bhima Sangha*, *Bal Sabha*, and *Safai Sena* make it obvious that the presence of an organisational form was empowering the children to overcome their restrictions and that of their communities.

Thus, while there were many indicators from these studies about how agency existed in the documented lives of the children, there were not many clues about how to highlight these aspects of agency through the methodology of the study. While traditional tools of enquiry such as ethnography, case studies, individual questionnaires, focused group discussions, qualitative descriptive surveys, structured and semi-structured interviews, and participatory surveys were all used differently by the researchers, it was not clear which one would best provide space for the expression of agency.

## What is Agency?

***Agency “is reflected in the decisions we make, and these decisions are never 'free' choices but constrained by the environment”***

# 4. Methodology

## *a) Methodology as visualised*

When the study on agency was first proposed within AIWG-RCCR in late 2014, the concept was that it should be a short-term one done by AIWG-RCCR. The focus was on capturing the individual and collective articulation by children, aged between the ages of 6 and 18, over 5 trunk routes radiating out of Delhi. 4-5 partners with active outreach with children in contact with railways could be identified and the researchers sent for about two months at the identified stations.

The term 'Children in contact with railways' was defined as those children whose work or shelter was located in or near the railway stations. It was agreed that fresh arrivals should not be selected as they would probably not have had time to exhibit agency at the station. A total of hundred children were to be interviewed, fifty of whom actively engage<sup>17</sup> with organisations and fifty who do not, using the methodology of FGDs and Interviews. The questions would be exploratory offering opportunities in storytelling, to get a sense of what are the options available to children and which ones they choose and do not choose. Direct questions about sexual activity or drug use were to be avoided as they raise doubts in the minds of both surveyors as well as surveyed about the purpose of the survey, and we would confine questions to exploring 'harassment'.

However, through 2015, the concept as well as methodology began to change as discussions deepened within AIWG-RCCR. The hypothesis broadened to acknowledge that children's agency is reflected in the decisions they make, and that these decisions are never 'free' choices but constrained by the environment at the station and the changes brought in it by other actors such as the police, the NGOs, or the Railway SOP. We began to question our understanding of why children took a particular decision.

It was decided that the study would be divided into two phases. In the first phase, a schedule would be administered to a large number of children in collaboration with other partners already engaged in child rights issues, to gather quantitative data about children's decisions at home, on the journey to the station, at the station, and outside the station. The second phase would be of preparing qualitative case studies of detailed histories of some selected children - they did not have to be respondents in the first phase - around issues emerging from the quantitative analysis.

The case studies were to be prepared by what we termed as Academic and Core researchers working together with the young people at the station. The Academic researcher was supposed to be a person with a degree in a related field who would have been given a specific orientation about how to approach the child; while the Core researcher would be a person who has possibly been through the experience of leaving home and finding a niche on or near the station and would be curious about how other children like her/himself are dealing with the situation they find themselves in.

The idea was that a comparison between the recordings of the two researchers would also provide insights about how the children respond to someone who is an empathetic 'outsider' and someone who is one of their 'own'; also, how researchers' own biases informs the research. Both Academic and Core researchers would be working in an extremely short time frame within which they will be required to win the confidence of the child and yet not be identified with the NGO through whom the child is being approached. Therefore, training and orientation was an important component of the methodology.

## *b) Methodology as it evolved*

In order to flesh out the methodology, a preliminary enquiry was conducted by AIWG-RCCR members in

---

<sup>17</sup>Meaning that the children had taken their decision to contact the organisation - and in consonance with the concept of 'agency'.

early 2016 at New Delhi railway station into the Railway Protection Force's (RPF) crackdown on children after the Railways had prepared their SOP. The enquiry found that the Railways felt that “crime” had increased at the station, but the children reported that they did not commit any crimes but were still “detained” at the police station. The Station House Officer (SHO) of the RPF, on the other hand, said he was detaining the children to “counsel” them so that he would not need to send them to “prison”, as no other immediate support mechanism was available. We felt that it would be possible to develop a more detailed picture of children’s agency - and the interventions that deprived them of agency - in the context of the Railways through researchers that AIWG-RCCR could employ.

However, it soon became obvious that it may not be possible to get experienced and competent researchers through advertising for posts and AIWG-RCCR members should strive to appoint researchers through reference and also take greater responsibility. We decided that first we would conduct a literature review into how children’s agency had been studied earlier, and then develop a schedule that other NGOs could apply at 20 stations where the Railways were acting in accordance with their SOP. A group exercise carried out with NGOs shortly thereafter, in order to understand their view of ‘agency’, showed that they valued those “good” actions by children which were compatible with dominant morality or were not in violation of the law, such as learning to read and write and dressing properly.

But for AIWG-RCCR, “bad” actions (such as sniffing ‘solution’ or pickpocketing) or “refusal” to change behaviour also equally represent agency, and we began to ask whether children and NGOs would want to actively and intelligently participate in this research? Hence, it was decided to first do a pilot of 50 sample surveys each in three locations - Delhi, Bengal and Karnataka. After learning from the pilots, a quantitative survey could be conducted of 1000 children from about 40 railway stations (this sample was based on an estimate of 112,781<sup>18</sup> children residing on railway stations), and then a qualitative one of 100 children.

Considerable time was spent on collectively building the questionnaire for the quantitative phase. Some of the broad points laid down were: have minimum standards of participation and safety been considered; have safeguards been placed in the process of data collection; how do we prevent surveyors’ biases from creeping in; how do we take back the findings from the study to the respondent children? Finally, a logic tree design<sup>19</sup> for the questionnaire emerged that could be administered through an Application designed for mobile phones. It was decided that, since we were not interviewing fresh arrivals but those who had not been rescued-and- restored and remained at the station, only those who had spent more than one month in contact with the railways would be selected.

The sample of children in the qualitative phase was to include children who had spent more than six months in contact with railways, as also some adults who have lived and grown up at the railway stations. This would help to capture a more longitudinal story and how adaptations and decisions were taken, while also understanding the changing landscapes of the railway stations with time. It was not necessary that these children would be from the larger sample of 1000 children interviewed in the first phase. It was also decided to cover 11 children in one each of the major stations in five zones (instead of 100 children totally) from the quantitative study. These 11 children would be distributed across categories<sup>20</sup> based on the proportion of children of different categories found in the quantitative study.

### **c) The Application**

The Application to collect survey data on mobile phones was initially accepted as a tool because it would

<sup>18</sup>Railway Children, UK, 2009, pg 59; the total was based on several surveys conducted by NGOs at 75+ stations and finally arrived at by considering the annual figures in every location as multiples of children arriving per day for 273 days or 75% of the year.

<sup>19</sup>A “logic tree” or “issue map,” is a graphical breakdown of a question that dissects its answers into different components vertically and progresses into other questions depending upon the answer selected.

<sup>20</sup>The 11 children were selected as 3 females and 8 males; 2 each from <12 years and 18-21 years, 3 each from 12-15 and 15-18 years, and 1 from >21 years; equal numbers from those living alone or with family; and 1 child with disability. The duration of being in contact with railways was minimum 1 month for the quantitative phase and 6 months for the qualitative phase.



ease translating the questionnaire into at least 10 regional languages, and data could be entered and compiled rapidly. We also felt that it would weed out surveyor's biases as a roll-down menu for each question would provide a set of pre-determined answers. Tablets could also be provided to field staff at all stations for administering it. It was further decided that zone-wise orientations be done with all partner NGOs in the use of the Application.

To help answer some of the anticipated questions that children would have for the surveyors (cf. "can you help us?"), information cards with names and phone numbers were prepared to give to the children on specific aspects of law and the support that they could expect from different institutions<sup>21</sup> [Annexure 12.3]. These cards were an important supplement to build trust with the children who were asked to respond to a questionnaire, but had questions of their own. And for every step in the logic tree the Application was designed to periodically ask the child respondent if he or she wished to continue with the survey. Thus, 'agency' of the child was respected and strengthened as far as possible in the design.

The development of the Application 'Child Speak' was entrusted to Ideafarms, a start-up in Gurgaon that has been promoting *Design Thinking* as a quick way to solve problems in new and innovative ways. It took a significant amount of time for the two teams from AIWG-RCCR and Ideafarms to brainstorm around the logic tree and convert it into an Application suitable for Tablets and Cellphones. It had a provision for uploading the answers on to a central server to yield online data that could be rapidly collated and analysed. It also provided an opportunity to monitor the collection of data itself and assess whether answers were being regularly repeated by the same surveyor (an indication of bias) and for cross-checking (sometimes telephonically) with the surveyor.

The design of the Application also ensured data protection since each participant surveyor was assigned a user code that allowed him/her to upload the data on to the server. This prevented unauthorised access as well as storage of garbage or wrong data. All the data uploaded on the server could be accessed only by selected persons from the research team who could monitor the data. After all the data had been checked and cross-checked and the excel sheets were available both according to the respective stations where the data had been collected as well as the partner groups who had collected the data, relevant data sets were shared with the partner groups after removing the names of the children. As part of the norms of ethical research, child identity has not been shared with anyone.

#### **d) Pilot studies**

Once the preliminary questionnaire based on the logic tree had been developed, pilot studies of 50 respondents each in three locations - Delhi, Bengal and Karnataka - were carried out to test the validity of the schedule. This enabled the evolution of a simpler schedule that was easier to administer within a shorter time and to which the children seemed to respond with greater attention and engagement.

Thus, for the Pilot study the logic tree consisted of 13 questions, each with a set (1 to 10) of related sub-questions [Annexure 12.4]. The main questions followed a sequence that appeared to be logical to the AIWG-RCCR members at the design stage and were arranged in the following order:

- 1 - Would you like to participate in this research?
- 2 - Would you like to talk to us about your work?
- 3 - Do males/females/other gender live at the station; also do this kind of work?
- 4 - Have there been any accidents during work on the train / station?
- 5 - Do you take help from any NGO/organisation?
- 6 - Would you like to tell us your real name?
- 7 - What kind of problems do different genders face at the sleeping place?
- 8 - Have you lived at any other station before this?
- 9 - Why did you come to the station?

<sup>21</sup>The idea of providing information may be traced directly to Article 17 of UNCRC: Children have the right to get information that is important to their health and well-being. In addition, they could refer to the information if they had a grievance they wished to redress.

- 10 - What dangers do you face?
- 11 - What do you do when you feel sad / bored?
- 12 - What do you wish to be, what will you do in the next 2 years?
- 13 - Do you get help from some people, while some people harass you?

The experience in the Pilot [Annexure 12.5] gave a better idea of the questions that the children understood and felt comfortable with for expressing their views and agency - that could be retained or expanded; and the questions that elicited no or few answers - and so could be removed or modified: thus, the final questionnaire [Annexure 12.6] became much simpler and followed a different sequence given below:

- 1 - Would you like to participate in this research?
- 2 - Would you like to tell us your name?
- 3 - Do you have friends at the station?
- 4 - Where is your home?
- 5 - What work do you do?
- 6 - What do you plan to do in the next 2 years?

In addition, each question had several sub-questions and some had a provision for multiple answers and priorities, as well as an 'exit' option.

### **e) Orientation**

During the course of the discussions through 2015-16, it became obvious that AIWG-RCCR on its own could not conduct a study of such size and spread. So AIWG-RCCR members began identifying NGOs they were familiar with or knew about and collectively built up a list of potential partners all over the country for conducting the quantitative study in Phase One. Once the preliminary list was complete, AIWG-RCCR members began contacting key individuals in these NGOs and exploring whether they or their institutions would be interested in partnering in a study of understanding the 'agency' of children in contact with railways. When the NGO was amenable to some its field workers being associated with the study, AIWG-RCCR members made a quick assessment of capacities and response and the NGO was selected as a partner.

Four zonal orientations were held in January-February 2017 before the quantitative survey for all the surveyor participants from the various partner NGOs at Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, and Bangalore. There were between 30 and 40 participants at each orientation. The objectives of the exercise were to inform the surveyors about the concept of the study; bring out their own biases with respect to 'rescue-and-restore'; and to introduce the Application 'ChildSpeak' to them. In addition, AIWG-RCCR members narrated a brief history of how child-centred legislation had evolved in India and the participants were encouraged to share their actual experiences with the care and protection measures undertaken by them and the Railways in order to understand the practical difficulties. Some of the fundamental and non-negotiable principles behind the study (such as the principles of dignity and self-worth) were also shared with the participants [Annexure 12.7].

Since it was difficult to assess the immediate impact of the orientation at a one-day workshop, AIWG-RCCR members also made an effort to visit some of the stations during the early days of the quantitative survey [Annexure 12.8] for 'hand-holding' sessions [Annexure 12.9 gives valuable insights into the many difficulties that had to be overcome to get the children to respond to the survey]. It became evident from these visits that, with a few exceptions, most of the surveyors were not able to transcend the rescue-and-restore approach that they had been trained in, in spite of the orientation workshops (perhaps because the workshops were too short to make any impact). Because of this evident bias they also had problems conducting surveys as the children would run away on seeing them approach. This made them reflect on their approach and, in order to reassure the children, at least some of them learnt to set their bias aside for a while.

An effort was later made to assess the impact of the orientation and whether the surveyors had found it

useful in administering the schedule, as well as if their own understanding of children's agency had become clearer, by giving them a form to fill up. The feedback largely indicated that they found the orientation interesting, the App to be a very convenient tool, and several had suggestions to improve the survey [Annexure 12.10]. Later we found that some surveyors did not use the App in front of the children but had a conversation and entered the data later.

From the point of view of the children who responded to the survey, it was observed that once they realised that the surveyors did not make any effort to “rescue-and-restore” them, they were quite free in answering the questions directly and without reservations (in fact, at least 8 of the 48 children volunteered this information during the qualitative survey - it was not part of the suggested questions). The 'Child Speak' Application then came into play and promoted the recording of their views and experiences in a more objective manner since there was now little scope for the surveyor to 'persuade' the child to be rescued (because then the child would immediately drift away) and he/she had to record the details provided by the child directly into the structured format provided by the Application.

The functional Application was rolled out when the quantitative survey began [Annexure 12.11]. Nevertheless, there were several technical glitches in its use relating to automatic sequencing of the questions, keyboard geometry, saving and uploading the data, functionality of the test mode, serial numbering of the schedules, repetition of data, slow speeds, occasional loss of data, synchronisation of data, and so on. These glitches were slowly ironed out in consultation with the surveyors and Ideafarms, and by February 2017 the Application was more or less fully functional and the data could be rapidly entered and analysed.

After the quantitative survey and the selection of Core and Academic Researchers for the qualitative phase [Annexure 12.12], a check-list was developed for a longer four-day orientation workshop that was held at Nagpur with these Researchers in July 2017 [Annexure 12.13]. Through the four days of intensive participation the Researchers arrived at a common consensus on their roles and responsibilities, schedules, fee payments, child protection, and child consent. Pointers on how the case studies were to be recorded were also compiled [Annexure 12.14], along with a protocol for obtaining the child's consent [Annexure 12.15]. They were provided with a copy of a Child Protection Policy and a Consent Form (developed by Praajak, one of the members of AIWG-RCCR) to be translated into the regional language and signed by the child whose case study was being presented [Annexure 12.16].

### ***f) Mid-course corrections - the reasons for it***

By the end of the quantitative phase a total of 40 organisations had participated in collecting data from 127 stations, and the total number of child respondents was 2148. All these were far more than what the study had originally anticipated, but it also indicated that there was an existing pool of interest in child 'agency' among the partner NGOs, several of whom had long experience in the rescue-and-restore process. The mid-course corrections of the logic tree, the App functionality and the schedule were in response to the experiences being communicated from the field and surveyors were probably feeling more involved as the corrections took place quickly as part of a speedy response mechanism.

In the qualitative phase, the notes of the Academic and Core researchers could not be compared as many of the Core researchers had basic literacy skills and those who could write were not able to capture their interviews. Thus it was decided that the best way out was to let the two work as a team where the Core researcher leads the interview and the Academic researcher writes the conversations. This would also enable them to act as a team with better access and trust with the children as well as a better grasp of their reality. The recorded case studies were then to be read back to the children and consent taken from them for use in the research. This ensured multiple levels of safeguards and also reduced interpretation and checked biases from creeping in to the study.

For the qualitative phase we also had to make other mid-course corrections. Since the number and distribution of children to be found at an earmarked station sometimes did not correspond to the study design, we either changed the station or modified the distribution at the same station. When the

researchers at Gorakhpur could not meet the deadlines, at the last moment Delhi was selected as a substitute. But we had no real answer for the problems faced when a few of the selected researchers did not complete their assigned tasks or where the stories that they provided were inadequate and did not conform to the designed format. Lack of time also made it impossible to go and recheck at the stations concerned.

### ***g) Limitations of the methodology recognised prior to the study***

We had concerns right from the beginning about how to remove the potential bias of the surveyors. The methodology in the development of the quantitative logic tree was designed as far as possible to keep those biases from influencing the stories told by the children and to record them as faithfully as possible. As reported by the surveyors themselves, the logic tree design did significantly manage to keep their biases at bay. A few of the partners did mention that their surveyors had conducted the survey first and entered the data into the Application later. But an observation made by many of them was that for this survey they had learnt that they had to make the child feel “comfortable” before questioning the child; and that both the use of the App as well as keeping it aside became an opportunity to have a conversation with the child - especially if they children were sitting in a group. Does this approach constitute 'bias' - that is a question that is still open to discussion.

The second limitation that was anticipated was that many of the children might not want to share their stories or refuse to participate in the survey. However, this limitation did not show up significantly in the results. In fact, in some cases, as mentioned earlier, the children were quite appreciative about how someone was taking their views seriously for the first time. This was particularly seen in the qualitative phase where the researchers began to work more closely and in depth with their willing respondents. As mentioned in the section above, we could not do anything about the failure of one of the research teams to complete the case stories and take the permission of the children for using them, or go back to the stations where the stories were inadequate to re-check the facts and gaps. So those stories have not been used in this report.

### ***h) Challenges due to ground dynamics***

There were four challenges that came up during our review of the study process. The first was that we did not give due attention to the economic aspect of the work the children were doing. This was a major gap because it left unanswered several queries about how much they earned, how much did they spend on themselves, what was a threshold level that they considered adequate for asserting their freedom, and what was the level of exploitation by others (police, local goons, railway staff etc.) that they were actually subjected to.

The second was the large number of children (more than twice the target) who responded to the surveyors call for interviews to fill the schedule while juggling with the train timings at the station that would ensure the presence of children during the times that the trains arrived at or departed from the station. However, this was also not a conducive time to administer questions as the children would often leave half-way to attend to the trains. At the same time, it became noticeable that since the App made the rapid administration of the survey possible, there was little or no problem with attention spans and, in many cases, the children would come back to finish answering the questions.

The third was that of the nature of contemporary urbanisation in the era of globalisation. The concept of the Smart city along with modernisation of the railways, the outsourcing or privatisation of many services, leading to the virtual collapse of the informal sector, and the expansion of the government-sponsored CHILDLINE gave an impetus to rescue-and-restore programmes leading to the increasing frustration of the children in contact with railways and their growing reluctance to participate in any surveys.

The fourth challenge was that there is a considerable amount of accumulated data for which we have no analysis or cross-connections at the moment because the study design itself did not anticipate the



possible answers. Thus, for example, many children mentioned “aspiration” or “freedom” as a motivational force to remain at the station, and it is not easy to quantify or grapple with such an idea and how it affects the decision of the child.

Nevertheless, we attempted to address these challenges through several initiatives. These included changing the station to be surveyed and/or travelling with the children in order to accommodate to their schedules; expanding the geographical reach around the station in order to be able to contact those children who lived in nearby areas but came to the station regularly for finding work; clearly distinguishing our work from that of CHILDLINE; and trying to find answers during the qualitative phase to the unanswered queries that emerged from the quantitative survey.

### ***i) Dissemination meetings, reflections about the survey***

Once the draft report was ready, four dissemination meetings were held at Delhi, Kolkata, Pune, and Hyderabad, during the months of May and June 2018 [minutes of the Hyderabad dissemination are given in Annexure 12.17]. The Academic Researcher in the South was also able to conduct Focus Group Discussions with 53 children at Kakinada, Rajahmundry, and Vijayawada stations, as well as met 6 of the children who had shared their stories during the qualitative phase, in order to share the draft report and obtain their comments [Annexure 12.18]. These provided substance for a few reflections about the survey process:

- During the initial period of making contact with the NGOs on site, the railway officials, and the security officers, some surveyors mentioned that many of them were interested in the study and quite cooperative.
- In one unusual instance, a surveyor took the help of the police inspector's presence to conduct the survey as he felt that inspector had won the confidence of the children; while another celebrated events in the life of the child to build rapport.
- However, different official activities, such as the implementation of the Railway's SOP or 'Operation Smile (or *Muskaan*)'<sup>22</sup> to rescue children, had made the children nervous and many moved location during the study to escape from being rescued.
- While some surveyors already had a connect with the children, others reported that the children were worried they might be rescued after the survey and it took time to build rapport with the children so as to be able to converse with them later.
- A few surveyors stated that they looked at the survey as an opportunity to converse with and learn from the child, especially with regard to questions that may not have been asked before - such as what did the child wish to do in future.
- Other experiences were that the children were reluctant to speak until permission had been granted by their parents, and many families would object asking, what is the benefit of this kind of survey that has been done so many times before?
- In at least one case the surveyor reported that the children were tired of responding to questions as many of the same questions had been asked multiple times by different groups and they never knew what happened to their answers.
- For many surveyors and researchers it was a challenge to be able to respond to these queries without promising anything - as had been decided as part of the ethics of the study - and still be able to retain the interest of the child or the parent.
- The logic tree and the Application on the Tablets eased the process of speaking with the child and recording the data, and its analysis, especially since the questionnaire had to be in as many as twelve languages.
- However, some surveyors mentioned that they initially collected the information from the child on

<sup>22</sup>In September 2017, encouraged by the success of a campaign launched by the RPF to rescue distressed children, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs launched 'Operation *Muskaan*' (or 'Smile') to rescue/rehabilitate missing children, and the Ministry of Railways decided to implement the campaign in 82 Railways stations, including all the 75 A1 Category stations.

paper or in memory and fed the data into the Application later because they did not wish to use the Tablet in front of the child.

- The rapidity with which the survey could be completed through the Application also provided a comfort zone within the attention span of the children, and some of them asked for details of what was being entered and demanded to be photographed.
- A few instances came to light of some of the children, who were literate, asking for the question from the Application to be narrated by the surveyor and they would then select their own answers directly on the Tablet.
- Many children came back to finish incomplete surveys, when the surveyors made clear that they could come whenever free (as dictated by train departures and arrivals), indicating that there was a degree of involvement in the process.
- A surveyor mentioned that while interviewing one child, other children would gather (some would even stand in line for their turn) and also respond in between, so he kept the other children engaged in drawing while interviewing the single child.
- Another surveyor developed the idea of gathering the children in a circle and then asking the questions to the group, so that when one child would give incorrect answers the others would correct it in a participatory fashion.
- Especially for the qualitative phase, it struck many of the children as being quite novel that their permission was being taken before the interview began and the surveyor was willing to come at their convenience for completing the interview.
- In addition, refusal to answer was not taken negatively; moreover, if children stated that they were engaged in “bad” things (theft, prostitution, drugs etc.) their answers were treated without judgement, the children said they appreciated the respect given to their answers, and this contributed to a more meaningful conversation.
- Some surveyors also said that during the survey the emotions of the child began to be expressed and they were able to learn much more about the child’s life; some of these lessons were documented in the comments section provided in the form.
- The Core researchers who prepared the case studies felt that at the orientation they had learnt the importance of observing and interacting before interviewing, as well as to write down exactly what the child was saying without adding anything.
- A few children refused to sign on the case studies when they were read back, fearing that the police who would use their signatures as proof of their admitting to stealing, although they were verbally willing to permit the story to be used for the report.
- One Core researcher was picked up by the police on the false charge of picking up bottles on the station and when the Academic researcher ethically refused to pay a bribe for his release, it was his friends who collectively got him released.
- With regard to the information card, provided to the children during the survey and containing important phone numbers, surveyors reported that the children would keep the card as well as ask the surveyor to write down his number also.
- In one instance, we were told that an irritated police official called saying he was receiving too many phone complaints from the children; while in another, when the child’s belongings were taken away at the CWC, he insisted on retaining the card.
- Some of the reflections shared by the children when the draft report was shared:
  - They come to the station as this is one the easiest means to survive as well as travel, make friends, and enjoy life in a new way.
  - They feel more secure when they stay in a group, and their seniors share stories that help them survive from CHILDLINE and the police etc.
  - They feel they are unable to live on their own terms with the care agencies who are unable to understand their problems and provide proper support.
  - One of the key phrases they have used is, “We are not answerable” to others on the platforms and streets.

- An observation they have shared is that sexual abuse is common in homes and physical abuse is also prevalent.
- They add that “psychological abuse” is used at home when families threaten that they should stay at home or else the police may imprison them.
- All the children shared that they missed someone listening to their voice, whether in the family or on streets or in the protection system.
- We also realised that we had not explored some critical areas in the questionnaire: such as:
  - Why did the children leave home;
  - Do they wish to live with the family or not;
  - How long have they been in contact with the railways;
  - What is their concept of care and protection and safety;
  - What is their perspective on child labour and sexual activity;
  - How do they avoid unpleasant tasks, such as stealing and removing dead bodies, that are forced on them by the police;
  - How has the structure of the railways changed and how does it affect them;
  - What assistance are they providing, and not just receiving;
  - How do they evolve their own support groups;
  - What did they think of *Bal Panchayats*, *Bal Sabhas*, and children's clubs;

These were crucial aspects that the study did not take into account. Had they been part of the study design then perhaps a deeper understanding of the requirements for supporting the structural agency of the child would have ensued.

### What is Agency?

*Agency “is reflected in the decisions we make, and these decisions are never ‘free’ choices but constrained by the environment”*

### Who are Children In Contact With Railways?

*They are “those children whose work or shelter is located in or near the railway stations”*

### Why this study?

*There are three categories of children in contact with railways:*

- *There are those children who are rescued and restored and do not come back to the station, so they are no longer in contact with railways.*
- *There are those children who are rescued and restored, but return to the station, hence they retain their contact with railways.*
- *There are those children who are not rescued and restored and so remain in contact with railways.*

*This study is specifically designed to “listen” to the children in the second and third categories, without making value judgements, so as to understand their ‘agency’.*

## 5. Ethical guidelines

Ethical norms are very important when a research deals with the intimate lives of vulnerable people and they part with information in the hope that their lot may somehow be improved while at the same time they do not have to face adverse consequences from the information they shared being made public. The researcher has a moral responsibility to deal ethically with the information entrusted to her care. This information may be 'data' to be analysed for the researcher, but for the respondent it is a slice of her/his life.

Ethics in general is the study of morality. It stipulates what is right and what is not right to do, as well as what one cannot omit to do. We may define “ethics as a set of values, a code, of translating the moral into daily life” (Remen, 1988). The code gives the guidelines, the dos and don'ts of a research.

In working with children, especially those in contact with railways, there is the added dimension of responsiveness and care. While doing research in such a situation, we need to add on to the ethics of research the aspects of the ethics of care, grounded in relationship and response. Ethical principles thus need to be clarified so that they inform the ethical codes.

Ethical behaviour stems from the internal congruency and harmony between our values and our actions. Ethical guidelines provide a map for ethical behaviour. Right from the beginning, when the research was conceived at Bangalore, we initiated the discussion on the ethics that would guide our research with children. In the Kundapur meeting, where the research design was finalised, we drew heavily on the rich experiences of the members and ethical considerations became an integral part of the research design itself.

The piloting of the quantitative tool was an eye-opener, throwing light on the practical dimensions of doing research with children, especially on the needs and expectations of the young people with whom this research is designed. At this stage itself, we had tested an information card that would provide information on the support services available in society for such children today and to which they have a right.

During the Nagpur consultation, where the procedure for the qualitative study was validated, all the three groups - the AIWG-RCCR team, the Academic researchers and the Core researchers - sat together at length, thrashing out these guidelines and internalising the ethical principles. These guidelines are thus a result of the discussion and the end product of this process. The following ten guidelines were prepared, shared, and discussed in detail by all the teams of researchers:

### **1. Informed consent of the child must be taken before conducting the survey.**

In practical terms this means that there are three stages of consent -

- The child must be informed about objectives of the research and asked for consent to participate in the research.
- The child has to be explained about the role of the case study in the overall research and ask whether the child agrees to tell her/his story.
- Read out the case study when completed and ask for approval; explain that the case study will be published only if the child signs the consent form.

### **2. Respect the views of the child and this must show in your behaviour.**

In practical terms this means that -

- The child should not experience any form of discrimination based on caste, creed, language, colour, place of origin, appearance, infirmity or handicap.
- You must be prepared at all times to integrate the opinion or proposal of the child into the research process.

- The act of asking for consent to participate is itself a form of respect and, if the child wishes not to participate, that too must be respected.

### 3. **Choice and freedom of the child must be ensured.**

- Participation by the child must be out of freedom and her/his own choice; so she/he also has the freedom to withdraw consent at any time.
- If there are certain details or facts that she/he does not want to disclose, then one cannot force or acquire it through any form of coercion or manipulation.

### 4. **Confidentiality of the identity of the child is critical.**

- The child has to be promised that no details like name, address or any personal information that will reveal the identity of the child will be disclosed
- Not only at the time of publishing but also when talking about the case in public or private, the identity will not be revealed.

### 5. **Responding to the children's needs.**

When working with young people who are largely on their own, there will always be situations in which one will have to respond to their needs. Yet it is important to realise and state clearly that it is not the researcher's role to provide services that are available for young people. Instead, one can respond to each situation by providing information where services can be accessed or how their rights can be actualised. Some practical rules:

- Define limits and learn to draw the line for ones self.
- Be aware of the emotional and psychological needs of the child.
- Have an opening discussion with the child about these issues.
- Make sure that there is firm closure on this issue.

### 6. **Make known services available to the child**

- The child shall be provided with information about the services available, the contact names and numbers of providers, and how rights may be accessed.
- But it is important not to raise false expectations and act only as a referral person.

### 7. **Being true is an important principle.**

- One must be true not only to the objectives of the research but also to the limits therein and these must be set out and maintained.
- Emotional truthfulness is an area that must be taken seriously:
  - So be sure to reveal the identity of the researcher.
  - One must be frank about your biases/opinions/judgements. Be true also about any commitments - financial or otherwise.

### 8. **Establishing and limiting the relationship is also necessary.**

One of the requirements to do a case study is to establish a good rapport. But the child's need is often to find a 'significant' other. In this activity if the child expresses strong 'feelings' towards the researcher, she/he must clarify that s/he is not significant and will not be responsive to it. Some practical measures are -

- Clarify the relationship and the contact will be temporary.
- While a friendly relationship is established, one must clarify that the child will not be a 'friend' or significant other during, after, or because of this research.

### 9. **Introspection is a constant factor.**

For the researcher a constant introspection must go hand in hand with the whole development of the story or case study. During the case study elicitation, the researcher will, on a daily basis, look at the ethical principles and guidelines to *ensure that they are adhered to all through the research.*

### 10. **Follow the Child Protection Policy.**

This is the principle of “no harm”: or be prepared for ensuring that there is no greater 'harm' than the

child is already experiencing. The researcher has to follow the child protection policy of the organisation sponsoring the research. The practical guidelines are -

- Do not take the child to your room or your home.
- During the interview or discussion do not take the child to a hidden/ isolated/ faraway (unreachable) location or place.
- Avoid physical touch and, when necessary, stick to the norms of 'safe touch'.
- There should be absolutely NO abuse - physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, or even economic.

These ethical principles have guided the publication of our report also, especially Principle no. 4 regarding the “*confidentiality of the identity of the child*”. This became critical when we had to choose between reporting sexual incidents, when they were narrated to us by the children, as mandated under the POCSO Act on the one hand, and preserving the confidentiality of the child on the other. We have chosen not to report since Principle 3 provides that “*choice and freedom of the child must be ensured*”, and used Principle 6 to “*make known services available to the child*”, so that if the child so wished she or he would initiate reporting the incident and taking action under the law. In addition, in our view, the detailed provisions of mandatory reporting may at times be detrimental to the best interest of the child. Thus, rescue-and-restoration as the only approach, with the words “production within 24 hours”, creates an environment that further alienates and frightens the already vulnerable child.



# 6. Findings

## 6.1 Background of the sample

Let us begin with some basic figures which give the background data. To begin with we had identified the organisations in each state working with children in contact with railways. We then contacted those organisations who were likely to be supportive and interested in being part of this research. The stations were selected by them based on their field experience and they were encouraged to send their teams to surrounding stations for the research study. Consequently, a total of 40 organisations participated in collecting data from 127 stations, and the total number of child respondents was 2148. All these are far more than what the study had originally anticipated. So we decided to divide the States and stations into four zones (*Figure 1*) to cover almost every State where there are railways, ensure broad geographical representation, compare trends, and for logistical convenience in orientation, supervision, and administering the survey [Annexure 12.8].

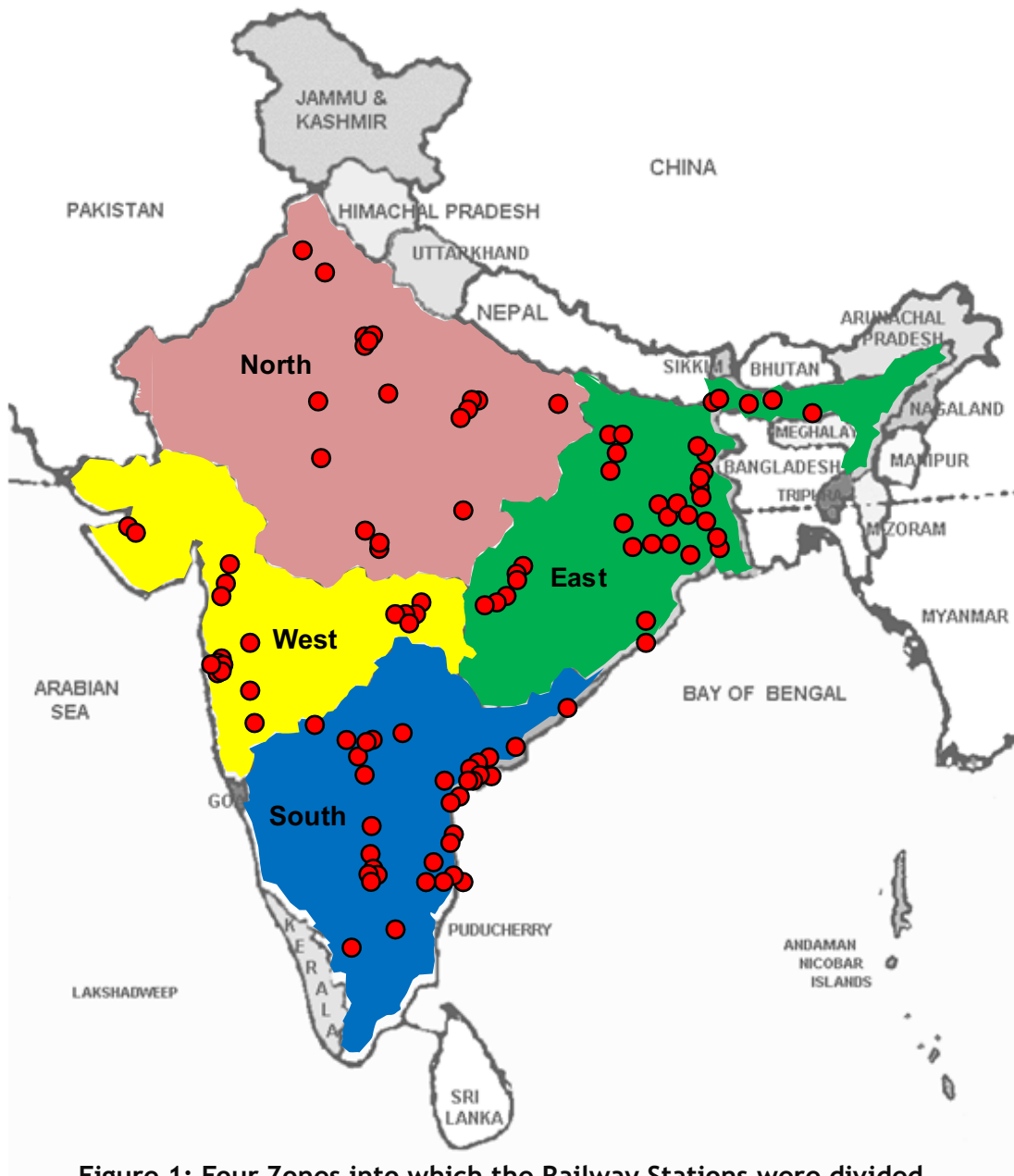
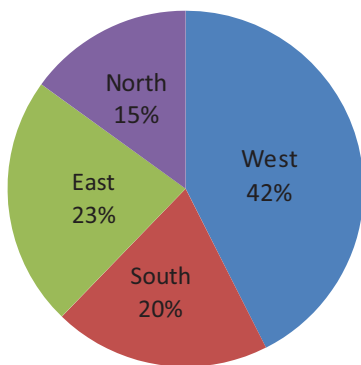


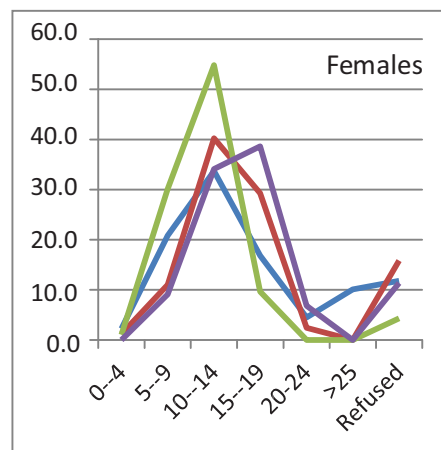
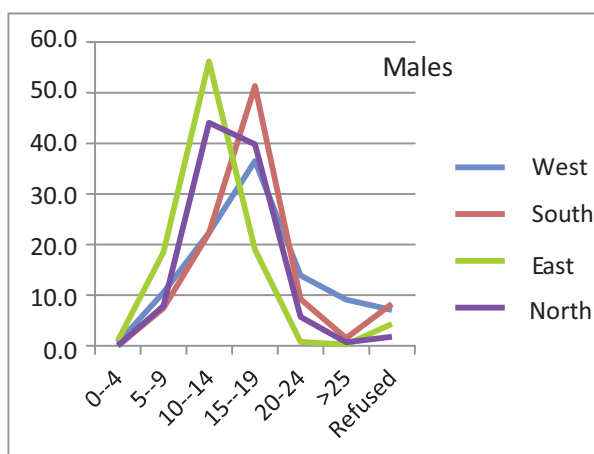
Figure 1: Four Zones into which the Railway Stations were divided



**Figure 2: Distribution of respondents**

The focus is on the all-India data and patterns emerging from it, although the zonal data is also presented. 42% of the respondents (but about one-fourth of the stations) are from the West zone. Zonal distribution (**Figure 2**) is used to identify variations between zones which could be significant for this study. The gender distribution was roughly 80% male and 20% female, except for the North zone, where the male proportion went up to 86%. The total number of trans-genders in the total sample population was only 6, and this presents a challenge for an analysis of their condition - which will have to wait for a study devoted to them as subjects. Given the size of the present sample, however, this distribution may reflect the entire population of children in contact with railways.

The age distribution was largely in the 10-19 years age group, with 69% of males and 60% females falling within this bracket (**Figure 3**). About 10% declined to divulge their age. There were about 15% children in the 5-9 years bracket, with the highest in the East (19%) and the other zones having between 7-8%. There were younger males in the 10-14 years bracket in the East (56%) and North (44%), but in the 15-19 years bracket the percentage went up for South (51%) and West (37%); while for the females, it was only in the North that their percentage was higher in age group of 15-19 (39%), in the other zones it varied between 34% to 55% for the 10-14 years group. The West also had high percentages in the adult over-25 years group (9% for males, 10% for females), unlike the other zones.



**Figure 3: Males/Females age distribution, in %**

The percentage of challenged children (**Figure 4**) overall was 13%, with West zone having the highest (21%) and East zone with the lowest (4.5%). Affected limbs constituted 5.5% of the total 13%, followed by 'other' (4%), and intellectually challenged formed the smallest category (2%). All the data is not presented here as it is given separately in frequency tables (where 'others' has been disaggregated), and some of the data is grouped together where the linkages could be useful<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>23</sup>It should be noted that to distinguish 'deaf' from 'mute' is not always easy because children with profound hearing loss have no spoken language and unless they have been to some special training, will not have any sign language. So we have had to depend upon the researcher's observation and trust her/his assessment of whether the child is to be classified as deaf or mute, depending upon what appears to be the dominant characteristic. 'Affected limbs' could either be missing limbs or those deformed by polio or any other disease. 'Total' is the sum of all the challenged children.



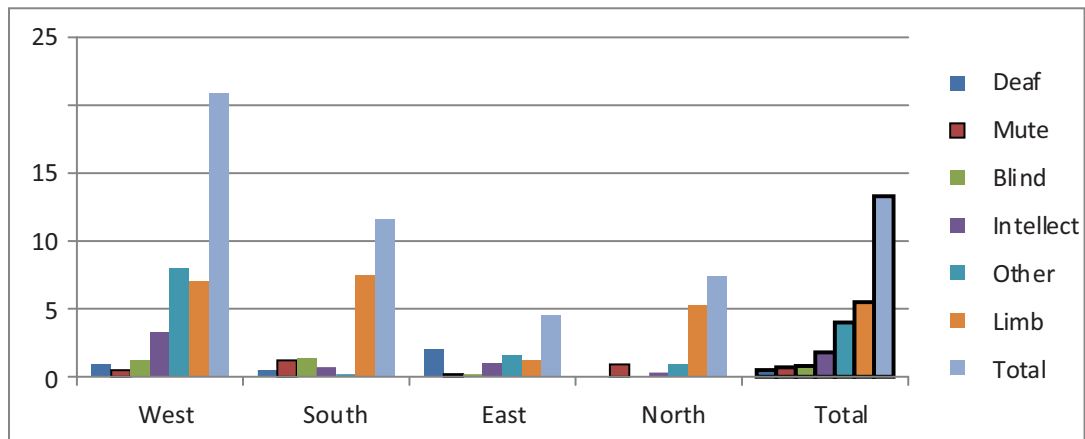


Figure 4: Children with Challenges, in %

The overall picture, therefore, is of an overwhelmingly male sample population. For the case studies in the qualitative phase, five railway stations of Surat, Rajahmundry, Nagpur, Pataliputra, and Delhi were chosen to meet the requirement of 11 children at each station purposively distributed to cover the different ages (as given in section 'c' of Methodology), include a disability, and maintain the gender balance. From Delhi and Pataliputra we were eventually able to get 15 and 14 case studies respectively, thus obtaining a total of 62 interviews, but detailed case studies from Pataliputra were not written and we were only able to access the notes left behind by the researchers.

## 6.2 Agency between home and station

### a) Place of origin

50% of the children report that they have come from some other city, while 44% trace their origins to the same city, except in the East, where 51% say they come from the same city (Figure 5). Only 4% refused to disclose where they had come from, and 1% had some other reason. Thus, it is not true that all children in contact with railways are “runaways” (or lost and missing), as is implicit in the concept of “rescue-and-restore” programmes.

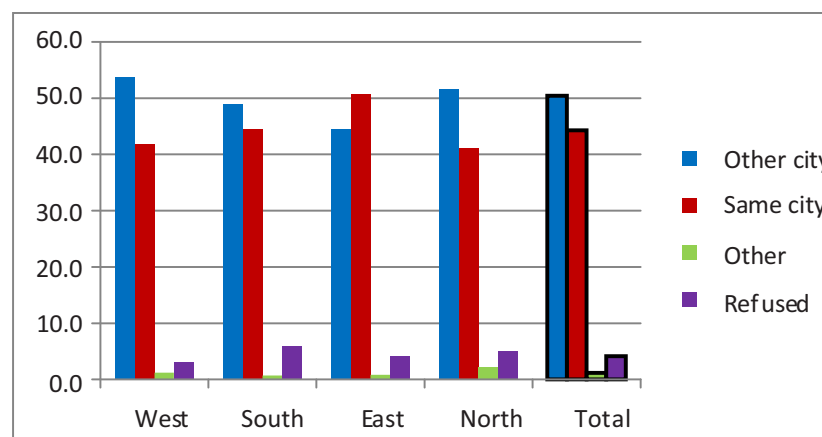


Figure 5: Place of origin, in %

### b) Reason for coming to the station

49% of the children say they have come to earn money, 21% declare they have come to live on their own terms (Figure 6). Only 9% mention bad treatment prompted them to leave, and 2% have stated physical abuse was the reason, while 12% give 'other' reasons. The variation is strongest for the West where 41% have come to earn money, and in the South

where it rises to 59%.

23% of the children give a second priority for coming to the station. Earning money remains the highest even as second priority, especially in the West and North. The urge 'to live on my own terms' comes next - especially in the South and East. This reinforces the earlier observation in the last paragraph that a large number of children are not 'runaways'.

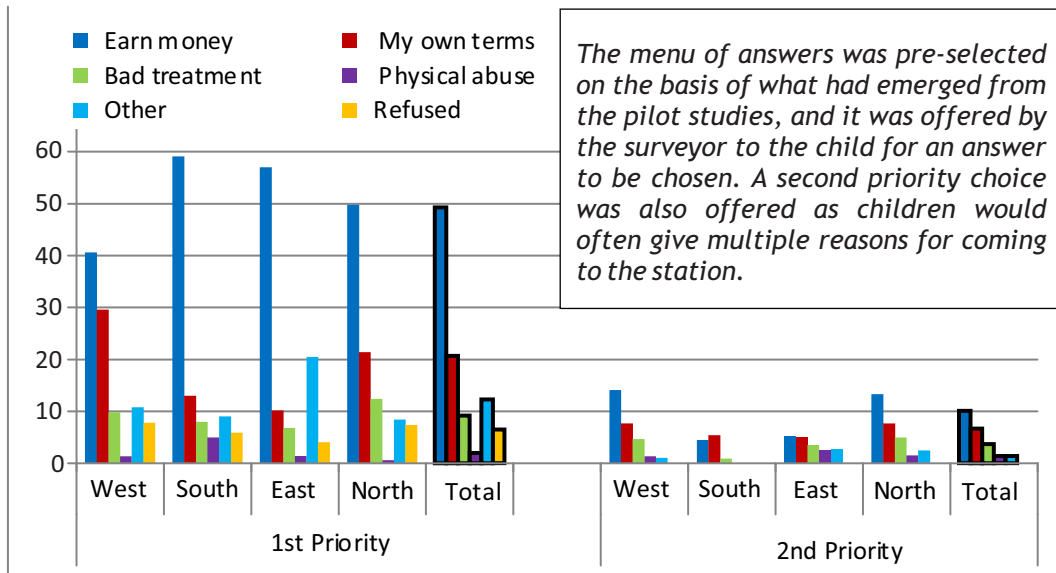


Figure 6: First and second priority reasons for coming to the station, in %

c) Visiting Home

Yet another marker for this dominant behaviour of being part of the family comes from the data on those children who visit home (**Figure 7**). Overall, as many as 71% say they go home. The range is also not too wide, with the lowest being 66% in the West, and the highest being 76% in the North. In addition, as many as 48% say they visit home often; 15% visit rarely, and 8% once a year (**Figure 8**). The link with the home or family, therefore, seems to be strong for most of the children, even though half have come from some other city. Except perhaps in the West, where those who visit home often are fewer (37%), and there may be a link with higher degree of origin in other cities (54%) and more wishing to live on their own terms (30%). There is a similar pattern in the North.

