

# THE "CHILD" SYSTEM MANUAL

## Comprehensive Help for India's (International) Little Destitutes {A manual for those working with street children.}

### **BASIC BACKGROUND DATA**

#### **Introduction:**

Street children are very unfortunate and forgotten, sometimes orphaned children, many of whom have taken a very big decision for a small mind, and have run away from home. A large percentage have even perhaps been forcibly thrown out by uncaring or poverty stricken family members. The reasons are mostly conflicts with parents or step-parents, broken homes, ill treatment by family members, or there are the rural children who have simply become attracted to big city life through the mass media, mainly films.

Having run away or finding themselves on the street, they are forced to live on the pavements, under bridges or in make-shift shelters, eat from dustbins or obtain food by begging or stealing.

Some are rag-pickers, others sometimes help out in small tea shops, shine shoes or do myriad odd jobs. None attend school. Very few have good health. Many, especially the very young, die an anonymous and agonising death.

The number of street children in India, and the world, has increased dramatically over the past few years due to deteriorating living conditions in both rural and urban areas, and the migration of the village family or members into the city in search of work to pay back loans taken from village money-lenders. The children are the first and worst sufferers. They are left most of the day uncared for, and when the parents get weak, sick, or worse, die, the children are left alone.

A percentage of these homeless children are "gainfully" employed as tea-boys, mechanics' helpers, errand-boys etc. Others are self-employed as rag pickers, newspaper boys/girls or shoe shine boys. Most just wander aimlessly in the streets and on railway platforms, begging, stealing, pick-pocketing - eventually coming under the control of "dad as" or manipulators who live off the meagre pickings of these young children. Many street children are forced into prostitution, thievery, drugs etc., and are exposed to AIDS, crime and terrorism, or are lured with promises of so-called good jobs and good living into occupations like carpet weaving, fireworks factories etc. where they work under inhuman conditions unable to escape. A large majority simply die. They are the forgotten children of the world.

The phenomenon of street children is finally being recognised as one of the major problems affecting major towns and cities in both developed and developing countries alike, not to speak of the future of the nations they live in.

#### **What do they need?**

In general, the prime need of street children is that of care and security, and a feeling of being wanted. This manual, written by the founder of some of the most successful Street Child Care Centres in India, S. Manihara and his wife, provides the know-how, guidance and information on the needs of these young children, and explains how a centre can initially be set up which can become a home to them, a place they can call their own, develop bonds, learn skills and grow to become useful, productive, responsible members of society. S. Manihara has devised and implements a totally non-institutional five phase strengthening system, starting with the first, where street children are personally invited to visit night rescue centres all the way up to later settling them into being part of mainstream society