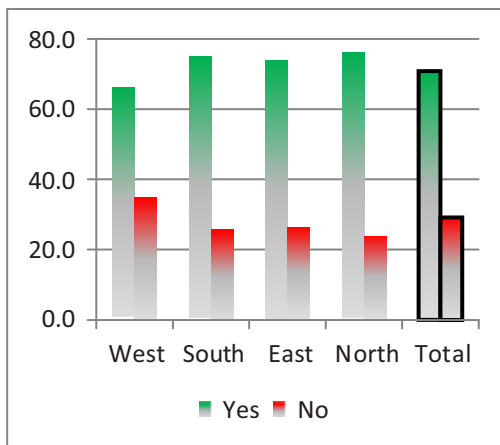


Figure 7: Those visiting home, in %

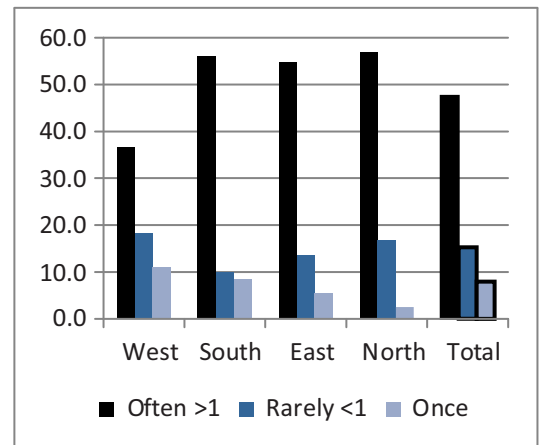
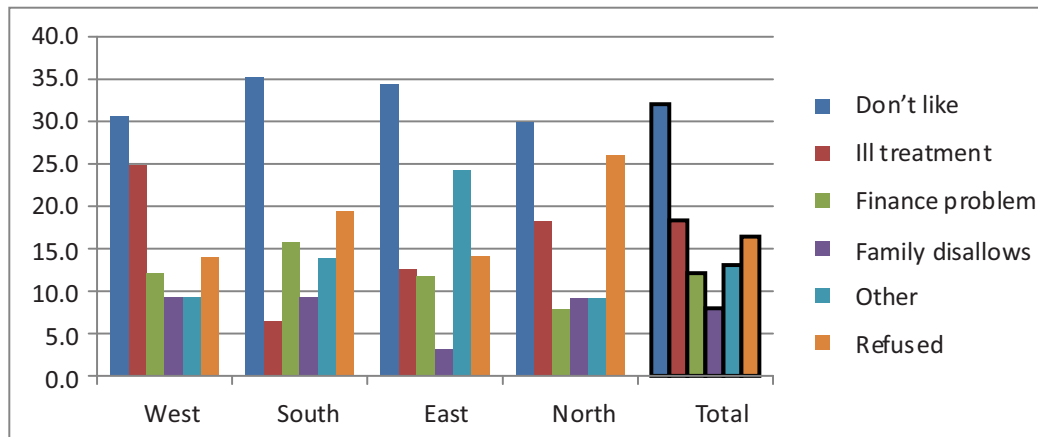


Figure 8: Frequency of home visit, in %

d) Reason for not visiting

What is, therefore, an area of concern is why 29% of the children and young people do not visit home. Of these children, 16% refused to answer, 32% didn't like going home, 18% felt they were ill-treated (compared to 11% who had said they left home because they were badly treated or abused), 12% had financial problems, and 8% did not feel welcome (**Figure 9**). It is also notable that it is the children in the West and North who complain more about ill-treatment and less about not going home. There is a much higher percentage of children in the East (24%) who mention 'other' reasons and this needs to be explored further.



**Figure 9: Reasons for not going home, in %**

Taken together, the overall pattern indicates that, as far as the 'agency' of the child is concerned in arriving at the station, a little over half come from another city, the need to earn money is a major driver, followed by wanting to live on their own terms, and most prefer to remain in touch with their families. Ill treatment may not be a factor in leaving home, but becomes more important when the child has to decide whether to visit home. In addition, the case studies reveal a sense of purpose on part of many of the children where they are taking 'responsibility' for their decisions.

### 6.3 The station as a venue for agency

a) Work at the station

Since 49% children come to the station for earning money, what do they do at the station to earn? There appear to be a variety of occupations that they have chosen (**Figure 10**). In the first priority set, the first choice is collecting plastic bottles (31%), the second is begging (23%), and the third is selling & vending (20%) a range of items. Only 2% report theft, while 9% clean train coaches for a living. Other occupations are about 11%. Begging, vending, cleaning, and plastic bottle collection are the preferred choices, in that order, at the second priority level. There is some regional variation with the North preferring vending over begging, the South prioritising begging and the East favouring cleaning the train as much as vending, along with other occupations.

An observation made by those familiar with street children was that the work done by children in contact with the railways is quite similar to those on the street, and that those collecting waste at the railway station may also be going to the city to pursue the same or another occupation.

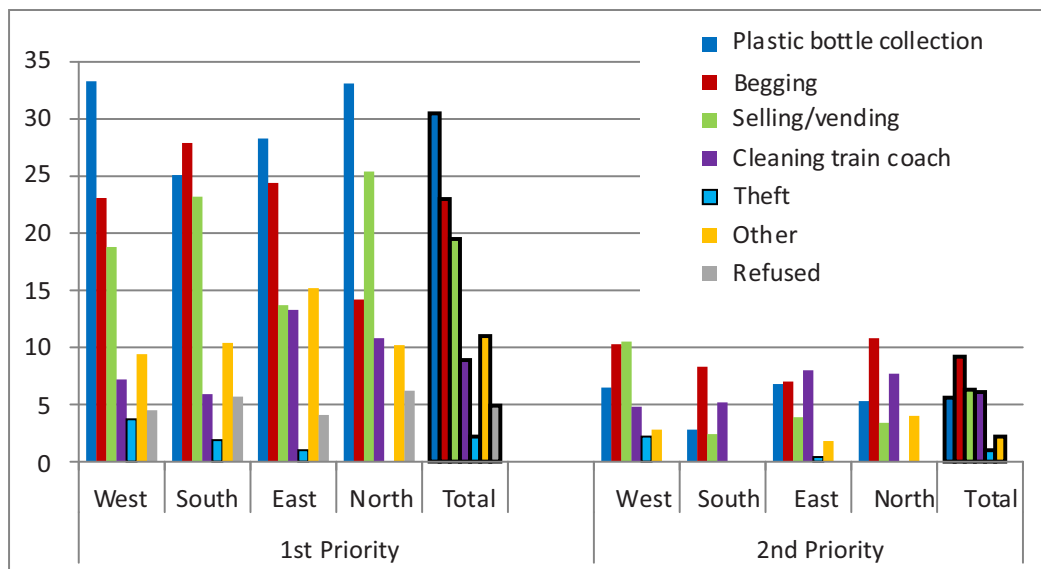


Figure 10: First and second priority work choices at the station, in %

b) Living behaviour

Given that all the above occupations are related to the railways and the passengers they carry, and 44% say they stay in the same city, while 71% are in touch with their families, where do they choose to live? 53% live with their families, 31% with friends, and 11% live alone, while only 3% live with the person who gives them work (or 'employer\*') (Figure 11). The behaviour is similar across zones, although those living with the family are higher in the East (63%) and lower in the South (40%), linked inversely to those living with friends. This supports the earlier observation that a majority of the children in contact with the railways are not 'runaway' children and that, therefore, the policy of "rescue and restore" has little to offer for these children. In fact, the children, along with their families, may be attempting to 'run away' from intolerable situations in order to rehabilitate themselves.

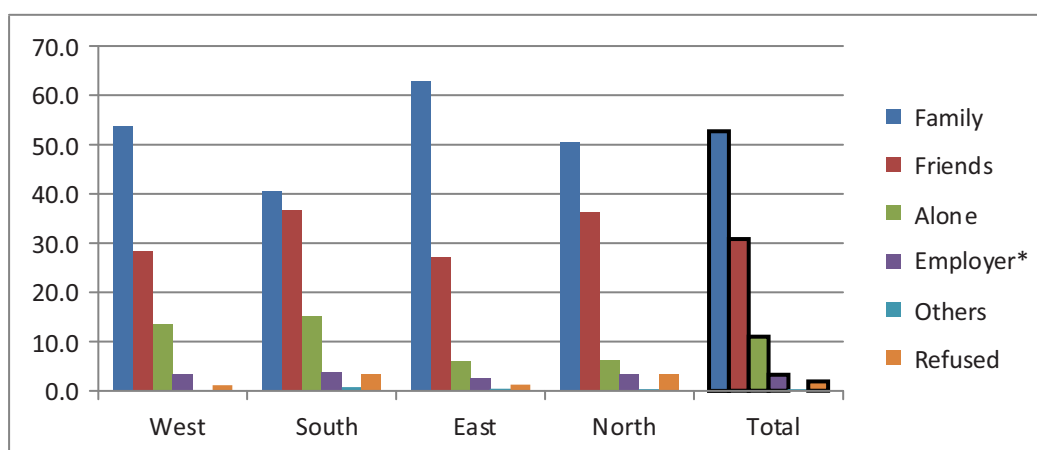


Figure 11: Living behaviour, in %

c) Sleeping behaviour

However, sleeping behaviour seems to be quite different. 44% sleep near the station and 26% at the station itself, while only 24% sleep at home. Very few (3%) choose to go to shelters (Figure 12). This is clearly related to work, as it is linked to when the trains come to the station and the timings would determine when the children have to be awake and at

the station. That large numbers choose to sleep near the station may be related to the adverse environment they face at the station. The adversity appears to be particularly high in the West - where the lowest percentage of children stay at home (17%) or at the station (21%) but the highest stay near the station (58%). Are the stations in the North then more hospitable (33%)?

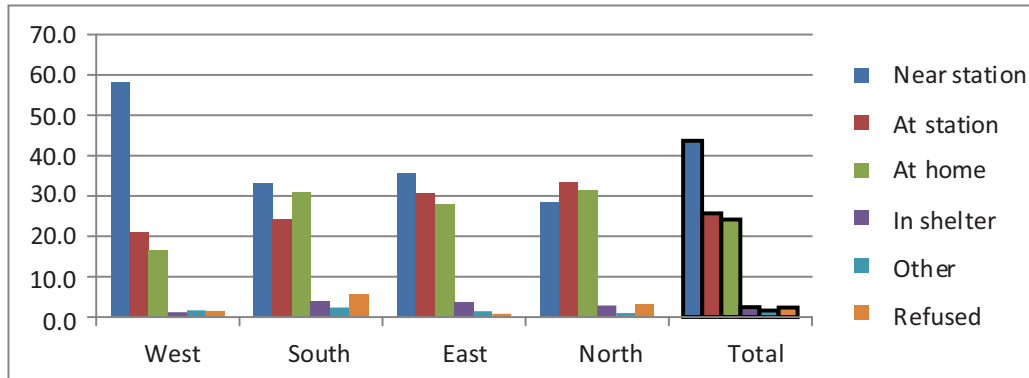


Figure 12: Sleeping behaviour, in %

d) Any change in station

Work and the sense of freedom being such important drivers for agency, most of the children seem to have found a niche near or at a particular station where there is some security amongst family or friends. Their responses indicate that only 38% have been at a previous station from where they moved to the present one (**Figure 13**). This is true even in the inhospitable West where 69% have not changed stations.

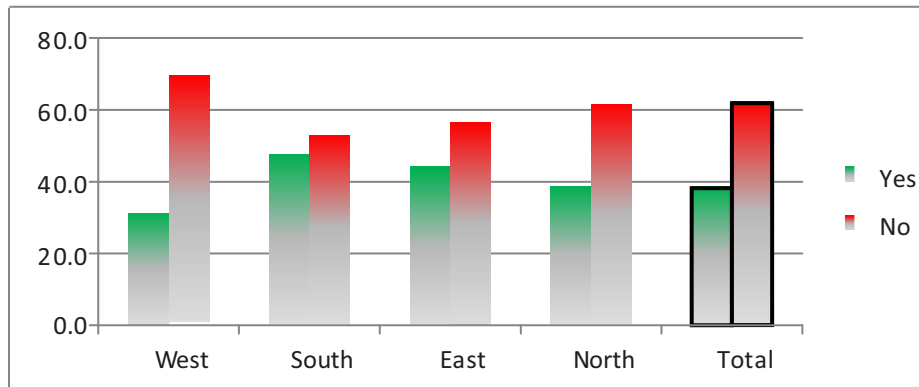


Figure 13: Who have been at a previous station, in %

e) Reason for changing station

When the 38% children were asked why they had changed stations, 93% replied giving their priorities. Less income was the major driver (37%), followed by the desire to visit new places and make new friends (21%), harassment at the previous station (17%), and the NGO attempting to 'rescue and restore' them (11%). The variations are quite large with more harassment in the West (24%), search for higher earnings in the South (49%), and desire for new experiences higher in the East (34%) and North (29%). Only 28% of the children replied giving the second priority reasons for leaving the earlier station. Here 9% gave harassment as the cause, 8% were looking for new experiences as well as higher earnings. Except for in the East, where less income is dominant, the zonal variations do not seem to be particularly different (**Figure 14**).

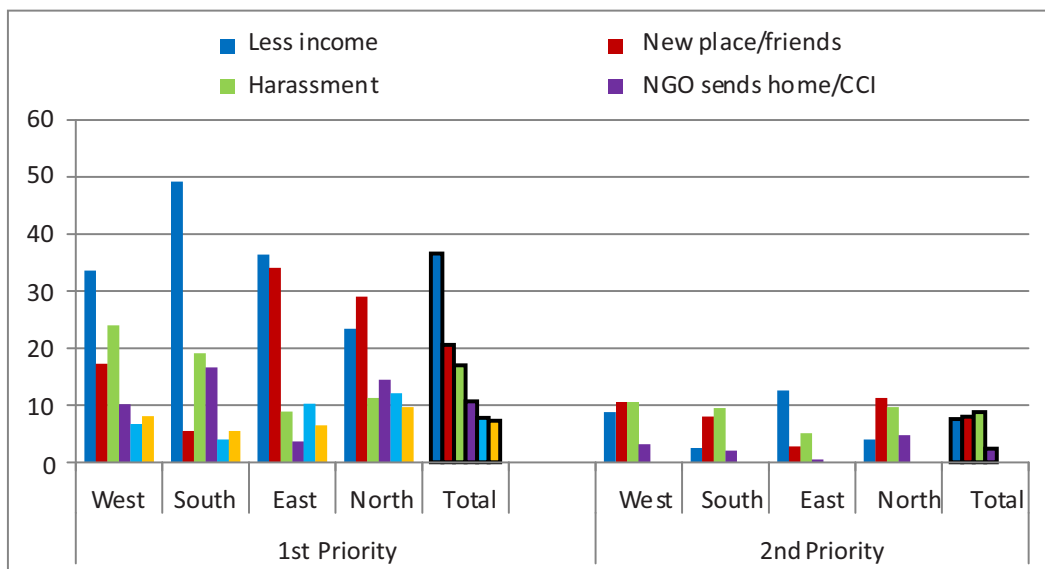


Figure 14: First and second priority reasons for changing the station, in %

## 6.4 Harassment as a counter to agency

### a) Experience of harassment

55% of all children, not just those who have changed stations, experience harassment; especially in the North where 68% report being harassed (**Figure 15**). The South seems to have the least (39%) harassed children. Yet, as we have seen earlier (Figure 12), 21-33% of the children choose to sleep at the station, in spite of experience of harassment. The fact that there are a larger number of older children and adults in the West and North (Figure 3) may be related to higher incomes that can be expropriated.

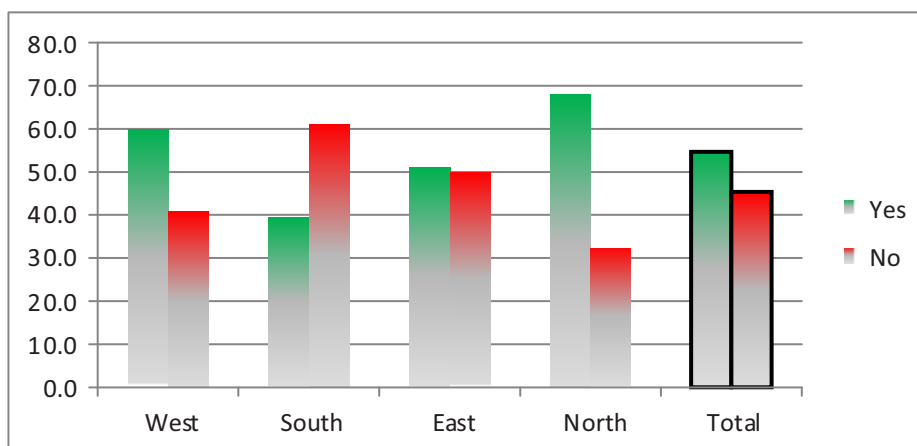


Figure 15: Experience of harassment, in %

### b) Harassing agent

Who harasses these children? 98% of the children replied to this question in the first priority and 51% in the second priority (**Figure 16**). For 61% police tops the list, followed by other 'children' at 27% in the first priority list. In the second list, 25% point to the 'older children', and police harassment drops to 12%. This would appear to be linked, therefore, to the older children's ability to control the younger ones and their income, which then becomes the object of extraction by the police. As may be seen, the police and the older 'children' are the major harassers precisely in the West and the North, where the



percentage of older children and adults are higher.

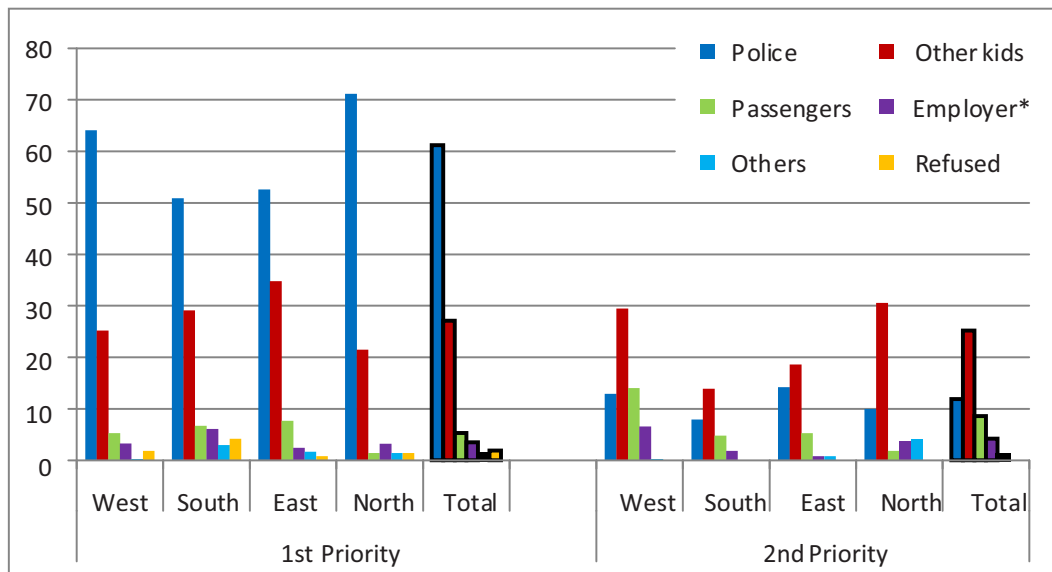


Figure 16: First and Second priority harassing agent, in %

c) Change in sleeping location

In consonance with the above, 31% of the children state they often change their sleeping location (*Figure 17*). The reasons for change seem to be related to the 'mood' of the child (49%), persecution by the police (42%), and persecution by 'adults' (28%). The variation across zones is not marked in this respect. Only in the East does the police harassment that causes sleeping location change go down to 28%, as does the adult persecution (16%). But adult persecution is high in the West as well as partly in the North. Does this have something to do with how well the city and the station are linked to better economic opportunities, higher earnings, and therefore more extortion?

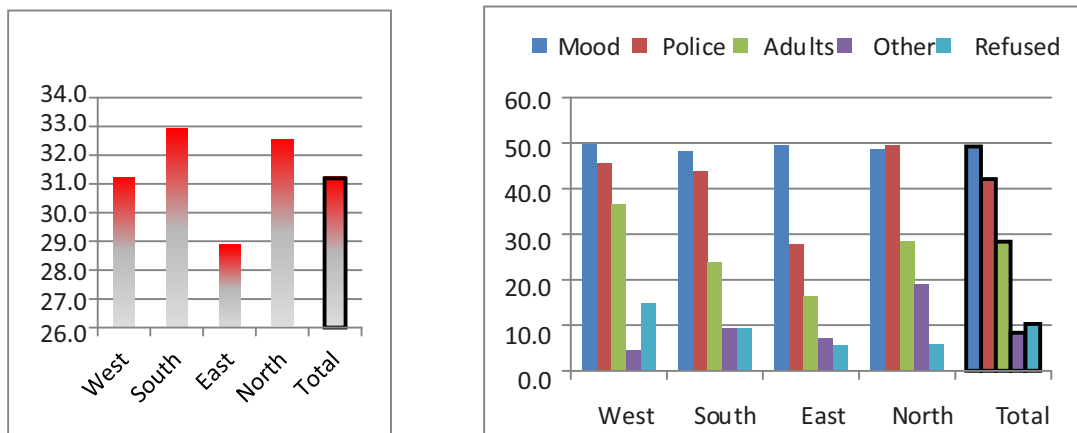


Figure 17: Change in sleeping location and reasons for the change, in %

## 6.5 Factors that enable agency

a) Friends

So far we have seen what the children have to say about the reasons for coming to the station and the obstacles that stand in the way of the agency they wish to exercise. Do these adverse factors demand that they discover new ways of exercising agency and are there circumstances that help them to do that? As we have seen 71% are in touch with their

families (Figure 7), 53% live with their families and 31% with friends (Figure 11), and 21% give priority to the search for new friends and places (Figure 14). Hence, apart from the family, do these friends also provide peer support to what they wish to do? The response of the interviewed children shows that 69% have friends at the station, and 26% do not (Figure 18). The trend is similar across zones, except for the South where children with friends are substantially lower at 55% - this may be related to the lowest incidence of harassment among zones (Figure 15) and, therefore, the reduced need for support from a peer group (see also Figure 19 where the children have to fend for themselves).

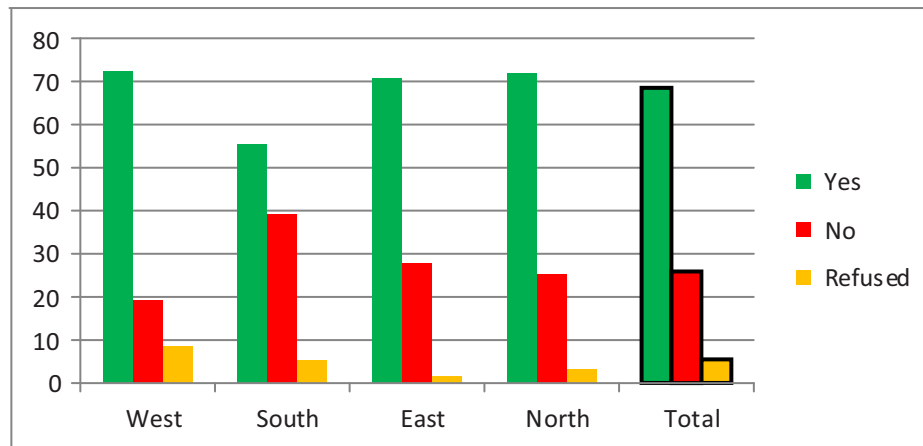


Figure 18: Friends at the station in %

b) Assistance experience

47% of the children said they received help when needed, 53% seemed to have had to fend for themselves - especially in the South (Figure 19). But even in the South not less than 34% of the children have been rendered assistance when required - which is a substantial number indicating that there may be many informal and organic structures that take care of the children when they are in trouble. Hence, observation and documentation of these structures could be a valuable addition to the information base for constructing policies and programmes other than “rescue and restore”.

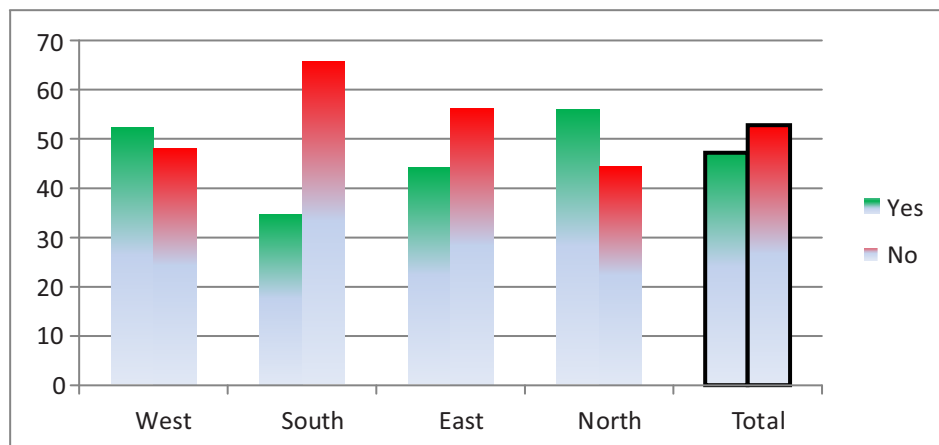


Figure 19: Assistance provided, in %

The nature of the assistance is mainly for food (50%), illness and accidents (41%), resolving fights (38%), and financial (35%); but surprisingly little for trouble with the police (22%) or employment (11%). Food assistance is highest in the South (68%), where help in fights and with the police is the least (9% & 10% respectively). Financial aid is the highest in the West (43%) (see Figure 20).

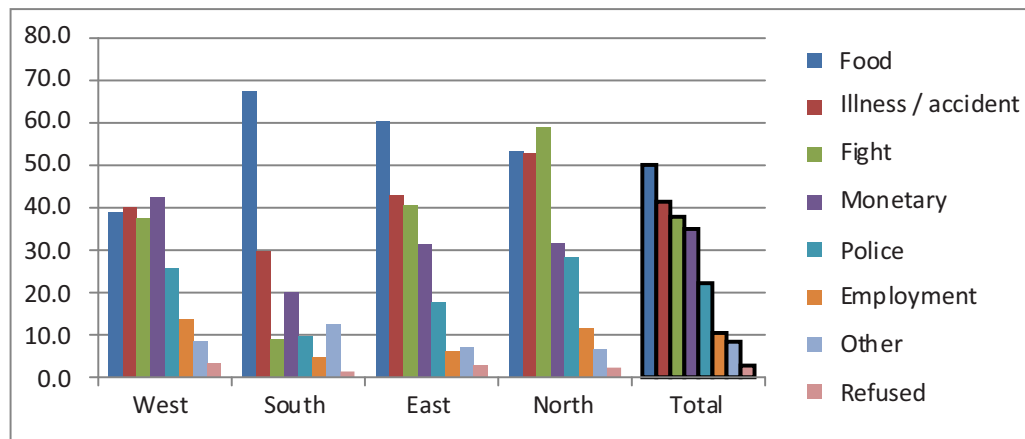


Figure 20: Nature of assistance, in %

c) Assistance agent

Significantly, of the children who have received assistance, as their first priority 49% say they have got it from their friends, 30% from an NGO, 9% from the person they work for (employer\*), and 11% from 'other' (Figure 21). The pattern is similar across zones, except in the South where it virtually gets reversed with the NGO being given emphasis by 51% and friends coming next at 26%, and this appears to be in line with what has been observed earlier about the children in the South having less friends than in the other zones. In the second priority, the emphasis changes to the NGO (13%) followed by friends (7%). This may merit a closer examination of the nature of NGOs in the South and what is the kind of assistance they are able to provide, apart from the common practice of “rescue-and-restore” that was observed by AIWG-RCCR members in the South, so that elements from it can be borrowed for incorporation into policy that enables the agency of the child who chooses to stay at the station rather than go 'home' - within the limits of the constraints imposed on the child by the environment.

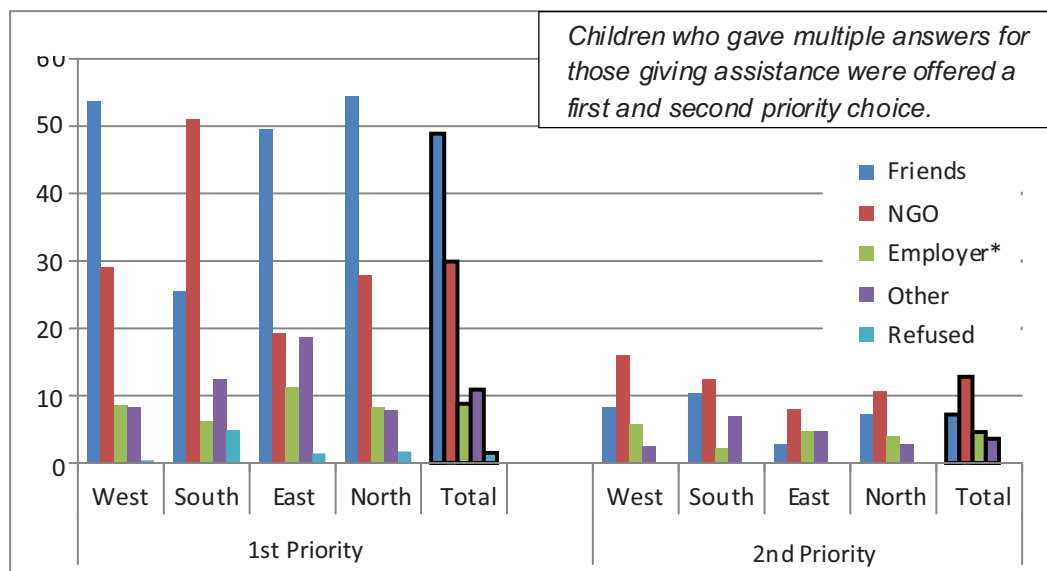


Figure 21: Who assisted, first and second priorities, in %

d) Issues with NGO

When asked if they had any problems with an NGO (second ranked in the first priority by the 30% who have received help, and first ranked in the second priority) 53% of respondents had no issues, while 23% gave no answer (Figure 22). But 13% felt the NGO did

not let them live life on their own terms, 9% were apprehensive they would be sent back home, and a similar number found the NGO 'boring'. Given that 49% have come to the station to earn money and 21% want to be on their own terms (Figure 6) and only 10% received help in finding work (Figure 20), this seems to be an important concern. Children in the West and North seemed to be a little more apprehensive about this. The large percentage (53%) who says they have no issue with NGOs may be saying so because they have had no engagement with the NGOs.

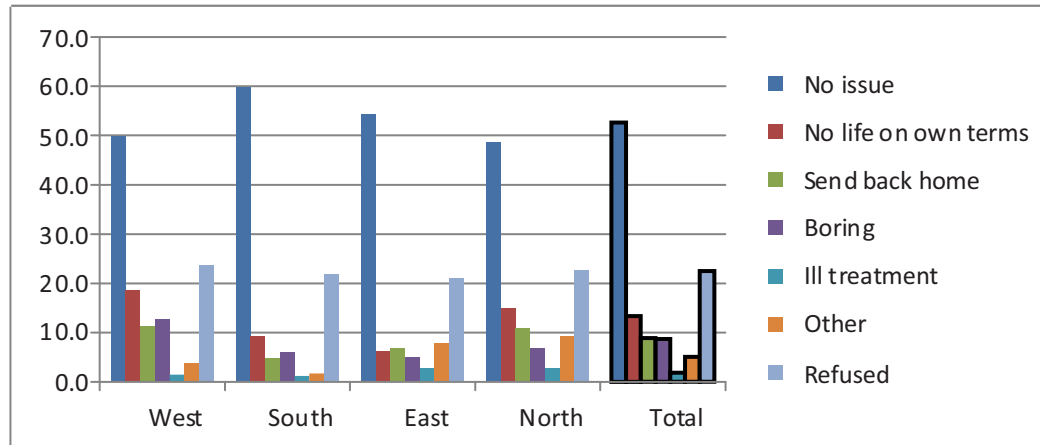


Figure 22: Issues with NGO, in %

## 6.6 Children's perspective for the future

### a) Savings behaviour

Are the children thinking at all about the future? One of the indicators could be the savings they keep aside out of their earnings, especially as one of the drivers of agency. A large proportion of 41% say they do save; the numbers are much lower in the South (23%); but at least in the other three Zones around 40-50% of the children are looking further ahead than just surviving for today (Figure 23).

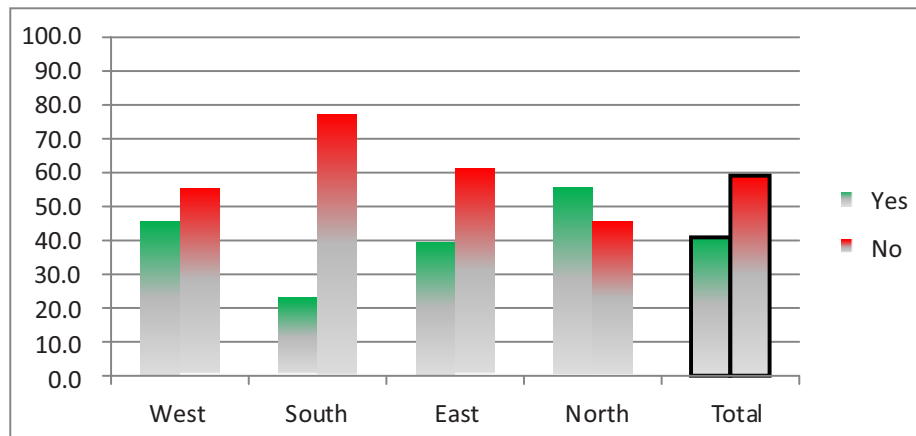
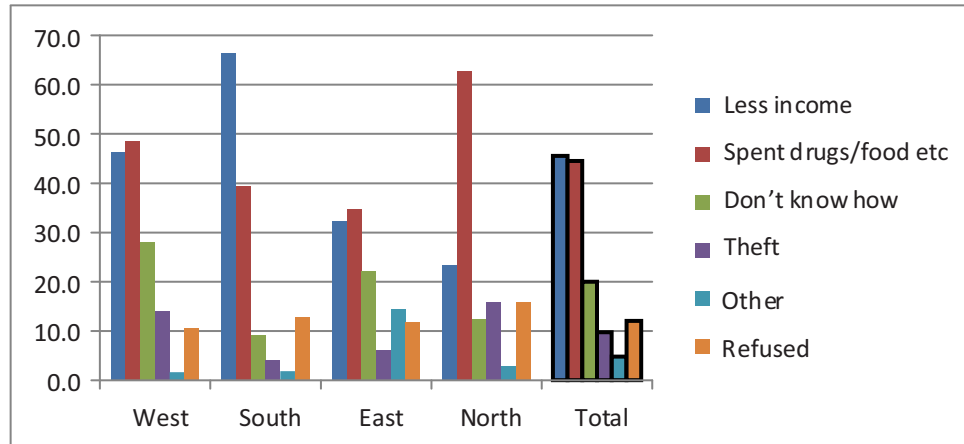


Figure 23: Do the children save, in %

### b) Reason for not saving

It may also not be true that the remaining 59% children do not wish to save. When they were queried, and given multiple choices to answer from, 46% said they did not earn enough to save, another 45% said they had to spend on food and drugs etc. (probably part of living on their own terms), and as many as 20% said they did not know how to save their

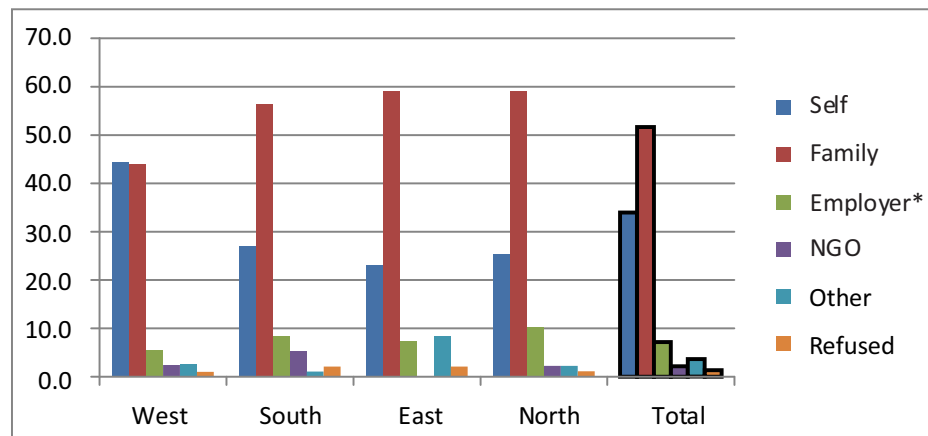
money (**Figure 24**). Less income was of particular concern in the South (66%), but not in the North (23%). Money spent on their own needs was especially high in the North (63%); and those who did not know how to save were higher in the West (28%).



**Figure 24: Reasons for not saving, in %**

c) Savings kept with whom

Not knowing 'how to save' may also be related to whom to save it with. When the 41% who save were asked about this, and given a choice of options, they listed their family at the top (52%), followed by keeping it on their own (34%), and only 7% mentioned that the person they work with could be trusted to keep their money in safekeeping (**Figure 25**). So there is an obvious dearth of institutional mechanisms which can facilitate thinking about a future. In the West, keeping the money with their family or keeping it with themselves had the same importance (44%), while the family had priority in the other Zones (56-59%).



**Figure 25: Who do they save with, in %**

d) Plan for next two years

It is within this context of not earning enough, daily requirements not allowing for any savings, the lack of any institutional mechanisms to help with work, and where money could be kept safely, and there possibly being no security of any kind, that the reply of the children to “What is your plan for the next two years?” has to be seen (**Figure 26**). 34% respondents say they do not know but, if one deducts the 8% who declined to answer, 58% have some idea of the future: 15% think learning a skill will enable them to work on their own; 16% wish to get a 'good job'; 11% would like to remain at the station to continue to earn money; 8% want to earn enough money to return home; and 5% would be content to get married and settle down. Getting a good job has a higher weightage in the South, while

learning a skill in order to work acquires more importance in the North.

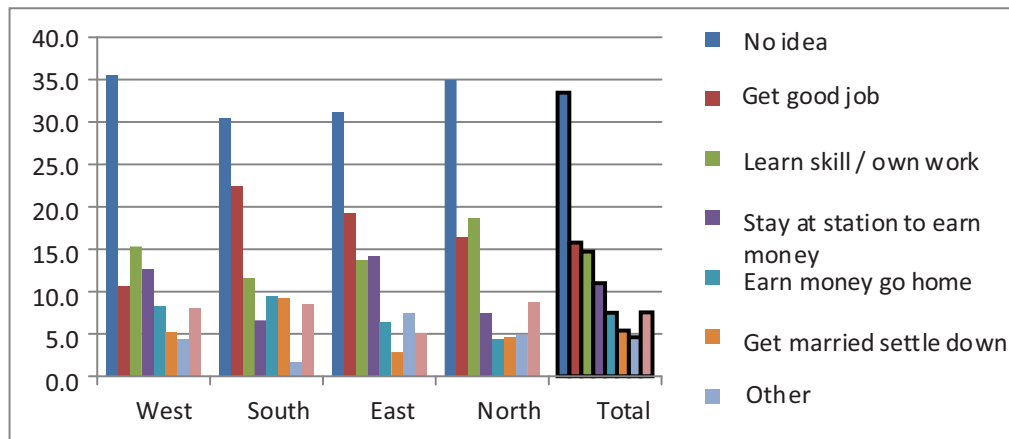


Figure 27: What is the plan for the next two years, in %

The larger picture of agency that emerges from the survey data is that at least half the children are coming to the railway station to earn money, another quarter wish to live on their own terms, and almost three-fourths retain regular contact with their families. Only about one-tenth did not wish to stay in touch with their families at all, while about the same percentage wished to remain at the station to earn. The railway station, by its very nature as a venue for a large number of customers, provided opportunities to collect bottles, beg, and sell all kinds of goods for survival; it also gave space to sleep and play, depending upon train schedules, and make friends with similar children.

On the other hand, over half were experiencing harassment at the station, mostly (two-third) by the police, and some (a quarter) by other children. Consequently, over two-third of those being harassed would change locations at the station for safer places and another half in search of a happier environment relative to their 'mood'. While over half were fending for themselves, more than two-third did have friends at the station on whom they could call for sustenance (mainly for food and illness), and one-third depended upon NGOs. Less than a quarter, though, were apprehensive that NGOs would 'rescue' them and or not let them live as they wished to.

Over half the children had some perspective for the future because many were saving money, either for themselves or their family, and keeping the money either with their families or with themselves. Even of those who were not saving, half said they did not earn enough to save or their entire earnings had to be spent on necessities, and a little less than one-fourth did not know how they could save. But aspirations to get a "good job", wanting to learn a skill to be able to earn, and wishing to remain at the station because it provided an opportunity to survive, were scattered through the sample, becoming stronger as they grew older.



# 7. Some correlations and cross-linkages

## 7.1 Correlations

Based on our collective experience and some of the stories we heard from the children in the qualitative phase, we also tried to see the possible correlations between different forms of agency expressed in coming to the station, visiting home, working, living, making friends, experiencing harassment, saving money, and making future plans with characteristics of gender and age, in an attempt to find out whether the assertion of children's agencies changed with these. All the analyses have not been presented here, only those with some marked correlation are presented below (all figures are in percentages).

### a) Reason for coming to station and gender

Earning money as the reason for coming to the station has the same priority for both girls and boys, but boys have an edge in terms of wanting to live their own lives (*Table 1*). Bad treatment at home does not appear to have any important difference in the decisions of either the boy or the girl to come to the station. Girls, though, do not feel the same drive for living life on their own terms as the boys, while considering 'other' factors to be more important. This gendered perception of agency is interesting because it shows the influence of home, family, and society on aspirations.

**Table 1: Gendered reasons for coming to the station (%)**

Reason for coming to station	Male	Female
To earn money	49.0	51.1
To live on own terms	22.1	14.4
Bad treatment at home	9.6	7.6
Physical abuse	1.9	2.3
Other	11.5	15.9
No answer	6.1	8.6

### b) Reason for coming to station and visiting home

The experience of bad treatment and physical abuse at home has a definite impact on the child deciding not to visit home; while independence of earning money and living life on one's own terms could result in visiting home with a certain degree of self-assurance (*Table 2*). It seems, therefore, that where the pull factors at the station are important drivers, there home relations are maintained; while when push factors at home become dominant, relationships with the home are adversely affected and there appears to be a greater unwillingness to maintain the link with home and family.

**Table 2: Push/pull factors and visiting home (%)**

Reason for coming to station	Yes	No
To live on own terms	63.3	36.7
To earn money	83.5	16.5
Bad treatment at home	43.1	56.9
Physical abuse	47.6	52.4
Other	68.1	31.9

c) Work and age

It is the older age group from 13 years and upwards which is more engaged in collecting bottles and selling/vending, while the younger children up to age 9 are more inclined towards begging as an earning opportunity. Thus, as the children approach adolescence, their occupations and earning capacities begin to change and, as one of our reviewers pointed out, there may be multiple work identities for the same child. Hence, should policy be determined by a single identity for all, or should the children also have some say?

**Table 3: Link between age<sup>24</sup> and occupation (%)**

Work/Age	4-6	7-9	10-12	13-15	16-18	19-21	>22
Collect bottles	14.6	20.6	24.7	37.1	35.4	43.5	19.5
Cleaning train	4.9	2.9	10.0	12.5	10.3	6.0	4.3
Selling/vending	6.1	8.3	16.7	18.6	28.7	20.1	36.6
Begging	51.2	42.6	31.6	13.9	9.1	13.0	22.6
Theft/snatching	1.2	0.5	0.5	2.9	2.4	5.4	2.4
Other	9.8	19.1	11.9	9.8	10.3	12	12.8

d) Work and gender

Both genders are engaged in all occupations. While boys have a slightly larger share in collecting bottles and selling, girls hold a clearly dominant position in begging (**Table 4**). It should be noted that in the sample of respondents, the percentage of girls was highest in the 10-14 years age bracket, while the boys spilled over into the 15-19 years age bracket. This gender divide may also be linked to occupations.

**Table 4: Link between gender and occupation (%)**

Work/Gender	Male	Female
Collect bottles	31.5	25.9
Cleaning train	9.9	4.8
Selling/vending	20.7	14.4
Begging	19.8	36.8
Theft/snatching	2.5	0.8
Other	10.9	11.6

e) Work and living behaviour

The data clearly shows that the absence of a family seems to be a significant factor in determining whether a child engages in theft and cleaning train coaches as the preferred occupations, while a family presence appears to facilitate the occupation of begging (**Table 5**).

<sup>24</sup> After a lot of discussion within AIWG-RCCR, these age categories were chosen with reference to the different periods of the child from infancy to adulthood in terms of growth and developmental milestones. This classification has largely been used by educationists and, sometimes, by policy-makers. See, for example: Developmental Milestones Chart, Institute for Human Services, Ohio Child Welfare Training Program, October 2007, Child and Young Person Development, Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools, Home Learning College, Child Development Guide, Centre for Development of Human Services, Research Foundation of SUNY, Buffalo State College, 2002, 2nd Study on Child Abuse: India 2007, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, 2007

**Table 5: Family presence and choice of occupation (%)**

Work	With Family	Without family	Other
Collect plastic bottles	48.2	49.9	0.3
Cleaning train coach	26.2	72.8	0
Selling/vending	51.1	48.0	0.2
Begging	63.5	35.8	0
Theft/snatching	10.6	85.1	0
Other	71.2	27.5	0.8

f) Friends at station and living behaviour

The child living without a family seems to be more likely to make friends at the station, although that does not prevent making friends when the family is present (**Table 6**). This may be related to the need for a peer group to provide security and stability akin to that desired in an absent or imagined family. It may also replicate family relationships that are missing.

**Table 6: Link between family and friends (%)**

Friends/Living	With family	Without family	Other
Yes	62.7	77.3	57.1
No	31.7	19.4	42.9

g) Work and saving behaviour

Saving money is possible only when there is sufficient earning, and that seems to occur only when the occupation is of selling and vending commodities (**Table 7**). Other trades, including theft, do not promote saving behaviour even if earnings are high as the earnings may be subject to a higher degree of expropriation (bribes) by individuals in authority, such as police and gang leaders.

**Table 7: Saving money and occupation (%)**

Work/Saving money	Yes	No
Collect plastic bottles	43.0	57.0
Cleaning train coach	33.0	67.0
Selling/vending	58.2	41.8
Begging	35.6	64.4
Theft/snatching	25.5	74.5
Other	36.9	63.1

h) Saving behaviour and gender

Being female only appears to worsen the possibility of saving money (**Table 8**). This may illustrate the greater vulnerability of girls and their need for institutions that provide them with safety, security, as well as work opportunities. This gendered approach to work and future security has not yet been considered by most agencies, or even by policy.

**Table 8: Savings and gender (%)**

Saving/Gender	Male	Female
Yes	41.6	37.0
No	58.4	63.0

i) Saving behaviour and age

As indicated by the data, saving behaviour gets triggered off when the child crosses the 10-12 years age group and then keeps growing (**Table 9**). This would indicate that children at railway stations may try to reach economic independence early. A suggestion is that as the uncertainty grows with age, savings may be the shield against uncertainty.

**Table 9: Savings and age (%)**

Saving/Age	4-6	7-9	10-12	13-15	16-18	19-21	>22
Yes	22.0	23.0	40.9	42.6	42.6	48.4	66.5
No	78.0	77.0	59.1	57.4	57.4	51.6	33.5

j) Future plan and gender

Having some idea for the future, including getting a good job and staying at the station to earn more, seem to be common aspirations for both boys and girls, although the boys probably have a greater impetus given the nature of society and the greater opportunities open to males (**Table 10**). Hence the boys are more 'entrepreneurial' in wanting to learn a new skill and begin their own economic activity, while the girls have more 'other' ideas as well as are more inclined towards getting married and settling down than the boys.

**Table 10: Gender and future plans (%)**

Future plan/Gender	Male	Female
Have an idea	55.8	47.9
• To get good job	15.9	15.4
• Learn new skill/start own work	16.3	7.8
• Stay in the station and earn more	11.5	8.8
• Earn money and go back home	7.5	7.1
• Get married and settle down	4.6	8.8
No idea	33.6	33.2

k) Future plan and age

As observed earlier, the children are forced to take up odd jobs early at the station in order to earn a living and save for the future. Disaggregating this impulse into different age groups illustrates that getting a "good job" is the dream of the early teens; it transforms into a vision of self-employment as the children get older into the mid-teens; marrying and settling down increases its charm after the teens are over; staying at the station to earn more remains fairly constant over the years; earning enough to go home acquires more importance in the early 20s; and as age increases the ones with no idea about the future do steadily decline (**Table 11**).

**Table 11: Growing older and future plans (%)**

Future plan/Age	4-6	7-9	10-12	13-15	16-18	19-21	>22
Get a good job	11.0	12.3	17.7	19.5	16.0	11.4	7.9
Learn skill/ own work	3.7	7.8	10.2	15.6	21.3	25.0	19.5
Stay at station & earn	15.9	8.3	9.3	11.5	10.0	14.7	16.5
Earn money go home	2.4	2.5	7.2	8.4	7.2	5.4	18.3
Marry settle down	0	1.5	2.8	4.3	7.7	11.4	12.2
No idea	34.1	49.5	37.0	30.9	32.3	27.7	21.3
Other	8.5	7.4	8.1	3.7	1.2	3.3	3

l) Future plan and assistance experience

The previous experience of the children with someone who has provided assistance of some sort with their current problems does not seem to have much bearing on what to plan for in the next couple of years; except somewhat in the field of learning a new skill and starting one's own business and staying at the station to earn more (**Table 12**). What is interesting is that a large percentage of children (57%) have had some assistance in 'other' areas that have given them some confidence about making plans for the future. This 'other' has, however, not been documented during the quantitative survey.

**Table 12: Assistance for future plans (%)**

Future plan/Assistance	Yes	No
To get Good job	48.4	51.6
Learn new skill/start own work	57.1	42.9
Stay in the station and earn more	52.8	47.2
Earn money and go back home	50.3	49.7
Get married and settle down	47.4	52.6
No idea	43.0	57.0
Other	56.6	43.4

## 7.2 Cross Linkages

Having considered the findings emerging from the quantitative data so far and on the basis of some field reports from surveyors that under the *Swachh Bharat*<sup>25</sup> mission the Railways were 'rescuing' children from the larger stations as well as where Railway CHILDLINE units were operating, AIWG-RCCR decided at a review meeting to explore the behaviour pattern of the children with respect to the larger stations where the annual income is higher than Rs 50 crores, and where CHILDLINE units were present. The following section reports the findings.

(Note: only those tables are presented where there is sufficient variation in the data to draw some inferences)

a) A1 and non-A1 stations<sup>26</sup>

For boys there is little difference between A1 and non-A1 stations (**Table 13**), despite the larger income earning basis of the former, but girls exhibit a definite preference (61%) for the non-A1 stations.

**Table 13: Gendered preference for stations (%)**

Gender/Station	A1	Non-A1
Female	39.55	60.45
Male	51.63	48.37

When differentiated by age it appears that girls frequent A1 stations up to the age of 9, but are more at non-A1 stations when they are between 10 to 15 years of age, and then decline faster at non-A1 stations as they grow into adults (**Table 14**). Boys, on the other hand, are

<sup>25</sup>The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is a massive government-sponsored movement that seeks to create a Clean India, partnered by Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, USAID, ADB, WHO, UNICEF, GTZ, United Nations, and World Bank. The main targets are the construction of household and public toilets, declare urban areas to be Open-Defecation-Free, and conduct 100% door-to-door collection of solid wastes. For more details see

<sup>26</sup>Indian Railway Stations are categorised as A1 to F, based on their average annual income: A1=>50 crores; A=6-50 cr.; B=3-6 cr.; C=Suburban; D=1-3 cr.; E=< 1 cr.; F=Flag stations, where trains only stop on request.

there in both kinds of stations at all ages with some preference for non-A1 stations, but with a swing in preference to A1 stations after age 15 years. Issues of greater vulnerability for the girls as they grow into puberty, and for boys with higher earning potentials, seem to be woven into these decisions.

**Table 14: Gender and age linkage to type of station (%)**

Gender/Age	04-06	07-09	10-12	13-15	16-18	19-21	>22
<b>A1 stations</b>							
Female	8.92	17.20	22.93	17.83	9.55	8.28	8.28
Male	2.77	7.10	15.65	23.97	27.30	6.88	10.32
<b>Non-A1 stations</b>							
Female	8.33	9.58	30.00	22.08	9.58	2.92	4.17
Male	2.73	10.66	21.45	25.47	15.88	12.09	5.69

Occupation also affects the choice of station (*Table 15*), with begging, plastic collection, and selling goods competing with each other as the main trades. Boys at non-A1 stations are more occupied in begging and plastic collection, and in selling/vending at A1 stations. Girls have a similar trajectory, collecting plastic bottles more at non-A1 stations and selling/vending more at A1 stations. Clearly, the larger A1 stations offer more customers for the hawking trade.

**Table 15: Gender and work linkage to type of station (%)**

Station	A1 stations		Non-A1 stations	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Begging	37.58	17.31	36.25	22.39
Cleaning	4.46	7.44	5.00	12.44
Plastic collection	19.75	32.63	30.00	30.33
Selling	18.47	20.31	5.42	3.20
Theft	0.64	3.00	0.83	2.01
Other	12.74	13.21	10.83	8.41

Harassment of both sexes is reported to be much more at the A1 stations, although a slightly higher percentage of boys than girls experience harassment at non-A1 stations too (*Table 16*).

**Table 16: Harassment by gender at different stations (%)**

Station	A1		Non-A1	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Yes	72.61	72.25	56.67	67.30
No	24.20	24.86	31.25	25.71

For girls, the police at the A1 stations are reported to be far more harassing than anyone or anywhere else, but police is seen as the major threat at all stations for all children, but especially so at A1 stations, (*Table 17*). Older kids are ranked second as the harassing agent, and their presence seems to be more felt at the non-A1 stations, where the girls are also more targeted.



**Table 17: Harassing agent by gender at different stations (%)**

Station/Gender/ Harassing agent	A1 Stations		Non-A1 Stations	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Police	48.41	36.74	31.67	27.61
Older Kids at Station	14.01	13.43	17.50	15.76
Passenger	1.91	2.33	2.92	3.55
Employer/ Aunty-Uncle	3.82	1.78	2.08	1.66
Other	0.64	0.33	1.25	0.71

The greater vulnerability of the girl child to harassment when living with the employer (also called aunty-uncle as a substitute for family ties), or alone, or even with friends and family is indicated by all responses (**Table 18**). The 'safest' place for the boy is with the employer or the family, and for the girl it is with the family.

**Table 18: Harassment by gender and living arrangements (%)**

Living with	Station Harassed	A1		Non-A1	
		Female	Male	Female	Male
Family	Yes	68.42	56.21	52.00	44.61
Alone	Yes	75.00	51.54	84.62	58.70
Employer	Yes	100.00	43.75	73.33	58.97
Friends	Yes	70.00	64.42	56.25	55.79

Earning money is the biggest reason for coming to the railways, and non-A1 stations are preferred over the A1 stations by both boys and girls (**Table 19**). Boys wanting to live on their own terms or having suffered ill-treatment at home opt more for the A1 stations.

**Table 19: Gendered reasons for coming to different stations (%)**

Station Reason to come to station	A1		Non-A1	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Live on own terms	14.01	24.20	14.58	19.79
Earn money	48.41	43.62	52.92	54.74
Ill treatment at home	8.92	11.21	6.67	7.82
Physical abuse	1.27	1.33	2.92	2.49
Other	14.01	12.32	17.08	10.55

Female children get money, food, and help during illness/injury more at non-A1 stations; for male children A1 and non-A1 stations have somewhat similar characteristics, except during fights and illness when they may prefer to be at non-A1 stations (**Table 20**).

**Table 20: Gender and assistance at different stations (%)**

Station Assistance	A1		Non-A1	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Monetary	24.71	35.07	44.57	34.83
Illness/accident	36.47	38.20	43.48	46.35
During a fight	44.71	34.45	32.61	42.42
Food	24.71	51.77	45.65	54.78
Issue with police	40.00	26.30	16.30	14.04
Get employment	7.06	13.15	9.78	7.58

Friends are clearly the most dependable people to get help from (**Table 21**) for money as well as with police at A1 stations, but are better at non-A1 stations in getting treatment, sorting out fights, and getting food. NGOs are effective aid providers, but they seem to be present mainly at A1 stations. Assistance with finding work is the weakest link.

**Table 21: Assistance from different agencies at different stations (%)**

Assistance with	Station	Friend	Family	NGO	Employer
Money	<b>A1</b>	21.28	2.30	3.72	4.08
	<b>Non-A1</b>	16.52	5.13	5.36	6.92
Medical	<b>A1</b>	14.01	2.48	19.15	1.77
	<b>Non-A1</b>	28.35	4.69	8.04	4.69
Fight	<b>A1</b>	22.16	0.89	10.28	1.60
	<b>Non-A1</b>	29.46	3.79	3.79	2.90
Food	<b>A1</b>	22.16	3.37	16.84	3.19
	<b>Non-A1</b>	27.46	7.59	10.71	4.24
Police	<b>A1</b>	13.48	0.71	11.17	2.13
	<b>Non-A1</b>	5.58	2.68	4.02	2.01
Work	<b>A1</b>	6.21	0.18	4.96	0.71
	<b>Non-A1</b>	4.46	0.45	1.56	1.34

Living with family helps to keep savings safe (**Table 22**), if the children are at non-A1 stations. Keeping savings with oneself is for the child living with friends at A1 stations.

**Table 23: Saving and living behaviour at different stations (%)**

Saving with		Self	Family	Employer	NGO
Living with	Station				
Family	<b>A1</b>	11.37	38.52	1.16	0.70
	<b>Non-A1</b>	12.22	48.87	1.36	0.00
Alone	<b>A1</b>	6.50	1.39	0.70	0.23
	<b>Non-A1</b>	4.52	1.81	0.68	0.45
Employer	<b>A1</b>	0.70	0.00	0.23	0.00
	<b>Non-A1</b>	2.26	1.13	2.94	0.23
Friends	<b>A1</b>	18.33	6.26	6.03	2.55
	<b>Non-A1</b>	11.31	4.75	1.36	0.23

The responses indicate that the A1 station has a slight edge over the non-A1 station for learning new skills and setting up on one's own, or to get a good job for the boys (**Table 24**). For girls, it is easier to get married and settle down when at non-A1 stations.

**Table 24: Future plans at different stations (%)**

Station	A1		Non-A1	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
No idea	45.22	34.07	25.42	33.06
Learn skill/ own work	6.37	17.65	8.75	14.81
Get good job	15.92	15.32	15.00	16.59
Stay at station earn	7.01	9.99	10.00	13.03
Marry settle down	5.73	4.44	10.83	4.86
Earn money go home	7.01	8.10	7.08	6.87

The boys at the A1 station seem to feel they have the best chance of saving if they can learn a skill and set up their own business, followed by the opportunity to get a good job (**Table 25**). Girls, on the other hand, favour their chance to save if they get a good job at an A1 station, or stay at a non-A1 station, and earn money to go home.

**Table 25: Chances of saving with different occupations at different stations (%)**

Savings/Station	A1				Non-A1			
	Female		Male		Female		Male	
Future plan	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
No idea	30.65	54.74	17.62	45.49	31.76	21.94	25.77	38.40
Learn skill own work	8.06	5.26	23.85	13.35	8.24	9.03	19.05	11.70
Get good job	24.19	10.53	21.68	10.90	9.41	18.06	14.29	18.28
Stay at station earn money	6.45	7.37	10.57	9.59	11.76	9.03	16.25	10.68
Marry settle down	8.06	4.21	5.42	3.76	8.24	12.26	5.32	4.52
Earn money go home	12.90	3.16	13.28	4.51	11.76	4.52	9.80	4.72

b) Presence/absence of Railway CHILDLINE

For both girls and boys, railway stations with CHILDLINE (which are all the larger stations with high passenger numbers and high revenue - generally above Rs 50 crores) offer more opportunities for earning money than non-CHILDLINE stations, probably by virtue of their size and traffic, especially so for girls. For boys, the other driver is to live on their own terms, and they seem to find opportunities at both kinds of stations for this, while 'other' reasons are more important for girls at non-CHILDLINE stations.

**Table 26: CHILDLINE and gendered impact on coming to the station (%)**

Reason to come to station	CHILDLINE		Non-CHILDLINE	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Live on own terms	16.0	22.7	11.6	21.0
Earn money	56.8	50.6	41.5	46.3
Bad treatment at home	8.8	8.5	5.4	11.2
Physical abuse	0.4	1.1	5.4	3.1
Other	10.8	10.9	24.5	12.3

For both sexes (girls more than boys), it appears that CHILDLINE stations are preferred for collecting plastic bottles, while begging is prevalent at both kinds of stations (Table 27). Non-CHILDLINE stations provide more latitude for selling and vending for boys, and for 'other' reasons for girls.

**Table 27: CHILDLINE and gendered impact on occupations (%)**

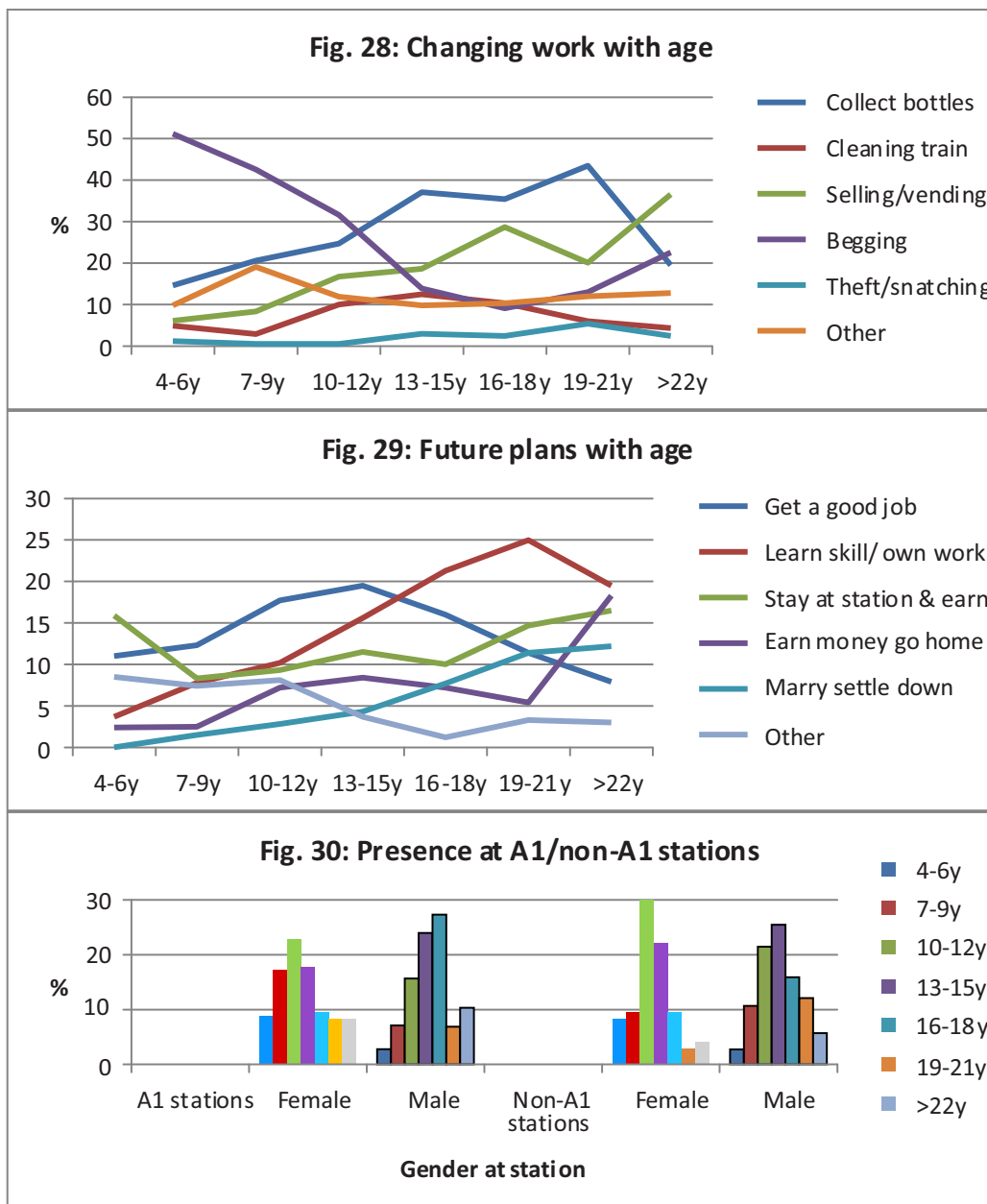
Station	CHILDLINE		Non-CHILDLINE	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Work at Station				
Collecting plastic	32.8	33.8	14.3	27.9
Cleaning coach	4.8	11.8	4.8	6.7
Begging	36.0	21.2	38.1	17.4
Selling/Vending	13.6	17.9	15.6	25.3
Theft	0.8	3.0	0.7	1.8
Other	8.4	9.2	17.0	13.6

The presence or absence of CHILDLINE at a station, therefore, may not signify a location where care and protection is or is not available. Based on the data from the quantitative survey and the case studies in the qualitative phase, it would appear that the CHILDLINE offices and personnel are quite clearly identified with the rescue-and-restore mode of the SOP and the CWC.

*(Note: only those tables have been presented where there is sufficient variation in the data to draw inferences)*

c) Trends with age

The following charts (**Figures 28 to 30**) give a picture of how the behaviour changes as the children grow into adulthood. This also gives an indication of what are the future challenges that care providers must plan for if they are to successfully rehabilitate the children within the context of what the children are already demonstrating through their agency and their practice.



The following observations may be made on the basis of the above charts:

- Begging is the preserve of the youngest children and declines steadily with age until there is a slight revival after adulthood. The two trades that show a steady increase as the children grow older are collecting bottles and selling and vending, with the former becoming less remunerative once the adults cross 21 years.
- The dominant aspiration that grows through childhood is to learn a skill and begin one's own work, which does show a dip once adulthood has been reached and probably they have tried to achieve this aspiration. Earning enough money to go home shows a sharp upward rise once this aspiration has been dispensed with. And the two other trends that show a steady rise throughout are to stay at the station and earn, and to marry and settle down.
- The young girls in the 7-9 years age group as well as the adult women after 19 years are found more at the larger A1 stations, but the middle group between 10-15 years seems to prefer the less prominent non-A1 stations. For the boys the non-A1 stations score higher until they are 15 years but the 16-18 years age group is predominant at the A1 stations.

Hence, care providers in both government and non-government sectors have to think about how to set up facilities mainly at the non-A1 stations so that the children can begin to learn a trade, either in the waste processing business or in the selling of food items and consumer goods at the railway stations. So that by the time they turn into adults they can begin practice of this trade in or near the larger A1 stations where the market is more assured. If a regular and assured income is assured, then the adults are as likely to have earned enough money to go home as they are of staying at the station to continue earning. The two fundamental issues are that the railway station has to be seen as the venue for livelihoods (and not just as a transport hub), and that it has also to be made secure as a learning and skilling centre. In addition, the source area (or "home") is also a place where the adults would like to go back to provided there is also the security of a livelihood there. This study suggests that it was the very absence of such a livelihood that was responsible for the move to the station for both the child as well as the family in a majority of the cases. Thus, prevention and rehabilitation seem to share the same roots.

## 8. Stories of Agency

There were 62 interviews<sup>27</sup> conducted at five stations during the qualitative phase of the study by carefully selected and oriented teams composed of one Core researcher, who had a past history as a child living at the railway station, and an Academic researcher, who had some experience of research in this or an associated field. This yielded a rich and complex texture of 48 case studies at four stations; along with descriptive notes for another 14 children by the Core researcher at Pataliputra where the detailed case studies were not written up nor consent obtained by the Academic researcher - hence, these 14 cases have not been included in this analysis. The factors exhibiting agency (where children take decisions about what they do in a particular context) have been extracted from these stories and arranged into five different areas of agency that were structured into the questionnaire in the quantitative study and have been categorised in Chapter 6: how the children decided to leave home for the station, what did they decide to do at the station, how they experienced harassment, what factors and decisions enabled them to survive, and what concepts of the future do they have - and are presented below to enable us to comprehend how railway children understand their own agency<sup>28</sup>.

Making contact with children amid a constant flux of trains and passengers, building rapport and trust, and asking them to relate their life stories is not an easy task. The team spent an initial two weeks profiling each railway station and its surroundings and submitting weekly reports [the station profile of Surat is given in Annexure 12.18]. They made a map of the area, collected details of its size and traffic and train timings, and got a sense of the number of children at different points in and around the station. In the process, they were able to speak with the railway officials, the police, children and others, and also become familiar visitors to the area. Some ideas were gathered of the possible formal and informal care-givers and services available to the children (teachers, vendors, schools, shelters, religious institutions etc.). There were moments when the researchers were seen as 'outsiders' or 'spies' or as a threat constituting forcible 'rescue', and police or angry youth or adults in contact with the children would be aggressive and intimidating. The team had to cope with these by repeatedly explaining the purpose of the study, that others had a lot to learn from how the children and young people were surviving at the station, about the key aspect of confidentiality, and thus try and gain the confidence of both children and their care-givers or protectors. In this manner the researchers slowly built enough rapport with the children to be able to collect detailed stories over a short period of six weeks.

### i) Agency for leaving home

#### *Family and Work*

Many of the stories illustrated the pressure on families and children to earn enough for survival. Thus, *Amit*, 11 years old, lives with his family in a slum near Rajahmundry railway station and his father works as a rickshaw puller and mother as a maid. They left the village for the city to earn and repay the loan taken for his sister's marriage. After trying at many places he managed to join a hotel as a sweeper. But he was "caught" in operation *Muskan*, handed over to CHILDLINE, presented before the Child Welfare Committee, which placed him in a NGO home to continue his studies. But he left the home and began rag-picking to earn while the junk dealer suggested to him to collect water bottles near the railway tracks. *Sushma*, 16 years, was forced to discontinue her studies and work at selling fruits in the trains along with her sister to repay their debts after her father died of alcoholism. As she said, "We had to stand for the family."

<sup>27</sup> As explained earlier, these 62 children and young persons were not from the original 2148 surveyed in the first phase.

<sup>28</sup> All names of the children have been changed to protect their identity. And only those details are being related here for which they have given written consent.



Arpit (all of 8), lives with his grandmother near Faridabad railway station because their slum in Delhi was demolished and the family had to shift to the village, but he comes daily to Delhi along with his grandmother and many others who continue to work here but have to commute long distances. While his grandmother works in the railway bungalows as a maid, he collects plastic bottles etc. from the railway station to sell to the junk dealer. Soniq (16) had a lorry driver father, who was so ashamed of testing HIV-positive that he committed suicide. When relatives expelled her mother from the house she had to start working in the fields with her mother. The income was not enough so she found out about ICDS, got food and medicines, and enrolled in a vocational training for stitching. After that she worked in a tailor shop but the pay was still insufficient to support the family, so she began begging in trains with a transgender group. Her simple explanation: “The full responsibility of running the household lies on me.”

### **Abuse**

Some of the children related stories of abuse at home. Kiran (20) had a father who left her in the red light area of Bombay with a 'bua' (aunt) but the place was so oppressive that she ran away to the station. Shiva ran away from his family at Bhatapara at the age of 8 when his father hit him for asking for 10 rupees to play. Raj (30) lives with his family on the platform, but hasn't seen his father while his mother was a rag-picker who married again, drank a lot, and beat him like “*Jhansi ki Rani*” (the militant queen who rebelled against British rule). Ritu (17) is from Muradabad and when she was a little child her alcoholic father hung her mother from the ceiling fan. Her mother somehow escaped so her father remarried, and when Ritu turned 11 he sold her off to work as a domestic maid in Bengal. She ran away from there, returned home, only to be beaten by her father, and her brother did “*galat kaam*” (sexual abuse) with her, so she fled to the station.

Many children seemed to come from broken families and wished to take charge of their own lives. Birju (12) was left behind at Udhana station 5 years ago when his parents took a train to go to the village. When they returned they found him and took him home, but he returned to the station as his father used to beat him and the 'mother' was actually a step-mother. Laxman (18) had a mother who burnt herself and his father took a second wife, fulfilling her every desire. But his father took poison when he learnt that she gave all the money to someone else, so Laxman came to the station “to live on my own terms”. He now faces murder charges and is involved in smuggling liquor, but to “protect my family from police and others I have cut off my relationship with them and don't visit them.” Shekhar (18) felt he was “psychologically disturbed” by his stepmother and decided to move out of the home.

### **Living on own terms**

Some of the case studies gave a deeper insight into what “living on my own terms” could mean. Sonu, 17 years, is the eldest son of a family living in a resettlement colony in Delhi. He moved to the station for “fun and work” when he failed in Class V and left studying. Amir, 15 years, similarly moved to the station with his friends, after he “got bored” at home when his father died. Vishal (18) also failed while his siblings got good marks in school, and his father beat him and would not give him any gifts. So he left home. Salman (27) said he was an angry child and had a fight with his father one day, so he left home without fully understanding what made him do so. Suraj (10) lives with his family near the Rajahmundry railway station. His parents could not afford to send him to school so he first joined his brother at a mechanic shop and then worked in a teashop, but the working hours were not to his liking so he escaped to the station.

Arun (19) lives in a night shelter and is in contact with the railway station since the last 3 years. He relates, “I belonged to the upper caste and was not allowed to eat non-veg. But I had several friends who were from lower caste, and I started eating non-veg in their home secretly. Father very strictly told me not to meet my friends who belonged to lower caste ... After this I met a friend who encouraged me to leave home, and we planned to go to city to act in films, as we had the experience of acting in dramas in village ... When I got to know that I had sexually transmitted

disease, I was afraid that my family will know, so I left.” Abdul (18) lives with friends near Delhi railway station and started working from the early age of 10. He would study in the day and work in a band at night. Later he started working in a clothes factory and his parents came and started living with him. “One day my father scolded me and it was then that I left home for the first time.”

### ***Repeated leaving***

There were quite a few cases where the children had been “rescued-and-restored” and then left home again. Rahul (19) ran away a couple of times because his uncle wished him to do well in school, but was caught by the railway police each time and restored home, where he was beaten, so he made up his mind to leave home. Saurabh (17) had a very strict father who admitted him to a boarding school. He broke a window glass there and was so scared that he ran away. He was rescued by an NGO in Vishakhapatnam and sent home. He was beaten badly and blamed for his father’s leg being amputated. So he left home and went to Vijayawada where he was again caught and restored. Then he ran away a third time. His dilemma is: “I understand that I need to take care of my family but it is not easy for me to settle on my own as I have been arrested thrice and I am still not eligible to work as I am less than 18 years.”

Neeraj (18) was beaten by his stepmother and his father did not care. One day he left home to go to his grandparents, but they were scared and scolded and hit him. So he left again but was caught by the RPF and sent back to find that his mother has divorced and married again. He was made to do farm work and he was not comfortable living with this family. So he left home again. Pawan (16 and affected by polio) was good in studies but his parents forced him to do better. After both his parents committed suicide his grandparents put him in a hostel, where he was ill-treated and sexually abused. When the hostel staff forced him to go home, he tried to run away and was caught twice by CHILDLINE and put in an NGO home, but he escaped and began cleaning train coaches and begging.

Tarun (25) was assigned to clean the poultry shed by his parents when they came upon hard times, but he did not like the stink. He was confident that his grandparents would take good care of him, so decided to go to their place. But, “The bus driver recognised me and sent me back to home. I was beaten severely by my father. I decided to permanently leave home. After some days when I got some money to pay bills, I left home.” Vikram (18) lives alone near Delhi railway station and is in contact with the railways since last 10 years. His mother left home and took his younger brother with him. “I was left with my father, uncle, and grandmother. My uncle used to scold me when I wet the bed. So I left home, went to the railway station, and sat in a train and reached Delhi. After living about 8-9 years at the railways, I was sent home about a year ago. But I came back as my uncle kicked me.”

### ***Other***

Apart from the above cases, several of the respondents in the quantitative survey had mentioned 'other' reasons for coming to the railway station. The qualitative case studies revealed some more aspects of what the other reasons could be. Gaurav (14) lives with his employer. He had a fight with a boy from the neighbourhood he lived in earlier. “I broke his head and there was a big fight between his and my family. So I decided to leave home and have never visited again.” Pratibha (11) has been in contact with the railways as long as she can remember. “My mother became sick and a dog bit my father and both died. Our house in village was on mortgage and we were in huge debt. My mother, when she was very sick, asked the woman (whom I now call mother) to look after us when she is not there and we started to live with her and beg at the station.”

Salmaan (17) lives with his family near Surat railway station. “There was a fight between my parents and father left us. We knew about this station as we took trains from here to go to the village. So I and my brother came here and found work.” Kajal (15) also lives with a family near the station and has been in contact with the railways since last several years. “I used to live in a joint

family with father, mother, grandfather, uncle, aunt. Father used to work in a chicken shop. He got paralysed and my uncle and aunt started fighting and harassing. So we left the village and came to the city, where father used to beg. Father used to drink a lot. He died. Then my mother brought me and my brother and sister to the railway station and I and mother started begging.”

## ii) Agency at the station

For the children and young people, agency at the station was manifested in the occupations they chose to earn a living, even within the limited options they could choose from, and how they chose tasks as well as locations so that they could optimise their opportunity to increase incomes or reduce drudgery.

### *Earning money*

All the children who mentioned the amount they earned during their interviews estimated their daily income in the range of Rs 150 to 400 per day. Rani (29) used to live with her family in Nagpur. There was little food to eat as her father had killed a man for which he was sent to jail. So she joined her mother to beg for money at the station. Sonam (12) is also from Nagpur and followed others in her community in 'ring gymnastics' inside the trains at Nagpur to earn enough to support her family. “My mother and I go to the station at 7 in the morning, she puts on some lipstick on to my cheeks and kohl in my eyes, then we get on to the train.” Shekhar (18) used to sell *chhachh* (buttermilk) inside trains before he met some *kinnars* (transgender) and they gave him an opportunity to make a better living. Kartik (16) began with cleaning trains and then shifted to earning twice as much by selling *chana* (horse-gram). Similarly Amir (15) used to beg before he started collecting plastic bottles from the trains, eventually moving to selling more categories of waste that could be collected from or near the station.

Ravi (17) lives with his uncle and cousin in Surat and left his studies to sell popcorn on the trains to send money home to his family in their village in Madhya Pradesh. Radha (12) comes from the *banjara* (gypsy) community in Rajasthan and has joined her cousins to sing on the trains so she can contribute to her grandmother's treatment. Laxman (18) was arrested for stealing and the police thrashed him for a week after which he joined a *bhai* (slang for don) in smuggling liquor. But now his girlfriend has asked him to stop smuggling so he is determined to learn diamond cutting and join the trade. Shrikant left his job smuggling liquor for an 'aunty' because tying the quarter bottles on his leg to travel in the train was hurting him, and began supplying water bottle boxes instead. Raj (30) too switched to smuggling liquor from collecting water bottles and is now selling air pillows. Pushpa (16) decided early on that she would not smuggle liquor like her mother and prefers to beg instead.

Sonu (17) related that he used to initially sell *bidi* and tobacco on the trains in Delhi which required giving bribes to the police. To increase his earnings he began working at a tea stall near the station. One day he was showing his girlfriend some videos and photographs when her father passed by and made some derogatory comments. Sonu became so irritated that he left the tea stall and came back to the station. Amir (15) is another boy who lives according to his 'mood'. He used to work at a catering job in Ahmadabad but takes any train to travel to new places. Suraj (10) collects coal at Rajahmundry station to sell it to local retailers along with begging. He has been rescued by police and CHILDLINE four times but keeps returning to the station because that gives him more income than working at a tea stall or a mechanic shop.

### *Secure work*

Some work turns out to be seasonal or short-term so the children learn to adapt. Thus, Prakash (20) was selling cold Pepsi on the train when he realised that purchases declined after summer and so switched to selling *chana*. He also tried selling oranges but lifting a crate weighing 30 kg turned out to be a heavy task. Saurabh (17) has worked as a sweeper in a hotel, a cleaner in a lodge, a

rag-picker collecting plastic waste from trains and wine shops, stealing petrol from vehicles, as a tea vendor with a railway contractor, and selling key chains, handkerchiefs and towels in moving trains. Neeraj (18) initially resorted to begging in the train and earned enough money to watch a couple of films before reaching home. Then he worked as a cleaner in a hotel, cleaned train coaches, begged in smaller stations, started working as rag-picker with a group in Elluru, worked with a tea vendor, and now sells water bottles in the train.

Finding a safe place can often be a complex task. Rahul (19) prefers the foot bridge where the railway police do not harass. When he was sexually harassed by adults at the station, he found refuge in an NGO shelter. But he “felt tired of all the counselling by the NGO” so left for Rajahmundry to work as a cleaner in a tea stall, which he had to leave due to a raid against child labourers. “I started working in a mobile noodles shop, but was ‘caught’ by government officials under Operation *Muskan* and sent to NGO and joined a school. I had a fight with one of my classmate there, and he was seriously injured. So I ran off to Duvvada, worked as a rag picker there for 8 months and also stole iron pipes until I was identified by local people. I escaped and started working in a hotel near the station. I met other people there and made friends and started working in a canteen selling water and tea in trains. At present I am working as a cook in the Railway Canteen”.

Amit (11) collected information about trains that stopped at the next station to get on those trains after they crossed the station so that he would not be harassed by the police. Sushma (16) and her sister started selling fruits in short distance trains, with help from an uncle who introduced them to a police constable. After some days CHILDLINE caught her as a child labourer. She says, “I do not understand, what is this child labour? I have been working in my home. My family is not in a position to support us but now the officials force me not to support my family because I am too young to work. I was scared to see my mother begging unknown people to leave me. I was released on my uncle’s guarantee and I changed the position and shifted to bus complex to sell fruits. My earnings decreased because of this”.

Sunita (14) does not travel in long distances trains for reasons of ‘safety’, and reports that in short distance trains the people “understand our language and are sympathetic to us”. She tries to hide in washrooms especially when the train reaches stations with CHILDLINE. Pawan (16 and afflicted with polio) has found that smaller railway stations are safer than the bigger ones for begging and trains where people speak the same language are also better for earning. Tarun (25) moved to Warangal as he was told that it was a major junction that was ‘safe’. Pratibha (11) has learnt to check out the station before starting to beg. Kajal (15) does not beg during the day but in the evening because then there are more passengers and she has learnt to instantly recognise a *lukkha* (soft mark). Arpit (8) does not go where the big children are because they do not let him work at waste-collection.

### iii) Harassing agency

Harassment is a continuous theme in the children’s memories about their lives. The very context of their lives makes them vulnerable to exploitation of many kinds. Their stories lay out a terrain of utter insecurity, which they negotiate by at times accepting the conditions, at other times rebelling against them, either surviving within them or escaping from them as they try to pick up the thread of lives they choose to survive in within their constraints.

#### *By police*

Shekhar (18) describes how he has lost count of the number of times the RPF officers have chased him on the tracks while he was picking waste and beat him up with *lathis* (wooden sticks), wrongly accusing him of committing theft, issuing *challans* (fines), which he has had to pay. On one occasion (when he was 12) they caught and put him in the observation home, which was “like a jail”, and he ran away back to Nagpur. Prakash (20) adds that there were two policemen at the

station who asked children daily for Rs 10 for permission to vend on the train. Rani (29) relates that there is a woman constable posted at Nagpur station who asks for Rs 200 rupees every day, and she also has to pay Rs 3000 rupees 'fine' to the RPF monthly for getting on to the trains without a ticket. Sonu (17) was collecting bottles when the RPF caught him: "What was my fault? Why did they send me to the remand home? Why did the beatings continue?"

Kirti (22) was even more mystified. One day when she was younger and playing at the station, some ladies arrived and took her away to the Amravati remand home. "I couldn't figure what was happening with me, and nor was I able to do anything, this kind of incident was happening the first time with me. I was feeling really frightened at the big building they had kept me in. There was a madam there, who used to be very angry, and scold and beat up all the girls. She used to come and threaten me saying, 'I will make you sit naked like the other girls near the window'." Sonam (12) and her mother were returning home by train when someone committed a robbery and the police caught and took them to the jail inside the station. "The female cops stripped my mother and frisked her; they also opened up her hair-plait. They didn't strip me just frisked me with my clothes on."

Prakash (20) found that hauling a 30 kg crate of oranges was difficult when the RPF was running behind him. Ritu (17) recounted how when she and her husband were chatting at the station after midnight, a policeman arrived, chased away her husband, and raped her. Pushpa (16) reported that when she was begging, "a fat lady police with brown eyes took me to the *chowki* (outpost) and hit me very much with a stick". Arpit, (8) was begging on the platform when he was caught by the RPF and taken to the Child Welfare Committee, who warned his parents not to send him for begging and then sent him to a NGO to continue his studies. Arpit "was shocked as I was unable to stay with my parents. I ran away from the NGO and stayed with my family ... I wonder the reasons why Police catch us at railway station and send us to children homes when our parents are asking for us".

Pratibha (11) is wise beyond her years. She begs with two daughters of the woman she calls 'mother', and gives anything above Rs 100 collected from begging to her. If a policeman chases her away from the railway station, she goes to the bus depot. Once a man offered her money to go with him and she reported him to the police but "they did nothing and asked me to deal with it on my own", so she now throws her slippers at such men. Another time a lady caught and took her to the police, who took her to the Children's Home. She called her 'mother' and, when she came, she asked the police, "Why have I been brought here, what crime have I done, and the police had no reply. So they had to let me go ... If the government does not want us to beg then it should give us some money".

Kajal (15) lives with her family but has been caught by the police and brought to the station. Then her mother got her ID and obtained her release. Her brother was also caught by the police on a false charge of theft, kept in custody for 2 days and beaten up, and then released when the stolen item was found somewhere else. So now if anyone harasses them, they together chase away the person or go out of the station. Sometimes the rickshaw pullers and other locals also come to the rescue. "We are 3-4 persons here. One of us goes to a different hotel each day to beg for food. Then we eat together. I give my earnings to my mother."

### **By passengers**

Rani (29) was begging one day when a passenger started misbehaving and put his hand inside her blouse. When she cursed him and threatened him, he filed a complaint with the RPF saying that "we threatened to throw him out of the moving train". Lokesh (16) was playing the *dholak* (drum) inside the train when some passengers shouted at him to get out of the train, and one person even slapped him. Sonam (12) was standing near the toilet, when a passenger dressed as an army officer signalled her to get inside the toilet with him. She was also slapped one day by a drunken vendor inside the train. Sushma (16) was travelling in the train when she and her sister were



molested by a group of boys, and they got down at a station and ran. Her sister was forced to have sex with an elderly person in the train, when she was travelling alone. But she states, “This attack brought change in me and I decided that I need to be more aggressive and suspicious.”

### **By others**

Rupa (17) said that when the RPF kept her husband behind bars for 4 months she worked for many months at the *safai* (cleaning) house and during that time the boys living at the station raped her. Sonu (17) used to wash plates in the hotel near the station and the hotel owner would give him food but no money. Kartik (16) was selling *chana* in the train but the DST gang (of youth) began harassing him so he left vending and started to collect garbage from the trains. Lokesh (16) recalls how he used to get into fights many times with the other kids who got onto the train and encroached on 'his' compartment. Kiran (20) says, “When I roam around at the Nagpur station, the women who know me curse me by saying I sleep with ten men”. Rani (29) had a fight with some boys at the station, so the boys dragged her to an empty luggage compartment inside the train, and kicked her and would have raped her if the police had not arrived. She has to also quietly put up with the daily teasing and misbehaviour by the fruit vendors.

Ritu (17) met *Sultan* at the Delhi *Gurudwara* and lived with him for 5 months, but one night he and his 20 friends “*mere saath galat kiya*” (raped me) at the Metro park. He told her that he would marry her, but she refused. Rahul (19) was forced to have sex with a couple of older youth at the footbridge on the station, and he “was scared as they used to be hard and they used to beat me too. I have cried a lot because of pain”. Saurabh (17) was himself exploited by people whom he trusted and now confesses, “I force children working in the rag-shop to have sex with me”. He has been caught and imprisoned several times and says, “I think officials know that homosexuals are there even in Juvenile Homes. The law, police, NGO etc. are supposed to take care, but I have to save myself from the system”.

Neeraj (18) observes that physical and sexual harassment are common on the streets for money and pleasure. He was raped by three people when working as a rag-picker and sees it as a common occurrence. His take is, “It happens mostly within the group members regularly. It creates bond and friendship between us and results in supporting each other morally and financially”. He also complains, “I do not understand why people are forcefully trying to send us to homes or family ... We know that society is not safe to survive individually but we can still survive”. Amit (11) was caught under Operation *Muskan* and sent to the Children's Home. He too is puzzled, “We have come all the way leaving our own land to solve our problems and earn for ourselves; NGOs work is not supporting us but restricting us”.

Sunita (14 and with a polio-affected right leg) was sexually assaulted by her grandfather when she was alone at home, and she began to understand, “it is safer to stay OUT of home”. Arun (19) has been forced to have sex with co-workers as he had no options since he was unable to leave as the owner had not paid his salary. Pawan (16 and also polio-affected) says there is sexual abuse in the group with whom he lives. He has participated in the same with new members who join the group. He feels, “NGO and JJ system have their own agenda which they achieve on child's cost. I have bitter experience”. Sonia (16) was afraid to work as a transgender, she was sexually harassed by other members in the group and also forced to have oral sex with passengers, but was able to earn 5 times more so she continued.

Gaurav (14) says, “I don't need help from anyone. I earn by myself and feed myself”. But once he went to another station and the officials from the Children's Home caught and locked him there. After two days he found an opportunity and ran away. Once Salmaan (17) was caught, his hands were tied, and then taken to the Children's Home. He was released next day when his mother came with his ID and other documents. He has been taken four times to the 'white building' at the station, where the RPF makes him sit, the Ticket Checker makes a receipt for Rs 250, and he has been released each time. Vikram (18) lives alone near the Delhi railway station and collects



plastic bottles. “Police knows I work here and is helpful. Other big children at the station do not let me work, so I don't go where they stay. I give my earnings to my grandmother.”

#### iv) **Fostering agency**

Given the prevalent air of fear and insecurity and harassment by police, passengers, and others, it is a daily challenge for the children to survive. They are able to do so because they have recognised their context and figured out ways in which they can beat the system of oppression or, at least, live with it. In this they are assisted by a number of informal and formal institutions or individuals who foster agency. Abdul (18) lives with friends in Delhi who have built a good rapport with the GRP whereby they pay a sum of money daily, and in return the police inform them if someone from another *thana* (police station) outside the station has come to catch them. Abdul says, “We all help each other. Once I had given a loan of Rs 50,000 to a boy. After several months he refused to return the money. So I stabbed him, after which I had to leave the previous station ... We earn for our families. I had to pay Rs 5,000 every month for the loss due to an accident in which all our music instruments got destroyed.”

Tarun (25) was caught while stealing shoes in the train and handed over to the Vijayawada railway police who sent them to an NGO and he says he was very happy as there was no work, no school, and no rules. But after 3 days he was bored and went back to the railway station “where I can stay safe”. The NGO has helped him when he was sick and also sent him to de-addiction camp. They called his parents, but “I liked my life on streets and was happy there”. Now, in a curious twist, he works in CHILDLINE. Rahul (19) met a boy in the train and decided to go to Tirumala Temple with him. He met a group of children who used to clean trains, and worked with this group. He then struck up a friendship with a Railway Canteen worker and started staying with him. Laxman (18) lives with his friends and claims he has given Rs 40,000 to various needy people. Birju (12) was given food and a place to live by a *bhai* when his parents abandoned him at the station.

Radha (16) says, after her mother's death, she got emotional support from a woman who has children and a husband at the station and started living with her. Sonu (17) was given a place to stay outside his uncle's shop initially, but after his uncle shifted his shop, he now changes location with the help of his friends to evade the police. He also takes care not to make friends with boys who take 'solution'. Pushpa (16) provides emotional support to her sister in the hostel but refuses to bring her to the station as she values that her sister should complete her study and live a good life. Rani (29) slipped and her leg got stuck between the train and the station and she was saved by a friend who took her to the Mayo government hospital and got her treated for only Rs 10. Shekhar (18) was similarly helped by a railway person to get admission to a government hospital when his fingers were cut in an accident. Ritu (17) made a 'brother' at the station when she gave him Rs 100 for eating and hid him from other kids who were troubling him. Now they help each other with food and money.

After her mother's death, Kirti (24) was looked after by 2 *bhaiyas* (brothers) selling water bottles at the station. In return, she began going on the train and earning money daily to give to *bhaiya*. “I was safe at the station because of *bhaiya*; I had found support in him.” She also said, “My daughter wasn't getting admission in the government school, so I asked *chacha* (uncle) who sells tea outside the station, and who I save my money with for the future of my children, to help me with my daughter's admission. *Chacha* sent *chachi* to school to vouch for me and got my daughter admitted in the government school”. Sonu (17) also has a *paanwala* 'uncle' with whom he keeps his savings for future use. Shekhar (18) describes how he saw a *chachi* at the *basti* (slum) near the bridge when he got to the station, asked her for some water, told her his story, and that led to the *chachi* giving him food to eat and treating him like a son. He also saves his money with the *paanwala chacha*.

Shrikant (17) was enrolled in a private school by an NGO for his 'future'. But in 10-12 days he ran away to his grandmother. The school staff came and took him back. He studied there for 1 or 2

years but left his studies and came to the station for good. Suresh (12) agrees that he had come to an NGO centre to learn drawing and writing but once their favourite *bhaiya* left, the number of children has declined. Arun (19) stayed with an NGO till he was cured from STD, he got vocational training too and a bank account, but he feels, “Friends play an important role in my life”. Ravi (17) also feels that no organisation helps children like him. Birju (12) says his experience tells him that NGOs come to the station to catch children only. Laxman (18) was once produced before the JJ Board on a murder charge and sentenced to 2 years in “jail”, but he came out in 2 months with the help of *bhai*.

## v) Future space for agency

The quantitative survey revealed that 58% of the children surveyed had some idea of the future. The numbers increased as the child became a teenager and then an adult. The qualitative stories also reveal a range of options that the young people are considering for what they could do in future.

Ravi (17) sells popcorn in the trains and says he is able to earn Rs 400-500 daily. He gives Rs. 300-400 out of this to *bade papa* (elder father) for depositing in the bank and sends money every month to his family farming at his village in Madhya Pradesh. Shrikant (17) lives with his family at the station and earns Rs 300 daily from his job in a stall for loading water bottle boxes in the trains. He keeps Rs 100 and gives Rs 200 to his grandmother for safekeeping, but not to his mother because she will drink it all away. Whatever Radha (12) earns from singing and begging in the trains she gives to her mother for a rainy day. Sonu (17) says he earns Rs 300 daily and saves most of it after buying clothes and food. He keeps the money in an inner pocket of his pant to give to his family over the weekends, so that his younger brother and sister can complete their studies and he wants to renovate the house.

Arun (19) wanted to open his own tailoring shop, but did not get any support, so he works in a Railway pantry as a vendor. Sonia (16) has joined a transgendered group after failing to earn enough from tailoring and a job with a sugar manufacturing unit, and has now earned enough to begin work with a group of children who have worked with her previously and are continuing in begging work. Tarun (25) was earlier a rag-picker who has stolen iron rods and passenger's shoes, cleaned and begged in trains. He got good medical care and de-addiction services from an NGO but missed his life on streets. He got a job as a cleaner in a hotel, then again begged near pilgrimage sites, was imprisoned for chain snatching, worked at a railway canteen, and eventually joined CHILDLINE as a “spotter”. He was passionate about this work but got bored after working for 3 months, so he now plans to start a new life by setting up a noodles shop in Rajahmundry, which requires Rs 1½ lakh.

Saurabh (17) is scared that the NGO will send him back home. Staff from the NGO has counselled him, helped with food and accommodation and in other ways. But, as he says, “NGO cannot help me in my problems as I need to earn money, which they obviously cannot support in. NGO have their own interests which are different from those of child.” He feels he has received most of the support from his peers, the rag-shop owner and tea contractor. He is sure that the platform will help him in reaching his goal of starting his own tea shop. He wants to open a bank account, even though he knows it is difficult, since he has been arrested thrice and is still not eligible to work as he is less than 18 years.

Neeraj (18) is not interested in meeting his father and mother as he feels they have their own families. He does not regret leaving home, even though in the five years since leaving home he has not seen any love and protection from society. He wants to set up his own snacks shop near the wine shop where he can earn good money. He finds freedom on the railway station, so wants to continue living there. Arun (19) has saved money in a friend's account and will open his own account once his *Aadhaar* identity number is registered. He wants to open his *pan* shop after meeting a blind person who runs his own *pan* shop and with whom he regularly spends time to

learn the business. He is collecting money for it and has already found a person who is willing to sponsor half the sum. *Sonia* (16) has a dream to start her own phone and internet centre and earn for her family. She also wants to get married after 4 years.

These case studies give us a deeper insight into the trends coming out of the quantitative survey. Thus, the dominant factors of agency determining the journey to the station, that were reflected in the data for the need to survive as well as live according to one's own desires, are also seen in the stories of pressure on both the children and their families to earn enough for survival, with the stations offering a viable option for meeting that need. There are also strong indications of the desire to live on their own terms, but these are often linked in the stories to incidents of abuse and violence at home, illustrated also by several tales of repeatedly leaving broken and unhappy families.

While the quantitative data provides enough evidence for the station as a venue for practicing agency by providing opportunities to earn through collecting bottles, begging, and vending, what the stories related above give glimpses also about how the children respond to uncertainties in the situation at the station by switching jobs as and when they deem it necessary for secure work and thus can acquire multiple identities rather than just be runaway children. The other driver of finding safety from harassment comes across more powerfully in the stories, as there are many little tales of changing jobs, locations, trains, and even stations in search of safe work.

While only half the children said they experienced harassment at the station, mainly by the police, during the survey, the children's stories seem to indicate harassment as a continuous state of being, marked by periodic episodes of violence. The police are also firmly placed as agents of extortion, extracting money out of the meagre earnings and precious savings of the children. But it is not the police alone; the child protection agencies, the NGOs, older children, passengers, and other people working at the station, all seem to be embroiled in the cycle of exploitation and competition. The extent of violence to maintain these relationships of power is a severe indictment of how care and protection is absent for most vulnerable children.

The factor that enabled agency, as enumerated in Chapter 6, was mainly the presence of friends at the station, although as often as not the children were left fending for themselves. The stories reinforce the importance of friends, but they also point to another set of protective relationships with actual or adopted 'relatives' (uncles, aunties, *chachas*, *chachis*, *didis* and *bhais*), or with other workers at or outside the stations. The payment of protection money to the main harassers, the police, also figures widely in how agency is preserved. In some very specific circumstances, such as illness and schooling, the children relate how NGOs have helped them, although some have expressed their apprehension that the NGOs may separate them from livelihoods and friends.

About the future, the quantitative data showed that as many as 58% had some idea, while 41% were saving for that future. In the stories too there is an emphasis on saving for both themselves and their families, and choosing (and changing) occupations that would be able to sustain them over time. There are also tales of how selective they are in whom they give the savings to, preferring those who will save or spend frugally on necessities over those who splurge it all away. And they are very clear in this respect about the implicit contradiction between the NGO objective to rescue- and-restore and their own necessity to adapt and survive. Many of them see themselves as doing what is right and needful, and cannot understand what makes the child protection agencies obstruct that.

# 9. Major Conclusions

This study began with the proposition that it was necessary to determine the root causes of children coming into contact with the railways, as well as to document their experiences in their own words so as to gain a better understanding about their requirements and aspirations which could contribute to make our responses to them meaningful. When NCPCR decided to withdraw from such a study, AIWG-RCCR proposed to take up the challenge independently.

As a collective, AIWG-RCCR recognised that children who leave home, either on their own or under compulsion, are in need of care and protection, but the policy understanding is that they have to be rescued and restored home, or rescued and institutionalised. This right to protection - where codification of structures and protocols ensure protective custody and criminalisation - is given primacy over other entitlements of the child such as the right to agency.

We also recognised that “children in contact with railways” is not a homogeneous group and there is a need to identify the reasons children leave home or come to the station, and how they cope with the outside world. We therefore sought to promote the idea, from a child's perspective, that the child has “agency” and that this should be part of the laws and policies in India engaging with children.

Hence, the objective of this research was to document what choices children are opting for, what is the basis for these choices, and how these choices have eventually panned out. We also wished to document their aspirations and what, in their view, was the most suitable support they required to realise them. We expected that different strategies for support would emerge rather than a one-size-fits-all, and shed light on the diversity of children.

As detailed in Chapter 4, we also learnt to question some of the above propositions during the course of this study. For instance, we realised that not only were there possibly multiple strategies, but that there may be conflicting strategies. We also realised that extracting real value from the stories children tell requires time, patience, and a very sympathetic non-judgemental mind - especially to respond to their demands about the nature and purpose of the study.

And we have also concluded, in retrospect, that some critical areas of enquiry have not been covered in this study. These include more in-depth explorations into the relationship between the children and their biological or adopted families; how do they visualise concepts of care and protection and safety; what values do they attach to child labour and sexual activity; and how do changes in society make them more or less vulnerable.

What has emerged though, from the survey of 2148 children in contact with railways at 127 stations (2% of the total estimated by Railway Children UK from a sample of 413 at 75 stations), is that the majority (80%) of children are male, although 20% females are important in the depth of their experience. This is evident from the 62 detailed case studies that have been put together by the Core and Academic researchers. The majority (70%) are in the 10-19 years age group.

Since 44% trace their origins to the same city and 53% live with their families, while 71% say they go home, it is apparent that many children are with their families and not 'runaways', and their sense of 'agency' as well as 'responsibility' to family comes across strongly in the case studies. This is further strengthened by the data that shows 49% of them come to the station to earn money, while 21% declare they have come to live life on their own terms.

Living life on their own terms could mean anything from 'fun and work', or freedom from 'boredom', not wanting to study in school, rebelling against parental control (18% felt they were ill-treated when they went home), liberation from long working hours, escape from caste taboos, or economic independence.

But they all reveal a sense of personhood (linked to agency as “deliberative, reflective activity in framing, choosing, and executing his/her actions”<sup>29</sup>), of identity linked to dignity, and of the desire to carve out one’s own path - whether free of family ties or not.

There are the 47% who do not live with their family and many may have cut off links. While only 11% of the respondents in the quantitative survey indicated that abuse or ill-treatment was the cause of their leaving home (and 12% cite ‘other’ reasons), the case studies yield many complexities to the word ‘abuse’, ranging from abandonment to the oppression of the neighbourhood, to beatings and psychological harassment at the hands of members of the family or step-parents.

There are also stories of children repeatedly leaving home - the causes being the same: unwanted schooling; beatings; desire to be financially independent and live their own lives; ill-treatment at the hands of peers; the drudgery of farm work; and the perceived ‘freedom’ of the street and the station. All these collectively point to forms of ‘agency’ that are not acceptable in children, although the same drivers would be seen as ‘initiative’ in adults.

The desire to ‘escape’ from insufferable conditions, both for the children as well as their families [see Box at the end of this section], has spilled over into the station as a location for agency. It manifests in the choice of occupation that will optimise earning. While the survey data suggests that collecting plastic bottles (31%), begging (23%), and selling & vending (20%) are the main choices, the case studies reveal a mix of begging, performing, stealing, selling (a huge range of products), smuggling, catering, cooking, and cleaning - carefully chosen to maximise returns.

Harassment is, of course, a lived daily experience - as 55% of the children respond in the survey. The railway police are seen as the main culprits (61%) followed by other youth or adults (27%). But the stories the children relate how wrongful charges, extortion of money and sex, unwarranted confinement, and beatings without cause constitute the range of actions of the men (and women) in uniform. One of the helpless queries the children pose is: why is working considered to be a crime?

Not that the children are safe when the police are not there. Their stories illustrate the insidious attitudes of train passengers, and the rapacious competitiveness of older children, family members, and even peers. While 42% complain of persecution by the police and 28% of persecution by adults, what emerges in the stories is that the culture of masculinity has been internalised and those who have been persecuted in their childhood turn upon younger children when they grow into adults, or sometimes act as mentors.

However, there are also stories of how agency overcomes, or tries to overcome, harassment and extortion. While 47% of the surveyed children said they received help when needed for food (50%), illness and accidents (41%), resolving fights (38%), and finance (35%); the case studies revealed a much richer tapestry of self-assertion and mutual cooperation. In this, friends and ‘mothers’, ‘uncles’ and ‘aunts’ and ‘brothers’ and ‘sisters’, play a critical role in structuring a different kind of ‘family’.

Several modes of coping with exploitation, harassment, abuse, and conditions inimical to earning or living life independently come through in the case studies. These include earning and saving enough to set up independent work units; moving away from the locus of harassment by changing location; cooperation among groups of friends to protect each other; linking with actual or adopted ‘relatives’ and others at or outside the stations for saving money or getting loans, paying protection money to the police; or taking shelter with NGOs for specific circumstances.

While a large chunk of 41% say they do save (46% said they did not earn enough to save), and 58% had some idea of a future plan; the case studies painted a much richer picture of what the children thought they

<sup>29</sup> Following Springer, A Developmental Theory of Situated, Agentic Personhood, [https://www.springer.com/cda/content/document/cda\\_downloadaddocument/9781441910646-c1.pdf?SGWID=0-0-45-802602-p173913829](https://www.springer.com/cda/content/document/cda_downloadaddocument/9781441910646-c1.pdf?SGWID=0-0-45-802602-p173913829)



could do about the future. Many of them earn between Rs 150 to 400 per day and even out of this they save or give to family (if they are not giving bribes). They wish to do tailoring, or help children, open little shops, get married, strengthen multiple identities - and these aspirations are based on the possibilities they see around them, not on a knowledge of what official schemes have to offer.

The details of transition as the children grow into adults also indicate some of the possibilities of rehabilitation and prevention that emerge from practice. Thus begging may be the preserve of the young children but it declines steadily with age and the two trades that show a steady increase as the children grow older are collecting bottles and selling and vending. The aspiration that grows is to learn a skill and begin one's own work, primarily as related to the railways and the movement of large numbers of people who are also consumers.

There is, certainly, diversity among this set of general trends. Girls are differently located than boys both in terms of vulnerability as well as options. Age differentials also dictate what transitions in work take place that are also linked to seasonal schedules and market demands. 'Criminal' activities pay more but that is offset by the costs to be paid for avoiding persecution. The railway station is not always the locus of all activities although it occupies a unique position around which many activities can be constructed - which is conditioned by the scope and safety it offers.

It is from this large canvas that some recommendations have emerged, both after due consideration of what the data and the stories are revealing, as well as on the basis of suggested actions by members of the partner groups and some children, and advisers and experienced individuals with whom the preliminary findings and stories were shared through disseminations and consultations. Two clarifications need to be made: firstly, we have omitted normative statements but retained all the specific action points; and secondly, this is a continuous process of engagement and we expect the recommendations to get further refined over time and space.

### Why are so many children with families?

The answer seems to be 'migration' from rural to urban areas, in search of a living, for entire families accompanied by their children. But, as both the stories of the children as well as extensive research conducted by one of our members<sup>30</sup> outline, the reasons for migration are deeply rooted in the economic policies that are driving development internationally. On the one hand, is the global imagination of the city as an 'engine' of growth - an engine that leads the gravy train to greater prosperity through vast fields of high productivity; yielding surpluses that will eventually 'trickle down' to the bottom of the pyramid. On the other, is the steady decimation of peasant agriculture so that agriculture can be gobbled up by the private corporate machine, while the deprived indigent peasant rides the train to the city to provide the cheap labour that fuels productivity, and also explains repeated statements by policy makers that 50% of the Indian population will be urban by 2030.

<sup>30</sup> Roy, Dunu, 'In the Name of the Poor: Urban Growth and Renewal', in Imrana Qadeer (ed), India - Social Development Report 2014: Challenges of Public Health, Council for Social Development, pp 42-48, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2015



# 10. Recommendations

*These have been finalised in consultation with partner organisations [Annexure 12.19] and are now offered for wider debate and discussion among all those interested in child welfare.*

In order to arrive at the recommendations from this study, we place the 2010 Recommendations for 'Safeguarding the Rights of Children in Contact with Railways' of the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights within the overall framework of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, the United Nations General Comment No. 10 (2007) on Children's Rights in Juvenile Justice, and the United Nations Resolution 64/162 on Guidelines for the Alternative care of Children, to lay down the fundamental premises of this study:

- Children must be enabled to exercise self determination to realise the totality of their rights
- The conditions for enabling should conform to the standards and principles of child rights
- Children are capable of forming views and must be allowed to express them
- Children's views are to be heard in all matters affecting them
- Their views must be given due consideration in accordance with their age and evolving capacities
- In view of the variety of person-hood and agency of children, customised approaches are required rather than a single standardised one
- It is the responsibility of the duty bearer to provide the safe and comfortable environment within which the child can make informed choice without fear of retribution

The Recommendations, therefore, are differentiated for the following institutions:

## Railways

Care and protection means that the economic and social value that the children contribute to the Railways through their unpaid services must be assessed and compensated, dignified opportunities must be made available for earning and saving opportunities, protection must be provided from harassment in the name of the law, and this has to be extended to their families with whom the children are in contact, as well as to the adopted family of friends, shopkeepers, vendors, "uncles", "aunts", "didis" and "bhais".

The current SOP<sup>31</sup> of the Railways has to be revisited as it violates the judgement of the High Court of Delhi, and the principles of the JJ Act 2015, the National Policy for Children, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, so as to mitigate the continuing harassment of the children at the stations. The children who come in contact with the Railways do so because the Railways offer a viable opportunity for the objectives of the children and hence, the Railways is duty-bound to provide care and protection, and not rescue-and-restore, as is made out in the present SOP. The principle of Corporate Social Responsibility must be invoked in this regard.

<sup>31</sup> NCPCR had come out with the recommendations for safeguarding the rights of children in contact with railways in year 2010. Non-implementation of these recommendations was taken up before Delhi High Court in year 2012 by Khushboo Jain. In response to this case, NCPCR drafted a SOP and attempted to get Court's approval for this SOP which was not entertained by the Court and instead clear directions were issued. Despite this, NCPCR went ahead and succeed in getting Railway Board to issue a SOP in December 2013. This SOP was heavily criticised by all quarters but it continued to be rolled out and at a later stage led to establishment of exclusive Railway- Childline at several railway stations across India. This SOP was revised and re-issued on 05.03.2015 by Railway Board to make it appear as if it is compliant of Court order and also addressed some of the legal lacunae in it. In the meantime JJ Act of 2000 was repealed and the JJ Act of 2015 got enacted with effect from 15.01.2016. Then, in a perplexing way, Railway Board issued another document on 04.06.2018 which contained "Guidebook for creating a Child Friendly and Protective Environment for Children in Contact with Railways" prepared by NCPCR which makes references to JJ Act of 2015 and also to the content of SOP.

The institution for care and protection within the Railways cannot be the Railway Police or Protection Force, which have been set up for entirely criminal and custodial protocols, even though there are instances, such as in Bengal, where the RPF is said to have played a positive role. A separate institution within the Personnel Department of the Indian Railways should be set up with specialised expertise in the care and protection of children. Where there is conflict with railway law, the law should be amended according to the principle of no harm.

This specialised institution should organise extensive consultations with the children and their families or associations, care givers, agencies who have experience with dealing with these children and have critiqued the uni-dimensional rescue-and-restore approach, and develop specific schemes to deal with the issues of harassment, confinement, penalisation, exploitation, and sexual abuse that have been detailed in this report, as well as other issues that the various stakeholders may raise.

The concept of the 'open shelter' should be revisited and redesigned, so that the children coming in contact with the Railways could be provided an atmosphere of care and concern that does not restrict their freedom to think and act in their own best interests. A 'drop-in shelter' at every relevant station, without custodial care and mandatory reporting, and under a specialised and competent institution within the Railways, should offer facilities of safe refuge and security for earnings and savings, as well as facilitate the association of children and their care-givers, with special attention to the most vulnerable. There also have to be suitable mechanisms to accommodate gender and children of different age groups at these open shelters, especially if they are functioning at night.

## Ministry of Women and Child Development

The 'rescue-and-restore' mode for children in public places that characterises juvenile justice must be challenged as the only mode. It has to give way to a holistic programme of restoration, rehabilitation, and reintegration. At the same time, a more nuanced view has to be taken of children who are already in beneficial contact with their families, are in public places by compulsion or accident, or are escaping from conditions of abuse. For such children, as shown in this study, care and protection resonate around the freedom to have fun and work, escape from irrelevant taboos, acquire space for social and economic expression of their needs, and be safe from exploitation and abuse. Paradoxically, the very institutions set up for their care and protection, such as shelter homes, have become the instruments for their further exploitation.

Children's agency has to be nurtured and protected from suppression. For this the existing institutions, such as the Special Juvenile Police Units, the Child Protection Services, and the Child Welfare Committees, have to undergo re-training and re-orientation courses that do not focus only on rescue-and-restore, but look at children from the point of view of agency that children display and have been documented in this report. In addition, the definition and rights of the child in need of care and protection in schemes such as the Integrated Child Protection Scheme must be looked at anew and critiqued in consultation with children.

The Ministry must, therefore, set up appropriate decentralised consultative bodies at the State and District level where the views of children in contact with public places can be periodically and systematically heard - once every month at the district level, and once every six months at the State level. This can be done through existing but reframed institutions such as the *Yuvak Kendras*, the *Bal Kendras*, and the Integrated Programme for Street Children. There has to be an acceptance in policy of the fact that such children do contribute to the economic and social value of public places, and that they can earn and learn provided the necessary structures are in place and their agency is respected as a part of national reconstruction.

Consultation with children in public places and their active associations is at the heart of redesigning care and protection, and children must be given the opportunity to articulate their own considered needs directly and not leave that for experts and adults alone. Their specific needs under programmes like Integrated Child Development Services with links to Right to Food, Right to Education, Juvenile Justice,

and Right to be Heard on a range of issues including child labour and sexual offences, can be considered only when the Ministry provides for bodies like *Bal Panchayats*, Children's and Youth clubs, and working children associations to be active participants in deliberations on policy and programmes and their implementation.

Children in public places are manifestations of a wider churning in society where there is large scale migration of entire families and children are forced to work as part of this search for survival. According to Economic Survey 2016-17, in the five years ended 2016, an average of 90 lakh people migrated between states every year for either education or work<sup>32</sup> and the number of working children in Census 2011 was 44 lakh<sup>33</sup>. Hence, child care and protection has to be part of a larger programme for migrant workers and restoration of livelihoods in the source areas. The Ministry has to collaborate with other Ministries and the States to earmark funds for these activities. Once again, consultation with children and their families is essential to grasp what are the drivers for their movement into public places and what are their needs.

One of the major needs that emerged from this study is the support required for the spirit of entrepreneurship and survival against odds displayed by the children who have contributed their stories to this study. Critical needs for skill development, banking assistance, loans and credit lines, vocational education, and market support, as emerging from this study, can be incorporated into child care and protection institutions that already exist or can be set up. In the context of the Railways, the Open Shelters (as originally functioning) and Drop-In Shelters that have already been experimented with, can become the nodes for such support with linkages to the other concerned departments through a special cell in the Ministry. This will become especially important as the children approach the age of 18 years and are then bereft of whatever support the Ministry may be able to offer.

The Ministry has to set up vocational training facilities at or near non-A1 stations to teach a trade to the children, either in waste processing or in the vending and hawking, or providing customer services, while at the same time providing education and skills. So that by the time they become adults they can earn a livelihood in or near the larger A1 stations. If a regular and assured income is assured then the adults are likely to earn enough money to go home and set up their own, providing there is inter-Ministerial cooperation to assure livelihoods in the source areas from which the children have come. It is the absence of such a livelihood that was responsible for the move to the station for both the child as well as the family in a majority of the cases.

## CHILDLINE Organisations

The objective of CHILDLINE of "Facilitating rehabilitation of children" must be re-examined to accept that 'restore' is not always synonymous with 'rehabilitation'. Where restore to a beneficial environment is possible and in consonance with the wishes of the child it should be CHILDLINE's prime endeavour. But where the child is trying to construct a different set of relationships and a more responsive 'family', the child's efforts should be respected. Before promoting awareness of citizens about 1098, CHILDLINE should critically examine trends and gaps as emerging from their own Research and Documentation of the rescue-and-restore paradigm. CHILDLINE needs to have a policy with respect to areas from where the children come - and where they are restored - to direct children towards educational, vocational, skilling and financial assistance.

The CHILDLINE centres at railway stations, in particular, have to be retrained to be seen by the children as points of assistance, rather than as agents for rescue-and-restore alone. Thus, both the child who wishes to return home as well as the child who needs assistance for shelter and food and protection from abuse should be able to approach CHILDLINE. This would require major changes in the way CHILDLINE is publicly

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.livemint.com/Politics/bK0wi486ff4HkV3NDcCTVI/Economic-Survey-2017-says-labour-migration-higher-than-earli.html>

<sup>33</sup> <https://labour.gov.in/sites/default/files/Census-2001&2011.pdf>

advertised as well as a radical overhaul of the manner of its functioning. It has to reach out to families of the children as well as the informal care-givers in and around the station to discuss what needs exist for care and protection of the child and how best CHILDLINE can advise on meeting those needs. A community-based implementation and monitoring system can easily be placed within CHILDLINE centres, along with a grievance redressal mechanism.

CHILDLINE must also provide regular avenues for hearing the views of children and to create platforms that would include these views in policy and practice. The informal and organic structures that children create out of their contexts must be given due respect and rehabilitation arranged around these structures. Thus, more exploratory and in-depth studies that build on the insights offered by this research report of AIWG-RCCR should be conducted in participation with children, who can not only participate in decisions on how the study should be conducted but also offer their own insights about the findings that emerge from the study. The methodology offered in this report may be taken as a starting point to build a comprehensive and transparent process for establishing child agency and its requirements.

The issue of valid identity cards by CHILDLINE to all children in contact with railways would not only help in legitimising their presence at the station but also lighten the load of harassment that they have to bear from exploitative individuals and agencies, especially amongst the police. These cards would also enable the children to access Open Shelters, government dispensaries and schools, and service providers as and when necessary. Sexual abuse is a tricky area which CHILDLINE personnel will be able to deal with only if they are able to put in place responsive measures of reporting and redressal, in the absence of which sexual activities are demanded or extracted from the children as demonstrated from the many stories in this study. It cannot be treated on par with drug abuse and alleged theft and the child further criminalised in all cases.

## Organisations Working with Children

The 1986 Juvenile Justice Act was repealed and another passed in 2000, and amended in 2006, changing the two categories of children under its purview from 'delinquent' and 'neglected' juveniles to children 'in need of care and protection' and 'in conflict with law'. Two separate institutions, the Child Welfare Committee and the Juvenile Justice Board, were set up to deal with the two new categories. Ever since then, organisations working with children have been accustomed to work with the rescue-and-restore mode of child care and protection. It will be a challenge for them to respond to the other needs of the children, as reported in this study, and which they must have already experienced in their field work, but it is a challenge that has to be accepted if they do not wish to be alienated from the very constituency they wish to serve.

To begin with, they could create structures within to collect information about conventions, laws, policies, and schemes to place them before the children (and their families and informal care-givers) they work with, and elicit their informed views on these. In this context they can also begin examining their own performance with respect to, for instance, how many children were restored and how many returned to the railway station. In addition, dealing with issues of sexuality and drug use among children would require responsive measures for those seeking help, not only for the symptoms but the root causes. Mere criminalisation of these activities, treating children (and their families and providers) as being in conflict with law, is not likely to address the causes of what is considered to be 'deviant' behaviour.

A transparent and participatory discussion, with children in public places and their families, 'employers', and informal care-givers, as well as the official protectors, on the structure of laws and schemes and the performance of the child-support organisations, would generate insights into what is it that the children really need within their boundaries, are the institutions providing for these needs, and can the organisations modify themselves in case there is a gap between the expressed need and what is being supplied? As this study demonstrates, the children's requirements for safety and security, and for skilling, vocational, educational, and financial assistance that move beyond the 'rescue-and-restore' paradigm, are currently not being met by the formal child-care institutions.

Joint and participatory research within the different forms of practice can also be promoted by the child-support organisations to assess whether practice is following accepted principles. If a gap emerges from such participatory research - in which children are the key participants in both design as well as analysis - then such organisations can jointly assess how the gaps may be addressed. Practice will also dictate that it be accepted that children cannot be bound rigidly within age limits; the growth of the infant through childhood and teen age to adulthood is a continuum. In such exercises, teachers, doctors, labour inspectors, railway officers and their wives, shopkeepers, vendors, porters, *anganwadi* workers, and local urban bodies can also be drawn in because child-support organisations have good access to these groups.

In particular, child-support organisations can play a critical role in forming associations of the children to collectively assert their views and their right to be recognised as active agents. Thus, the formation of youth clubs, children's societies, *bal panchayats*, *yuvak kendras*, girls defence committees, and working children's associations, are activities that child-support organisations can effectively take up to provide a platform for informed discussion around what children's needs are and how can they be best met, partly through self-generative activity and partly through support from outside agencies. These forms then become the path through which the information of children's agency also reaches policy-makers and programme executives, both at District, State and National levels.

In the process child-support organisations can also consider how to draw in service providers, such as *anganwadis*, nutrition and health scheme programmers, vocational educators and skill developers, banks and finance agencies, *panchayati raj* institutions, ward *sabhas* and committees, local entrepreneurs and women's associations, sports clubs and professional groups, and municipal committees and legislators into the frame for larger collective efforts that bring synergy through combining many efforts together. These are activities that most child-support organisations are familiar with as part of their organic functioning, and the mass appeal that children's activities evokes is something that will add to the power of such coming together.

## AIWG-RCCR

On our part, we commit to the following to the best of our ability:

- Attempt to enlarge the scope and reach of AIWG-RCCR by appealing to the partner groups who have already been part of this study to join the group
- Reach out to other organisations sympathetic to child agency who wish to incorporate this approach in their work
- Endeavour to promote more such participatory studies with children so that they can get an avenue to discuss and advance their views in child care and protection
- Engage with Railways to contribute to revisiting the SOP and to help design and set up a specialised institution for the care and protection of children in contact with the Railways
- Make concerted efforts with the Ministry of Women and Child Development to substitute the one-dimensional rescue-and-restore paradigm with a multi-dimensional child-agency led policy
- Explore collaboration with CHILDLINE India Foundation and other child-support organisations to re-evaluate their practice and frame a broader structure that will assist children in what they choose to do in what they think is in their own, and their families', best interests



# 11. Bibliography

- 20 years of UNCRC and Children of Karnataka, A state level workshop, 20-21 November 2009, Karnataka Child Rights Observatory
- A Unique Revolution, The Concerned for Working Children, Bangalore
- Ackermann, Lisaane, Thomas Feeny, Jason Hart & Jesse Newman. Understanding and Evaluating Children's Participation, A review of contemporary literature, Plan UK, October 2003
- Advocacy Strategies Training Manual, Children's Rights in Juvenile Justice, Defence for Children International, Geneva
- Balakrishnan, Vijayalakshmi. 2011. Growing Up and Away: Narratives of Indian Childhoods, Memory, History, Identity. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Because we struggle to survive, Child Labour among Refugees of the Syrian Conflict, Child Labour Report 2016, Terre des Hommes International Federation
- Beyond Survival - A status report on livelihood programmes for street youth in India, Railway Children
- Bhima Sangha and the Makkala Panchayats. Chronicles of our own histories, Bhima Sangha and The Makkala Panchayats in partnership with The Concerned for Working Children, Bangalore, March 2003
- Bhima Sangha and Makkala Panchayat. Our Survey Story, The Concerned for Working Children, Bangalore, 2001
- Chamwi, Edith Chenga. Street children Moshi: A study of the phenomenon of the street children in Moshi - Tanzania
- Child Labour Stories, International Labour Organization, [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/--declaration/documents/publication/wcms\\_decl\\_fs\\_44\\_en.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/--declaration/documents/publication/wcms_decl_fs_44_en.pdf)
- Child Rights Programming, A Training Manual Developed in Eastern and Central Africa, Save the Children, Sweden
- CHILDLINE1098: Service Case study, <http://www.childlineindia.org.in/1098/CaseOfChildLabour.htm>
- Children as Active Citizens, A Policy and Programme Guide, Commitments and Obligations for Children's Civil Rights and Civil Engagement in East Africa and the Pacific, Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation, Bangkok, 2008
- Children as Research Protagonists, The Concerned for Working Children, Bangalore, June 2008
- Children of Balkur Panchayat. Work We Can Do and Cannot Do, The Concerned for Working Children, Bangalore, 1999
- Chuta, Nardos. Children's Agency in Responding to Shocks and Adverse Events in Ethiopia, Young Lives, Oxford, UK, June 2014
- Clements, Je'anna. How crazy can it be? an assessment, three years later, of outcomes from a participatory object with children in Johannesburg, Integrating Children's Environmental Rights into Municipal Action, Save the Children, 2003
- Damle, Ashish. UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: Monitoring and Reporting, An overview of South Asia, Save the Children, 2010
- Das, Udit. Lost Childhood: A study on platform children and other children in distress in India, Paul Hamlyn Foundation India programme, March 2013
- D'souza, Dr. Barnabe. (Shelter Don Bosco), Children in adult garb (The street children reality), A research study in Mumbai
- Eradication of child labour or a violation of children's right, The Concerned for Working Children, Bangalore



Guidelines on Children's Reintegration, Inter-agency group on children's integration, 2016

Hecht 1998, Agustín 2007. Web link: [https://www.streetchildrenresources.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/critical\\_perspectives\\_social\\_interventions\\_africa.pdf](https://www.streetchildrenresources.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/critical_perspectives_social_interventions_africa.pdf)

Jain, Khushboo, Kavita Ratna, Deep Purkayastha, Dunu Roy, Fr G, Anant Asthana & Shwetank Mishra. Reflections on RPF's crackdown on children at NDLS, AIWG-RCCR

Jane Thompson. Reaching Safe Places, Exploring the journeys of young people who run away from home or care, Railway Children, November 2014

Klocker, N. 2007. An example of 'thin' agency: child domestic workers in Tanzania. In: R. Panelli, S. Punch and E. Robson, eds. Global perspectives on rural childhood and youth: young rural lives. London: Routledge, 83-94

Kruger, Jill Swart and Louise Chawla. "We know something someone doesn't know": children speak out on local conditions in Johannesburg, Environment & Urbanization, Vol 14, No 2, October 2002

Lahiri, Agniva. Developing child perspective is the new mantra for promoting meaningful participation, Network of Asia Pacific Youth,

Lansdown, Gerison. Promoting Children's Participation in Democratic Decision- Making, UNICEF, Innocenti Research Centre, Florence, Italy, February 2001

Lansdown, Gerison. The Evolving Capacities of the Child, Save the Children, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2005

Leave No One Behind, Voices of Women, Adolescent Girls, Elderly and Disabled People, and Sanitation Workers, Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council,

Left to Survive, Systematic Failure to Protect Unaccompanied Migrant Children in Greece, Human Rights Watch, New York, December 2008

Liebel, Manfred, Paternalism, Participation and Children's Protagonism, Children, Youth and Environments 17(2), 2007

Liebel, Manfred, Philip Meade & Iven Saadi. Working Children as Subjects of Rights: Explaining the Children's Right to Work

Lieten, G K. Participation: The Case of Children, IREWOC, paper Participation Workshop, June 2005

Lolichen, PJ. Children and their Research: a process document, The Concerned for Working Children, Bangalore, 2002

Lorenzo I. Bordonaro & Ruth Payne. (2012) Ambiguous agency: critical perspectives on social interventions with children and youth in Africa, Children's Geographies, 10:4, 365-372, DOI: 10.1080/14733285.2012.726065. 17 October 2012

Mc Fadyen, Lori & HOPE INDIA. Voices from the street: An ethnography of India's street children

Media Code of conduct to Realise Children's Rights, The Concerned for Working Children, Bangalore, May 2005

Methodology, Longitudinal, Participatory Research with Street Children and Youth in Sub-Saharan Africa Briefing Paper 2, March 2014, StreetInvest

Mugove, Kudenge & Hlatywayo Lincoln. Why children leave their homes for the streets? The case of Harare, International Journal of Scientific and Research publication 10 October 2015

Nath, Ronita, Wendy Sword, Kathy Georgiades, Parminder Raina & Harry Shannon. The Impact of Drop-in Centres on the Health of Street Boys in New Delhi: An interpretive descriptive study, Children and Youth Services Review 68 (2016) 202-208, 2016

Nieuwenhuys, Olga. Theorizing childhood(s): Why we need postcolonial perspectives, Childhood 2013 20:3, Sage Publications, 2013, <http://chd.sagepub.com/content/20/1/3>

Pal, Swarup Ratan. A situation analysis of the children staying on railway platform in Rajasthan

Powell, Mary Ann, Nicola Taylor & Anne Smith. Rural Childhoods: Literature Review, Childwatch

International Study Group on Rural Childhoods, May 2008

Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Children and Governance, Holding the State Accountable, HA: Centre for Child Rights, July 20-22, New Delhi

Protection of Children Living on the Streets, UNICEF, Bangladesh, September 2009

Punch 2014 pg 190; Cited in Reconceptualising Agency and Childhood: New Perspectives in Childhood Studies, edited by Florian Esser, Meike S. Baader, Tanja Betz, Beatrice Hungerland

Ratna, Kavita. Adolescents as ambassadors of change, Introducing Namma Bhoomi, The Concerned for Working Children, Bangalore,

Ratna, Kavita. Oxford Notes: Documenting Bhima Sangha's process, 'Children in Adversity: ways to reinforce the coping ability and resilience of children in situations of hardship', The Concerned for Working Children, Bangalore, September 2000

Recommendations for 'Safeguarding the Rights of Children at Railway Platforms', National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), Government of India

Reddy, Nandana (The Concerned for Working Children) Children As Partners In Change, Presented at The Bapscan Congress York, September 2000

Reddy, Nandana. Children and Resilience, The Concerned for Working Children, September 2000

Reddy, Nandana. Children as Partners in Change (Children, Citizenship and Governance), The Concerned for Working Children, Bangalore, presented at the Bapscan Congress, York, September 2000

Reddy, Nandana. Strategies to Address Child Labour within the Context of Globalization, The Concerned for Working Children, February 1999

Reddy, Nandana. Huligamma and the Big Mac. Accessed from <http://infochangeindia.org/agenda-issues/cost-of-liberalisation/5691-huligamma-and-big-mac> on 22. 07.2017

Remen R.N. Autumn, 1988. On defining spirit, Noetic Sciences Review 63.

Roy, Dunu, 'In the Name of the Poor: Urban Growth and Renewal', in Imrana Qadeer (ed), India - Social Development Report 2014: Challenges of Public Health, Council for Social Development, pp 42-48, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2015

Safe Movement in the City, Street Children and Youth in Three African Cities, Briefing Paper 7 · June 2016, StreetInvest

Sathi. (2008) Evaluation of Home Placement Strategy among children in Difficult Circumstances for the Period of 2007-08, and Follow-up of children of 20 Camps held in U.P. and Bihar.

Schwartzman, Jason, Promoting the Agency of Young People, Children and Poverty Working Paper 4, Christian Children's Fund, 2005

Seneviratne, Dharshini. Towards Rights- based Child Participation in Governance, Organizational Transition at Save the Children in Sri Lanka and Emerging Children's Agency,

Situational Analysis and Recommendations by Children from Karnataka, Facilitated by: Action Aid & The Concerned for Working Children July 2010

Skånfors, Lovisa, Ethics in Child Research: Children's Agency and Researchers' 'Ethical Radar', *Childhoods Today, Volume 3 (1), 2009*

So You Want to Consult with Children? A toolkit of good practice, Save the Children, London, November 2003

So You Want to Involve Children in Research? A toolkit supporting meaningful and ethical participation in research relating to violence against children, Save the Children, 2004

Steinberg, Jonah. 2012. *Runaway Train: Railway Children and Normative Spatialities in India*. University of Vermont. 1-55 of Anthropology. Print

Steinberg, Jonah. 2015a. *Remaining Nameless: Names, Hiding, and Dislocation Among Delhi's Runaways*. South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal [Online], 12 | 2015, Online since 26

October 2015, retrieved on 01 January 2016. URL : <http://samaj.revues.org/4061>

Steinberg, Jonah. 2015b. *The Social Life of Death on Delhi's Streets: Unclaimed Souls, Pollutive Bodies, Dead Kin and the Kinless Dead*. *Ethnos*. 80:2. 248-271. DOI: 10.1080/00141844.2013.822903

Stephens, Sharon. Children and the Politics of Culture in "Late Capitalism", in *Children and the Politics of Culture*, ed. Sherry B. Ortner, Nicholas B. Dirks, Geoff Eley, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1993

UNICEF, The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, London

We've Got Something to Say!, Promoting Child and Youth Agency, A Facilitator's Manual, Christian Children's Fund, June 2008

What Is and What Can Be, Multi-stakeholder cooperation at railway stations in India for interventions with children in need of care and protection, Railway Children, 2009

Working Children of India, Working Children's Report, submitted to UNCRC, The Concerned for Working Children, Bangalore, 1998

# 12. Annexures

## 12.1 Railways Standard Operating Procedure, December 2013

### Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

For Railways to ensure protection to Children

In compliance to the directions of Hon'ble High Court of Delhi issued in WP (Civil) No. 5365/2012 in the case titled Khusboo Jain Vs UOI & others regarding safeguarding rights of Children arriving at and living at the railway stations in Delhi and elsewhere, a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Railways to ensure protection of Children is drafted as under:-

1. Child Protection Committees at all major railway stations of Indian Railways which will be identified by the General Manager concerned, will be constituted in which Station Manager/ Station Superintendent/ Station Master will be Nodal officer and SHO/GRP, Inspector/RPF, CTI/TTE and SSE/Works as members of the CPC. **These will hereto be referred as Child Protection Committee (CPC) /Railways.**
  - CPC (Rly) at every major railway station will be responsible and authorized to set and ensure the mechanism for care and protection of children at and around railway stations. It will function as nodal and apex body for the provision of all child protection issues at Railway station level.
- 1.1 **Children's Assistance Centre** at major Railway stations will be set-up for children in need of care and protection. Such space should have adequate arrangement for food, temporary shelter, clothing, toilet, first aid and medicines. Such centre will be manned round the clock. There will be one female member from Railways to man the centre so that in case the Child is a girl, till the time she is produced before the CWC shall be kept in the safe custody of the female member. It could be managed by the CPC at station level by Station Superintendent/ Station Master with or without the help of NGOs. The required staff will be provided by the Station Superintendent/Station Master from Group D category to man the centre round the clock. Detail guidelines are given in Annexure.
- 1.2 **Nodal Officer on behalf of CRB at Railway Board will be AM/ Commercial assisted by IG/Crime & Intelligence and EDCE (G).**
  - AM/Commercial will be the first contact person on behalf of CRB at Railway Board to ensure functioning of child protection systems within railways. The information data maintained by the Railways shall be provided to the NCPCR annually by Railway Board.
- 1.3 **Nodal Officer at Zonal level:-**
  - Nodal officer at Zonal Railways will be Addl. GM assisted by CCM, PCE and CSC of the Zone. The half yearly information data maintained by the Zone shall be provided to the Railway Board.



**1.4 Nodal Officer at Divisional level:-**

- Nodal officer at Divisional level will be ADRM assisted by Sr. DCM, Sr. DEN (Co-ordination) and Sr. DSC/RPF who will monitor the functioning of Child Protection Committee at stations.

**2. OTHER STAKEHOLDERS at the Railway Station:**

- Passengers/ commuters.
- Escort/s of passenger/s.
- Coolies.
- Vendors at the station.
- Taxi, auto rickshaw and cycle rickshaw drivers.
- All other service providers at the station or on train.
- Public spirited citizens.

**3. Responsibilities of Child Protection Committee (CPC) at major railway stations:-**

- Maintaining a designated Child Assistance Centre.
- Making arrangement for emergency support for such child/children including food, drinking water, toilet, primary medical facility, etc.
- Maintaining emergency contact numbers of nominated Child Welfare Officers of GRP/RPF, local Child Welfare Committee (Juvenile Justice), nearest shelter home, nearest hospital with paediatric department.
- Monitoring child protection systems at the stations and ensuring their proper functioning.
- Maintaining records of children received at the stations and its follow up action.
- Display of advocacy messages.
- Installing a functional P&T telephone at Child Assistance Centre.
- Station level Child Protection Committee will hold monthly meeting to review the functioning of the committee and ensure over all supervision of child protection issues at the station and supervision of Child Assistance Centre at the station. The report to be prepared which will be shared with the Division.
- Sufficient imprest should be created with the SS/SM to meet the expenditure for food, clothing, toiletee, first aid box, medicines etc and arranging transport for the children for production before CWC.
- Adequate publicity should be given in print/ electronic media through the Public Relation department of the Division/Zone in regard to the availability of information about the Child/Children produced before the CWC in the Railway Website.
- Making appropriate provision for putting safety, care and protection mechanisms for children at railway stations.
- Ensuring adequate vigilance mechanisms to ensure that potential abusers are unable to approach or trap any unattended children in and around railway stations.
- Coordination with statutory bodies of the CWC & Juvenile Justice Board for effective rehabilitation of children.
- To coordinate with all the NGOs working on the station related to the issue at hand.
- Any other work related to the protection of platform children.

#### 4. Details of the Children to be maintained by SS/SM in their record/register:-

- a) Name & age of the Child
- b) Father's Name
- c) Mother's Name
- d) Names and age of siblings
- e) Address-Village, Police Station, District, State.
- f) Reasons for the child leaving home-is it alone, with friends or relatives or an unknown adult?
- g) If child left on his own the reasons for doing so?
  - Family discord
  - Education related
  - Work related
- h) If child left with an unrelated adult, name and details of the adult?
- i) From where the Child boarded the train and date, time and train number with details of persons accompanying the child.  
Statement of the child including whom did he came in contact with at the station immediately on arrival.

#### 4.1 Role of Train Ticket Examiner (TTE) and TC (Ticket Collector)

- If a group of children boarded in trains accompanied by one or two adults or unaccompanied by any male member or travelling without proper ticket or hiding their presence/ shifting from one coach to other or they are not allowed to talk to each other/any other person or giving contradictory information about their destination, other details or loitering at stations will inform the GRP/RPF escort on board or refer the matter to the Child Protection Committee at station.
- In case the Child/Children is/are found involved in any crime under the provisions of Indian Penal Code or any other law, RPF will hand over Child/Children to GRP for taking further legal action.

#### 5. Role of SHO/GRP and Inspector/RPF:-

- Briefing of GRP/RPF personnel on child protection issues, during routine meetings at the station
- Awareness among stakeholders.
- Oversee child protection issues on platforms.
- Ensuring the production of children before CWC (JJ).



### 5.1 GRP/RPF Escort Staff:- Intervention Protocol in moving train:-

- The GRP/RPF escorting staff on trains shall keep vigil on the suspected child/ group of children travelling with or without any adult member and if found shall consult the TTE on board and take necessary action to protect the child/children and produce them before the Child Protection Committee of the station.
- The GRP/RPF escorting staff shall communicate with the child/ children in child friendly manner and not in a threatening or intimidating tone.
- Record the details of child/ children about the names and address, age, the station where boarded/ destination, details of ticket etc.
- Inform the SS/SM, GRP & RPF at the nearest following station about such child/children to depute representatives of CPC for taking further necessary action for protection of such child/ children.

### 6 Intervention Protocol at the Station:- Applicable to:-

- Child or children who de-boarded at the station and have missed the train carrying the accompanying adult/s.
- Child or children who arrived at a station alone or in a group.
- Children in groups waiting at the platform for another train.
- Children's group which have more than five children and are accompanied by one individual adult.
- Children living on the stations and working.

#### 6.1 Responsibilities of other stakeholders at Station:-

- Taking temporary responsibility of child/children who are in need of care and protection at the station or on the train
- Providing right guidance and support
- Referring the child to SS/SM, GRP/ RPF or escorting the Children to Child Assistance Centre
- Leaving behind identification details so that he/she could be contacted if necessary for further information about the child/children

### 7 Training:-

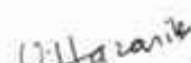
- Training and orientation programmes on child rights and child protection for railway employees should be organized at all zonal training centres.
- The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2006 and Child Rights should be meaningfully incorporated in the syllabus of initial/refresher course of RPF and GRP training centres/Academies.


### 8 AWARENESS MATERIALS AT THE STATIONS

1. At all the stations, at the entry and exit points, display boards should be put up in prominent locations indicating the location of the help desk along with the telephone numbers. Pamphlets can also be distributed.

2. In all important trains including Rajdhani and Shatabdi, announcements about missing children and getting trafficked should be made and the emergency contact numbers of concerned authorities be made.
3. The menu charts or place sheets in food service trays and the bogey walls could carry similar messages.
4. Periodic announcements must also be made at all platforms about missing children and being subject to abuse. The location of the Child Booth/Help Desk and emergency contact numbers should also be announced.
5. Display boards should also include awareness to educate children from crossing tracks and being hit by running trains.

  
(DIG/RS)  
Railway Board

  
(ED/C&IS)  
Railway Board

  
(ED/CE(G))  
Railway Board

  
(ED/IR)  
Railway Board

#### Annexure

### Indian Railways Children's Assistance Centre at Railway Stations for Children in Need of Care and Protection

Divisional Railway Manager shall allocate space at major Railways Stations to open such a Centre. Child Assistance Centre shall be set-up at major railway stations itself or in association with registered child care and protection voluntary organizations across the country to provide temporary shelter to children in need of care and protection who came in contact with the Railway authorities during odd hours between 8 PM to 8 AM and require right shelter facility.

#### Structure and Infrastructure at Child Assistance Centre at station

The space shall be a dormitory with four beds- two for boys and two for girls separately with partition using fiber or any light material. The Centre shall be located at the ground floor and shall be disable friendly. The Centre shall have adequate lighting, ventilation, heating and cooling arrangements, safe drinking water and clean toilets, in term of gender, age appropriateness and accessibility and furniture such as chair, table, etc.

#### Facility and Standards at the Centre

The Child Assistance Centre shall have the facilities with standards as per the provisions in the JJ Act for the drop in Centre and shall fulfill the minimum compliances for children in need of care and protection. It shall provide boarding and lodging which includes clothing, food, safe drinking water and sanitation adequately.

The rooms shall have the following items:

1. An Admission register to record details of children being admitted.
2. Mattress- one per bed
3. Cotton bed sheets- two per bed, one to spread and one to cover
4. Pillows- one per bed
5. Woolen blankets- one per bed for winter season.
6. Clothes: two pairs summer clothes for boy and girls age group 0-3 years, 7-11 years, 12-16 years and 16-18 years.
7. Food for children: The Centre shall have arrangements for providing boarding facility for children admitted through the Indian Railways Catering Service where it is functioning or through any other caterer. It shall be the duty of the officer in charge of the Centre to ensure the same. A water filter shall be installed in the room at a place which is easily accessible to children of ages as well as those with special needs.



### **Management and Supervision**

The Centre shall be managed by the Railways wholly or in partnership with registered voluntary organizations running child care institutions, shelter home or Children's homes. It shall remain open 24 hours and two trained team members shall be available at any given point of time in which at least one shall be a female.

The Centre shall be recognized under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000 as Drop in Centre. It shall function under the JJ system and shall be monitored by the child protection agencies-Child Welfare Committee (CWC), District Child Protection Society (DCPS) and District Inspection Committee as per the mandate in the Juvenile Justice Act and Rules. They shall ensure that provision of shelter, care and protection is made available to the children being admitted and production of children before the CWC is undertaken in a timely manner.

The Station Master or any person assigned by him shall be responsible for overall management and supervision of the Centre. In case the Centre is being run by registered voluntary organization, the Officer in Charge of such organization shall be responsible to supervise the Centre.

### **Child Protection Systems at the Centre**

The Centre shall have all safety and security arrangements to ensure protective environment for children of all ages and gender. It shall have fire safety, door locking system and personnel to provide security to children. All emergency helpline numbers and telephone number shall be displayed in the room. There should be telephone connectivity available in the room in case children have to make emergency phone calls. A complaint cum suggestion box outside the room and near the door shall be installed.

### **Procedure to Receive the Child/Children and Release from the Centre**

The staff on duty shall receive the child or children and make an entry in the register. He/She shall also record the time of discharge of the child or children from the Centre and authority or concerned adult/s to whom child or children have been handed over. It may include Child Protection Committee, parents, GRP or RPF.

### **Record Maintenance:-**

Each Centre shall maintain an Admission Register and case diary and each case shall be recorded in the register. The details shall include.

- i. Date and time of receiving and discharging each child.
- ii. Name and age of every child admitted and his/her gender.
- iii. Name and identity of the person who has referred the child or children.
- iv. Name of the person and designation or relations with the child whom child or children have been handed over with proof of identity.
- v. A daily summary of the number of children admitted and discharged should be made for records.

\*\*\*\*\*

## 12.2 Minutes of Working Group Meeting, NCPCR, Delhi, April 2014

### National Commission for Protection of Child Rights

#### Minutes of First Meeting of Working Group on “Safeguarding the Rights of Children in Contact With Railways”

April 15, 2014

Maple Room, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi

10:30 A.M – 4:00 P.M

#### **Session I: Welcome of Participants and Introduction - Ms Kushal Singh, Chairperson, NCPCR**

Ms Kushal Singh welcomed the participants expressing her satisfaction over the august gathering of people working at the grassroots level. She further mentioned that the process began because Khushboo Jain approached the NCPCR with concerns about the SOP circulated by Railways, following the High Court Order in “Khushboo Jain Versus Ministry of Railways & Others” Case. Ms Singh further stated while policies for interventions exist for street children, needs of platform children are specific, and hence the need to evolve a policy for children in contact with the railways based on the experience of people’s interventions with that group.

#### **Session II: Conceptualising the Framework: ‘Rights of Children Coming in Contact with Railways’ - Dr Ramanath Nayak**

Dr Ramanath Nayak presented a brief overview on the making of NCPCR Guidelines, which was an outcome of the NCPCR’s consultation with various stakeholders, especially the civil society organizations who are involved in safeguarding the rights of children in contact with railways. After an informal consultative process from August 2008 - March 2009, NCPCR formalized a Working Group in March 2009. The Working Group formulated the recommendations by holding multiple consultations with experts/ different stakeholders working on the issue of children at Railway Stations. The recommendations for ‘Safeguarding the Rights of Children in Contact with Railways’ was issued on 31.03.2010 to the Ministry of Railways and Ministry of Women and Child Development.

Further the Secretary, MWCD wrote a letter to Chairman, Railway Board (dated 11<sup>th</sup> August 2011), to which s/he received a response (dated 30<sup>th</sup> August 2011). The reply claimed that Railways has taken initiative to constitute Child Welfare Committees at the Divisional level, headed by the Sr. Divisional Security Commandant, which has been changed to Child Protection Committee in the SOP recently issued.

As one of the respondents to the Writ Petition by Khushboo Jain, NCPCR organized various consultations and had a meeting with the Chairman, Railway Board on 5 December 2012. During the meeting with the Railway Board, it was agreed that the Railway Board and NCPCR will work together to ensure the safety, care and protection of children who are unaccompanied and distressed. For this purpose, NCPCR agreed to develop a Protocol for smooth transition of the

children with their parents/guardians or to the child care institutions through the Child Welfare Committees.

In order to review the existing guidelines (in relation to ICPS) and develop a protocol for the production of children before the Child Welfare Committees, NCPCR constituted a small Working Group and developed a draft Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) emphasizing the roles and responsibilities of RPF, GRP and other Railways Officials – Station Master, Train Ticket Examiner (TTE), and allied systems –Special Juvenile Police Unit (SJPU), Childline and also the fellow passengers.

The Writ Petition was disposed of after the hearing on February 13, 2013. Afterwards NCPCR kept on writing to the Railway Board to comply with the Court Order and also conveyed its possible support, if required, in implementing NCPCR guidelines. Not receiving any response from the Railway Board, NCPCR shared the draft SOP and expressed its desire to interact with few DRMs, Station level Officers, GRP and RPF personnel and NGOs working on Railway platforms to deliberate upon the draft SOP and to receive feedback on the same.

Thereafter, the Railways issued their own SOP in Dec 2013, without sharing with or taking into confidence NCPCR. Dr Nayak mentioned while the SOP was a welcome step, there were gaps and concerns expressed by the civil society groups. To address these concerns and develop a holistic understanding on the issue of children in contact with the railways, NCPCR constituted a Working Group for developing a framework for a National Policy towards safeguarding the rights of children in contact with Railways.

### **Session III: Setting forth the agenda: Children vis-à-vis Railways - Issues & Concerns – Khushboo Jain**

Khushboo Jain started with the premise of issues with the SOP circulated by the Railways. She mentioned while tremendous amount of work is happening across the country with children in contact with railways, the SOP issued by the Railways overlooked the existing intervention practices including those in which railways itself has played a major role. The task before the group was to bring all these experiences on one table, of NGOs, and of Railways itself, of interventions done with children in contact with the railways. She further said that the policy making process needs to be more representative as children in contact with railways are not only most often runaway children arriving fresh on the station or staying in and around station premises but also children from the communities who live in slum areas and visit stations often or are from itinerant groups that live around railway stations, or children whose parents may be vendors at the stations or in the trains, or children from homeless families.

She further pointed out concerns arising with children in contact with the railways.

1. Overemphasis on Child Protection and a neglect of children's agency and capacity for autonomous decision-making. In instances that a child has decided to work on the station and



- is not ready to leave, of which numerous examples exist, how then can the railway station space be made safer for the child?
2. Working towards convergence of all plans and policies and maintaining a balanced role between state and civil society.
  3. Having sustainable models for ownership by the state.
  4. Concerns facing older children who grow up in and around stations, or return from institutional care after attaining adulthood at 18 years. The 'kinship' networks that children form with other children at the station becomes important for them. Need to understand what children in that network provide to each other. But instead the current practice is to break up these networks and groups, labelling them 'gangs'.
  5. The several favourable Court Orders and judgments across the country which need to be collected in one place and made use of. For example: the High Court order in Odisha for providing compensation for injury of a child in the Railway.
  6. The Railways are mainly concerned with fresh arrivals as per the SOP. But the major issue is that they produce children from adjoining communities before CWC who come back to the station. This issue hasn't been dealt with at all.
  7. There is no focus on why girls are mostly missing from the street while data can substantiate large numbers of girls are running away. There is a need to explore the reasons for this, especially the assumption that girls get into wrong hands and thus fail to come into the protective system.
  8. ICPS Open Shelters meant primarily for children like the ones that stay in and around stations. However, in the existing centres, drug addicted children are not allowed inside. Therefore, there is an urgent need to re-examine existing practices and challenges faced.

Khushboo Jain further said that it is time to bring Child's perspective to the fore and integrate children's voices in the policy framing process. It is also time to do a critical evaluation of our own work, of all existing models, policies and programs and look into the gaps. Since the 2010 NCPCR recommendations, the atmosphere has been positive and much more has been translated on the ground, with Railways also being more positive. Therefore instead of restricting ourselves to SOP alone, it is time to capitalize and build on history - towards broader policy concerning Railway Children - implemented by a broader set of stakeholders. There is also a need to listen to the Railways themselves - what is their understanding of the issue and concerns faced by them while implementing their own SOP.

#### **Session IV: Discussion on the Agenda – Roundtable**

The session was moderated by Dr Bharti Sharma and Advocate Anant Asthana. The house was opened for initial comments from Working Group members.

**Ms Kavita Ratna** congratulated the concept note for focusing on Agency of Children, an area she feels is seriously lacking in policy discourses. Furthermore, understanding the coping mechanisms children have in place, acknowledging the fact that many children fear the system and going to the law, and that these fears needs to be understood. Also she noted that it is not a homogeneous group, and asked how we can recognize they are unique individuals and that there



are children seeking options other than what is being provided or that may be currently imagined. She also expressed concern about issues related to older children, even in the age group of 14-18 years and issues relating to gender, sexuality, livelihoods, children with disability, child sexual abuse, etc. She further emphasized the need for understanding safe spaces from the child's perspective. Kavita Ratna also stated that the implicit linkage with Juvenile Justice is an area where we all despair and there is need for forward-backward linkages. The need is to focus on the mandate of this process, and building this mandate in the Action Plan with Ministries and Departments.

**Ms Preet Verma** stated the need to begin from the perspective of the needs of children that haven't been fulfilled given every SOP or Policy, etc. What is required is to look at gap areas and see where the policy has to be strengthened, which should then be taken up with MWCD. There are several Departments but there should be one nodal department which will keep pulling the process through.

**Father G Kollashany** said it is important to keep in mind that in this process of getting together to create a policy, the policymakers are also themselves changing, with a new focus on children's voice and perspective. The need is to look at that process of change, how we are changing and widening our perspectives. Children on railway station should not be looked at as 'runaway' children 'in conflict with the law'. The child's action of leaving home should be seen as intrinsic to her/his growing up and adolescence which finds expression in this manner. The focus should be on creating resilient support systems for the child and look beyond one-time interventions. He further said that in all locations where collection of information is taking place, railways and other authorities should be brought in. There should be a process of ownership by the Departments and Ministries.

**Dr Bharti Sharma** emphasized the need to focus on the 6 month timeline all the time. She further said it is important to understand who the children in contact with the railways are and at what developmental stages they belong to. There is an absolute need to re-examine the protective mechanisms on offer and to explore whether the children actually want those mechanisms. She suggested that in this exercise we must collate our experiences of working with children and most importantly, that the voices of children are heard and recorded but not through the medium of existing intervention agencies.

**Adv. Anant Asthana** suggested that the Action Plan of the Delhi meeting organized by Chetna on 22 January 2014 needs to be circulated amongst the group, so the group is aware of the discussions on the SOP and the issue. The first question he posed is how we look at the act of running away. He further stated that it is clear that the existing laws and policies are not fulfilling the needs of this particular group. The Juvenile Justice Act heavily compromises the child's agency. The JJ Act has built into it a procedure for differential treatment of children in conflict with the law depending on their nature of offence, whether they are first-time offenders or not, etc. The JJ Act recognizes diversity among children in conflict with the law. However, there is only one uniform approach to children in need of care and protection. While the police can dispose of petty offences in cases of JCL, for CNCP, children have to be produced before CWC.

There is no diversion and no approach or understanding of different kinds of CNCP's. This needs to be looked into and kept in mind. He emphasized that it is the right time to bring diversity in process for extending support to CNCP. It is time to acknowledge at the policy level that running away is not a problem but a part of the growing up process. To get into legal reform, the National Policy for Children 2013 needs to be revisited.

At this point, discussion was initiated by Mr Aseem Srivastava about whether the current J J System interferes with children in contact with the railways to which Mr Sanjay Gupta said children are caught between laws. There are different laws at the station, for example, different for GRP, RPF, etc.

**Mr Sanat Sinha** stated, at least 90 percent of children in contact with railways are CNCP. He opined that the role of railways was less compared to that of the Child Welfare Committees. The CWCs often have limited options to help children in terms of referral organisations and CWCs do not have a magic stick to solve all problems. There should be diverse facilities to help the CWC carry out its duties. He further stated that frequently children are produced before Railway Magistrate instead of Juvenile Justice Board. He was of the opinion that all children in contact with railways should be brought under JJ system. The priority, he suggested, is to see what the systems might be that would ideally be put in place.

**Sr. Jacinta Pinto** said while policies are framed, the implementation at grassroots levels do not happen and most often, the system is very inhuman. There is need to devise systems for step-by-step implementation at the grassroots level. The role of government and railways needs to be defined. She further opined that there is a total lack of child friendly systems. The Police especially are not child friendly at all. There is no clarity as to what is the role of the Railways in the implementation of the SOP. She observed that there are families as well on platforms, and child rescue happens continuously, but due to poverty, migration of families to cities continues. She highlighted how there is conflict and redundancy amongst NGOs, and that there was no networking amongst NGOs.

**Sr. Clara** observed that there were positive responses from a few regions of railways, but no response from most. She said CWCs and implementing agencies views should be collected in this process. Also, drugs and crime among children are major issues affecting children and have to be looked into. She highlighted that in many states, there was no JJ infrastructure. For example, in Madhya Pradesh, there were only three Government Homes for children, one for girls and two for boys. The State should be made responsible to develop more homes, and Homes run by NGOs should be recognized with fund releasing systems in place. She also noted that CWCs are often insensitive.

**Mr Sachin Sachdeva** said that the issue should be looked at afresh. He pointed out that it was important to get organisations' perspectives about what they want to do with the children, with a horizon of 5-10 years. There was also a need to collect evidence on what can be done especially in areas like drug addiction. He stated the need for extensive research on children. Furthermore,

there was a critical need to look at the girls in the stations and explore their 'invisibilisation'. The policy needs to have an eye on the tension between child agency versus protection for the child (by adults). Further enquiry and understanding is needed on existing practices like whether putting the children in a Child Care Institution or back to the family indiscriminately is a successful strategy that helps children, or what should be the role of CWC once the child has been restored back to the family. He also stressed the need to identify and work with groups and networks of children and adults on the station premises.

**Prof Shekhar Sheshadri** said it is crucial for a social worker who meets the child for the first time to understand the situation of the child, the state in which the child is at the moment of contact, and thereby to respond appropriately. This is an important skill which cannot be emphasized enough. However, the psycho-social component of working with children is not given due importance or is non-existent and the focus is only on the state legal component. It is important to realise that just 'being there' with the child helps. There should not be any intervention with the child without adequate staff capacity. There is a need for some specificity on what kind of intervention is beneficial at that point and not just structuring the process. He further pointed out that it wasn't clear whether the SOP's vision of the railway situation is a 'transitory and brief contact' with the child or a 'long-term engagement'. A range of issues need to be kept in mind when formulating policy: the child who has spent some time on the station vs. the new child, the fresh arrival, issues of rights enablement of the child vs. rights violation in the name of her/his protection; how to look at personhood and agency issues especially with regard to sexuality of the child and drug use; has the child faced trauma or has the child symptoms of ADHD. The study done by NCPCR on substance abuse should be referenced. Training is required on how to approach and work with children, what is the kind of child you are working with. The question as to what makes platforms safe or unsafe is very important. Is the platform 'unsafe' in essence? The nuances of categories of children and specificity of child should be captured and channelized. There is a need to capture processes. The ideal attitude could be 'watchful expectancy and masterly inactivity'.

**Mr Masroor Khan (Butterflies)** stated that children are suffering from many behavioural problems which need to be addressed, and highlighted the need for follow up.

**Mr Navin Sellaraju** said there is need to look at the 'universe' of children in contact with railways. Need to consider the number of children not ready to 'go home'. He expresses alarm about what happens to the child after they turn 18 years as suddenly they are off the radar. He wondered if we have any perspective on our engagement with young adults on the streets/railway stations. He mentioned that skills to engage with children is crucial to working with them and subsequently there was a need to invest in skills building. He gave the example of different tools developed by their partner organizations like art and sports-based psychosocial support, tools for education, etc.

**Mr Pramod Kulkarni (Sathi)** suggested two documents should come out at the end. First should explain the existing practices, and the other should be an operational action plan for the next 5-6 years to be done with all children in contact with railways.



**Mr Sanat Sinha (Bal Sakha)** said there is no system for children arriving fresh at the stations. Also, society's reaction towards older children is very negative.

**Mr Dunu Roy (Hazard Centre)** highlighted the need to have some coherence in the Working Group and suggested three questions for deliberation and integration of the discussions. (1) Are we talking about all children - or a specific group of children? In his view, if it is about children who have left home, then are they being seen as vulnerable children or are they resilient kids who have made a choice moving away from vulnerability when they come to the stations. (2) Understanding the difference between protecting the Rights of Children and Protecting Children, because they may be contradictory. For RPF and others, for example, it means protecting the child from crime. What does it imply when we say protect the children from crime? (3) The policy needs to be discussed with children and their feedback on what they think is their rights should be focused upon.

**Ms Shachi Singh (Ehsaas)** asked if everybody could deal with the child and emphasized the need for skilled engagement with children. Which agencies are skilled to deal with children? There should be clarity of roles between multiple agencies working with children. What is the policy of the Railways against 'abusers' on the railway platforms, like people selling drugs or committing crimes in its premises? Railway stakeholders need to be actively involved in policymaking. There should be support systems in cities for the children but we should also look at the root causes of the children coming to stations, there should be interventions in source areas linked to interventions on the station.

**Ms Heenu Singh (CIF)** said the existing SOP's should be reviewed. There should be a process document like a Compendium of Best Practices. There are three categories of children, fresh arrivals, older children and the ones who have been part of the station for a long time, alongside children from local communities. There should be a proper risk analysis for children at the stations in view of child protection systems and gaps.

**Mr Deep Purkayastha (Praajak)** discussed the concept of "the best interest of the child," wherein he said the specificity of child means the specificity of best interest. He feels JJ Act is very constricting to deal with realities of children in contact with railways. He questioned if decision of a child to stay on the Railway station is recognized in JJ Act. Many children are not coming into NGO interventions at all and have their own survival and protection systems. Sometimes, existing children accessing existing centres also create barriers to other children from accessing these services. The agency of a child can be equated with the choice of a child not to go home. He emphasized that getting children's voices in the policy process should not be done by NGO's, but rather by researchers trained for it. He further said that in all smaller stations, there are small community agencies (funded by communities themselves) or individuals with whom children stay. Though these are not centralized or recognized interventions, they are effective for those children. Such voices, i.e. interventions that fall outside of intervention structures of state or NGO's needs to be brought in.

**Mr Sanjay Gupta (Chetna)** said we need to focus not on problems but on solutions and how we can sell those solutions to stakeholders like railways. We need to look at what is “safe” space from the point of view of stakeholders so as to sell the concept to them. A vision for protection of Railway children and a proper action plan needs to be developed. He also highlighted the point of abusers at the station who are apparently popular with and protective of children, whom he referred to as 'Protective abusers'.

**Ms Arlene Manoharan (CCL-NLSIU)** started with the premise that children are here as duty-bearers where the State and the family have failed, and the response of JJ Act to this group of street children is a complete failure. She flagged some major concerns that have to be looked upon: (1) Focus of the Working Group is on children in contact with the Railways, but ramifications are huge because of the very wide range of services that these children need to have access to - medical attention, drug de-tox facilities, protection, access to justice for sexual abuse, violence from the police, shelter - in a sense talking about the entire JJ Act, POCSO, NDPS, Child Labour Act, RTE, Right to Food, Schemes like NREGA, ICPS, etc.; (2) Role of the State and its perspectives about the child - how does the state view railway children and see its own role vis. a vis. Railway Children especially when it wants clean stations without children; how does the state respond to this unique category of citizens - children and communities living on the street - criminalization of poverty? How do we ensure State Accountability to Railway Children and their families in the existing scenario of police abuse, etc. From the point of view of the Railways, these children are a nuisance, thieves, drug addicts, free labour to pick up dead bodies, Juvenile in Conflict with Law. In producing children before CWCs, there is a need for balancing Right to Participation and the Right to Protection, and enabling Best Interest determinations. How are the core principles of Protection and Autonomy reflected in our approaches - and what value is given to each of them in the various kinds of interventions for each and every child. The contested area of 'crime' and livelihoods have to be explored. Also, need to explore how existing models fit into the JJ system. She cautioned against getting caught in the purely protective and the purely participative approach to determine best interest of child; (3) Role of Civil Society - What will be the role/responsibility for citizens/passengers/communities on the stations in this policy; (4) Need to look at the root causes - mapping of migration of families, women survivors of violence, and children on their own. Family support may be more important than setting up Child Care Institutions; (5) Evidence - data to back recommendations on a range of laws and policies concerning children (6) Role of NCPDR in process of law reform of the JJ Act - strong resonance between both these processes. The insights in the working group should be linked to the JJ amendment initiative.

**Dr Sarada Balagopalan (CSDS)** spoke about the tension between prescriptive and descriptive where the prescriptive goes against the narrative of descriptive; for example, prescriptive impulses of the state are problematic for children. Children are not a homogenous group. This has to inform all discussions. There are many perspectives - of gender, age, neglect of older children. Children's every day practices, their coping mechanisms, need to be seen as part of a future they are trying to build. There is need to see protection more broadly, with the RTE and other laws wanting to re-address the idea of protection of children. Children in contact with

railways should not be looked at as a category or an 'isolated group'. She emphasized how the children's rights agenda is structurally homogenizing children. She suggested that the group involves various Ministries who will address these children in the long run, and that the protection of Railway Children is not separate from the other policies.

### **Session II: Evolving an Action Plan for Further Work – Roundtable**

Khushboo Jain moderated this session. The agenda for the meeting was discussed point by point.

#### **Agenda 1: Documentation and enumeration of various existing initiatives taken by Government and Non-Government Organizations for safeguarding the rights of children in contact with Railways.**

It was decided that all Members will provide available information with respect to eight broad themes identified by Ms. Khushboo Jain by 30.04.2014. A Sub-Group was also constituted comprising of Shri Navin Sellaraju, Dr. Sarada Balagopalan, Dr. Bharti Sharma, Ms. Khushboo Jain, Shri Anant Asthana and Ms. Arlene Manoharan to analyse the information received from different Members.

Khushboo Jain pointed out that the members of the Working Group were selected based on zones, so they could facilitate collection of data in their respective zones.

North Zone - Chetna, Ehsaas, Butterflies

South Zone - Sathi

West Zone - Bal Prafula

Central Zone - Jeevodaya Society

East and North East Zone - Praajak and Bal Sakha

To be able to segregate information which should be shared with the group, she suggested certain broad themes:

1. List of NGO's working in the respective zones
2. The intervention models, IEC material, Evaluation Studies, etc.
3. Reports, data, research on other stakeholders' participation, linkages with JJ System, challenges and issues faced.
4. State policies, CWC Orders, Standing orders, SOP's, Court Orders in any respective cases done by NGO's etc.
5. Issues to be covered - missing children, trafficking of children, children in and around railway stations, drug de-addiction, children and sexuality, JCL cases, Children and work, railway children in institutions, running away of children, forward-backward linkages-identification of source areas and routes of children, children with disabilities, gender breakdown and any specific intervention and issues with girl children, children from itinerant groups, local slums, children with families on the street.
6. Issues/Experience with existing policies and legal structures vis. - vis. children in contact with railways
7. Suggestions on how the State including Railways should play a part.
8. Experience with ICPS open shelters, and how railways can be a part of ICPS, and how children might envisage an open shelter

The group after long deliberation agreed to source secondary source materials and share them



with the working group by April 30, 2014. A **Subgroup for data analysis** was formed comprising of Navin Sellaraju, Sarada Balagopalan, Dr Bharti Sharma, Khushboo Jain, Anant Asthana and Arlene Manoharan, who would do the first initial screening of the documents collected, identify themes and cluster data according to themes.

**Agenda 2: Compilation and analysis of various administrative and judicial orders, longstanding or new, concerning the rights of children coming in contact with Railways, their status of implementation and overall impact.**

It was decided that since National Law College, Delhi (NLUD) was already conducting a study on the legal aid to railways children, they will do the compilation of all orders of CWC and JJB. The National Law School of India University (NLSIU), Bangalore also agreed to share the available information and coordinate with NLUD in compilation of the requisite data. Since the representative from TISS was not present in the meeting, the Working Group decided to approach TISS with the request to make necessary contribution in this endeavour.

**Agenda 3: “Understanding the views of railways children and involve them in the participatory system with a view to find viable solution to their problems.”**

It was agreed that the existing Participatory Assessment Tool prepared by Prof. Shekhar Seshadri should be suitably modified and pilot-tested in Karnataka within six weeks’ time in coordination with NGO ‘Concerned with Working Children’. The pilot testing will be done by a Sub-Group comprising of Prof. Shekhar Seshadri, Father George Kollashany and Ms. Arlene Manoharan of ‘Concerned with Working Children’. After field testing and finalization of the Participatory Assessment Tool, Childline will train its field staff in the country to collection information using this tool. For this purpose, the Childline will use NIC Video Conferencing facility available in all States.

**Agenda 4: How the Framework needs to be taken up simultaneously with concerned Ministries and Departments.**

It was decided that the second meeting of the Working Group will be held only after the initial data collection, analysis and documentation and pilot testing etc. [Agenda 1 - 3] is completed. The tentative dates suggested for the meeting were 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> June, 2014.

Meeting ended with Concluding Observation by Mr Asheem Srivastava.

**Next Working Group meeting: June 6 and 7, 2014, Delhi**

## 12.3 Information Cards for the Surveyed Children

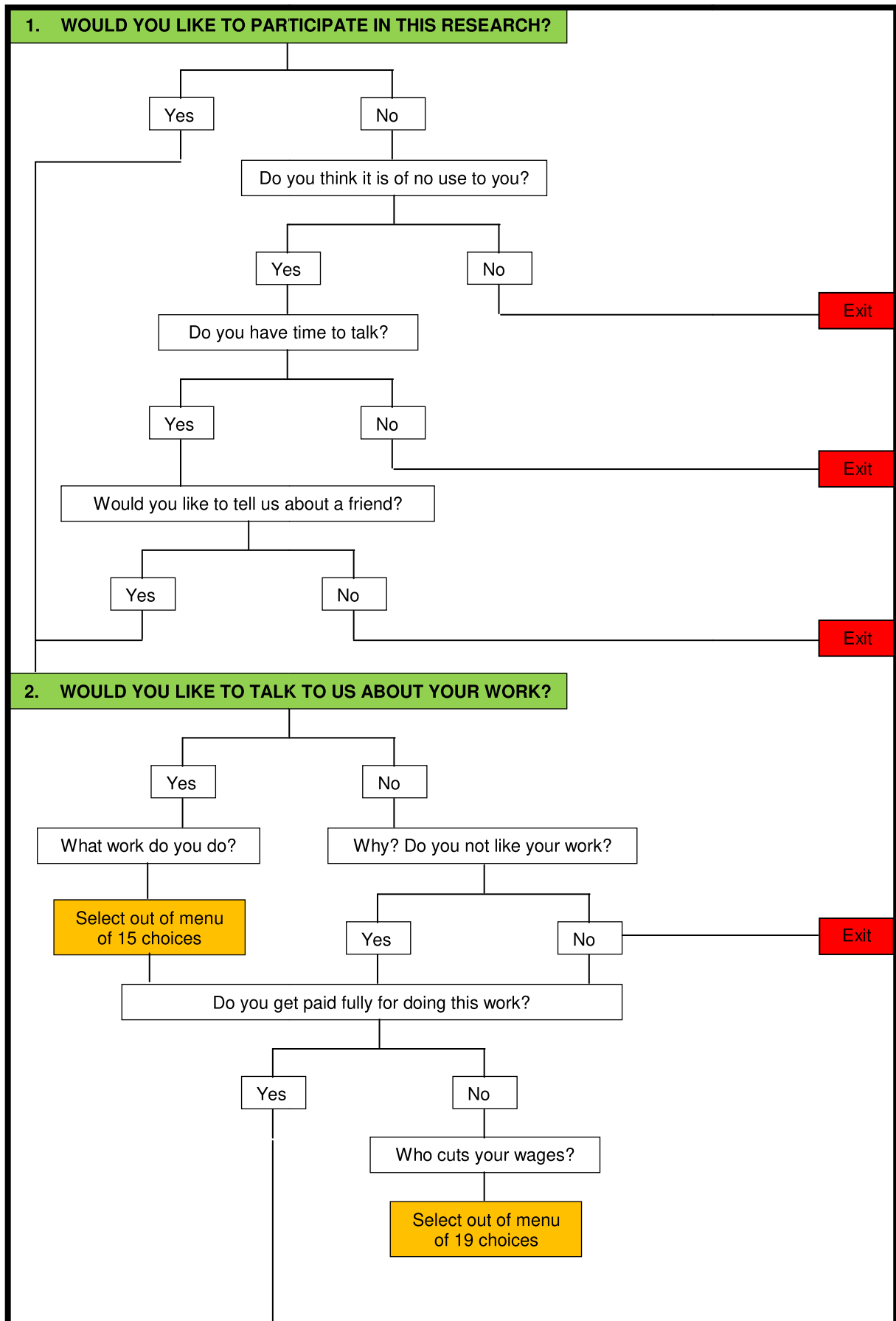
इमरजेन्सी फोन नम्बर नई दिल्ली रेलवे स्टेशन		
क्र.सं.	नाम	फोन नम्बर
1	सरकारी अस्पताल	लेडी हार्डिंग फोन: 011-2336-3728, कलावती सरन फोन: 011-2334-4160
2	एम्बुलेंस सेवा	102
3	व्यवसायिक शिक्षा सलाहकार सेवा	एस.ओ.एस. व्यवसायिक ट्रेनिंग सेन्टर फोन : 011-4335-7299
4	चाइल्ड लाइन प्रयास	011-6515-1098 / 011-6516-1098 जूनेद (कॉर्डिनेटर) :- 991-171-7802

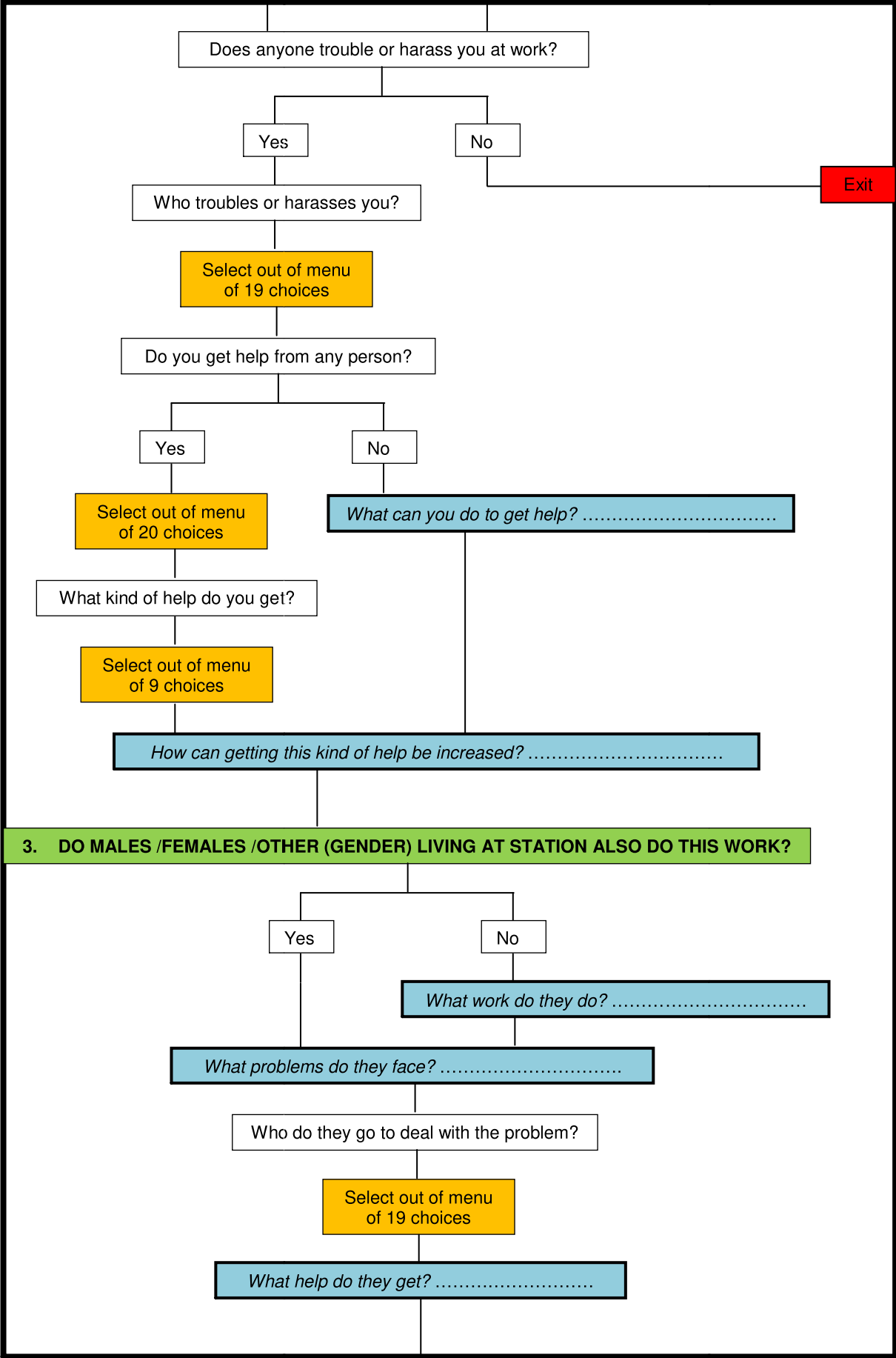
क्र.सं.	नाम	फोन नम्बर
5	एन.जी.ओ. सलाम बालक ट्रस्ट	प्रमोद कुमार: 989-929-5669 011-2358-9305
6	बाल कल्याण समीति (सी.डब्ल्यू.सी.)	सुषमा विज (अध्यक्ष) : 991-019-7929 प्रेमवती राणा : 921-107-0023
7	जी.आर.पी., एस.एच.ओ.	थाना:011-2374-4073 आकाश रावत :875-087-1305
8	आर.पी.एफ. (एस.एच.ओ.)	थाना:011-2334-0790 अनिल धीवन रु. 971-763-1747
9	दिल्ली बाल हक सुरक्षा आयोग (डी.सी.पी.सी.आर)	ममता साही (पूर्व मेमबर) 989-919-4397
10	डी.सी.पी.सी.आर.	011- 2386-2691
11	राष्ट्रीय बाल हक सुरक्षा आयोग (एन.सी.पी.सी.आर.)	011- 2347-8266

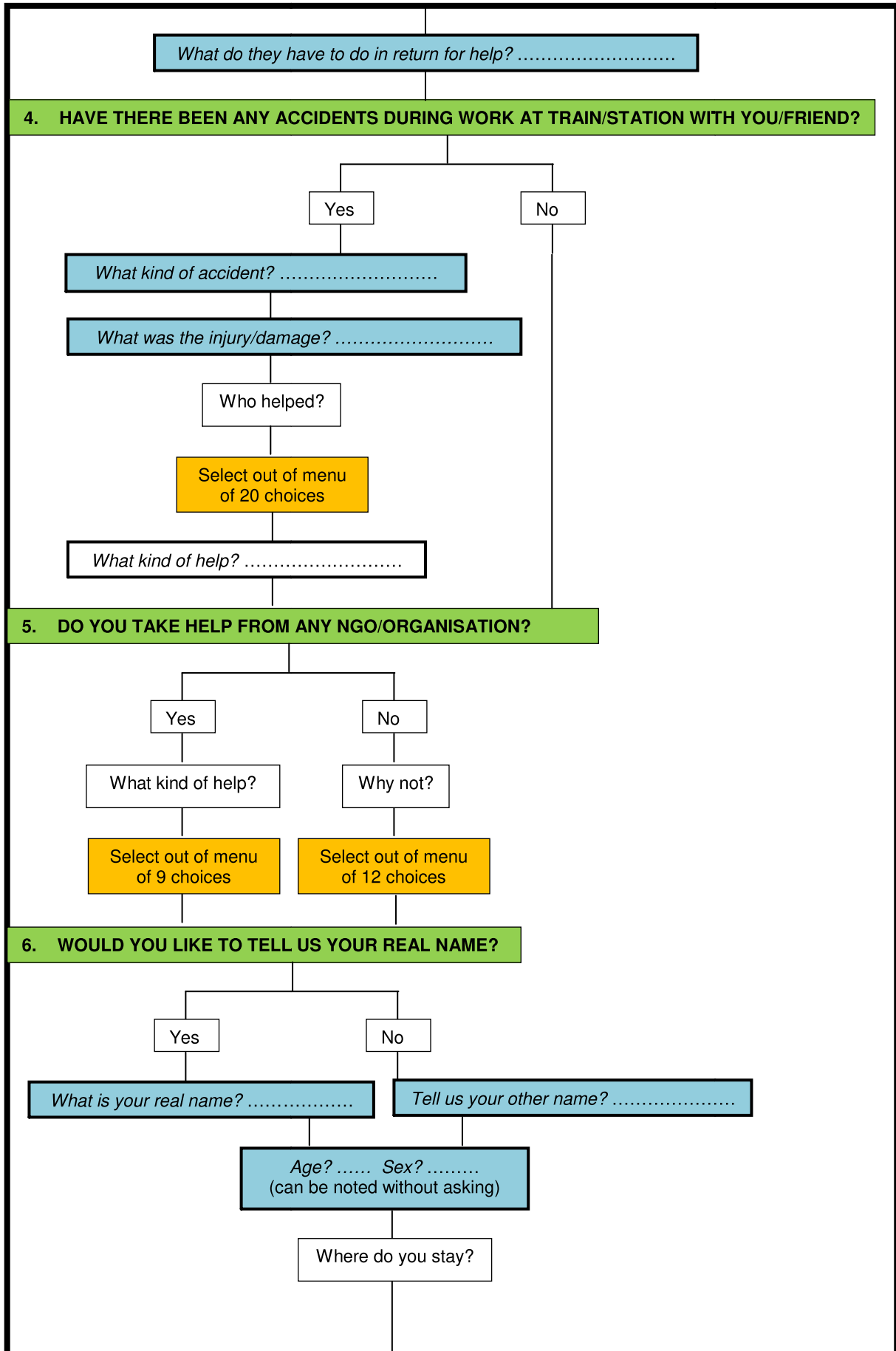
Emergency Phone Number Hazrat Nizam uddin Railway Station		
S.n	Name	Phone number
1	Government Hospital	AIIMS Ph: 01126588500
2	Ambulance Service	102
3	Vocational Training Service	S.O.S Vocational Training Centre Ph: 01143357299
4	CHILDLINE Butterflies	01124352264 Sunil (Booth Coordinator) 9821369655

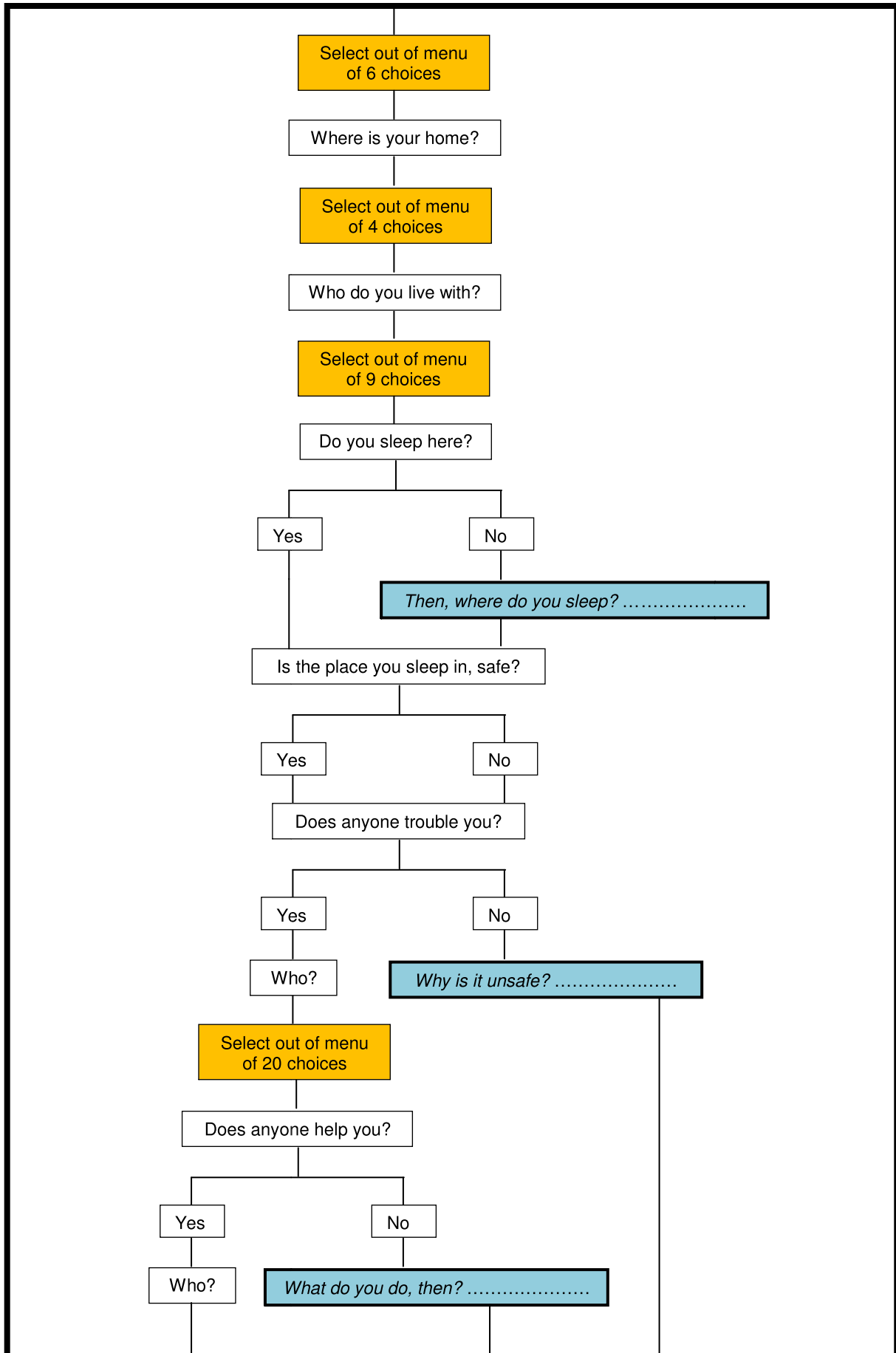
S.n	Name	Phone number
5	NGO CHETNA	Surendra Singh 9311141092
6	Child Welfare Committee	Vaidehi Subramaniam (Chairperson) 9910015483
7	GRP SHO	Thana: 01124358593
8	RPF SHO	Thana: 01124359748 Gulzar Singh 9717631760
9	Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights	Mamta Sahi (ex-Member) 9899194397
10	DCPCR	01123478266

## 12.4 Preliminary Questionnaire for Pilot Quantitative Survey

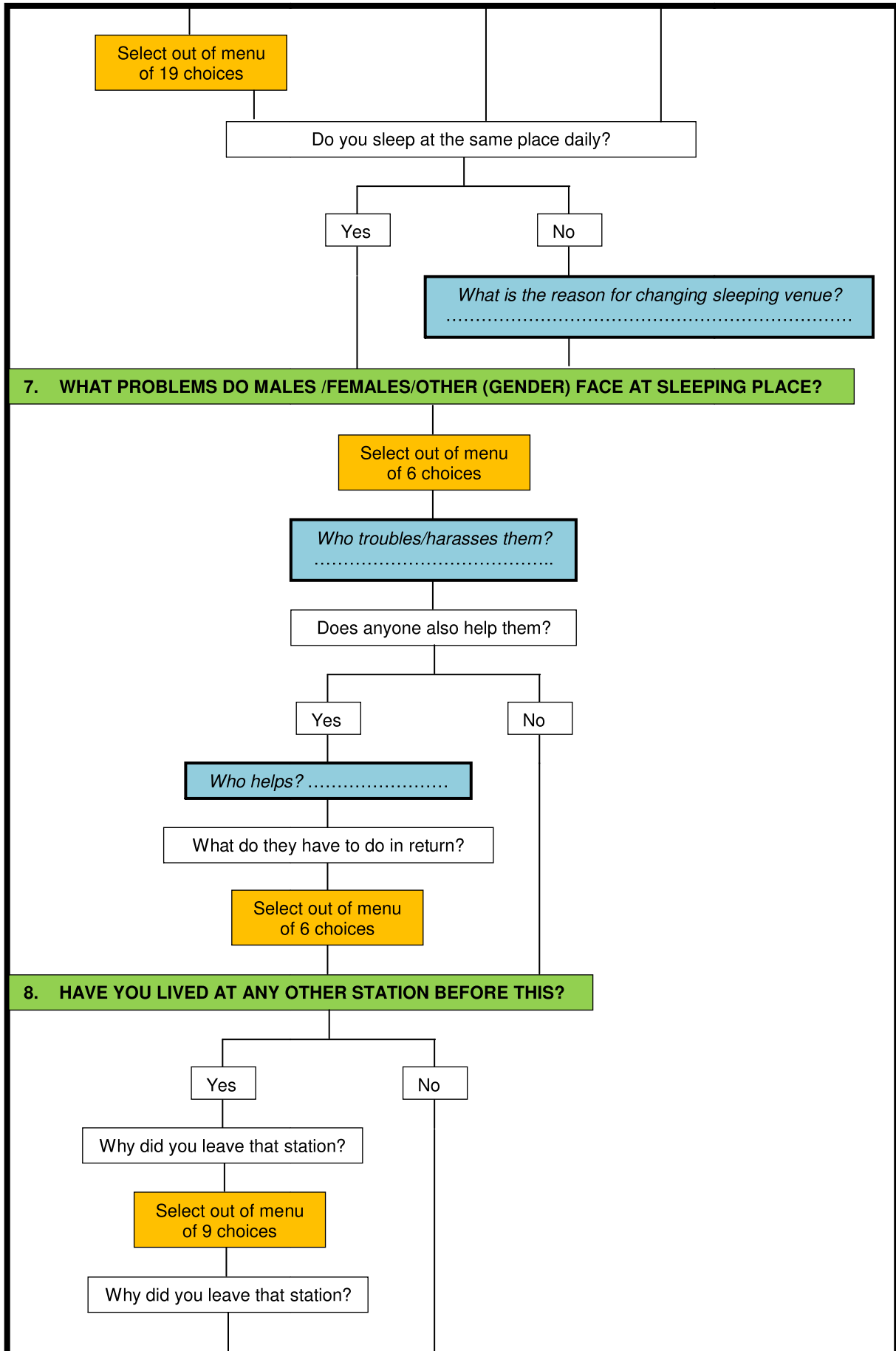


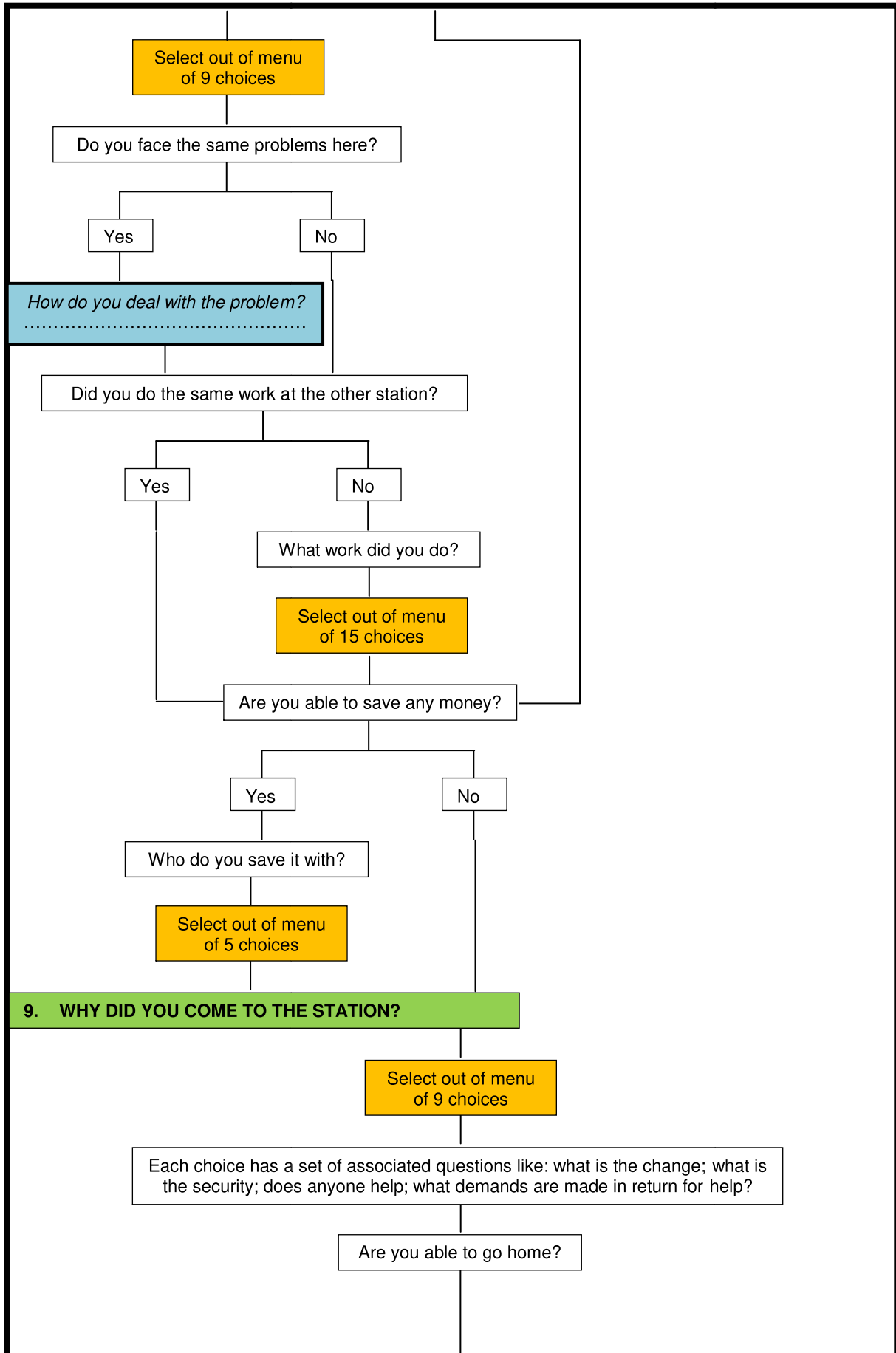


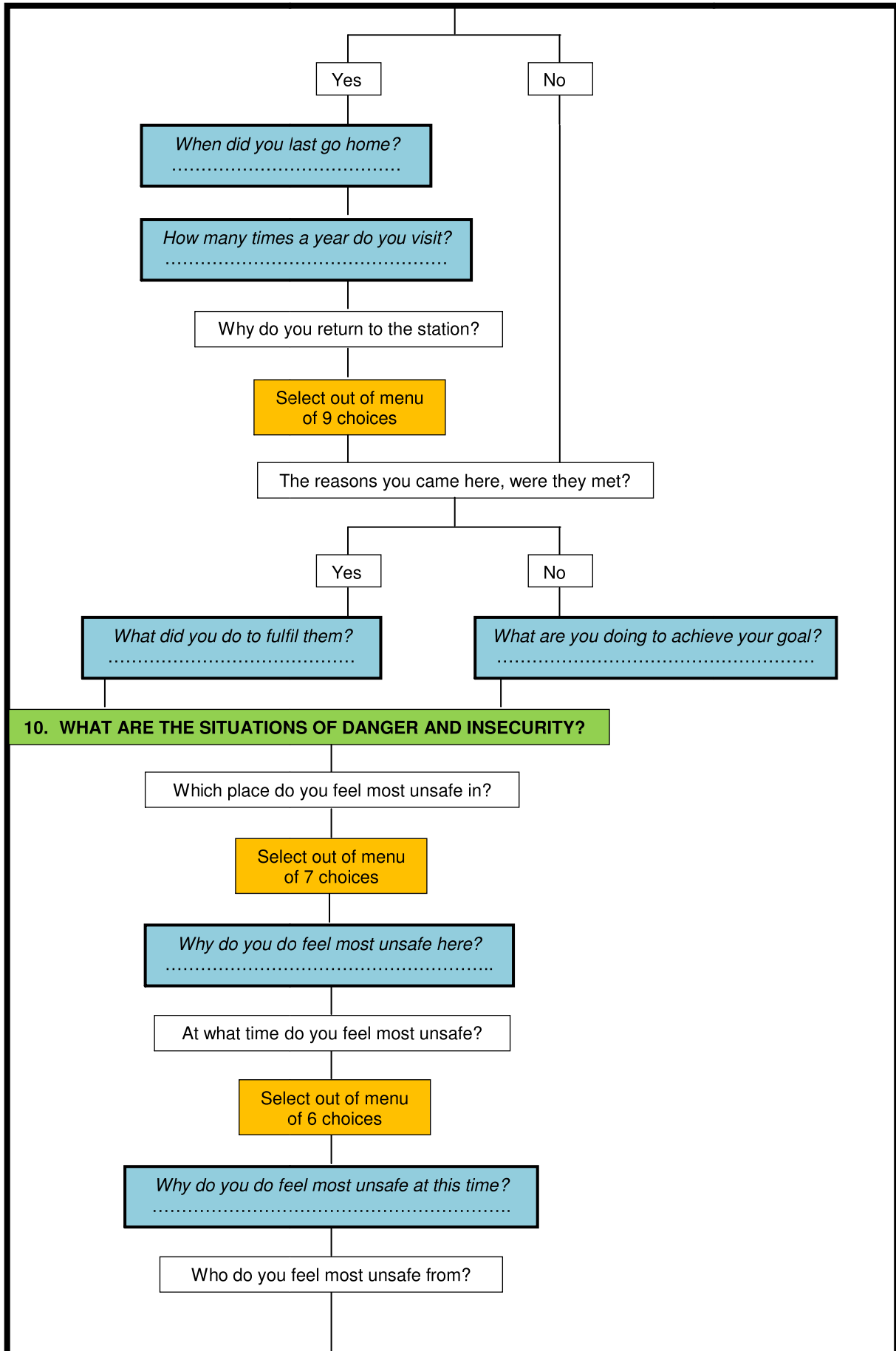


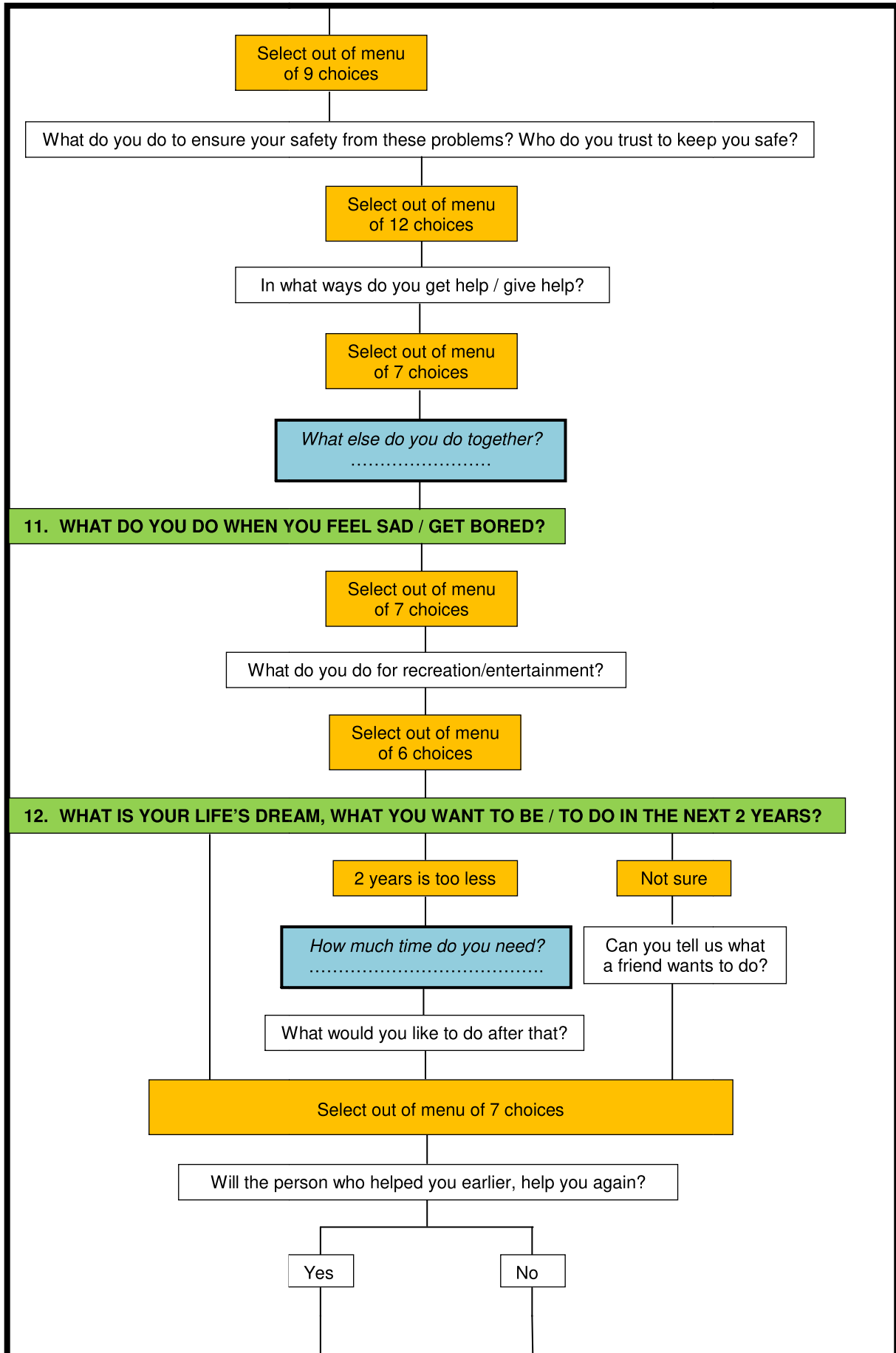












<div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #ADD8E6; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <i>How can they help?</i>                  .....             </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #ADD8E6; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <i>Who can help?</i>                  .....             </div>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">                 Will you have to do something in exchange?             </div>	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">                 Yes             </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">                 No             </div>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #ADD8E6; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <i>What?</i>                  .....             </div>	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">                 Do they help other children also?             </div>	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">                 Yes             </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">                 No             </div>
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #ADD8E6; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <i>Why don't they help other children?</i>                  .....             </div>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #ADD8E6; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">                 Some people help you, some people harass you.                  You are sensible: how will you use the help of one to deal with the harassment from another?                  How will you ask them to help you achieve your dream?                  .....             </div>	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #ADD8E6; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">                 Are any of the following of any use to you?                  1. SOP .....                  2. Rules &amp; regulations .....                  3. NGO .....                  4. Childline .....                  5. CWC .....                  6. CRC .....                  7. GRP .....                  8. RPF .....             </div>	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">                 Comments             </div>	



## 12.5 List of stations where the Pilot study was carried out

No	State	Station	Respondents
1	Delhi	Hazrat Nizamuddin	10
2		New Delhi	14
3		Old Delhi	16
4	Karnataka	Gulbarga	4
5		Raichur	6
6		Sedam	2
7		Wadi	7
8		Yadgir	3
9	Telangana	Kachiguda	3
10		Lingampally	4
11		Secunderabad	15
12		Thandur	1
13		Vikarabad	3
14	West Bengal	Asansol	10
15		Chitpur	2
16		Kharagpur	13
17		Malda	4
18		New Jalpaiguri	4
19	Blank		10
20	<b>Total</b>		<b>157</b>

Examples of Choices offered under different menus in the Pilot:

What work do you do?

<input type="checkbox"/> Q	1. Waste Collection	<input type="checkbox"/>	8. Porter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> X
<input type="checkbox"/> R	2. Cleaning the train coach	<input type="checkbox"/>	9. Theft/snatching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Y
<input type="checkbox"/> S	3. Collect plastic bottles	<input type="checkbox"/>	10. Sell drugs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Z
<input type="checkbox"/> T	4. Boot polish	<input type="checkbox"/>	11. Sex work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> AA
<input type="checkbox"/> U	5. Music/performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	12. Catering	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> AB
<input type="checkbox"/> V	6. Selling/Vending	<input type="checkbox"/>	13. Seat blocking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> AC
<input type="checkbox"/> W	7. Begging	<input type="checkbox"/>	14. No answer	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	15. Other _____				

Who troubles or harasses you?

Who do you get help from?

Who do these females/males approach to get away/deal with this problem?

**OPTIONS LIST:**

1. TT
2. R.P.F.
3. G.R.P.
4. Railway staff
5. Yard employee
6. Friend
7. Adults living in the station
8. Adults living near the station
9. People living with you
10. Passengers
11. Porter
12. NGO
13. Shopkeeper
14. Goons
15. Some aunty or uncle living in or around the station
16. Employer
17. Contractor
18. Family members
19. Shelter in-charge
20. No answer
21. Other \_\_\_\_\_

What kind of help do you get?

What kind of help do they get? \_\_\_\_\_

1. Monetary
2. During illness
3. During a fight
4. Food
5. During issues with the police
6. To get employment
7. Providing a place to stay
8. No answer
9. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Do you take help from any NGO/ C**

Why not?

1. Out of fear
2. Find them boring
3. They do not listen to what we have to say
4. Forcefully send us back home
5. Feels like prison
6. Bad food
7. One has to follow their rules
8. Can't live on our terms
9. Cannot do drugs
10. Restrictions on doing sex
11. No answer
12. Other \_\_\_\_\_

Who do you live with?

- |                  |                          |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Friend        | 5. With an uncle or aunt |
| 2. Alone         | 6. Contractor            |
| 3. Employer      | 7. Family                |
| 4. With an adult | 8. No answer             |
| 9. Other _____   |                          |

Why did you have to leave that station?

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. Harassment           | 6. NGO/shelter were sending back home           |
| 2. Less income          | 7. To meet a friend or to go around for leisure |
| 3. Didn't like the work | 8. No answer                                    |
| 4. Stopped getting work | 9. Other _____                                  |
| 5. Unsafe place         |   |

What work did you do?

- |                             |                    |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Waste Collection         | 8. Porter          |
| 2. Cleaning the train coach | 9. Theft/snatching |
| 3. Collect plastic bottles  | 10. Sell drugs     |
| 4. Boot polish              | 11. Sex work       |
| 5. Music/performance        | 12. Catering       |
| 6. Selling/Vending          | 13. Seat blocking  |
| 7. Begging                  | 14. No answer      |
| 15. Other _____             |                    |

Who do you save it with?

- |                      |              |
|----------------------|--------------|
| 1. Keep with oneself | 4. NGO       |
| 2. Employer          | 5. Family    |
| 3. Friend            | 6. No answer |
| 7. Other _____       |              |

What do you do for your safety?

1. Stay away from those who trouble
2. Carry weapons for safety
3. Stay in groups
4. Pay bribe to older children /goons
5. Approach NGO
6. Get help from the police
7. Ask shopkeeper to help
8. No answer
9. Other \_\_\_\_\_

Why do you return to the station?

- |   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. Ill-treatment by family members        | 5. To live on your own terms     |
| 2. To earn money                          | 6. Family doesn't look after you |
| 3. To provide financial support to family | 7. Friends are here              |
| 4. Due to physical abuse at home          | 8. No answer                     |
| 9. Other _____                            |                                  |

<p><b>In which place do you feel the most unsafe?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Station</li> <li>2. Train</li> <li>3. Place where you live</li> <li>7. Other _____</li> <li>4. Place where you sleep</li> <li>5. Work place</li> <li>6. No answer</li> </ol>	<p><b>When do you feel most unsafe?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Night</li> <li>2. Evening</li> <li>3. During work</li> <li>4. While sleeping</li> <li>5. No answer</li> <li>6. Other</li> </ol>
--	---

**What do you do to ensure your safety from these dangers, who do you trust for your safety?**

1. Stay with a friend	7. You protect yourself
2. Stay with an aunt or uncle	8. R.P.F.
3. Stay with your employer	9. G.R.P.
4. Stay with older children at the station	10. NGO
5. Stay with older children outside the station	11. No answer
6. Stay with the contractor	12. Other _____

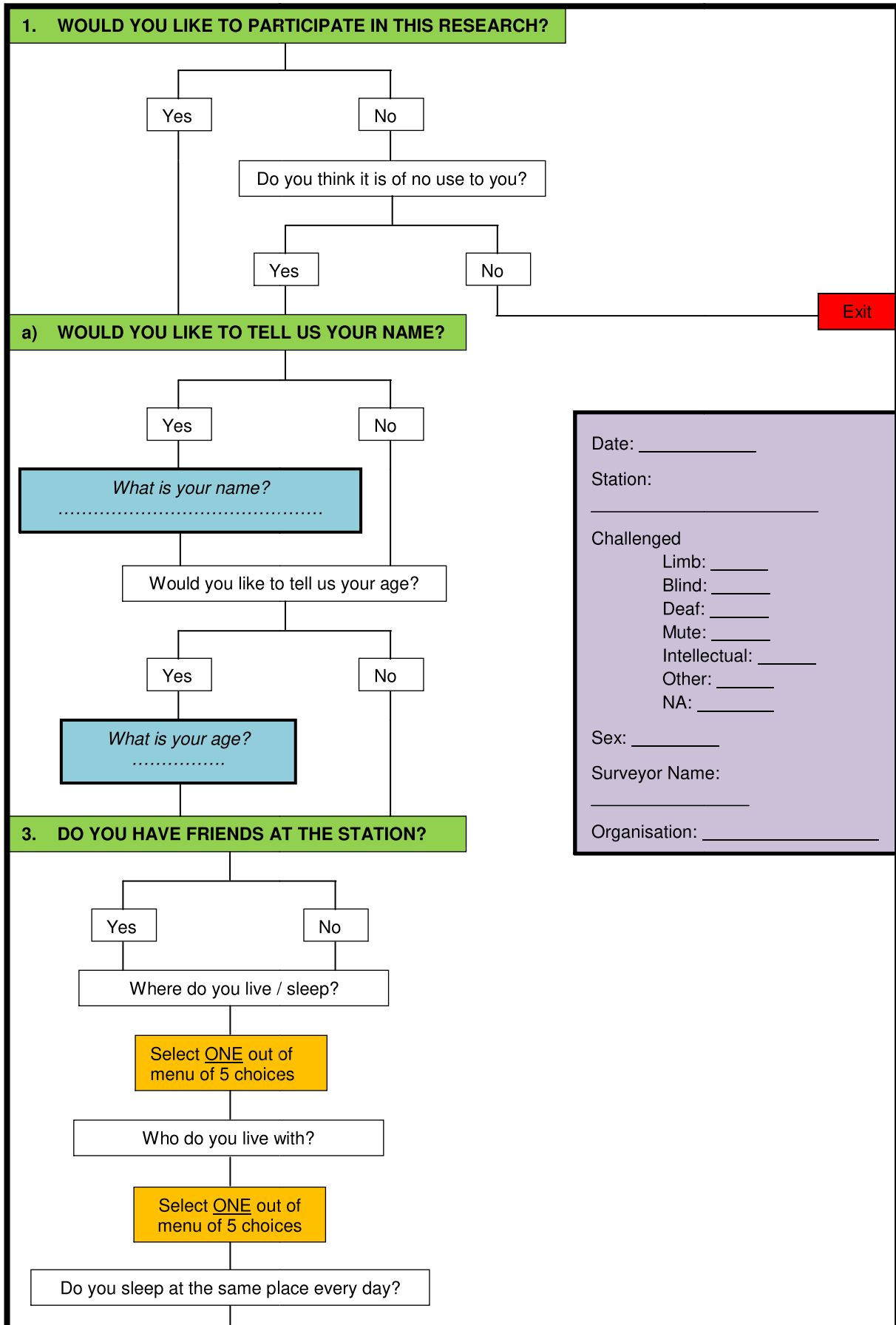
<p><b>In what ways do you get help/give help?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. During fights</li> <li>2. During illness</li> <li>3. With money</li> <li>7. Other _____</li> <li>4. To get food</li> <li>5. To get respite from the police</li> <li>6. No answer</li> </ol>	<p><b>What do you do when you feel sad/get bored?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prefer to be on your own</li> <li>2. Go to your friends</li> <li>3. Go to see a new place</li> <li>7. Other _____</li> <li>4. Cinema</li> <li>5. Do drugs</li> <li>6. No answer</li> </ol>
---	--

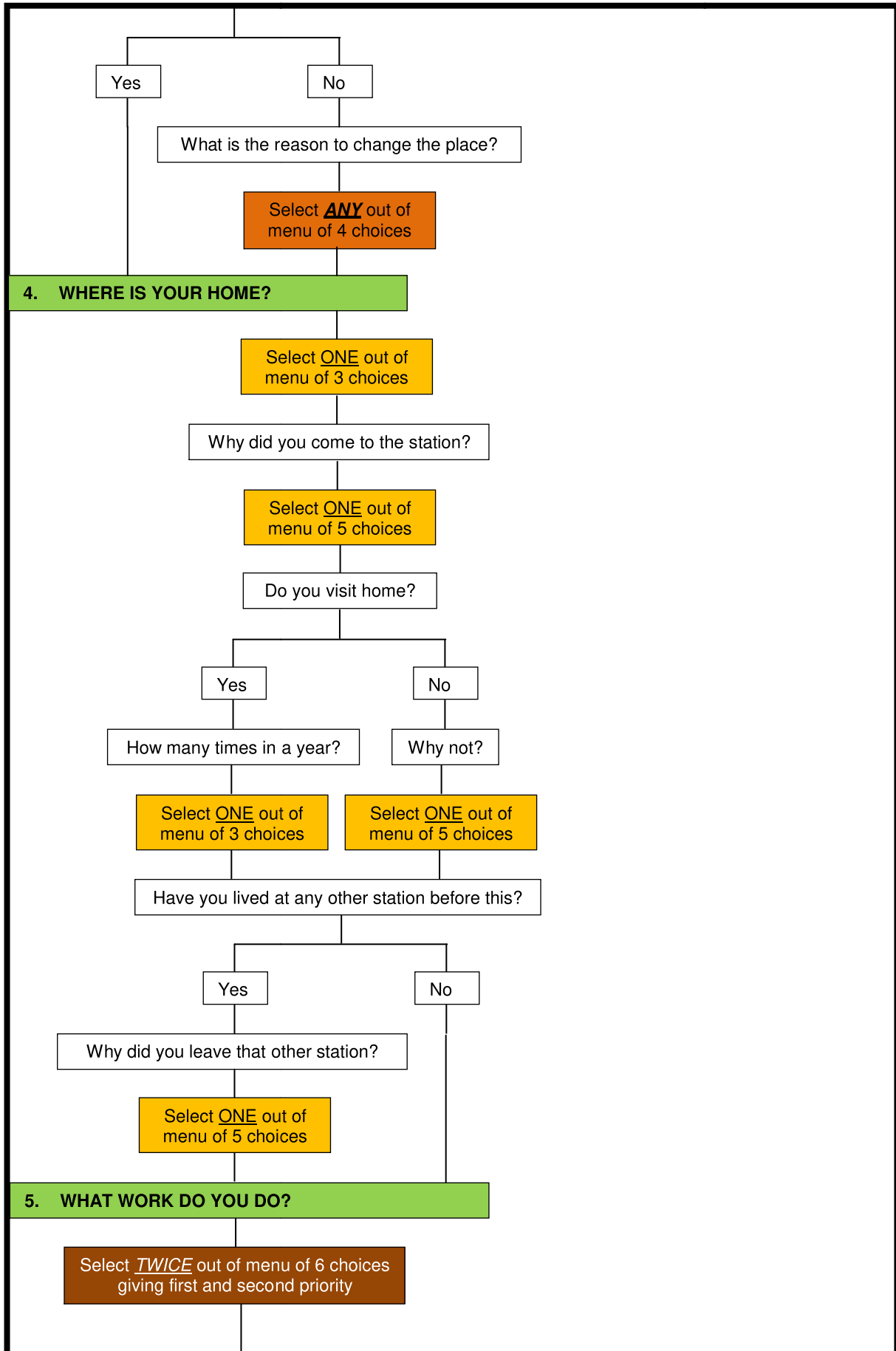
<p><b>Who do you feel most unsafe from?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. RPF</li> <li>2. GRP</li> <li>3. Older children</li> <li>4. Passengers</li> <li>5. Children you are living with</li> <li>6. Shelter In-charge</li> <li>7. Porter</li> <li>8. Shopkeeper</li> <li>9. No answer</li> <li>10. Other _____</li> </ol>	<p><b>Would any of these be helpful in doing what you want to do?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. SOP _____</li> <li>2. Laws and policies _____</li> <li>3. NGO _____</li> <li>4. Childline _____</li> <li>5. CWC _____</li> <li>6. CRC _____</li> <li>7. GRP _____</li> <li>8. RPF _____</li> <li>9. Railway employees _____</li> </ol>
<p><b>What do you do for recreation/entertainment ?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Play games</li> <li>2. Cinema</li> <li>3. Go out</li> <li>4. Party with friends</li> <li>5. No answer</li> <li>6. Other _____</li> </ol>	

**What would you like to do after that?**

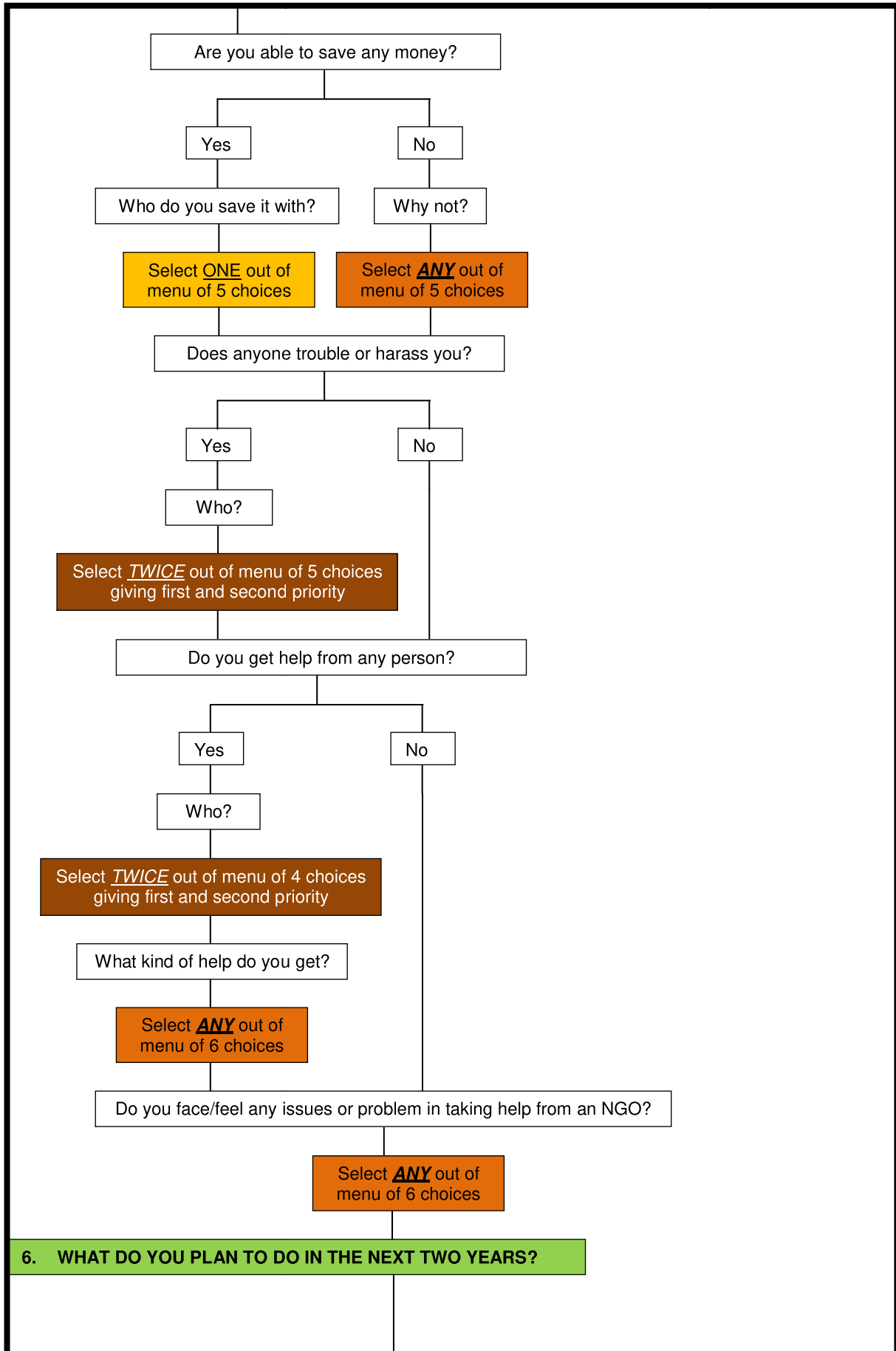
1. Want to continue living here on my own terms	4. Learn a new skill/work <span style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 2px;">PX</span>
2. Wish to continue work here and earn more money	5. Earn enough money and go back home -
3. Go to another city and try to make things work there	6. No answer <span style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 2px;">PZ</span>
7. Other	

## 12.6 Final Questionnaire for Quantitative Survey and Logic Tree









Select ONE out of menu of 7 choices

Of the helpers (Friends, NGO, Employer/Uncle-Aunty, Other in the previous question), who do you think can help you prepare your future plan?

Select ONE out of menu of 5 choices

Comments

Signature of Surveyor .....

## 12.7 Fundamental Principles shared at Orientations: Delhi, January 2017

Program: Orientation on AIWG-RCCR project  
 Date: 19<sup>th</sup> January 2017  
 Venue: USO Hall, New Delhi  
 Time: 10:00 a.m. to 5p.m.

The orientation programme for 40 field workers of the various Partner NGOs working with children in contact with railways in the North zone was held at USO Hall, New Delhi on 19th January 2017. After the welcome by Priyanka Chhapola, the programme began with self- introductions by the representatives and the coordinators. The orientation programme was divided into four sessions in which the first two were informative and the last two were interactive in nature.

In the first session, Ajay Singh and Fr. George described the evolution of child-centred legislation beginning from the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child, 1959 to the present amended Juvenile Justice Act, 2015. The transformation of child-centred legislation from a welfare perspective to development, then rights, and protection and care was illustrated by emphasising the provisions in the previous Five Year Plans and other major laws for children. Fr. George explained the national and international context related to the evolution of these legislations.

In the second session Khushboo Jain spoke of the background and need for the research. She introduced the context of the project and the driving force behind this initiative by sharing her own experience of attempting to remedy the miserable conditions of railway children, which turned out to be ineffective and made their life more miserable. Hence, the ultimate focus of this project is 'the institutionalisation of an agency approach that meets the best interests of the children in contact with railways'.

The next session was an interactive one led by Dunu Roy, in which the active engagement of all the participants was provoked by asking questions about their own sense of 'agency', with respect to their field experience with children in contact with railways. From these descriptions an analogy was drawn about what could be the 'agency' of the child, as distinct from the 'agency' of the NGO. The discussions helped to develop an understanding of why some children are reluctant to be in shelters or return home and what other concerns they may have.

For the fourth session, Kavita Ratna showed a small film and used the discussion that followed to outline the 'Governing Principles' behind the project. She explained the non-negotiable and fundamental Principles such as those of Best Interest of the Child, of Equality, Equity, Universality and Non-discrimination, of Confidentiality, and of Dignity and Self-worth. In particular, she emphasised the Principle of Right to Participation and Agency: which includes "providing a safe and respectful space to children to express their views; and to protect them from retaliation from others for expressing their views; and the right of the child to choose to 'not' participate". The session was translated into Hindi by Bharti Sharma. Deep Purkayastha related the experiences during the Pilot study and the mistakes made, so as to caution participants to avoid them in the quantitative data collection.

In the next interactive session Ranjan Mehta led the participants step-by-step through the formulated questionnaire and explained all the questions in detail to clear the doubts that participants expressed from time to time. He also emphasised why the surveyors had to leave aside their own preconceptions and get the children to feel free to respond any way they liked. Following this, the Tablets were distributed to the participants for a trial run of the ChildSpeak Application. Mohammad Naeem demonstrated how to use the App and all its important features. Everyone participated in the trial and cleared whatever technical as well as theoretical questions they had.

The entire programme came to an end by 5p.m, with distribution of the survey form and the information cards.

## 12.8 List of Stations, States and Zones during Quantitative Survey

Zone	State	Station	Zone	State	Station	
North	Punjab	Amritsar	South	Andhra Pradesh	Ananthapur	
		Ludhiana			Chirala	
	Delhi	Anand Vihar			Eluru	
		Nizamuddin			Gudivada	
	Uttar Pradesh	Agra			Gudur	
		Aishbagh			Guntur	
		Gorakhpur			Hindupur	
		Kanpur			Machilipatnam	
		Lucknow			Nellore	
	Madhya Pradesh	Unnao			Ongole	
		Bhopal			Rajahmundry	
		Hoshangabad			Tenali	
		Itarsi			Tirupati	
	Rajasthan	Katni			Vijaywada	
Jaipur		Vinukonda				
Kota		Vizinagaram				
East	Bihar	Barsoi	Tamilnadu	Arrakonam		
		Danapur		Chennai		
		Gaya		Coimbatore		
		Kishanganj		Katpadi		
		Pataliputra		Salem		
		Patna		Tambaram		
	West Bengal	Adra		Thiruvallur		
		Asansol		Vellore		
		Balichak		Karnataka	Bangalore	
		Ballygunj			Gulbarga	
		Burdwan			Krishnarajapuram	
		Dumdum			Raichur	
		Durgapur	Yadgir			
		Farakka	Yellahanka			
		Girimaidan	West		Maharashtra	Bandra Local
		Harishchandrapur				Bandra Terminus
		Howrah		Borivali		
		Kharagpur		Charni Rd		
		Kolkata		Shivaji Terminus		
		Malda		Dadar		
	New Coochbehar	Grant Rd				
	New Jalpaiguri	Hinganghat				
	Rampurhat	Khar				
	Sealdah	Kurla				
	Siliguri	Tilak Terminus				
	Assam	Guwahati		Mahim		
		Kamakhya		Mumbai Central		
		New Bongaigaon		Nagpur		
	Odisha	Cuttack		Nashik		
		Puri		Pulgao		
		Rourkela		Pune		
	Jharkhand	Dhanbad		Santa Cruz		
Hatia		Satara				
Pakur		Sewagram				
Ranchi		Sholapur				
Tatanagar		Sonegaon				
Chhattisgarh	Bhatapara	Sandhurst Rd				
	Bilaspur	Wardha				
	Durg	Gujarat	Adipur			
	Rajpur		Ankleshvar			
Rajnandgaon	Bharuch					
South	Telengaga		Hyderabad	Bhuj		
			Secunderabad	Surat		
			Tandur	Vadodara		

## 12.9 Field Notes of Chhattisgarh Visit, January 2017

Chhattisgarh RCCR quantitative survey  
Field diary - Khushboo Jain  
21.01.2017 - 24.01.2017

AIWG-RCCR had decided to join partner organisations for hand-holding for conducting the quantitative survey. For this, I joined the NGO (BBB) for survey in four stations: Raipur, Bilaspur, Durg and Rajnandgaon in Chhattisgarh, as their approach in all the interactions seemed to be on rescue of children alone.

### Raipur, 28-30 Jan 2017

In a meeting with Program Manager and staff members of BBB, CHILDLINE Coordinator and outreach staff, their focus on rescue of children in Raipur was repeatedly emphasised by them. Since CHILDLINE is very active here and focuses mainly on rescuing children, alongside having joined hands with State forces under Operation Smile, they contended not many children can be found in the stations any longer.

On migrant families living around stations, they stated that most migrants from Chhattisgarh go to Gujarat, Maharashtra, and brick kiln areas in UP, maintaining that migrants from other States come to Chhattisgarh for daily wage labour while rural migration from Chhattisgarh happens outside the State mainly. When I asked if migration had connections to the civil strife in the state, they were all quite critical of the Maoists and said Maoists were just thriving for *Ganja* production, smuggling in *Sagwan* wood and fertile land, and people like Bela Bhatia were helping promote them further.

According to them, around 40 children could be found at Raipur station, 50 in Bilaspur, 20 in Durg and 15 in Rajnandgaon which includes all categories of children with or without families at or around the railway space. Two categories of children have mainly been found in the stations:

Children from *Nat jati*, who make a living through performing, are prominent at or around the station and live with their families. The father is usually not around; the mother or elder sister plays the instrument and the younger children perform. Also present are what they called *ghoomantu bachhe* (nomad children) from broken families, who take drugs and clean train coaches using brooms and ask for money in return.

The reasons they mentioned for children being on the stations were primarily, railways being an ever changing space, people from whom they beg keep changing, there is ready availability of water, food, TV, shelter, constant movement, place to sleep in the trains which are in the yard, free sex, children who think alike and form groups, criminal connections, easy drug availability for both buying and selling.

The Coordinator mentioned stories of sexual abuse of girls in the stations faced at the hands of GRP and RPF staff in Raipur. However she did not bring it up anywhere else, despite girls confiding in her, as this may have resulted in backlash from the police forces making lives of these girls further difficult in the station.

On 28th Jan when I was in the station with CHILDLINE outreach staff, the Coordinator - who had otherwise shown great understanding of lives of children in contact with railways - became jittery about leaving two boys between 12-14 years of age in the waiting hall. Both boys said they were returning from *Madarsa* in Raipur to their village to collect Rs 300 as fees from their rickshaw-puller father and were planning to catch the train next morning. The Coordinator offered to provide dinner to the two boys. They came out of the waiting hall but got very apprehensive and left after a while without eating anything. We also met another boy about 13-14 years old whose name seemed familiar to the Coordinator. According to her, this boy's missing report is registered in a police station 5 km away, and the child needs to be immediately rescued. However the child refused to go back home and the Coordinator seemed to be in a fix about forcibly taking the child away in my presence. She kept repeating she cannot leave the child here; as he was a fresh arrival and bound to fall prey to a life of drugs and abuse.



So she called Control Room (100) and asked them to connect her with the police station where this child was reported as missing. She later got a call from the police station that this child's case was closed a day after it was reported, as he was found and handed over to the family. It is not clear whether the child we met was the same child who had run away from home again or a different child.

The three BBB staff members who had attended the orientation in Kolkata did not seem to have clarity on who to include in the survey or who to exclude. Two are both new to the CHILDLINE project, with focus only on rescuing children, and the third is the shelter in-charge with no outreach field experience. With the confusions on who to include, they ended up speaking to school-going boys, who all left the conversation mid-way thinking these CHILDLINE staff will take them away, or children coming to the Raipur station from nearby localities to use free wi-fi at the station. Their style of approaching children was unfriendly and they would use words like, "*daro mat*" (don't be afraid), which would have opposite impact on the child.

When I approached a few young men at the end of the station, one of the BBB staff dissuaded me from speaking to them saying they are "*nashedis*" (drug addicts). It took a while for him to loosen up in their presence. We interviewed two of these young men who were both intoxicated. While one maintained there are no problems at the station and no one troubles them, he had a deep wound on his left eyebrow which according to the other happened in a fight with a third person. How 'solution' and are involved in unlawful activities like theft etc. and live on platform 5 and can be found there late in the evening.

The BBB staff member then interviewed another boy, who is with his gardener brother and they both live and sleep in the garden outside the station. This boy was taken away and kept in a shelter home for four months by Raipur Childline before his father rescued the child and brought him back to the station. Though the boy has always lived with his family, even when on the station, blade marks on his left cheek and both hands tell untold stories of life on the station. He also kept saying "*abhi koi nahi milega kyunki sabko pakad liye hain*" (nobody will be available now because they have all been caught). He has also been caught by the police twice and put into jail with adults, and this, he says, has happened to all his friends in the station at the moment. They are falsely implicated on charges of theft by the police.

After the interviews, the BBB staff member came back saying he learnt a lot in the field.

#### Rajnandgaon station, 31 Jan 2017

Except for one young adult picking bottles from the tracks, no one was seen around. The team spoke to three boys who had come to loiter from school but all three left the interview in between fearing the team will take them away after recognising they were CHILDLINE (this was according to the team itself). According to shopkeepers around, children stay under the *puliya* (flyover) near the railway station on the post office *chowk* with their respective families. We saw many homeless families living there with sacks of collected waste bottles. The *kabadi* shop is also nearby. They said children will be found only in the evening. During day time, children go to the city to collect waste material while they collect bottles in the station only early in the morning.

A Railway staff member, who comes from Durg every day, said more children are found in Durg as it is a bigger junction. He mentioned Durg, Power House Bhilai, Kumhari, and Dungargarh stations as the places where most children stay inhaling 'solution'.

#### Bilaspur station, 1 Feb 2017

Reconnaissance at Bilaspur station started on a very dramatic note. We met a person at the scrap dealer's shop who said four children live with him who make a living through rag-picking. When we went to his living area where he had put up a tarpaulin shack in an open area and lived with his family and many goats and chickens, the four children arrived (who he had already sent for) and looked petrified seeing us all. They initially refused to speak but, after a lot of cajoling by this care-taker, sat to talk with us. When we were explaining the research, two boys aged about 14-15 years started crying. They narrated how

CHILDLINE had taken them away and put into harrowing living conditions. They all escaped and returned to the station somehow.

The man, with whom the children work, said he asks them all to live and sleep there but the children refuse and prefer to live at the station. It was not clear what is the relationship these children share with him and his family and needs to be further explored.

When the boys agreed to speak and the interviews began, another boy about 15 years of age came hurling abuses recounting his experience of having been taken away. No amount of convincing worked with him. The team repeatedly said they were not CHILDLINE and not here to catch them, only to understand the children's lives better. This boy returned with a brick wanting to beat us all up. But the boy K who had first started crying then became our spokesperson and started explaining we were not there to catch them. The boy continued to hurl abuses, and it was only later he pacified and sat close to us but still refused to talk.

K narrated his experience of staying in the shelters. He said the shelter home was 75 km deep in the forest. Food served is never enough to satiate hunger and there is nothing to do there, no education or games. While there are carom boards, they are not given to play. Shelter staff beat them up badly and, in one such incident, his head was repeatedly banged by the staff on the carom board leaving him with 5 stitches on his forehead between the eyebrows. They are 5 brothers who live in the station; 4 were taken away by CHILDLINE; of whom 3 ran away and returned while 1 is still in the centre. One of them while running away jumped over the barbed fence and got severe cuts on his stomach and returned bleeding badly. He added, out of fear of children running away from the centre, they are all locked up inside the room and are not even allowed to use the toilets outside. A bucket is left in the room for children to pee and poop in which they have to empty out in the morning when they are allowed out of the room.

K then took us to the station and showed us areas where other children live or work. We met a man who said he was 34 years of age, but barely looked 24, and had a 14 month old daughter in his arms whom he was going to leave with her mother on the other side of the station. He said he has been coming to the station to pick rags since he was a child, adding, "*kaam nahi karenge toh kya karenge*" (if we don't work what will we eat?). He married a girl from the village and stays outside the station.

Most people who live on the station move out during the day, either to clean or beg on the trains or to the city for rag-picking. Everyone there maintained that the children/youth will return after 6 pm to the station and there are over 50 such people who can be found here including many girls and young women. It was decided the team will stay on till late evening so they could meet the children, do some interviews and get a better idea of the situation here.

However, the team left just around lunch time. With bricks being brandished and abuses hurled by the children, the day had not gone well with the team members. They kept asking, what is the purpose of the survey and what would come out of it? Being new in the field - and with the only training received being on rescuing children - was clearly inhibiting the survey in these stations. At the moment, it looks unlikely that the team will put in extra efforts to travel to other stations to interview children after 6 pm. But, after discussions on logistics, the team has divided stations amongst themselves for conducting interviews.

However, if they fail to do it, considering this area is important for survey where a large number of children and families stay and have tales of interventions by CHILDLINE and such, another NGO like one doing the survey in Bhopal or Nagpur stations could be approached to cover these stations.

According to two journalists in the area, Bilaspur is one of the top three stations in India in terms of maintenance and cleanliness. Children and homeless living in and around the station are routinely rounded up by the state forces, as was also going on when we visited, and not many homeless were seen sleeping outside in the evening. There is a sprawling market right outside the station, in the lanes of which children and people stay when forced out of station space.

UNICEF Child Protection Officer Gargi Saha, who had started interventions with railway children in 2002-2003 when she was with Prayas, Delhi, has been working in Chhattisgarh for 6 years. She has been trying to get the SOP implemented in Chhattisgarh stations. One can imagine the scale at which children are being "rescued" by everyone with CHILDLINE, Operation Smile, and UNICEF, all pushing for the SOP. Through her efforts in Bilaspur station, she has managed to get space allocated for children right on Platform 1. However, according to her, it was still not clear how will it be run and where the funds will come from. The space was awaiting a formal inaugural ceremony and was still not functional.

Bilaspur, at the moment, looks like an important station for the qualitative study given the sheer number of children who stay here; their experience with State and NGO interventions; youth who have grown up working in the station and have families living nearby; and migrant families who have lived here for a long time. All the stations have a large number of homeless families living right in the station space or under a flyover or market in the vicinity, making a living through rag picking. It needs to be further explored to understand the situation of children better.

## 12.10 Surveyor Feedback on Orientation and Survey

AIWG-RCCR Orientation and Survey (App) Evaluation Form

Surveyor Name: PVK User Code: AP003 No. of children surveyed: 20

Organisation: NBBS Mobile No: .....7934

### **Feedback on Orientation:**

1. Was the orientation useful? [Yes/No] YES. If yes, please explain, what was it useful for and how: Useful, explanation, good concept, Acts

2. Did you learn something new during the orientation? [Yes/No] YES. If yes, please give details: Special APP, Services Card, and Notepad

3. A) Do you think children have the right to make their own decisions – for deciding to make friends; what to eat; what to study or to do work; where to live; including running away from home? Please explain why: Yes .... if h is l i f e g e t s t o o h a r d a t h o m e o r w o r k , c h i l d h a s f o r a s a f e r p l a c e

3. B) If asked before the orientation, would your answer have been the same? If not, can you tell what would have been your answer then? Yes

4. Any suggestions you can give on how to improve the orientations? Remove Language barriers

### **Feedback on Survey (multiple answers):**

1. On which stations did you do the survey? Vijayawada, Tenali, Chirala, Gudivada, Khammam

2. On what places did you look for children or speak to children for the survey?

i) On the platform - yes

ii) On the edges of the platform/station - yes

iii) Market or junk shop near the station - yes

iv) In slums/colonies near the station

v) In Hostels or Homes or Child Care Institution

vi) In NGO centres or Day care centres

vii) Other

3. Which children did you speak to for the survey?

i) Recently lost/missing child found at station

ii) Recently arrived/runaway at station

iii) Child who regularly visits our NGO centre

iv) Child who lives at Hostel/ Institution

v) Children working/living at or near station - yes

vi) Child at station who is now adult - yes

vii) Other

4. What problems did you face during survey (other than in using the Mobile App)?

i) Children run away when they see us

ii) Children were not interested in survey

iii) Children change their responses

iv) Others (passengers/child) create problem

v) Police/Childline/NGO were not supportive - yes

vi) Children left mid-survey

vii) Parents did not allow us to talk - yes

viii) Other

ix) Some questions were NOT necessary. If yes, which?

x) Some questions were missing. If yes, which?

5. Did you speak to some new (or not previously known) children during the survey? Yes

6. After speaking to the children did you get some new information about the life of the child and their situations and decisions? If yes, what? Exploitation of Labour, not genuine information, no shelters for persons 19 to 22 yrs, many such children are disabled.

7. Did you feel that for some of the questions the child was giving false information? Yes

If yes, for which questions? And what did you do in this situation? Support persons, earnings, name change, address, health issues.

### **Feedback on Mobile App 'ChildSpeak'**

1. Has the Mobile App 'ChildSpeak' made the survey process easier? [Yes/No] Yes If, yes:

i) Reduces time and effort - yes

ii) Child is interested in Mobile App survey - yes

iii) Easy to use & record responses - yes iv) Other

2. What problems did you face in using the Mobile App 'ChildSpeak'?

- i) New to using smart phone and Apps - yes ii) Problem in data entry/typing  
iii) Problem in using App functions iv) Many times App not opening properly  
v) Other

3. In future would you prefer to do survey using a mobile or with paper-pen? Mobile

***Feedback for Qualitative Research (Next Phase)***


1. Did you find some child who should be interviewed in more detail (for case studies in the next part of the study): if yes, then who and at which station? Chirala, Tenali, Vijayawada Rag Shops

2. Did you find some child who could be considered as a bare foot researcher (a child, who has lived and grown up at or near the station, understands life on the railways, and knows reading & writing) for doing the detailed survey with other children in the next phase of the study? If yes, then who, and at which station? - No

3. Any other feedback: Street addicted adults 19-20 yrs need shelter



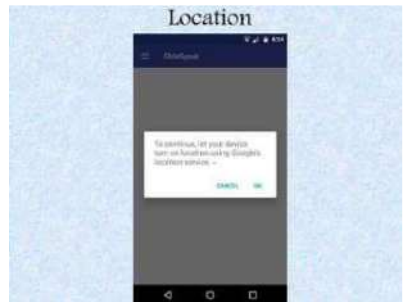
## 12.11 Functional ChildSpeak Application Design




### Main features

- Works on both mode – Online & Offline
- Multiple languages
- Only authorized users can use
- No restriction on movement
- Draft & Sync
- Survey modes – Testing & Live
- Simple – interface & data flow

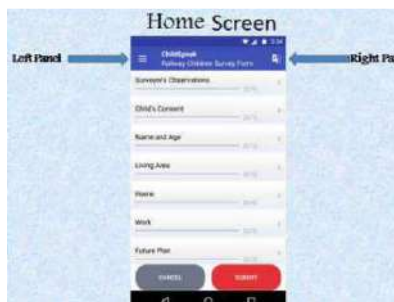
### Location




### Login page



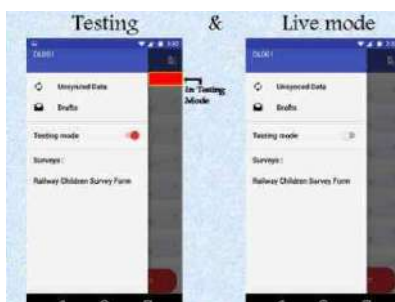
### Home Screen



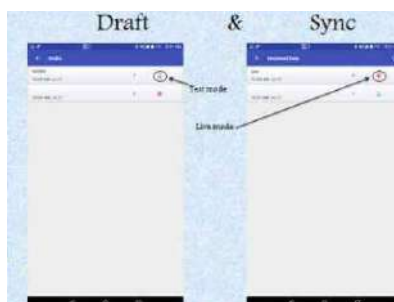
### Side Panels




### Testing & Live mode



### Draft & Sync



### Different sections



### Precautions.

1. Pre download survey form in comfortable language
2. Do survey in live mode
3. Use testing mode when trying
4. Keep extra precaution in questions having priority
5. Do sync data ASAP preferably daily
6. Don't delete cache memory before syncing data
7. Before updating App from Google Play Store, sync data

### Thank you

&

### Best of Luck 😊

The above is the design of the App as it appears in different languages on the Tablet or the Mobile Phone.

## 12.12 Core and Academic Researchers and Stations for Qualitative Study

<b>Station</b>	<b>Core-Researchers</b>	<b>Academic-Researchers</b>
Delhi <sup>a</sup>		Mohammad Naeem, along with the Hazards Centre team
Gorakhpur <sup>b</sup>	Ram Karan Chauhan, 19 Left his home due to financial problems; living in contact with railways for the last 6-7 years	Shraddhesh Kumar Tiwari, 33 Post-Doctoral Fellow; research into Social Dominance, Stereotypes, Self-esteem, Behavioural Orientation, Mental Health
Nagpur	Avinash Shinde, 19 Left his home for the station, has been living there for 3 years, has done multiple jobs, is currently a rickshaw puller	Kiran Ashok Thakre, 24 Involved in Campaigns for Right to Water and Housing for 5 years; handled Information Resource Centre; Coordinator for Nagarik Abhiyan on City Makers .
Patna / Pataliputra <sup>c</sup>	Bijay Das, 21 At 12 years he was collecting bottles at the station; became an NGO outreach worker, now working in hospitality sector.	Paramita Banerjee, 49 Ashoka Fellow; Consultant for numerous Foundations and Agencies involved in children, health, and gender concerns; Senior Researcher in five studies of children, migrant labour, sex workers.
Rajahmundry	Hemant Kumar Naik Nenavath Has worked briefly in a railway child research project; skilled in computers, graphic design, languages	P Pavan Kumar Varma, 11 years of experience in Research, Social sector, CBO and RBO, Education, Skill Development, Livelihoods; Project Management; Consultant and Technical Trainer
Surat	Wasim Ibrahim Pathan, 33 Left his home to live on railways for 15 years; sells accessories on the train; has been an NGO field worker	Krinna Shah, Consultant and Senior Researcher with a variety of organisations concerned with Child Rights, Trafficking, Rehabilitation of Children of Sex Workers, Juvenile Justice Act, Drug Abuse; served on the CWC;

<sup>a</sup> Delhi was taken up very late in the project when the work could not be done at Gorakhpur

<sup>b</sup> Gorakhpur was abandoned because the Academic-Researcher took up another assignment. Shraddhesh Tiwari and Astha Matharoo briefly laboured to identify children at Gorakhpur station who could be interviewed but paused prematurely, so the task of collecting case studies had to be taken up by the researchers from the Hazards Centre at Delhi station.

<sup>c</sup> Research in Patna could not be completed as the Academic-Researcher stopped communicating.

## 12.13 Orientation for Core and Academic Researchers, Nagpur, July 2017

### 1. *Roles & responsibilities of Core-Researcher and Academic Researcher:-*

The Core-Researcher (renamed from Barefoot-Researcher) shall be responsible for the following roles:

- Observation of the situation at and near the station with specific reference to the interaction of children with the railways
- Interact with the children (and adults) present using different forms as appropriate
- Introduce him/herself along with the proposed research to at least 15 children/youth as identified in consultation with the Academic-Researcher in the team
- Obtain the verbal consent of the selected children to explore their life experiences
- Conduct the interviews with the selected children to complete the 11 case studies over a period of three weeks as per the prescribed guidelines
- Compile field notes to assist the Academic-Researcher in documenting the stories of the participating children

The Academic-Researcher shall be responsible for the following roles:

- Introduce the research proposal to and get consent of the relevant officials
- Develop the profiles of the station and children and select the possible interviewees in consultation with the Core-Researcher
- Guide the Core-Researcher from time to time during the course of the interviews keeping the thematic questions & ethical guidelines in mind and identifying the gaps
- Step in to help in the interview on request
- Write the stories of the children in collaboration with the Core-Researcher Identify timeline gaps and highlight incidents of agency while writing the stories Present the stories back to the interviewed child/youth in the familiar language Send reports to AIWG-RCCR as per the given schedule
- Submit the final report to AIWG-RCCR with 11 stories and detailed analysis along with field notes and observations

### 2. *Dates of Reporting:-*

1st week- Profiling the station & profile of 15 children from whom the final 11 case studies will emerge

2nd week- Information about formal support system like GRP, RPF, etc. & livelihood support system

4th week- Researchers should have completed all areas of enquiries and a draft report shared

6th week- Submit the Report

Above stated reporting timeline is flexible and can be modified according to situation and other issues.

### 3. *Fees:-*

The 1st instalment of 25% of consolidated amount would be released after submission of first draft report (by the Academic-Researcher) on children & station profiling. The remaining payment will be made after 6 weeks from the date of starting research.

### 4. *Letter:-*

All the Researchers would require a letter of introduction about the research as well as photo ID cards for the duration they would spend in the stations so as to avoid any hassles that may arise in the field. So Praajak will send the letter on Researcher's address. Two Core-Researchers do not have

any address proof so the letter will be send to their Academic- Researcher partner.

**5. Child Protection Policy:-**

The Child Protection policy and Sexual Harassment at Work Place policy of Praajak will be sent to all researchers by Praajak.

**6. Consent:-**

At the beginning of the interview the researcher must get the verbal consent of the child to collect the story, and this should be recorded by the researcher. After the case study had been completed and documented, it would be read back to the child and then the child's written consent taken that what has been read out to him/her in his/her own language is what he/she had related or narrated to the researchers and that the story could be used in the final report but without revealing his/her identity. If the child doesn't give his/her consent in the end of the case study then we shall not use it even for our analysis and subsequently our number of case studies may decrease.

**7. About administrative & financial issues:-**

All administrative and financial issues Praajak will manage and all invoices / bills & request for advance, etc. should be sent / made directly to Praajak.

Contact Details of Praajak:-  
 Saurav Banerjee  
 Praajak Development Society  
 468A,Block-K, New Alipore, Kolkata - 700053  
 Contact No:-09830160777  
 Email.Id:-praajak.saurav@gmail.com

**8. AIWG-RCCR members' zone visit for hand holding:-**

AIWG-RCCR members will visit their respective zone after 1 week from when researchers start their work at their respective stations.

Zone AIWG-RCCR member to visit

North	Dunu
East	Khushboo
West	Shwetank
Central	Bharti
South	Fr.G

**9. Note:-**

- No one should share AIWG-RCCR research data with anyone till the final report is published.
- During station/field visits or interaction with child, all forms of recordings like photography, audio recording, and video recording should be avoided.

## 12.14 Pointers for Case Study Preparation in Qualitative Study

Issues to be explored in the qualitative phase

### 1. *Disability:-*

- a. How disability happened & what they did to overcome from it
- b. Approached whom at station? Was it reason for leaving home?
- c. Have they visited home after accident?
- d. Reasons for living alone
- e. Reasons for not going home

### 2. *Exploring the reason for coming to station (& for changing the station):*

- a. From how many years are they living on/near a station? This station?
- b. What were the circumstances, socio-economic conditions, and relationship with the family? What factors led to taking the decision?
- c. What did they see in the station that made them stay there?
- d. From where do they get to know about the station?
- e. What did they see/found at the station as a place for staying/working?
- f. How did they make a space for themselves in the station when they arrived? Did they have to struggle for it? Did they find friends?
- g. Who helped them to settle there, providing some form of company, feeling of support and care?
- h. Have the reasons for coming to station fulfilled?

### 3. *Visiting home, living behaviour and work at station:*

- a. Options of work available to them
- b. How do they work and how many hours they work?
- c. Do they work in team? If yes, how profit/loss shared?
- d. About seasonal work
- e. Involvement of adults in their work
- f. The informal system in which they are working and their relationship with:
  - i. Employer (or family)
  - ii. Railway authorities and police: informally allowing them at the station
  - iii. Other children at the station: division of area of work
- g. Type of city and the trains that stop there and how it affects their choices
- h. Conditions under which they work
  - i. Help and problems
  - j. From where do you get money to buy clothes, drugs peddling, and sexual behaviour?

### 4. *Some questions:*

- a. What changes do they see in their living circumstances after coming to the station?
- b. Where they keep their stuff like clothes, belongings, etc.?
- c. Do they also financially contribute/help at home? Are some people dependent on them?
- d. Has their work changed? Why?
- e. How do you decide which work to do at what time?
- f. Has their income changed? What are the reasons?
- g. Does someone extort/charge them? In terms of money or other favours?

- h. Is there a relation between what work they do and where they sleep?
- 5. Harassment:**
- What harassment do they face?
  - Explore the term 'harassment'.
  - What do they do about it? Do they share it with someone?
  - Repetition of such harassment and what do you do at that situation?
  - Relationship with the harassing person? Do they have some deal with them?
  - Is the harassment by adults having something to do with how well the city and the station are linked to work and extortion?
- 6. Change in sleeping location:**
- Is the mood factor related to income or harassment
  - Explore the “according to mood”?
- 7. Is there a relation between whom they live with and who helps them?**
- 8. Friends and other children:**
- How do they help each other? What help do they provide?
  - Do they have to do anything in return? What?
  - Do they belong to the same place or region?
  - How do they see the other children on the station?
  - What do they do when a new child comes to the station?
  - What would they do for other children at the station if they are given the some responsibility at the station?
- 9. Help/Assistance:**
- What do they think/consider as help?
  - Do they have to do anything in return? What?
  - What would be help for them in Short term and in Long term?
  - What type of help would they need/ would be more helpful?
  - Exploring the regional variation the type of help and who helps?
  - Explore the term 'financial help'.
  - What help do they get from shelter homes/ night shelter?
  - Explore the informal structure from they get help.
  - Have you encounter with police, NGO & CHILDLINE & what was the experience? Other than above, if they encountered with any other agent? Which one?
  - From JJ Act which type of help they give?
- 10. Issues with NGOs**
- What do they know and think about NGOs?
  - How did they got to know about NGO?
  - Why so many refused to answer?
  - What is there relationship with these NGOs?
  - Are you live at any institution/shelter? If yes, why you leave that institution/shelter?
  - How children making choices between JJB & other institutions like NGO, & why?
  - If went to any other institution, then why move out from there?



**11. Saving and Future:**

- a. Do you think it is important to save?
- b. Why do you save?
- c. How to save?
- d. Who do they save it with and why do they save it with them?
- e. What are they doing to achieve their future plan?
- f. If someone helps them to fulfil their reasons for being in the station, what should that help be?
- g. From adults, who is your ideal/inspiration for your future planning?

**Profiling of station:**

- Size and traffic at station
- Sense of the number of children, their age group and gender
- Presence of NGOs and locations
- Presence of structures or facilities of water, religious places, shops etc. Spots where children stay during day time during night
- Spots where they sleep, or gather during leisure time, hide. Places of work

**Profile of children:**

- Final case studies with 11 children at each station/zone
- Gender: 3 Females and 8 Males
- Living alone or with family: equal distribution. Handicap: At least one handicapped child.  
Age group:
  - < 12 yrs. 2
  - 12 to 15 yrs. 3
  - 15 to 18 yrs. 3
  - 18 to 21 yrs. 2
  - > 21 yrs. 1

## 12.15 Protocol for Obtaining Child's Consent

### *Protocol for obtaining the consent of the child for collecting and using their stories*

The researchers should keep the following points in mind:

1. Praajak has a Child Protection Policy (that is attached) and the Academic Researcher should read it fully and explain the essence of it to the Core Researcher and ensure it is followed during the course of approaching and interviewing the child.
2. When approaching the child, the purpose of the study should be explained to the child and the child's verbal consent taken for agreeing to relate her/his story.
3. This verbal consent should be recorded in the notes kept by the researcher.
4. Once the story has been told and the case study prepared it should be read back to the child by the Academic Researcher in her/his own language.
5. If the child wishes to make corrections in the story's documentation then these changes should also be documented in the case file.
6. When the child finally agrees that the story has been documented as and how she/he related it, then the child should be requested to sign the Consent Form.
7. The Consent Form should be in the language familiar to the child and should be read out to him/her.
8. If the Consent Form is not signed by the child, then the case study may be submitted but cannot be used by Praajak for the purposes of the study.

## 12.16 Child Protection Policy and Consent Form

### Consent Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_ name in Block letters), age \_\_\_\_\_ years, agree that the story read out to me is what I have willingly told to \_\_\_\_\_ (name of Researcher) and that it may be used by Praajak for the study without revealing my name.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Countersigned: Core Researcher \_\_\_\_\_; Academic Researcher \_\_\_\_\_

### *Praajak's Child Protection Policy*

## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY PRAAJAK



### INTRODUCTION

Praajak is a voluntary organization that works for the establishment of Child and Youth Rights. Being an agency for ensuring Child Protection the organization seeks to develop a Child Protection Policy to implement within the organization for all of its staff, associates, volunteers, interns, vendors etc. Child Protection is the responsibility of every adult who is involved with children.

Praajak's aim is to provide Child Protection and ensure Child Rights to bring positive changes in children's lives by making the state accountable. As an organization working for the rights of the children, it is Praajak's duty to ensure that children are protected from accidental harm as well as deliberate abuse within organizations. This policy will assist in fulfilling this duty as well as providing desirable norms and thus enhance the credibility of Praajak.

The Child Protection Policy will help to create a child safe/friendly organization where children feel secure, can speak out, are listened to and where children and staff are respected and empowered.

The policy will be applicable to all members related to Praajak and working either directly or indirectly with children.

### DEFINITION OF TERMS

#### Who is a Child?

According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 1) a child is every human being below the age of 18 years.

#### What is Child Protection?

Child Protection is a broad term to describe philosophies, policies, standards, guidelines and procedures

to protect children from intentional and unintentional harm. In the current context, it applies particularly to the duty of the organizations and individuals associated with the organizations towards children in their care.

## What is Child Abuse?

'Child abuse' or 'maltreatment' constitutes all forms of physical and emotional ill treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power' (WHO, 1999).

## TYPES OF CHILD ABUSE

There are four major types of child abuse:

1. **Physical abuse** - is an injury resulting from physical aggression. Even if the injury was not intended, the act is considered physical abuse.

Injury from physical child abuse may be result of:

- Beating, slapping or hitting
- Pushing, shaking, kicking or throwing
- Pinching, biting, choking or hair pulling
- Burning with cigarettes, scalding water or other hot objects
- Severe physical punishment
- Abuse by a sibling

### Signs of physical abuse

#### Physical Indicators:

- Unexplained bruises and welts on the face, throat, upper arms, buttocks, thighs or lower back in unusual patterns or shapes which suggests the use of an instrument (belt buckle, electric cord) on an infant in various stages of healing that are seen after absences, weekends or vacations
- Unexplained burns, cigarette burns, especially burns found on palms, soles of feet, abdomen, buttocks; burns producing marks on hands and feet that might indicate that the limbs have been immersed in hot or boiling water; "doughnut shaped" on buttocks or genital area
- Rope burns
- Infected burns indicating delay in treatment; burns in the shape of common household utensils or appliances

#### Behavioural Indicators:

- Behavioural extremes (withdrawal, aggression, regression, depression)
- Inappropriate or excessive fear of parent or caretaker
- Antisocial behaviour such as substance abuse, truancy, running away, fear of going home
- Unbelievable or inconsistent explanation for injuries
- Lying unusually still while surveying surroundings ( for infants)
- Unusual shyness, wariness of physical contact

2. **Sexual abuse** - of a child is any sexual act between an adult and a child. This includes:

- Fondling: touching or kissing a child's genitals; or making a child fondle an adult's genitals
- Violation of bodily privacy: forcing the child to undress, spying on a child in the bathroom or

bedroom

- Child pornography: using a child in the production of pornography, such as a film or magazine
- Exposing children to pornography (movies, magazines or websites) or enticing children to pornographic sites on the internet
- Luring a child for sexual liaisons through the internet or by any other means
- Exposing children to adult sexuality in any form ( showing sex organs to a child, forced observation of sexual acts, telling dirty stories, group sex)
- Child prostitution or sexual exploitation ( using a child to perform sex with others)
- Sexual acts with a child: penetration, intercourse, incest, rape, oral sex, sodomy

### Signs of Sexual Abuse

#### Physical indicators:

- Torn, stained or blood stained underclothes
- Frequent, unexplained sore throats, yeast or urinary infections
- Somatic complaints, including pain and irritation of the genitals
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Bruises or bleeding from external genitalia, vagina or anal region
- Pregnancy (for girls)

#### Behavioural Indicators:

- The victim's disclosure of sexual abuse
- Regressive behaviours (thumb - sucking, bedwetting, fear of the dark)
- Seductive behaviours
- Disturbed sleep patterns ( recurrent nightmares)
- Unusual and age - inappropriate interest in sexual matters
- Avoidance of undressing or wearing extra layers of clothes
- Sudden decline in school performance, truancy
- Difficulty in walking or sleeping

3. **Emotional abuse** - is another person's attitude, behaviour or failure to act that interferes with a child's mental health or social development. Surprisingly, emotional abuse can have more long - lasting negative psychiatric effects than either physical abuse or sexual abuse (Reuters Health Information Medline Plus). Other names for emotional abuse are: verbal abuse, mental abuse, psychological maltreatment or psychological abuse. **Emotional abuse can range from a simple verbal insult to an extreme form of punishment. The following are examples of emotional child abuse:**

- Ignoring, withdrawal of attention or rejection
- Lack of physical affection such as hugs
- Lack of positive reinforcement
- Yelling or screaming
- Threatening or frightening
- Negative comparisons with others
- Belittling; telling the child he or she is “no good”, “worthless”, “bad” or a “mistake”
- Shaming, humiliating or name - calling
- Habitual blaming
- Using extreme form of punishment, such as confinement in a closed or dark room, tying to chair for long periods of time or terrorizing a child
- Child exploitation such as child labour
- Witnessing the physical abuse of others
- Child kidnapping
- Parental child abduction or child stealing

Emotional abuse is almost always present when another form of abuse is found. (some overlap exists between the definitions of emotional abuse and emotional neglect).

### Signs of Emotional Abuse

#### Physical Indicator

- Eating disorders including obesity and anorexia
- Speech disorders ( stuttering, stammering)
- Developmental delays in the acquisition of speech or motor skills
- Weight or height level substantially below norm
- Flat or bald spots on head ( infants)
- Nervous disorders ( rashes, hives, facial tics, stomach aches)

#### Behavioural Indicators:

- Habit disorders (biting, rocking, head-banging)
- Cruel behaviour, seeming to get pleasure from hurting children, adults or animals; seeming to get pleasure from being mistreated
- Age-inappropriate behaviours ( bedwetting, wetting and soiling clothes)
- Behavioural extremes, such as overly compliant - demanding; withdrawn - aggressive; listless - excitable

4. **Neglect** - is a very common type of child abuse, yet victims are not often identified, primarily because **neglect is a type of child abuse that is an act of omission, of not doing something**. “More children suffer from neglect...than from physical and sexual abuse combined” (Child Welfare Information Gateway).

Neglect is a **pattern of failing to provide for a child's basic needs**. A single act of neglect might not be considered child abuse, but repeated neglect is definitely child abuse. The types of neglect are:

- a. Physical neglect - **is not providing for a child's need, which are:**
  - Food
  - Clothing appropriate for the weather
  - Supervision
  - A home that is hygienic and safe
  - Medical care, as needed
- b. Educational neglect - is the failure to enrol a school age child in school or to provide necessary special education. This includes allowing excessive absences from school.
- c. Emotional (psychological) neglect -is not providing emotional support and love, which is:
  - Affection
  - Attending to the child's emotional needs
  - Psychological care, as needed

### Signs of Neglect

#### Physical Indicators:

- Poor hygiene, including lice, scabies, severe or untreated diaper rash, bedsores, body odour.
- Squinting
- Unsuitable clothing; missing key articles of clothing (underwear, socks, shoes); overdressed or under dressed for climate conditions
- Untreated injury or illness



- Lack of immunizations
- Indicators of prolonged exposure to elements (excessive sunburn, insect bites, clods).
- Height and weight significantly below age level

Behavioural indicator:

- Irregular school attendance
- Chronic absenteeism
- Chronic hunger, tiredness or lethargy
- Begging for or collecting leftovers
- Assuming adult responsibilities
- Reporting no care taker at home

**What is the impact of child abuse?**

Child abuse can have dire consequences, both during childhood and adulthood. Child abuse may result in:

- Impaired social behaviour, antisocial behaviour and difficulty in establishing intimate personal relationships
- Alienation and withdrawal
- Depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, feelings of worthlessness
- Self-injury
- Suicidal tendencies
- Substance abuse and high levels of medical illness Eating disorders or drastic change in appetite
- Problems in school or work
- Impaired psychological development; personality disorders
- Abusive parenting or care giving
- Prostitution (in the case of sexual abuse) Alcoholism
- Cognitive disorders
- A distorted view of sex, and difficulty relating to others except sexual terms (in the case of sexual abuse)
- Nightmares and bed wetting
- Death of a child; or death of the abuser, if the child eventually fights back
- Unwanted pregnancy
- Abortion
- HIV/AIDS/STIs
- Difficulty in having normal adult relationships with the opposite sex

The effects of being abused as a child vary according to the severity of the abuse and the surrounding environment of the child. If the family and the school environment are nurturing and supportive and the child receives psychological help, s/he might be able to cope with the trauma.

**APPLICATION OF THE POLICY**

**Empathy:** Identification with and understanding of another's situation, feelings and motives.

This policy is applicable to as follows:

**Group 1: Staff: Contractual staff, general assignment, trainee**

**Contractual Staff:** A staff is known to be contractual staff when an agreement is made between Praajak on the one part and the employee on the other part for a specified period. It may be a contract of one, two or three years and sometimes even less than a year. Generally it is for one year at a time.

**General assignment:** This type of assignment is for specific activities, both short term and long term for

those with knowledge in certain fields. The assignments may be extended from time to time depending on the requirements.

**Trainee:** New recruit in Praajak may initially be appointed as a trainee initially for a period of three months. After the training period is over, their overall performance is assessed through an existing appraisal system and if found satisfactory enough, they may be given a contract with an appropriate designation for a period of 1 year or more.

## Group 2: Donors, Interns, Volunteers, Visitors

**Donors:** Any individual or agency contributing to the organization's resources in cash or kind for a specific period of time. Prior to their contribution there is a planning stage where both the donor and the recipient play an active role. The recipient is accountable to the donor and they work in partnership.

**Interns:** As a part of the academic curriculum, students coming from different institutes/ universities for a specific period of time with the objective of practical learning through completion of the specific assignment given to them by the organization.

**Volunteers:** Persons who perform a service out of their own will, without payment.

**Visitors:** An individual or group who visits the organization for a short span of time with the purpose of understanding the organisation's work.

## POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Child Protection Policy hereafter referred to, as CPP will encompass all units, children and staff of Praajak, suppliers and contractors, visitors and donors coming in direct or indirect contact with children.

A Child Protection Policy provides a framework of principles, standards and guidelines on which to base individual and organizational practice in relation to areas such as:

1. **Recruitment/Contracting/Selection**
2. **Induction and training**
3. **Management systems**
4. **Behaviour protocols**  
 Appropriate behaviour of the staff and volunteers towards children  
 Appropriate behaviour of children  
 Appropriate behaviour of visitors  
 Appropriate behaviour of interns  
 Appropriate behaviour of donors

5. **Communication protocols regarding children**
6. **Reporting and responding protocols**

**1.1 Recruitment/Contracting/Selection:** All employees, contractors, suppliers, interns and volunteers having direct or indirect contact with children have to face a thorough and standardized recruitment or interview process.

### 1.1.1 Contractual staff, general assignment, trainee and volunteer

- Child protection statement mentioned in advertisement
- Specific responsibilities included in job description
- Questions on child protection issues relevant to the role during interview
- Original evidence of qualification to be produced by employee before recruitment
- Two reference checks to be verified either over telephone or in writing by the employer
- Enquiry into employment gaps, frequent changes of employment or reasons for leaving employment (if sudden)

- Requirement to sign a statement of commitment to the organisation's CPP and pledging a written oath not to employ children under the age of 18 as domestic help in one's homes

### 1.1.2 Interns and volunteers

- In case of interns, letter or reference from the institution and for volunteers a statement of intent as well as two reference checks, to be submitted
- Will have to give complete details of their work, objective of doing the work and expected outcome
- Will have to sign a statement of commitment to the organisation's CPP
- Orientation of the organization and its work

### 1.1.3 Suppliers and Contractors

- Should not come in direct contact with children. If required, will have to take prior written permission from relevant staff
- Requirement to sign a statement of commitment to the organisation's CPP as well as a statement for not employing children (below 14 years of age) in any kind of work done under the institutional site

## 2.1 Induction and Training

There must be opportunities within the organization to develop and maintain the necessary skills and understanding to safeguard children.

- Half day orientation on child protection issues for all new recruits [ contractual staff, general assignment, trainees and volunteers] to be given within 1 month of joining with a of the policy for reference. (refer to annexe 2)
- Half day orientation for interns and volunteers, on child protection issues within 7 days of joining (refer to annexe 2)
- Half day refresher training for personnel every 1 year, to remind them of procedures and update on new developments
- Orientation of children on all relevant aspects of CPP within 5 days of their arrival and refresher courses every 3 months
- Orientation of donors and visitors on behaviour and communication protocols before interaction with children
- Behaviour protocols to be displayed on notice boards of all units. ( Refer to annexe 3)

## 3.1 Management Systems

**A management process should be adopted in order to facilitate the implementation of the CPP and procedure**

- Clear and open line of communication through regular meetings.
- Raising concerns on sensitive matters in relation to children and staff in appropriate forums
- Concerns are listened to and responded to in a positive manner
- Reports and personal information on children are kept confidential and disclosed to only those who need to know
- Child protection issues are included in regular staff evaluations/appraisals
- Responsibility of management to ensure implementation of CPP (through regular interactions with staff and children) and surprise checks of reporting documents
- Responsibility of the management to ensure that the Policy is reviewed every year by unit heads and any necessary changes are incorporated ( in print)

## 4.1 Behaviour Protocols

These protocols will ensure that all personnel understand and abide by behaviours, which will help

in creating a child safe environment where children's physical and mental integrity /space/privacy are respected.

#### 4.1.1 Appropriate behaviour of staff and volunteers towards children [to be displayed in all the centres]

- Respect each child
- Consider each child as a unique individual with specific characteristics and needs and thus accept each child with his or her positive and negative characteristics
- Observe attitude of children with patience and understand them within the local context in which they live
- Be empathetic rather sympathetic towards children
- Views of children to be heard, valued and taken seriously with objectivity
- Encourage children to express their feelings as well as to participate in decisions which affect them at the same time confidentiality
- Work with children in ways that enhance their inherent capacities and capabilities and develop their potential
- Act on children's concerns and problems immediately
- Appreciate their good efforts and performances since it would be rewarding and reinforcing for further development
- As far as further possible, work with children in a place within the view of others Equal attention to be given to all children irrespective of gender with no favouritism Information to be given to concerned staff prior to interaction with children
- Never engage, encourage, neglect or support abuse under any circumstances
- Never stigmatise and humiliate children, for example do not speak badly of a child in front of or within the hearing of other children
- Recognize the child with her or his name and never use any derogatory name or nickname
- Never use corporal punishment
- Never develop a physical/sexual relationship with any child
- Never behave in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative
- Never share a bed with any with any individual child except in exceptional circumstances
- Do not use slang words or abusive language in the presence of children
- Never do things for children of a personal nature, which they are capable of doing themselves such as washing, undressing, using the toilet etc.
- Staff and volunteers must never engage children in their personal work
- Staff and volunteers must wear clothes and accessories that are modest and acceptable to the communities that we work with so as to be respected and trusted
- At the time of rescue, restoration and follow up, a girl child is to be accompanied by a female staff/volunteer
- Girls and boys will be given the choice of working with a male or female staff/volunteer where gender may be a consideration such as counselling, medical check-up. If such a need arises from the child if such a need arises from the child then it is to valued, considered and necessary action to be taken
- Permission of children (written in case of children above 10 years; ref annexe 4) and concerned authority to be taken before taking their images or case studies/life stories Images of children are not to be taken while they are taking bath or changing clothes. They are to be properly clothed while taking images.
- With regard to case studies, names of children must be changed and no personal information to identify the location of child to be given. Education sponsorship cases may be treated as an exception where the sponsor needs to be given authentic data.
- Never give any information regarding any child sensitive incident to media over telephone or in person. Senior management to be informed regarding any coverage by media and have written records (refer annexe 5) on the same from the media with the

objective of the coverage.

- Be clear about purpose and inform and guide children prior to media coverage
- Maintain confidentiality at the time of disclosing case studies of children to media with regard to their name and other personal information
- Staff and volunteers must ensure orientation of visitors, donors, interns and volunteers on the organizational Child Protection Policy.
- Staff and volunteers will not allow visitors, donors, interns, volunteers to give gifts directly to children. Staff and volunteers will distribute these equally on their behalf

#### 4.1.2 Appropriate behaviour of children [to be displayed in all the centres]

- Respect all staff, volunteers, parents and outsiders
- All relevant information to be given to concerned staff/volunteers
- Share information and learning with other children
- Never physically assault or sexually abuse another child
- Never tease another child or call nicknames
- Never threaten another child
- Never spread rumours about another children
- Never force another child to give away his/her personal belongings
- Never use slang or abusive language

#### 4.1.3 Appropriate behaviour of visitors/interns and volunteers/donors [to be displayed in all the centres] there needs to be some mention of the media as they, in their interest to get a story, can violate a child's rights

- Prior written permission from concerned authorities to be taken regarding purpose of visit and signing a statement of commitment to the organisation's Child Protection Policy before interacting with children
- Must empathize with the child rather than sympathize
- Physical contact with children must be appropriate to the child's age and circumstances, which must be initiated by the child rather than the adult
- Interaction with children, only in the presence of relevant staff / volunteers who will facilitate and observe the process
- Consent of children and concerned authority to be taken before taking images
- Images are not to be taken while they are taking bath or changing clothes /undressed
- Must not give any treat or take any child out on any kind of excursion. If it is done then prior written permission will be required
- Must not give any gifts directly to any child
- Will not be allowed to record case histories or take personal history of any child without prior permission of the relevant staff and child
- In terms of case studies name of child has to be changed as well as no personal information to identify location of child to be given
- Never sensationalise or manipulate text and images and emphasis to be given on dignity of child
- Do not use offensive or slang language in the hearing of children
- Must wear clothes and accessories that are modest and appropriate keeping in mind the local Indian context in which the children live so as to be accepted by them
- Will only be allowed to interact with children during their convenient time (in case of residential units, not during their time of rest and in case of non-residential units, only during the centre's working hours
- Must not force or lure a child to open up in case a child refuses to share any information
- Must possess a child - friendly attitude
- Before publishing any report or document on the organization the draft has to be approved by the organization
- Decent and understandable language to be used while communicating with children
- Recognize the child with his or her name and not use any derogative name/nickname
- Accept and respect the child and his or her parents, family members, neighbours and the

- child's living conditions
- Never stigmatise or humiliate the children
- Never give out details of any information gathered during placement or period of work to anyone without the prior knowledge of Prajaak

## 5. Communication Protocols

These are protocols to control confidential information regarding children and to prevent the presentation of degrading images of children through publication.

- Permission of concerned authority and consent of children (by giving details about purpose and use) to be taken before taking their images
- Images of children not to be taken while they are taking or changing clothes. They are to be properly clothed
- Allow children to give their own account without interfering and asking leading questions
- For case studies, name of child has to be changed and no personal information to identify location of child to be given
- There must be accurate representation of the statement made by staff and children
- Never sensationalise and manipulate text and images and emphasis to be given on dignity of the child
- No information regarding the organization and any child to be obtained over telephone
- Media persons will only interact with the organization head or unit heads or designated staff deputed by the heads
- Prior information to be given regarding date of publication/telecast/broadcast

## 6. Reporting and Responding Protocols

This is a protocol for reporting and responding to witnessed, suspected or alleged child abuse or violation of the Child Protection Policy

- Allegation of abuse must be reported to the Coordinators or Supervisors immediately after abuse or concerns of abuse take place
- This has to be done through a reporting format (Refer to annexe 3)
- Dialogue with concerned abused child to understand the depth and extent of allegation
- In case of an allegation by a named individual from a variable source, the accused will not be allowed to come into direct contact with children
- The organization will ensure dialogue with the staff being accused and ensure ramification of misconduct once it is proved, with proper evidence through other variable sources
- If the allegation is proved correct, then the individual will be dismissed and legal action might also be taken

## Requirements for Drop in Centres and Night Shelter

### Physical Infrastructure:

- For children in the age group of 0-5 years, separate facilities for boys and appropriate facilities for infants
- For children in the age group of 6-18 years, separate dormitories/facilities for boys
- Shelters with sufficient space, ventilation and light
- Safe drinking water and hygienic toilets for children

### Clothing and bedding:

- Each child shall be provided with clothing and bedding including towels, bed sheets, mattress, blanket, pillow, shoes or slippers, tooth paste, soap, comb, oil



### **Nutrition:**

- Two *Sanjha Chulha* should be held every day except Sunday
- The menu shall be prepared with the help of a nutritionist or doctor to ensure a balanced diet and variety in taste
- Children may be provided special meals during events
- The diet of infants and sick children shall be according to their needs

### **Medical facilities:**

- Children should be provided first aid as and when required
- All children coming to the centres shall undergo a compulsory medical examination
- Routine check up to be done on a monthly basis
- Sick children shall be under medical supervision
- In case of contagious diseases infected children must be segregated
- The medical service shall include immunization facilities
- The medical record of each child shall be maintained in the file of the child. It shall also include record of height and weight, any illness or treatment and other physical and mental problems

### **Education:**

- Centres shall provide education to all children according to age and ability
- There shall be access to a library that is adequately stocked with books and periodicals as well as learning materials suitable for children who should be encouraged to make full use of it

### **Counselling:**

- All centres shall have the services of a trained counsellor

### **Recreation:**

- Children to be provided with the opportunities of indoor and outdoor games
- Picnics and outings should be organized for children

### **Entry Procedures and Care plans for children**

- Every new child coming to the centres is to be received with due care and oriented about the activities in order to remove any kind of inhibition or fear
- The child is to be provided with clothing (if required), food and to be medically examined
- A photograph of the child is to be taken immediately for records
- The personal belongings of every child are to be kept in safe custody and recorded in a register and all items are to be returned to the child when he leaves the centre
- Information on the child is to be given to local police station in a prescribed format
- A plan for every child is to be developed by the caregivers in consultation with the counsellor and the child, which is to be reviewed from time to time
- In case a child leaves the centre without permission, a missing General Diary Extract (GDE) to be lodged in the local police station

## 12.17 Dissemination Meeting, Hyderabad, June 2018

### South Zone Dissemination

June 22nd, 2018 @ Hyderabad

To begin, Fr. G said we are meeting today to share the study finding from the quantitative and qualitative phases so that we can take it back to the children and other stakeholders for their feedback, suggestions and recommendations. We have adopted the same procedure from the qualitative phase in which case studies of the children were shared with them for their consent and approval. After this, the partner organisations and other participants who are working on child rights gave their self-introduction.

Following this, Khushboo gave a brief overview of the formation of the All India Working Group on the Rights of Children in Contact with the Railways (AIWG-RCCR) and the initiation of this research. She also shared how NCPCR and SOP were formed. Then she gave a detailed description of the research questions and methodology followed in carrying out the research:

- Children have their own agency, taking decisions based on their understanding and capability within the available opportunities, and hence they have reached the station.
- The study consisted of 3 phases:
  - Literature survey - of the existing studies to know & understand about child 'agency', how it was calculated, existing methodology not workable/feasible with the children, so have to develop our own methodology
  - Quantitative survey - planned for 1000 surveys but with the help of partner organisations able to do 2148 surveys
  - Qualitative survey - able to capture detailed case studies of the children

#### The first session was on the survey Methodology

J Prasad: I made the child comfortable by making rapport and then able to talk with them.

Sheeba: Since I was already working at the station, so I had no such problem and was able to talk to the children easily; have not used the App in front of the children.

J Prasad: I used to remember or note down the data on paper and then filled it in the App.

Khushboo: In the Pilot conducted with about 150 children, there were lots of questions. But we got very less response for some of the questions. So, those questions were selected that had a minimum of 5% response and the questionnaire was reformed. Major learning for us was that if we want to talk with these children we should talk about things that interest them rather than us. Consent is part of the ethics of this research. And the App is based on this ethic. Whenever a child refused or showed unwillingness to reply, the survey was to have stopped there only.

Anbu: Initially children are worried that they may be sent to some other place or something like that. So we made rapport in 3-4 days and then talked to the children and collected the data.

Sundar: When child comes to station and we are asking repeated questions, child gets nervous and actually they like to go away. So we just talk to the children first. Not bringing out any App or piece of paper or pen. Make rapport with the child and had conversation and after that; and when child is not there then we documented his/her story.

P Raghava Kiran: Initially children were not freely sharing their story, but after building rapport with them we are able to talk to them and document their views and experience through App.

Khushboo: The present SOP is somewhat able to work with fresh arrivals, but a large number of children

are not covered. The present study is about how to document what are their multiple experiences, and how they survive. We decided we are not going as interventionists, but as researchers, so we gave the children info kits containing important numbers of CWC, police, RPF, etc. so that they can contact them when in need.

Kavita: The App was prepared in 12 languages, so we were able to get data of the children from many regions. It was also very useful to decode the data into numbers and statistics.

Khushboo: Even in the qualitative we did not want the researcher to just jump in and do interviews of the children. So we decided that the researchers will spend 1 month at every of the 5 stations and do child and station profiling in the first week, and collect the detailed case studies in the remaining time.

Pavan: Initially we went to Rajahmundry and contacted government officials like RPF, GRP and other NGOs working on streets for children there. They were excited to know about the study. The CHILDLINE official also shared their information with us. We started with the area survey to locate where the children are sleeping, rickshaw wala, and other stakeholders. We found children are not living at stations, but in the outskirts of the city. Many children are engaged in selling fruit or some other stuff. We identified about 20 children for the case studies. While doing profiling, we also contacted Fr. G but he was not happy with the data that we were collecting, so we expanded our reach from Rajahmundry to nearby stations.

Fr. G: The reason for choosing Rajahmundry was based on the survey finding that there were many children living there, but when we went there for qualitative study, we found very less number of children due to Operation 'Smile' and children had moved to other stations.

Pavan: During Operation 'Smile' children who are working in hotels or on streets were all rescued. So majority of time children started to travel on the local train to escape, or went to some other main station like Vishakhapatnam. After spending about 2 weeks there we could start speaking with children.

Fr. G: Since qualitative study started 6 months after the quantitative study, because of various operations and interventions, the number of children declined at stations.

Pavan: In Operation 'Smile' about 600 children were rescued, so that means they were in contact with railways. Majority of them were from Telangana. Initially we had 6 to 7 informal interactions with the children, and then started collecting data in 3 to 4 sessions. There were some gaps and to fill that we had to visit the child again.

Khushboo: We realised that children may lie while replying, but we accepted that that is also the agency of the child. Because of 'Smile' and Railway CHILDLINE rescue work at larger stations we also decided to get case studies from the smaller stations. Researchers had to read out their stories to the children and take their written consent, but many children refused to give in writing, so we decided to consider oral consent as adequate.

### **The second session discussed the Findings.**

Ranjan gave a brief presentation on the Findings of the study.

Biplav: I want to know a) the basis for deciding the sample size, and b) is there any definition of the various terminologies used in the report?

Ranjan: Sample size of the quantitative was based on 1% of the total 1 lakh children in contact with railways as determined by the Railway Children study. And sample for qualitative was based on the decision to take 11 children in 5 zones to cover all categories.

Kavita: We will have a glossary of terms in the final report.

Fr. G: This study is a process of presenting data and analysis and taking feedback from all participants and others.

Biplay: There is a lot of potential to make the findings richer.

Khushboo: The data shows that more than 50% of the children are from the same city, so we have to relook at the rescue and return model.

Fr. Joseph Leo: There is information about sexual harassment in one of the slides, so some explanation is needed whether it is by father, or step-parent.

Biplay: The categories of children in this study are challenging the existing categories and they are overlapping, as the same child is involved in child labour, prostitution, trafficking. It may be that the same child is having multiple identities. So the identity given to a particular child is given from the top by policy makers, researchers. What about the child? If 50% children are working, they might be the same children who are runaway and so on. Another point is why children are at the station? From the data we can see most of the children left their home to earn money and so what are the systems or structures compelling them to work? These different prevailing structures are missing and should be added in the report.

Fr. G: We will do that.

Biplay: In the literature review we have not captured this important discourse related to identity. There is an important historical dimension when we talk about whether the child has any kind of potential, or they are innocent, and their needs to be rescued, and they need to be supported. My sense is your findings are challenging that concept. One more thing I want to highlight is the interpretation of childhood in terms of autonomous and individual child.

Fr. Joseph Leo: There is a lot of discussion on interdependence, dependence, etc. Actually below 8 or 10 years should be given 'protection' whereas above that they should say what they need.

Raja: In Hyderabad, most of the children do plastic bottle collection.

J Satyanarayana: The children are doing work like cleaning, water bottle refilling, etc. which is the worst kind of work and they are not supposed to do that.

Sheeba: Due to some family problem, it seems the children are out of school.

P Raghava Kiran: Some children are engaged in refilling water bottles and selling in the train. And some are engaged in prostitution for fulfilling their addiction needs.

Biplay: Is there any work change trend and the reasons for changing?

Khushboo: There are correlations between age and work and saving and work. The children are exercising their agency according to the availability of work and their age and security. Question is what are NGOs doing in the South and why children are having less friends in the South?

J Prasad: The interaction of NGO with children is more here.

Sheeba: One can also see that the older children are going back to NGOs for help.

J Satyanarayana: NGOs are more secure and have shelters here, that is why children are opting for them.

Pavan: NGOs are formal structures and are sending children to home and shelters and taking away their freedom, that is why children are making distance from the NGOs. There is no support mechanism from

the NGOs and the children have friends here.

Fr. G: The quantitative and qualitative seem to give different pictures: new children prefer NGOs while older children have made friends.

Raja: Here 24 hours services are given to the children and they have trust in NGOs. Also NGOs give food - that is why they prefer NGOs.

Fr. Rubin: New children or fresh arrivals may have said no friends because it takes some time to make friends, which clearly come out in the qualitative case studies.

Trivikram: The children are doing more begging in the South. What compassionate gravity is forcing that?

Fr. Rubin: I don't know whether the study covered the children rescued and rehabilitated from any difficult situation. Also if 50% of the children are from the same city and 50% are from other cities, what are the preventative measures we can propose for them?

Kavita: In this study we can see, even though there are NGOs at the station, the children have minimal interaction with them. A lot has been already documented about those who have been helped by the system. So we have looked at the children who may have gone into the system but who have moved out. We have taken help from NGOs for this study and they may have criticism, but we have to together think and learn from it. Preventive measures we will look at later for making recommendations, but since 50% children are from outside the city and many have come with their families, so preventive measures should cover the entire family.

Khushboo: During field visit, at one station I saw that the NGO staff was entering 'Yes' on the question "Help from NGO", without asking the child. When I objected, he said they used to distribute food. But when he did ask the child the child said 'No', we don't get any help. Perhaps children do not regard getting food as 'help'.

Ranjan: From the study, it can be seen that children are getting help from friends, so how to support and strengthen these informal structures?

Trivikram: Saving money also gives some sense about how confident one feels about the future. The more confident one feels about the future, the lesser is going to be saving as well.

Khushboo: Many of the children want good jobs as they grow older, but after some time that aspiration goes down.

Kavita: The aspiration is highest between 12-14 years and then it goes down, maybe because of opportunities or because of realisation. We also have to look at the difference in agency between men and women and the opportunities available.

P Raghava Kiran: How were the categories of the children based on age worked out?

Kavita: After a lot of discussion on educational pedagogy, we decided the age categories on the basis of particular age groups having developmental milestones in terms of physical growth and psychology. We should explain this in our report.

### **The third session discussed the Recommendations**

Kavita asked whether there was anything from the study findings that participants felt was new or reinforced what they already knew.

Fr. Rubin: Were the recommendations made equally for all or considered gender also? Pavan: What about

the push factors, the compulsions for leaving stay the home? Kavita: Yes, they have been considered.

Trivikram: I am curious to know about the term “intelligence”, and what support we can provide.

Anbu: I had done a study 19 years back with a sample of 100 children in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh on the same issues. So these are not new for me.

Raja: There are many reasons why children come to the station and their needs are not addressed. Why can't we work to address the root cause of distress at the home?

Sathyamurthy: So many children are coming from North to South, so we should recommend that the governments of the North do something like giving food, shelter, and some kind of awareness to keep children in the North only.

Jiyobitesh: I work in North for restoring runaway children. There are no government agencies like CWC, NCPC, etc. that work in the South. They know the child comes to station due to some financial problem and comes with permission of the family. But while restoring the child, we get very poor response from the officials from South. When doing rescue and return, they say why you have brought them here, you should hand them over to police and RPF there only.

Fr. G: There is lots of migration from North. Are we able to see a changing scenario, where local children are living at station and doing work, is it the same with the migrants?

Anbu: They may be coming for the job purpose, they may not be staying at the station and may be settled at workplace.

Kavita: For the recommendations we are looking at how best can we support children, their family and their community, whether at the village or near the station. Lot of suggestions came in the morning about our attitude towards the children, but do we understand them as citizens with rights or as weak children needing protection? Even in protection, participation of the children is very important. How do we increase opportunities, capacity, resources, etc for the children should be kept in mind while making the recommendations. They should be age-based and for the specific departments and institutions concerned.

Anandraj:

- Panchayati Raj and Women & Child Department should take complete responsibility of the children.
- Root cause should be addressed at the source area.
- Either the local government teachers or the some teachers from Odisha should come to teach these children.
- There are many bonded child labour in brick-making and other occupations; Telangana should be made child labour-free state.

Trivikram:

- The CWC needs to be sensitized.
- We should not recommend for the child in isolation, we should also consider the family.

Fr. Rubin: what can be done with the 16-18 year age group so that their responsibility for the family can be addressed?

Solomon Raj: There should be some agency to address issues at the source areas.

Fr. Joseph Leo: Child labour department should be strengthened.

Biplaw:



- Identify present informal structures.
- Complaint redressal structure should be strengthened.
- Child participation needed in framing policy.
- Recommendation should be in context of present laws and structures.
- There should be monitoring and implementation mechanism

Ranjan: Whatever the approach, the department should first listen to what the child has to say.

Pavan:

- Multiple options should be there for the children to select from.
- There should be some liberal school at the station.

Priyanka: There should be a separate Ministry for the children to work with, share suggestions and feedback, and to manage the action plan.

Naeem: Many things like child participation have already been covered, priority should be given to the child voice, and to accommodate their demands to include and amend in present policies, if required.

Raja:

- Special children should have better care and protection at station.
- Abuses like sexual, drugs etc. should be stopped at the initial stage.
- Child friendly school should be started.
- Have child parliament in every school and panchayat.
- Every child's parents should be taken care of.

J Satyanarayan: Sensitizing the family, society and government to make a better place for the children.

Sundar: Children come from different places and do different work, but no government department is taking responsibility. So, all departments should work in convergence and not work in isolation.

Anbu:

- Children's Department should be separated so that they can focus on child and should work at district level.
- Teachers should visit home and look for the child when he/she is absent for a long time like say 1 month.
- If the child is working and the labour department does not take any action after receiving complaint then it should be punished.
- Funding should be increased for rights-based approach in child welfare sector.

Sheeba:

- Anganwadi should admit migrant children.
- Panchayati Raj & local government should be strengthened.
- Railway stakeholders should be made aware about child rights.

Khushboo:

- Recommendations should be based on our experience, and not on the funding agency.
- Non-criminalisation of work in public spaces is necessary.
- Children's informal support structure has to be recognized.

Saurav:

- Should work on strengthening the family.
- Develop system to support migrant workers.

## The fourth session focussed on the Way Forward

Fr. G said we need to take this study back to the children in contact with railways to speak with them regarding the findings and recommendations, and asked how that could be done.

Trivikram: It will be very challenging to present and share it.

Fr. Rubin: It is a good idea to take it back. We should collect suggestions and feedback on how to improve the report or what can be done.

Anbu: should be taken to the JJB & CWC also.

J Prasad: The report must be discussed with the head of the organisation and Railway Childline and then taken to the children.

It was decided that all the participants can share the report within their organisation and with other concerned groups or individuals to have some discussion and consultation on it. By the end of this month the participants will share the feedback and suggestions so that we can put together all views and recommendations of children as well as questions that stakeholders and others would have so as to complete the study and prepare the final report. Ranjan and Saurav will follow-up with the participants for this.

## 12.18 Sharing Findings with Children in the South

### Kakinada & Rajahmundry :

Team managed to contact children in contact with Railways in Rajahmundry and Kakinada with a prime motto to reach children shared their stories in research, where they have met 6 people namely G, K, L, M, R, and S.

Team had organized 3 FGDs with 25 children in contact with Railways over a month, out of which 15 children are in contact with Railways since last six months and they are constantly travelling to save themselves. Majority of the children were caught by organized systems such as Childline, Railway Police. The findings from FGDs are as below.

The culture in South India and especially Andhra Pradesh is different compared to other parts of the India, the social economic problems face major role in individuals life, which is same with children who have participated in the FGDs.

Few additions from FGDs are

1. The family problems played major role as child took a crucial decision to live on his own terms. Majority of the children have come of the home for the first time. They were scared to face their parents and neighbours, which forced them to travel regularly instead of staying in a place for less than a week.
2. Majority of the children have come out of home as they are ill-treated by either parents or School Teachers. A group of children came out of their homes as they were ill-treated by parents wants to live on their own terms, on the opposite side children ill-treated by school teachers an neighbours left their home wanted to threaten their parents.
3. These children are non-residents of Rajahmundry and they assumed that traveling in trains is an easiest transport and secured and they can earn for their living while travelling on trains and they also can visit new places regularly if they are bored of staying in a city or town.
4. They are interested to stay with children in groups than individually as they felt they are secured and their seniors share their stories helps them to survive from Child line and Police etc. They act as their mentors. These seniors constantly share their bitter experiences while unwillingly staying child care institutions
5. They strongly admit that they are unable to live on their own terms and raise their voice as Police, Child line and other NGOs are unable to understand their problems and support which forces them to stay away from these systems (18 children are reluctant to interact with AIWG- RCCR Team in couple of meetings)
6. Most of the children from these groups spend their money for their living, food and alcohol. It is shocking to know that children on streets within 6 months are addicted to alcohol. While interacting with children its shocking to know that all these children are from below poverty line and middle class whose parents or one of the parent are alcoholic and they are attracted to Alcohol. Alcohol is also one of the prime mottos for children to leave their homes.
7. All 18 children are between 15-18 years and they didn't understand the need to save as they are new to streets and they are keen on entertainment and alcohol.

### Vijayawada:

The Team supported by staff from Navajeevan Bala Bhavan had couple of sessions with children in Vijayawada. 38 children have participated in FGDs. 18 children were staying in Navajeevan Bala Bhavan and 20 children are working on streets as dwellers and rag pickers out of whom 32 children have repeatedly come out of home and 6 children have left their families for first time.

All 38 children are on streets and in contact with railways over 6 months. As Vijayawada is heart of Andhra Pradesh and one of major railway junction majority of the children used to move to Vijayawada.

The findings from FGDs are as follows.

1. Most of the children who came out of home regularly came to Railway Station willingly as this is one the easiest means to survive and regularly love to travel in trains as they can make friends from similar background and enjoy life in the new way which also says physical relation, addiction, employment etc.
2. For the first time children came out of home as they were ill-treated but as they started living on their own terms they didn't to stay in their house anymore made them to leave their house frequently.
3. One of the key word all 38 children have used is "They are no answerable" to others on streets.
4. Harassment from NGOs and Homes. One of the point they have suggested to use as they said that sexual abuse is common in homes some times and physical abuse is also prevalent.

#### **Few words from AIWG-RCCR Team :**

We have organized three meetings with children near Rajahmundry Railway station in three days where the children are not interested to speak with us as they had distrust towards systems and they are comfortable in second and third discussions as we have invited children whom we have identified for Qualitative Research.

Few points which can be added in report are

1. Percentage of children in contact for railways for first time
2. Socio Economic Status of children as this is also one of the reason for them to leave home
3. Majority of the children are scared to join their family as they maybe ill-treated by their family/ relations / neighbours forced them to stay on streets than with family, as a result they are gradually create their own world on streets
4. They are attracted to stay in contact with Railways as it is one of the easiest ways to earn money, especially through begging or cleaning trains.

In Vijayawada we have met 38 children and majority are staying on streets over months and they came out of their home regularly.

Children suggested to add:

1. Harassment from NGOs and Homes. One of the point they have suggested to use as they said that sexual abuse is common in homes some times and physical abuse is also prevalent. They have added psychological abuse by homes as they are threatened to stay in homes or police may imprison them.
2. Voice of speech. All the children shared that they missed someone listening to their voice which happened in their family and on streets through homes and system. This is one of the important addition

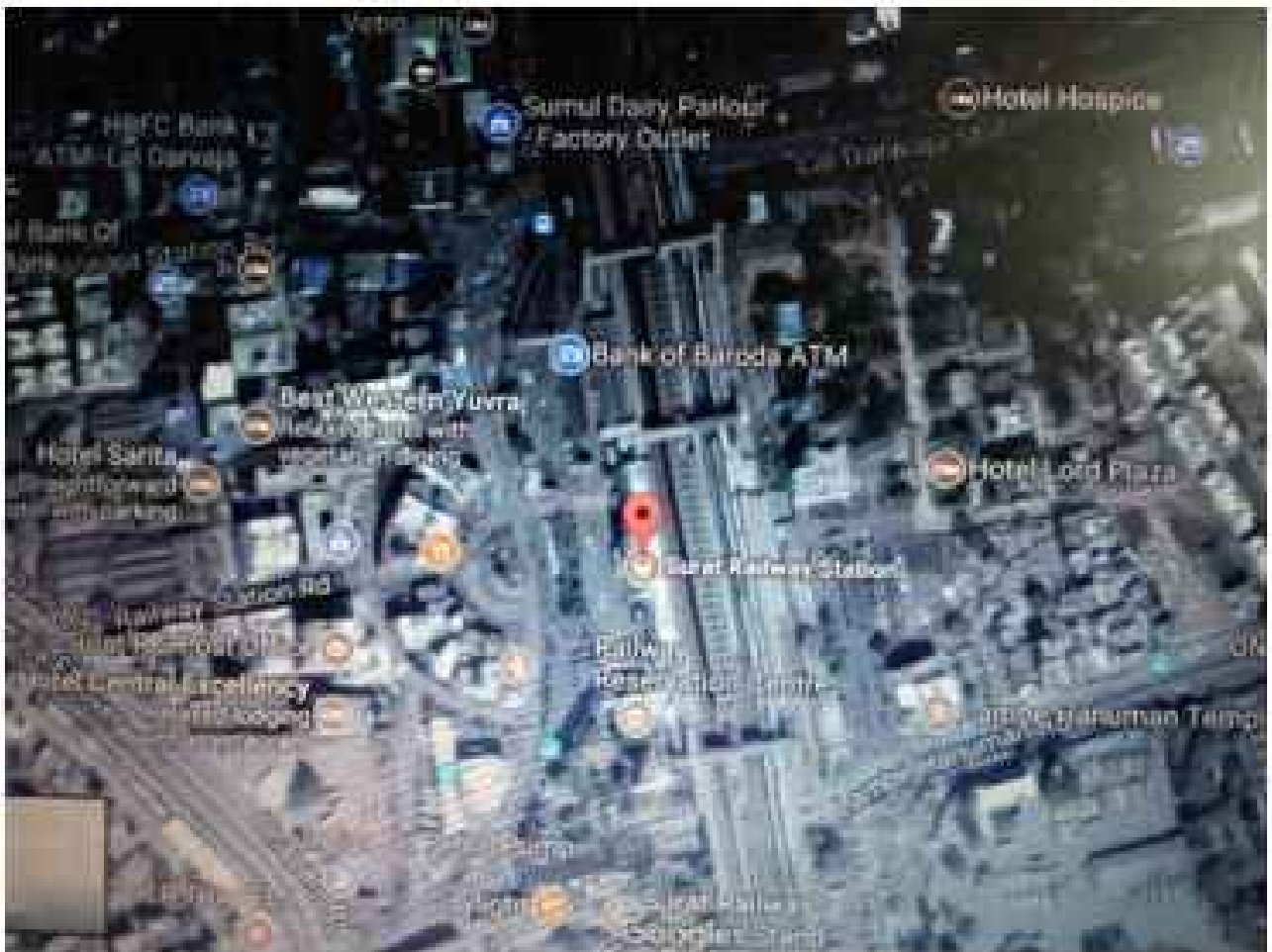
## 12.19 Profile of Railway Station, Surat, Gujarat

**Note:** The following profile is an outcome of the visits at different times during 26th July- 4th August 2017 covering 8:00 am to 3:00 am. The platforms and surroundings were not visited during 3:00 am to 8:00 am. Also all most each day there was a presence of police ( be it RPF or GRP) and vendors were arrested while children and young adults were chased away or locked up or frisked for possessing any stolen things. Rain was frequent and due to rains in other areas trains were cancelled on daily basis. Delay was for few hours up to 20 hours.

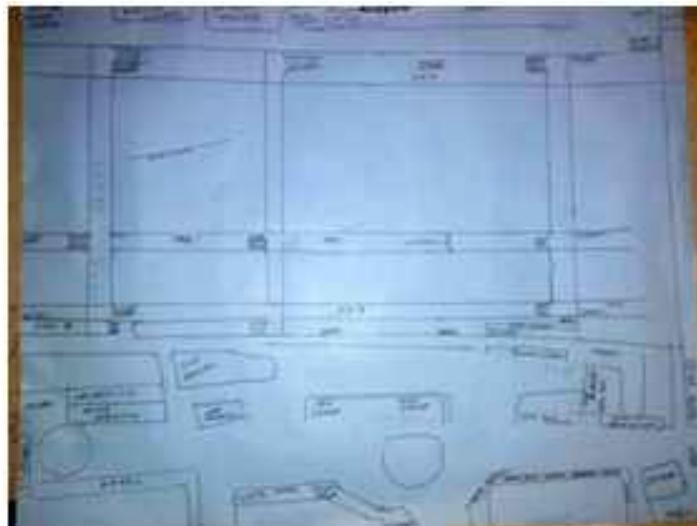
### Profiling of station

#### 1. Mapping of station: geographical representation of station & surrounding environment

There are four platforms at Surat Railway Station and six railway tracks. The station is in Western zone. The station had begun in 1860. In 1952 the current building was open to public. It has six tracks and 4 platforms and a Platform Zero.



Picture 1: Google Map of Surat Station



Picture 2: Geographical representation of Surat Railway Station and surrounding (by Wasim, Core Researcher)

There are three footbridges, as seen in the pictures above. On the front side there are ticket windows for general (unreserved) and there is a machine for platform tickets. A subway is going towards Platform 2 and 3 which are on the same elevated place. Platform 1 is on one side and the Platform 4 on the other side. The steps on the opposite side of the ticket windows are used to reach on the Platform 1. On the back side of the Platform 4 there is another set of ticket windows. On the left side of ticket windows below the Platform 1, there is a separate building for reservation of tickets. The same building has courtyard on its right side. There is a slope that connects the outside of the station to the Platform 1.

There are several hotels and restaurants on the opposite side of the road in the front side of the railway station. There is a local bus depot sharing the wall with the station where there is ticket reservation building. On the far end of the left entrance of the station there is GRP, Surat Railway Police and Local Crime Branch. Both are in same premises though adjoining but have completely different entrance. GRP has a *chowki* on the Platform 1. There is a PI's office few feet away from there. RFP is on the second floor above the ticket windows. Station Superintendent (SS)'s office is on the Platform 1 on the left side of the entrance there, while the Area Officer / Area Manager's office is on the third floor above the ticket windows. There is a Zero Platform which is branched out from Platform 1. Further to it on Baroda side about 100 feet away is the parcel office and post office too. The platform is between the two underpasses ("*garnalu*" / culvert). On the back side there is a parking and on the front there is a VIP parking outside ticket reservation building. There is a slope that also leads to the Platform Zero and Platform 1. The space below the slope is a big parking area. The commercial road opposite to the parking is used as resting place for vendors, mainly adults. There are few such spots, including a temple adjoining to the *garnalu* on the slope of most likely railway land. There is a *Pati Chal / Narsi mandirni zupasspati* (slums adjoining to track at Platform 4 towards the Mumbai side. These slums and other adjoining areas have few godowns that supply cold water bottles to the supposedly unauthorised vendors, mostly adults and fewer among the vendors are children and young adults. Also vendors come to the parking side near Zero Platform as well as from the *Pati Chal*. Some vendors are living in these slums too. There are two temples adjoining the Platform 4 towards Mumbai but no children are found there. There are two hotels that side. There is a *Sulabh Sauchalaya / pay-and-use toilet complex* near parking on the back side.

## 2. Size and traffic at the station:

According to Station Superintendent (SS) on an average 250 trains and 50 goods trains come to the station. Of which *Sampark Kranti* and *Duranto*-like some 15 trains do not stop here. According to Ticket Booking Officer (CBJ) there is a sale of 45,000 (forty five thousand) tickets daily at Surat Station of which 10,000 are platform tickets and 35,000 are general (unreserved) tickets. There is a



list of 264 trains on the board displayed opposite ticket windows. 40 of that are local trains.

3. Train timings and time of children's movement (when movement of trains and children in the station increase)

These days due to on-and-off rains it is difficult to observe train movements increasing and accordingly increase in children's presence. Also vendors of all kinds i.e. water bottle, tea and other refreshments/*gutka* (chewing tobacco), are hiding from GRP as well as RPF. Since 2013 there is increased "*daban*" (pressure from higher officials and both of them keep catching/ arresting supposedly unauthorised vendors. In two consequent days (30th and 31st July 2017) at least 4 young adults were arrested by GRP. When GRP arrests any vendor, which could generally mean between 18 to 30 years of age, are kept in the lock-up until the evening or night and if the Court is open they are released the same day with the fine of Rs.50 against identity proof of the vendor. This arrest is done under 109 section<sup>34</sup> of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (Section is known to many children and adults on the station but need to verify with GRP for details). If GRP hands over the vendor to RPF, then there is case booked which means Rs.1,500 fine. On 29th July some 30 vendors had gone to Kosamba to pay that fine. Vendors of pantry car, licenses stalls and moving stalls are authorised to sell things in train/platforms; others are arrested during the raid by police. They would run away from the hands of GRP as there is no surety if they will be handed over to RPF or not. Based on or observations, below 18 and young adults are very few across the stations, those who spend few minutes on the platforms are not more than 10.

RPF had already warned one of the owners of supplying the water bottles to the young adults, mainly to stop the business. He had told the same to his team of water bottle selling youth. They all wanted to continue until they can on their own risk. Of course there is exchange of money to protect these young vendors. There is no tension when someone is arrested by GRP as this is also part of target given by officers and it does not harm the youth in any way but for loss of a day's earning and payment of fine. The owner told that if any vendor is caught with second-hand mobile and if that had any connection with a crime, then he might be called and he would give his guarantee of being available without any documents to be submitted. He also said that such arrest of vendors is to control crime by cheaters, so that they get the message that there is someone to control them. There are at least 4 such providers of water bottles to the supposedly unauthorised vendors. The young adults (all men) selling bottles go on the platform only when train comes and they soon leave the platform when train leaves or even before that. They come back to the godown of the water bottles. From here they pick bottles from the cold storage and just mention the number of bottles they have picked up to the owner or the manager. They settle the account as soon as they are back from selling bottles. The work goes on in a systematic way and each vendor is focused on the number of bottles he sells.

One of them is so focused that it is difficult to seek his attention. His movements were very fast. The tea kettle is hidden in the cloth bag and selling of tea is done in very vigilant manner, as observed with one man of 25-30 years of age. The Platform 1 is a danger zone as Wasim puts it, something like unsafe place. No unauthorised person is allowed on it to sell things. There were 2 boys below the age of five who were begging on the platform around the office of SS, at least on 31st July around 2:30 pm.

At ticket window on Platform 1 a group of children is seen and it seems that they are children of those who are working there for cleaning the complex. They are around when there are more people in queues for buying the unreserved tickets.

<sup>34</sup> Section 109 in The Code Of Criminal Procedure, 1973. Security for good behaviour from suspected persons. When [an Executive Magistrate] receives information that there is within his local jurisdiction a person taking precaution to conceal his presence and that there is reason to believe that he is doing so with a view to committing a cognizable offence, the Magistrate may in the manner hereinafter provided, require such person to show cause why he should not be ordered to execute a bond, with or without sureties, for his good behaviour for such period, not exceeding one year, as the Magistrate thinks fit.

The group of 15- 20 children who live on the bridge towards the Baroda side is very much there around 1:30 to 2:30 pm for lunch which is sold by an old man there and then. Police informs him not to be around whenever someone visits the station for inspection. This group size varies and also becomes 2-3 smaller groups. There are young adults also and some come periodically for collection of money or come to meet their friends from Udhana or Baroda. Again in the evening 7:00 pm onwards they hang around there until they sleep around 2-3 am. As one of them said, “This is our bridge, we are always here.” As they had said, most of them sleep here. At noon we have seen two of them sleeping there. If police chase them away children sleep on Platform 4 and few also go to Zero Platform. Members of this group go down to attend the train of their choice to lift shoes and *chappals* but one cannot notice a big group of children/ young adult approaching any train on arrival.

According to Wasim, many sleep during the night on Platform 1 on the Mumbai side on the way that leads to outside the station. The place is open from one side and therefore, due to rain, it might not be used these days.

At least 5 vendors were seen climbing the platform with bags with water bottles or edibles covered in plastic bags as soon as the train arrived in the afternoon. They wait on the slope of the station around Zero Platform according to timing of the trains' arrival, get into the train just before it stops, and do quick selling and get down from the other side. While getting down on the platform they are vigilant and keep checking if there is anyone there. It looks like they are checking if police is there or not. They do not get down from the platform at the same time but as soon as they finish their (targeted) selling. Similarly, on Platform 2 and 3, three adults and a boy of less than 15 years of age were seen rushing from one leaving train to the arriving train on the other side. However, the trains'/ platforms' front and rear sides are kind of divided among the vendors and they don't cross the area on platforms. Even if they do selling in the train they don't go beyond the Udhana station on Mumbai side and Uttran station on Baroda side. This is due to boundary demarcation in which the godown/shop owners are able to defend them.

The RPF is either on platforms or at the locations from where vendors get out of the station selling their goods. A young adult doesn't get down from the train if he notices the police but comes on the platform and sits down on benches as any passenger does. That is the way of hiding from police. Another way of escaping from police is to be on the edges of the platforms so that one can run away out of the station. Almost no noise is made on the platform to sell their tea or any goods. Efforts to interact with young adult vendors resting/ hiding around the station did not bring much result at 3-4 known locations. At one place 2 adults, and at another 3 adults, were found. Rain, delay and cancellation of trains, and appearing at the court to pay fines are the reasons as we understood from locals for absence of young adults. At least 2 boys, one is 18 years and other looked younger, also sell things in the train but without getting noticed.

3 girls stay on the bridge where the group is found. Two of them are with their respective partner/ husband; one seems to be on her own but in the group. Other girls are begging.

One can see elderly men, women or disabled person sleeping on Platform 4 but not young adults or children generally.

To conclude, children's movement are not seen in an obvious manner but they are scattered and not many. Even the young adults and adult vendors of all kinds are also not seen in groups.

#### 4. Sense of the number of children, their age group and gender

As mentioned above the children are seen not in a big group. Following is the list of places where children were seen and at some places interaction could take place. Some are just observed only.

**Table 1: Number of Children and Young Adults found at and around Surat Railway Station**

Sr. No.	Location	Age Group (years)	Girls	Boys	Total Children /Young Adult	Remark
1.	Ticket Window at the entrance below Platform 1	5-7	00	02	05	Looks like having family member working on the station for cleaning.
		7-8	02	00		
		11-12	01	00		
2.	Zero Platform	5-6	00	01	01	He is with his father.
3.	Platform 1	4-5	00	02	02	
4.	Platform 1,2 & 3	16-20	00	15	15	Mostly disappear from the platforms or might be remaining in trains until little ahead of the platform.
5.	Platform 1,2,3 &4	2- 16 years	03	04	07	A group of family with men, women and children; Albinism; they are seen from morning to afternoon.
6.	Footbridge towards Baroda	13-16	03	00	20	No. varies each day but some 10 of them are seen daily. Their work is mainly lifting the shoes and <i>chappals</i> of the passengers from the passing trains. A boy doing shoe- polish outside the station was there once.
		11-15	00	04		
		16-18	00	02		
		18-22	00	07		
		16-22	00	04		
7.	Platform 4	16-19	00	04	31	Vendors
		20-22	00	02		Vendors
		08-12	06	00		Morning visitors for begging.
		4-5	01	01		Begging/ collecting food from passengers.
		7-11	00	05		Residing with family across the road from end of Platform 4 on Mumbai side under the open tent.
		16-25	00	12		Mainly water bottle vendor from one of the godowns.
		Total	16	65	81	

5. Different categories of children and young adults found in contact with railways

80% of male and 20% female among children and young adults seen at the station or working in the train or connected to railways in some way. There is a male child and 2-3 young male adults who have lost hand or leg are visiting this station. Only one young adult is staying on the bridge who has lost a leg after having left the home as a child.

6. Location where children are found in and around the station

Locations are mentioned in the table above. The footbridge toward Baroda, the stairs of that

bridge, all the Platforms 0,1,2,3 & 4, just outside the Platform 4 in the slums towards Mumbai and ticket windows below the Platform 1 are the locations where children and young adults are found. Due to strict checking and much presence of police (RPF& GRP) and Ticket Checker, the presence of children and young adults is very unpredictable. Those we see one day are not seen the next day. Of these 81 children and young adults we have met or seen from the distance, some 20 are daily found but not all had time or interest to speak with us. The big group with Albinism keep changing its place from one platform to another and at least one girl of about six years had approached us for begging. They are not there on daily basis and not much longer. It could be that they have a scheduled visit to Surat and we have not noticed the timing due to our engagement with different groups and tasks there.

According to R who was on the station as a child and is now some 30 years old, there is no child selling newspaper on the platforms and outside station. No child is seen selling newspaper during our visit.

According to the NGO team members who visit the station and surrounding, now they see only 2-3 new faces of children around the station which was 10 in 2015 per month.

The vendor children and young adults come for very limited period on the station and then disappear. Efforts to find their location around the station were not successful.

7. Formal systems available for children (CHILDLINE, RPF, GRP, Station Superintendent, Presence of NGOs and locations)

CHILDLINE's booth is not there, however a board is hanging near the main entrance of Platform 1. It has one side in English and other in Gujarati. As per the board, it is managed by PCVC. No one is mentioning about it, also we have not made very pointed inquiry. We ask the children and young persons if any NGO is helping them. The young adults said no to this question in different conversations. VSD is an NGO which comes once a while and last time it had collected blood sample as one of the young adults had responded. Some of the boys who are staying on the bridge have stayed at Don Bosco, Vishwamitry, Baroda. They also mention having been to (Cillar) Children Home of Parle Point, Surat or *Katra Gam Anathashram*. NGO's team member says that he daily takes a round on platforms as well as around the station and we met him only when we had visited their shelter in nearby commercial building. RPF and GRP are not support systems.



Picture 3 and 4: Sign board of CHILDLINE in English and Gujarati, on Platform 1

Once 2 boys who were having tea at night around 11:00pm were taken to the police *chowki* of the Bus Depot of State Transport and they were frisked and were let go after nothing was found. GRP/RPF come and beat them and chase them away. We also see children greeting the police saying, “*Namaste dada*”. Smiles are exchanged. One police *chowki* outside Platform 1 is the place where children and young adults are brought after arrest and then taken to the police station of GRP



outside the station. If there is a case without complication they might be taken to RPF and released against receipts of penalty

Girls said that police in uniform or in regular clothing do not beat them as they are “ladies”. Boys of 14-15 years were taken to police *chowki* and were checked for having anything with them.

The NGO is in a commercial building some 600-700 feet away ahead of the cross road. It seems that now those children who were going there once upon a time do not use this shelter any more. Some 10 other children and young adults do visit the place each night and during the day. One of them is selling water bottles in a running long route train. Another is working in a shop in the complex. The boy who had come to Surat railway station at the age of about 10 years is now about 30 years. He does not go inside the station since 2005 but sells paper outside. 3-4 children have parents and the shelter is like a day care centre for them as parents drop them in the morning and pick them up in the night as they are living on the footpath. These children go to school.

It looks like young adults might be supported by the police if they are some sort of informers in getting criminals arrested. Thus, a young adult male was caught by police (RPF perhaps) but mistakenly identified as another person wearing similar clothing who has stolen a mobile. Talking to a senior police over the phone resulted in release of that person. This happened in the evening around 5:00pm and he had helped in getting 2 thieves arrested at night, as he has told the researchers.

After two days he was again taken to the lock-up over the footbridge and was beaten 110 times with a stick. He has shown the thumb with a bandage. He was also telling the police passing by that police had beaten him much last night. His some Rs.500 and two mobiles were taken away. On the previous arrest he was drunk and during the night another mobile was taken away by boys but SIM was given back to him. In short, it is difficult to know if the police are his support system or not. He said that he told the police that he used to steal earlier but not anymore and police did not find any stolen thing, as he told the researchers.

Children did not mention any support from Station Superintendent (SS).

8. Informal systems - where children eat and sleep, where they sell their collection, who they stay with, etc.

A group of some 15-20 children and young adults are sleeping on the bridge and on Platform 4 as per the need. If they are being chased away from the bridge they sleep on Platform 4 or outside the station near closed shops during night. Few also use Platform 1 towards Zero platform. The young adults working as water bottle vendors are staying in the slums adjoining Platform 4 or they are staying in nearby areas/ villages like Udhana, Uttran and Navsari with their families. Few vendors selling other things like popcorns or refreshment have rental houses in Kosamba.

Those who lift shoes and *chappals* sell it at a market 500 feet away. There seem to be no children or young adults collecting used water bottles, however, there is a scrap shop about 100 feet away from the rear of the platform.

9. Presence of structures or facilities of water, religious places, shops etc.

There are two temples on the back side of the station but no children are seen there. 300 feet away from Platform 4 on the right side below the tunnel/ underpass there is a temple on railway land, were once the adults were seen playing ludo on mobile. The adult vendors rest there. Each platform has water supply for free and children on the bridge use the water supply from Platform 2 and 3. From here they get cold water as and when needed. Platform 4 has water supply but of normal temperature. Water is available all the time. The toilets at the station are for free, and are on each platform. There is a mosque on the opposite side of the front side of the station but no child uses

that place. At least this group do not take the free food available at two places nearby; rather they buy food both the times. Some say they use self-medication and do bandage by themselves (at least one did) and other two said that they go to the hospital. Towards the Mumbai side they reach to the hospital by walking on track of Platform 4.

10. Spots where children stay during day time and during night

During day time no vendor is spending time on the station, they are in the train or at the water bottle godown, or go away from station soon after attending a train to sell their goods. The group of children who are mainly lifting shoes and *chappals* are almost all the time there on the bridge. Only for a few hours, when GRP chases them away, they go on to the track 200-300 feet away from the platform.

11. Spots where they sleep, or gather during leisure time, hide.

Children and young adults in the group sleep on the bridge mainly. Here they share *chilam* (marijuana), 'solution', and eat. For lunch an old man comes daily to sell food for Rs.20. That is mainly non-vegetarian biryani and, if he can't come due to restriction by police, children buy food from hotels opposite the entrance of the station. They stay there or gather in 2-3 groups on the bridge. On attending the train to pick up the shoes/*chappals* they go down to the train and come back. Later they go to market and sell the collection. Then they go to Varachha Road to watch movies. They mention that boys go to a particular cinema and boys to other, but an adult woman suggested that no one goes to cinema but to Varachha road (may be to video shops, but this needs to be verified during personal interview or on other occasion).

12. Places of work

There are children who are begging, who are lifting shoes and *chappals* and selling at Delhi Gate market, there are some young adults involved in collecting money from others, some are into supply of liquor. Many are selling water bottles and refreshments/ *gutka*/chocolates.

13. Location of support system - like for addiction, help, abuse, etc.

The bridge seems to be serving all purposes for addiction, help, or abuse. Two young adults had come once to collect money from some of the members staying on the bridge. Similarly, another young adult was scolding the other young adult for not bringing the earnings when he is spending 2-3,000 on him per week. Another boy also seems to have come for some collection.

They buy Fevicol synthetic rubber adhesive ('solution' as they call it) from furniture shops near Gitanjali, as they have said. This seems a bit far as only one tin ("*dibba*") is shared among all and one or two are in held back individually. Cigarette and *gutka* is bought from platform or shops outside the station.

14. Other systems other than sending home

It seems that some of the boys have used the facilities of open shelter by the NGO but now no one from the group on the bridge goes there. Some of them had also stayed for year or two at Don Bosco in Baroda. And now as per a team member of the NGO, "The old boys (known to him) are seen and hardly any new boy is found." The boys/young adults also confirm that they do see them on the station. This was shared in a response as the researches told them that the previous day they had gone to the NGO and therefore did not take a drawing session. During the first six days of interaction no child had mentioned the NGO. No young adult or adult also had mentioned the presence of the NGO on the station. Some of the children and young adults had already been to Children's Home of Surat or Katargam.



At least one boy, who has a home in Udhana, goes to the NGO sometimes and is selling water bottles in the running train. However, the researchers have met him only at the Shelter.

15. Mapping geographically locations in and around the station where children are found and spaces they use

The locations where the children/ young adults are found is given with details in the Table 1. The children said that they go to the area called Gitanjali to watch movies. They buy food from the hotels and restaurants across the road mainly in the front side of the station.

16. Challenges faced because of the systems (CHILDLINE, Railways, Police, etc)

There are a lot of challenges these days from police. At least CHILDLINE is not visiting the station supposedly as there is no booth of Railway CHILDLINE. There is no pressure by the NGO on the children to visit the Shelter. Seems that some of them have used the services of the NGO and now it has agreed in some way not to do any intervention with the old (not fresh arrival) children. There could be some reason that children are not using the NGOs where they have spent some time, even a year or two, in institutional care of one and Open Shelter of the other. This might be clear during individual sharing of story of their life.

17. How was the situation a few years ago and how has it changed over time (situating historically)

Few years ago there was a coach on the side of Platform 4, and 7-8 young men vendors use to sleep their hanging their bags, as someone told us. Now no child besides the group on the bridge is seen sleeping somewhere on the platform. Also a man who is 30 now and stays on Platform 1 with his six year-old son says that only people staying for many years are found here.

There were 40 vendors of all ages, according to one of the young adults, some 3 years back. Now only 10 are there. There were many selling popcorn. There were 3-4 machines of popcorns on the platforms and just outside the station. The previous officer was strict and in the past 2½ years there is a drastic change in popcorn selling as 3 machines were taken away by the said officer and now only one such machine is left on the platform; the other one is some 100-200 feet away in the bus depot across the road from the railway station and is supposedly an authorised stall.

According to one of the godown owners it is not the frequent raid by RPF or GRP, but as the concept of Smart City is under pipeline, the railway authorities along with Surat Municipal Corporation will acquire land around the station or remove the illegal occupants, and for that the frequent raid of arresting the vendors is going on. Soon all the unauthorised entry for any kind of selling will stop totally.

Earlier until 2-3 years ago we could see edibles, especially like *bhel* and *masala dal*, were sold from big plastic tubs the vendors would carry around, and now there are really small tubs they carry to sell these popular snacks. Other things are sold in not-so-obvious bags they carried earlier. There is not much loud calling when selling things like tea and water.

18. Safe and unsafe spaces

Overall, the platforms are unsafe; however, the bridge on the Baroda side seems the safe one while being unsafe also at times. During the night police respond to greetings by the children there with a smile at least. At other times they are interrogated or frisked on the bridge, and at still other times they are arrested. The empty trains which are waiting on the station seem a safe place. Platform 1 is not safe at all for almost every child and young adult.

Safe space for vendors is the shops/ godown in the *Pati Chal* or places away from the platform next to the track. It seems that the police do not go beyond the platform.

19. Basis for choosing these spaces

The bridge is the only place which is seen as a chosen space for children on their own, as they are in a group and less unsafe than other place it seems. It seems that the police do not go beyond the platform.

During interactions in following days the researchers might find more details and clarity. If any additional information is shared by the children and young adults or anything in particular is observed it will be shared.

20. Access to different spaces in and around the station

This is given in the above points.

21. Maximum 5 Km from station or maximum 2 hours travel time by train, should be covered

As of now the team has gone around as per the information gathered and the need to explore. If there is a need, then more distance will be covered.

## 12.20 List of Partner Organisations

North Zone	
Station	Organisation
Agra	CHILDLINE
Aishbagh	Human Unity Movement
Amritsar	Khushboo Jain
Anand Vihar	Don Bosco
Bhopal	Aawaj
ODRS	Chetna
Gorakhpur	Safe Society
H. Nizamuddin	Chetna
Hoshangabad	NIWCYD Bachpan
Itarsi	NIWCYD Bachpan
Jaipur	Taabar
Kanpur	Subhash Children Society
Katni	NIWCYD Bachpan
Kota	Taabar
Lucknow	Human Unity Movement
Ludhiana	Khushboo Jain
Unnao	Human Unity Movement

East	
Adra	Praajak
Asansol	Sarathi
Balichak	Praajak
Ballygunj	Praajak
Barsoi	Praajak
Bhatapara	Sankalp Sanskritik Samiti
Bilaspur	Sankalp Sanskritik Samiti
Burdwan	Praajak
Cuttack	Basundhara
Danapur	Sarathi
Dhanbad	Praajak
Dumdum	Praajak
Durg	Sankalp Sanskritik Samiti
Durgapur	Praajak
Farakka	Praajak
Gaya	Praajak
Girimaidan	Praajak
Guwahati	Praajak
Harischandrapur	Praajak
Hatia	Bal Sakha
Howrah	Don Bosco Ashalayam
Kamakhya	Praajak
Kharagpur	Praajak
Kishanganj	Praajak
Kolkata	Don Bosco Ashalayam
Malda	Praajak
Midnapur	Praajak
N. Bongaigaon	Praajak
N. Coochbehar	Praajak
N. Jalpaiguri	Praajak
Pakur	Praajak
Pataliputra	Sarathi
Patna	Bal Sakha
Puri	Rush
Raipur	Sankalp Sanskritik Samiti
Rajnandgaon	Praajak
Rampurhat	Praajak
Rajgangpur	Disha
Ranchi	Bal Sakha
Rourkela	Disha
Sealdah	Individual
Siliguri	Praajak
Tatanagar	Praajak

West Zone	
Adipur	Manavjyot
Ankleshvar	Don Bosco Snehaylaya
Bandra Local	Pehchan
Bandra Term.	Pehchan
Bharuch	Don Bosco Snehaylaya
Bhuj	Manavjyot
Borivali	Pehchan
Bhugaon	NIWCYD
Charni Rd	Pehchan
Churchgate	Pehchan
C Shivaji Term.	Pehchan
Dadar	Shelter Don Bosco
Grant Rd	Pehchan
Hinganghat	NIWCYD
Khar Local	Pehchan
Kurla	YUVA
L Tilak Term.	Shelter Don Bosco
Mahim	Shelter Don Bosco
Mumbai Central	Hamara Foundation
Nagpur	NIWCYD
Nashik	Navjeevan
Pulgao	NIWCYD
Pune	Samatol
Santa Cruz	Pehchan
Satara	Samatol
Sewagram	NIWCYD
Sholapur	Samatol
Sonegaon	NIWCYD
Sandhurst Rd	Pehchan
Surat	Don Bosco Snehaylaya
Vadodara	Don Bosco Snehaylaya
Wardha	NIWCYD
South	
Anantapur	Don Bosco Navjeevan
Arrakkonam	Don Bosco Anbuillam
Bangalore	Don Bosco
Bangalore Cant	Don Bosco
Bhimadolu	Don Bosco Navjeevan
Chennai	Don Bosco Anbuillam
Chirala	Don Bosco Navjeevan
Coimbatore	Don Bosco Anbuillam
Eluru	Don Bosco Navjeevan
Gudivada	Don Bosco Navjeevan
Gudur	Don Bosco Navjeevan
Gulbarga	Margadarshi
Guntur	Don Bosco Navjeevan
Hindupur	Don Bosco Navjeevan
Hyderabad	Don Bosco
Katpadi	Don Bosco Anbuillam
Krishnarajapuram	Don Bosco
Machilipatnam	Don Bosco Navjeevan
Nellore	Don Bosco Navjeevan
Ongole	Don Bosco Navjeevan
Rajahmundry	PARA
Raichur	Margadarshi
Salem	Don Bosco Anbuillam
Secunderabad	Don Bosco Navjeevan
Tambaram	Don Bosco Anbuillam
Tandur	Margadarshi
Tenali	Don Bosco Navjeevan
Thiruvallur	Don Bosco Anbuillam
Tirupati	GRASM
Vellore	Don Bosco Anbuillam
Vijaywada	Don Bosco Navjeevan
Vinukonda	Don Bosco Navjeevan
Vizianagaram	Don Bosco Navjeevan
Yadgir	Margadarshi
Yellahanka	Don Bosco





All India Working Group for Rights of Children in Contact with Railways (AIWG-RCCR) is an alliance concerned about the rights of children in contact with Railways and was founded on 12th June 2014 to promote concept of agency of children. It strives to seek greater recognition of “Agency” of Children in laws, jurisprudence, policies, programmes, judicial and administrative process, practices, art, literature, culture, politics and academics.

AIWG-RCCR, individually through its members and collectively as an alliance, engages with children, adults, voluntary organisations, Non- governmental organisations, Judiciary, Government bodies, statutory commissions, media, political leaders, various campaigns and alliances etc. to propel them towards more active engagement with issue of “Agency of Children”.

[www.rccr.in](http://www.rccr.in)



**C/o New Alipore Praajak Development Society**  
468 A, Block-K, New Alipore, Kolkata – 700053, West Bengal, India  
Tel. : +91-33-2400 0455  
Fax : +91-33-2400 3438  
Email : [praajak.kol@gmail.com](mailto:praajak.kol@gmail.com)  
Website : [www.praajak.org](http://www.praajak.org)